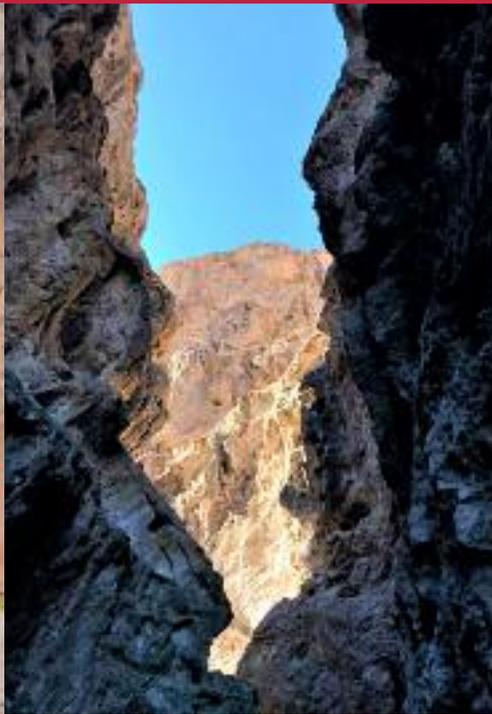


# OLLI JOURNAL 2018



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## 2018 OLLI JOURNAL

It is with great pleasure that we present to you to the 2018 OLLI Journal!

This year, we chose to emphasize the abundance of classes offered at OLLI at UNLV. While The Journal showcases the fruit of the many art and writing classes, know that OLLI also provides numerous other classes, rich in content, broad in spectrum and diverse in subject matter. Our program affords countless opportunities to explore new avenues of learning and personal growth in a social environment that is laced with the treasure of meaningful friendships.

Between these covers, you will discover just a sampling of the art accomplishments and writing talents of some of the students enrolled at OLLI during the 2017-2018 academic year. These pages are full of creative endeavors by those with seasoned abilities and also by many who might otherwise never have the opportunity to explore and expand their creative gifts.

Please enjoy the diverse art... the varied and inspired writings... and the enthusiasm that is evident throughout the pages of this year's Journal.

### PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Amy Atkinson, Chair

Diane Benelli

Ron Szalla

Tom Lyon

Elena Cieslak

### COVER ART

*Clockwise from upper left:*

Jill Barnard, Colored Pencil Drawing

Alexis Carlson, OLLI Hiking Club

Mary Hee, Colored Pencil Drawing

Jim Atha, Women Making Art History

Bilal Shabazz, Photography

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# WRITING

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## The Fur Coat

Diane Crane Benelli  
Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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She lived in Brooklyn and worked in Manhattan on 57th Street. It wasn't a bad commute. She was out far enough that she was usually able to grab an early morning seat on the subway. And the walk to the office, depending on the weather, could be enjoyable. There were always things to see and people to watch along the way. After so many years, the owner of the coffee shop knew her well: Coffee, black, one sugar. If he wasn't too busy, he would make light conversation with her, which made the morning start a bit more pleasant. She always took the same route—up Fifth Avenue and West on 57th Street. And she always glanced at the windows in Bergdorf Goodman's, that pricey store whose inventory was a constant temptation to those who could afford it. She couldn't. She was a working girl.

As fall approached and the new displays went up, a fur coat appeared in the window. Just by looking at it, you knew it was no ordinary fur coat. The tailored lines were classic. The rich, deep brown color was magnificent. It was stunningly luxurious, worthy of the star window at Bergdorf's. She paused to take it all in. She could imagine running her fingers up and down that soft fur and how glorious it would feel. It was the kind of coat that would keep a woman warm forever. But she also knew Bergdorf's reputation, and she knew the price would be way too steep for her paltry salary. If anything, she needed to spend any money she could scrape together on her apartment. She was less than comfortable there. It was cramped, and it lacked storage. The shower didn't always

# WRITING

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work, and she repeatedly had to call for maintenance. It was shabby, but she had been there a long time, and it was what she could afford. Besides, moving is disruptive and expensive. If nothing else, the neighborhood was familiar. It was just easier to stay put.

But passing that fur coat every morning and evening without longing for it was very difficult. She could imagine what it would be like to put her arms through those silk lined sleeves... to turn up the collar and feel that soft fur around her bare neck... and to snuggle inside it on the cold winter days ahead.

On the spur of the moment one evening after work, with nowhere else to go, she slipped into Bergdorf's. She just wanted a closer look at that coat... and maybe touch it. That's all. That was probably her first mistake. The saleslady, so well trained in catering to customers, insisted that she try it on, and she couldn't resist. She had been right about all of it. It was more than glorious. It was opulent. She had had a tough day at the office, and despite her disheveled hair, it made her look beautiful. Everything about it screamed "you deserve this."

The price, of course, was staggering. She could skip her morning coffee, her one indulgence. As if that would make a dent in the price tag. She already brought her lunch every day just to save a bit. The thoughts swirled around in her head, but the image in that mirror destroyed any practical thoughts she could summon. Without much serious calculation; and against her usual better judgment, she fell prey to temptation and charged the coat so she could pay it off over time.

She was euphoric, almost giggling, as she carried the box on the way home. It had the Bergdorf name written across it, and the way people looked at her made her feel affluent. She had worked hard for so many years. She had deprived herself of so much, staying in that old, rundown apartment. Her cloth coat was frayed, and it was worn. Wasn't she entitled to some happiness... something that brought her a bit of pleasure? It was time to throw caution to the wind. At least that was what she kept telling herself.

# WRITING

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Weeks went by, and although she still loved the coat, it didn't seem to fit quite as well as when she first tried it on in the store. And it was silly to be wearing this gorgeous coat to work on the subway every day. But she had no place else to show it off. She seldom left Brooklyn and her middle-class neighborhood. And late in the evenings a sense of guilt would wash over her. And though she tried to brush it off, in the end, practicality prevailed. She held the monthly bill in her hand, and she realized she had made a serious mistake. Who was she kidding? She was playing way out of her league.

As much as she suffered over the decision, she gently folded the soft fur and laid it back in the Bergdorf's box. She furtively stroked it one last time. She tied the same cord around it to keep it safe. She didn't want to ruin it. And then, she took the train into Manhattan and made her way back to the store, resigned to accept her ordinary life as it was without that fur coat.

Of course, Bergdorf's was very gracious about returning the coat. It was Bergdorf's after all.

# WRITING

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## The Museum

Diane Crane Benelli  
Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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He loved the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Who doesn't? You can spend an entire week there and not take it all in. When the stress of life became overwhelming, it was a sanctuary and a place of refuge for him, and he was a frequent visitor. He was particularly enchanted by the Renoirs and the Monets, their soft colors strewn across the canvas to depict a pastoral and genteel existence. Would that he could crawl into the scenery and make that his reality. The women, all so beautifully calm and serene, taking a Sunday afternoon stroll in the park or sedentary in some small boat gracefully gliding on a lake, their gossamer parasols upright to shade them from the noonday sun. It was always sunny in those portraits. Did it never rain in the lives of the artists?

This was the exact place where he had met her. Claire. Even her name epitomized serenity. She first approached him with polite conversation, but her words faded as he was totally taken by the vision of her grace and her soft-spoken manner. How was it possible that the person he first met, that the couple they had become, had somehow evolved into a life of battles and conflicts?

Oh, the early years were blissful enough. They were consumed with the good fortune of their compatibility. There were no harsh words back then. They floated along in tandem, each lifting the other up if one should fall. He thought it would last forever.

They were well positioned both socially and financially. A striking portrait of the two of them hung in their library. They were an incredibly

# WRITING

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handsome couple, she in a bejeweled gown, and he in the perfectly tailored tuxedo. It was quite typical of their lives at charity balls and posh political dinners.

I suppose that the years brought disappointment to them both, but Claire was more the protagonist of the two. Recently, she had fits over even the smallest of issues. She was clearly unhappy, and in her mind, the blame for that fell squarely on his shoulders. He was more mild mannered, avoiding conflict whenever possible.

At first, they had what might be called spats... small disagreements here and there that never got resolved, but with each one, a wall began to build up between them. He never made an issue over anything for fear of confrontation, and she felt like any issue she raised was never heard. They never experienced the intimacy of making up after a lovers' quarrel.

Now in their sixties, they had little in common. She had her artistic friends and did volunteer work at a local society thrift store on the upper east side. He spent his time at the club and served on the boards of several non-profit organizations. Their lives were cemented in different directions. But on the evenings when both found themselves within the walls of their well-appointed home, things could be unpredictable. They would share the same room for hours, he in his books and she in her writings, and never a word was exchanged between them. At other times, an innocent comment could escalate into a full-blown row of raised voices and horrid accusations, ending in unresolved conflict and bitter resentment.

It was on a summer evening when the heat of the day hung over the city and persisted into the night. They began to argue over some insignificant matter. It was nothing of any consequence, but somehow the years of emptiness and anger overtook Claire, and out of total frustration, she struck him square across the face. It had deteriorated to that. With immediate regret, she ran out of the room in a fit of tears. Typical of him, he did not pursue nor try to comfort her, but instead, it was at that very moment that he knew he needed to be free of her.

# WRITING

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He now had a purpose. He needed a plan, and he agonized over various strategies that would liberate him. There was always divorce, but he knew it would be ugly and provide scandalous fodder for the society pages. She would want revenge and compensation for all the years that she suffered through their marriage, never admitting that he too had made innumerable compromises to maintain peace at all costs.

The summer passed, and fall brought anticipation of the holidays. He would endure the sham of yet another Christmas, where expensive gifts were traded, a tangible pretense of affection between them.

He chose to wait until the new year to act. He had carefully conceived a plan that would erase her from his life. He looked forward to the time when anger and conflict were no longer part of his daily existence. He chose early in the month of February as an appropriate time. He did not want to feign yet another bogus ritual of Valentine's Day.

It was a simple plan. He would find just the right moment to push her down their long marble staircase, and at her age, no one would question that it was an accident. He chose the most perfect and ironic date, February 13th. As fate would have it, it fell on a Friday that year. Yes, Friday the 13th would be his day of liberation. There would be funeral plans to make, people to notify, and graveside ceremonies to be arranged. He would write a beautiful and fitting obituary. He was quite adept at logistics. Everything would fall nicely into place, including his freedom.

She actually seemed to notice his improved mood. He was much more attentive these days, and their squabbles were virtually nonexistent. It was as if they had reset their lives back to those halcyon and harmonious days.

On February 11th, he rose early and was off to the kitchen to make her breakfast. He wanted her last days to be pleasant. He scrambled eggs, grilled sausage and made freshly squeezed orange juice. He fished a small vase from the dining room breakfront and snipped a carnation from the

# WRITING

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large floral arrangement in the hallway. It was her favorite flower, fragrant and long lasting. He positioned all on a large tray and returned to the bedroom where she still slept peacefully in her satin nightgown.

“I’ve made your favorite breakfast for you, my dear,” he said. “I’ve made your eggs just as you like them, and the red carnation longs to bring a touch of beauty to your day.” But there was no response. He touched her arm to wake her, but she was cold.

The coroner determined that she had suffered a heart attack sometime in the night. And now all that was left was to put the funeral plans in place, notify their many friends and make arrangements for the burial, all of which he had mentally organized weeks ago. The swift passing of the next few days surprised him. It was over so quickly. He was free.

Months went by, and he continued with his usual routines. He lunched daily at the club, and participated in his various board meetings. The evenings would find him relishing in the quiet, reading alone in his peaceful, silent house.

He wasn’t quite sure how he had wandered into the museum, but there he was on that very same bench where they had first met so many decades ago. The memory of it was etched firmly in his mind. He recalled her smile, her beauty, her countenance... the shine of her hair as it fell across her forehead... her soft green eyes that probed deeply into his. A sudden wave of emotion overwhelmed him, and he found himself sobbing for the one woman he had truly loved. It was only then that he realized his life was empty without her. He had never imagined that he would miss her so totally and so completely.

Some walked by and stared at this slumped and grieving old man, sitting alone on a bench at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He took his handkerchief from his breast pocket and tried to wipe away the tears that flowed uncontrollably. He cried for himself; he cried for Claire; and he cried for what could have been.

# WRITING

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## The Reunion

Diane Crane Benelli  
Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Jesse sat at the bar, wondering why she had even come to her high school reunion. It was ridiculous. It was barely 9:30, and she was more than ready to leave. What made her think it was a good idea to make the trip back home to Mill Creek, Oklahoma? Home... that was a joke. She hadn't been back in more than ten years. Heck, she could have gone to the Bahamas for what it cost to get here. Yet here she was, taking inventory of how many of the girls were now grossly overweight and how many of the guys had lost their hair. "One more glass of wine, and I'm out of here," she thought. It was apparent that she had nothing whatsoever in common with these people. Most of them she barely recognized.

She was just about to leave when an exceptionally handsome man grabbed the seat next to her. "Hey, Jessie, I was hoping to see you here. Truth is, it's the only reason I came." She had no idea who he was, but obviously, he knew her. She mumbled a few words, stumbled over the niceties, and he began to laugh. "You have no idea who I am, do you?" Truth is, he was right. He was the best looking man in the room, and she hadn't a clue. "I won't make you guess," he said. "It's me... "Pudgy." She nearly spit out her wine. She leapt from her stool and put her outstretched arms around him as she exclaimed "No Way!" She took a few steps back to take him in. "Well, look at you, John Hammond."

Jessie couldn't believe her eyes. She and John comforted each other through their miserable high school years. He was the one whose shoulder she would cry on when her heart got broken... and back in those

# WRITING

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days that was a frequent event. John had obviously grown out of his baby fat years and added a few inches to his height. Unlike several other of their male classmates, whose idea of dressing up was a golf shirt, John wore a beautifully-tailored navy suit, elegant tie and even a pocket square tucked neatly in place. He could easily have passed for a men's fashion ad in *Vanity Fair* magazine. His winsome smile was just about the only thing that hadn't been transformed. They had a lot of catching up to do.

Like Jessie, John had escaped Mill Creek, gone to an out-of-state college and never looked back. As it turned out, both of them were now living in Los Angeles. Jessie was a VP at a high-tech company, and John was well on his way to making partner at a notable law firm. They took turns reminiscing and catching up on each other's families. Jessie's parents had moved to Florida years ago, and John's folks had both passed away. Neither had any siblings, so they were at the grownup stage of their lives, responsible and independent. Several times during their conversation, John anxiously looked at his watch and remarked that he didn't have much time... that there was somewhere else he had to be. It was odd, considering the hour and considering that neither of them had any connections left to anyone in Mill Creek. They were so engrossed in each other that it came as a complete surprise when the lights began to dim, and they were the only couple left in the room.

It was at that moment that John anxiously looked at his watch again. He took her hands in his and blurted out that he had always loved her, but he never had the courage to tell her, for fear of ruining their friendship. Jessie then realized what a fool she had been. She had cast her pearls to swine when all the while, a genuine diamond was right in front of her. Of course, John was the perfect man for her. She should have seen it all along. He quickly kissed her cheek and left her with the words, "Sorry, but I really have to go." With that, he rushed out the door. She sat stunned, cemented to her stool at the bar until the bartender brought her back to reality with "We're closing up here, lady."

# WRITING

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Out in the parking lot, she stared up at the full moon. A serene breeze floated over her. Maybe this was why she had come to the reunion. Maybe it was destiny. She drove back to her hotel and climbed into bed with a thousand thoughts rushing around in her head. In the morning she packed up her things and made her way to the airport. There would be plenty of time for breakfast and contemplation.

Jessie ordered some much-needed coffee and settled into a booth at the rear of the restaurant. It would be a couple of hours before boarding time. She had grabbed a copy of the local paper to pass the time. It was only as she stirred her coffee that she saw a picture of John on the front page. In horror she stared at the headline: “Alumni, John Hammond, killed in fatal car accident on his way to Mill Creek High School Reunion.”

# WRITING

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## 1968 – Year of Turmoil

Dick Rose

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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1968, fifty years ago, was a year of turmoil throughout the United States: two assassinations, multiple student demonstrations, riots following the assassination of Dr. King and a continuing disillusionment by the public about the Vietnam War. All of this was recorded by the press: radio, TV, newspapers and magazines.

It was also a year of turmoil for the military. I know. I was in Vietnam. For me, the biggest event, tragic as it was, was the communist Tet offensive, the plans for which were widely known by the troops but ignored by General Westmoreland's intelligence staff. The standard answer to our inquiries was that no Tet truce had been broken in 1,200 years. "Tet was the time for weddings, funerals and celebrations," we were told.

There had always been a truce for Tet, regardless of what fighting had been going on before or after the holiday. Still the rumors persisted. I, myself, called army intelligence to inform them of the stories we had been hearing. Always, the same answer was given in different variations. But in simple words, it amounted to "Never happen, Brother."

I called because I had been sending the navy combat correspondents under my command down into the Mekong Delta to cover the navy units down there. Fortunately, during Tet, only one of my men was on assignment in a large village called Vinh Long. There was a riverboat squadron and a helicopter squadron down there, a support base, along with a Seabee detachment. Had the village been attacked? Was he there? Was he safe?

# WRITING

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Communications were unavailable. Considering the rumors I had heard, should I have sent him there in the first place?

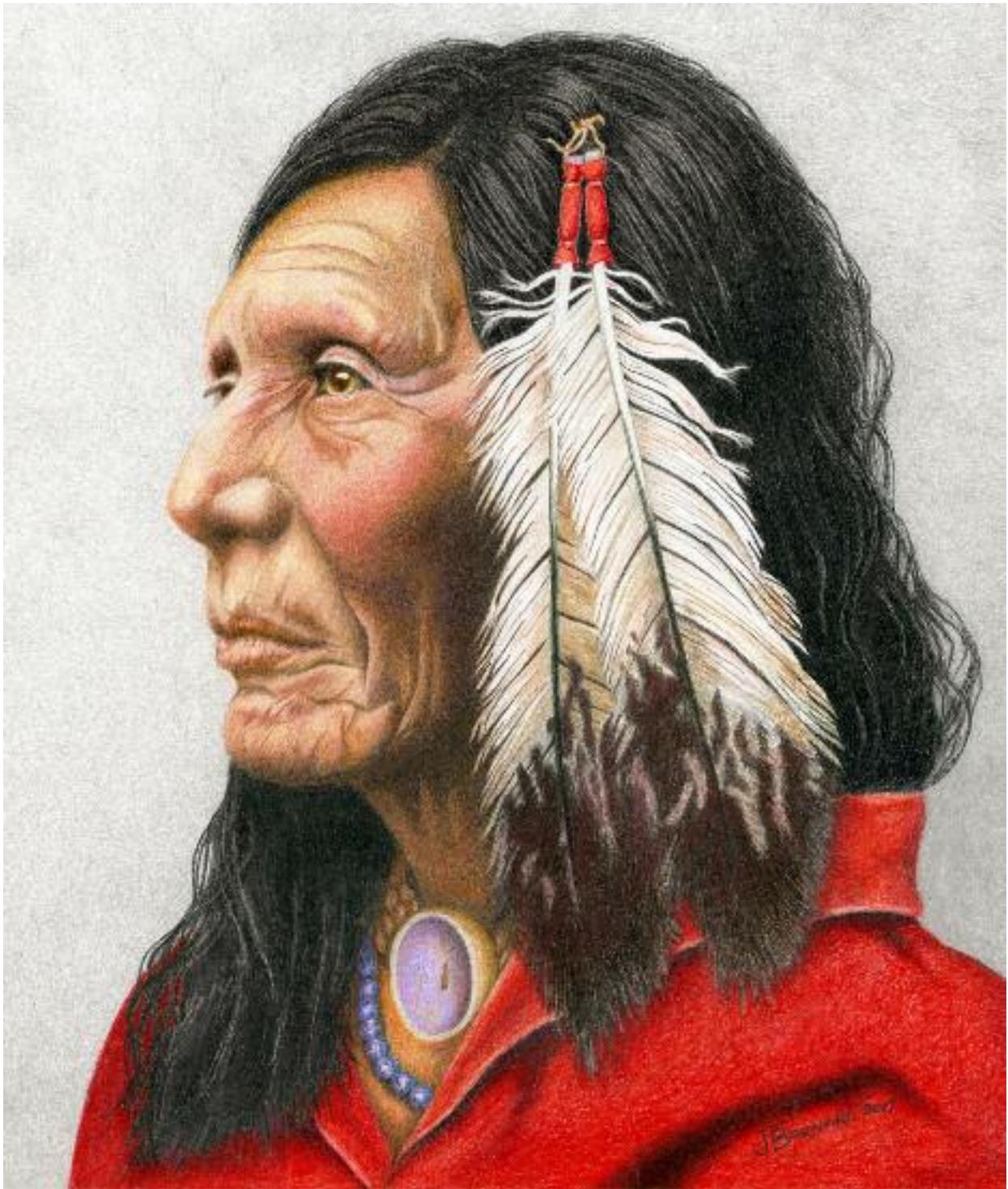
Two weeks later, he returned to Saigon with the answers. Yes, the village had been attacked; yes, there was a lot of damage; yes, he had been safe. The American and Vietnamese troops had held the enemy off until reinforcements arrived to evacuate all the troops at the Vinh Long base. I never did find out about the Seabee detachment three miles away.

But 1968 had been a bad year for the military in other ways. The USS Pueblo had been captured by the North Koreans; an American spy plane had been shot down over North Korea; the My Lai massacre had occurred. Stateside, the former Sergeant Major of the Army, the most senior enlisted man in that service, was found to have been skimming slot machine profits while he was stationed in Vietnam before his selection for that senior job; and the Army Provost Marsal, the general in charge of the military police, was found to have been selling weapons on the black market in the U.S.

1968 was, indeed, a year of turmoil, one that fifty years later, still has its victims.

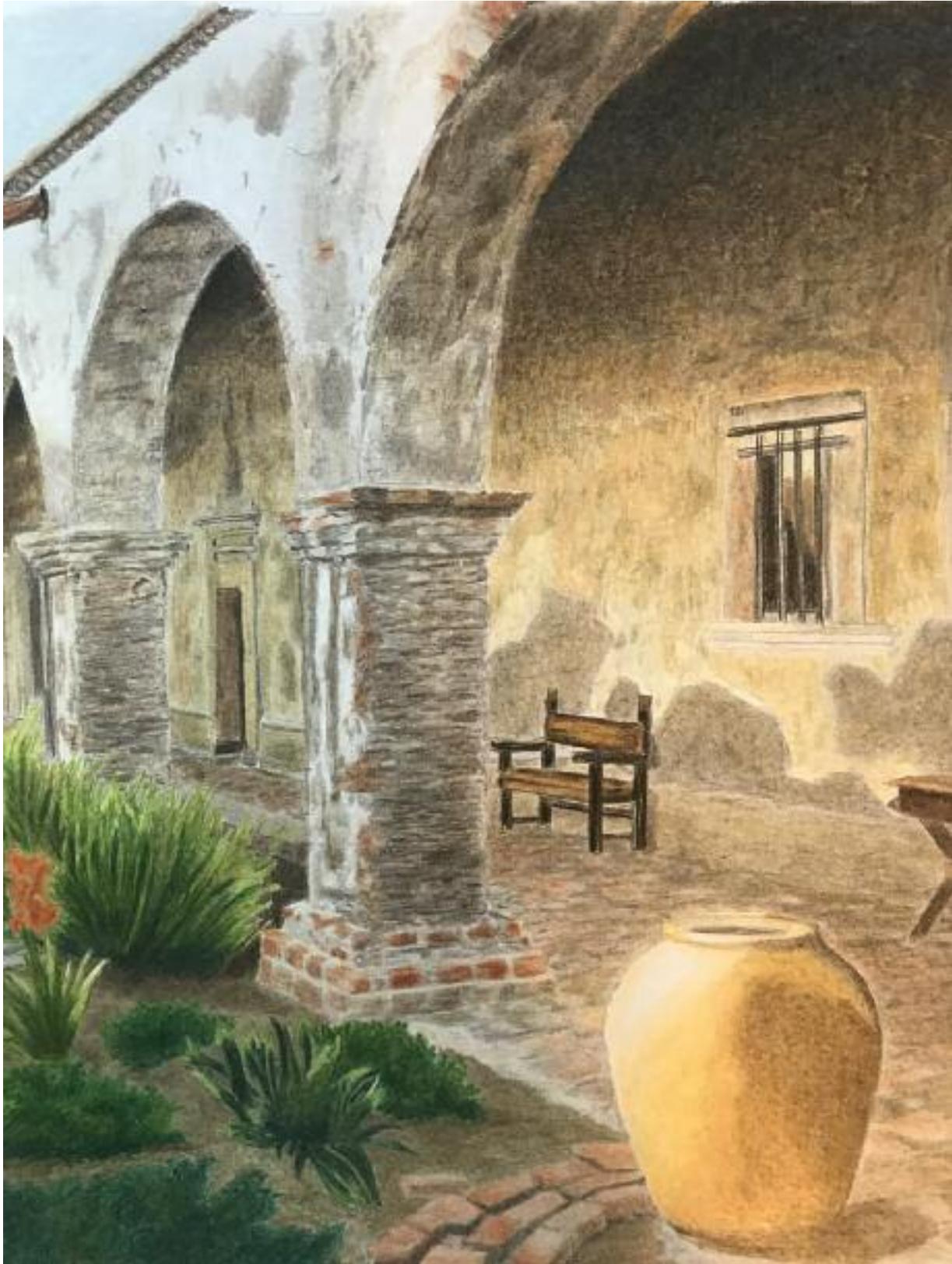
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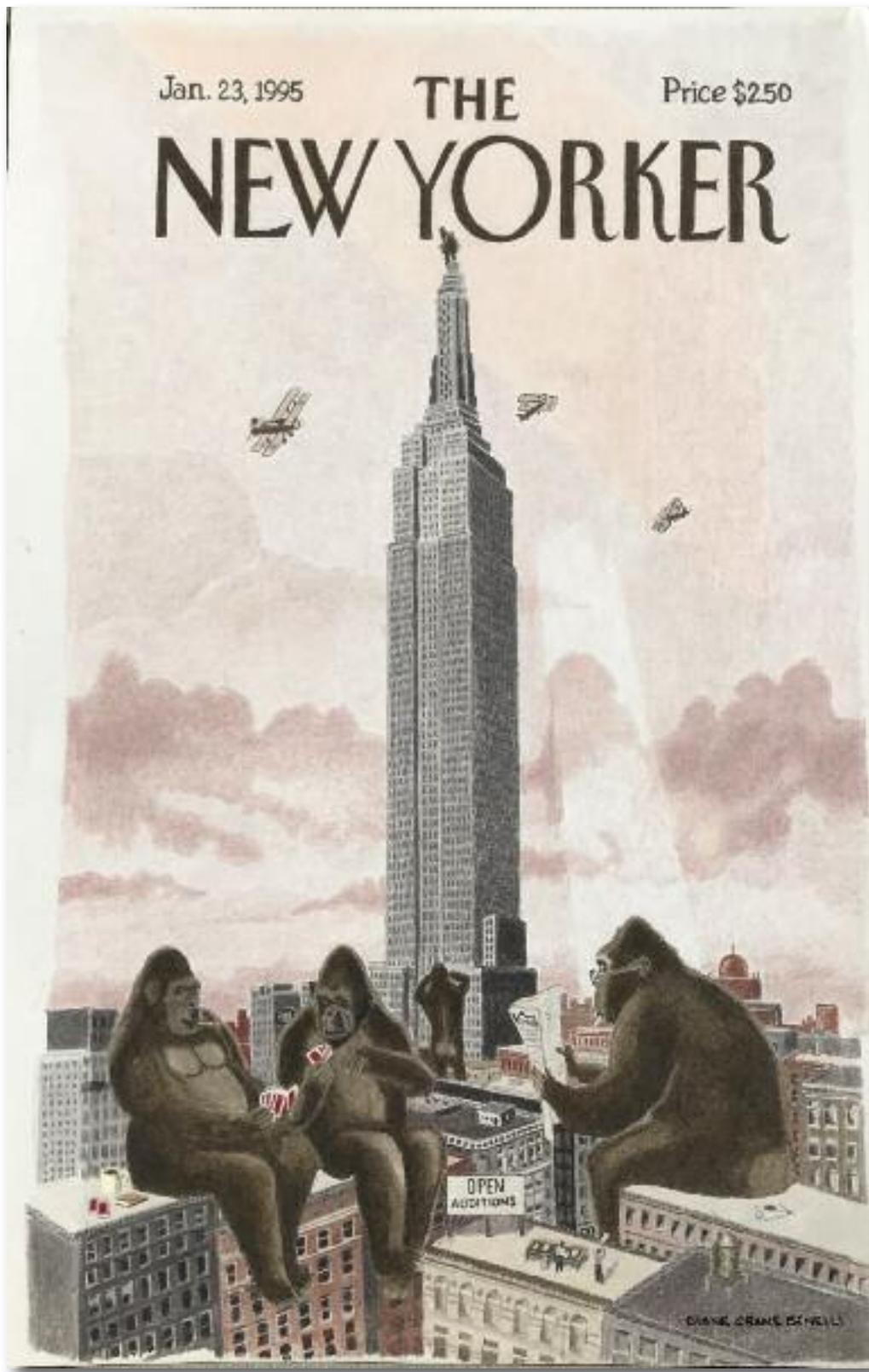
Jill Barnard  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# ART



**Diane Benelli**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# ART



Diane Benelli  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# ART

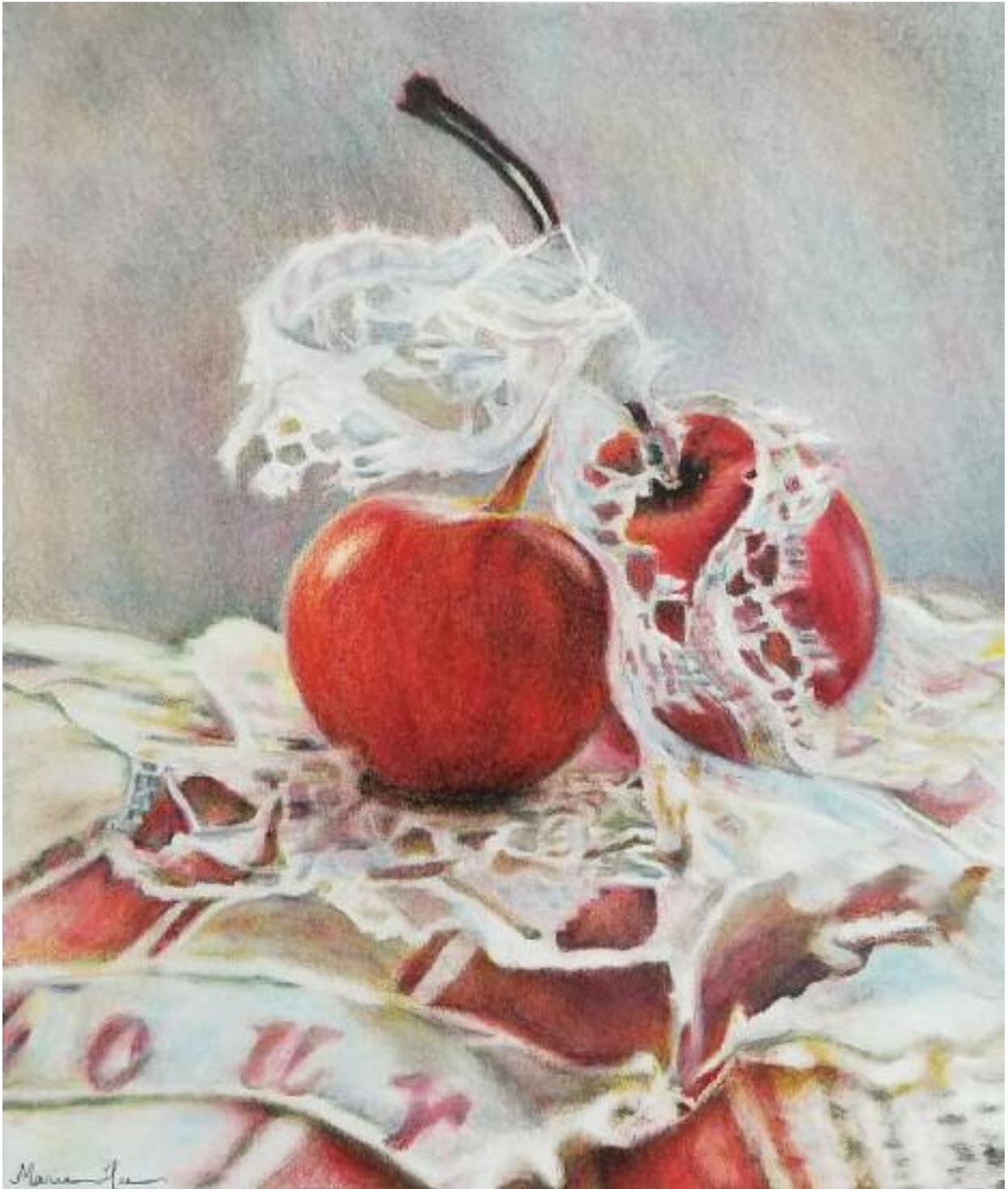
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Marie Hee  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# ART

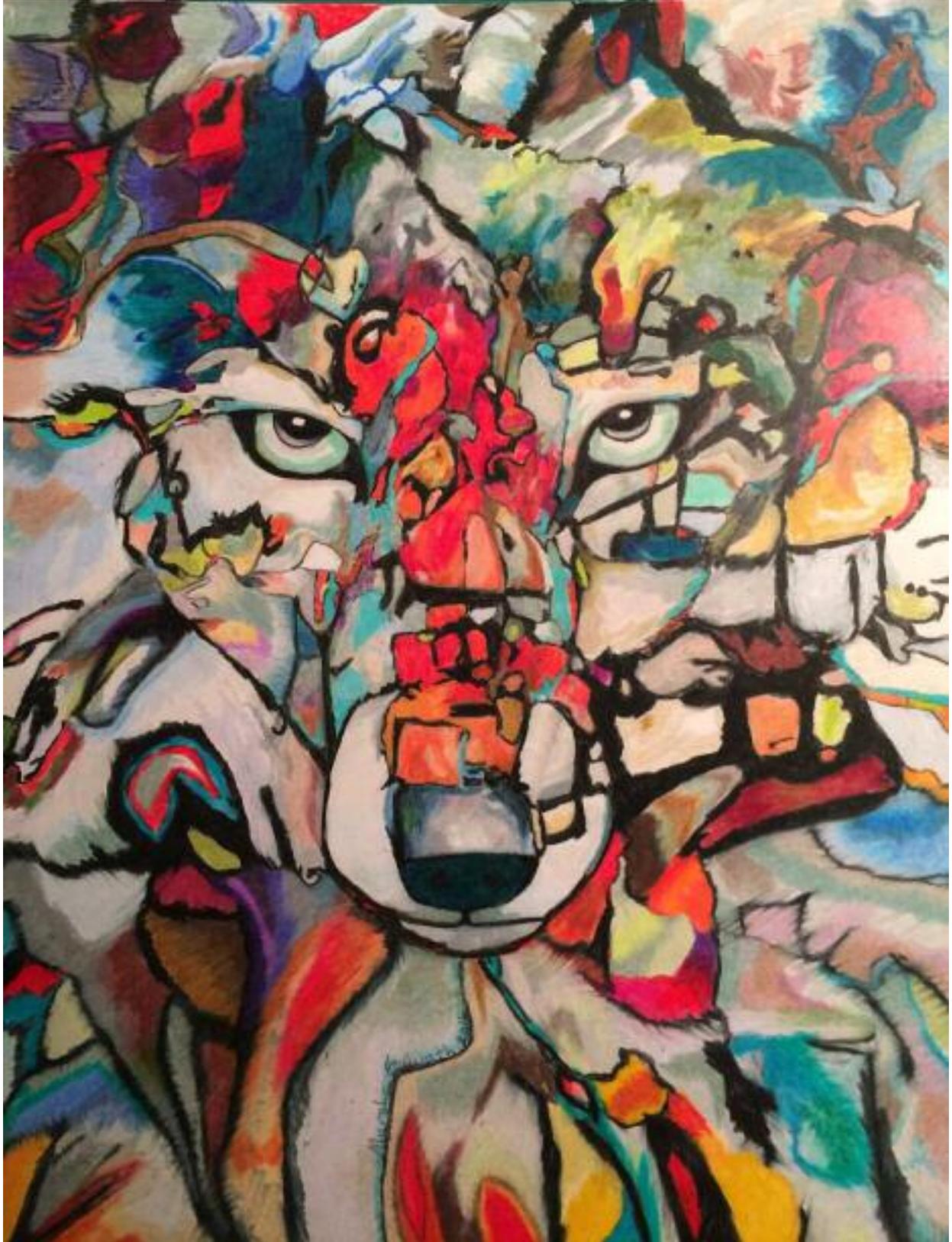
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Marie Hee  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# ART

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Marsha Howath  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# ART

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**Diane McWhorter**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Nancy Giniger

# WRITING

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## The Swing

Ron Szalla

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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As reliable as mornings that come with light and night with darkness, the swing stood motionless in the stillness of the dawn at waters' edge. The only sounds were the ripples on the pond as they inched their way on to the leaf covered shoreline.

It has been years since children came and enjoyed the day here, being lifted high into the blue sky by the swing, faster and faster, up and back with shirts and blouses billowing in the breeze like tails on kites.

As it sat quietly waiting in the breeze, the swing yearned to again take its passengers on a playful journey. The long-braided ropes that secured the swing to the old oak tree were worn and grey. Frayed sections had unraveled and dangled from the support of the overgrown tree limb. Bark now had grown over parts of the rope that secured the swing. Soon the old swing might be touching the ground and forgotten by all that had played.

As the sun reached out higher over the horizon, an old man approached the timeworn swing. The light from the morning sun shone through his thinning grey hair. He was tattered and fragile like the swing.

# WRITING

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“Old swing,” he said in a quiet voice, “I have come here to play this day. Take me high into the sky and let me feel the sun on my face.”

As the old man approached, he carefully tightened the worn ropes in an attempt to extend the swing’s life.

A brisk breeze came through and disturbed the leaves on the ground and made a sound like the swing was talking. The rustling leaves whispered, “I will take you to a place where the wind is born.”

The old man sat on the swing without another word. The swing and the shade of the tree gave him a quiet rest. As he touched the newly secured braided ropes, he could hear children’s voices and laughter in the distance. “Take me high into the sky old swing,” the old man said.

As the children’s sounds came nearer, a small voice cried out, “Grandpa, there you are! We have been looking for you.” The old man looked over his shoulder and said, “Come closer my young ones and take a ride on this old swing. It has been waiting for you to come and play this day.”

The old man rose from the swing. He was quickly replaced by his two-young grand-daughters. One child was seated and other stood straddling the seat. “Push us grandpa,” they said in their excited and high pitch voices.

The old swing had found new life as the old man pushed the swing higher and higher. As he watched the smiles on his grand-daughters faces, he could envision the memories of his youth and the pleasures that the swing had once brought him. Now the grandchild had discovered a magical place to play and share with him. As time passed that day, the swing was content once again.

# WRITING

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## A Dog's Life

Peter Philander

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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He was no more than a handful, but what a handful. A tiny nose that burrowed into warm moist nooks and crannies. Little brown eyes that sought out spots for comfort and for nestling. Ears that stood up at attention, cupped to track and identify each sound. Brown fur that could be stroked and smoothed. A heart that was constant, warm and caring, beating away in the palm of the hand fortunate enough to do the holding.

The girls passed him around like the treasured bundle that he was. Once they complained about having to relinquish the comfort and joy that he represented, their mother set a timer of eight minutes for each one, and then he would move on to the next girl. At some point the boys realized how much warmth and heat and love he radiated and they moved in on the rotation, gently but insistently and irresistibly.

Mary, the aunt who owned the dog, watched as attention was lavished on her treasure. She was reassured that she had made the correct choice when she selected Jax over a course of hormone therapy for her menopausal depressive symptoms. The cloud of sadness and disaffection that had descended over her was beginning to lift. Her sleep had improved since he arrived, snuggling between her neck and the pillow as she settled down at night.

Where she had previously tossed and turned, wondering how long she would lie there without obtaining any of the nourishing and revitalizing

# WRITING

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dormancy so essential to life, she now drifted off, feeling his heart beat, vaguely concerned that he might come to some ill-defined harm from sleeping where he was, but she could not persuade herself that anything bad could come from this wonderful ambience. The cardinal symptom of depression, anhedonia or lack of enjoyment of pleasurable things, had yielded and ceded its hold over her, dissolving in the face of this little puppy.

She thought of her mother who was in an assisted living facility where she could obtain the care and attention to her bodily needs that Mary could not provide. But in the process of moving Miriam to the Willows Center for the Elderly Infirm, something of the essence of her enjoyment of life had been lost. Her mother was losing weight and she had lost her appetite. She chose not to participate in the activities that the center planned for their residents' enjoyment, the music concerts seemed mostly to put her to sleep. Her days seemed to drift without direction.

Mary took Jax in her purse, tucked under her arm, and locked her car behind her. Care dogs were welcomed but this was a care package for one person. She opened the door to her mother's room and found Miriam sitting in an easy chair, dosing as the television displayed images and the voices washed over her. There was no apparent interest and Miriam could only be described as apathetic, but when Mary opened Miriam's hand and placed her little bundle there, her eyes popped open and Miriam looked down, closely. A smile lit her face and the features that had been quiet and locked with little expression, lifted and a light seemed to appear in her eyes. Jax snuggled into her palm and pushed his snout up the sleeve of her sweater, sniffing as he went.

"He's wonderful," Miriam whispered. She held that dog for the entire time that Mary was there. From that day forward Jax visited her every day until the end of her days, and the light in her eyes never grew dim when Jax was there. He was like a magical elixir and though her weight kept decreasing and her appetite never returned, her joy in this little bundle persisted.

# WRITING

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## Gamat's Vigorish

Peter Philander

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Gamat speculatively peered through the chain link fence, keeping his head well down, his body curled in a ball in the sand. The plane with Qatar written on the side had arrived a week earlier and it stayed parked on the tarmac. Stories were circulating in the refugee camp about this recent arrival which had come in the early evening, landing into the sunset and then settling at the end of the runway.

On normal days there was one plane in the morning and another in the evening, landing with a screech of wheels and taxiing towards the terminal. The stairway was pushed to the door of the plane. Passengers and crew made their way up and down the stairs. In less than an hour it was gone again.

But this plane had now been here a week. The crew stayed on the plane and they were getting worn down. They had started the engine a few times when they first arrived but not in the last four days. They had the windows open in the front, where the pilot sits and they had opened the door at the back. Gamat came after dark and watched the scene. He counted six men who moved around with the dull, bored look of people waiting with no end in sight.

Gamat knew this look from the refugee camp where men sat around by the hour, the week and the month, waiting for something to happen, something outside their control. They would give anything for some change in the routine. These men had reached that same stage. The men

# WRITING

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in the camp had figured out how to make a home brew of a drink that made them a little happier, a little less impatient and a little more tolerant.

It was early in the morning. The only light came from the stars and the new moon. A thin sliver of sickle hanging low in the sky. The soldiers who guarded the airport had made rounds two hours earlier and they would not be back. Gamat gently moved the leaves and the garbage bags that filled the hollow under the fence.

He slid through the hole, covering his tracks behind him. For a moment he was nervous and apprehensive because if he were caught here, there would be big trouble. This was forbidden territory. He hugged the bottle of moonshine that he had stolen from the camp closer to his body and then paused to hide the full bottle under the leaves. If he were caught, he would return for this, and it should be some sort of bribe.

Nobody would miss him where he usually lay down to sleep. His mother was busy and exhausted from dealing with younger children. At age 12 he was left to his own devices and he cared for himself. He usually had two friends with whom he shared his adventures and the results of his foraging. Tonight, he was on his own. He had decided that this was too dangerous to invite them along. He moved slowly and surreptitiously, keeping low to the ground and approaching the large plane in the shadow that it cast against the sky.

The rear stairs were down and as he approached he heard rhythmic breathing and snoring from two men lying under the plane. He paused and then put one foot on the bottom stair. He moved up slowly, listening carefully to the breathing and the sounds of the night. His head cleared the floor of the plane and he waited for sounds, alarms, warnings. There was nothing but his thudding heart.

He found himself in a small room with shelves and cupboards. He felt and saw and explored, every sense at its sharpest. He found a corner where he could hide and as he slid into the crevice. He heard a cough from out-

# WRITING

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side the plane. He froze in place. He had heard tell of the cough a lion makes as it hunts in the night. This did not sound like a human cough. His hair stood up on his neck. Then he heard the scratch of a match and he sniffed smoke from a cigarette. He felt around and he found a latch that opened easily, as he moved a knob. A tiny door opened and he pushed his hand into the space. He encountered a soft velvety bag that he could pull out and slip into his front pocket.

He heard steps on the stairs and he willed himself to be smaller. The smell of stale cigarettes grew stronger. Then a door opened and shut again with a click. He heard the sound of running water and he was out of his hiding place and down the stairs in a flash. He went down on his haunches, stopped and looked around carefully. Nobody was moving.

With infinite patience he moved away from the plane, moving only when he was sure that he would not make a sound. Back he went under the fence, retrieving the moonshine. At the camp he replaced it and then found a safe hiding place for his new bag. In the dark he felt coins inside it.

In the morning there was frenzied activity at the airport and security kept all the refugees in the camp. They saw the plane as it lifted into the air and took off. Later they learned that a group of Qatari hunters had been held hostage until a ransom was paid. The plane had come for those hostages.

When Gamat examined his pilfered bag, he found Krugerrands, a treasure that had been extracted from the ransom for somebody's personal use.

# WRITING

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## Oh, Say Can't You See

Joyce Block

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla



Tell me a story.

Sing me to sleep.

Make the world go away.

Fools are dancing and making believe

That my country is being okay.

NO!

Sound the alarm.

Yell loud so they hear.

Tell them they can't acquiesce.

There are sinister meanings behind every move

That people don't even guess

I'm crying please hear me

For Liberty's name

In school where I taught her so well.

In songs that I sang 'bout America's meaning.

Speak out and protect her from Hell

She's going away, and Democracy's dying,

Our laws turned awry and dictator's coming.

Guard her; protect her. Oh, say can't you see?

America needs you. Don't let this be

Any land other than Sweet Liberty.

# WRITING

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## After the Night

Don Kubicki

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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The wind blew in the light through the window.

Lace curtains that your mother made waved hello.

The soft beige walls guarded us from familiar guilts

As we lay in sleepy trance between crafted quilts.

Cotton on cotton, no place to begin... or to end.

The hours enclosed in your sultry sauna have drained.

The longing of touch and caress of breath have strained

Our soul; our will to move or even speak softly fled

As we curled together in the center of your smallish bed.

Wish upon wish we may not expire... or extend.

The starry swoony night before, when gazing up, you fell

Gently without a sound, sweetly under the spell

Of our golden minutes as sprite-borne floating dreams

Moved us to enter the oval door to your fleshy seams

To imbibe wantonly a magnum of that magnificent wine.

# WRITING

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But then what? Laugh and love and laugh some more.  
Passions and exaltations came flowing from every pore.  
Mouths cannot breathe; minds cannot begin to muse  
That perfume of perspiration like bootleg booze whose  
Fumes are intoxicating more than any star or moon shine.

Reborn and renamed by Lofn, gossamer goddess of love.  
Intertwined, interwoven, we struggle to find the Camelot  
So longed for by lovers across millennia of time and space.  
All is done when all is magnificently done. Forsake me not!

# WRITING

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## Places Remembered

Ron Szalla

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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There are faces and places I'll remember all my life, though some have changed. Today some are gone and still some remain. All of these memories had their moment. I can still recall those moments and hopefully they will never lose their meaning of people and things that came before. I often think about them.

The James Monroe school yard, at the corner of Monticello and Schubert Avenues, was a magical place, the center of activity of our world for a period of time to a bunch of teens growing up in the mid-1960's.

There were a lot of characters; like the Mullins brothers, Ernie the Greek, Swany, Wayne my Chinese locker partner, Maggie and Frank the Ameba man. We did not care about social status or where we came from, we were just kids having a good time and experiencing the mysteries of our youth together.

Every day during the summer from midday through dusk and most evenings during the Spring and Fall, if anyone was looking for us, they could find us that the Monroe school yard playing baseball, touch football, pitching pennies, or maybe evening taking a walk with our girlfriends. More about that later.

We were not an organized street gang, but just a gang of kids and we had our turf. I do recall a gang called the Drakes because most of them lived-on Drake Street. We really never had a dispute but if there were any

# WRITING

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disagreements, a baseball or football game would settle things as we were cheered on by the girls in our respective crowds.

After the games, they guys who were lucky enough to have a girlfriend would always chew on some Double-mint or Bazooka bubble gum because the time was coming to take a walk. “Walk” was a code word to walk hand-in-hand and find a secret spot and make-out.

While kissing someone you like for even a few seconds can be electrifying or intense enough on its own, making out takes kissing to a new level. You have to figure out how to sustain your passion, mix things up and make your partner feel appreciated. Although there are no formal rules for a make-out session, one of the older guys that was more advanced and experienced in this art form gave me some advice. I do not recall all of the steps, but do remember some fundamentals:

- Make eye contact and smile.
- Move slowly and find a comfortable position to avoid head bumping or banging teeth.
- Under no circumstances should you blow bubbles or crack you gum.
- Take a little break as you need to come up for air now and then.
- Leave your kissing partner wanting more. This is the most important of all suggestions as you need to make sure that there is a repeat session on the horizon. When you start to run out of energy and breathe control, you can just say that you cannot wait to take a walk again and how much you liked it. Give your partner a hug.

The Monroe school yard was engulfed by a school building expansion many years ago. The old playground and make out places are gone forever but I still remember my old friends and hope that they think about me now-and-then.

# WRITING

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## Melting World

Ron Szalla

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Glaciers are Mother Nature's slight-of-hand,  
calling you out and drawing you in.

One of the last natural and majestic wonders of the world.

They are panoramic and seductive  
as they move with little feet across the land  
and leave their foot prints behind.

Big baby blues and long curvy curves that roll this way and that.

Their foggy horizon sits peacefully,  
waiting, in the whispering rain.

Grand and limitless.

The inside passage is a cathedral.

There are echoes heard from the groaning ice  
over the sounds of the bellowing harbor seals  
and shriek calls of the seabirds.

Bald eagles soaring high as the clouds,  
look down on the wonder and glory  
of the snow-covered mountains in the distance.

It is a display that defies definition in any language.

Ice breaks off with a tremendous crash in small islands,  
driving krill and small fish to the surface.

Whales break the surface of the water  
and leap looking over their tail fins  
as the glaciers they remember  
slowly vanish from the sheltered fjords.

Before too long these magnificent blue giants could disappear forever.

The scenery of these ancient marvels captures your imagination  
but be cautious as demise lingers near.

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Sandra Dibble**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Jill Price**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Jill Price**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Gil Shaw**

Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Gil Shaw**

Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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Teena Sobey  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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Teena Sobey  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Bilal Shabazz - Stratosphere II**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Bilal Shabazz - Donkeys at Red Rock III**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**DéAnna Ernst - Lover Boy**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**DéAnna Ernst - Convergence**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Sharlene Lim**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Sharlene Lim**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Audra Brewer - Gamers**  
Photography - John McDonald and Gil Shaw

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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Alexis Carlson - White Owl Canyon  
OLLI Hiking Club

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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Alexis Carlson - Red Rock Arnight Trail  
OLLI Hiking Club

# WRITING

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## Mary Kay

Kathy Raney

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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“Hello, Mary Kay good morning.” “How are you doing today?” called Sam as Mary came through the senior center door. She stood there, five feet tall and ample bodied, purple umbrella in hand, blue eyes sparkling under a cap of white hair in yesterday’s style.

“Well Sam,” she replied with a smile, “I didn’t see my name in the obituaries this morning, sooooo I must be doing ok. I can’t complain. I’ve been out walking with my new royal blue cane. And now I’m here to volunteer, talk to some friendly folks and maybe, just maybe, I’ll stay for the book club meeting this afternoon.” “But, then again,” She pondered, finger to her lips, “it’s such a beautiful day! And some alone time might be just the thing. Yes, it just may. I never mind being alone, you know. Not me. Cause I’m just such darn good company! In fact, there isn’t anybody I’d rather be with than me. So, I may just go home and pick some roses in my yard or wander over to the park and watch the ships out in the bay.

“Well,” Sam said, looking confused. “That all sounds real nice, Mary, but, it’s pouring rain outside and cold. Myself, I’d just as soon go back to bed. How can you say it’s a beautiful day?”

“Honey,” she answered with a chuckle and a grin, “you’re just too young to understand. When you’re 82 and holding, every day is a miracle. Every day is beautiful when you don’t wake up dead.”

# WRITING

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## The Career of Number 89

Ron Szalla

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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At the height of his career, he was tall and good sized with decent but not exceptional speed, good reactions and soft hands. He was not a notable broken-field runner and would often challenge defenders by running head-long into them.

His career started with childhood sandlot games of touch football, which were played in a nearby parking lot. His uniform consisted of an old grey sweatshirt with the number 89 drawn with black marker on the back, faded blue jeans and PF Flyers. He was a receiver, always running in and out or in circles, hoping to catch a pass. He had a knack for catching any ball that was thrown in his direction and would play in games until the last traces of sunlight vanished.

As he advanced to playing football in grammar school, he found himself competing on the rutted grass fields of neighborhood parks. His uniform now included a set of small shoulder pads that fit snugly under his old grey sweatshirt and a gold helmet with a single cross-bar. He always tried to come home with grass stained jeans and mud on his face to signal to all that saw him on that walk home that he played football.

Advancing to high-school, he traded his old grey sweat shirt for a uniform. It had a white jersey, helmet with an Indian decal, padded stretch

# WRITING

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pants trimmed in green and gold and sizable shoulder pads that stretched his jersey to its maximum. Number 89 was embroidered on his jersey.

He played the game with reckless abandon. If he was hit hard, he would quickly get up off the ground and give his opponent a tap on the helmet as if to say ‘nice hit.’ It was his trade mark and opponents respected him.

Near the end of his junior year in high school it did not appear that college was in his future. He was not being recruited. Without a sports scholarship, the cost of college was an impossibility for his parents to bear. He was discouraged. Not knowing what the future might hold, Number 89 left school to try to find his way in the world. With no marketable skills and now carrying the stigma of being a high school dropout, life was increasingly tough for Number 89.

After a few years of struggling, Number 89 found himself on the freshly cut green fields of the grid iron again. He had secured an opportunity to try out for the Northlake Lions, a new semi-professional football team. He walked onto the practice field wearing an old plain grey sweatshirt, shorts, cleated shoes and shoulder length hair.

He was a long-shot at best. Many of the players trying out were undrafted college players as well as a few professionals cut from their teams, looking to be rediscovered. Some of them looked like giants especially the linemen. They had names like, Gunslinger, Tank, Vulture and Cobra.

The coach turned to Number 89 and said, “let’s see what you can do kid.” With a deep breath, he inhaled the smell of the September grass. His senses were exhilarated. Number 89 did not disappoint. He ran routes flawlessly and caught every ball thrown. Just like that his confidence was back. The coach called out “hey kid” and said that he had just found his starting tight end.

On game day, he tugged on his shoulder pads and jersey in the stark and austere locker room beneath the stands as elusive dream of playing football again was happening against all odds.

# WRITING

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Number 89 finally had his day in the sun playing on the well-manicured turf of Hansen stadium in front of fans that actually paid to watch the game. He was a teammate, an equal with players with more experience, and was as good as any of them.

Today there are no records of the Northlake Lions. The team only existed for one forgotten year with a zero for ten record in a league that included the Lake County Rifles and the Sheboygan Redwings.

He still has dreams of hearing the announcement over the loud speaker. “Starting at tight end for the Lions, number 89\_\_\_\_\_.” Well let’s just say that Number 89 is every kid who just wanted to play football.

# WRITING

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## The Desk at Yasnaya Polyana

Dennis Goode

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Tolstoy was born here, kept residence for 50 years, and was buried nearby. This manor, 120 miles from Moscow, was where he did his great writing. Images and items everywhere speak without words of an old word, of old ways, of an old order. His grandfather bought the place, and though his parents died when he was so very young, he was raised there by relations. Sitting upon 4,000 acres on a hillside and containing a dense forest, four ponds, and clusters of houses for 350 peasants living on the estate, there is a sense of the peace he needed to complete his work.

Thirteen of his children were born on the same leather sofa he was born upon. Four died in childhood. He was a man of routines. He would wake early, exercise, walk the park and pathways of the estate, and then begin his writing for the day.

Such small penmanship, done in the day and given to his wife at night, making a copy of the draft and returning it to him the next morning as he revised and revised, each chapter of his novels seeing no less than half a dozen edits. A tumultuous world around him, a nation feigning the last remnants of greatness, he sought and fought for a place of serenity to say what he must say.

A simple desk, some candles, ink, and portions of this tale or that. A library of 22,000 books surrounding him. His great-grandfather's mirrors and his wife's embroidery on the walls, a constant reminder of heritage, ancestry, and the nobility of simplicity in an ever-changing complex

# WRITING

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world. Two pianos in the house. He would entertain the writers of his country and beyond, small dinners with conversations not subject to the constraints of European protocol nor time. Musical and literary evenings hosting Chekhov, Gorky, and Rachmaninoff, reading his manuscripts to family and intimate friends. Playing chess. Stables and ash trees all around, places to walk, to talk, to think. They say that the cats that wander the property are the descendants of those that lived with the family.

The intimate and casual gatherings with everyone else taking place in the rooms and the surroundings, but the gatherings of his masterpieces taking place at a simple, uncomplicated, writing desk. A curious thing, a border of wood around the rectangle top, as if to say, “This is mine. This is where my work unfolds. Let it remain so.”

# WRITING

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## I Know Who I Am

Venessa Rivers

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Not bad, if I say so myself. I think that I have done pretty good for myself over the years. My foundation is still strong. I think they call it having “good bones”. There are no holes in my walls. OK, some nicks, but not any holes, and not many houses in this neighborhood can say the same. I am though, a little ashamed at how dirty my walls are, especially those in the kitchen. It’s not so much dirt, as it is grease because no one ever thinks about putting lids or grease splatter guards over their skillets. I have always hoped that someday, someone, would have enough time to give me a fresh coat of paint. Now I’m not talking about anything fancy mind you, just something a bit livelier than eggshell white.

In this part of the country it isn’t unusual to see a lot of brick houses’, especially with the cold winters and massive amounts of snow that falls here every year, so I don’t need my exterior painted except for around the trim. My roof has had a few leaks throughout the years, a little “water-works” from time to time, but nothing compared to that monstrosity of a duplex, across the street at the end of the block. A few years back it rained for what seemed like a solid week and the entire roof just caved in, I heard that everything was ruined.

I don’t know when this happened, but someone has put some cheap looking clay pots with Lord knows what, growing in them on my front porch. Now don’t get me wrong, I am not a snob, really, I’m not, but I do like to look my best. I can remember when those two little girls with

# WRITING

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the braids lived here. All summer long they would jump rope, draw on the sidewalk with chalk, and play jacks all in the front yard, where I could keep an eye on them. In the evenings, after dinner, their parents would sit on my porch relaxing while they talked about their day. Many years ago, a white picket fence was put up to keep the neighborhood dogs from peeing and pooping in my yard. Boy was I happy about that. The fence has always been a little crooked, but now it's sort of run down, and badly in need of a fresh coat of paint.

I have seen so many family's come and go through the years, and to the outside world I'm just an old brick house with a crooked fence, but I know who I really am. I am the place where they had their cookouts, birthday parties and holiday celebrations. I am the place where they brought their newborns, and where they stayed when they had the flu. I am the place where their kids did their homework and said their prayers at night. I am the place where they shared their joys and sorrows, in good times and in bad. I am the place where they always knew they could run to when they needed a safe place to shut out the world around them. I know who I am, I am a home.

# WRITING

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## One Afternoon

Venessa Rivers

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Carrie is a very smart and curious 10-year-old girl. She has beautiful dark skin, as luscious as a Hershey chocolate bar, with light brown thick wavy hair, which she wears in two large cornrows. Carrie is a nice sweet kid with a smile that just melts your heart, no matter the situation. Carrie is an only child and she lives with her parents, Benjamin and Maylene Jackson. Her father is a professor who teaches History at the University, and her mother volunteers at a nearby Adult Assisted Living Facility. They live in a two-story house in one of the most popular neighborhoods in the city, on a tree lined street.

Carrie is a student at Crispus Attucks Elementary school in Mrs. Jenkins 3rd grade class. Her favorite subjects are math and science which is outstanding for a girl of her age. Carrie is Mrs. Jenkins all-time favorite student; who always turns in her homework on time, follows the classroom rules, and goes out of her way to be helpful and friendly to her classmates. She reminds Mrs. Jenkins of her oldest daughter, when she was around the same age as Carrie.

Imani is her best friend; they share a locker, do their homework together, and once a month have sleepovers at each other's homes. Carrie loves to go over to Imani's house, even though her little brother Aaron follows them around, gets in the way, and is a tattle-tail. Since Carrie and Imani are best friends, it has pretty much forced their parents to be-

# WRITING

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come friends too. Once or twice a month both families go out to dinner, nothing fancy, just a good meal shared by friends.

Carrie's parents would take turns walking her to and from school, but this year, after much begging and pleading, they were allowing her to walk the four short blocks home by herself. Mr. Jackson always reminded her each morning to look both ways before crossing the street. He made a little game out of it as where he would say, "look both ways", and Carrie would finish with, "before crossing the street", and then they would both laugh. Carrie doesn't mind that she doesn't have anyone to walk with. She likes being able to walk home by herself, and besides, this is the only time that she is on her own, having no one telling her what to do. Today was an especially beautiful fall afternoon, the leaves were just beginning to turn from green to brownish orange and there was a light warm breeze blowing, just enough to make the leaves tumble down out of the trees like rain. The sidewalks were blanketed with so many leaves that it was hard to tell where the sidewalk ends, and the street began. Carrie didn't have a care in the world, she was having so much fun skipping and kicking up the leaves high into the air.

I guess this was the reason why Carrie didn't see the garbage truck coming down the street or hear the screeching of the tires as it tried to stop. The driver jumped down from the cab, rushes over to her, drops down on both knees as he repeatedly cries, "oh, no, oh, no, what have I done, what have I done?"

# WRITING

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## Stay, Stay in My Corner

Venessa Rivers

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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I don't remember my parents going out on the town much, but I do remember them having one or two other couples over to our house from time to time on Saturday nights. Occasionally they would bring their kids with them, and we would be sent off to play in the basement. If it was in the warmer months, out to our front yard. My parents and their friends would have drinks, and smoke cigarettes, like most people did back in those days. There would be long stretches of talking and then uproarious laughter. They would put a stack of 45s on the record player, and dance to song after song.

After what would seem like forever, each kid's parents would tell them that it was time to pick up the toys and get ready to go home. Once the last family had left, my mother would tell me to get ready for bed. When I was ready, she would come in, and listen to me say my prayers, "tuck me in." Once I was all "snug in the rug, like a bug", in my bed, I would quickly fall asleep, all tuckered out from the massive amount of playing that I had done with the other kids. "Stay, stay in my corner", I slowly drift awake from a deep, deep sleep, "Stay, stay in my corner".

Our house wasn't very big, everything was all on one floor with two bedrooms, dining room, living room, kitchen and a bathroom. My parents would always close my bedroom door, leaving a crack of light for my benefit, since I was afraid of the dark. From this advantage, I can't see much, but I can hear everything; the TV, talking, and the record player.

# WRITING

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I think that I may have drifted off to sleep again, but once again I hear, “Stay, stay in my corner”. Every time the song ends, I pray, “Lord, please don’t let them play that song again. My prayers go unanswered because repeatedly, this song continues to play. It’s not a great song, I have listened to it since I’ve become an adult, and it’s ok, but when you are a little girl trying to go back to sleep, it is a nightmare. I can’t figure out why this song continues to play, what are they doing? Did they go to sleep and forget to turn the record player off? Is the record player broken? After what seems like hours, I decide to do the unthinkable, and sneak out of bed and peak through the sliver of the crack in my door, just to see for myself exactly what was going on. As I looked through the crack, do you know what I saw; I saw my mother and my father slow dancing. My mom’s head is snuggled up against my dad’s cheek and his arms are around her waist. The sound of “Stay, stay in my corner”, begins again, and as it does, they both continue to sway, oh so gently, to the music, together.

# ART

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**Kathy Simpson**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Anne Herrington**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Eileen Augente**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Geraldine Hillock**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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Marilyn Edwards  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Alan Nazur**  
**A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak**

# ART

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**Jeanie Alaimo**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Anne Herrington**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Kathy Simpson**  
A Canvas Full of Posies - Elena Cieslak

# WRITING

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## Wallflower Social Club

Ron Szalla

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla



Near the end of the sixth grade my adolescent voice was still pitchy and would occasionally and involuntarily crackle. It was also a little awkward to be looking up the girls in my class as they were maturing faster and a little taller.

Boys and girls sat separated in the classroom but when the good Sisters of Nazareth would hand out punishment to the boys for not paying attention in class, we were asked to sit in the middle of the girls' section. It was embarrassing but I think it was meant to help us concentrate. The girls' big hair styles did not make it easy to see the blackboard.

Near the end of the school year some of the girls of the sixth-grade class at St Hyacinth asked for permission to hold a social event. This was to be a dance but to be chaperoned with rules developed by the none other than the good Sisters. Most of the rules were directed towards the boys. We were to wear leather shoes, a clean white shirt and tie and if possible a sports coat. Girls just needed be sure that their skirts reached below the knees and to wear flats.

This was to be the social event of the year for the six-graders. The girls decorated the assembly hall with streamers and ribbons with signs wishing the class good luck as we advanced to the seventh grade. There was also a fair amount of helium filled balloons floating on the ceiling with long strings that stretched almost to the floor. There was a record player

# WRITING

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on the stage stacked with 45's. It was neatly placed in the corner next to a microphone so that the music could fill the hall.

In all of our grandeur and splendor, we arrived. The boys gravitated to the far right of the hall and the girls to the left with the nuns positioning themselves squarely in the middle. We nervously drank Pepsi from red SOLO cups, popped our chewing gum, and combed our slicked hair back while trying to find the courage to walk to the center of the dance floor and come in contact with a girl.

The records dropped one by one and songs by the Diamonds, Chubby Checker, the Star-liners and Dee Dee Sharp filled the room. Girls could be seen swaying to music with their natural rhythm while the boys nervously clutched their red Solo cups still planning a strategic moment of truth to enter the dance area. Many of the dances were named after animals like the Pony, Dog or Chicken and we had no idea how to do them. There were other dances like the Hitchhike, Mashed Potato, Stroll and Twist and our knowledge on how to execute these steps was also non-existent.

Finally, a breakthrough came and the first slow dance record dropped. Slow dances were not too complicated. You just needed to hold on for dear life and not step on your partners' toes. As both groups started towards the middle of the dance floor and tried to pair up, the nuns gave each couple a helium filled balloon to be used to separate us. We could hold each other while dancing with the balloon used as a barrier, like the Wall of Jericho.

For the lack of a better definition, this was called Balloon Dancing. I guess it was better that sitting alone on a chair sipping soda. Needless to say, nearly every balloon returned to the ceiling and that was the end of slow dancing, at least for that day.

# WRITING

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## Mother's Day

Kathy Raney

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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I sat, my legs crunched beneath me in the wet grass staring out at the rows of stone markers that dotted the slope almost to the water's edge. The water itself flickered like blue crystal in the morning light, gently lapping at the rocky shore with a sense of serenity and peace, a peacefulness I did not feel. I felt immobilized by the weight of my grief, each movement almost more than I could bare. I forced myself to reach down and dust off the flat gray stone that lay before me, clearing the dirt from my mother's name.

"Happy Mother's Day, Mama," I whispered, as my voice broke with the effort, and emotion over took me. Tears trailed down my cheeks as I touched the carved letters that formed her name and wished from the bottom of my soul for her to somehow come back to me. This was the first Mother's Day since her death, and even though I had a husband and young children, I felt totally alone in the world.

"An orphan at the age of 44," I thought to myself. "How silly!" But that is exactly how I felt. Like a buoy floating anchorless in a sea filled with raging waves of emotion. It had been almost a year, and I still couldn't believe she was gone. I found myself picking up the phone almost every day to call her, then realizing I could never call her again. She was gone—forever. There would be no more phone calls, no more Christmases spent together, no more birthday cakes made lovingly just for me from that special one of a kind recipe. No more silly jokes or reassuring words from the one and only person in the world who had loved me completely and unconditionally and without reservation.

# WRITING

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The roses that lay in my lap were deep red and velvety to touch. Her favorite color. Her favorite flower. The sweet smell invaded my thoughts and brought a picture to my troubled mind, a picture of another Mother's Day just a year ago. My Mother's last Mother's Day. The last Mother's Day that I would be a daughter. But I didn't know that then. If I had, would I have done something different? Probably. Could I have changed the way things turned out? I'll never know. I laid the roses on top of the stone then ran my fingers through the grass, pressing down on the unyielding earth, somehow thinking I could reach her in this way. I listened, but the voice I wanted to hear so much did not come. Only the sound of cars rolling by on the road above and a distant fog horn from a ship below broke the silence.

A couple of other families were gathered at nearby grave sites. I wondered, "Were they here to visit their Mothers as well? Did they feel this same sense of desperate loss, this same burden that I seemed totally unable to carry or cope with?"

I sat in the wet grass for a long time, long enough to drench my shirt with tears and soak my pants with soggy earth. Long enough to watch a little girl stray from her family twirling happily in a pink polka dot dress, her blond braids flying as she moved exuberantly, still young enough to escape the grave site in favor of play. Long enough to watch an older man in blue jeans and a red shirt walk over and grab her up in his arms. He buried his face in her hair with obvious adoration.

My children were waiting for me. My life was waiting for me, but my life would never be quite whole again. And now there was no one to form a barrier between me and death. Now I was the barrier for my children, I realized. I touched my fingers to my lips and then to my mother's name on the cold stone.

"I love you Mama," I said. "Always and forever." Then I dragged myself to my feet, brushed off my clothes, and walked away down the path, back to the living.

# WRITING

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## My Ghosts

Kathy Raney

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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On Angels wings my ghosts arrive  
Fluttering into my deep velvet dreams  
And gently brushing my weary eyes  
With memories and melodies lost but redeemed.

Into my slumbering soul they come,  
Distant voices in silence dare to speak.  
The words unfold in illusive wisdom  
Defying capture just beyond my reach

One by one they gather round,  
Voices whispering in hushed reverie.  
Loving comfort lost but found  
Now holds me in sweet familiarity

Time intersects with unconscious thought.  
Form and substance cease to be.  
Between dimensions I am blissfully caught  
Suspended twixt dreams and reality.

# WRITING

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For one fragile moment –sweet brief reprieve  
My ghosts and I bound tentatively  
By a thread of connection I cannot perceive  
And existence exists across death's boundaries.

In paisley dreams they come to me.  
In dreams their spirits soar  
Dancing in concert unconsciously  
Upon my soul then lost once more

And just when I've begun to begin,  
The visions falter and fade.  
Though I call them back in unison,  
They respond in silent serenade.

My ghosts On Angels wings aglow  
Into the silken night depart  
Leaving but the faintest fragile shadow  
And an ever present yearning in my heart.

# WRITING

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## Losing Grandparents

Barbara Miller

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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Can you miss what you never knew? I know you can. My paternal grandmother, Brucha, died giving birth to my father in Russia. My father obviously never knew his mother, but that period of time in Russia was chaotic. People were leaving, mostly to America because of the pogroms. Pogroms were a death sentence. Russian soldiers would enter a small town and loot and take whatever they wanted, including the women, and they'd burn down the town. My dad didn't leave for America until he was six and probably just in time. His older brother and sister preceded dad to America. They sent two tickets to America for my dad and his brother, Hershel. His father didn't want to go no matter how their children begged them. He never saw his children again. I cannot imagine the pain. I was named for my grandmother, and perhaps that is a part of my feeling cheated, never to have known her.

While I was growing up, my father and his brothers and sisters kept the memories of their parents alive because they would talk about them. That gave me a taste of who they were, but I always felt a void in never getting the hug or getting the grandma and grandpa time that is so nourishing.

My maternal grandparents were a huge part of my life from the moment I was born. I dearly loved them both, but I have to admit that my grandma was my heart. She was a tough cookie, and when she thought that she wanted something her way, there was no way it was not going

# WRITING

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to happen. Grandma lived on the other side of Brooklyn, and she managed to come to our house at least three times a week. She did not drive but took three trolley cars. There was not a lazy bone in her body. My grandparents had two daughters, one being my mom, the other another huge part of my heart, my Aunt Mimi. My grandfather and two of his brothers were bakers. The third brother was always looking for a job and going to union meetings. My dad said he was a communist, and he always sounded as if the government was the enemy. Looking back, I think he was just lazy and didn't want to work.

I was so lucky to have both of my grandparents in my daily life because when I was ten, they moved into the same apartment building I lived in. Then my Aunt Mimi married, and she moved into the apartment building as well. It was really nice, but at times suffocating; however, everyone seemed to survive.

When I got married and had my oldest son, I had those three ladies, mom, grandma and Aunt Mimi visiting every day to see Jeff. He was everything to them. In fact, my grandmother, who never had a good grasp of the English language was teaching my one-month old Yiddish so she could finally have someone to talk to. I had given birth to my youngest son, and when he was three years old, I got divorced. I never felt lonely because of the support my family gave me. Although we did live separately, I always knew I was just one phone call away from someone that I loved coming to see if they could help or just hug.

Four years later, my grandfather had a heart attack and lasted for a little while, and then we lost him. It was so sad, but at least he didn't suffer and just went to sleep. His passing left quite a void. Time passed, and about three years later, I received a phone call one Friday evening from my aunt to get the kids and get over to her house as quickly as possible. Grandma wasn't well. I picked up the kids and ninety the whole way. I ran into my mom's apartment, and a policeman told me to bring the kids to Aunt Mimi's apartment and come back quickly. I did that with my heart racing and found the EMT people crowded outside my old bed-

# WRITING

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room, and grandma was propped on the floor and the EMT gentleman stood up and said, "I'm sorry." Grandma just went to sleep. However, earlier that day, she had prepared all the food for our Shabbos dinner. There was enough for at least twelve people, which was a normal Friday night meal.

Her funeral was on Sunday, and again, I don't remember it. I just remember the sadness and pain. It felt like the sunshine had left my life.

Losing anyone you love is traumatic and painful. Grandma and grandpa will have a home in my heart forever.

# WRITING

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## Speeding Ticket

Barbara Miller

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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The roses in my front yard looked like a painting. They were the size of softballs and almost every color of the rainbow. It looked as if someone had tripped on the sidewalk and had twelve pints of different colors of paint that splashed on the roses. A beautiful spring Friday in May, and I had the pleasure of spending the day with my Mom.

I took her to the doctor in the morning for a checkup and waited forever in the waiting room, all the while Mom, g-d rest her soul, spoke to almost all of the people in the waiting room. She missed a few because she got called in to see the doctor. I would like to add that all of the people she had conversed with were seniors, and the conversations were pretty much content free.

We then picked up my son and took Mom to her favorite restaurant, Sweet Tomatoes, for lunch. We spent about an hour or so having lunch and on to shoe shopping for Mom. My son was not too happy about the shopping. He had thought it was going to be lunch and then home. I guess he learned there is no free lunch. Shoe shopping was an experience because Mom loved to shop and had to try on a million pair of shoes before she selected the shoe she would buy.

The sales person was not too thrilled about her indecision either. Finally, the decision was made, and Mom purchased the shoe she liked in every color they had. It was a tradition. The truth be told, her nickname was Imelda Marcos. A few stores down was her favorite clothing store,

# WRITING

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and, of course, we went in to look, and that is when the free-for-all started. My son went for a walk, and I was jealous but stayed and helped Mom try on half the clothing in the store. I don't remember what she bought, but I know we left with packages.

When I looked at the time, I asked her if she would like to stop and get some dessert. She declined and told me she was tired from all the shopping. We all got in the car and started for home. I am cruising along the ninety-five freeway, and I am near the Cheyenne entrance when I spot a police car getting on the freeway. The police car is now in the center lane, and I am in the right lane, and we are side by side. In the car my son was in the back seat with headphones on listening to music. My Mom was in the passenger seat talking about something that had occurred at a Mah Jong game fifty years ago. Mah Jong is a Chinese game played with ivory tiles that no self-respecting Jewish woman in the fifties living in Brooklyn did not have at least two or three games a week. Mom's conversation was about her friends in Brooklyn, all about their lives, grandchildren, their arthritis, and, of course, their rotten son-in-laws, etc. All of these subjects I found really interesting and tried really hard to keep saying in my head La La La La La. That was because all I was hearing was blah blah blah blah, having heard these stories quite a few times before. The next sound I heard was a siren emanating from the police car. I was surprised, and I thought to myself that I had not been doing anything wrong. What could he want? I pulled over, and the police car parked behind me, and the officer got out of his car and approached my car. I lowered the window, and the officer asked for my license and registration. He bent down and looked inside the car, and by the way, my Mom was still talking, never even took a breath. I then noticed that the officer had gray hair and very blue eyes that were kind of smiling.

He spoke to me, but he was looking at my Mom. "Been there done that. I understand the pressure you are driving with, but that does not give you permission to go faster than the police car driving beside you in

# WRITING

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the next lane. It is an unspoken rule that passing a police car is not a good idea. Are you almost at your destination?”

I responded, “I am getting off at Ann Road.”

He said, “Please stay in the right hand lane and get home safely. When you get home, get out of the car, go into the house and pour yourself a glass of your favorite wine.”

I drove home and could not believe my good fortune to have been pulled over by an officer that had experienced what I had been experiencing. I will never forget him.

I would like to explain that I had the most incredible Mom and miss her very much. she had a big heart and loved people, especially her children. However, unlike myself, some people have habits and or quirks that get on other peoples nerves. It does not make you a bad person.

# ART

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Johnny Law  
Art According to Law - Johnny Law

# ART

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**Johnny Law**  
*Art According to Law - Johnny Law*

# ART

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Naomi Lewis  
Art According to Law - Johnny Law

# ART

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**Steve Kilgour**  
Ukelele for Beginners - Niels Clyde and Carol Wagers

# ART

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**DéAnna Ernst**  
Introduction to Print Making - Salley Sawyer



**Alexis Carlson**  
The Artist's Way: Unblocking Your Creativity - Sharon Gainsburg

# ART

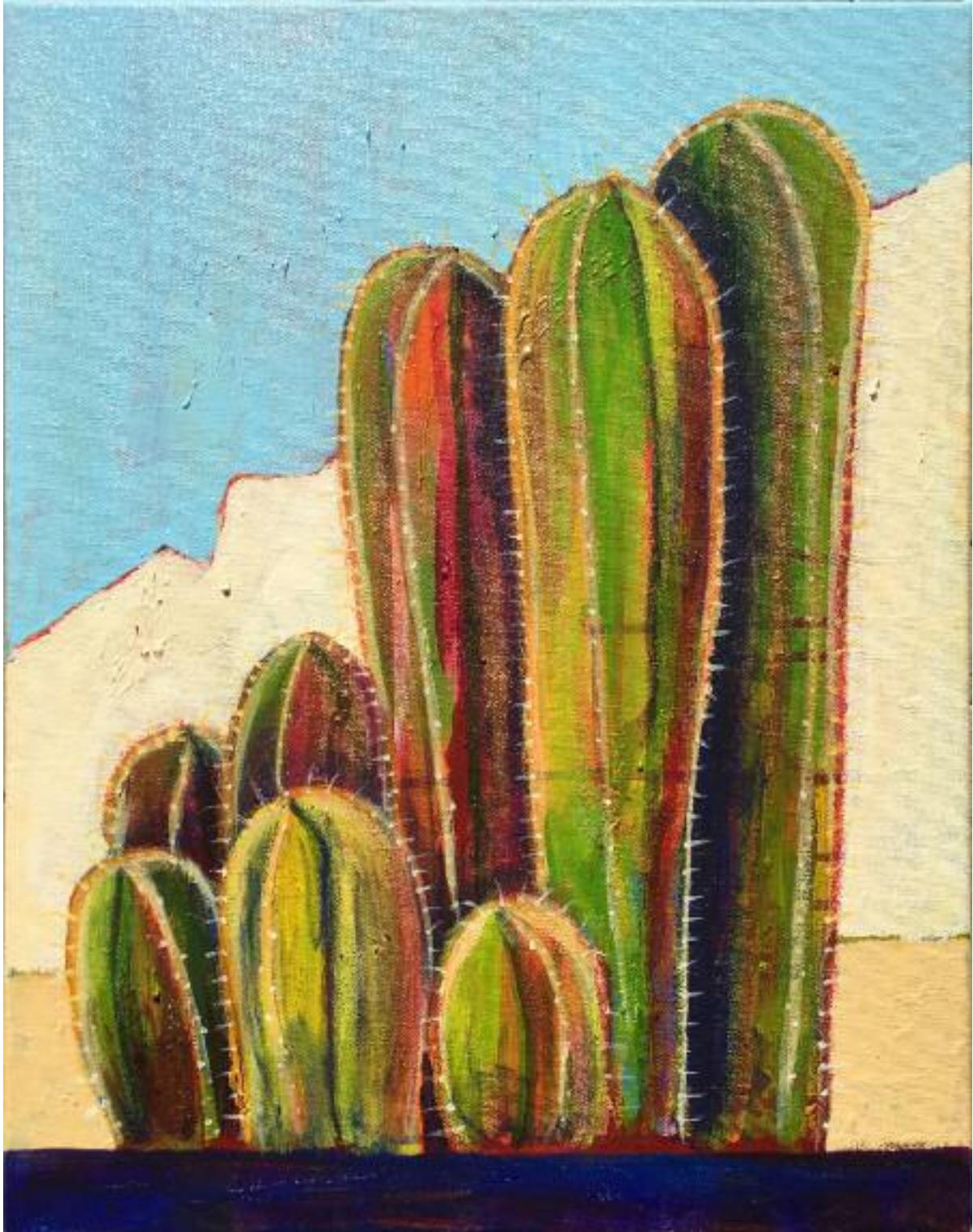
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**Sonia DelVecchio**  
Negative Painting in Acrylics - Amy Atkinson

# ART

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**Amy Atkinson**  
Negative Painting in Acrylics - Amy Atkinson

# ART

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*Amy Atkinson*  
Negative Painting in Acrylics - Amy Atkinson

# ART



**Cheryl Albrehcinski**  
Crochet & Knit Workshop

# ART



Gerry Kulz  
Card Making

# WRITING

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## Lenore

Kathy Raney

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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“Arnie, don’t give me that bull!” the raspy voice bellowed into the phone. “Mr. Brodsky can’t wait two weeks for a caregiver. You find me someone now, or I’m calling your supervisor.” I heard the phone slam back into its cradle, and an extended sigh erupt from the back of the room. That was my first introduction to Lenore. The second came a few minutes later.

It was my first day at my new job with Senior Services. The supervisor, a demure young woman dressed in heels and blue power suit, was showing me around the office and introducing me to the staff. “That’s just Lenore,” she said shaking her head in reference to the one-sided telephone conversation we had just heard. “Don’t let her intimidate you.” Little did I know what an impact Lenore would come to have on my life.

A few minutes later, a woman in her late sixties rounded the corner of a row of cubicles wiping spilled something from the front of her red blouse. The blouse matched her low-heeled shoes and lipstick – almost, and the grey skirt fell below her knees. It was a professional outfit except for the half tucked in blouse with the spots and the oversized dangling ear rings that graced her earlobes beneath curly dark brown hair that was accented by skunk-like white roots. Several necklaces of differing colors surrounded her neck, as well as one that held a pair of reading glasses. All that glitter did help to hide the remnants of the lunch that clung to her clothing. Her drooping face came to life as she smiled and held out her hand after wiping it off on her skirt.

# WRITING

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“Hi, welcome,” she boomed. “I’m Lenore. You’re the new kid, huh?” I was a bit put off wondering what had been on her hand, but I responded with a yes and thank you and nice to meet you and all those pc comments you always make even if you don’t mean it.

I thought to myself, “Oh my, I wonder how I can avoid her.” Well, avoiding Lenore was a task far beyond my limited skills. I just didn’t know it yet. As with any new endeavor, the first few weeks of my gig with Senior Information and Assistance were overwhelming, and I spent much of my time asking questions and going to my co-workers for help. Often, people would say, “Go ask Lenore. She’ll know.” But I didn’t go to Lenore. I had been so put off by her disheveled appearance and what I judged to be sloppiness at our first meeting that I guess in hind sight I just disregarded her. I don’t know if she noticed, but would a pit bull notice if they were the only one who wasn’t fed? HmMMM. She noticed.

The cubicles were small, and everyone in the office was on the phone constantly. You couldn’t help hearing the conversations, so everyone pretty much knew what everyone else was working on, and often who they were talking to just by the tone of the conversation. It wasn’t uncommon to hear, “Yes, Mary, I know you can’t go out and that you have to be careful to keep the tin foil on the windows. No, Mary, I can’t come today, but I’ll see you Thursday for our visit. No, Mary, I doubt your neighbor is from Venus, but you should keep your door locked anyway. Yes, Mary, I’ll see you Thursday.” And as the phone was disconnected you would hear, “OMG, what am I going to do with her? WTF, why me? Why me,” as frustrated hands pounded on a desk.

One day I hung the phone up after a similar conversation, but with a client who really needed services but made just a little too much money to qualify. As I was sitting there feeling inadequate at my inability to help this sweet woman, Lenore appeared at my side. She dropped a folder full of papers in front of me with a thud and stated, “You can’t fix everything for everyone. If you think you can, you’re nuts, and you won’t last here till the end of the month. Look through these resources. Make yourself

# WRITING

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copies, and let me know if you have questions. I'm gonna go get coffee. Why don't you take a break and get some too. With that, she walked off.

I found myself following her, kind of like a lost puppy, to the kitchen where she was pouring coffee into two mugs. She handed one cup to me and took a swallow from her own, promptly spilling dark spots on her blue and yellow flowered blouse. “

“Damn”, she muttered, “I need a bib.” She then reached for a donut from the table, took a bite and started to talk as crumbs fell on top of the coffee spots. She didn't notice. I couldn't help but smile. I learned that Lenore was a widow. Her husband had been a psychiatrist which she thought was hysterical — that a psychiatrist would marry her. “But I guess he thought he could practice on me,” she'd laugh.

She was Jewish but didn't go to synagogue. She adored her son and daughter and loved her granddaughter fiercely, even though she was horrified that Marlena had married a Shiite Muslim and named her great grandson Hussein. After all, this was the late 80s, the time of Saddam Hussein. Lenore was Lenore. She seemed to know everyone, and everyone seemed to love her, and I began to reevaluate my quick judgement of this woman who would become my friend. She was active in everything from the Gray Panthers to AARP to local government, and she spoke her mind without worrying about the consequences. That sometimes got her into trouble, especially at work, but she never seemed to really care.

“If I don't ask, they can't tell me no,” she would say. She bent rules like they were pretzels, but her clients reaped the rewards. How many times did we hear after the fact, “Lenore you can't do that.” “Okay,” she'd say, and the next time it would be the same thing over again. Lenore lived on Bainbridge Island, a beautiful little picturesque community, where she rented a top floor condo on the water. She loved to watch the boats and the wildlife, but almost every morning she would come into work complaining about the sea gulls. She'd be rubbing her eyes and moaning that she hadn't gotten any sleep because “the damn sea gulls kept dropping shells on her tin roof all night long.”

# WRITING

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“Don’t they ever sleep? It sounds like I’m being bombed,” she’d complain. “How can anyone sleep through that?” Then she’d raise her arms in a “what can I do” motion and add: “But I feed them. You know — I feed them, so what can I expect, right?” We’d say, “Stop feeding them, Lenore.” She’d look at us with a horrified expression and say, “You know I can’t do that.” We’d throw our arms up, and that would be that till the next day when it started all over.

Lenore had always been an adventurer who danced to the sound of her own music. She did things like hot air ballooning or riding a burro down into the Grand Canyon. In her early sixties, she’d gone to Peru and lived with a family there for several months to immerse herself in the culture. She went river rafting and rode on the back of her son’s motor cycle and marched in protests and told you in no uncertain terms when she thought you were wrong. Then she’d give you a hug and a cookie.

On her seventieth birthday, we rented a hall and gave Lenore a party. It was standing room only, and you could tell she was thrilled. She came dressed to the hilt in green silk, high heels and huge silver ear rings. She danced the night away and left us youngin’s exhausted.

Every so often we’d ask her “Lenore why don’t you retire?” She’d shake her head like we’d said something really distasteful and say, “What would I do all day? Besides, I couldn’t live in the manner to which I’ve become accustomed,” which was probably true. She’d worked for non-profits all her life, and her late husband had not been a wise investor. “Eh,” she’d mumble, “You aren’t getting rid of me that easy. I’m leaving when they roll me out of here on a gurney” Then although she swore she’d quit smoking, we all knew what she was up to when she’d sneak out the back door and come back chewing gum.

Lenore had true empathy for her clients because many of them were younger than she was, at least in years. Whenever someone found themselves at an impasse with a difficult client, the cavalry would be called in the form of Lenore. Nine times out of ten, she would be able to accom-

# WRITING

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plish what no one else could, though admittedly her methods could sometimes be less than by the book.

When my mother passed away in 1992, it was Lenore who was by my side holding my hand as I cried my way through the process of burying my mother. I don't know how I would have gotten through those days without Lenore propping me up at every turn. This woman, who I had so disregarded at our first meeting, had become an anchor in my stormy life and a role model for how to grow old with a young heart.

It was only about 18 months after my Mother's passing that Lenore was diagnosed with cancer. She continued to work until they almost did remove her on a gurney. Her children moved her in with her daughter in Seattle, and for the six months they had her with them, she was doted on and loved and cared for. She never had to go back to the hospital or a nursing home, which was her biggest fear. She had her strong black coffee every morning and her cigarettes for as long as she could. Why quit now was her motto. She'd look at the cigarette in her hand and say "I always knew these things were gonna kill me. But they're like the pigeons—what are ya gonna do?"

Lenore's funeral and celebration of life were like her birthday party — standing room only. People flew in from all over the country. There were a lot of tears, but there was a whole lot of laughter too. After all, she'd left us with a stockpile of good material to laugh about. I doubt she ever realized how many people she had helped during her life, how many lives she had touched or how much she was loved. There is a poem that begins with: "When I am old, I will wear purple with a red hat that doesn't match." Lenore had worn purple for as long as anyone could remember, and she was her own best story. I was blessed to be written into a few lines on one of the pages in her book of life. She was my friend and my mentor and my second mother, and I will never forget her. Though her story was rich and colorful and remarkable, I'm sure the cover of her book was stained with coffee and yesterday's food, but if there is one thing I learned from Lenore it's that you can't judge a book by its cover.

# WRITING

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## My View of Peace

Barbara Miller

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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I am sitting in my children's house looking out to the amazingly wondrous backyard just after the rain stopped falling. It is a blissful feeling, and I am so relaxed. I feel that this is what good living is. The sun is just setting in lovely shades of yellow and oranges and fading into pink, creating a watercolor canvas across the sky. Dinner is over, and the family is off to the movies or hanging out with friends, and I settle myself in to enjoy these peaceful surroundings. All I can see in my line of vision are tall stately trees, their leaves in many different shades of green, still wet and shimmering from the rain. The trees are very tall and have been there since they were saplings fifty-five years ago.

This is the time of year the birds' eggs are hatching and the Moms are busy flying up and back to the nests with food for the new additions to our planet. I am listening to the chirping of the baby birds and sounds from other small creatures (hopefully harmless) which makes me feel alive.

The clean smell of the summer flowers surrounds the acre of land. The fragrances of the flowers are heady with luxurious aromas. This makes you feel that you want time to stand still as this is an evening that does not happen enough in life. Everything is still and serene, and there is no one around except me, and I decide to go into the pool. I take a soft fluffy towel from the pool house cabana and dive in. The water is colder than I expected as I float and gaze at a sky full of twinkling stars. I am so happy that no one else is home. I don't want to share this peaceful moment.

# WRITING

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## The Funeral, The End or the Beginning

Barbara Miller

Creative Writing - Ron Szalla

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The phone is ringing, and I know who it is, and no, I cannot answer it right now. I am not able to think or make any kind of decisions right now. I wonder how I can disappear so that I won't have to function or make decisions.

I have just gotten out of the funeral limousine and entered my home. I am sure you have heard the expression "be careful what you wish for because you might get it." That is where I am now. I got my wish. What the hell do I do now? The house is filling up with family and friends, and I am sad and unresponsive. So, I don't have to have conversations with the well-meaning people that are all around me. I am feeling a bit guilty about that, but I just do not have the emotional strength. I really don't want to hear one more person tell me that she is in a better place, or time will heal me and any platitudes these really well-meaning people keep telling me.

This all started quite a few years ago when my wife and I realized our marriage was a sham because we really were not suited for each other. My wife, her name was Rachel, was a lovely, smart and beautiful woman, a great Mom and she had great qualities. That was what attracted me to her when I met her. I never dated too much and was used to a quiet life. I did not go to clubs to meet people and being by myself, was something I enjoyed. However, when I met Rachel, I thought that she was special. And she was. And I knew she liked me also, so I gave it a shot. I really loved her but not the way I know now I should have. I was a good husband in the textbook way but not a real husband. I was also a good father. My kids mean the world to me. Our two grown children, both in college, are people I am very proud of.

When Rachel was first diagnosed, needless to say I was very upset and worried about her, but by that time I was also in love with someone else. Rachel's diagnosis came after about a year and a half of us acknowledging

# WRITING

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our marriage wasn't working. We both were talking about our marriage and we agreed that it would best if we separated. Those discussions were difficult but very cathartic. We didn't fight. We just discussed our marriage. We both had observed our friends and their relationships, and we both knew that we didn't have what they did. Our friends' marriages were healthy and flourishing, and they seemed to enjoy spending time with only each other. We did not have much of that.

Once Rachel started her treatments, and I observed what she was going through, I scrapped the plans to separate. Then I had the problem of explaining to the person I had fallen in love with that all plans had to be on hold, hoping that everything would still be all right when the inevitable occurs. I still went to work and saw to it that Rachel had transportation to and from treatments. We had dinner together when she could eat.

On the weekend I spent time with her. When she could, we would go out to lunch. I was still nurturing the new relationship that was at last teaching me how to love. I could not help it. I spent time with Rachel and was sincere from my heart because she was a dear friend, which I believe she was. My kids were away in college and came home to be with their Mom as often as they could. My daughter took a semester off when she observed that Rachel was not going to last much longer. Once I knew that my daughter was going to be home, I could then take care of some of the loose ends of my life.

About a year or so before Rachel was diagnosed, I discovered something about myself that had always been nagging me. It was quite inadvertent. My very dear friend at work, Alan, was going through a very difficult time. I, of course, stepped in to help him out of his depression. He was gay and had just broken up with the love of his life and really needed help in the way of a friend.

One evening after work, Alan and I went out for a few drinks and dinner. It was kind of a gay bar, but no one really was flaming gay, so it was a nice evening.

# WRITING

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When dinner was through, I mentioned I should be going home, so we paid the bill and headed for the door and he ran into a friend. We were introduced. and I felt really weird and thought about this man all the way home. I started thinking that perhaps that was why I was never comfortable or happy in my marriage. Back when I was young, you did not really admit to yourself or anyone else for that matter that you might even think you were gay. I met this man a casually a few times more when Alan and I had dinner.

Rachel was then diagnosed with her cancer, and our primary doctor set her up with the doctor of choice that specializes in kidney cancer, and we made an appointment. I took the day off, and we went to the appointment, and there he was. The doctor was the man I had met in the restaurant and couldn't forget. He called me on my cell phone the next day, and we chatted about Rachel, and then he asked if we could meet for a drink. I am in shock, but I agree to meet him, and the rest is history. I was never so happy in my life and feeling so torn and guilty at the same time. He gave Rachel's case over to his partner that also specialized in kidney cancer, and he thought it would definitely be a better idea and would not be a conflict of interest.

Time passed, and Rachel went through her treatments and then the chemo wasn't helping. She passed away.

Here I sit in my house with all these people, friends and family, and I don't know how to feel. I do know that all of this sadness will pass, and life will go on for everyone including my kids. I am so distressed to have given them another huge life altering situation, but I will wait a decent amount of time before I dump this news in their laps.

I have to make a phone call now that will make me sure that the rest of my life knows that I will be there very soon. I will let him know that the funeral is over, that was an ending, and now I can start the beginning, with a capital B.

# WRITING

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## Grief

Barbara Miller

Creative Writing - Ron Szala

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Grief is a fog that covers your insides.

It makes breathing and feeling anything else impossible.

Sometimes you forget and then a song, a sunset, a photo reminds you

And grief overcomes you once more.

If only for one hour or one day I could see you, touch you, hug you,

Say the things I didn't say, have you play your music for me.

Time passes, life still happens, and I will never be me again.

# ART

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Barbara Stevens  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

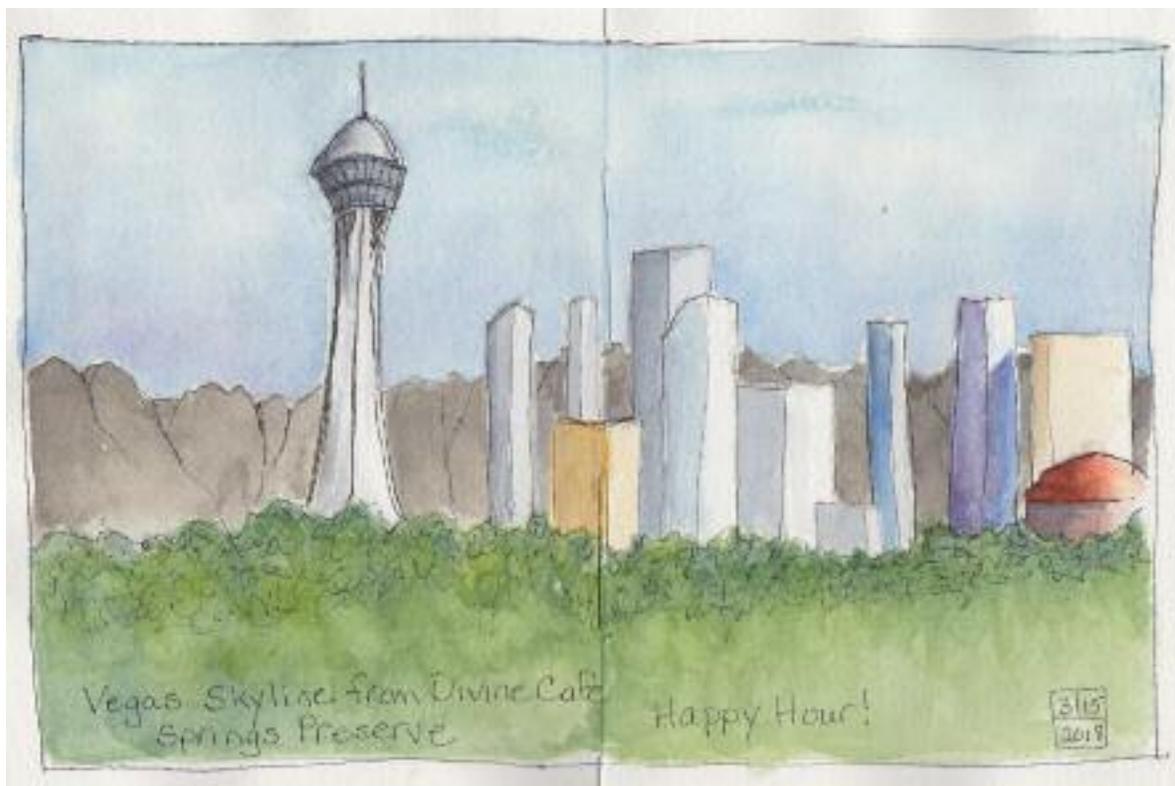
# ART

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**Jill Barnard**  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

# ART



**Jean Beard**  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

# ART



Amy Atkinson  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

# ART

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Sharon Heyman  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

# ART

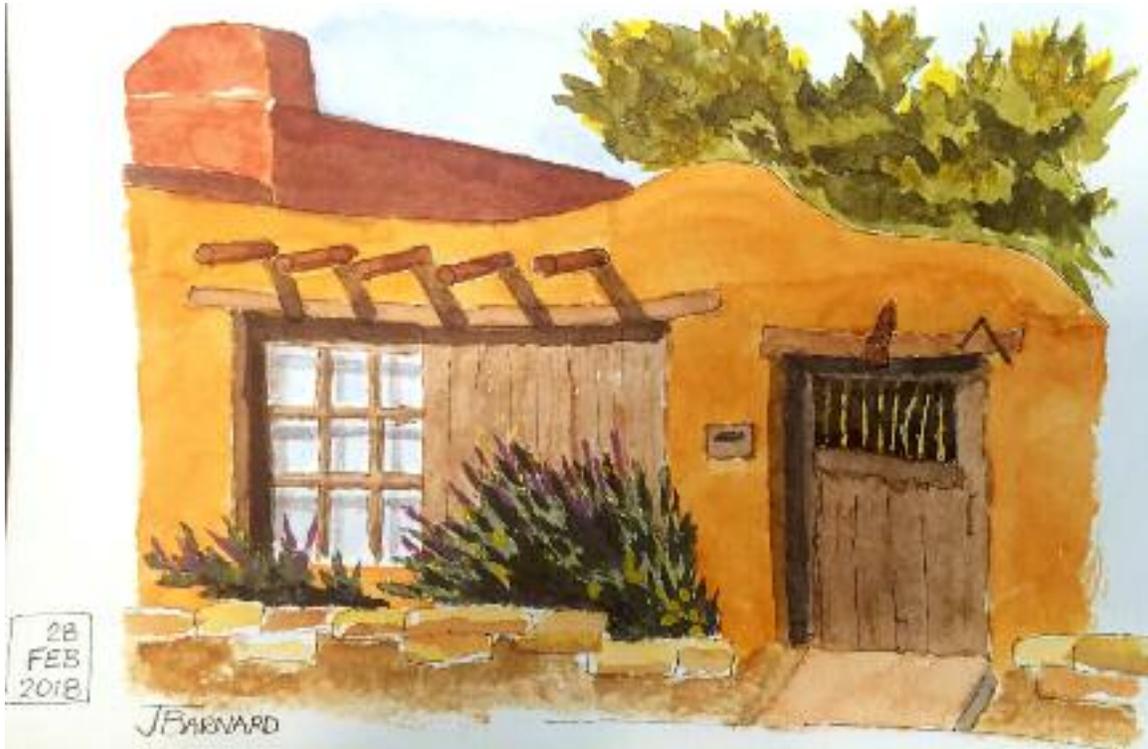
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Sharon Shuster  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

# ART

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**Jill Barnard**  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson



**Steve Kilgour**  
Sketching on Location - Amy Atkinson

# WRITING

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## Alone

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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My dreams are opaque,  
Full of strange symbolism:  
Terribly silent.

Why have I lives long  
After those most loved are gone?  
There are few answers.

While I still endure  
Trapped in a strange universe  
Never understood.

# WRITING

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## But We Didn't Know

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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Our leaders preached hatred  
But we didn't know.

Burning books and "Kristallnacht"  
But we didn't know.

Neighbors disappearing  
But we didn't know.

Children wear yellow stars  
But we didn't know.

Boxcars' haunted faces  
But we didn't know.

Auschwitz and Buchenwald  
But we didn't know.

"Just singing in the rain"  
Until nightmare became reality.

Postscript Elie Wiesel:  
"indifference to evil is worse than evil..."

# WRITING

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## Candy Lady

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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She sits there waiting  
In her farmer's market stall  
Smiling to herself

Rising painfully  
On elephantine haunches  
To sell her candy

To rural neighbors  
Who pass this stall unaware  
Who she really is.

We live in shadows:  
All we can do is reach out  
In our need to touch.

# WRITING

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## Do Others See Me as I See Myself?

Darlyne Underhill

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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I look in the mirror.

I am my Mother.

A tear rolls down my cheek.

I miss my Mother.

I hope she knew how much I loved her.

That woman in the mirror is old.

Perhaps I feel sad for her aging?

Being an elder brings many forms of pain.

The body no longer moves with grace or speed.

The stiffness and sore spots are many.

Am I sad because I am running out of time?

Time to see my grandchildren grow up,

The time to tell my husband, "Thank you," for a wonderful life

And that I love him. Time to share laughter and memories

With loves ones and dear friends?

If the mirror should fall to the floor and break,

Would I lose those outer vestiges of years?

Would the little girl inside of me emerge?

# WRITING

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## Chetnik Vengeance

Betty Ruth Theile

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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She was old and had been hiding for years. Now that her life was close to ending, she hoped that she could relax and not remember the violence of her past. What had happened sixty years before was a long time ago but was not forgotten. Dora was living in her castle in the mountains of Austria, secluded and alone. But this was not the peace she craved. The years had taken their toll, and now she was crippled from the injuries she had suffered and from the bone-numbing cold she endured living in the mountains when she was an artisan soldier.

When the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia, she and Ivan were children. They saw the enemy in action and vowed to fight them to the death to protect their families. They refused to surrender, and Dora joined the Rauna Gora Movement which was led by Draza Mihailic, who had fled to the hills in the wake of the invasion and who joined one of the resistance forces. Eventually, the Nazis began using terror tactics against the Muslim, Croats and other Partisans and the people who supported them.

The mass murders had taken such a devastating toll had been justified as Ethnic Cleansing: cleansing the areas where enemies of the Fatherland lived. Nothing the Chetnik resistors did mattered in the fight against the Axis since for every one of the Nazi soldiers killed, one hundred civilians were murdered in reprisal.

After the initial shock of seeing the faces of the murdered villagers, Dora's heart and mind slowly hardened. Finally, even the most torturous

# WRITING

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scenes had no effect. But now, after all these years, for some reason, remembrance was returning. Dora began to hear voices that she thought were coming from other “guests” in nearby dwellings or from the village that laid ten miles below her castle. She stubbornly tried to ignore them. Even when she could hear them loudly calling her name, she knew it was not HER name they were calling as she feverishly struggled to put them out of her mind. But the calls which were soft at first began to get louder. And now here she was alone and shattered, needing company, any company she could find. As if in answer to her despair, word came that a distant cousin was traveling through Europe looking for family members in order to finish a genealogy history. This was the answer to her growing paranoia. Once her cousin arrived, all the evil surging through Dora’s head would be quelled, and her wicket behavior would be justified.

Finally, the deed was done! Katlin had been found and was now safely ensconced in the medieval castle Dora and Gustav, her deceased husband, owned. No more would she be alone with those screaming voices and raging faces. She had a companion to keep her safe. But Dora knew that Katlin had to remain with her forever, lest she fall prey again to those demons that kept pursuing her. As a result, the family history, with gaps that Dora kept insisting were forgetful moments did not contain complete information. She painted such a beautiful picture of the family history, full of heroes and loving children and friends. No dark, terror-filled phantoms were ever mentioned. Katlin, full of hope for the reunification of a family that could be brought together in love and harmony, didn’t notice how quickly the days passed into weeks.

Suddenly, the weather chilled, and the leaves became brightly colored to remind everyone that winter with its massive snowfall would presently appear. Katlin woke up as from a trance. How long had she been here? Was her family ever informed about her quest? She wrote a note and asked Dora to have it sent to her family, but when a reply never came, she began to suspect that something was wrong. Daily requests to be driven down the mountain to the village were met with some excuse as

# WRITING

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to why it couldn't be done at that time. After several requests were unsuccessful, Katlin began to formulate plans for her "Great Escape." Surprisingly, she began making a timetable of the activities of all the workers and tradesmen that came to the castle. Feigning an interest in the antiques and their history and making notes for the "book" that she assured Dora would be written, she was able to move a little more freely through the castle. Dora tried to accompany her every day, but the weakness of her body precluded long walks through the rooms and up and down the oddly-shaped stairways.

Katlin knew that she would be unable to walk the ten miles to the village without her shoes. They always had to play that silly game that Dora invented, "MY SHOES; YOU CHOOSE." Since Katlin was barefooted, they always played with her shoes which were filled with stones. After the game, Dora would disappear with the shoes, so Katlin took great interest in playing the game. How many visits to the alcove off the bedroom was the clue to where the shoes were hidden. Count the number of steps Dora took and listen carefully to get a sense of direction: drawer opening? Sliding noise? Remember. Remember. I WILL be ready Katlin promised.

The snow brought with it Dora's usual migraine. How she hated the mountains in the wintertime, but this castle was her only refuge, and she had to stay.

Now was the time, Katlin thought, as she quietly stole into the ante-room and without much trouble located the chest that contained her shoes. Dumping the stones into the vacant place where her shoes once were, she grabbed her small bag and fled. When she was well out of sight and down the mountain path, Katlin slipped her feet into her now-too-tight shoes and continued her flight down the mountain. After hours of flight, she finally made it to the small village and staggered into a pharmacy begging for help. Although the pharmacist gave her some medication, it didn't work to soothe her aching feet.

Painfully, she limped to the station where the train had brought her to find cousin Dora so many months ago and cried in despair. The train

# WRITING

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wasn't there. Then to her relief, she heard the sound of the engine as it came up the steep incline. As the train pulled into the station, Katlin struggled to get her shoes on her swollen feet. One stone from "The Game" fell out, and to her delight, Katlin found that she had traded diamonds for freedom and that she had won the best bargain.

# WRITING

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## How

Darlyne Underhill

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile



A small child's inquiring mind asks how,  
And we give him directions as to why.

A young mother asks how.  
We tell her just to try.

In old age, seniors ask how.  
We reassure them not to cry.

When we find out the answer to how,  
It is too late to find out the why.

# WRITING

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## Silences

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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Each Summer I seek  
out my final resting place  
in town I was raised.

Among the tombstones  
I savor the silences  
That fuel memories.

Yet here one section  
Of graves offers me no peace  
Or tranquility.

Over twenty years  
Ago now, but the trauma  
Remains visceral.

For flight 800\*  
Is etched in town's memory  
For eternity.

# WRITING

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Gothic stone angels  
Give quiet testimony  
To terrible loss.

“Please don’t forget us”  
Chime the young, muted voices  
“We were unfulfilled.”

“Not for us to wed  
Then know childbirth’s pain and joy  
Or ever grow old”

George Gershwin’s music:  
Melancholy and timeless  
Filter my senses.

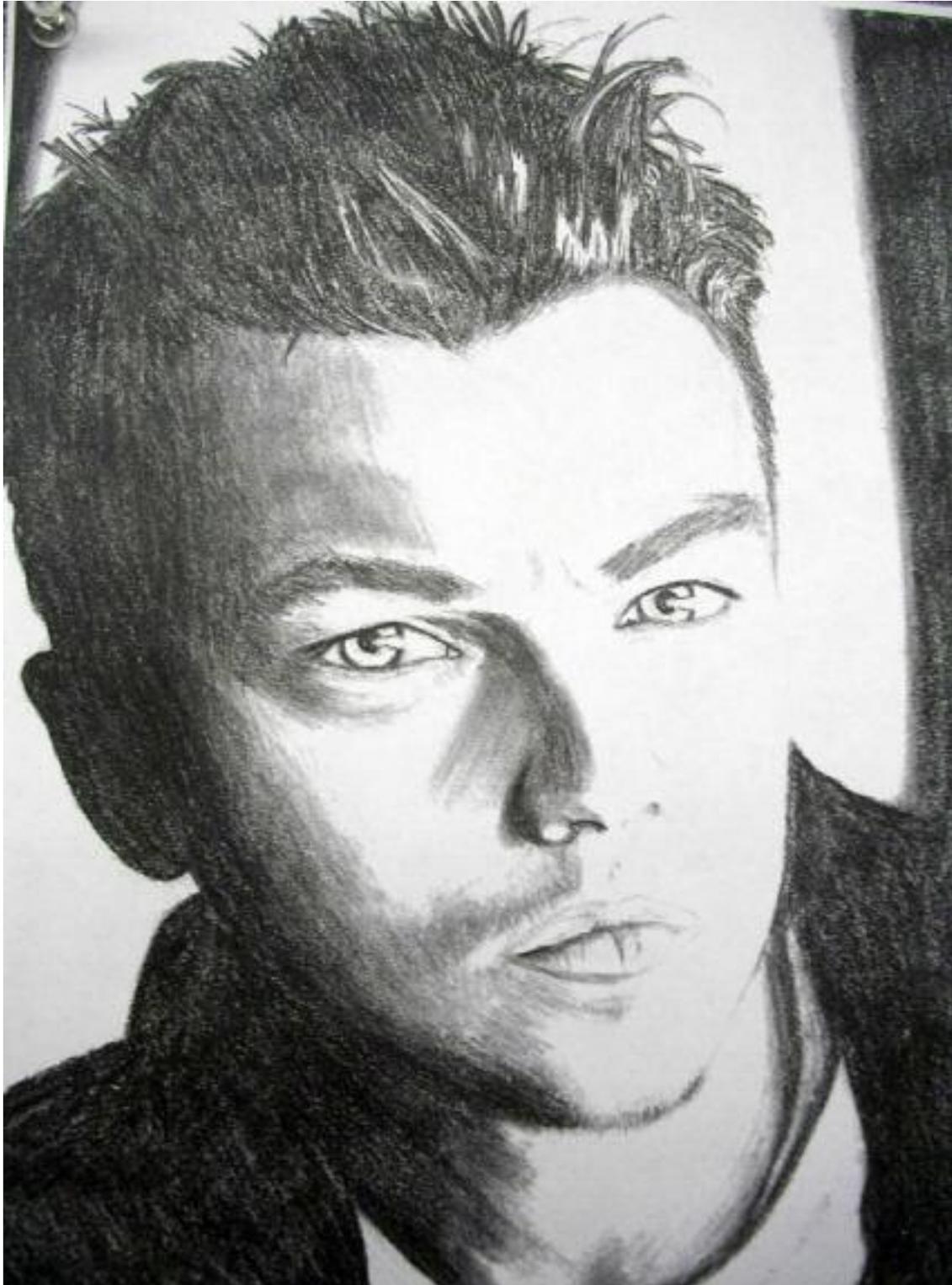
Its message conveys  
A universal sadness  
That we must all know

As I, who am old.  
Ponder the transience of life  
and slowly start home.

\*On July 1996, flight 800 from New York to Paris, with 230 passengers and crew, among whom were 16 high school French-Club students from my town left JFK airport. Shortly after take-off the aircraft exploded. There were no survivors.

# ART

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Mobley Shelley  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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Mobley Shelley  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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Sylva Moujaes  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Sylva Moujaes**  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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Sang Moo Lee  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

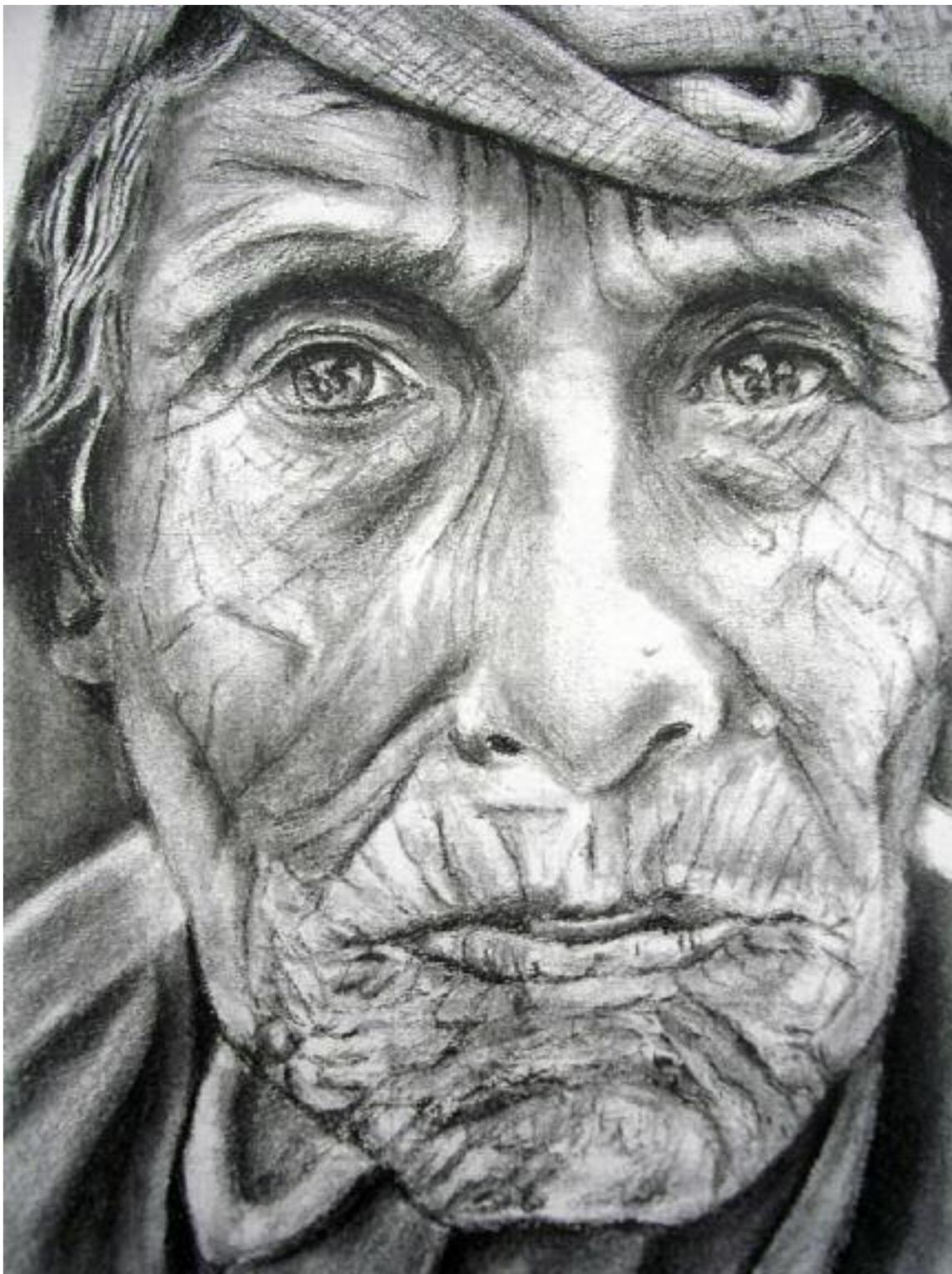
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**Sang Moo Lee**  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Cheryl Stoddard**  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Cheryl Stoddard**  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# ART

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**Cheryl Stoddard**  
Getting Ahead of Drawing - Elena Cieslak

# WRITING

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## Gaming the Army System

Don Silverman

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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This is my recollection of some of my experiences while on active duty from 1955 to 1957. Whether or not the requisite conditions have changed in the 60 years since then, I really don't know, but I doubt it. Even then it was said that the army's motto was: "We have been doing it wrong for 100 years; why should we change it now?" Also, I'm confident that the common World War II pejorative "SNAFU" (Situation normal; all f\*\*\*\*\* up), is still routinely applicable.

Back in the fifties, you really didn't have a real chance to game the army system unless you were an officer, and that's probably still true. That was one of the unspoken perks of being an officer, and one of my incentives to complete all four years of ROTC during my college years, which qualified me to enter the army service at the tender age of 21 as a second lieutenant in the quartermaster corp. That always makes me recall the old joke line: "Yesterday I couldn't even spell lieutenant, and today I are one."

My first base assignment after completing officer basic training was at Sharpe Depot in Stockton, California, an army supply depot a fast 45-minute drive from home in Oakland. I was ordered to take charge of one of the many large warehouses at the Tracey Annex, a few miles from the Stockton main headquarters. The warehouse was efficiently run by two veterans, experienced master sergeants. They were very happy to keep running that facility, and I was happy to let them.

# WRITING

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I did learn to operate one of the several forklifts, which led to many forklift races with the second lieutenant from the next warehouse. That fellow young officer had a ping pong table at his warehouse, so we spent many hours in fierce ping pong competition when we tired of forklift racing.

I also had been given base housing for my wife and baby son. Steve was born while I was at Fort Lee, Virginia for basic officer training. The total cost of that birth was \$8. Just eleven months later, now in Stockton, our second son, Rob, was born, also an \$8 birth, courtesy of the U.S. Army.

There was no typical army nonsense at the Depot because the personnel were 90% civilian and 10% officers — no GIs at all. As a result, almost every Friday early afternoon, Judy packed up the kids, picked me up at the Tracey warehouse, and we were home in Oakland for dinner and the weekend. You will appreciate that this was as amazingly desirable duty as any young officer could dream about.

Unfortunately, that came crashing down after a few months when, out of the blue, I received orders to report to a section of the Ninth Army Regiment at Ladd Air Force Base in Fairbanks, Alaska. Judy was pregnant with our second child, so I did a diligent study of the maze of army regulations and obtained a delay until after the birth. When Rob was born, I had only eleven months left of my two-year active duty commitment. Again, I found a regulation that stated that there should be no transfers to overseas duties when there was less than one year of service remaining. I made the appropriate request, confident that I had really won this one and would spend the rest of my service at this glorious Sharpe Depot assignment. However, as the saying goes, “Sometimes you eat the bear; sometimes the bear eats you.” The reply to my request was: “Alaska is a territory, but not technically overseas, so send him anyway.” (Note: Alaska did not become a state until 1959).

I was off to Alaska, but by now I was experienced enough to know that a lot of the most annoying army nonsense could be gamed if you

# WRITING

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were smart and lucky. The following is a very brief description of only a few of my gaming the system successes.

Having less than a year of service remaining, I was not entitled to concurrent travel for Judy and the boys, or to have my car shipped up. Furthermore, base housing was very hard to come by, and rentals in downtown Fairbank were extremely scarce. My immediate superior officer was a red necked quartermaster captain. I was successful in standing up to him when he objected to my giving three-day passes to the GIs in the two operations I was running, the army clothing sales store and the base ration breakdown unit. That made me a hero with the GI's and with the many civilians who worked in the Captain's office. Patrick, one of the civilians, heard my problem. He lived in an apartment building in downtown Fairbanks with some buddies but was moving out to a house at the edge of town. He had given notice, and the building owner notified the first in line of a long waiting list. Patrick told the owner that he did not mean to give up the apartment and that his first cousin, Don Silverman (who was clearly not Irish like Patrick) and his wife and kids were going to take it. The owner and the notified person on the waiting list were very unhappy, but it worked, and we moved in. Although the army frowned on officers socializing with GIs, we regularly had the GI's who worked for me over for dinner or to watch TV and relax. Score one for me.

The army base commander had a rule that every officer each year had to pass an overland skiing test. I was scheduled several times but managed to have it postponed. The last time, a new second lieutenant arrived and was put in charge of a transportation corps unit operating near my outfit. In the meantime, I had been promoted to first lieutenant. I was able to persuade him to take my place, and that was approved because I was now a higher ranked officer. Shortly after that, the entire U.S. Army instituted a Reduction in Force program which encouraged officers whose term of duty was short to take an early out option. Damn straight I would take

# WRITING

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that, and I received my honorable discharge two months early. As one result of that, I never did any overland skiing.

During my Alaska duty, mid-winter, the Army Base Commander ordered all army personnel to participate in a mass winter combat training exercise, which meant that all army personnel, including officers, were to prepare a suitable backpack and spend four days camping in the sub-zero weather up in the frozen tundra area, sleeping in sleeping bags in the snow. Only a small skeleton crew were exempted to stay at and guard their respective units. Since I was in charge of the Army Clothing Sales Store and the Ration Breakdown units, I was one of the very few lucky ones who stayed. I threw a number of bales of army fatigues on the floor to sleep on, in my warm store, and had access to plentiful food supplies from my ration breakdown unit. I was careful to be very sympathetic when hearing stories from my personnel about the horrors of the winter combat training exercise.

After qualifying for the early out program, I was notified that all GIs who were mustering out were traveling back to the mainland by ships and that I would be the ranking officer on the ship sailing to the Bay Area in California. I had already heard stories of out of control, drunk GIs on ships going home, with many headaches for the officer in charge. In addition, I would be traveling with my wife and two babies in diapers. I made an attempt to get out of it by going to the base hospital and trying to convince a doctor that this would be an unhealthy ordeal for my wife. He was clearly sympathetic, but regretfully said he couldn't really get us out of it for alleged medical reasons. In desperation, I went to the colonel who issued the transportation orders, and when he wouldn't budge, since the base commander had ordered all junior officers to take the ships, I told him that I would refuse government transportation and buy civilian flight tickets for myself and family. He was flabbergasted. No one had ever suggested refusing free government transportation. Finally, in sympathy, he got us all on a MATS flight. We flew comfortably accompanied by all higher-ranking officers and their families, and as it happened, the

# WRITING

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base commander, gave me a long stare, but mercifully ended up saying nothing.

Although I was mustering out, I had 8 years of army reserve commitment left from my ROTC commissioning deal, so I was assigned to a reserve unit at the Presidio of San Francisco, which included monthly meetings and one week of active army camp every year. However, the mustering out sergeant informed me that, although I was assigned to the Presidio, due to the Reduction in Force and resulting austerity program, the Army had no funds to pay me, and that accordingly, I was not required to attend. I replied: “Okay; don’t call me and I won’t call you.” I never attended a meeting or an annual camp.

There are a number of other gaming the Army episodes, but these are the ones I remember the most. Despite all these maneuvers, I am still qualified for veterans’ benefits, and for years I have received all my prescription medications from VA, which saves a very substantial amount of money. I am, after all, a veteran, so I try not to feel guilty. But whenever anyone has an occasion to say to me, “Thank you for your service, I can’t help thinking that I really didn’t do all that much.

# WRITING

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## Haiku

Art Fournier

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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### February 14, Remembering

Watching you in sleep  
Knowing that you share my life  
I forget to breathe

### Remembering Yosemite

Listen to the rocks  
Looming tall against the sky  
They have seen it all

### Lamentation

Peanut butter sky  
Ice cream hills and chocolate trees  
Dieting is hell

### The Observers

Songful in their trees  
Seeing human cruelties  
Mockingbirds can w

# WRITING

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## Haiku Thoughts

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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Can there really be  
A form of life much like us  
Somewhere in deep space?

Only a poet  
Can explore the dark caves of  
Loneliness and loss.

We have been driven  
From birth by such hungers as  
The need to find love.

I'm drawn to creatures  
Who live only by instance:  
They the fortunate.

My question is this:  
Why am I drawn to attics  
That mirror the past?

# WRITING

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## John, Sit Down. I Have Something Important To Tell You

Naomi Lewis

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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John tied his shoelaces and stood to brush his hair in the mirror. He was looking forward to the concert, and since he and Margie were hosting a house show of electronic music in their living room, he knew he had to look his best.

John loved the concept of an intimate gathering, meeting old friends and new. And it would be a new experience for his old friend, Ted, who was tired of playing clubs and living with the conflicts of bands with personal issues, who wanted to try a new kind of venue – performing in their home.

John knew Margie was in the kitchen finishing the finger foods for their guests, and he thought he'd venture in to see what he could do to help. Standing in the kitchen doorway, Margie's face suddenly grew very serious.

"John, sit down. I have something important to tell you."

John was stunned. What could it be? His heart began to race, but he pulled out a kitchen chair and sat down, looking mostly out of one eye and then the other.

Margie kneeled in front of him. "John... your shoes don't match." She untied the neatly executed bow and pulled off one shoe. "Oh, and neither do your socks."

# WRITING

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## Spook Alley

Naomi Lewis

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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Strobe lights blink in a black hall filled with fog.

A witches brew steams and stinks like a bog.

The taste of sulfur hangs in the air.

I've had enough. My head starts to throb.

My hair's blown away from my face in a rush.

I find my voice. A scream comes in a gush.

Gummy worms falling around squeamish necks.

Ahead a bucket of blood, goo and mush.

A Jack O Lantern with long jagged teeth,

A head on a platter comes alive with a shriek.

I brush up against dry, rattling stalks,

Scaring my heart clear into next week.

A room labeled, "hell." I feel the heat of the flames.

Around the corner a gravestone with my name.

Up on the ceiling ghosts moaning boooooo

As I rush on through the rest of the maze.

I get entangled in webs churning with spiders.

There's the witch, a ghoul right beside her.

Ah, no, bottles of formaldehyde eyes

(Panting) I'm ready for a cup of hot cider.

# WRITING

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## Discovery

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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In the cabin woods  
There is a moss-covered pool  
Just off walking path.

Crystal-clear water  
Above leaf-covered bottom  
At this quiet place

I will often stop  
For this quantum universe  
Seems to strike a chord.

You could lose yourself  
Here without really trying  
And I often do.

# WRITING

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## Limerick Fun

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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In the fairgrounds outside Jersey Shore  
Prowls Nicole, the town's "Carnival Whore,"  
Who will sell her poor hide  
For a meal and a ride,  
Performing acts that most would deplore.

## At Night

Tom Lyon

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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Often cryptic dreams  
Feature very old houses  
With dank, empty rooms.

# WRITING

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## On Gracefully Growing Older

Cathy Lowe

Writer's Club: Expressions in Prose & Poetry - Tom Lyon & Ruth Theile

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The changes are so gradual, you barely notice. One day there are a couple of white protrusions on your thumb. They hurt when you try to rub them away. Next, your hair has gone to wiry-white-uncurlable and unruly. A single wiry white hair can be plucked from eyebrow or chin, but the legs recreate forests every three days, like clockwork.

You ignore the signals to excuse yourself from the table, or from a card game, or from a prolonged telephone conversation at your peril, and the ads for lovers in outdoor bathtubs simply make you shiver.

The doctor over-uses the word “morbidly” as an adjective in her conversation and in her notes, and the side effects outnumber the benefits to ingesting almost any drug. TV ads conclude with the caveat: “including death.”

I can't drive at night anymore and really must be desperate to see you to drive across town for lunch.

I noticed my mother's world growing smaller and smaller until it was confined to her tiny den, where she watched endless tennis matches because she couldn't change the channel. I take undue pride in being able to change the channel but notice that if it weren't for fresh batteries in the remote, I might never change it.

# WRITING

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My husband used to drive me crazy with corny catch lines, but now they make me laugh until I cry. And every time I hear them, I forget the punch line.

Of the hundreds of jokes I've suffered through over the years, I can only remember one, about a Carmelite nun. I told it at the YMCA, where a Carmelite nun asked me why I didn't tell any Dominican jokes. End of stand-up.

There are white knots on nearly every knuckle now, and my wedding rings can barely fit on my little finger. Size 5 to size 9 I'm told.

The good part is that I still have my own pearly whites, despite the fact that the childhood dentist gave out lollipops at the end of each appointment.

Enough! I won't mention the right bundle branch block in my heart, the phantom atrial fibrillation, or the circulation problems that can only be addressed by Ted Hose, if I were willing and able to put them on.

My husband and I have learned to love each other, and ourselves, as we are. It is a great gift. We cheer and do fist bumps when the other gets a question right on Jeopardy. He changes the ink in my printer. I get the morning paper, turn on the coffee, and put out a banana and chocolate breakfast bar in the morning.

It works out pretty well, despite the annoyances that come with pushing and pushing past 80. Pardon me while I take a little power nap. Good-night, sweet prince. Next time let's talk about growing old gracefully!

# ART

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**Claudia Drake**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton

# ART

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**Claudia Drake**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton

# ART

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**Claudia Drake**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton

# ART

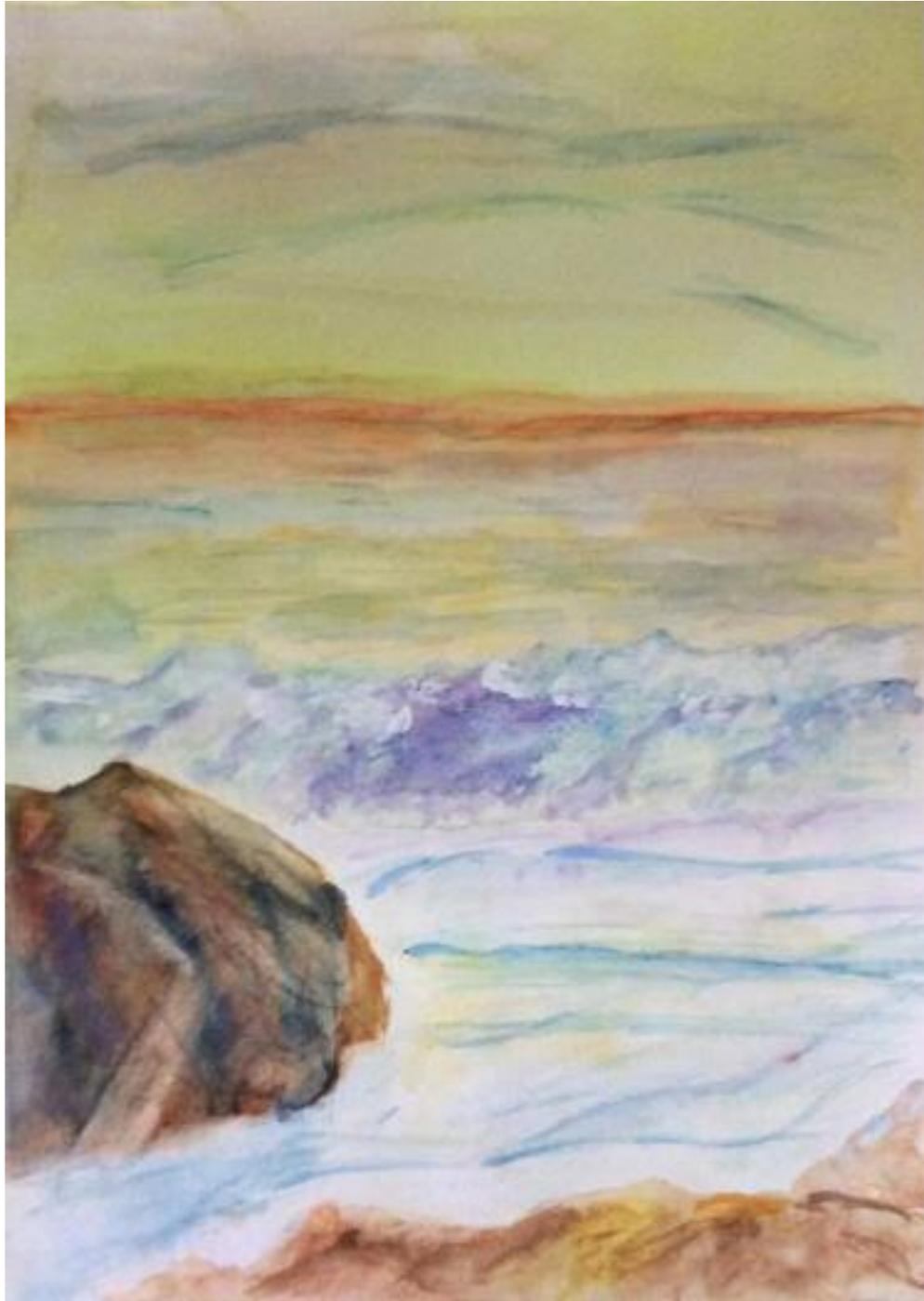
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**Naomi Lewis**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton

# ART

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**Geraldine Hillock**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton

# ART

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**Geraldine Hillock**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton

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**Barbara Stevens**  
Watercolor - Martine Patton



**Barbara Stevens**  
Watercolor - Jean Beard

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Sharon Shuster  
Watercolor - Jean Beard

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**Sharon Heyman**  
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**Jean Beard**  
Watercolor - Jean Beard

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**Sandy Kilgour**  
Watercolor - Jean Beard

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Sandy Kilgour  
Watercolor - Jean Beard

# ART

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**Sonia DelVecchio**  
Watercolor - Jean Beard

# WRITING

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## I Loved Them Both Dearly

Clyde Dinkins  
Enjoying Poetry



I met this beautiful woman in Las Vegas  
And fell madly in love with her.  
I knew it would be forever!  
That's a fact.  
But I ended it quickly when I found out  
She was A Democrat!

Then I met another lovely woman from Las Vegas.  
The joy, the fun, the ecstasy!  
How much more happy could I be!  
But, I ended it quick as can.  
You see, I found out she was a Republican!

# WRITING

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## The Chase

Sharlene Lim

Writer's Critique, Ink - Richard Richard Kram

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Time slipped through my fingers, fell on the floor,  
Jumped up, looked at me and ran out the door.  
I chased it down the street, across the square,  
Into the alley and up the dark stair.  
Onto a ledge, through the open window,  
Stepped into a room. I was in limbo!  
There in the room I felt my world tumble.  
All that I knew, and thought I knew, crumbled.  
Turning all my emotions inside out,  
I saw my anger, regrets, loves and doubts.  
I saw all the people, places and things,  
That made up my life, into one wellspring.  
But, I was out of breath and out of time.  
I reached for my life; it was no longer mine.  
Regret filled me as my past slipped away,  
Helplessly watching my years go astray.  
Now Time took a moment to look at me.

# WRITING

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What would happen next, I could not foresee.  
Time smiled and nodded and gave me a shake,  
“You must remember, it’s never too late.”  
Then Everything stopped, and time disappeared.  
I had been given hope, to replace fear.  
I heard an odd sound, as hope came alive.  
It was me laughing. I knew I would thrive.

\*\*\*

I'm back to my life, and time is my friend,  
With hope and much laughter, until the end.  
And all my regrets, have moved to the past,  
No longer chasing time, just chasing life....at long last!

# WRITING

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## Taking A Knee

Bilal Shabazz

Writer's Critique, Ink - Richard Kram

---

We have been taking a knee in our cause  
since the dawn of American History.

Crispus Attucks likely fell to a knee  
before he died fighting in a war  
in which he had no stake.

Nat Turner most probably hit his knees when they cut him down,  
after a risk he was prepared to take.

Dr. King and Rosa Parks reportedly knelt in prayer  
before demonstrations that couldn't wait.

Jackie Robinson was knocked to his knees  
many times, I surmise,  
But he continued to rise.

Jon Carlos and Tommie Smith each took a knee  
before they raised their fists to the sky.

Muhammad Ali prayed on both knees  
before he took a stand.

He announced to the world.  
"I have no problem with any Asian man."

Then there's Kaepernick,  
who stood up by kneeling down.

# WRITING

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#45 thinks it's about a flag,  
but he doesn't have a clue.  
It's about walking, and talking,  
and staying alive;  
Standing, and working,  
and being equal in this hive.  
Now the country is on one knee.  
And we are not in unison yet.  
Ask anyone why they're kneeling,  
and see what you get.  
You get the flag,  
the war,  
the first amendment,  
veterans,  
and such.  
But we've been hitting our knees,  
whether kneeling, or praying,  
or being knocked down,  
For the very same thing, pretty much.  
Walking, and talking, and staying alive;  
Standing, and working, and being equal in this hive.

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# WRITING

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## The Meeting

Betty Ruth Theile

Writer's Critique, Ink - Richard Kram



He stood on the corner  
Waiting,  
A soldier home from the war.  
A soldier who had  
Walked 5,000 miles through a jungle  
Over mountains  
Behind enemy lines,  
Always fighting  
Always hungry  
Waiting for food  
Food dropped onto a patch of land  
Hacked out of the thick forbidden jungle.  
He had been called  
To serve his country  
And had not seen his loved ones  
For many years,  
Not one furlough

# WRITING

---

Not a chance to say "good bye."  
In the beginning were 3,000 stalwart men,  
But only 500 returned.  
He stood there,  
Duffle bag full  
Of his only possessions,  
Mementoes of a horror  
Now past,  
Grateful to God  
For his safe return  
To loved ones  
And his country  
Forever free

# WRITING

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## The Best Day of her Life

Art Fournier

Writer's Critique, Ink - Richard Kram

---

It was a lovely day, full of promise. She woke Laurie early; no sense wasting even an hour of this big day. Of course, the girl was a tad cranky from insufficient sleep, but this was soon cured by the news: "It's your birthday, Laurie! Didn't you know? Today will be very, very special." It wasn't the child's birthday really, but Laurie was sweet and loving and deserved the best a mother could do to make at least one day very, very special for her.

"After you wash, sweetie, what would you like for breakfast? It's your day – you can choose."

"Maypo!"

"Then Maypo it will be. And after, maybe peaches with whipped cream?"

"Lotsa wip' cream?"

"Of course. And then go find your green jacket, because we're going to the zoo today."

"Zeeba! Zeeba!"

"Yes, we can see the zebras ... and the tigers with big teeth grrraugh, and elephants and ... well, it's your birthday. You're old enough now for the donkey ride."

"Yay, birtday!"

The zoo excursion was a delight, and little Laurie even got permission ("Please, it's her birthday") to feed the giraffe. Then there was a children's movie at the arcade and a very grown-upy lunch with tea and everything

# WRITING

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and balloons and a band concert in the park (an unexpected bonus – she didn't know the concert was scheduled) and the water slide, and ...

Back home at last, she brought out another surprise: a daintily wrapped box, long hidden away in preparation for this occasion, and took from it a child-size necklace as sparkly as Laurie's excited eyes, draped it lovingly around the child's neck, kissed her cheek, and whispered, "Laurie, sweet, is this the best day ever?"

"Yes, yes, the very bes' day!"

So, she gripped the necklace from behind and twisted and gripped harder, and twisted and gripped harder, and waited, until a little girl no longer lived behind those eyes. Well, what better gift could she offer? Life would never again be this good for Laurie. Everyone knows the cruelties and disappointments that await us all. And besides, the preacher taught that little children are innocent and cannot know sin, so they are sure to go to heaven if they die.

The next morning there was some serious driving to do, to get well away from where she was known. In due time, she arrived at the glade remembered so fondly from her own childhood. The site was far from public access and sheltered by noble trees which filtered the sunlight like stained glass windows. She eyed the surroundings, finding it difficult to settle on just the right spot. Over there? No, David was there and Linda and Mary Beth. Leave them be. And definitely not near 'Becca. 'Becca was off by herself and would remain so. She was an evil child, the only one who had to be dealt with prematurely. No very special day for her, thank you very much. There, next to Jimmy. He deserved a nice companion. Digging would be easy, and that bit of columbine nearby should be flowering soon.

When the work was done, she surveyed her Secret Garden with a mother's pride and glanced at the sun. There was plenty of time. It was only forty miles to the County Foundling Home. And it was another lovely day, full of promise.

# WRITING

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## Wiley and Me

Art Fournier

Writer's Critique, Ink - Richard Kram

---

I like to go to Laughlin now and then, abandoning the smoky casinos and jangling slots of Las Vegas, to spend a few days in a town of smoky casinos and jangling slots. Go figure. At least there's a river.

I usually take the scenic route, which means a dirt-and-gravel road through the Newberry Mountains and what the locals call Christmas Tree Pass. I rarely meet anyone on this route, but on this particular trip, I had company, or rather acquired company, when a coyote trotted into the center of the road and forced me to stop. Why wasn't he afraid of cars or of people? He acted as if he owned the place, which I suppose he did, having a far better claim on the territory than any of us two-legged interlopers.

Satisfied that he had my attention, he slipped into the roadside brush and approached my car, keeping a calculated distance, then looked at me expectantly. Was I supposed to pay a toll? I didn't have any quarters, and what would a coyote do with them anyway? Well, food is the universal currency of wildlife, so I rummaged through the cooler in the back seat and came up with ... a bagel? Hardly. Grapes? Surely inadequate for a carnivore. Alright then, that leftover turkey loaf. I rolled down the window and tossed a couple of slices in his general direction. Apparently, this was adequate payment because he went for the handout, and I was allowed to drive on.

# WRITING

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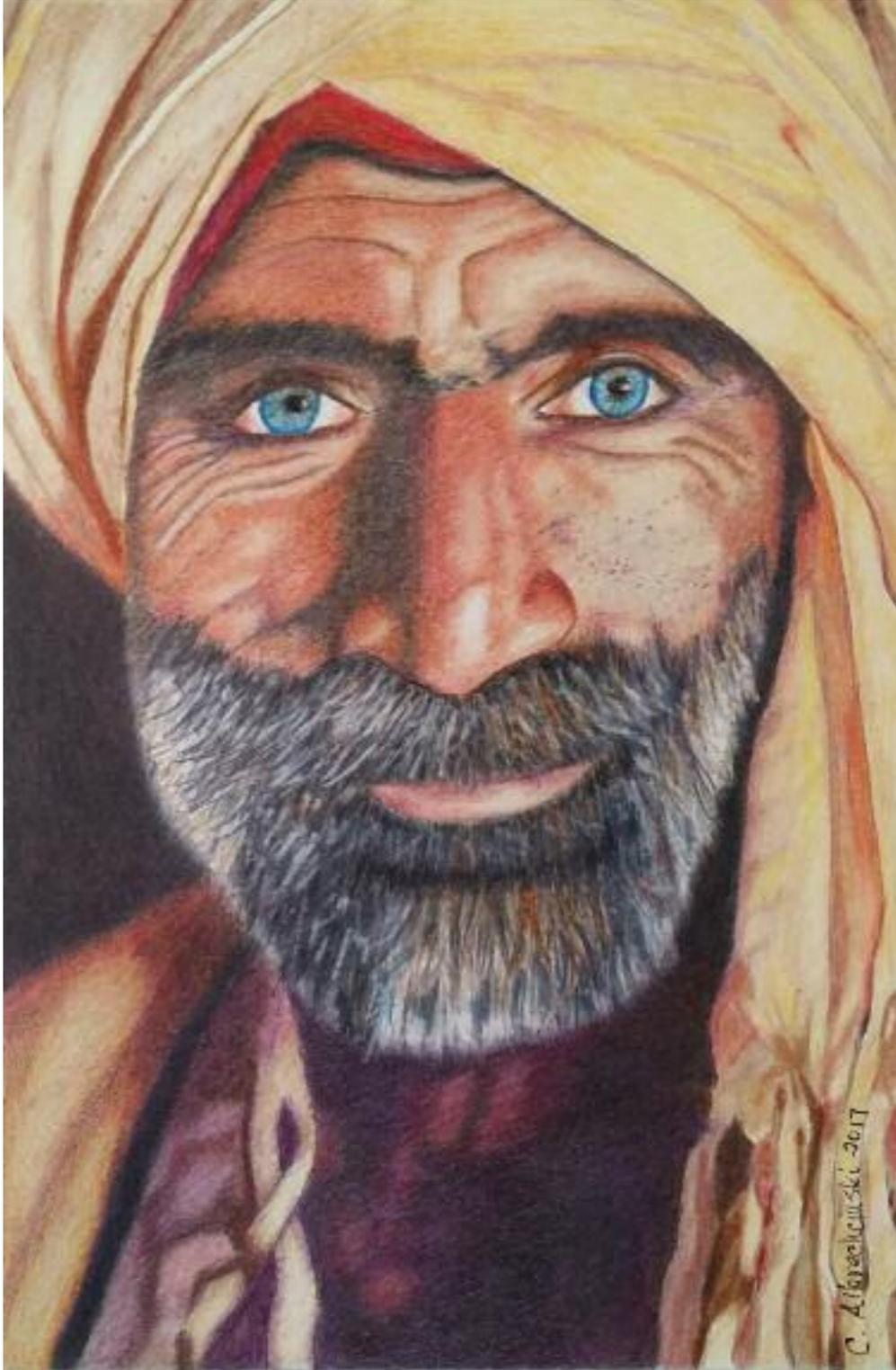
But not alone; a glance at the rear-view mirror showed Mr. Coyote trotting along behind. How far would he follow if I just kept driving? Were we developing a relationship? Should I feel guilty for raising his hopes with a tasty sample and then ignoring his natural expectations of more to come? Conscience and curiosity led me to pull over, park, haul out the cooler and a lawn chair, settle in with my bagel and turkey loaf, and await developments. Wiley showed up promptly. If we had a relationship, it should be on a first-name basis, and I established the routine: one slice for Wiley, one for me, and so on. We agreed that this was fair.

After this shared meal, no after-dinner coffee unfortunately, I wondered how to prolong our encounter, and my mind flashed on the Kevin Costner film, *Dances with Coyotes*? Why not? Scrunching down on all fours, tongue hanging out, prancing a bit, I hoped Wiley would respond. He wasn't buying it. He didn't start to play. He didn't dance. He just stared. I guess he never saw the movie. Behind those impassive eyes, I could imagine a canine brain thinking, "What kind of idiot is this?" I could think of nothing else to engage his interest, and if a coyote can shrug, I swear he shrugged. Wiley turned and went out of my life.

So, I too went on my way, sans coyote, feeling I had experienced something special: a moment of inter-species bonding, a meeting of man and beast as equals. But this romantic fantasy dissolved as I reluctantly came to terms with reality. What was so special here? The Navajo people know coyote as the Trickster, the Deceiver of Men. For him, our magical encounter had simply been a routine hustle. I was Wiley's sucker of the day, and tomorrow some other naive mark would reprise my role.

# ART

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**Cheryl Albrechcinski**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

# ART

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Elena Cieslak  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

# ART

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**Naomi Lewis**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

# ART

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**Eline Lanthier**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

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Elizabeth Spikes  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

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**Elizabeth Spikes**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

# ART

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**Sonia DelVecchio**  
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# ART

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**Linda Nowell**  
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# ART

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**Pat Gombarcik**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

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**Anne Herrington**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

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Pamela DeGenova  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

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**Pamela DeGenova**  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

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Sang Moo Lee  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider

# ART

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Dawn McCafferty  
Colored Pencil Drawing - Mark Snider



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