

2013 OLLI at UNLV Journal Errata Sheet

The following are two pieces of original work that were misrepresented in the 2013 OLLI at UNLV Journal. The first, *West Side Story* by Cheryl Hauntz, was omitted by error in the final copy. The second, *Plans* by Susan Breene, was incorrectly edited and formatted. Please enjoy both of these pieces in their intended format.

--The OLLI Journal Editing Team

WEST SIDE STORY

By Cheryl Hauntz

The year was 1961. To quote Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." John F. Kennedy was sworn in as the thirty-fifth President of the United States in January. The Peace Corps was established and the Twenty-third Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, allowing the citizens of Washington, D.C. to vote in presidential elections. The Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba happened in April. Alan Shepherd was the first American in space in the Mercury program. Diana, Princess of Wales was born. Construction of the Berlin Wall was begun and Roger Maris hit his sixty-first home run- surpassing Babe Ruth's record. All these events paled in comparison to the single-most important event to me that year- the release of the movie version of "West Side Story" on October 18, 1961.

"West Side Story" is a contemporary musical loosely based on Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." It takes place in an Upper West Side neighborhood of New York City in the mid-1950's. The story revolves around the rivalry between two teenaged street gangs which come from different ethnic backgrounds- the Jets made up of Polish-American working class citizens and the Sharks, who are Puerto Rican. Tony, a Jet, falls in love with Maria who is the sister of the leader of the Sharks.

I turned thirteen the year the movie came out, a teenager at last! I was finally allowed to go to the movies without adult supervision and "West Side Story" became my favorite movie. Seeing

the love story between Tony (Richard Beymer) and Maria (Natalie Wood) unfold on the big screen totally captivated me and I went to see the movie three times.

It was a big hit at the box office and the winner of ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture, 1961.

In December of that year, I took my younger brother Christmas shopping. Neither one of us had a lot of money for presents, but we had been saving our allowances and had enough to get something for each other and something for our mother. We went downtown to JJ Newberry, a five and dime store, to do our shopping. My brother kept trying to get me to go away so he could buy my present. I was pretty sure I knew what he was going to get me- the soundtrack to "West Side Story." I kept teasing him about it, but finally left him alone and let him make his purchase. He thought I didn't know what he bought, but I had around the end of the aisle and saw him pick up the album and pay for it. I was thrilled and could hardly wait for Christmas to open my gift and start playing the record.

Several years went by. I went off to college, got married and moved around a lot. Wherever I lived I always had my "West Side Story" soundtrack album with me and played it often. In fact, "One Hand, One Heart" was played at my wedding.

In August 1998, our small family had our one and only family reunion in Coeur d'a Lene, Idaho. All of our family was there except our daughter and a cousin. There were 27 of us. It just so happened that my fiftieth birthday fell on one of the reunion days. Before meeting with the rest of the family, my husband and I, and my brother and his wife met in my mother's room to celebrate my birthday with cards and gifts. My brother gave me the best gift of all- a CD of the soundtrack of the 1961 movie version of "West Side Story!" Even after all those years he still believed he had gotten away with surprising me. It's easy to fool seven year olds- his age back in 1961. However this time he *did* totally surprise me!

Then on my sixtieth birthday my daughter surprised me with a special Collectors' Edition of "West Side Story" including the original 1961 movie on DVD, with a second disc of behind-the-scenes photos of the cast and crew. Now I can watch the movie whenever I choose. But wait, that's not the end of the story. As part of its Broadway Series, the Smith Center is presenting "West Side Story" at the end of February 2013. I received two tickets for Christmas from my husband and you can bet I will be at the Smith Center on February 26th to continue my love affair with "West Side Story!"

Plans

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I was at the gym, trying to get my muscles to remember what they were supposed to be doing. It had only been a couple of weeks since my last workout and I was reminded that I am getting older. I looked over at another treadmill down a few in the row, and saw a man considerably older than I. He was moving slowly on his treadmill and had a look of consternation etched into his face, as if he had lived all his life in a state of confusion. His face had tightened up and all of the lines and wrinkles converged toward the center of it, toward his nose, as though his nose could point the way to the answers and end his confusion. His head had a way of moving that wasn't a smooth motion but ratcheted from one groove to the next in a sort of stop-action style, resulting in a bird-like movement. He reminded me of those funny little birds with the stick legs that you see at the shoreline, the ones that feed in the wet sand until a wave rolls in and sends the whole group of them racing back up the beach in unison like little wind-up things. I think they're called sandpipers. But the man was too old to move fast and would have been swallowed up by the next wave if he had been one of those little stick-leg birds.

Unlike a bird, he had a tongue that darted around outside his mouth. The tongue licked furtively at his lips, and I wondered if he was aware of its activities as he stared into the space in front of him. Advanced age can bring this sort of odd activities. It's as if parts of the body, like the tongue and the mouth, have a life of their own, independent of conscious choice.

Next to him was a good-looking guy around 20 years old. I compared his face to the old guy's. The young man's face was SO casual, so unworried, and did not do all those strange mouth movements that often betray an old person. I tell myself that when I'm very old I won't do those old-mouth things, I will keep myself vital no matter how old I am, but I wonder if I will remember, and I wonder if very old people made the same promise to themselves when they were younger.

It seems to me that we make so many plans when we're young, plans that are forgotten as we age. Plans to achieve this and that, to never get old, to maintain our cleverness and our strength. But where do they go, those plans? Into what black hole do they disappear, unable to climb up and out and be seen or felt or tasted again. Surely the energy that carried those plans must survive somewhere, in some form. Is it converted into the oak tree sapling, with its own plans for majesty and growth and survival? Does it join up with the raging Colorado as it plans its long journey to the sea? Funny thing about the Colorado...its conviction to reach Baja is not forgotten but rather thwarted by the loss of most of its water in the final hundred miles of its pilgrimage. Before human interference where it had once flowed freely, this relentless sculptor and its offspring carved Arizona into the Grand Canyon and gave humans one of the most beloved and breathtaking sights and experiences on the planet. But little by little, human needs for water have depleted it of its lifeblood and its power. That heroic force, that flooding fire, has become much like the weak old man, except that the once-mighty river ends its life wishing it *could* forget.

*Susan Breene 2013*

**2013 OLLI JOURNAL**  
**IN FULL BLOOM**



*"In Full Bloom" by Beth Sylvester*

**UNLV** | OSHER LIFELONG  
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## **A NOTE OF THANKS**

OLLI's many products and member services, including the 2013 **OLLI Journal** are made possible by a generous grant from the Bernard Osher Foundation. The OLLI Board of Directors demonstrates its support of the arts by approving an annual grant-funded budget to sustain the costs of publication. Our thanks always to UNLV President, Neal Smatresk and his wife, Debbie for their unflagging support of the OLLI organization, and its academic and social contributions to the University we call home.

Thank you to the 2012-2013 OLLI Board of Directors for its continuing sponsorship of this beloved Journal, edited for 15 years by Roz Braverman, and now by Cathy Lowe and Mary Owens.

## **THE 2012-2013 OLLI BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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# OLLI JOURNAL 2013

## “IN FULL BLOOM”

**Editors: Cathy Lowe, Mary Owens**

### ABOUT THE JOURNAL

This anthology of prose and poetry is produced annually by OLLI at UNLV. Contributors to the Journal come from every corner of OLLI, and include members of the Creative Writing Workshop, a practicum artfully facilitated by Don Silverman, Ruth Theile, and Tom Lyon, accomplished writers - all.

On the following pages you will find the works of mature philosophers and visionaries from many walks of life- published authors, military veterans, lovers, lawyers, business men and women, educators, and many New-Age thinkers. All the writers, photographers and visual artists are, or have been, dreamers.

We welcome you to discover and relish this close-up view of OLLI’s remarkable seniors as they laugh, mourn, love and serve. Here they are at their creative best...In Full Bloom!



*“Sunset” by Gil Shaw*

### IN MEMORIAM

This issue of the 2013 Journal, “In Full Bloom,” is dedicated to Helen “Mo” Payne, one of the great ladies of OLLI whose grace and good humor were woven into its fabric from its early EXCEL days. Her work was featured in the 2012 edition of the Journal. She is greatly missed today.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                              |                 |    |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----|
| Creativity                   | Susan Breene    | 1  |
| <b>LOVE LOST &amp; FOUND</b> |                 |    |
| My Love, My Wife             | Bill Hanna      | 5  |
| Love/Life                    | Bob Giandicamo  | 5  |
| Valentine's Day              | Mary E. Cecil   | 6  |
| To Light a Candle            | Susan Breene    | 6  |
| Reality                      | Michael Fishman | 7  |
| Missing You                  | Janet Asay      | 7  |
| Courtly Love                 | Cathy Lowe      | 8  |
| Brideshield                  | Cathy Lowe      | 9  |
| Courtly Love Lost            | Cathy Lowe      | 9  |
| Two Poems for Beth           | Joyce Block     | 10 |
| Summer                       | Joyce Block     | 11 |
| The Return                   | Ruth Theile     | 12 |
| <b>TRANSITIONS</b>           |                 |    |
| Plans                        | Susan Breene    | 15 |
| I Am a Stubborn Tree         | Cathy Lowe      | 17 |
| Remembrance of a Past Life   | Ruth Theile     | 18 |
| Lost                         | Ruth Theile     | 18 |
| Flight 800 Remembered        | Tom Lyon        | 18 |
| An Aging Minstrel            | Tom Lyon        | 19 |

|                                  |                    |    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----|
| Sonnets in Black Face I, II, III | Tom Lyon           | 20 |
| My Epitaph                       | Tom Lyon           | 20 |
| Mom                              | Joyce Block        | 21 |
| Grandpa                          | Robert L. Stanelle | 21 |

### **OUR OTHER LOVES**

|                              |                    |    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|
| The Picture                  | Robert Hall        | 25 |
| Even the Bird                | Susan Breene       | 27 |
| Dinosaurs and Us             | Tom Lyon           | 28 |
| Could It Be?                 | Robert L. Stanelle | 28 |
| Butterflies for Breakfast    | Christine Battle   | 29 |
| I Prefer the Company of Cats | Susan Breene       | 34 |

### **TREASURED MOMENTS**

|                    |                         |    |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----|
| Penelope           | Kathy Dougherty-Rouches | 37 |
| Poem for Baby Trae | Susan Breene            | 37 |
| That Morning       | Susan Breene            | 38 |
| Perfect Mornings   | Carol Katz              | 39 |
| The Fancy Coat     | Janet Asay              | 41 |
| About A Life       | Marge Gately            | 43 |

### **HUMOR IS AGELESS**

|                     |                       |    |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----|
| Friends             | Charlene McKenzie     | 47 |
| Space Cadet         | Hector M. Rosales     | 48 |
| Letter of Complaint | David Minnicks        | 50 |
| Complaint Letter    | Karen Cooper Minnicks | 51 |
| The Perfect Lawn    | Alan Nazer            | 52 |

|                                 |                       |    |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| OOPS!                           | Karen Cooper Minnicks | 53 |
| Cogitating                      | Ed Devore             | 56 |
| Medieval Introspection          | Cathy Lowe            | 57 |
| The Temple of Age and Beauty    | Mary Owens            | 58 |
| Gotcha!                         | Carl Weller           | 61 |
| <b>PURELY POETRY</b>            |                       |    |
| Dances With Poets               | Robert L. Stanelle    | 65 |
| Haikus, Tankas, Tercets         | Alan Nazer            | 66 |
| Tankas and Haikus               | Tom Lyon              | 67 |
| Yearnings                       | Tom Lyon              | 68 |
| Temptress                       | Ed Devore             | 68 |
| Fruit and Nuts                  | Robert L. Stanelle    | 69 |
| Alternative Energy              | Cathy Lowe            | 69 |
| Little Ballerina                | Susan Breene          | 70 |
| <b>THE PRICE OF FREEDOM</b>     |                       |    |
| Then Everything Changed         | Mary E. Cecil         | 73 |
| The Vote                        | Ed Devore             | 75 |
| The Day I Lost My Innocence     | Mike Cutler           | 76 |
| Lost and Found                  | Hector M. Gonzales    | 78 |
| An Unexpected Life Lesson       | Gregg Pollack         | 80 |
| <b>MORE LIFE LESSONS</b>        |                       |    |
| Death of a Visionary            | Robert L. Stanelle    | 85 |
| Life Lesson in a Can            | Gregg Pollack         | 86 |
| Life Lesson on a Cardboard Sign | Gregg Pollack         | 89 |

|                                     |                  |     |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| Two Four Six Eight                  | Ruth Elliot      | 92  |
| Imagination                         | Morrie Greenberg | 93  |
| Reflections on Spring               | Don Silverman    | 95  |
| <b>WHALE OF A TALE - CITY LIFE</b>  |                  |     |
| Conversation in a New York City Bar | Martha Carrell   | 101 |
| The World's Rudest Waiter           | Don Silverman    | 103 |
| City of Amazing Grace               | Mary Owens       | 107 |

## ~ Creativity ~

by Susan Breene

Let us be a channel. Let us be a way.

Creation wants to use us. Creation seeks to expand, to fill,  
to express itself in ever-enlarging variety... to laugh, to delight,  
to thrill in its own creative essence.

Let it use you. Turn yourself into a spigot stuck on OPEN.  
Feel its waves surging through you.

Dance with it, sing with it, let it hold your brush, your pen,  
let it move your feet and breathe into your lungs.

Embrace it like a lover. Let it ravish you, ride you, thrill you,  
destroy you and renew you.

For what is the choice? Would you choose death?  
Living death chewing up your innards?  
Clawing at your soul and ripping out your dreams?

Choose life. Creativity is Life. Make friends with it. Welcome it in,  
and allow it to live its life through you.

*This piece was inspired by the OLLI class, "Unblocking Your Creativity"  
led by Sharon Gainsburg*



# LOVE

## *Lost & Found*



Broken Hearts  
by Diana Maloney



## My Love, My Wife

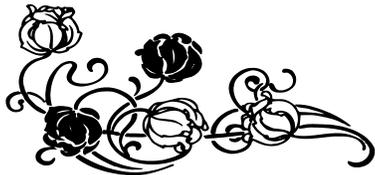
by Bill Hanna

A breath  
clearly seen  
on a cold crispy day  
That's life

A dewdrop  
brightly sparkling  
in the early newness of morning  
That's hope

A star  
hanging silent  
in the clear cloudless sky  
That's mystery

A love  
embracing fully  
life, hope and mystery  
That's You



## Love/Life

by Bob Giandicamo

If one, perchance, observes the dance  
That lovers dance while wooing,  
One might assay their strange by-play,  
As cause for their undoing.  
The lovesick male is wont to wail  
His heart's unfading credo,  
But for a fact, this verbal tract  
Is fueled by his libido.  
And she, beguiled, is reconciled  
To sampling his affection,  
And bit by bit she'll soon submit,  
With little circumspection.  
This evidence we can condense,  
Albeit with confusion,  
And in reprise can but surmise  
Some logical conclusion:  
Are we to view this pas de deux  
As our species' finest station,  
Or see, point-blank, just nature's prank,  
Insuring procreation?

## Valentine's Day

by Mary E. Cecil

Valentine's Day celebrates love,  
A holiday unlike the rest.  
To make my point,  
I've borrowed lines  
From those who've said it best.

Maybe you have loved and lost-  
Your sweetheart now is gone;  
But life without love is no life,  
And the heart goes on and on.

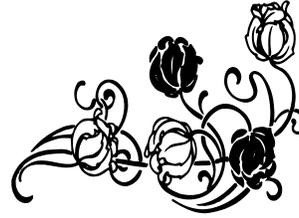
Do not complain, and please don't cry!  
It's not the cards you get.  
What you *do* is more important  
To feel better, not upset.

If all you really need is love  
To make you unforgettable,  
Then sending a few valentines  
Will hardly be regrettable.

Get up and look around you,  
See the sunshine in your life.  
Send valentines to your neighbors  
And especially to your wife.

Send cards to all the n in-laws,  
A frilly one to your mother;  
Send one to a co-worker,  
To your sister and your brother.

The best goes to your husband  
To your daughter and your son.  
Send cards to your grandchildren,  
Do not forget a one.



Send one to someone lonely -  
To friends long-lost and new,  
To older family members,  
And all who matter to you.

Love them just the way they are-  
You'll not grow old alone.  
Life is what you make it-  
That's a truth that is well known.

Remember the best is yet to come  
Although your life is flawed.  
And to love another person  
Is to see the face of God.

### **To Light a Candle**

He said, To light a candle is...  
To tempt the wind, she said  
And that was the moment  
when he knew he could not  
love her.

by Susan Breene

## Reality

by Michael Fishman

Now, in late Spring  
I am reminded  
of the wheelchair lady  
across the street dying  
of what they considered  
how her house was marked off  
by clotheslines and signs  
while they aired  
scoured and cleaned down  
every inch where she had breathed.  
I am reminded  
because since you've left  
I've been up all night  
washing down walls  
turning the mattress  
and just in general keeping  
very busy sweeping up  
this dust of our love.

## Missing You

by Janet Asay

I saw you in a raindrop  
That slid softly down the icy windowpane.  
You were smiling, your eyes twinkling,  
As you rode  
Down  
And down  
And out of sight.  
I felt a teardrop,  
Hot against my cheek.  
It tumbled  
Down  
And down  
Until it rested on the cushion of my breast  
And found you,  
Hiding in my heart!

## COURTLY LOVE

by Cathy Lowe

O, once they called it "Courtly Love"-

That passion so impure

A token for your helmet, Sir,

Our secrets to inure?

Ride well in tourneys for me, please,

And when you win, just laugh,

And hasten to my chamber

Where you'll take your monthly bath.

And then between my snow white sheets-

Oh no- among the rushes,

We'll roll and play 'til end of day-

All murmurs, sighs and blushes.

O ride for me my noble knight,

But if you suffer loss,

I'll send you on Crusade again

For relics of the Cross.

And if your siege at Acre fail,

And should you be imprisoned,

Long may you rot in pagan jail,

Until you're old and wizened.

Love-Courtly's mine to give or hold;

I'll give it to your brother;

And should he, too, prove less than bold,

I'll give it to another.



## BRIDESHIELD

by Cathy Lowe

Lo, many a year I fought afoot  
Beside my mounted knight.  
We sailed in fearsome dragon boats;  
Set villages alight.  
I strapped you in your padded mail,  
And armor all without  
And off you rode, behind my shield,  
So I'd advance and route.  
It took me years to figure out  
That I, your armor am.  
I fended off the arrows, yes,  
And pushed the battering ram.  
I burned, I bruised, but faltered not  
Protecting my own knight.  
No more my love; I'm battle-worn  
And weary of the strife  
It costs me more than I can bear  
To go on as your wife.  
So now I sit the fire by,  
And watch the children play,  
Smiling in my heart to know At last  
I've ta'en the day!



## COURTLY LOVE LOST

by Cathy Lowe

While away, ye months and years;  
While away ye hours and days;  
While away ye moments cherished-  
Too soon woven in the maze.  
  
Now I count the ticks of time  
Drawing toward an end unknown;  
Weeping in my heart to know  
It's far too late to turn for home.  
  
O seize ye every day and hour,  
Knowing that they pass for good.  
O, my knight, the king doth beckon...  
I should have loved you while I could.

## TWO POEMS FOR BETH

by Joyce Block

Speak not her name.  
Let her laughter wait.  
Outside the door.  
Her story knocks  
Like some furnace  
Rent ajar in Dante's hellfire.

Speak not her name.  
No. Let her be gone and  
Merriment thrown to the wind  
There is no place to save her  
Let the clarion call be heard

But do not answer and  
Do not judge

A flock of white pigeons flew round in the Maui sun  
They landed close by and eyed my ice cream cone  
Hurry up and share the cone I thought  
They gathered round my feet and then I spied  
The one with the foot that was turned awry  
I tried to give him all I could but truth be known  
It managed quite well on its own.  
Then it flew up near my face. Too late.  
I did not think to put my arm out.



# SUMMER

by Joyce Block

Remember that summer we spent together? How old were we? Seventeen? I lived with my father then. He left for work at eight or so, and then you would arrive about nine o'clock and we would have nothing to do but be with each other. We'd lie on the rug in the living room with the sun shining in through the casement windows letting us know there was life out there on the blistering streets of New York.

I fed you grapes from the bunch, holding them above your lips to bite from as if I were Delilah and you my Samson. On the phonograph Harry Belafonte's record spun out Shenandoah, Cuckoorico, Danny Boy, Merci Bon Dieu, Come O My Love over and over again. Day after day, we lived as on a sheltered isle where nothing could touch us ..., and all the craziness caused by the world around us, would have to wait until four o'clock when you walked out the door. How long did that time last? I don't know, but suddenly I was going on a whirlwind trip to Europe with my father. I so did not want to leave you, but I could not bear to hurt his feelings. For two weeks I longed for you. When I came back you were gone, joined the Army .You wrote once asking for my picture. I sent it. A shot of me floating down the Rhine River looking very pretty. You came to see me, but I was already engaged to be married and you never said a word.

Summer had ended.

## THE RETURN



by Ruth Theile

I heard the waves crash on the rocks far below  
While the winds from the gale whipped the foam to and fro  
Clouds scudded across the sky in quick flight  
Changing the sky from sunlight to night  
The roaring, the pounding how it beat in my ear  
Filling my heart with worry and fear  
I knew you were out there and you were alone  
And the fear in my heart became a low moan  
The beam from the lighthouse flashed long and low  
Skimming the waves with a green eerie glow  
Like denizens drawn from the world far below  
Remnants of living things started to grow  
Piles of seaweed were lining the cove  
And the pieces and bits a tapestry wove  
Light against darkness, some moving, some still  
Rushing, retreating without any will  
Then down on the beach with purposeful stride  
Hurrying toward me, your figure I spied  
Alive and unharmed you returned from the sea  
My prayers had been answered, you came back to me

# Transitions



“Turtles” by Dick Rose



# PLANS

by Susan Breene

I was at the gym, trying to get my muscles to remember what they were supposed to be doing. It had only been a couple of weeks since my last workout and I was reminded that I am getting older. I looked over at another treadmill down a few in the row, and saw a man considerably older than I. He was moving slowly on his treadmill and had a look of consternation etched into his face, as if he had lived all his life in a state of confusion. His face had tightened up and all of the lines and wrinkles converged toward the center of it, toward his nose, as though his nose could point the way to the answers and end his confusion.

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people made the same promise to themselves when they were younger. It seems to me that we make so many plans when we're young, plans that are forgotten as we age. Plans to achieve this and that, to never get old, to maintain our cleverness and our strength. But where do they go, those plans? Into what black hole do they disappear, unable to climb up and out and be seen or felt or tasted again? Surely the energy that carried those plans must survive somewhere, in some form. Is it converted into the oak tree sapling, with its own plans for majesty and growth and survival? Does it join up with the raging Colorado as it plans its long journey to the sea? Funny thing about the Colorado...its conviction to reach Baja is not forgotten but rather thwarted by the loss of most of its water in the final hundred miles of its pilgrimage. That heroic force, that flooding fire, has become much like the weak old man except that the once mighty river ends its life wishing it *could* forget.

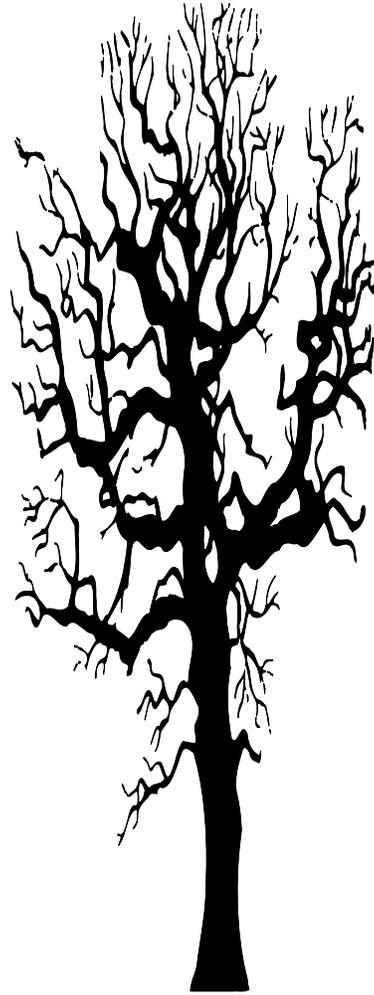


*Mighty Lake by John Macdonald*

## I AM A STUBBORN TREE

by Cathy Lowe

I stand, a stubborn tree in autumn.  
My once-red leaves, now brittle,  
Turn to powder in your hand;  
But still I face the wind  
Welcoming thunder and torrential rain.  
My roots drink deep draughts  
'Til I am ready once again for bed.  
Roll on thunder...one, two  
Lightening is near, too near  
It cracks a mighty light  
And I am wounded once again.  
A pretty branch hangs lifeless  
From my trunk.  
In this elemental world,  
It's lightning I fear...  
It's all that makes me burn and tremble...  
Yet I love the storm and welcome it,  
Though I be split in two  
And leave this earth no more than splinters.  
Ah, but there's a stubborn root  
May sprout me back in spring.



## REMEMBRANCE OF A PAST LIFE

by Ruth Theile

One by one they are lost and gone  
Family, Friends  
My loved one  
Wasn't it only yesterday  
That we grew up playing together  
Our special childhood  
Sharing a friendship  
That few could understand  
How others tried to enter this  
Closed circle  
And how we encouraged them  
To come with us  
But somehow our special bond  
Could not be broken  
No matter how hard we tried  
And now I am the last lost warrior  
standing  
Standing all alone in a world that  
surrounds me  
A world that sees me, but does not  
Embrace me  
I am the old - they are the new  
And so I stand waiting for  
A familiar voice  
A gentle hand  
To find me once again  
And take me home

## LOST

by Ruth Theile

Like a tiny creature  
I am lost, lost, lost.  
Lost in the garden  
Where despair is my lot in life.  
I wander through the tangled thoughts that  
Creep into my mind,  
Looking for discomfort released.  
I tell the thoughts "begone to another day"  
But they mock my desolation.  
And will not unlose the painful bonds that  
tie me.  
I see happiness growing in my garden  
But not for me.  
When I try to caress some joy,  
Like a wayward child it eludes me,  
Taunting and teasing  
Saying "Stay, the game is not yet over."  
My tears have washed a hundred  
continents  
My heart has cracked  
A thousand cracks  
My soul has been  
Twisted and tortured forever.  
Oh release me, my Lord  
I can stand no more.

## AN AGING MINSTREL

by Tom Lyon

Mr. Bones, let's you and me  
Git somethin' clear right now;  
It sure is easy to see

That the emptiness I feel  
Is hardly somethin' new.  
Every single night I kneel

And goes into my prayer  
To whoever might hear-  
But there's never nothin' there.

When I finally do wake  
My stage is empty, cold,  
But for my sanity's sake

I still go up on that stage  
And dance and shout each night  
Away in impotent rage.

Sometimes I gets me a crone"  
Ugly as hell, but then  
No one wants to die alone.



## FLIGHT 800 REMEMBERED

by Tom Lyon

The stone Angel waits  
Her vigil of sixteen years  
Fill the quiet park  
honoring the youthful lives  
Whose cries still echo my town  
So was Rilke right?  
Beauty just the beginning of terror  
we are still now just able to bear  
the stone angel waits

We can comprehend  
so little of life or death  
but perhaps that's best  
somewhere out in the cosmos  
In galactic darkness, peace

*On July 17, 1996 a plane took off from Kennedy international Airport for Paris with passengers and crew of 230, including sixteen high school French students and five chaperones from my small town in Pennsylvania. Shortly thereafter an explosion quickly claimed them all.*

**SONNETS IN BLACKFACE**  
**by Tom Lyon**

SONNET IN BLACKFACE I

Mot gazed into the mirror and he saw  
A minstrel's face astarin' back in awe  
And with a touch of fear he somehow know  
That he would soon go up or else below

He don't know which: the biggest mystery  
Is the lastest thing a body do see  
At the end of this pig-in-poke script  
As we lie awonderin' in some crypt.

Mr. Bones, what do any of this mean?  
I knows some grace, but mostly knows obscene:  
Mot soft-shoe tapped thru sunshine and thru gloom  
Performin' mostly to an empty room.

It's autumn now and damned if I recall  
A time when I know'd anything at all....

SONNET IN BLACKFACE III

In the quiet hours does Mot recall  
His loneliness and it fastly accrue  
Mr Bones, as one keeps puttin' on all  
Them years: and it be mostly sadly true

Thet they keep whittlin' away at his heart  
Diminishin' his desire to care  
For anyone new, lessin' they depart  
And leave another void. The night is rare

That he don't think back on all them losses  
Specially them, Mr. Bones, that come too quick,  
Too soon' on Father, Brother. Mot tosses  
On his sleepless bed: his heart tired and sick.

Mot hoopes there be some sort of after-life  
To make some sense of earthly loss and strife.

SONNET IN BLACFACE II

Mot ponders on losses of which many  
Come now more often in this cruel parade  
Which be now his life; he can't see any  
Hope: he ages in a world never made

A picnic for us minstrels. Mr. Bones,  
Do you believe there be a Messiah  
To give meaning? My gals all age to crones  
Oh for lost loves we never dared to trust  
And the mute sadness of an empty heart.

While Mot be more like Bible's Uriah:  
Mot goes to bed alone and Mr. Bones  
Keeps laughin' as he piles on the stones.

---

**MY EPITAPH**

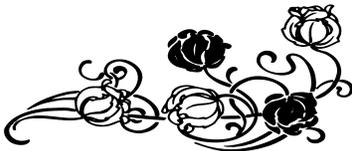
by Tom Lyon

Lord, please help me, sayeth this sinner  
Let me somehow leave life a winner.  
May history mark with pride  
My name before I died  
And became some cockroach's dinner....

## MOM

by Joyce Block

She told me that she had lived a good life  
Done the things she wanted to do  
Said it was enough.  
When the time came  
Her tiny frame lay  
In the hospital bed while  
She tried so hard to hold on  
Like a dog with a bone  
Like the tiger with its prey  
Like the last leaf of summer  
Like the last kiss goodbye  
She lied



## TO GRANDPA

by Robert L. Stanelle

I remember walking by his knee,  
he was a giant to me then  
But I was just a little Jack along side a  
loving man  
He worked the same job for thirty years to  
take care of his family  
And he put aside his own dreams,  
to always find time for me  
We'd throw a ball out in the yard,  
time together after doing our chores  
Had long talks without hardly a word,  
behind those old barn doors

As I grew older I saw him change,  
much shorter than he used to be!  
I asked him once about growing old,  
he shared his thoughts with me  
"When I was born, man rode only horses.  
Now we've landed on the moon.  
I've seen a lot for one man's life".  
I think he knew his time was soon.

I stood staring down at him as he lay there  
quiet and still  
Wanting, needing him to get on up, and  
knowing he never will  
The tears flowed freely down my cheeks,  
day after day I've cried  
For a week, a month, the years it's been,  
since the day that Grandpa died.



# OUR OTHER LOVES



"Kitten"  
by Gil Shaw





*Rusty and Robert  
by Robert Hall*

## THE PICTURE by Robert Hall

Hi Reader, my name is Rusty and I have a tale to tell. Ten years ago I was living in a downtown Rochester apartment with my companion, Bob. It was a good life- lots happening-1 had friends in the building, loved the smells on our walks. Lots of people said "Beautiful dog! What breed is he?" On weekends, Bob took me to a large park where we could run around. Bob ate out a lot and always brought me back a doggie bag. I had it made; this was the good life.

I saw no need for changes. Bob asked me for help in adding romance to his life. He wanted to post our picture on "Match.com." I said OK not knowing the changes one picture could make. The day after our picture appeared on "Match.com." there were 240 e-mails wanting to date me. I had responses from all 50 states. How was I to know there were so many women in need of canine companionship? Of course Bob thought these women were interested in him.

We set about reading and evaluating the e-mails. I insisted that we ignore the ones that only wanted a canine companion. After reading all the e-mails we decided it was answer all or none. One e-mail was from a lady living in Rochester. She wrote "My membership is up on Saturday so you will not be able to contact me by e-mail. If you want to contact me at work my number is 518-232-5910."

Match.com allowed guys to post a picture and note about themselves without paying, but if you wanted to answer any of your responses you had to join. We liked the idea of one phone call and no fee so Bob made the call. The date prospect's name was Jean. Bob asked if she would like to meet for coffee. Her reply was "No, but I will meet you at the Strathallen Bar for drinks on Saturday at 4 p.m. You will wear a jacket, dress slacks- do not wear jeans." The lady knew what she wanted. Bob and I were anxious to meet this lady and see if we were up to her standards.

I must say Bob did look good in his sports coat, mock turtle neck sweater, gray slacks and polished shoes. We drove to the Strathallen and were on time. Of course I had to wait in the car but it was a beautiful day and I took a nap.

The rest is history. Thanks to my help Bob and Jean fell in love, married and we no live in Las Vegas. I love a happy ending!



*White Mountain River by Penny Thompson*

*This piece is true and was inspired by a green Amazon parrot who was with me for 25 years. He was like a small person in a bright green outfit and he had a lot of human-like personality traits, both good and very bad, but I put up with him for so long because he was extremely entertaining and sometimes, usually when I needed it most, would suddenly and for no apparent reason launch into a loud laughing jag that could last for many minutes and always caused hilarity in anyone who heard him.*

**Even the Bird** ( *A Sort of Prayer, Inspired by Butch Breene* ) by Susan Breene

Oh, Great Magician!  
In my darkest moments  
You send me giddy reminders of your Light

Like those times when, in the heavy, silent glooming of my dusk-dampened room  
As fear begins its creeping threat and hope plans its escape  
A sound arises from the outer room  
maniacal laughter bursting from the throat of the crazy parrot in the parlor

I hear...ah, the feathered one has muttered a joke to himself  
and is his own best audience  
He is overcome with delight, the sound of his own voice feeding his exuberance  
the laughter building, growing, spiraling into the heat of hysteria

The raucous uproar catches me, takes me prisoner, pulls me out of the darkness  
as I surrender to it and soon the cauldron of sound is bubbling inside me, too  
the hot giggles surging through me in an upheaval of mirth exploding out my  
throat, through my eyes and through my flushed face now distorted with glee

~ ( a moment to breathe ) ~

"Spirit whispers through the tree's rustling leaves  
Spirit calls in the sea's mythic surf"

(Don't we just know all the clichés)

But did you know? Did you know that even the bird - that demented feather  
fluffing, chest puffing self-satisfied comedian in the cage out there—  
Even the bird can be the messenger of miracles:  
the gifts of imagination, and laughter  
and Hope

# DINOSAURS AND US

by Tom Lyon

Such millenia  
Of years to comprehend, when  
Our span is seconds.  
Of course, I'm speaking  
Dinosaurs and their long reign:  
Over one hundred  
Million years they were  
The alpha life on this earth;  
But then, suddenly  
They just disappeared.  
Probably a large comet  
Crashing into earth  
Caused climatic change  
Which hastened their doom.  
Was this Cosmic accident,  
Or some grand design  
To enable ancestors  
Of ours to emerge  
From the sea and then  
Very slowly begin to  
Evolve into us?



## CAN IT BE?

by Robert Stanelle

Can a chipmunk love a raccoon  
or a robin desire a loon  
Can a woodpecker kiss a quail  
or a walrus need a whale  
Can a grizzly want a polar bear  
or a skunk have a furry hare  
Can a frog cherish a turtle  
or funny old Herman  
love strange Myrtle?  
I don't see  
how it can be  
I don't know why  
they can't try

# Butterflies for Breakfast

by Christine Battle

“It’s not that I’m upset at turning seventy.” I told Irene on the other end of the phone. “It’s just that I haven’t finished doing any of the things I promised myself I would do in my sixties. I was cleaning this morning when I came across my “Sixties To-Do” list. In ten years I haven’t completed one of them. Remember when we were kids and mom got so upset with us over not doing our homework. We wouldn’t even finish one week’s assignments, then a new week started with even more things to get done? That’s how I feel.”

“No good ever comes from cleaning.” Irene laughingly chided. As always my big sister’s laughter spilled out of the earpiece and filled my Florida kitchen with her warmth.

She’s trying to cheer me up, I thought. But her timing was way off. I wasn’t ready to move on, to let go of my brooding.

“Stop it. I’m feeling depressed and you’re ruining my mood.” I said, but I couldn’t keep a smile from my voice.

“I never thought to make a decade list. I’m curious. What’s on yours?” she said.

“I’ve wanted to go to southern Italy and see Pompeii since forever. I want to walk the same cobblestones those ancient Romans did and wonder what their lives were like. We still can’t afford to do that.” I sighed. “Maybe down the road.”

“What else is on this list?” Irene asked.

I grabbed the crumpled paper from the countertop. “Let’s see, Great Wall of China, the Pyramids? I must have written this when I was feeling rich. If my brain didn’t feel so scrambled I would tackle number Nine and learn to speak Russian. But no way that’s happening. Maybe Ten ... plant a butterfly garden. It wouldn’t be all mental so maybe if my back holds out and I actually finish something I start, it might make me feel better. I don’t know. I feel so powerless lately. I can’t seem to concentrate. How would I even start? All I really know about butterflies is that they come out of cocoons.”

“You can find out how to do anything online.” my sister said. Then she wished me “Happy 70th, Rachel.” And threatened to come visit if my mood didn’t improve soon.

I was anxious to get the supper dishes done, leaving them in the drainer to dry themselves. In anticipation of finally starting something, I stepped outside to survey our postage-stamp yard. The cool breeze ruffled the hairs on my arms and told me March was around the corner. A bird cooed nearby, adjusted itself, finding just the right position for its night’s rest in a tall cypress tree. Unseen pig frogs grunted from their hiding places. The blades of St. Augustine grass felt damp underfoot and smelled so fresh.

I enjoyed the night sounds as I thought about my butterfly garden, looking back and forth at the continuous row of about nine backyards. Almost spring and not one flowering plant in sight. Plenty of metal lawn chairs and plastic storage sheds but not one nectar producing flower. Good thing I wasn’t a hungry butterfly I thought.

I woke up before the morning alarm, eager to start. With a cup of dark roast in my hand I began trolling the many butterfly websites nonstop. In the next few days I collected facts in time snatched from other chores. I spent one entire day in my neighborhood library. My brain became a butterfly information sponge.

Of the hundred different types of butterflies to be found in Florida, I learned that only about twenty call the Tampa Bay area home. My forty-by-thirty foot patch of yard couldn’t support that many. And ample room would have to be left for family cookouts. My husband Fred was, after all, the neighborhood Barbeque King.

I would try to attract my three favorites. First, the simple-looking Yellow Sulphur I remembered from Grant Park in my youth. Irene and I would chase them for hours as they fed on the large beds of flowers. The Orange, Black and White colored Monarch was my next easy choice. Their wings always looked like soft suede fabric if one were to stroke them. And I liked the fact that Monarch’s moved on to happier places when the cold rolls in. Number Three had to be the Tiger Swallowtail, with it’s black stripes, set sharp against their yellow bodies. They reminded me of a kite my son Andy once flew, and lost to a tree, so many years ago. But the question remained in the back of my mind, if I did all this work, would they come? No way to know unless I tried.

The next step was clear. With my credit card secure in my wallet I went to my nearest full service plant nursery. The ‘Butterfly Specialist’s’, as they billed themselves in their ads, were in the nearby town of Odessa. The nursery was Saturday-morning busy. Several customers strolled along dirt walkways defined by borders of potted ferns, past sprouts of

oak, pubescent palms, sapling cypress, and on into the flowering plants.

Most shoppers rolled mint green metal garden carts along the winding trail, stopping here and there to load more of this and some of that. The soft squeal of reluctant metal stopping and starting was pleasing rather than annoying. From somewhere towards the back of the nursery a fountain splashed and bubbled nonstop. Between the sound of groaning metal and gurgling water and the assault of primary colors everywhere, I felt slightly tipsy.

With my own cart in tow, I found myself standing in the middle of a grouping of sprawling blue Butterfly Bush, which then led to another cluster of pails of orange flowering milkweed. My eyes followed that as it morphed into buckets of purple Bee Balm, which then flowed into a section of giant containers overflowing with red star-shaped Penta's.

The top of my head felt warm in the ninety-degree heat. The warmth spread down my arms and back, trailed across my stomach and down my legs, then to my feet and into the earth beneath. I felt rooted to the spot, connected by invisible vines formed from the sun's rays above.

Despite the full sun, a soft rain started to fall, light at first, then turning into a sudden spring downpour. In seconds my hair was damp and the skirt on my sundress clung to my legs. Through it all the air was thick with the perfume of blended floral scents. I stood trancelike in this Monet like setting, with the rain washing over me, cooling me down, overwhelmed by the beauty surrounding me. I closed my eyes and gave in to the various scents and the feel of the downpour on my skin. I imagined I could smell the lilac bushes of my youth, the wonderful hyacinth of my college years, and the yellow, edged in pink, Peace roses from our first house so long ago. Such sweet memories.

Like it's sudden onset the shower stopped abruptly and with it my daydreams of times past. I looked around. I was alone. Everyone had sought shelter in the gift shop during the rain. I wondered if I might look foolish to them; an old lady dreaming in the middle of a downpour. To my amazement I realized that I didn't care what they thought.

I smoothed my skirt knowing it would dry in minutes in this heat. I hand fluffed my hair and pulled myself together, remembering why I had come. My spirit now felt as light as the butterflies I sought.

Then, in the distance I spotted them; a swarm of butterflies feasting on row upon row of plants. I watched which flowers were most irresistible to them. Books sometimes get things wrong. Like a squadron from a local parachuting club, some butterflies, my yellow

sulphurs included, seemed to flutter in from above, while others preferred to dive-bomb their way in to the nectar buffet.

Now knowing firsthand which plants they liked, I loaded my own cart with plants, soil, tools and fertilizer. For good luck I threw in a pair of soft pink gardening gloves.

I worried about the short trip home in the heat and humidity of my trunk, hoping my plants would all make it. “A” for effort and “D” for planning I thought. Now I would need to race the light if I was going to get these plants in the ground by nightfall.

Once home, Fred insisted he unload my floral treasures. “I’ll put this stuff out back. You get something cold to drink. You do something different with your hair?” he asked.

I quickly changed into shorts and a summer top as I downed a glass of icy cold lemon water. On a blank pad I sketched my garden’s design. Since I had gone slightly overboard in my buying frenzy, my phase one layout would have to be larger than I originally planned. I wanted a three foot wide by fifteen foot deep wavy line at the right edge of our property. My goal was to be able to see the garden from our breakfast table.

Fred, fresh from unloading plants and supplies out back, joined me inside. “Call if you need help getting up off the ground and make sure you don’t block my barbeque area.” he said. I could tell he wanted to help but this was something I needed to do for myself.

Armed with his words of inspiration I started to remove the grass one square at a time. Then I loosened the soil with a sturdy garden fork. The dirt smelled sweet and musky both. The first few shovels, full of the rocky soil were the hardest. I needed to remove the limestone type dirt to make room for my premium soil mix. Soon my body settled into a rhythm and the hours passed as the afternoon sun sank low on the horizon.

Fred brought out a tuna salad sandwich and iced tea at dinnertime. I was too dirt-caked and obsessed to do more than gulp it all down. He wanted me to quit for the night, not knowing what completing this project meant to me. I tried to pace myself, but I was a woman on a mission. By the time I decided to call it quits my back and thighs ached so that I did indeed need Fred’s help in standing upright.

A little more than half of my plants were in the ground. I knew however that I should stop. There’s always tomorrow I thought. Fred came out and watered all the plants, both those in the ground and the ten flower buckets lined up to be planted on the following day. That would have to do. All my fingers and the palm of my right hand ached from gripping the

gardening tools so tightly. My back wasn't on speaking terms with me anymore, and my calves were threatening to withhold support, but I felt more pleased with myself than I had in the past twenty years.

I went to sleep that night as soon as hair met goose down. I remember dreaming but wasn't sure about what. Then somewhere, where dreams and reality meet, I heard my husband calling me. "Get up, get up" he was saying. I blinked at the morning light pouring in through the raised blinds. "Wait till you see your garden" he said.

I stumbled up, still half asleep. I rushed to join my husband out back. "Look, over there." he shouted and pointed. There, on a stalk of milkweed sat one lonely orange and black monarch, just one, but it was so beautiful. One is all it takes. Guess this butterfly didn't care if the garden was only half done.

Later, as I lingered over my morning coffee, I crossed through number Ten on my Sixties List. I felt at peace. Ready for what my seventies would bring. I won't make any list though; I'll just let it all unfold in it's own good time.



*"Butterflies" by Dawn McCaffrey*



*Photo by Susan Breene*

## **I Prefer the Company of Cats**

I prefer the company of cats  
too bad men can't purr

when cats paw you it means they love you  
when men paw you it doesn't always mean that

cats give you affection even when they don't want anything from you  
can you say the same thing about men?

by Susan Breene

# TREASURED MOMENTS



*“Art at the Bellagio” by Beth Sylvester*





Penelope



First born Daughter, of a  
First born Daughter, of a  
First born Daughter.

Blessed child!

Worried over and waited for,  
Born in perfect time.  
Penelope.

*by Kathy Dougherty- Rouches*

**Poem for Baby Trae (on the occasion of his adoption party)**

Seed feels the warmth of the earth and roots itself into the embracing soil  
River senses ocean's pull and journeys into mother sea  
Dream is drawn by love and enters the world of being  
And the baby boy settles into the loving arms of his true family



by Susan Breene

## That Morning

by Susan Breene

That morning, as usual, I didn't recognize it right at the moment,  
the precise moment when I felt the awareness, received the invitation  
followed by the thought ...

Well, I thought, before I step into the gentle, falling water  
before I run my fingers through the frothy tangle on my head  
before I venture out into the warm haze of the settling-in day  
I will sit for a moment, and say Hello

And again, as so many times before  
'though it always arrives as somewhat of a surprise  
There it came, there it was  
Engulfing me, flooding me, the expansion, the filling-up,  
the joyful billowing of every cell as that essence mingled with my own  
and then, for a few moments, replaced it  
There it was again, that Love that could not have been richer, fuller,  
more expansive  
or more thrilling  
if flesh and blood had been there with me.



*"Purple Bloom" by Gil Shaw*

# Perfect Mornings

by Carol Katz

I awoke to the pleasing, but almost haunting sound of the train's whistle... moving along tracks next to the great body of water, almost a mile away. It's a sound that always beckons me to travel. Happiness.

It's a sound that brings to mind snatches of little treasures. Spring's red winged black bird making its squeaky announcements atop a cattail near the railroad station. Views of the high basaltic cliffs that brace the opposite shore as the train travels south.

A sighting of an eagle.

Long walks, hand in hand...up long blocks past specialty shops and fancy hotels. We seem to be carried by waves of people that bring us to the heart of the island, Central Park. Happiness. I think of another early morn foray there. Hand in hand again, we pass an apothecary that not only sells what's necessary... but could also bring moments of delight to the woman who steps inside on a whim to have one of the glittering baubles in its delightful windows.

Within an hour we enter the vast inner spaces like time travelers. We marvel at the Etruscans, Greeks and Romans. I delight in the ancient jewelry, and the smooth shiny curves of half limbed sentinels. Was that a headless goddess? We venture to other wings, in awe of tribal pasts, but grateful that our own feet are planted in the here and now.

Hunger takes over. We toast each other from the small bottles of wine, seated near statuary and indoor ponds, now long gone. Happiness.

I indulge in my daydream, toothbrush held but momentarily forgotten.

He brews the coffee, rich and dark. My mind envisions the places where bushes on hills are blessed by sun, places where these ground beans grew, land where my feet will never touch. It doesn't sadden me. I'm happy. Especially with him smiling at me and a warm mug in my hand. I'll bring my nose closer before I sip. True happiness.

There is another high, long whistle. Is this one headed north? If so, it will be passing by rounded green hills, where the sun is inching its way to rest on crested houses. They will bask in the yellow glow, as if they were giant nests holding what's precious. Somewhere a dog barks, and closer, a baby cries.

I recall another morn. We climb halfway up the steep hill to a place of natural wonder. Puddles remain after the rain. A thick forest all around us ... evergreens, maples, dogwood and oak. The air is fresh and chilled. Our breaths and our strides adjust to

the rhythm of our jog. Twenty feet up the red cardinal rests on drying bittersweet. It sings its song: "pretty boy." There is the crunch of leathery oak leaves that the night's wind swirled on to our path. We look up again, past the red, feathery, regal specimen to what is cloudless and as blue as a southwestern sky.

We smile and increase our speed. Two blue jays ahead of us look like sparring warriors. Each seems to squawk, this land is mine. We are near the budding heads of skunk cabbage in standing water along the edge of the road. Ahead of us is the arched gateway covered in ivy, beyond that the lake that signals us to return home to warm showers and soft robes. Another perfect morning.

Happiness:

One more insistent whistle from the train. I'm thinking of the North Country we will drive through before the next morning's light. Buckets and tubing on trees. The ground is still icy and crunchy there. If we're lucky, steam will billow from the sugar house's chimney, the aroma from its production coating the air. Little pots of crocuses will be on the veranda and all will be in a happy mood as we munch on all things maple syrup, the donuts best of all. Children laughing, running. High on sugar? We'll bring a gallon home.

Another happy morning.

But something about the tubing makes me think of another time when, for a month, I was tethered by vining tubes that traveled wherever I went. In the early morning hours when I had to pee, the aide and I did our usual ungainly dance, and laughed as best we could while six tubes dripped, giving me life.

A momentary bit of happiness.

Then my thoughts skip to a recent morn, when at a good clip we descend the hill, traveling home, our house now in sight. It feels so good, my arms pumping and my gait so fluid that my hips and legs seem to move effortlessly. Behind our house the thorny bushes are greening. The promise that once again we'd be able to pick wild blackberries and raspberries for our cereal.

I put down the toothbrush and breath in deeply, all the way to my diaphragm.

I now know for certain that it isn't only happiness that's fueling my thoughts.

It's gratitude.



## The Fancy Coat

By Janet Asay

I was 41 years old and had never had a really fancy coat. Now that I was living in Ohio, I needed a good coat, and on a trip to the mall one night in the early winter of 1987, I found one I could love.

“Oh look, Honey!” I cooed to my husband. “Isn’t it beautiful?”

It was white faux fur with a few grayish streaks to give it more of a real fur look. My husband was a practical man, and he didn’t see what I saw in the coat, but he agreed that it would keep me warm in the harsh Ohio winter, and the price was reasonable, so we bought it.

The first Sunday I wore the coat to church, I was stopped by numerous friends who wanted to touch and stroke the fur. I couldn’t have felt more elegant if I’d been wearing mink. In fact, being inclined to think that wearing dead animals is kind of gross if it isn’t necessary, I felt even more elegant in my faux fur. The attention I got that first Sunday became the norm whenever I went anywhere in the Dayton area in my beautiful coat.

At the end of February, we had a death in the family in my native southern California. I had just finished a temporary work assignment in Dayton, so I decided to stay in California for a month and to offer whatever help and consolation I could.

I knew I could get a job with the same temp agency, so the trip was arranged. I didn’t have a lot of clothes, so I packed what I had. I knew the coat was too heavy for the San Diego area, but I didn’t have another one or even nice sweaters to wear to work – and besides, I looked so good in that coat! Family and friends in California would surely admire it the way my friends in Ohio did.

After the funeral in Los Angeles, I took a train to San Diego, and a friend picked me up at the station.

“Um, isn’t that coat a little heavy?” he asked with obvious lack of appreciation.

“Not really,” I lied.

We went to dinner at a nice restaurant before he took me to my mom’s. I shrugged out of the coat, and it lay around my hips on the seat of the booth. The waiter approached, looked down, and jumped back.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “It’s a coat!”

“Yes,” I answered, puzzled.

“I thought it was a dog,” he said.

I tittered nervously, but I was offended. My friend offered no condemnation of the waiter after he’d taken our order and headed off to the kitchen.

I got the anticipated assignment from the agency, and began my three week stint. My mom would drop me off at the bus stop near her home, and I would ride the bus to work and back to the stop again each day. On the first day, of course, I wore my beautiful coat, even though the temperature was in the 50’s and hardly called for real or faux fur.

After work, I took the bus to the transfer stop, an area of San Diego County that I remembered as being upscale when I was in my teens. I sat down next to an old lady who was wearing a sporty outfit, complete with visor and tennis shoes. She studied me furtively, but we didn’t speak, and I didn’t look directly at her. I was bored with this non-conversation, so I went to the nearby pay phone and called my sister for a short chat.

As we visited, an expensive-looking gold-colored car pulled up near the phone booth. The middle-aged man at the wheel looked successful. He smiled at me, as if he knew me.

I reported to my sister “There’s a man in a nice car, smiling at me. I wonder if I used to know him at church. He doesn’t look familiar.”

He smiled and I smiled back, but continued talking with my sister.

Finally, I said, “I have to go. The bus will be here any minute.”

I returned to the bench and decided to break the ice with the old lady.

“That was weird,” I told her. “There was a man who kept smiling at me. I have racked my brain, but I honestly can’t remember ever meeting him.”

“He probably thought you were a hooker,” she replied matter-of-factly.

“What?” I exclaimed. “Why would he think *that*?”

“Well, you are wearing that coat,” she answered. It turned out that the area wasn’t so upscale anymore; in fact, it was now something of a red-light district. When I got back to Ohio, I proudly wore my coat again, but for the rest of the time I owned it, my family referred to it as my “Hooker Coat”

## ABOUT A LIFE

by Marge Gately

I remember when I first started school in Brooklyn. I don't remember much about school itself, but I do remember walking behind my big brother. I don't have to tell you what big brothers are like- they love to drive little sisters crazy. He would walk very, very fast and my little legs would struggle to keep up with him. It was especially trying when we had to walk through the snow in Brooklyn.

The next time I remember my school days, I was living in Riverside, California, where we moved when I was seven. I started second grade at Longfellow School, and really liked my teacher. This would be my last year in public school. We moved across town and settled across the street from Saint Francis de Sales School, where I remained all the way through high school graduation.

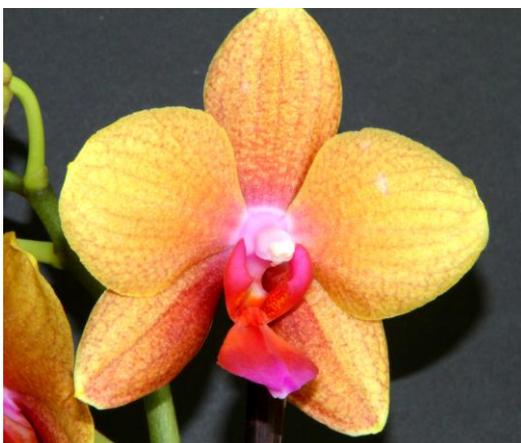
I remember when I first decided that I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up. I was in third grade, my first year at Saint Frances de Sales. I noticed that my teacher bossed all the children around, and they had to do whatever she said. I remember thinking that it would be really fun to boss people around. So the decision was clear: be a teacher.

Fortunately for my many students, I was able to come up with better (and more humane) reasons for being a teacher.



*"Bridge" by Penny Yazzie*





*"Coral Orchid" by John MacDonald*

**HUMOR  
IS  
AGELESS!**



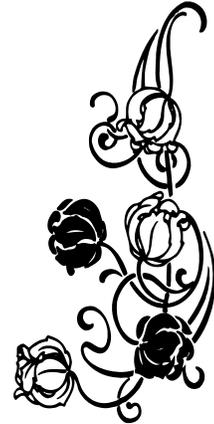
# Friendship

by Charlene McKenzie

I have been charged with befriending idiots. Guilty! I have been charged with defending weirdoes. Guilty! I have been charged with flip-flopping because I have considered opposing opinions and changed mine. Guilty! I am admitting to these and many other crimes of.....acceptance. So now, I am branded a circus ringmaster because I attract so-called

“wackos.” Well, this is my defense: people interest me. Why should friends be just like me? As much as I do enjoy my own company, I treasure differences in others. The ringmaster directs performances of a varied group, human and non-human. He does not possess the skills of his cohorts, but he supportively introduces them to the audience. Typically, the fickle audience selects favorites. Similarly, in my role as ringmaster, I may introduce new friends to old ones, and they choose to like or dislike. Either way, the show must go on.

So give me your weirdoes, your wackos,  
Your nutcase masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched oddballs of your teeming shore!  
Send these, the misunderstood, tempest-tost to me,  
I extend my hand; you are friendless no more!



## SPACE CADET

by Hector M. Rosario

You come across what seemingly appears to be a stunning female specimen of the human race on a cold December night in 1978 in Flagstaff, Arizona

You strike up a conversation and all goes well until you realize she's not from our neck of the woods.

You have just entered a moment in space and time which seems to be obscure or bent.

In a moment you will be entering a small figment of our imagination called The Twinkle Zone.

Here's what transpired between the stranger and me:

Hector: "Good evening. It's a lovely night. I've never seen you around here. What's your name?"

Lady: "My name is Aliana. I'm not exactly from here. I come from the Pleideas Galaxy, about 500 light years from here."

Hector: *(thinking to himself)*: "Great, I can't handle another Space Cadet in my life, but I'll play along".

I found it strange how she kept touching me with her index finger on my arm.

"Tell me, how long did it take you to get here?"

Lady (or Space Cadet from now on): "In your earth time, it took me about seven of your hours".

Hector: "How can you take such G forces? I don't care what G strings you pull but that's impossible."

Space Cadet: "Do not judge us by your limitations. We take short cuts to get here. We bend time and space and use what you refer to as a worm hole."

Hector: "Ok, so let's talk Philosophy, Religion, etc."

Space Cadet: "Where would you like to start?"

Hector: "How do you do IT in your planet?"

Space Cadet: "Well - our Information Technology is way beyond your comprehension."

Hector: "NO, I meant 'IT', you know, with a capital I and a capital T. The creation of new human form."

Space Cadet: “Well, if there’s a need for Engineers, we go to the DNA bank and inject ourselves ... and when it’s time, we rip it out and be done with it. We do not need a partner, for we are asexual.”

Hector: “Where’s the fun in that? “

Space Cadet: “Would you like to come with me?”

Hector: “Excuse me?”

Space Cadet: “COME with me in my transport to my planet.”

Hector: “Oh, well ... how old would I be when you brought me back after say a week?”

Space Cadet: “Maybe about 20 years older in your earth time.”

Hector: “I am 64 now, with problems. I don’t think I can survive the trip. I would die! And how old are you?”

Space Cadet: “I do not understand that notion. I am 2000 in your earth years, but it does not matter.”

Hector: “When we get old and sick, we die. We cease to exist.”

Space Cadet: “We have eternal life and our first 70 years is spent going to school learning about many things - including studying your planet life and your languages. And by the way, we create an atmosphere around our ships to make the travelers comfortable.”

Hector: “Say, why do you insist on touching me with your index finger on my arm?”

Space Cadet: “That’s how we do IT! When we encounter a strange creature we find attractive ...”

Hector: “You mean all this time you were taking advantage of me without my consent?”

Space Cadet: “I thought you were enjoying it.”

Hector: “Was it good for you?”

Space Cadet: “I prefer doing IT to myself but it’s something we need to do to fix your DNA. We’re trying to make you more passive before we let you into our GAG (Government of Alien Galaxies).”

Hector: “So what do you do after the Big Bang?”

Space Cadet: “We are still expanding.”

Hector: “No, I mean, after you inject with yourselves with Engineering Love Juices.”

Space Cadet: “Well, I enjoy going for a nice tall glass dish of strawberry ice cream. What do you do?”

Hector: “I forgot. It’s been light years.”

Space Cadet: “Well, are you coming with me or not?”

Hector: “Do me a favor. Go back to where you came from. I feel used and abused. I’m going to hit the showers; I feel dirty. You can go enjoy your strawberry ice cream.”

## LETTER OF COMPLAINT

by David Minnicks

To: Manager and Chief  
Department of Creation  
Solar Planetary System

Re: Earth

It has come to the attention of our engineering department that a lack of attention to detail and execution has resulted in the creation of an inferior planet.

We would specifically request you immediately address the following:

The choice of a liquid molten center is curious, but encasing this core with unstable and shifting tectonic plates is irresponsible, as it leads to the danger of earthquakes on the surface, as well as the constant movement of continents. Additionally, several breeches in these plates allowing molten lava to flow on the surface would only be acceptable on an unpopulated planet. We also question your curious choice to cover so much of the planet with undrinkable water.

As to flora and fauna – we find the plants to be acceptable with the exception of the few, completely unnecessary, poisonous species.

It is with animal life that we raise our strongest objections. Your system of giving all of these creatures a will to survive and then placing them in a food chain that redefines them as a meal is more than irresponsible engineering, but suggests a lack of concern for all living things.

As for the Human Experiment, your lack of success and missteps are too many to be covered here, and will be delineated in a separate attachment. Let it, however, be noted that you have been aware of these human problems for some time, and your previous attempt to correct this by covering the entire planet with water (known in this department as the Crazy Weather Experiment) accomplished nothing more than destabilizing the tectonic plates even more as well as relocating the continents. Let it be noted that one continent was lost entirely.

Other departments are preparing reports on your handling of aspects of your social experiments. These will include your questionable handling of:

Religion  
Tribalism  
Disease  
Distribution of Wealth, etc.

We are only concerned with engineering at this time, and urge that you consider some solutions to the structural problems on this planet. Not, mind you, just a quick patch-up with extreme weather.

Looking forward to your immediate response to this evaluation,

I remain,

Manager and Chief

Quality Control

Engineering Department

Milky Way

### COMPLAINT LETTER

By Karen Cooper Minnicks

Dear Green Valley HOA President,

When we moved into our new home recently, I observed an error in the lettering on our street sign on the corner. My many attempts to get this error corrected have fallen on deaf ears since, as I have been told in no uncertain terms, you feel the error is inconsequential and changing one letter would not be worth the time or money. I am writing to you today to convince you otherwise.

Here are some examples of just one letter making a huge difference:

- What if I told you, "She beat thinks if line art fred". Change one letter in each word correctly, and you'd know I said, "The best things in life are free."
- What if you were away on a business trip, left off an "e" and sent your wife a message saying, "Wish you were her"?
- What if you were advertising your house for sale and proudly stated that it had a huge dick for entertaining?
- What if the FDA told you to check for tainted peanut butter in your panties?

I think I've made my point. Please stop being such an ignoramus and add the "L" to my street sign so I can stop living at 357 PUBIC CONCOURSE WAY.

Bent dishes,

Karen Minnicks

## THE PERFECT LAWN

by Alan Nazer

After a storm my lawn looks like a battlefield. The grass is overgrown, the bare spots mud and everything littered with twigs and branches from the oak trees that tower above the yard. I look at this scene with loathing, since I am the designated lawn maintainer.

I grew up in a high rise apartment building in Brooklyn NY. I specify the one in New York because I learned there are other Brooklyns in the world. Of course they are not the original. As an apartment and city dweller, I endured crowded elevators, noisy hallways, and abominable traffic. I dreamed of open space, clean fresh air and open roads found in the distant suburbs. No one warned me about lawns.

Lawns are a scourge. They break the hearts of homeowners by never looking as pictured in magazines or on fertilizer bags. I wondered if those were pictures of true lawns or just artists'

renditions, until the day I came upon one that lay in brilliant green splendor. I looked closely for bare spots, the yellow or white of dandelions, exposed tree roots, gray fungus or any imperfections. There were none. I raced to the door and rang the bell.

"Sir, I couldn't help admiring your beautiful lawn. Would you please tell me what you use to keep your lawn in such perfect condition?"

The man stared at me for a moment, and then said "Nels".

"Nels?" I asked. "What's a Nels?"

"A gardener."

"What does a Nels cost?"

He told me. I am now considering AstroTurf.



# OOPS!

by Karen Cooper Minnicks

"Oops, I'm such a klutz!"

Henry Dawson heard his wife, Nancy, in the other room and shuddered. When they first met, five years ago, her clumsiness was cute. Now it wasn't cute, not cute at all. Henry walked into the den to find out what Nancy had done this time.

"I'm sorry, honey," Nancy said, "I seem to have broken your bowling trophy. I had no idea the top would come off so easily."

Henry wheeled around and walked back into the living room. He had to do something and do it fast. So far this week, Nancy had broken his grandmother's pitcher, chipped a tile on the kitchen counter and scorched his favorite shirt. Every time, she said the same thing, "Oops, I'm such a klutz!" Henry couldn't stand it a moment longer. He wanted out.

He thought about what he was going to do. Maybe he should just divorce her. Wait a minute, though. They lived in a community property state, and he wasn't about to give her half of everything he had worked so hard to build. After all, there was the house, the car dealership and the vacation cabin in the mountains. She'd take him to the cleaners if he left her, and he wasn't about to give her the chance. Henry sighed as he realized he'd have to kill her.

Now he knew what he was going to do. But how? Then, it came to him. He'd use her famous klutziness against her. Everyone knew how clumsy she was, so if he made her death look accidental, he'd have it made. While Nancy was busy dusting in the den, Henry slipped down to the basement and looked around. There had to be something here he could use. Then he saw what he needed. It was a box of rat poison marked with the grisly skull and crossbones. He poured a little into a piece of scrap paper, folded it up and put it in his pocket. Later, after Nancy was dead, he'd bring up the box, put it on a shelf near the sugar, fill the sugar bowl with some and let the police reach their own conclusion about the nasty little mistake Nancy had made. He took his coffee black and unsweetened, so nobody would wonder why he hadn't succumbed to the same fate.

Henry went back upstairs and into the kitchen.

"Nancy, honey, I'm putting on a pot of coffee. Take a break from cleaning and have a cup with me."

"How very thoughtful you are, Henry," Nancy shouted from the den. "There are some fresh-baked cookies in the jar. Let's have some of those, too."

Henry put out the best cups and saucers and arranged some lemon cookies on a little silver platter. Let this be a stylish sendoff for Nancy. When he poured her coffee, he quickly put in the rat poison, stirred it until the fizziness was gone and called Nancy to the breakfast room.

"Thanks, Henry. This is super."

Henry poured his coffee and joined her at the table. Nancy took one sip, squeezed her lips together and stood, saying that she needed to get more sugar. Henry reached out, their arms collided and Nancy's cup smashed to the floor, its contents spraying everywhere.

He gritted his teeth at Nancy's too familiar "Oops, I'm such a klutz!" As she cleared up the china shards and wiped the floor, Henry left the breakfast room. Suddenly he wasn't thirsty anymore.

Now that he had made his decision, he wasn't about to give up. He decided he'd have to try something a little more creative, however. There was a three-day weekend coming up. His manager could run the car lot. Perfect.

"Nancy, how would you like to go up to the mountains for the weekend? It would do us good to get away."

"Great idea," Nancy answered. "I've missed our little cabin in the woods. It's been way too long."

Now all Henry would have to do would be to take a hike with Nancy, and a shove at just the right place would send her falling hundreds of feet into a canyon not far from their cabin. On the ride up to the mountains, Nancy told Henry he'd been acting a little strange lately.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked.

Henry told her that everything was fine, getting better all the time as a matter of fact.

"Maybe you've just been working too hard," she said. "This weekend will do you good."

Little did she know, Henry thought.

They arrived at the cabin late Friday evening, had a bite to eat and got to bed early. When Henry proposed a hike in the morning, Nancy agreed enthusiastically. There was a small delay, however, when she ripped her jeans on a nail sticking out of the cabin wall. Don't say

it, please don't say it, Henry begged her silently and, to his surprise, she didn't. This was going to be a good day after all.

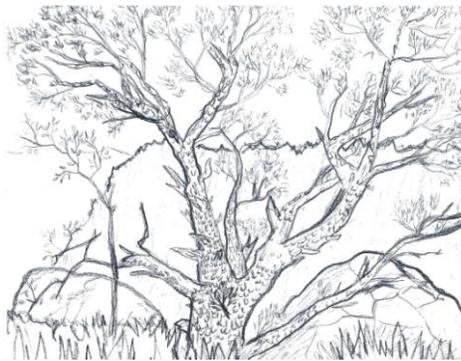
Henry and Nancy walked side by side in the woods, occasionally stopping to look at flowers, plants or small forest creatures that Nancy found interesting. Henry didn't want to be an ogre, after all. Let Nancy look all she wanted. She'd be gone soon enough, a victim of her own clumsiness, with a little help from her not-so-loving husband.

When Henry looked up the path, he could see they would soon be at the perfect spot for him to act on his plan. The ridge was covered with loose gravel, and poor Nancy would never know what hit her as she tumbled down into the canyon. As they walked along slowly, Henry mused about how wonderful his life was going to be without Nancy. No more chaos, no more money spent on things soon broken. No more, "Oops, Henry, I'm such a klutz!" Just peace and quiet. One little shove, and he was going to be free forever.

As they approached Henry's perfect spot, Nancy frowned and looked down. Henry seized the moment and lunged at her – just as she bent down to tie an undone shoelace on her sneaker. As he sailed over her crouched body and fell toward the canyon below, he heard Nancy's voice above him.

"Oops, Henry, you're such a klutz!"

Just before he hit the ground, he could swear he heard her laugh



*"Old Cedar" by Penny Thompson*

## COGITATING

by Ed Devore

Earl was out back sitting on the two holer. Darkness had not yet given way to dawn and it was very cold in the old wooden outhouse. He always came out early to be first, before his seven brothers and sisters, so he could sit on the right side because the left side had splinters on the seat due to the crack. There was also the hope that some real toilet paper would be left but today not even the soft inside sheets of the Sears catalog were available, just some shiny pictures from a discarded magazine. Still, that was better than the time he had been in the woods hunting with his Pa and mistakenly used some poison oak leaves; couldn't walk straight for a week.

A battered kerosene lamp provided enough light to see some of the pictures which showed a life that he dreamed about. Houses with inside plumbing, people all clean and dressed pretty, doing things like dancing inside or eating off decorated porcelain tableware. His dreams were helped by the teacher in the one room schoolhouse he attended that said he was very smart and could do great things if he just studied real hard.

Shards of light were starting to come through the chinks in the wood. The chilly air kept most of the smell at a level that was bearable but Earl knew that once the sun came up, that would not be the case. He needed to hurry because sometimes his sick uncle Clint (he had the black lung disease) would come out and sit on the other hole. Uncle Clint smelled even worse than the outhouse so Earl squeezed real hard till his face turned red and he could feel the veins popping out on the side of his neck.

Ma was always up early and when he had left this morning, she told him she would let him have some extra pancakes and honey for breakfast, since it was his birthday. Earl had told his Ma that he wanted to stay in school so he could become a doctor like old doc Finley but his Ma said that was up to his Pa. His Pa said the mine was hiring and he needed to work so this would be his first day in the coal mine. Today, Earl would be twelve years old, time to stop cogitating about nonsense.

# MEDIEVAL INTROSPECTION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

by Cathy Lowe

I wonder what my errant knight

Is doing on a starry night.

Is he reading en Francais

By candle light?

Or in the day

Just jousting all his youth away,

When he should spend it

Here with me

By all the rules of courtesye.

Taking my favors

With gentle hand,

The emblem of a gentle man.

But, ah I know not where he be...

Where follows he his destiny

Jerusalem...or death en route

Or offering another suit?

I only know his loyalty

Is to his lord, and not to me.

## THE TEMPLE OF AGE AND BEAUTY

Eulogy for Mademoiselle Roux,  
Madame L'Oreal and Miss Clairol.

by Mary Owens

As we gather here in the Temple of Age and Beauty, I am here to commemorate the passing of three Beauty Goddesses - Mademoiselle Roux, Madame L'Oreal and Miss Clairol. May They Rest In Peace.

Mademoiselle Roux was, in my youth, a most helpful and Fanciful Rinse, the creative offspring of Mr. Charles Revlon. She promised me I could be beautiful like she was. Her Hair Color was magical - sometimes flaming red, sometimes black, sometimes auburn, sometimes even blue black. I met her at age twelve and, not liking my own virgin brown hair, I surrendered it to her. I modeled myself continually in her glamorous image, rinsing my way to beauty, romance and adventure for several adolescent years.

My next friend and mentor was Miss Clairol and her exciting companion Blue Lightening Booster - these fiery hot goddesses were first introduced to me when I was 17 years old. Miss Clairol also promised me beauty, glamour and happiness with the innocent looking frosty blue powdered potion she offered to me. Blondes do have more fun don't they? - But she was also the first goddess to betray me and she even make me cry real tears. Her toxic potion put scabs on my head and even made some of my hair fall out. Yet, I confess, I still could not let go of our abusive relationship.

Indeed, there were some good moments. After all, she wooed and assured me that I did look a lot like Jean Harlow or even Sandra Dee or Marilyn Monroe.

Our fairytale, love-hate, somewhat expensive relationship continued for many more years

I finally broke up with Miss Clairol after I got tired of my old brown roots appearing faithfully every three weeks. –perpetually threatening to expose the clandestine deceptive relationship shared by Miss Clairol and me. I did sometimes think we were actually fooling everyone until even more of my hair started breaking from her abuse – my coiffure beginning to look like an old soaked yellow straw broom - so I gave up on Miss Clairol and finally left.

The late Madame L'Oreal of Paris later whispering from the shelves of a Thrifty Drugstore promised she could rescue me. She said that if I let her change my hair to black, I could then be beautiful - like Liz Taylor, my movie idol during those years. Drenched with black tint - I added purple eye shadow and false eyelashes – and began dreaming I was Cleopatra, falling passionately into Marc Antony's arms. On some days I was Liz the lonely artist at Big Sur with Richard Burton loving me madly, or his Beloved Kate in Taming of the Shrew.

But then one day, I grew tired of Madame L'Oreal too. I was in my forties by then, and restless and bored, craving change. So to rejuvenate and beautify me, Miss Clairol returned to my side. She rescued me again with Nice & Easy hair color solutions which transformed my now rebellious gray roots to blonde. But then the new white roots began clamoring for respect, so we covered them too and turned them into streaks – but they became bigger and bolder – like the relentless weeds in my front yard, my own persistent now white hair color just kept getting older like me and just kept coming back –

So now a very special goodbye to Miss Clairol too... Even though I once betrayed you, you returned to me. And like a loyal friend, you remained with

me - always available, until the very end. You even conspired with me secretly during my 12 year romance with a much younger man – remember when we hid together in the bathroom - and he never noticed as we frantically covered even a speck of grey with your golden blonde serum?

And I always had to pick up the ticket and pay when we were together Miss Clairol, but at the time, you were worth every penny.

But now finally here – in the Temple of Age and Beauty, I lay my former goddess girlfriends to their final rest. May the Goddesses Roux, Clairol and L’Oreal Rest In an Eternally Youthful Peace and on their tombstones the inscription:

“IGNORING THE BEAUTY OF AGE –  
UNTIL THEIR COLORED ENDS  
THEY VALUED “DYE” ING”

And as we say Farewell to them, I also wish to honor those still living who are gathered here among us. Among these my long time friends since birth. Despite my infidelities with loves of many hair colors, my own natural hair has always been there with me begging for acceptance. First unwanted brown, then unwanted grey and now white – she remained honest, faithful, pleading that I abandon all others - and just accept her as she really is.

So today, after searching endlessly for beauty in what I wasn’t - I now pledge my eternal love to my long suffering natural hair. No longer will she be forced to hide, buried in shame, but is now a silver and white crown of beauty... this crown shared by many of the handsome and beautiful Gods and Goddesses now gathered here with me - in the New Temple of Age EQUALS Beauty today.

GOTCHA !

By Carl Weller

S: Sheriff M: Moe

S: We've got you surrounded, Moe! Come on out with your hands raised up where we can see them!

M: I can't!

S: Why not!

M: Because I'm naked.

S: It's all men we got here, Moe - come on out.

M: That's the problem, sheriff. I won't have them men laughin' at me. I'd rather die right here. Death by Cop. Ain't that what you call it when you shoot somebody accidental on purpose? That's what'll happen if they laugh at me.

S: Come on Moe, seein' a guy naked ain't no big deal to these guys.

M: It's a big deal to me. When they was passin' out the endowments, I ended up on the short end of the stick, so to speak.

S: Well, where the hell's your clothes? I'll give you a couple of minutes to get them on, then you can come on out.

M: They ain't here, sheriff. Besides, I ain't alone.

S: You ain't alone? Who's there with you, then?

M: Madonna's here too.

S: Madonna who? You can't be talkin' about my wife, Madonna!

M: Sorry, Sheriff. And she's naked, too.

S: What? This has got to be a joke!

M: Adam and Eva are here, too.

S: What? What are my kids doin' there?

M: Sorry sheriff. And they're naked, too. But everybody's fine.

S: Fine? I ain't fine, Moe. You better clear this up fast or I'm comin' up there and that short stick of yours is gonna' be no stick before you can blink.

M: Sony, sheriff. I met Madonna and Adam and Eva while we was all relaxin' by the pool when you guys was all at the Sunrise Nature Camp last week. I don't know where you was. I figured you was off playin' badminton or somethin'.

S: I was playin' volleyball, Moe. But that don't explain what you are all doin' up there.

M: We're havin' a picnic sheriff. I got the day off and I just swung by your house and I asked Madonna if she and the kids would like to go on a nature picnic. I woulda asked you, too, if you wasn't workin'.

S: Jiminy Crimeiny, Moe. That don't excuse you for your criminal conduct.

M: I'm really sorry Sheriff. Would you give me a break if I just pay for them ready-made deli sandwiches I stole from the Fresh and Easy store?



*'Lemons' by Denise A. Simon*

# Purely Poetry



## DANCES WITH POETS

By Robert L. Stanelle

On a weekday afternoon, once a week or so, the poets of Las Vegas prance  
I like to come and join them, have coffee and a dance  
I listen to their words, as they flow from golden lips  
Give pause for serious thought, between my coffee sips  
I sit each time amazed, at words that stir my soul  
The painted flowing images, the poet makes a whole  
I really love to listen, words fill me with great joy  
Like I used to find in sports, as a young and mobile boy  
Now I prefer to sit and sip, while great thoughts I do think  
Some will thrill to my every word, some might say they stink  
Critics do not bother me, I think my own words pretty swell  
Besides, as we get older, we don't hear so well  
I'm no longer a young boy, whose joy is playing in the grass  
Nor am I old and beaten, my solace lies in a glass  
Now joy lies in my words, and the hope you'll hear them well  
For I have now lived long enough, that I have much to tell  
If you should choose to listen, you may learn a thing or two  
For the lessons I have learned, may well apply to you  
If you choose not to listen, to dismiss me as an old quack  
Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn, I'll keep on coming back  
I'll keep on reading my little poems, the humor I do so well  
And if you don't enjoy the laughter,  
Well, you grouches just go to your room and sulk



## **HAIKUS TANKAS & TERSETS**

**By Alan Nazer**

### **It was a Dark and Stormy night – a Haiku 5-7-5**

Dark and Stormy night  
Dark shattered by lightening  
Dark erased by flame

### **It was a Dark and Stormy night – a Tanka 5-7-5-7-7**

It was a Dark and  
Stormy night, filled with sound and  
Fury. Driving rain  
Pummels the earth and tries to  
Contain lightening strike flames.

### **It was a Dark and Stormy Night - a Terset 7-6-7, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> lines rhyme.**

It was a Dark Stormy night  
Lightening flash thunder  
Crash and all the birds take flight.

TANKA  
by Tom Lyon

Of ten the quiet hours  
Bring certain melancholy:  
Is this all there is ?  
Later the paths not taken  
Come to life in old men's dreams.



HAIKU  
by Tom Lyon

Marriage not so great  
Still it seems a better fate  
Than dying alone....

AGING HAIKU RAMBLINGS  
by Tom Lyon

Is it possible  
That in spite of loving life  
One can live too long?

I am determined  
To outlive my enemies  
Whatever the cost.



## Yearnings

by Tom Lyon

Why have  
I always been  
Drawn to woods and mountains?  
Do they answer some primitive  
Yearning?  
Do they provide  
Some spiritual goal-  
The manna I need to feed my soul?

Likewise  
My being drawn  
Ever to the ocean:  
This even more mysterious  
Yearning  
Subconsciously  
Perhaps to once again  
Return to a watery womb?

## Tempress

by Ed Devore

Seductively resting away up high  
Your diaphanous bed trembles in the sky  
With sinuous gestures and fluttering eye  
You beckon all to give you a try  
Some you entreat with a breathy sigh  
With others, a blatant, don't pass me by  
A seductress of such charm is hard to deny  
Particularly with tested techniques so sly  
Thus many succumb with nary a cry  
To a tempting spider comes a willing fly



## Fruit and Nuts

by Robert L. Stanelle

I am the walnut  
the world knows me not  
I remain hard and refuse  
to let them enter me

I am the marshmallow  
pure, soft and good to all  
Sometimes I am roasted  
and eaten

I am the banana  
my tough skin protects me  
When stripped I slip away  
avoiding danger and responsibility  
I am afraid

I am the lemon  
some will avoid me  
Some taste and spit me out  
few will devour me  
For most only the bitter taste remains

I wish I were an apple



## Alternative Energy

by Cathy Lowe

We're all into alternatives:  
Caffeine to booze to pills.  
What powers us is energy  
Born of our various ills.

Fracking our emotions  
Takes less energy by far  
Than traditional incentives  
Like reaching for a star.

Yes, we're propelled by energy-  
A force that's not our own,  
But what we seek is not success,  
But not to be alone.

# Little Ballerina

by Susan Breene

Little ballerina needs a little rest  
Little swan, this morning, has been put to quite the test  
Little toes pointing to the future of her dance  
Little heart hoping for a smile with Madam's glance

Sweet tiny little dancer, you steal my breath away  
You graceful little thief, I fear the price that I must pay  
As years spin by like pirouettes and soaring grand jete  
Too soon the rosin and the wood will take you on your way  
Away from me, away from home, please keep me in your heart  
I'll shed some tears but wish you well when time has come to part

Stay true my girl, stay true to all that spirit you possess  
The beauty of your dance will bring you so much happiness  
I see it in you even now, the talent that's your gift  
Pursue your dream, devote yourself, don't let it go adrift

Your legs are strong for one so small, your arms like doves in flight  
I pray you feel it when you dance, and in your dreams at night,  
that bold Terpsichore has fully claimed you for her own  
and whispers softly in your ear in words like pale moonstone  
She speaks to you of dazzling heights of artistry and fame  
How, unlike me, she cannot die but always will remain  
to urge you on, this loving muse, to ever more success  
Yet part of me would keep you close forever, I confess  
But no, it cannot be, my girl, and let you go I must  
For could I ever hold you back, betraying your sweet trust?  
But wait! I'm getting way ahead and dancers need their rest  
So, little ballerina, lay your head against my breast  
The miracle you are will surely in its time unfurl  
And finally I'll let you go, and give you to the world.

# THE PRICE OF FREEDOM





## AND THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED

by Mary E. Cecil

It was unbelievable. The scenes were horrible but all I could do was stare numbly at the screen. I couldn't take my eyes off the television since the conversation with my brother.

"You are not going into the city today. Turn on the TV," he said, his voice halting but firm.

"What? Why not? Of course we're going to New York," I said. "The game is today and we're just about ready ..."

"Turn on the TV" he interrupted, "you are not going! "

It was Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001. When I turned on the TV, I saw what everyone was watching and not believing was possible...the attacks on the World Trade Center, in New York City were unfolding as we watched.

It had been a perfect vacation and family reunion. My brother had invited my husband and me and our children and their families to his beach front home in southern New Jersey where we planned a surprise eighty-fifth birthday party for our mother. My children and grandchildren had flown in from Utah and Alaska and family had come from New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and DC to surprise her. After the party, we had planned family activities, some fun beach time, a trip to Yankee Stadium to see a home game and finally a drive to West Virginia to see my husband's family. It was all planned, all going well. Our biggest problem was do we cook in or do we eat out. And then everything changed.

I called everyone upstairs not knowing what to tell them except that something awful was happening in New York and that we were staying home. We all sat around the TV and watched in horror. We watched the second plane turn and deliberately hit the South Tower. We watched as a man jumped from a smoke filled window to certain death some several stories below. We watched as firemen and policemen ran into the burning buildings as terrified people ran out. We watched the towers implode. We watched as a crowd of stunned and horrified people covered in ash and debris ran blindly down the street with a giant smoke and ash cloud chasing right behind

them. We watched as reports came in of a plane striking the Pentagon, and of another plane that was brought down by heroic passengers in Pennsylvania.

Air Force fighter planes began to patrol the Atlantic corridor between Washington DC and New York City. They were flying so close to shore and so low that the roar of their engines was deafening. The house shook as they flew overhead. The fear and panic was very close to home now, but we were safe, the people that I loved most in the world were here with me and we were safe, and really, selfishly, that was all that mattered.

A few days later we were able to get on with our plans and continue our vacation. My children flew safely home as soon as planes were allowed back in the air. My husband and I drove through Washington DC on our way to West Virginia and saw the damaged Pentagon, saw highways that are usually crowded all but deserted, and saw many, many American flags flying at half mast.

So what really did change on that fateful day? Everything certainly was changed for the 3,000 innocent people killed in the twin towers, in the Pentagon and on the planes and for the 10,000 people who were injured. Everything changed for their families and for all those who loved them. And everything was really changed for all of us because now we were a country afraid.

How could this have happened? How could we have been so proud, so arrogant to think that nothing and no one could harm us on US soil? What happened was unthinkable, but it happened right in front of our eyes. As a unified people in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, we felt the same sense of loss, the same sense of pride in the heroism, the same sense of patriotism. But everything changed as anger and mistrust for our government crept in along with rumors and conspiracy theories. Soldiers died in the Middle East. Hate crimes, racial profiling, and Homeland Security became common words in the country's vocabulary. Toxic debris caused sickness to our collective society in the form of physical illnesses and post traumatic stress syndrome. Toxic economic and political fallout polluted our economy, divided our government.

Everything changed. We became a vulnerable people. Yes, my family is safe...for now. But a sense of uneasiness remains and there is always an underlying fear, an unspoken question as I board a plane or enter a public building or a concert hall or a sports arena:

What if?

## The Vote

by Ed Devore

Flies hummed about his face, sweat dripped, soaking his hair flowing down his ribs, pooling in the hollows of neck and shoulders. Tomas' didn't care. He had been searching for this place two years, since first hearing about it from the hushed whispers of his parents, after they stopped the low groans and sighs, which signaled an end to their love making.

There was a cave hidden deep in the jungle, where, they said, his Uncle Jesus met with the other freedom fighters. Tomas' father promised his mother he would not get involved or do anything dangerous.

Tomas' started looking the next day, he was ten. Now, at twelve, he could hardly believe he'd missed this place for so long. The small animal trail passed right by the boulders which hid the entrance. Inside was a huge cavern which dropped over a hundred feet below ground level. Many men, some with parts of a uniform such as a shirt or a hat stood or lounged against the rock wall. All were holding rifles.

He knew all this because he'd been caught and dragged into the cave by a guard; protesting loudly to the General that he wanted to be a Freedom Fighter, he begged for a chance to prove himself.

Now, as ordered, he was standing rigidly at attention outside the cave. Inside, whether he would live, die or be allowed to join them was being decided by a vote.

His most fervent wish and prayer of the past two years was answered. They gave him a gun and welcomed him as a Freedom Fighter.

Next day, on his first raid against the enemy, Tomas' was killed.

## The Day I Lost My Innocence

by Mike Cutler

A large turkey, fresh from the roaster, sits in the middle of a long dinner table. Spread across the linen tablecloth, like a feast ready to be ravaged, are dishes of mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes, green beans and sweet corn, dressing and cranberries and, of course, mince meat and pumpkin pies.

If you can picture that iconic Norman Rockwell painting, that's me along the side. I'm the young boy anxious to devour every dish as quickly as my fork will move. Every year my parents and my brother, my uncle and his family, grandma, several family friends and I gathered around the table on the last Thursday in November. My childhood was that idyllic.

I grew up in the 1950s and '60s in a small Ohio town with seven thousand neighbors. You know the place; one large grocery store, along with several Mom & Pops, a few small banks, a couple of drugstores and gas stations, three family-run restaurants and half-dozen churches. A dairy queen anchored the north end of town and a cemetery the south. At the east end was the lush green manicured high school football field and to the west, the county fairgrounds.

In the center of town stood the magnificent Madison County courthouse. From it sprang the major intersection of Main and High Streets. Several dozen city streets neatly criss-crossed my community. Trains ran several times a day on tracks that divided the "poor side of town" from everyone else. Most residents of my town were white, Christian, hard-working people.

My dad worked in a factory assembling cement mixers. A quiet man, he rarely missed a day of work or Church on Sunday. My mother taught fifth grade at the only public school. The typical school marm of the day, she was demanding, disciplined, and tough as nails.

My older brother and I grew up riding our bicycles, playing football with the neighbor kids, and roller-skating. We did well enough in school. Schoolwork came before playtime, and bedtime was promptly at 9 o'clock. Tom and I sat quietly with our parents in the same church pew every Sunday morning. I remember my childhood fondly. And then it ended.

I was 17 years old, a junior in high school. Recently elected student body president, I was also selected sports editor of our school newspaper. A classmate, Janet Holton, was the

editor-in-chief. Janet was a pretty girl with light red hair, the color that caught your eye when spotting her in a crowd. Her protestant, liberal family was well known in my conservative blue-collar town. I liked Janet. I liked her smarts. I liked her sense of humor.

Then one spring day in 1969, I heard the news. It made the front page of the town paper. Someone had burned a cross in the Holton family's front yard. I couldn't believe it. What could have caused such a display of hatred? Janet, it turns out, had had the audacity... with her parents' blessing... to date a black boy. No one had done that before, at least not in my hometown.

Everybody read about the cross-burning. My parents talked about it. The neighbors talked about it. Friends at school talked about it. But I didn't talk about it... not with friends, not with family, not with Janet.

There are certain things I just didn't talk about. But, that day, I knew London would never be the same. I knew I would never be the same.

I no longer live in a small Midwestern town. I no longer ride my Schwinn bicycle. I am no longer sheltered by the warm embrace of loving parents and caring neighbors.

Today, I am an adult, thankful for my loving family, my wife and our son.

Today, I am an adult who lived through the Beatles and Laugh-in, the Vietnam War and streaking on campus, assassinations and impeachments, 401Ks and T-bills.

Today, I am an adult. Still, I miss sitting 'round that holiday dinner table.

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# Lost & Found

by Hector M. Rosario

On January 7, 1971 I married my first wife whom I met while stationed at Webb AFB in Big Spring, Texas. This was a town of 28 thousand people including 3 thousand Air Force personnel. Our mission was to train pilots on T-37 & T-38 aircraft in support of war efforts. Up until then, I had been contemplating re-enlisting, under the premise that our squadron commander would send me to Dallas to study weather computers. However, after discussing it with my new wife we both decided I would not reenlist. Two weeks after giving notice, I got orders to go to Vietnam

It was June of 1971. I was to undergo a secret clearance for 6 months before leaving for Vietnam on December 23 of that same year. I was to go to an Army base at Vinh Long in the Delta region of South Vietnam. I had only ten months left before completing my military obligation. What was the use given such a short assignment? I thought about this but did not formally question it at the time. .

I remember an officer coming down from Dallas prior to the orders being cut and then discussing with my sergeant what I perceived as their intentions for me. At one point the officer looked at me and I got the nastiest look from him –someone who did not even know me. I still remember his frown as if it was yesterday, but I quickly dismissed it and forgot the situation.

Years passed and I did not think of my military experience. Then later, while employed at the Clark County Recorder's Office in Las Vegas, I met a retired Marine officer. He suggested that I send away for my military records from the Missouri archives. Why would I do that, I thought? For what purpose? I had my DD-214 discharge record in the bank and I had nothing to prove by sending away for them. I considered myself lucky that I came back alive and wholesome, or so I thought.

Finally, curiosity got hold of me and I sent away for the records anyway. Upon receipt, I inspected them and found an entry about a dip in my hearing at the 2000 decibel level in my right ear. I remember this being the only problem they found in my separation exam at Travis AFB in Oakland, California. My officer friend suggested I pay the VA a visit to see if I might be eligible for some compensation. I figured 10% would help my family; an extra \$200 a month was better than nothing to a family man with two young kids to support.

My interview at the VA went fine. I showed them my DD-214 with my Vietnam medals. They asked if I had diabetes, which I had lived with since 1989. They also entered me for Agent Orange compensation as well. I had no idea until that time that Agent Orange was a problematic issue with Vietnam Veterans. My imagination started going wild since I had a daughter from my prior marriage and two new from my current marriage. Are their genetics OK? I became scared.

The essential paperwork was submitted in 2002 and I waited for the outcome. Seven months later I got a letter of denial stating in essence that I was not in Vietnam. I had to read the denial letter several times to ensure that I had read it correctly. How can that be? What started as only my curiosity now became a fight to protect my family name's honor. I was shocked, sad, mad, and indignant, bent on resolving the matter. I joined the DAV and was assigned a VSO on my case. Everyone who I told about my case was as mystified as I was. I knew then I was to be the main driver and main stake holder in the process of finding ANY evidence of my being in Vietnam. I was lost in Vietnam!

My true Vietnam battle had begun. It became an obsession. It took me 27 months and \$500 of my own money to find my evidence...The search placed me under undue stress. I was lucky that I had computer skills. I was able to find Bruce Fuller (name changed) who was in Basic training with me, whom I saluted and had small talk with for a few minutes in Ton Son Nhut while processing out. After Basic training, I went to Chanute AFB to study Weather and Bruce went to Vance AFB and became a squadron commander as a captain over C-141 troop carriers in Vietnam. Bruce wrote a sworn statement to the fact I was in Vietnam. I found Jack (retired Master Sergeant) living in Virginia and he too, wrote a statement on my behalf that we served together in Vietnam as Weather Observers.

I also ran into a high school buddy in Ton Son Nhut, serving in the Army who attested to the fact he saw me there. I found another retired Master Sergeant living in Rio Linda, California, a Weather Equipment Specialist. In addition, I had my entire family, including my ex-wife submit sworn statements on my behalf. My DD-214 now has a summary giving me credit for South East Asia but a NO for Vietnam. I spent 175 days in Vietnam before being sent to Thailand. I found out that to get a tour credit for Vietnam I needed to be 180 days in Vietnam. Was this part of the conspiracy, or am I being paranoid? Or maybe that's just the way the ducks lined up.

Vietnamization was going on and there was a lot of troop movement during our stand-down. For Agent Orange all you need is to prove you were there, boots on the ground, even for one day. But apparently the VA looked for that entry in the summary: Vietnam = Yes. So the VA finally admitted by the preponderance of my evidence that I was there. The VA later theorized that perhaps the 1973 fire at Missouri archives may have affected my records. Thousands of Korean and WW-II records were also burnt and the VA had no backups. They first gave me 40% benefits for my diabetes, one of about ten different ailments they cover under Agent Orange exposure. A recent one they added is Parkinson's, which Bruce suffered from but never claimed.

When I had my heart attack in 2004, they gave me a 100% rating. By the way, my pilot friend is in a nursing home in Olympia, WA. He may have passed away by now. Back in 2002 when I was having my problems, his wife told me that Bruce could not attend his daughter's graduation from Harvard Law School. I remember him as a healthy young man who was destined to be a commercial pilot after the war. Instead, he became a Systems Analyst like myself but was forced into early retirement.

Last week I received a letter from Department of the Air Force in Washington. They now too have acknowledged my presence in Vietnam, but only after my second try. Even after the VA's acknowledgement, the Air Force did still not believe it to be a fact, and they are the ones who sent my buddies and me! Only after I sent copies of my buddies' letters did they realize I was telling the truth. And why would I be getting compensation anyway?

The Air Force will issue a DD-215 which is a correction of my record, and they are in the process of reviewing their pay records, and maybe any medals that may be due. I have no idea what they'll find because I tried getting evidence from them back in 2002. I remember being paid since I was sending my mom some money automatically from my pay. I wrote numerous FOIAs to everyone, including DFAS in Denver and the Air Force Historical Society. Hector Rosario was Lost, Undocumented, and SOL in action.

It took the tenacity of a pit bull for me to prove my case. I learned a great deal and almost became a lawyer in the process. This was a life-changing experience and I feel deeply for those caught in the same predicament I was. How many are walking the streets right now not being able to prove they were there? Time is running out for them. I used to think that it was a conspiracy against me back in 1971. But maybe it was just plain incompetence in their not keeping good records.

I was once lost but now, 35 years later I feel I am found. I am finally compensated for my ailments presumably due to Agent Orange. But most important, my grand-daughter Rhiana will someday, after I'm gone, be able to say proudly that her granddaddy served honorably in the Vietnam War. And when the Air Force presents its findings to me, I will finally feel what it means to be welcomed home.

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## AN UNEXPECTED LIFE LESSON FROM ALABAMA

by Gregg Pollak

That nasty twinge of doubt resurfaced in my mind as I looked out the window of the bus, contemplating the various ways nature presents her seasonal displays relative to your geographic location. After autumn in New York the seasons in the Deep South seemed to be even more anti-climatic than Southern California. My mind was suddenly flooded with a vision of mom complaining about how she was once again missing the colorful pageant of trees preparing for their winter sleep in up-state New York. I was grateful for the mental image providing a brief respite, distracting my attention from the more vexing problem of Ensign Harris. Not to mention questioning the validity of my decision to join the Navy instead of trying to get back into school. My thinking was that the navy was the only face saving way to leave home following the debacle of running away and then trying to rejoin the family. Now I'm dealing with the realization that that choice may not have been my best option.

There was an obvious slowing in the sound of the engine refocusing my attention on the changing scenery outside the window. We were passing some small houses with ill kept yards. I suppose as often as God waters the grass here in the South one would need to be a serious gardener to keep things looking as neat and tidy as the old neighborhood in San Diego. I was wondering just where in Alabama we were, I realized that I had no idea, and I did not even have a reference point in my mind that might provide a clue. All knew was that I wanted to get off this bus and walk around on solid ground, maybe find something to eat. Maybe even get lucky enough to find some food reminiscent of home, although my experience with this place said that that sounded rather doubtful. The differences between Southern California and the Deep South made the differences between New York and California seem miniscule. Since arriving here I almost always felt like I was lost in the unreal mental imaging you experience when reading a novel about another time and place, that surreal feeling of wakeful dreaming. But this was real, if somewhat unsettling.

The bus meandered through the small town streets finally turning into the station. There were not many amenities there, just the basics; a few benches, two small waiting rooms with restrooms, and drinking fountains. There was a sign indicating that food was available across the street at a combination grocery store, post office, and barber shop that also had a sandwich counter.

Looking around taking in the newness of this place I found the white and colored signs on everything to be viscerally disturbing on a level so deep that my information processing capabilities were spinning out of control. No matter how hard I tried to understand I could not get used to, or make sense of these divisions between colored and white. Was everything divided based on skin color? What was meant by that word 'colored'? I just had no reference for the word used in that way.

I had found in conversations with the locals back in Pensacola, the separation between self and other runs much deeper here. In conversation I found intense friction just because I was from California, a place the locals considered so foreign to their palpable sense of reality that my origin alone created an instant barrier between us. Due to feelings generated from that experience I felt a sort of mild kinship with those people that the locals called, colored. All this caused me to question the very fabric of the social network in this place.

After getting my sandwich I was looking around for a place to sit and eat, maybe even someone to talk to. I was still feeling quite uncomfortable and out of place. Conversation here was often unsettling. The words of the language spoken here, even with their unfamiliar twang and accent sounded recognizable, and always left me with a feeling of uneasiness. Like there was a hidden meaning behind everything, a secret that I was not privy to. I was confused about how to fit in to this society. But, at nineteen years of age there was a great need to fit in and to feel accepted, yet, having been raised in Southern California this whole white /colored thing was so nonsensical, not to mention... it just felt so terribly wrong. After the first few months of adjustment in Pensacola I decided to just ignore the whole thing, thinking it was not I who had a problem.

It was in that frame of mind, sandwich in hand, that I sat down next to a black lady wearing a flour sack dress. She was sitting on the waiting bench in front of the colored waiting room; she smiled as I sat down, and that reassured me a lot. I was worried that she might have found the situation uncomfortable, and I had no desire to put her in harm's way or to make her uncomfortable, I just wanted company. So, even though I did not have a good understanding of etiquette in this place, I decided to use my ignorance as a shield, and just sat down.

It was so long ago I really do not remember the small talk that led to her profoundly changing so many events in my life. I do remember she was very proud of reaching the third grade in school before going to work in the fields. I remember something about share cropping, and pleasant conversation. At some point I started getting worked up about Ensign Harris, I remember his name but not my problem so it must have been something inconsequential. However her response to my ranting was life-changing for me.

Essentially what she said was so simple, only one quick sentence... "Son, you have to be careful what you give power to." I said, "What do you mean by that?" She answered, "you don't give that thing the power to bother you, it can't"

It took some time before the depth of her words lingering in my sub-consciousness took effect. But now upon reflection, the magnitude of how those words altered my life script is profound. Years later someone would cut me off in traffic. My initial response was to get upset, maybe even a little yelling, but then almost immediately came the thought: "Do I want to give this 'thing' the power to bother me?" . After all, most likely 'that guy' does not even know he upset me - he is almost out of sight already, cutting off someone else. He's busy just being himself, but hey, my blood pressure is still up! Why's that? Where is the energy to upset me coming from... if he is not even in sight? That must mean the angst that I feel is generated somewhere within me. Then, that must also mean that the power over the situation resides within me. Why do 'I' want to give some guy I don't even know the power to affect me in any way. Just what makes him so powerful, oh yea I gave him that power... well I want it back!"

The life lesson from Alabama- - a perspective is the birth of choice, expand your perspective and you increase your choices.

# MORE LIFE LESSONS



*"Autumn Leaves " by John MacDonald*



## DEATH OF A VISIONARY

Robert L Stanelle

Jayson was always different, always strange, always obstinate. Always. Little boys are often obstinate, but Jayson was beyond anything you can imagine. He could not respond to the simplest request without adding an opinion. He knew the world was flat.

Jayson could see forever, after all he been to the top of the tallest building to see the end. The world was clearly flat. He had rolled a ball down the street over and over and the ball did not curve. The world was clearly flat. He had jumped up and down and always landed in the same spot. The world was clearly flat. He had observed and tested his theory hundreds of times beginning as a very small boy. Where the white ended the black began and where the black began, the white ended. There was nothing else to discuss. The world was clearly flat.

He was a very bright boy and his hand would wave frantically when the teacher would ask a question. First grade, fifth grade, high school, it didn't matter. Now he was in college. The world was still flat. All along people had tried to convince him otherwise. It never mattered. He knew it was they that didn't understand. He never tried to convince them. Some people just don't know anything!

How much is three times twenty-seven? "Eighty-one" he would answer, "and the world is flat". Who was the tenth President of the U.S.? "John Tyler" he would say, "and the world is flat". What is the "red" planet? "Mars" he would shout, "and the world is flat". He said nothing else about it, but often wondered why no one understood.

Karen Jane understood. At least she never denied the fact. She was his only friend. Many seemed to admire his intelligence in all other things, but didn't ever talk to him. One doesn't talk to weirdoes. One doesn't approach crazy people. Taunt, ridicule, mock, scoff, twit, parody, deride, but never talk to. Everyone knows crazy weird-o-ness is communicable and no one wanted to catch it. Incurable.

One day Karen Jane came to her sophomore philosophy class and noticed Jayson was not there. That evening she found the note. It said only, "The world IS flat", and a scrawled signature. She knew.

The next day she announced to her classmates Jayson was dead and he had been right all along. He proved it! He walked to the end of our flat, flat, flat world ..... and jumped off. The body was, of course, never looked for.

Some people know things that others will never understand.

## A LIFE LESSON IN A CAN

by Gregg Pollak

‘She set the bowl of soup on the table. I was lost staring at the soft pastel redness of the soup’s surface. A round Ritz cracker floating there drifted across the center of the bowl propelled by the residual currents created by its journey across the room. How was she to know that a can of Campbell’s Tomato Soup could have any value to me? After all it was just an ordinary can of soup, nothing special. I had never talked to her about it, not to mention she was just a neighbor and had not been in my house very often. She was after all just helping me recover from the surgery, a little housekeeping and an occasional meal. When she chuckled and said from the kitchen “You must have set that can of soup on the bookshelf when you brought the groceries in, or you gotta a hungry ghost in the back somewhere.” I immediately knew what she meant. “Oh hell it was just a can of soup”.

The cracker had slowed its travel and was near the center of the bowl, I was intently staring at the place where the crackers edge met the surface of the soup, when my mind started to drift.

“I got Mary at Ralph’s market, anyone covering south-six?” the call came across the radio. There was a something in the sound of Nancy’s voice even over the scratchy sound of the radio I could hear her agitation building. “Come on guys, she’s a regular I know it’s busy out there. Somebody’s got to help me out here.” I knew as busy as it was most of the other drivers had just shut off their radios, and the rest of them were ignoring the call. Things were hopping and every cabbie was trying to make the most of the rush.

I scooped up the mike and said “Don’t worry Nancy I got her.” Nancy came back on the radio asking where I was. “I’m over by south eleven, but the freeway looks to be moving. Tell Mary I will be there in about ten to fifteen” It struck me as odd that the other drivers did not realize anyone can make money when it’s busy. They always took issue when I got more than my share of the morning airport calls, or when Nancy told me to call her on the land line

for something extra good, they just did not understand, I earned that little extra juice. But, honestly I didn't care.

I turned into the market parking lot I knew Mary would be out front with her standard four bags, always the same. And, sure enough there she was. I had picked her up at least 10-15 times in the past. So I knew the whole bit, two blocks a \$1.40 meter drop without even the first 1/5 mile click. Large apartment building on Devonshire, I park in front, she points to the second floor apartment in the back, I grab the bags and meet her at the door, I put the bags on the kitchen table and I get a \$1.50, ten cent tip and a \$1.40 fare, and goodbye.

I was pulling the cab up in front of the building and looking at Mary in the mirror I was struck by the worry in her eyes, and I ask "Everything okay Mary?" she was staring intently at the meter, and then she said just a little to loudly "That guy sure took his time making that stupid turn." The way she said it seemed so out of character, almost venomous. Mary was in her eighties very slight in structure and mild mannered so her tone stood out. I heard the meter clicked the 1/5 mile, another ten cents, I said "That guy in the parking lot with the turn and the extra time got ya."

I got out of the cab, went to the trunk grabbed the groceries, one bag under each arm and one in each hand, as usual. But, for some reason Mary was insisting that I put the bags down on the curb, but that made no sense to me at all, it would take her four trips, and it would cost me less than 5 min. if we just got moving. I was in a hurry, and after all it was busy, so I took off for the apartment.

Mary was following me pretty much the same as usual. She opened the door I put the groceries on the table. Mary was into one of the grocery bags looking around for something. She came up to me with the dollar fifty in her hand, the amount on the meter, she gave me the money. And then, she gave me a can of Campbell's Tomato Soup with the other hand. When I looked at her she had tears in her eyes saying thank you.

Suddenly, I realized she did not have the money for the ten cent tip, and the soup cost ten cents. Memories of other drivers joking and ridiculing her as Ten-cent Mary remarking about no click, upstairs, way in the back, four bags of groceries, all for a ten cent tip the visions

were cascading through my mind. And, then the realization hit, this was at least one meal maybe two, maybe it represented a missing ingredient in a more complex dish, and that might last someone like Mary several days.

I was trying to say no when she looked at me with those damn tears and said “Please don’t make me leave another debt”. At first it seemed odd, but it was busy, and I was young, and there was money to be made. I took the soup, and said “Thanks, next time I’ll catch the meter before it clicks.”

As I was running back to the cab the whole ordeal and her words caught hold and just would not leave me alone. Wouldn’t you know business died almost as soon as I got back to my cab?

I started thinking about the true value of things, not leaving even small debts unpaid, misjudging customers and fellow workers, costing someone a meal due to my not listening. The list was endless, and I spent the next two hours on a cab stand, attaching a part of my very being to a can of Campbell’s Tomato Soup.

It was just a can of soup, but one that was responsible for both memories and many stories about the best tip I ever got as a cab driver. It lived for ten plus years on a bookshelf, until served... enhanced with memories of Mary and lessons learned.

The life lesson from a can:

“A thing... has no value, unless you personally attach a value to it. The beauty is it can be small and worthless to everyone else, and yet contain as much value as you want to give it.”



## A LIFE LESSON - FROM A CARDBOARD SIGN

by Gregg Pollak

Jessie was being quite insistent about the weather he kept going on about the morning news “It was over a seventy percent chance.” He said for the third time even louder. I decided to offer him a thought line that might relax some of his increasing anxiety. So I said “What do you think that means seventy percent, seventy percent of what?” I was pretty sure that he would be lost for a few minutes thinking about it. But, I was also worried... the clouds were looking more ominous every time I leaned forward to look up at the sky. I really needed a good meet today, my decision to invite Jessie was primarily based on the idea of splitting the space rental, but with the weather looking this bad it may still turn out to be an unfortunate loss of gas and time. There was a very good chance the swap meet will be closed altogether, but, even if they do open, it will be a very slow day. Everyone is going to stay home, light a fire and withdraw into their world of books, and games on T.V. Or, whatever they do, most likely it won't be here. Well, we will know pretty soon only another mile or two to the Saugus off ramp, and we'll see the line up before getting off the freeway.

This day is sure turning out differently than what I had feared earlier. Business has been surprisingly good in general. I even sold the cool little gadget thing. Wow, now that was a hoot; I must have brought that thing out a dozen times now. I knew my little sales line would work sooner or later, ‘I have no idea what it is... but it is a very nice one, and it's worth five bucks’, I could tell by the reaction the first time I said the line and noticed the response. My using this line will either sell it, or someone will tell me what it is. Either way I win. Now, because it was so much fun, I'll need to find a new cool little ‘what is it’ type doo dad, gadget thing to replace it.

Wow! Now look at that, there is someone picking up the ‘drama box’, and he is wearing a Tommy Bahama shirt this could prove interesting. He shook it, will he open it? I need to be careful to keep him in my periphery vision. I don't want to let him catch me watching him. Bingo, he opened it, he's looking inside, perfect he snapped it shut and is walking over. “How much for the little box?” he asked. “Ten dollars” I said. I heard Jessie shuffling around behind me; he sidled off to my right with a quizzical look, staring at the guy. Mr. Tommy Bahama said “That's a little steep, don't ya think.” I was ready for that, actually at this point

I was pretty sure I had him. “Well let me take a look at it, maybe I got it mixed up with something else.” I said. “Nah, that’s okay” he said quickly shoving the box into his pocket, and throwing a ten dollar bill on the table.

Jessie came storming over as soon as Mr. Tommy Bahama left; he had a look of awe on his face and I knew he was going to grill me about it. He was going to make me tell him about the Tommy guy, there is no way he’s going to leave it alone, so I might as well just spill. I just hope I am not creating a monster; it would be just like him to overplay the angle enough to kill the goose... “What the hell just happened, how did you do that?” he asked. “Do What” I replied. “I saw you buy that stupid box for fifty cents last week over on the back row. Now you sold it for ten dollars, I know you, you did something tricky. What?” So I spilled the proverbial beans. “Last year at the Rose Bowl meet I found a coin guy selling old coins, he had a cigar box half full of some odd old coins about the size of a half dollars, they had the look of American currency, but they’re not, they’re called trade tokens; the sign on the box said fifty cents each. Most of them had very old dates back to 1700’s. So offered him twenty bucks for the whole box and he took it... so I bought them for bait.” Jessie said interrupting “Wow, where are they now?” “Home, they’re bait.” I replied impatiently. “It’s a game I play; I buy the little boxes they have to look kind of cool, but very cheap only one dollar or less. Then I sell off them one at a time, I put in something to rattle maybe a marble, rock, anything. I add the coin with the date facing up. Then I put what I now think of as my ‘drama box’ into a big box of pure junk and wait.” Jessie was looking contemplative when he said “You’re ripping them off. It would serve you right if they refused to buy.” I was confused by his take on morals and ethics, especially considering the source. “First” I said, “It is their choice, so think about it... they are trying to rip me off. They never ask about the coin, they ask about the box, to get the coin. If Mr. Tommy would have asked about the coin, I would have sold it to him solo for a buck. But, he wanted to play... so I sold him the box for nine dollars”

Traffic was pretty light coming home, so we made good time. We got off of the freeway at Sherman Way; it was only a few blocks to Jessie’s house, and thankfully he did not have much stuff as far as volume goes, so I should be home in time to record the races no sweat. Up in the distance by the next red light I could see a panhandler at the corner. I looked in the center console of my truck to see if there were any bills left. I always keep a few ones there to feed my karma, for I fully expect some day I will be on the other side of the cardboard. As

I approached the light, the panhandler started working his version of the rope line. I grabbed a bill handed it to Jessie and ask him to give it to the guy. Jessie gave me his best and much exaggerated pity the fool look, he shrugged his shoulders and took the bill, handing it to the guy with the hungry vet sign. I made the turn onto Woodman Ave. Another six blocks and there will be peace in the truck.

Best lain plans of mice and Gregg, when I saw the other pan handler at the next corner I could feel the drama building. This was a favorite pet peeve of Jessie's and I knew that he also saw the guy on the corner. As I was opening the console and Jessie was winding up. "Holy shit not that guy" Jessie said, 'He's more animal than human. He's been living in those bushes for months now. Who knows where he goes to the bathroom? He doesn't even know what money is, he'll just eat it." I said "the universe has set up this encounter, and the universe is requesting me to act as a conduit to provide him with this dollar. If you think of it not as a dollar, but as a packet of compassion in the same way a photon is a packet of light, I am the fiber optic cable, the conduit. The universe has directed the journey of this dollar or packet to me, and now working through me, and with my permission, it will continue to direct the path of that packet; it is not for me to instruct the universe. Mine is only to listen, to hear, and to decide whether or not to answer the call, my free choice." Jessie started laughing uncontrollably "Look, look" he said "the guy has a blank sign there is nothing on it give him the nothing he is asking for". As usual he was ignoring me completely, once more came the thought, this is the last time I will explain. I was getting tired of explaining my point of view, but then I remember Jessie's path is also a part of my karma, and, after all my words and deeds are also packets requesting passage, and I am but a conduit, although I have to admit sometimes, me thinks, the universe asks a little much.

The life lesson on a cardboard sign:

The sign in my path ask for nothing, yet I hear the call. If I, as a conduit, restrict the flow with anything more than my need - will not the universe perceive only my greed?



## TWO, FOUR, SIX, EIGHT

by Ruth Elliot

Who do we appreciate? Appreciation is as necessary as food and water to the survival of a human being. A person who has never been praised is a lost potential. But praise, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. So much time is spent in competition, cynicism, and criticism, that we scarcely realize how seldom we are grateful. We are too busy with our daily pressures to remember it is of importance to us as well as the person serving us.

When was the last time we thanked someone helping us? Is it our attitude that they are being paid and need no thanks? If you are a member of the public being served you will be aware of those who are helpful and those who are uncaring and rude.

A waitress or cashier, attendant or mechanic, nurse or orderly, secretary or receptionist, deserve our thanks for serving us well. Those who are rude and unkind may need our accolades more than those who serve us with kindness. It is much easier to be grateful to the polite than to those who act as though we are imposing on their time. For them, it is hard to find the grace to say, "Thank you."

We do not know what has made them crude and distant -- what is happening to them in their daily lives. It becomes a challenge to find something to compliment on the spot. Do they have a great hair do -- a pretty ring -- an unusual pair of earrings -- a good-looking shirt? Finding some small thing about them to open a dialogue helps things along. There may be a sudden face-to-face smile and recognition that can send chills up the spine.

For a businessman, who knows how to find something with which to praise an employee, he knows the habit pays off. He will have a more productive, congenial worker, open to the occasional, constructive criticism.

Kindness comes to us in direct proportion to the kindness we radiate. Real appreciation is not based on "What's it gonna' get me?" It is based on the ability to be empathetic toward another. As an apple a day keeps the doctor away, one appreciative remark can keep a person going all day.

If you tell me that you are the exception to the rule and need no appreciation, I feel for you. You are in a state of denial. More than likely you belong to the race of Mr. Spock on Star Trek and are not human at all.

# IMAGINATION

by Morrie Greenberg

Ken Wilson stared out at the sea of bored faces.

“You’ve been a great audience. Many thanks,” he shouted, and then stepped down from the convention hall podium amidst a smattering of polite applause.

A half hour later Ken and his boss, Charles Winfield, sat facing each other in the hotel room they shared. Winfield spoke first.

“Two years ago you were the best- the most inspiring speaker we had. Lately you’ve slipped from average to mediocre to lousy.” He paused only a moment. “Ken, we are hired to encourage and inspire a company’s employees- not to put them to sleep.”

Ken couldn’t argue. “Charles, we have always been straight with each other. Don’t think I haven’t sensed what you’re telling me.”

Winfield leaned forward in his chair. “Let me offer you the benefit of my years of experience. You’ve been saying the same thing to audiences so many times that *you’re* bored stiff, and you rehearse so much you lose your enthusiasm- your inspiration.”

“You got me pegged pretty well. What do I do about it?”

Winfield didn’t hesitate.

“Stop planning what you will say...and stop rehearsing! Let spontaneity take over. Use your imagination and I promise something fresh will click in your brain. I once felt burned out too- until I turned to my imagination.”

Ken jumped up from his chair; shook his boss’s hand and almost shouted: “I’ll do it! I’ll do it at the very next conference.”

Two weeks later, Ken walked gingerly toward the entrance to the Wesley Convention Center in the heart of San Francisco. Even though he was scheduled to be the featured speaker, he had no idea what he would say. Winfield had convinced him that something would inspire him and his imagination would take over.

*And then it happened!*

As he entered the hall, Ken saw inscribed in bold letters on the entrance door the single word: “**PUSH!**”

*That’s it,* he muttered to himself.

For forty minutes an animated Ken Wilson inspired his audience. He spoke in glowing terms of ambition, achievement, goals, perseverance, determination. And then in a resounding conclusion: “Perseverance, determination, goal-setting- yes, they are important... but nothing is as important as a single four-letter word that will take you the farthest in your hunt for success.”

*He had the audience in the palm of his hand.*

“And what is that word? Just turn around and you’ll see it inscribed on the entrance door.”

Ken pointed to the back of the room. In a single motion, the entire audience turned around.

There, inscribed on the front door in bold letters was the single word: **PULL**

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*"Red Flowers" by Dick Rose*

## Reflections on Spring

by Don Silverman

Spring. When I think about spring, the first thing that pop into my mind is the poem often attributed to e.e. cummings, or to Ogden Nash, or to a Marx Brothers movie, but actually from an anonymous source, and from none of the above. It goes:

***"Spring is sprung***

***Da grass is riz***

***I wonder where dem boidies iz***

***Da little boids is on da wing***

***Ain't dat absoid***

***Da little wings is on da boid***

Personally, I attribute it to a friend of my parents who recited it to my brother Rick and me when I was about six years old, and Rick about nine. I truly believed that wonderful man had

made it up, but my research reveals that it has long been well known not only in America, but broadly throughout Europe.

The man's name was Joe Cohen, but he confided in Rick and me, after having us swear that we would keep it a strict secret, that although my parents knew him as a lawyer, he was in fact, a secret agent. His secret agent handle was "Nehoc." He authorized us to refer to him as "Uncle Nehoc" when no one else was present, which we faithfully did thereafter. As I now recall, it was a few years later when Rick finally figured out that Nehoc is Cohen spelled backwards. Uncle Nehoc had also given us a big ceramic piggy bank and told us that saving was extremely important, and that if we each put in a penny every single day without fail, by the time we grew up we would be rich. It took Rick even less time to figure out that we jointly would be putting into the piggy bank the handsome total of \$7.30 a year, followed by the calculation that it would take us 10 years to save \$73.00. Confronted with that conclusion, Uncle Nehoc rapidly changed the subject and atoned by telling us the importance of appreciating music, and bringing us a phonograph player with one record. I can still vividly recall at least one side of that old 78 single: "There is a rose in Spanish Harlem."

But I digress: The subject is Spring, and a more literary and celebrated poem about spring, entitled Locksley Hall, was written by Alfred Lord Tennyson. The pertinent portion of that poem says:

***In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;***

***In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;***

***In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;***

***In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.***

The state of sophisticated literacy in America being as it is, it is not surprising that a vastly greater number of people are more familiar with Johnny Carson's partially bleeped version of a young man's spring fancy, spoken to Ed McMahon on the late night Show. It goes:

***Hooray, hooray, the first of May,***

***Outdoor (censored) starts today.***

I must confess, however, that being a long way from a young man, a spring poem that rings true to me today is by Thomas Hardy.

***Here by the baring bough***

***Raking up leaves,***

***Often I ponder how***

***Springtime deceives--***

***I, an old woman now,***

***Raking up leaves.***

Ah, but despair not, my fellow geriatric warriors. When it comes to spring, we still have some spring in our steps. We all appreciate the beauty of continuing education, and Aristotle nailed it when he said, "Education is the best provision for old age." And don't forget that he also said, "Educated men are as much superior to uneducated men as the living are to the dead."

By the way, if you are a youngster contemplating this essay, take heed of the warning of Walt Whitman, in *Leaves of Grass*:

***Youth, large, lusty, loving--youth full of grace, force, fascination,***

***Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal grace, farce, fascination?***

Turning to Shakespeare for ultimate wisdom about spring, youth, old age, or anything else, is never a bad idea. Proteus, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, says:

***O, how this spring of love resembleth***

***The uncertain glory of an April day;***

***Which now shows of the sun,***

***And by and by a cloud takes all away.***

Also, from *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare deftly nails us decrepit oldsters with these cynical words:

***Have you not a moist eye, a dry hand, a yellow cheek,  
A white beard, a decreasing leg, an increasing belly?  
Is not your voice broken, your wind short, your chin double, your wit single,  
And every part of you blasted with antiquity?***

Being a devoted Shakespeare fan, I forgive him for those words when he adds:

***Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;  
For in my youth I never did apply hot and rebellious liquors in my blood;  
And did not, with untactful forehead, woo the means of weakness and debility;  
Therefore age is as a lusty winter, frosty but kindly.***

So there is hope for us “strong and lusty” ancients, but I confess that the Shakespeare quote I can most relate to is this:

***My comfort is that old age, that ill layer-up of beauty,  
can do no more spoil upon my face.***

# A WHALE OF A TALE!



*"Whale" by John MacDonald*

## CITY LIFE



## Bar Conversation in New York City circa 2005

by Martha Carrell

Since Dallas had at least two hours before boarding the Long Island Express train she decided to visit one of her favorite bars not far from the train station. Located just off 7th avenue Time Out was the perfect place to go ...classy atmosphere...tasty bar food...upscale and lively clientele...great ventilation system and good music.

When she entered the bar she waved to John, the likeable bartender in his fifties who always remembered what she liked to drink and what she had been doing in her life. A few minutes later her Manhattan appeared along with a question from John about her long absence from the bar.

Dallas smiled.

"Been really busy with out of town business travel and helping my parents. By the way, how is your daughter? Last time we spoke she was thinking of dropping out of the university?"

"Much to my relief she changed her mind. She seems to be back on track since she broke up with her loser boyfriend." Noticing a group of about five people walking in together John quickly ended the conversation with a look and nod towards the door. "Looks like newbies...catch you later."

Dallas always enjoyed being at Time Out. Her reasons were many. In particular she appreciated the fact that the customers tended to mind their own business leaving her to sit quietly at the bar reveling in a different type of solitude. Because she was deep into her thoughts she failed to notice the handsome, well-dressed man who sat down next to her.

This stranger caught John's attention, gave him a signal and interrupted Dallas' mental solitude by introducing himself.

"Excuse me. Sorry to bother you. I've seen you in here before and have wanted to meet you. My friends call me Bry, am from Philadelphia, do a lot of business in the city and would like to know who you are and what you do. Asked John about you and he told me to find out for myself. So, here I am."

Annoyed and uninterested Dallas looked at him...she was surprised that she liked what she saw.

"Hi Bry I like to drink alone, have a train to catch in just over an hour, and am busy with my thought. My name is Dallas."

"We are both pressured for time. You have the train and I have a quick meeting in a couple of minutes. You should consider taking a later train so that we can have dinner together...before your last train departs. My meeting will be short as we are finalizing a deal and just have papers to sign."

"And why would I do that? Why would I want to have dinner with you?"

"Because I am a good conversationalist, a gentleman, and a person who wants to know you. Plus, dinner is a safe bet. If you don't enjoy it you can just write off the experience off as a one-time dinner date. No harm, no foul. Should it be necessary, and it won't, John knows me well enough to give the police my description and name, Also you can call a friend or leave a message on your phone regarding our rendezvous."

"You've certainly covered your bases but you missed one, maybe two, along the way. I'm not hungry and I make it a point not to dine with strangers."

Bry and Dallas stared at each other for a long while before Bry responded.

"If you aren't hungry that does present a problem. Would suggest then, that we stay here and have a snack or sandwich before you leave. As to dining with strangers, consider me to be a 'familiar stranger.' We both like this bar and we both know John."

Dallas considers the offer. Taking her eyes off her drink she looks at Bry. He notices the slight smile but he can't read her facial expression. She starts talking as she turns towards the bar.

"I noticed that you are wearing a gold band on your left hand which might indicate that you are married or separated. Make it a point to not involve myself with men who are attached."

"Oh, the ring...don't pay any attention to it. The ring is a prop I use to maintain my privacy and distance. Yes, I was married and I have a son. My wife and I are divorced. Custody is equal. Found that the ring is also a good conversation opener if one is trying to meet someone such as you. There are women who want to have flings only with married men because married men are considered to be safe...no need to become involved."

"What a great, well thought out response. Just because you say that you are divorced doesn't mean that you are. Bet that if I looked in your wallet I would find a picture of your wife and your son. "

"No, just my son. You don't know if I am married or divorced...you will have to gamble on this one....go with your gut."

John interrupts their conversation letting Bry know that Mr. Evans is seated in a booth by the door.

Bry and Dallas shake hands when Bry stands up to leave.

"Enjoy your Meeting" she says.

"Will you wait for me?"

"Maybe, maybe not."

They look at each other. He leaves to meet Mr. Evans.

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## The World's Rudest Waiter

By Don Silverman

The “World's Rudest Waiter” was a popular attraction in the City for many years until his death in 1984. If you are or were a resident of the San Francisco Bay Area, you know that San Francisco is commonly referred to simply as "The City," and never, never, never as Frisco. For us, no other place qualifies to claim the lofty designation of "The City." If you lived there anytime from the 50s through the 80s, you would probably know just who was firmly established as the “World's Rudest Waiter”. He was the head waiter during those years at Sam Wo, one of the oldest restaurants in Chinatown. Sam Wo was a place known to many college kids, entertainers, journalists, and others as the place to go for cheap Chinese Food and entertainment by the infamous rude waiter whose name, I kid you not, was Edsel Ford Fong.

Edsel's notoriety soared with the help of the great columnist of the San Francisco Chronicle, Herb Caen, who often described his many visits to Sam Wo and the antics of the misanthropic Edsel Ford Fong in his columns, which Edsel would proudly show to his loyal regulars. Herb Caen, who everyone in the City read every day, also included Fong in his guide of things to do in San Francisco. Fong was also a recurring character in Armistead Maupin's series of Tales of the City novels and was also a character in the 1993 miniseries of the same name. Robin Williams referred to Fong in his 1997 eulogy of Herb Caen, and a series of club-level bistros at the AT&T Park, home of the San Francisco Giants, are named "Ford Fong's" in Edsel's honor.

My wife and I were introduced to the Fong phenomenon by our son Jeff, and his then girlfriend Lynn. Both were then in their twenties. We all entered Sam Wo from its narrow customary Grant Avenue Chinatown entrance, directly into the kitchen that was located along the left wall. We noted that the kitchen help was chopping and preparing meat dishes on a wood table near the front door, and that a prep table was located next to a toilet. The view was a little bit unnerving, but we soldiered on. Lynn led us through the narrow passage along the kitchen to an equally narrow stairway to the second floor, which was the domain of Edsel Ford Fong.

At the top of the stairs was a long table with dishes, glassware, silverware and napkins piled on top. We were immediately approached by a short, pudgy, crew cut Chinese waiter—

Edsel himself -- who without greeting or ceremony pointed a finger at an empty table, then pointed the finger at Lynn, and said, in his gruff voice, "You! Set the table."

Lynn, a veteran of Edsel's entertaining abuse, prepared to do so with a smile and without comment. Meanwhile he pointed at the rest of us, pointed at the empty table, and said, "You; sit down and shut up."

Once we were all seated. Edsel wasted no time coming to our table carrying a huge photo album and a Polaroid camera, pushing Jeff aside, sitting closely next to Lynn, throwing an arm around her, and demanding that we take a picture of him and her together. It was no coincidence that Lynn was a beautiful, voluptuous, twenty year old, blue-eyed blond -- and fortunately one with a fine sense of humor. Of course we took the picture, and Edsel immediately put the photo into the album, which was filled with pictures of Edsel mildly groping good looking female customers. As for less charming women patrons, he was known for sometimes calling them fat, ugly or retarded.

Ordering a meal was another adventure. Lynn had been to Sam Wo several times before, so when Edsel came over to take our order and said, "You want order your way or my way?" she quickly answered, "No, no; your way Edsel." Edsel turned and went to a large dumbwaiter, about three foot square, located at the front of the room which ran down to the kitchen. He leaned over the dumbwaiter and hollered down what sounded to us like, "YA TA TA HOWWW, YA SO WOW WOW!" A similar garbled reply from the kitchen in Chinese scat could be heard, followed by further bellowed orders shouted down by Edsel. When the food finally came up through the

dumbwaiter, Edsel brought it over and slammed the dishes on the table.

While we were waiting, Lynn had warned us that Edsel was famous for refusing to serve people he didn't like the looks of and chastising customers who dared to complain when they were brought the wrong dishes. Lynn told us that the first time she was there she ordered sweet and sour pork, and Edsel said,

"You boring. Why white people always order the only Chinese dish they know. At least you didn't order chow mien!"

Then she made the further mistake of asking for a coke. "No coke, only water. You want coke you go across the street and buy it," Edsel replied.

At first she thought he was kidding, but he really wasn't.

At the table next to us, two young men were finishing their dinner, and one of them asked Edsel, "What's for dessert?"

Edsel pointed to the guy's plate and replied, "You finish your vegetables; then you get dessert!"

Regular customers knew that he was notorious for criticizing people's menu choices before telling them what to order, slamming food on the table, complaining about receiving only 15% tips, seating people with strangers, forgetting orders, cursing, spilling soup on customers, refusing to provide forks or English menu translations, and busing tables before diners were finished. Sam Begler, a caterer who had been dining at Sam Wo's since 1976, reported, "The Soup Nazi is the Dalai Lama compared to Edsel Ford Fong. He is the Don Rickles of waiters."

Fong died in 1984 at age 57, but for a long time a sign listing the restaurant's house rules maintained the spirit of Edsel's gruff demeanor. Among its warnings: "No booze; no jive; no coffee, milk, soft drinks or fortune cookies." Long time patrons bemoan the fact that Sam Wo was closed down in 2012 when the owners could no longer afford to repair and maintain the 100 year old building, and health code violations caught up with them. We all still enjoy vivid memories of dining on good, cheap Chinese food under the stern control of Edsel Ford Fong and we all have our own Edsel Ford Fong stories to share.

The funniest story to me is the one often told by my youngest son, Gary. When he walked into Sam Wo with a small group, Edsel met them at the front door. None of

us had ever seen Edsel anywhere other than in his second floor domain, and certainly never on the first floor. Edsel pointed at Gary and commanded, "You. Stay here." Then addressing the others, he said, "You. Upstairs."

Gary was then in his early twenties, and he was about six foot two and 220 pounds, and seldom intimidated by anyone. But Edsel Fond could intimidate anyone. When the others went upstairs, Edsel told Gary, "You. Come with me."

Edsel turned and bolted out the front door onto Grant Avenue. Gary says he can't say why, but he followed. With no further comment, Edsel led him down the block to another Chinese restaurant. Once inside, Edsel negotiated in Chinese with one of their employees. Then he commanded Gary, "You. Stay here" and Edsel abruptly turned and headed out the door with no further direction or explanation.

As Gary relates it, he was now left standing in a strange restaurant, by himself, with no idea why he was there or what he was supposed to be doing. After a few minutes he was about to just leave and go back to Sam Wo and join his friends, when a Chinese waiter appeared carrying a 20 gallon container filled with ice. The waiter, who apparently spoke no English, motioned to Gary to pick up the heavy container, and pointed to the door. Feeling no good alternative, Gary picked up the ice, carried it back to Sam Wo, set it down inside the front door, and climbed the stairs to join his party. Edsel, predictably, appeared not to even notice Gary's return. He gave no thanks or comment about the incident - then or later.

It was never quite clear whether his crustiness was genuine or an act, but it was always an experience. I've traveled all over the globe, and I've been to the most famous and the most exotic cities in the world. I've eaten in the finest restaurants, and I have to say that I've never enjoyed a unique restaurant experience anywhere and have had as much fun as those memorable times in a little Chinese joint in Chinatown in the City, complete with the rudest waiter in the world. I know. I know some of you are thinking, "What's so fun and entertaining about such a rude, crude waiter?" I can only give you the answer that Edsel would have given you:

"Some of you white people pretty dumb -- some pretty ugly too. You just don't get it. Not my problem!"

## CITY OF AMAZING GRACE

by Mary Owens

There are angels in Sin City,  
circling all around OLLI this afternoon  
They are in each classroom ...I am sure of it.  
I am certain of their presence among us  
and within us  
and I am certain of their power  
and of their love.

I started a painting several years ago ....  
Of a lone angel ... emerging from somewhere  
then unknown to me.

I painted her penetrating eyes  
her arms outstretched.

I felt her welcoming warmth ...  
her easy motion, her healing energy.

Then her canvas sat unfinished for years ...  
Until years later, on a whirlwind impulse

I moved to Las Vegas  
in search of a happier life,

And here one day I found her again.

The angel- in- waiting on a rooftop  
watching over a slum motel on Charleston Street–  
THE BLUE ANGEL – majestic glorious protector -  
presiding over cars racing by  
over people rushing to casinos  
people desperate to find a pawn shop  
those people barely stumbling by  
over those people strutting by  
and those barely crawling near gutters

And then I knew how to finish my Angel painting  
and I am finishing her now.

Many years ago on my first visit to Las Vegas  
I looked down from my room at the Sahara  
mesmerized

I felt spirits amid the neon lights over the Strip.  
I would always feel those spirits here here  
and my son said he too feels the spirits here

Sin City?

You will never convince me of that...

Not ever.

Las Vegas - my beloved City of Neon Spirits,

Home of the Blue Angel

Las Vegas - City of Amazing Grace

Where angels are also pink and yellow

and green and pristine white

and sterling silver and majestic gold

Their wings fluttering in the wonderful clouds

In the clear brilliant blue Las Vegas Sky

Angels who make frequent stops over the Wedding Chapels

Dancing amidst the evening stars to jazz music on Fremont Street,

Peeking into the window of a Strip hotel room ...

when a lonely gambler has lost his last dollar.

Angels tumbling gracefully in the wild desert winds

Painting pastel rainbows over purple grey mountains in the desert sky

OLLI instructors are angels too.

Angels who offer time and knowledge freely

because plain and simply "they know how to Love".

I am here because Angels can be anonymous messengers

helping someone who needs OLLI to grow ...

... to know... or for a reason to wake up and keep on going....

Life can present endless challenges at any age ...

Even for those of us who know Angels personally.

My own life has sometimes seemed a casting call

for every Tennessee Williams heroine ....

Like Blanche Du Bois – I have relied on the kindness of strangers.

And .. with Stanley leaning over me ferociously

I too have seen the brutal, bare light bulb of reality, of dreams crushed.

Harsh light glaring as the shade is snatched from my carefully placed pink lanterns.

Like Maggie the Cat, I have screamed and clawed to survive.

Like Amanda I too have repeated motherly advice to those who did not hear,

And like Laura, my glass unicorn has crashed to the floor

when a gentleman caller was not Prince Charming after all.

But now here at OLLI I can be just be me –

Raw passionate soul...

Express my thoughts to you ... open my heart..

and relentlessly grab up every bit of knowledge

that I can devour.  
that you so generously share.  
Among you, I can still keep growing  
and try to be a better me.  
I am SO VERY thankful to be here right now among you.  
Thank you each and every one for offering, for your community,  
for your presence and for your warmth  
I feel at home here, as if among family.  
I feel safe. I feel protected.  
And I know why this is so.  
Because there are angels, circling all around Las Vegas  
and over OLLI this afternoon.  
And in these classrooms  
And right now  
They are in this classroom too.  
I am certain of their presence among us  
And within us ...  
And within you ...  
And I am so certain of their power  
And of their endless, empowering Love.





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