

Ripples

Stories and Poems

by or about Yellow Springs Elders



Volume 6, June 2019

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the sixth edition of Ripples. It is with great pleasure that the Senior Center presents this gift to our community.

Throughout this journal you will discover the many thoughts of those among us. Everyone has a story to tell and I know you will enjoy reading their works. The works weave a great tapestry...a tapestry that looks at life in and around the village of Yellow Springs. Enjoy the read!

Karen Wolford
Executive Director
Yellow Springs Senior Center

The response to Ripples from readers and writers spurs us onward. If you have a story to tell in poetry or prose or photography, the committee encourages you to start now.

We give special thanks to Jane Baker, editor and layout; Matt Minde's expertise with photographs; and Karen Wolford, YSSC Exec. Director, for securing an Ohio Arts Council Grant for this edition; and Teresa Bondurant, whose organizational skills are top notch.

Enjoy this issue! This gift is from and to the community.

Suzanne Patterson and committee

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from 1953–1974.

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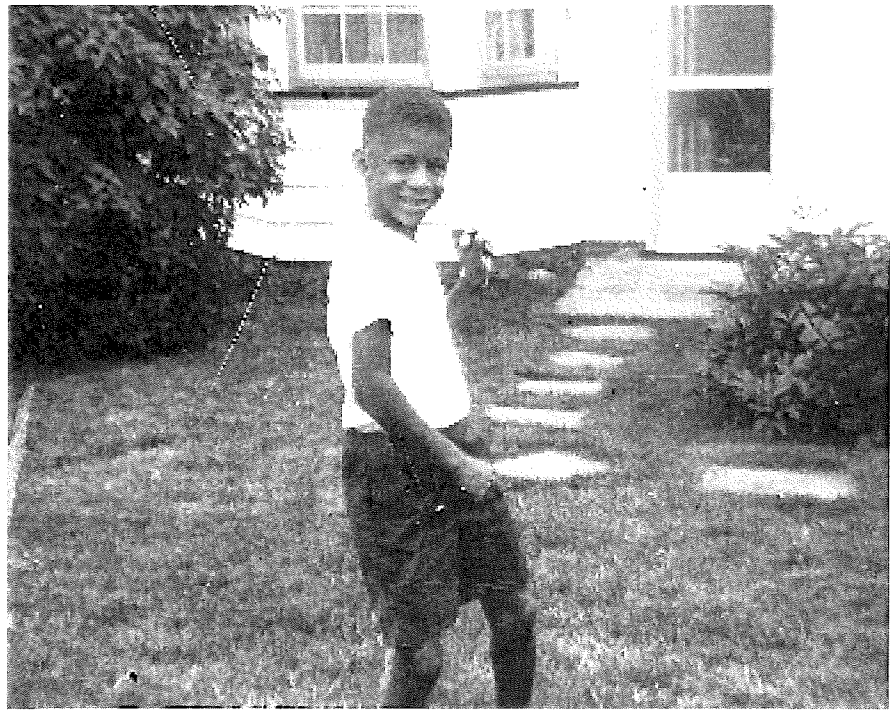
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Sycamores in Winter by Janeal Ravndal

The Potter's Field by Shelly Blackman

From the time I was a little boy I was captivated by "The Potter's Field" in Glen Forest Cemetery—that little patch of green grass to the right as you enter off Cemetery Street. My grandfather, Shelly Blackman, Sr., was buried there in 1936. I can remember, as a kid, long summer days touring the cemetery with my grandmother, Martha Brooks Blackman Higby (1906–2004), who regaled me with wonderful stories about my family, both happy and sad, as we placed flowers on the graves of our people, including the unmarked resting place in the potter's field for Grandpa Shelly. Of course, I had to ask, "Grandma, what's a potter's field?" and she wasted no time launching into my biblical lesson for the day with references to The Gospel of Matthew, The New Testament, Judas, silver blood coins, and on and on. You see, Grandma Mart was very religious and never missed an opportunity to drop some of that Godly knowledge on me. Although I'm sure, on that day, in my young mind, I was thinking, "Oh Lord, here we go again with the Bible," I have come to savor those stories now that she is no longer around. Stories of how Grandma and her six siblings were born right across the street in the little two-bedroom, one-bathroom house (112 Fairfield Pike) that was built for my great-grandparents Jackson and Mary Elizabeth "Kitty" (Todd) Brooks, who worked on Whitehall Farm for Ed Kelly, co-founder of the Kelly Springfield Tire Company. And how years later, when my dad and his siblings were young, they would play in the



Shelly Kirk Blackman, c. 1967

cemetery at night after dinner and chores. "Grandma, weren't you afraid to let Dad, Aunt Betty, and Uncle Ed play in the cemetery at night by themselves?" I'd ask.

"Oh no, Sweetheart, it's not the dead you need to be afraid of."

Although most of Grandma's answers were lost on the seven-year-old boy asking the questions, what I came to understand at that innocent age was that a potter's field was where post-Depression poor folks buried their dead, and I never forgot it.

In recent years, while my father (Shelly Blackman, Jr., 1929–2016) was still alive, I would pick him up at the nursing home and we would visit the cemetery. Even though he was troubled with dementia by that point, he still knew where every

family grave was located, including Grandpa Shelly's in the potter's field. To this day, one of my favorite things to do is to hang out in the cemetery—nothing quite as edgy as Bud Cort's character in *Harold and Maude*, but more of a peaceful getaway from the chaos of the everyday—just me, my God, and my "peeps."

Shelly Kirk Blackman is a local Realtor, activist, passionate advocate for seniors, and a "Springer" of the third (Generation) Order! He would love to hear from villagers with similar stories and/or names and dates of others who might be buried in the "Potter's Field," and who would be interested in honoring them with a memorial wall. He can be reached at Shellyblackman3@gmail.com.

Sibling Stories: Lily, Ralph, Manny, Abe, and Ruby

by Rubin Battino

I am the youngest of five children, and thus I was the “baby” of the family. My siblings’ names were properly Lillian, Raphael, Emanuel, Abraham, and Rubin—all biblical names as befits children in a Greek/Jewish family. I am thirteen years younger than Lily. We were also Sephardic Jews whose origins were in Spain. When Queen Isabella evicted all of the Jews from Spain in 1492 they settled in other parts of the Mediterranean area. They were particularly welcomed in Turkey and Turkish-controlled areas like Greece. There were large colonies in Istanbul and Thessalonika. Their common language was Ladino (a form of Spanish). In contrast, the Ashkenazi Jews were in northern and eastern Europe, and their common language was Yiddish. One major distinction between these two groups was that Sephardim name their children after living relatives, and the Ashkenazi after dead relatives. This meant that two of my brothers who married Ashkenazi Jews had difficulties in naming children. (They got around this by using the first letter of names of Sephardic relatives like Richard or Robert for Rubin.)

When I was a toddler much of my care was foisted off on Lily as the daughter, and was needed since our mother had quite a few health problems from time to time. I know that Lily as a young teenager resented this, since she told me so much later! Lily was twenty-four when the U.S. got involved in WW II. Many women were hired to do men’s jobs at that time. She and

cousin Sofia traveled daily from the Bronx to an airplane factory in New Jersey. I quote from Wikipedia about the machine that she worked on: “Gear cutting is any machining process for creating a gear. The most common gear-cutting processes include hobbing, broaching, milling.” She worked on a gear hobbing machine during the war. My memory tells me that she was engaged to someone during the war, but that he died in combat. After the war at some Greek/Jewish event she was introduced to Manny Solomon. Both she and Manny were fluent in Greek. Our father liked Manny as a potential husband since Manny was in the wholesale vegetable business (mainly tomatoes), and he always arrived with a bag of vegetables when he came to pick Lily up. They were married in a typical Greek wedding, with lots of music and dancing and ouzo and retsina. They had two children, Sol (my oldest nephew, who has a natural products business) and Annette (who has a business providing art work to medical facilities). After the children had grown Lil and Manny moved to California. This was partly because our mother was ill on and off at the time, and Manny was the only relative with a car who lived near enough to drive her to the hospital. This, of course, was quite wearing emotionally. Charlotte and I were very close to them, and they visited us here in Yellow Springs several times. They both died over twenty years ago.

Brother Ralph, twelve years older than I, turned ninety-nine this

past August. He is in an assisted living facility in Glen Cove, NY, and I visit him periodically. His birthday party at the beginning of August was chock full of children, nephews and nieces (and their children) and some great-grandchildren. Since he has effectively outlived all of his friends, only relatives were at this party. He was born in the tenement the family lived in on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. When he was about two years old he fell off the fire escape of their building and broke both of his legs. Orthopedics was not as good then as it is now, and he still walks with slightly bowed legs. Once, when he was about fourteen (and I was about two) he was given the assignment of looking after me in a carriage on the street. He had several friends who were in the same predicament. What could they do to make life interesting? They decided to have a carriage race around the block—Ralph still remembers that event and likes to tell me that story. Ralph is naturally left-handed. In public school he recalls having his left hand tied to his side to force him to write with his right hand. Ralph is the family historian, and has an amazing memory. I have videotaped him talking about his life and the family on a number of occasions. He was drafted early in WW II. Beforehand he had taken a number of courses (I believe for two years) at a local evening school on his way to becoming an accountant.

There was a great deal of open prejudice at that time against Black Americans and Jews (and others).

Ralph's skills were recognized and he was admitted to OCS (Officers' Candidate School). After graduating as a second lieutenant he served stateside in a number of battalions as a training officer. Ralph's life was saved because when that training was completed his commanding officers left him behind because they did not want to go into combat with a Jewish officer in their group! As the war wore on officers were needed, and he was sent overseas to the Pacific front as a forward observer for the artillery. (Ralph had good mathematical skills, an asset in the artillery.) A "forward observer" is the person at the edge of the front line to call in artillery to land short distances away, a dangerous job. He went through a number of island battles before the war ended. Before he was mustered out he was the military "governor" of an area in Korea. When he returned home he gave me a book of seven-place logarithms, one I used for many years, including for my master's and doctoral theses calculations.

When he returned home he met and fell instantly in love with Rita Samuels, the youngest of four beautiful sisters, at a Greek social event. They had three children, Richard (computer consultant), Eileen (interior designer), and William (finance). Rita died at a relatively young age of cancer. A few years later he married Doris, who also sadly died of cancer a few years after they married. Ralph and brother Manny became partners as contractors in the garment industry. Contractors cut, sew, and fold the fabric that a manufacturer gives them. In my high school and college years I worked for them on Saturdays in their shop, and I calculated (by hand!) their weekly payrolls. One

further note here: our father taught all of his sons how to play the Middle East version of backgammon. Any time any of us visited each other we always played this game, and Ralph and I still do this.

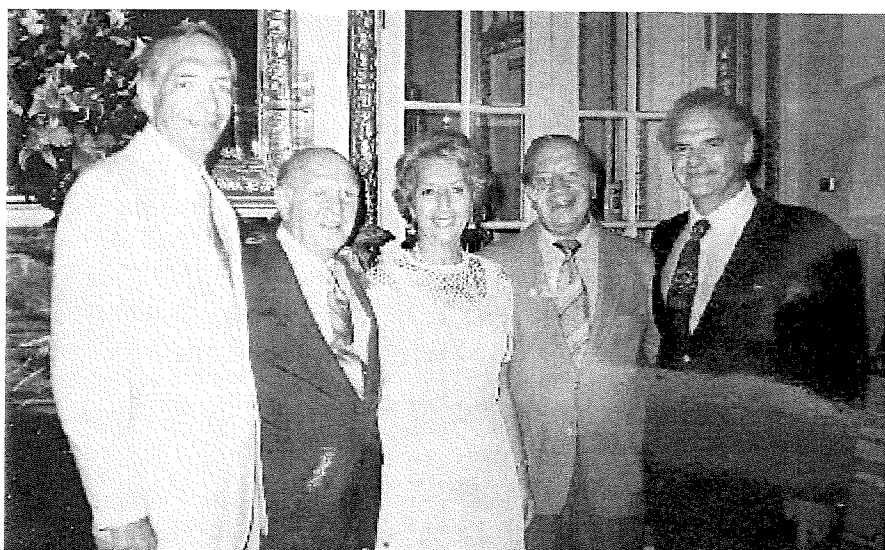
Manny was twelve years older than I. When he was young the Italian friends in his group called him "oubaish," which means fish, for his swimming prowess. I do not recall which of my brothers or how many or at what age threw me into the deep end of Starlight Park pool to teach me how to swim. They had to fish me out, and I was afraid of water for a long time afterward. Manny was also drafted, and he told two stories of his war-time experiences. Apparently he sometimes walked in his sleep and was afraid that he might do this in combat. Wise Uncle Joe Malta knew this, and he gave Manny the following advice: "Every night before you go to sleep put the left shoe on the right side, and the right shoe on the left side." He did this throughout the war in North Africa and Italy.

When Manny was in the North African campaign he worked as an air spotter. On one occasion he and some comrades had leave in Casablanca. They decided to go to a Turkish bath, and when they signed in one of the workers there noted Manny's last name of Battino. He was told that there were Battinos nearby, and that the son was a pharmacist. So all the guys went there, where they received royal treatment. The pharmacist's father told him that there were many Battinos throughout the Mediterranean area, and that they were probably related. Manny told this story many times. Later in life his wife, Minnie, developed dementia and predeceased him. They had two children;

the oldest, Robert, became a radiologist and lives in Perth, Australia, and the younger daughter, Robin, is a school teacher.

Brother Abe was four and one-half years older than I, and passionately disliked me as the newborn "baby" of the family who got lots of attention. He had previously been the apple of everyone's eyes, especially Nona, the only one of our grandparents who came to the U.S. She was a small woman who always dressed in black. Sadly, I never knew her since she died a few months before I was born. So, in a short time Abe lost his main support in Nona, and I replaced her as the child of interest. My sister, Lily, tells the story of once finding him hovering over me in my crib and attempting to harm me. Once we all grew up, Abe and I were close.

Abe was tall (about six-two) and quite lean. He was drafted into the army toward the end of WW II. His life was spared when he caught pneumonia on his leave before his outfit was shipped to Europe. This was a serious illness in those days, and it took him several months in hospital to regain sufficient health to be sent overseas. In Paris he ran into someone from his old unit, and was told that over ninety percent of them were killed in the Battle of the Bulge. His new outfit chased the Germans back into Germany, and he told stories of seeing concentration camps and a church where all of the villagers had been locked in, and which was then set on fire. I heard the story many times about how he accidentally met Governor Lehman of New York on the troop ship to Europe. Abe had wandered up to a forbidden deck and started talking with this older gentleman. An MP attempted to hustle Abe



all had midwives and possibly doctor's visits. My father's brother Sol lived on the same floor. My earliest memory is visiting my Aunt Molly (Sol's wife). Apparently, I preferred visiting with her rather than being at home for some reason. It was a family "joke" that almost my first words were "No peets," when Aunt Molly wanted to send me home. That was the way I pronounced the Greek word for home, *speet*.

When I was two my family moved to the Bronx since my mother wanted to "move up" in the world, and also be near her sister, Esther. One Friday evening my father came home from work to find the apartment completely empty. He asked Uncle Sol, and was told that the family had moved to the Bronx and here was the new address. My mother saved up money in jars for special purposes, and this was one of them. She knew that my father would never move on his own and just decided to do it (he accepted this). The only time I ever recall being spanked was by my brother Ralph. He did this to me when I was four years old and he found me leaning out of a window to peel some paint off the building's walls. We were basically controlled by tradition, and knowing what was expected of us. My mother also threatened that she would get sick from the "aggravation" of unruly behavior, and we believed this!

Rubin Battino is a Professor Emeritus of Chemistry, a licensed counselor, and has written 17 plays, many three-line poems, too many chemistry papers, and books on chemistry and psychotherapy. Rubin "grew up" in the Bronx, and dedicates this article in the celebration and memory of his 99-year-old brother Ralph, who died in March 2019.

back to a lower deck, but the governor intervened. They had a long chat.

After the war Abe met and married Thelma (always called Terry). As a teen I was best man at their wedding. They had three children: Mitchell, Nancy, and Robert. Abe worked as a broker of garment industry goods after he graduated from Pace College. Terry for many years had the fascinating job of administrative secretary to the head restorer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On one of my visits to New York she gave me a tour of the restoration area. Millions of dollars worth of famous paintings were all over that area in various stages of restoration. Abe and Terry eventually retired to Boynton Beach in Florida. We visited them there on many occasions in the winters when Ralph and Manny and their wives went as "snowbirds" to Florida to avoid the cold weather up north. Abe gave lectures on swing music and UFOs and also taught many children how to play chess (at a local library).

When I was a volunteer facilitator at an Exceptional Cancer Patient support group in Dayton I started

making audio recordings of many of its members talking about their lives. Copies of these recordings were then given to them for their family members. I do have audio recordings of my father and my sister, Lily. At some point I had acquired a video camera, and I then began filming people talking about their lives. One of the important effects of these recordings is that they serve to validate the lives of the people I recorded. It was not unusual to be told at the outset that they had nothing to say, and then end up with a two-hour recording! I mention these recordings here to urge others to do this for family members. I have several recordings of my brothers, and many of Ralph.

I will end this piece with a few Ruben stories. My family lived in a tenement on Broome street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Directly across the street was the Greek Jewish synagogue where our father (a carpenter and cabinet maker by training) did some work on its construction. There were no toilets in the tenement apartments, but two in the hall on each floor I was the only one of my siblings who was born in a hospital; the others

Grief, Resilience, and Gratitude

by Sue T. Parker

Recently I thought it would be fun to try to remember at least the first names of people who have helped me in the past two years.

When my husband, Bob, died at the age of ninety, he had been unwell for several years. He died at home, with superb help. I looked upon him as my rock. The whole first year after Bob's death was sort of "lost." For months, I didn't really ask for help, except for legal and governmental and banking. (Those folks were wonderful, but I can't remember all those names!)

After about a year, I moved to a rental house, and sold my home. Then I built a house, sold the house I was living in, and moved again.

I pretty much made these decisions myself. But inside, I could hardly breathe. I had physical symptoms and pain that doctors checked out and found were, well, grief. I suffered from a need for silence and alone time.

I spent one winter in a house largely unheated. I got locked out of my house in winter without a phone or keys to my car, while not feeling well.

I made improvements to the house. A friend showed up at exactly the right time after one move and organized my kitchen cupboard. But whenever people offered to help, I usually said no. I got offers of rides at night, since I couldn't see to drive.

What's important when you are feeling desperate and lost is dependability. You get up the courage and strength to tell someone what

you need done, then hope you have asked the right person for help.

A simple, matter-of-fact response when I was flustered made a big difference. Cheerfulness during the heavy lifting also helped. I noticed a generosity of spirit and patience when I was slow and couldn't focus on details well, or had to ask again because of hearing loss.

I was amazed at the competence and efficiency of the people who helped me, as well as their cheerfulness and flexibility. They were trustworthy. Once I asked for help on New Year's Eve. They came! I asked for a house cleaning before

a move after construction the day before Thanksgiving, and got it. Moves had to be postponed, but when the date was moved up, people still said yes.

Here are a few of the people who quite literally saved me, with help that they may have considered small, but who have made a huge difference in my life. Thank you.

Mary, Tina, Amy, Andy, Julie, Susan, Terri, Enoch, Jane, Randy, Ashley, Virginia, Jocelyn, Vicki, Rick, Stacy, Chris, George, Gentry, Xavier, Jorge, Aaron, Jacob, Chris, Steve, Todd, Kristie, Craig, Bill, Evan, Matt, Helen, Dave, Eric, Patrick, Andrew, Phil, Bob, Larry, Paul, Bryan, Wes, Early, Michael, Rob, Margaret, Tia, Pat, Tyler, Peggy, Justin, Joyce, Steve, Nick, Liz, Brian, Mike, Seth, Holly, Joan, Bruce, Beth, and David.



Chris Salazar fixing Sue's mailbox

NEEDING SOME COMPANY

by Maxine Skuba

Here in Italy,
alone and sometimes lonely,
the toilets tend to talk to me.
There's the gurgling reprimand about what I should have
done today,
There's the reminder, "Buy some prunes" or
"Isn't it time to take a shower?"
"Don't forget your face cream!"
and the assorted high-pitched chatter about nothing.

My clients often say their radios speak to them.
Sometimes it's the TV. It doesn't matter,
I always know to check off "delusional" on my list
and usually, it is time to go to the ER,
speeding through red lights behind the police car.

When I hear the toilet talking,
I'm sane enough, to know it's not God,
but whoever it is,
it's nice to have the company.

Pat Stempfily is fairly new to Yellow Springs and to writing but is enjoying both. She likes to write about real stuff in her books (most recently *Keep Movin' Your Energy for Body, Mind, and Spirit*) and simple poems. She finds Ripples a good way to get acquainted with this great community.

Sue Parker worked for the Refugee Resettlement program for many years. She also worked with children and libraries and at the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center. She married Bob Parker in 1982, and after both retired they spent many years involved with grandchildren.

SEASON OF NOW

by Pat Stempfily

Birds are singing, woodpeckers are pecking,
snow drops are in bloom . . .
is it summer, spring, winter, or fall?
I walked through the woods
wondering about it all.

Is Mother Nature giving me a sign
to think about the seasons of life
am I young, old, older, or oldest
will I claim it as mine?

I am not young but how am I old?
some say "You look good for your age"
some call me "Young Lady" or "Dear."
I am being told it's not good to be old.

some open the door with love and care
some ignore me as if I'm not there
some see me as spent and old
some see me as wise and bold.

Each season of life teaches me
to listen
to the season of now.
To its wisdom I bow.

The old have been young
The young have not been old.
They will be loved on their journey
to the season of now.

Coming of Age 50 Years Ago

by Michael Hughes

"Grandpa, what did you do in the War?" It is a centuries-old question that youngsters have asked and older men often struggle to answer. As a septuagenarian, "The War" was the Vietnam Conflict and those of us of draft age in the mid to late 1960s had an existential decision to make around age eighteen. Among our tough choices were: participate in a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program in our college or university; apply to an Officer Candidate School (OCS); enlist in a branch of service to circumvent the local Selective Service Draft Board making the decision for us; declare we had a conscientious objection to serving in the military and, if approved, perform national service in an alternative capacity; use whatever medical, educational, or family situation we had to permit the Draft Board to grant a draft deferment or exemption; move to another country to avoid being inducted into military service; or take our chances and be drafted. Barely out of high school, we were forced to make a seminal decision unlike any we would face again.

In my case, I received a full Navy ROTC scholarship upon graduating from high school and entering Dartmouth College. Five years later, in 1971, my diving/salvage ship was steaming independently while transiting "Vietnam territorial waters." We were within twelve nautical miles of the Vietnam coast, which qualified as "Vietnam service." In my mind, I never served in Vietnam.

By contrast, a high school class-

mate enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps and saw extensive combat duty in Vietnam as a "tunnel rat." He would squeeze into narrow tunnels which the opposing Viet Cong soldiers would inhabit for periods and store their cache of food, weapons, and munitions. His job was to discover if the tunnels were inhabited and if not, look for anything that could provide combat "intelligence." This hazardous duty required incredible courage and was often deadly. As with many war veterans, what he experienced on the battlefield left a deep psychological scar that was evident when he returned home.

Another friend was a Conscientious Objector (CO), an option to serve in an alternative position of service to the country. Once granted CO status, he was assigned as an orderly in a small hospital in New England. His job required pushing patients around on gurneys and other mundane tasks, but most nights he returned home to be with his wife and newborn son.

Several friends qualified for Selective Service "4F" status due to physical or mental health issues that made them unfit for military duty. Some were granted "2S" student deferments for being enrolled in various medical and advanced-degree programs. Others were granted "3A" exemptions for having dependent children. In many cases, friends altered their life trajectories in order to be granted deferments or exemptions that avoided being sent to fight in Vietnam.

One junior high school buddy

could not, in good conscience, take part in a war that he believed was deeply immoral. He chose a path to Canada where he would settle, marry, and raise a family in Nova Scotia. He became a small business owner and a prominent citizen in his community. To this day, he enjoys a productive and peaceful existence and is anything but an exile in his adopted nation,

As with many wars, young lives are sacrificed for what often appears to be nothing more than political posturing and domestic economic stimulation. In retrospect, the 58,000+ individuals who are memorialized on the Vietnam Wall had their flames extinguished needlessly before their time. One of those lives cut short belonged to a grade school classmate who was a Combat Infantryman in the Army. After serving in Vietnam for less than three months, he was killed by enemy small arms fire on July 8, 1968, at the age of twenty. I remember him as a gritty Little League baseball player who was tough as nails and, despite his competitiveness, always had a smile on his face. One wonders where his athletic prowess and magnetic personality might have taken him. But he never had the chance to flourish as an adult nor to wed and have children. His branch of the family tree was pruned fifty years ago; there are no grandchildren to ask James Eldon (Jimmy) Jordan, Jr., "Grandpa, what did you do in the war?"

Michael Hughes spent his entire childhood in Yellow Springs being exposed to the pros and cons of important political issues. Although he chose to accept an NROTC scholarship to attend the college of his choice, he was always respectful of anti-war activists

Art in the Senior Center

by Helen Eier

Suddenly the walls in the Fireplace Room were bare. Who said it first, where did it begin—seemingly spontaneously staff and members were having a conversation in the lobby about the bare walls. The conversation focused on the idea we should have senior art in the room. A first meeting brought together Barbara Brookshire, Margrit Petrie, Corinne Whitesell, Ginny Bentley, John Ford, Fran LaSalle, Lin Wood, Shirley Wexler, Roslie Smith, Sharon Mohler, Corinne Pelzl, and myself. There was much excitement by these self-appointed "Art Committee" members. Far-ranging discussions followed: suitable wall coverings, fixtures for pictures, timing of shows, publicizing shows, liability. Also, who would qualify (age, residence) and what art was acceptable. Enthusiasm was high, practical experience limited. Amy Crawford, acting director at the time, was interested but wisely advised waiting until a director was hired. These meetings took place between January and March 2013.

Karen Wolford was chosen as director in the summer of 2013. A year went by, then some months. A plan came to me one day. I went to Karen with the story of the "Art Committee"; she'd had similar ideas about art in the center. One of the first committee members was John Ford, a medical photographer whose images of highly magnified ordinary substances evoked much interest. John brought some of his art to one of those first meetings and I suggested John for the first show.

He had experience as an exhibitor and had art ready to show.

The first show was very successful. It opened along with other shows in the Village on a third Friday. A pattern of a new show every two months was established. Karen suggested a membership show for November and December, in which a number of artists could show one or two pieces of their work. We believed in offering as many seniors as possible an opportunity to show their art. There have been shows by two people, groups, families, and individuals. Several of the first committee members (Corinne Whitesell, Fran LaSalle, and Margrit Petrie), accomplished artists, followed with individual shows.

Deciding what qualifies as art has sometimes been a challenge. The shows have never been limited to professionals. A simple statement has guided the decision of what to show. If it is original and you enjoyed creating it, it is art. Even this can be difficult to define as artists take their inspiration from many sources. It has been rewarding to experience the joy of many artists, some of whom may never before have had public recognition of their creativity.

Many practical problems had to be resolved. Karen spent many hours creating a system of responsibility, liability, publicity, building accommodation, engaged the help of staff, and managed endless details. The committee members have had responsibility for finding the artists, reviewing applications, as-

sisting with publicity, assisting the artist to prepare for the show, and arrange the openings. Much has been learned by all involved. Several other persons in addition to those mentioned have served or continue to serve on the committee since the beginning, including Roslie Smith, Marian Miller, Linda Parsons, Pat Robinow, Betty Felder, and Sue Parker. The committee is a working committee; its meetings have always had lighter moments, the sense of shared responsibility, decision making, and success have been important to all involved. Staff and other volunteers have supported openings. Bob Huston produced large signs for every show which are displayed outside the building.

The importance of offering older artists, professionals as well as those who create for their own enjoyment, an opportunity for a show has been very rewarding. It has brought art to many who come for activities, not just a short visit on opening night but as a part of their experience of the center. Members look forward to new shows and notice when the art is missing. Sale of the art is welcome; some income has been realized for the artists and the center, but has not been a priority. The requirement of membership for artists has added a number of new members. The Friday evening Art Strolls have brought many people into the center for the first time. The idea born of bare walls has truly touched many and enriched the center's environment

Valerie French is presently coordinator of art. An artist, she brings a fresh perspective and new ideas to the Center. Helen Eier was self-appointed chair of the committee for the first years.

LOVE LETTER TO TERRY

by Abigail Cobb

I miss you, Terry.
Here on Xenia Avenue we're missing you.
There's a cold, dry wind that blows right
through the middle of me
when I remember that you're gone.

Now that the sun has come back out
I look for you everywhere:
Sitting at the table under the umbrella with a
couple of friends,
your hearty laugh ringing out,
greeting me as I walk by,
your bicycle with the big white compost bucket
on the back,
leaning against the painted wall.

I miss your wild golden curls
never tamed
glinting with sunlight,
and your hard, cracked bare feet
comfortable on concrete.

Inside the Emporium I scan quickly,
looking for you at one of the little tables,
hands wrapped around a small cup of coffee
(you never indulged in a large),
eating the toast you made in the kitchen
from heel pieces of bread
when you picked up the compost.

You loved the Earth, truly,
like a mother,
feeding her daily, tenderly,
the leftovers of the world,
those you didn't eat yourself.

You spoke with reverence of the mycorrhizae
in the soil,
and you knew the name of every plant,
especially the nourishing weeds:
red root and stinging nettle.

You respected everything that lives,
including each person,
even the ones wandering by, muttering to
themselves.
You spoke to them by name.

Was there anyone you didn't know, here
on Xenia Avenue
where you offered your daily doses of love
equally to everyone—
a long, lingering hug, or just a kind word,
gauging comfort level and need.
Love was the medicine you dispensed,
even when you saw the shortcomings:
your own, mine, their's.

"We're all in this together," you would say
and "We're so much more alike than we
are different."
Even as you called Trump an "asshole"
you acknowledged his humanity.
With gentleness and skill you pried open
the lid
of whatever was bottled up inside
each of us,
giving full attention to whatever poured out,
making sense of our sometimes crazy choices,
encouraging our next steps.

You made us feel stronger, Terry,
and less alone,
a little more okay about being who we are.
You eased our hearts open just a little bit wider
toward each other
in this hard, competitive world.
Somewhere deep down we knew all this,
but you showed us by living it, Terry.

Wherever you went, whomever you spoke to,
you carried that inner silence with you
from your daily meditation,
a silence as wide as the sky,
warm as the sun,
soft as grass under bare feet.
You listened to the Divine within,
all the time,
and you were present in that place with us,
speaking your truth.

Creator/Creation you called it,
that Life Force you let guide every step you took,
every word you spoke,
pausing, sometimes, in conversation,
eyes tightly closed,
searching for the truest word.

Or, taking your pendulum from your pocket,
a plain metal washer on a piece of string,
we paused together,
watching the magic disc circle one way
or the other,
or just hold still.
Pocketing it, again, you had your answer:
you would go or stay
or say or not say.
It was clear to you.

The mystery thrilled us.
We could see your direct hook-up to Creation
in action.
There were no false moves
or idle words from you.
You breathed in Trust
and exhaled Serenity.
Love breathed through you.
We could feel it.

That's how you stayed comfortable with
stage 4 cancer,
almost to the very end,
not knowing what,
but knowing something stalked you,
keeping that knowing to yourself.
You accepted.
You adjusted.
You opened yourself to Life and Love
wherever it revealed itself.
You listened carefully.

You encouraged us to open ourselves, too,
to do the work we came to do,
walking forward in our inner light,
offering no resistance.
Trusting.
Enjoying.
Enjoying every bit of this marvelous Creation,
this Gift:
Earth. Us. Here.

We miss you, Terry.
Love you forever.
Thanks for showing us what we knew all along,
for helping us wake up and remember.

You gave so much.
You gave yourself.

Abigail Cobb is a retired psychiatric nurse who has lived with her family in the Vale Community just south of the village for the past 32 years. She misses having coffee with her friend Terry.

A Love Letter To Terry

by Kay Kendall

We met under the osage orange trees in the fall of 2001. I was a newcomer to the Village. Little did I know, you were a legend. Soon thereafter came the comfort of a Terry-hug to the sound of chain saws bringing down the precious trees we had tried to protect.

A year later, at Barry's birthday party, a conversation and another haunting hug led to the real beginning. In others' eyes we were surely the odd couple, but beneath the surface we found fertile common ground in unconventional beliefs and values and philosophies—a relief and a comfort to find a kindred spirit with passion for stewardship of the earth, for simple, conscious living, for a natural death.

You honored me with an invitation to the "home place" for Christmas. Your extended family was warm and welcoming (and large!). I loved seeing the land where you were nurtured, hearing the stories, feeling the peaceful spirit of the Church of the Brethren roots you all shared. I loved the way the generations worked together on projects, feeling the bond created through cooperation and the accomplishment of the basic necessities. (You let me try the log splitter!) You opened another world to this city girl, one my soul found deeply desirable. It felt natural, modest, and real. Did you know that I entertained the fantasy of some day living there with you?

In Yellow Springs we worked together on countless projects. You were always willing, capable, pa-

tient, and, of course, notoriously strong. You were the implementer of my wild ideas. It felt like a partnership. You taught me to drink stinging nettle tea. I shared wine with you. You taught me to cook and eat groundhog stew—better with wine for sure!

On numerous road trips—Vermont, Prince Edward Island, and ultimately, Oregon—you were a dream of a driver. I could always relax with Terry behind the wheel, except when you indulged your passionate interest in a farm along the road!

The magic between us mellowed over the years into a deep, respectful, caring friendship. Unconsciously I was counting on those tough, calloused, grounded feet to walk the earth you loved forever.



Terry Snider, 1940–2018; painting by Thomas Verdon

You were an anchor—steadfast and true, generous and kind, and deeply spiritual. My heart still refuses to believe I will never hear your voice again—although I've saved your last messages—or feel the best hug in the universe. If I return to Yellow Springs, I will look for you on your bicycle. I will feel your spirit in the Glen, at the Emporium. . . .

Terry, I will love you 'til the GOATS come home.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for being in my life,

Kay

Kay Kendall formerly lived in Yellow Springs. She is now a resident of Ashland, Oregon.

A Clash of Truths, But What Possible Difference Can It Make Now? by Peter Whitson

The other day my daughter, Leanne, texted me a Face Book picture of my cousin James Palmerie, along with the names of two other people I did not recognize. That Face Book picture was definitely my cousin, Jimmy. Now, I refer to Jimmy Palmerie as my cousin, but that reference has a question-marked footnote attached. In fact, all my paternal relatives have question-marked footnotes attached with respect to me. These include cousins, aunts, uncles, grandmother, grandfather, brothers, and yes, even my father. Up to the time of my daughter's text, that's the way it has always been. All my life I had learned to live with and accept being what is now politely called "an unplanned child." When I was growing up, a different term was used, one usually reserved for someone considered very unlikeable.

Not any more, though. Thanks to twenty-first-century genetic science, a clash of truths is no longer a big question—yes, all that has changed. If I may explain, I'll try to keep it simple. The picture of my cousin Jimmy was sent to my grandson, Sam Stillman, as part of an ancestry search. The search was a family gift from my daughter. Sam and the rest of Leanne's family had submitted DNA samples to the ancestry data pool, which made a 99.99 percent connection between my biological grandson, Samuel Stillman, and my foot-noted cousin, Jimmy Palmerie.

So, in one simple swab with a Q

tip—Voila! No more footnotes! No more question marks!

According to the DNA testing, James Palmerie was genetically linked to my grandson, Samuel Stillman. Therefore, my cousin Jimmy—along with the rest of my Palmerie cousins—my Palmerie aunts, uncles, grandmother, grandfather are all blood relatives on the Palmerie side. And yes, the DNA finding indicates that even my question-marked, footnote-attached Palmerie father, Salvatore, is my biological father! Oh my God, can you believe it? Well, it's kind of hard to argue with science. So great, now what the heck am I going to do with all those stories and footnotes?

Oh! And what stories there were! Just a quick aside, while I'm thinking about it. I remember one time when I asked my older brother, John Whitson, about my place in the family, he said quite earnestly that I was left with us by an itinerant family named Roberts. Later I was adopted. (Which was how I got my middle name, Robert.) Sounds reasonable doesn't it?

My mother swore that it was not true, though. She had no idea where John got the story from; she knew I was her son because she was there when I was born. Hey, good enough for me! And this is only one of lots of other stories surrounding my little twig on the family tree. John Whitson, my older brother and the son of my mother's first

husband, Milton Whitson, loved to tell stories whether they were true or not. But I was not a love gift from a traveling circus and I was not Milton Whitson's son, even though I had his last name. My last name is Whitson because it was the only name available at the time I was born.

How's that for a cold case solved? My Palmerie cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents are my relatives. My brothers are my brothers, and my father is my father—for better or for worse. No footnotes needed. Thank you very much!

So, does all this make any difference? I have to confess, when I looked in the shaving mirror the following morning, I didn't see anything different. But then, as I got to thinking about it, I began to make some delightful inferences. I have real Italian blood coursing through my veins. Most operas are sung in Italian. Most operas are juicy with passion and, lord knows, at my age. I need all the passion I can get just to make it through the day!

And, when I asked Google about it, something very interesting caught my eye. (Ask Google and it usually has something to say.) This is what came up: What did Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, mean by "I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to my court, and German to my horse"?

Charles V (1500–1558) was suggesting that a particular language was best suited to particular use:

Spanish was the language of religion. (Spanish Inquisition, from 1478, intended to maintain Catholic orthodoxy.)

Italian was the language of love and intimacy. A real comfort in those cold and drafty castles.

French was the language of diplomacy and of many royal courts.

German was the language of empire, of which the horse represented strength and conquest. (The Kingdom of Germany later referred to as the "First Reich.")

How about that? Italian, as the language of love and intimacy. God, it is so nice to be able to speak to somebody passionately, besides my horse!

Well, this is pretty much brings you up to date on my strange but true (no pun intended) "tale." Actually, though, there is one other thing: as part of my daughter's venture into ancestry, she also gifted me a test kit so I could research my own DNA to find out if there are any other new twists or surprises to the story. I completed the process and sent it off for testing. And if there are, I'll be sure to let you know next time I see you.

So, in tribute to Conrad Balliet, "Thanks for listening."

Peter Whitson is spending his senior time allotment living happily in Yellow Springs. His family, the people, the senior center, and the Village all contribute to a perch in the tree of creative energy and the joy of living. Others have said this of their lives too. It is all true and is a gift to be embraced with profound gratitude.

The Mayor of Baltimore

by Joy Fishbain

My sister Barb is a V.I.P. She is the mayor of Baltimore. Not Baltimore, Maryland, but Baltimore, Ohio, an ordinary little town near Columbus: population 2,600. And she's not really the mayor; that's just the nickname my nephew uses to describe her.

This particular senior sister of mine is nearly eighty. She rides her old bicycle all over town, winter and summer, keeping an eye on things. She purchased it at Children's Palace for \$80 many years ago. She maintains a record of her odometer readings and has racked up 5,200 miles in less than three years.

The whole town knows my sister, the unofficial magistrate of the town. If my nephew's lawn needs mowing, she reports it to his mother—my other sister. And if the Laundromat he owns is untidy or needs sweeping, she springs into action and registers her observation (for the benefit of the community, of course). She loves our nephew dearly, but she doesn't let him off the hook. She keeps a plastic bag in her pocket and picks up discarded pop cans on her route, giving them to her grandson for proper recycling. She finds toboggan hats lost on the road, and washes them. She either wears them or turns them in to the local thrift store for resale.

In her immediate neighborhood she rules the roost from her comfortable, expansive front porch. She knows who drinks too much, who yells at their kids, and who's dating whom. In the larger world, she abhors technology and figures

it will be humankind's downfall someday. She's a tightwad by reputation and by her own admission, but she is generous in many touching ways.

She has opinions of everybody, and lets them fly as often as the spirit moves her. She assesses every situation that comes her way and pronounces her judgments with conviction. She makes predictions as well, which are often uncanny and on the mark. She finds it true that "with age comes wisdom," and counts herself as one of those select people to whom the saying applies.

She's a wife, mother, grandmother, and doting pet owner. She attends church and does her share. She's determined to keep peddling, to be watchful, involved, and relevant. She can't do less—after all, she is the mayor of Baltimore.

Footnote: When my sister read this, she declared every word to be absolutely true. She took it to the real mayor of Baltimore, who laughed his head off and kept a copy.

Joy Fishbain came to Yellow Springs in 1975 to complete a degree in Social Work at Antioch College after working as an R.N. for seven years in Columbus, Ohio. She and her late husband, Dr. Harold Fishbain, built a country home in 1981 just outside the village and raised their son there. She likes to dabble in writing about human experiences and in using poetry to describe her love of nature.

The Little Thief

by Shirley Strohm Mullins

The child stood on her tippy-toes, stretching to reach marks at the very top of the chalk board. Her teacher said, "Don't be long, Shirley. It's time for lunch; and thank you."

She smacked the erasers together, watching the smoke fly up, wiped her hands together and then finished them on her dress. She whirled around, ready to leave when she saw something sparkling on her teacher's desk. She planned to just look at it, that's all. The fountain pen was beautiful, painted in bright, shiny colors. She picked it up so she could see it better. "Oh, my," she thought, "It is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen." She held it in both hands, watching the colors change as the sunlight moved. Then she did something extraordinary. She tucked the pen, her teacher's pen, between her arithmetic papers and skipped out the classroom door as if nothing had happened.

After lunch, the afternoon moved right along . . . spelling, her worst subject, and music, her favorite. No mention was made of anything missing. The little girl, whose short pigtails were tied tightly at the ends with colored bows, almost forgot about it. Even at eight years old, she had plenty to think about . . . Larry Honeywell, for example. He was the cutest boy in the third grade—smart, too, and funny. The bell rang and everyone except Shirley jumped up and hurried out. She wanted to walk home alone today. Maybe she would go a different way; you don't have to always go the same way.

She held the pen tightly in her left hand, secured under her jacket sleeve; the pen that wasn't hers. The pen she had taken from her teacher's desk. "I'll just drop it here in this stranger's yard. No one can prove who took it." Without further thought, without looking left or right, she dropped it to the ground, where it was hidden by the thick grass. Perhaps someone in the house had seen the child, saw what she did and wondered who the little girl was and what she had dropped. No one will ever know for sure. She walked home, free as a bird, knowing she would never be caught. Never ever.

The next morning at school, she noticed that people were chattering about something something that had happened the day before. Someone had stolen the teacher's fountain pen, the special pen her parents had given her at college graduation. There was a reward for its return.

Shirley was not a bad girl; in fact, this was the first real trouble she had ever been in. She was, however, too smart for her own good. Without thinking about the possible outcome, she knew exactly what to do.

After school, she walked home alone the wrong way, stopped at the house with the thick grass and knocked at the door. Lying to the nice lady who was happy to find the pen's rightful owner, she hurried home, sure of her good fortune. Five dollars was a big reward, worth at least ten movies at the Ri-

alto with popcorn and candy.

The next morning, things didn't go quite as planned. When the item of interest mysteriously appeared in Shirley Strohm's hand as she asked for her \$5.00 reward, the teacher frowned. Then the teacher's face turned red, really red.

In a single moment, life took a very bad turn. "Did you take it?"

"Why did you take it?"

"Class—should Shirley have taken it?" Teacher talked very fast. There was no time to answer, to explain.

Everyone said that she was very naughty. Even her big sister, Alyce, called her a thief. Her mother said quietly, "We'll talk about it tonight after supper."

Shirley didn't really know why she took it, but that didn't seem to matter. Stealing was a very, very bad thing in her family. Strohm's didn't steal or lie or say bad words . . . Just because. Her mother kept her word. After supper, the two of them went into Shirley's little bedroom. The exact words and spanking are long forgotten. But her mother's voice remains clear. It was calm and firm at the same time. She never yelled; she just tried to explain what had happened, and why punishment was required. Then it was over. Her mother tucked the blanket snugly around her, kissed her on the cheek, and whispered, "I love you, darlin'."

Then Shirley decided what she had to do the next day: Tell everyone at school that she was sorry about what happened, that she wouldn't steal anything else, ever again. She would tell her teacher she took the pen because it was so beautiful. Also, she really liked her a lot. Everything would be okay again, just like always.

We Shall Overcome by Marguerite Heston

How does a deadly accident teach you how to live? How does it teach you your choices and limits? My father's accident in 1947 has taught me throughout my life.

My father, Philip Delpierre, was forty-seven years old in 1947, husband of Eva, father of Evelyn (twenty-one); Philip, Jr. (eighteen, senior at Chariton High School); Marguerite (sixteen, a sophomore); and Richard (fifteen, a freshman). We lived in Chariton, a small town of 5,000 in southern Iowa. My father worked at Johnson's Machine Works as an outside foreman. Johnson's was a producer of steel beams for buildings. Also, during World War II the company produced buoys for the U.S. Navy. In the first week of November of 1947, Johnson's Machine Works was to deliver steel beams to a building in west Iowa. Their employees Delpierre, Peterson, and Johnson, a brother of the owner, were given the job.

Johnson was in the motorized lifter cab. His job was to lift the steel beam up on the building. Also guiding the beam was an attachment, the guide bar. To guide the steel beam to the top of the building it was held by Peterson with two hands and my father by one right hand. Running next to the building was a 35,000-volt electric high line. Johnson was to see that the steel beam would clear this dangerous wire. No one knows what went wrong, but the steel beam hit the 35,000-volt line, sending a horrendous volt of electricity down through the guide bar, piercing its deadly fire down into the bodies of Peterson and Delpierre, throwing them to the ground.

Peterson died on the site, Dad Delpierre was burned badly in his right arm and both legs. He miraculously lived! His shoes were made of leather. The soles were held on with nails. The leather was burned all around each nail. Did the electricity exit through the nails? Dad Delpierre, still alive, was taken to Yokum's hospital in Chariton, Iowa. Fortunately, Dr. Curtis was attending there, an experienced surgeon during WWII in Europe. He told my mother, "Your husband's legs and right arm are badly burned. Poisoning may set in quickly. We need to amputate his right arm and both legs now."

My mother and the whole family were shocked . . . numbed by this situation. My mother pleaded to the doctor to save his legs and arm. My father, lying in pain, knowing that his buddy Peterson did not make it, wanted to live; he tried to comfort my mother, telling her he was strong. This was his chance to live!

So Dr. Curtis amputated the two legs, six inches below the knees, and the right arm three inches below the shoulder. We had a lot to be thankful for at Thanksgiving, but a lot of grief at the loss of limbs.

Looking back on it now, I wonder what went through his mind when he looked down and saw no legs, looked over and saw no right arm? Did he think, "How am I going to walk? How am I going to work? I am right handed. How am I to drive a car. How am I to use a tool? How am I to hold and hug my wife and kids?"

Patients in the hospital marveled at him. Before Christmas they told my mother he would cheer

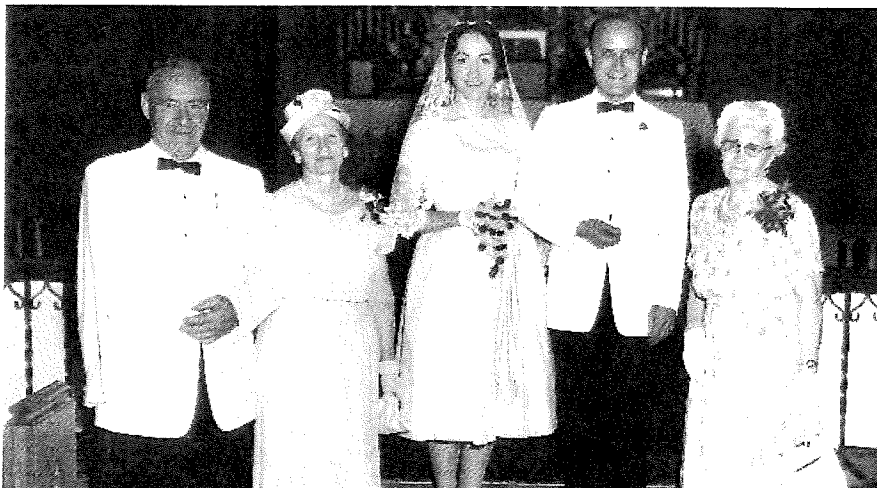
them up by singing Christmas carols. They heard him across the hall. Yes, my dad did not waste his time on being a victim. He looked down at no legs and saw himself walking. He looked over at no arm and saw himself using his good left arm and hand. My dad had a can-do attitude. He was determined to adapt and overcome.

When his limbs healed, he was fitted for artificial legs, but the arm did not have enough muscle to use. When he got home he immediately tried to strengthen his legs. So he walked around on his knees, pulled himself up on the couch or chair, and, of course, with his left arm pulled himself up on the bed. In a few months the artificial legs came. He would walk on his knees to the couch, put his left arm on the left couch arm and lift his body up in a sitting position. The night before he had taken off his legs so they were next to the couch in reaching distance. Thick wool socks came first for cushioning. He then would slip his leg stub into the harness and leg hole, and then the other leg. There was a leather harness for each thigh with an attachment to the waist belt. Mom had to help him get on his pants and his shirt, but he could button his shirt and buckle his belt. Not only did he learn to get up on those legs and walk, he learned to push a small plow in his garden, mow his lawn with a motor lawn mower. When he needed to drive a car he put a knob on the steering wheel and with his left hand steered it. After he learned all these things, he returned to work at Johnson's Machine Works and became head of the tool shop. He sharpened the

tools, supplying the machines with tools and keeping inventory. While working he invented a hammer for a one-handed person. He drilled a hole in the center face where a nail could fit, so with one pound the nail would stay in place. He would lift the hammer off the nail, and pound it the rest of the way in. Yes, my father showed us a positive "can do" attitude. His thinking mind would figure out a way around his handicaps to do the job.

In 1960 my father, in all his glory, walked me down the aisle at my wedding to Ernie Heston. What a great day that was! He listened to the positive spirit within him. He had no limits. His choice was a positive spirit and the spirit made it true. And we, his sons and daughters, have found that way for us. When the tough times come we look at the positive spirit.

People at the Senior Center call me Maggie. We came to Yellow Springs seven years ago to be near my daughter, Melissa Heston, and her family. I am active at the center and in spiritual book clubs. Picture of our wedding below: my parents to left, Ernie's mother on right.



CARNIVAL by Nora Chalfont

I rented a child
Not having any of my own
It was an experience I'd missed,
I'd seen lots of pictures though,
A whirl . . . a piece of cake.

But by accident I got one all
covered with dirt
Hadn't washed in a week at
least.

Hungry too.
After he'd had his bath and I
had my cry
(Genuine liberal tears, good for
stripping paint off a wall)
We looked at each other a good
long time
We both have brown eyes.

"Let's go to a carnival!"

It's been years since I've been to
one,
A little girl about his age,
His cousins used to work at one,
he says.

He didn't want to go to the
midway
The glitter and rides and games
He wanted to go to the trailers in
back

To try and find his cousins there.
We agreed to meet later at a hot
dog stand
I wandered among the glitter and
the lights whirling
Won some games, went to the
freak show.

When he didn't show at the hot
dog stand
I went looking for him in back.
There were people who looked
like him but weren't him
Suddenly I heard loud music
playing
People singing and dancing,
And he was laughing and danc-
ing too.
He seemed to be looking straight
at me
And it looked for all the world
As if he was laughing at me.

Maybe I'll rent another child.

Nora has lived in Yellow Springs since late in the last century. Her published writings include a poem in *Pinehurst Journal* and a short novel, *St. Elmo's Fire* (in the YS Library).

FALSE PROMISE
by Linda Chernick

The new day dawned tea rose and peach.
At midday a brilliant bulb burned mega-watt,
Flood-lighting the remaining snow cover
Pure wedding-cake-frosting white.
Such a light illuminated Eden.
The atmosphere radiated hope:
Spring will be here, soon, bringing
Children splashing, laughing, through puddles;
Daffodils, hyacinths and tulips
Blooming in greenening gardens.
Almost anything seems possible on such a day!
But,
After a night-long icy pelting,
Only the slightest lightening of gloom insinuated morn;
Yesterday's glory a dimming memory.
Today, a filthy gray sheet hangs outside
Obliterating the view;
Killing sudden hope with sodden chill.
By evening,
Hidden patches of black ice await the weary, unwary.
So, don once more the down,
Sip a steaming mug of soup:
It is cold, dark, dank winter.
Still.

Linda Z. Chernick, an Ohio native, lived in Massachusetts for many years before returning home. As a Baby Boomer, she is thankful for the opportunity to learn from the many people who embody vital, engaged aging in the Village. Linda previously published a chapbook, "The Turning: Poems of Love, Loss and Renewal." She gratefully acknowledges the late Conrad Balliet and members of his poetry group with nurturing and helping to better her writing.

MIDNIGHT IN NORWAY
by Judy James

"Look up,"
he said as we stood
in the biting cold Arctic air.
My nose inhaled
January's crisp, clear scent.
Salt lingered on my tongue
from pickled fish heads.

Looking up, my watery
eyes widen to unexpected color
against the dark curtain of night.
Long, moving ribbons of light
in the quiet, starry expanse.
Red, green, yellow ribbons
move like cosmic dancers.

"Have you ever seen anything like this?"
he softly said without turning his head.
"No," I whispered, not wanting to spoil
the moment when time stopped
to pay homage to the dancers.
"The perfect end to a perfect dinner
at the top of the world," I murmured.

Judy James: I was lucky enough to view the Northern Lights while on a trip to the Arctic in the 80s. This poem describes that experience.

Originally from Massachusetts, I am retired from a long career in the Air Force. I lived in Fairborn while stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB in the late 80s, and recently moved back to the area from Jacksonville, Florida. I am very happy to call Yellow Springs home.

An Unusual Visitor

by Sylvia Carter Denny Miller



It was just an ordinary morning, no sun, gray; bare feet, still in pajamas, I started into the kitchen. A little leaf, what I took for a bit of leaf, caught my attention. As I bent over swiftly in an attempt to get it, it shot into the air almost grazing my face. Thus began the chase: scrambling, chasing, the leaping critter always just ahead . . . until I finally gave up and settled down in the comfy big chair to consider the situation. The leaf had actualized itself into a tiny gray toad, or frog (as in Samuel Clemens' "The Celebrated Jumping Frog"?) Put your thumb on it. See, it really is tiny. But toads don't do this, they sit and meditate and wait

for the next event, I think.

Ready to try again, I found it cuddling into the chair skirt. I went for it, and again it deftly eluded me. I gave up, leaving it behind the TV making fast to the quarter round I couldn't get him to give up. Reluctantly I left for the day.

That eve, avid to discover the next episode—oops, there he was in my face again. The chase ended with his leaping the incredible height of the wicker chair back! That clenched it. He is a tree frog! I have two sizeable trees in this room. A cozy place to spend the rest of the winter?

I sat down with the day's mail,

tearing open what I knew would be interesting, "The Gray Eastern Tree Frog"! Nancy Stranahan, co-founder and director of the Ark of Appalachia sending me a donor invitation via this picture. So tiny, in the luxuriant green ferns and exactly like mine! Can you believe it?

Sylvia Carter Denny (Miller). Carter is my mother's name, Florian Earl Denny is Dad's and is Italian for flowers. Sylvia, Italian for trees. What's Italian for birds?

About fifteen years ago, and before Chris and I moved to Yellow Springs, I was diagnosed, after various kinds of brain testing, as suffering from "mini strokes and some dementia." Recently, while going through old papers, I found, under the heading "Swan Song," a few poems written while trying to cope with that verdict.

Now, having lived more than a dozen years in a community that even announces itself as "Dementia Friendly," I'll share some of those poems. They were written in a state closer to terror, but it's gratitude I feel now after all these bonus years of happy coping.

DIAGNOSIS

by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

1.
Awkward in youth,
clumsy at party talk,
styles askew,
let me now look this
grim consistency
full in the face, offer
my own lopsided grin
when it's the best I can do at
dancing graceful
down toward a last sleep.

2.

If it were my choice
I'd avoid the dark tunnel
stay alert well into sunset
writing love stories maybe,
ignoring my pain,
caring for someone who
liked my cooking or my jokes
or both.

Not knowing,
going into not knowing in pieces,
is a path so absent from my list of
first-class adventures,
a strange opportunity to go away
propelled by all my
un-prayed or forgotten prayers,
tripping, slipping slow
in a shrinking passage,
smiling if I get it right
in the dim light.

3.
Once, before trying again,
to reach me,
the world's kindest math teacher
said, without even a sigh,
"It's all right, my dear,"

So, perhaps the words I still
 have
will do.
After all, a cook whose kicks
come from making leftovers
palatable
or even delicious
can surely learn to
make do
with her own remnants
of memory.

Perhaps she could even learn
 to love
the remains of herself.

4.
Remind me
when I am no longer walking,
or you're changing my wet
 bed again,
or I don't remember who you
 are,
how much joy I found in
adding a vase of violets to a sick
 tray,
surprising a grouchy client into
 smile,
reading poems to blind Nell.

In case I can understand, tell me
again, and again, and again
not to be so damn greedy,
wanting still more of the
 pleasures
bestowed on the beneficent.

Remind me it is my turn to give
 you
the joy of giving.

5.
When you are failing,
when you begin to know
that the furniture of your mind
will turn to dust
—and the wind is already
 blowing—
still there is something
beyond sad
a small sound like a chirp
 perhaps
or more light in the morning
almost a hint
of warmth to come.

Janeal Ravndal and her husband of sixty years, Chris, live in Friends Care Community. Following careers in teaching and social work they retired here after Sue Parker, Janeal's sister, introduced them to Friends Care and Yellow Springs. The couple's two daughters and their husbands live in Dayton, a son in Michigan. They have eleven grandchildren and two great-grands.

AN HORATIAN ODE: O FONS BANDUSIAE
Horace, Carmina, 3.13, translated by Michael J. Kraus

Brighter than glass, Bandusian spring, you shine,
Deserving flowers not unmixed with wine;
To you tomorrow's gift will bring a kid
Instead, whom nascent horniness would bid

Butt with his fellows, win the prize of love,
In vain. Abreast your frosty streams will move
His ruddy, staining blood, and passion mock
This lusty-virgin hope of all the flock,

Beyond the touch of sizzling summer's heat,
Unscathed you flow, and gaily go to meet
With welcome freshets every wand'ring cow,
And wearied bullocks, resting from the plow.

You will of all the far-known springs be one,
When I, singing your arching oak have done,
Your hollow rocks, cascading wet with spray,
Whence chatt'ring waters leap, then skip away.

Historical note: in the ancient world of Greece and Rome springs were much praised by poets, especially perennial ones; most dried up in the heat of the summer. Horace here seems to celebrate a spring to which the slain kid has transferred its regenerative powers, to the advantage of kine and humankind—and, of course, poets. He is perhaps the first poet to show some sympathy for the sacrificial goat. The sixties chanted "make love, not war"; Nature destines many animals to do both.

Michael Kraus taught Latin for 17 years and took a course on Horace's Odes one summer at the University of Georgia.

Two Kinds of Losses

by Joyce McCurdy

Part I - Mother

Mother met us in the lobby. She looked radiant. The light blue blouse and the navy suit flattered her. "Oh, Mom, you look beautiful." Her eyes sparkled. Rushing to our seats in the Kuss Auditorium, I heard the crowd gasp. After herding my children into their seats, I looked around for Mom. She lay prostrate on the floor . . . so peaceful. I knelt down and whispered, "Mom, we must get out of here."

My son shouted for a doctor—no responses at first. Then his baseball coach, Dr. Kelly, came forward and tried to revive Mother. The cast and crew were annoyed by the delay. The crowd of 1500 people witnessed my mother's death. We thanked Dr. Kelly. He knew Mother because he lived a block away from her house. Dr. Kelly saw her yelling at the baseball field. He was coach, neighbor, and friend. He followed the Hippocratic oath and helped in time of need.

Many years later, I was getting gasoline and saw Dr. Kelly. He gave a panhandler five dollars. As we stood in line, I commented that the panhandler was a well-known addict. He said, "I have been fortunate and I share what I have with others." His remark showed his faith and willingness to help people without distinction. This message softened me and made me question why I considered his assistance to my mother noble and his gift to a homeless woman foolish. This per-

spective was transforming. I was reminded of my grandmother who always said, "There but for Thee go I" and Mother's advice, "Be kind." Who was I to judge?

Part II - Husband

After sleeping soundly for several hours, I heard the phone ring. Usually my husband, a light sleeper, would grab the call; however, the incessant ring continued. I reached to the nightstand and mumbled a half-awake "Hello." I was without concern. The children were adults, and we were now the elders. Having had young teens a few years ago, I remember how the phone ringing traumatized my pleasant dreams into an icy fear—a knee-jerking terror. Sleepless I concocted haunting possibilities. My wildly invented fantasies were far from the reality as I would learn the next day, or at least their revised version. The kids were grown; parents, gone. Therefore, I did not connect the call with any immediate person: it was likely a wrong number. Abruptly sitting upright, I noticed crumpled comforters and a pillow making a lump on the bed.

The voice, firm and demanding, informed me that my husband was not in any condition to drive home. His truck had a flat tire. The digital clock gleamed a red two-forty-five. I thought, he can change a tire. I asked if the spare was there. The officer gently said he is lost. No

accident had occurred. I suggested that he call AAA to tow the vehicle. Perhaps the tow company would let him ride in the cab. My driving to Far Hills in the rain would take more time. The highway patrol officer agreed and confirmed the address and the auto club number. I waited, wondering where he was going in the truck and why would he be lost in Dayton?

Later, he told me he was going to a doctor's appointment, scheduled at seven. He did not crack a joke or make light of what had happened. He was strangely disoriented, not self-assured—so different from my husband of more than fifty years. The next day, he was back to normal; my concern dissipated. My suspicions shifted into complacency, and I no longer thought that this event would become insurmountable. We laughed as if nothing had happened.

Now, I know that the darkness that night was my first introduction into the world of Alzheimers. His later explanation made sense as he assured me that he often went early to the dermatologist and waited in the truck. That early appointment let him go to work on time; he would have changed the tire if he had a spare. Everything seemed reasonable.

However, this was the first time that his behavior was not predictable; I was concerned but the next day he was the same person I had known since I was fifteen. Although I studied a few past moments when he seemed to be different but I positively thought all was well—until November. Another episode occurred. We were joking with each other, and then he looked at me as if he had never seen me before. He did not recognize me. Four months

later he recognized me and remembered my name.

• Author's Note

Sharing this personal experience may be helpful for others to see how dementia like a thief steals the reason and feeling of a victim. Yellow Springs' community interest in being dementia friendly realizes this patient, his family, and friends are struggling to cope with the transformation that has erased memory and logic.

Joyce McCurdy: The joy of knowing people, writing, teaching, and chatting with them is why I see Yellow Springs as a comfortable place to be.

UNTITLED
by Shirley Kristensen

In the trees

the leaves are rustling.

Leaves fall

gently floating,

spiraling to the
ground.

As I walk thru them

the leaves are rustling

their conversation
resuming.

The Foal

by Dan Beverly

On January 19, 1938, I was born on a small farm, ten miles north of Somerset, in Pulaski County, Kentucky.

Our farm still looked like it did in the nineteenth century. To help with the farm labor we had two horses and a mule. A short time before my birth the farm was connected to a telephone system. The farm did not have electricity.

When I was about three years old, one of our horses gave birth to a foal, and was kept at the tobacco barn in a private stall and pen. My mother took me to see the foal and told me the horse mother would not let any person or animal get near the newborn foal and to never go near it. So as soon as I could, I went across the road and down the lane to the tobacco barn. The foal was so cute I had to pet it. I crawled under the barbed wire and was met by the kick of the rear hooves of the horse, which sent me back into the lane. I screamed and my mother came running and picked me up and hugged and kissed me and carried me home to see if I was hurt. On the way past the gooseberry bush she broke off a branch. After she was sure that I was not hurt she proceeded to spank with the gooseberry branch. She said if you go near the foal again I shall let your father spank you.

Shirley Kristensen: I met YS when arriving from Red Bank, NJ, to attend Antioch College. After work, grad school, and travel I returned for a job and remained.

Being spanked by a gooseberry branch did not hurt much. So—I had to pet that foal. This time I got into the pen, the horse mother was very upset, and kept placing herself between me and her foal. Finally she got me and kicked me through the barbed wire fence. The kick hurt, the cuts from the barbed wire hurt, and when my mother picked me up and hugged me and kissed me and saw all the blood and started crying, that hurt the worst of all. She took me home and bandaged up my cuts and cried some more and said that she was going to ask my father to spank me when he came home. My mother's crying because I had disobeyed her hurt me. My father had never spanked me so the anticipation of his coming home left me very anxious. When Dad returned and Mom told him how I had disobeyed her twice, and now he had to spank me, he removed his belt and found an unbandaged part of me and gave me three good licks. That hurt and I no longer wanted to pet the foal.

That was a near-death experience. If I had not been kicked through the barbed-wire fence and landed in the pen, the horse would have stomped me into the ground with her front hooves and Mom could not have got to me in time.

Dan Beverly: After a rural childhood, and school years in suburban Cincinnati, I found Yellow Springs very soon after college. Even though our family followed jobs to distant cities, we always came back to this "just-right" town.

COMPASSION DECIDED TO TAKE A NAP

By Jenni Davis

Compassion decided to take a nap
She felt depressed and tired,
Because her good friends Kindness and Love
By the president had been "FIRED!"

Reason and Intellect tried to survive
Without the other three,
But Fear and Prejudice grew so strong
America no longer felt free,

Freedom to be yourself was gone
Along with new friends from afar . . .
"We'll build a wall to keep some out,
and others from airplanes we'll bar."

Truth's been rushed to the hospital
She's sick of all the lies . . .
From how many were at the inauguration
To collusion and Russian ties.

Mother Earth moans from deep within,
As climate change is ignored;
She thought we had evolved past coal
And that elephants were adored.

Decency and Respect for women
Find bold, lewd behavior bizarre,
Unwanted groping, the president says,
Is OK if you are a "star"!

People of Color no longer feel safe
On streets or even in shops;
"Don't our lives matter?" they wonder with fear
of so many reckless cops.

Places we love and used to go
For learning or praying or fun,
Are danger zones where we are told:
"Just come equipped with a gun!"

Our Founders set up three branches
We learned of them in our schools.
When did NRA become fourth?
Why are we being such fools?

Courage, now we call on you
With Love and Kindness please band!
Wake Compassion from her nap
And bravely make a stand'

Bring back Reason and Intellect,
Shut down Prejudice and Fear;
Gain great strength from knowing this:
HOPE will always be near.

Jenni Davis is a member of the Yellow Springs "Writers Eclectic" writing group that meets at the Senior Center twice a month. Her husband, Jerry, is one of the Yellow Springs Potters.

PERCEPTIONS
by Ardis Macaulay

No SHADOWS without LIGHT,
No LIGHT without SHADOWS.
Interdependent these
Seamlessly
woven tapestries
of JOYS & SORROWS.
No SHADOWS
without LIGHT,
No LIGHT
without SHADOWS.
Inseparable these
Just flowing shifts in
perceptions and change.
No SHADOWS without LIGHT,
No LIGHT without SHADOWS.
Amid the dappled patterns,
A bird takes flight.
The wind listens.
Sunrise
or
Sunset.
Which?
Perception
makes
ALL
the
difference.

Practicing artists Tom and Ardis Macaulay moved to Friends Care Retirement Community in 2018. Ardis is a former high school art instructor and art therapist. Tom retired from Wright State after 39 years as a sculpture professor. They are both looking forward to this new life chapter and discovering ways to become involved in the unique and uplifting Yellow Springs community,

Seniors know that one of the best ways to stay sharp is to learn something new. Here at the Yellow Springs Senior Center language classes are offered in French (Lynda Hicks), four different levels of Spanish (Judy Skillings, Harriet Dadras, Didier Franco), German (Prof. Robert Conard), and American Sign Language (Joan Champie). These classes provide the opportunity to refresh your early language studies or to master the elements of a language that is completely new to you. At the same time a bond is created among the students who struggle to find the right words and help each other out. In high school we had to raise our hand to speak. A YSSC language class is a lot more fun.

Approximately 60 participants take these free classes. The YSSC offers the most language classes of all the senior centers in Greene County. Consider taking one of these classes, or suggest another language you would like to study. Last year we offered Japanese!



German Class. From left, seated: Lee Huntington, Steve Bujenovic, Sheilah Conard; standing: Jeff Huntington, Angela Day, Robert Conard (teacher)

"The best thing I've done since retirement."
Dr. Robert Conard

Spanish Class—Teacher: Judy Skillings
Right side: Anna Arbor, Linda Sikes, Carmen Milano, Pat Johnson; Left side: Marcie Rogers, Roxy Morano, Lidia Mora Stone, Bobbi T, Ric Maas, Adele Maas

"It's like my son, it's much more rewarding than the energy it requires."
Judy Skillings



SYCAMORES IN WINTER

by Janeal Ravndal

How fitting that I've left the graceful birch
behind to decorate New England hills
I can no longer climb, to bend its supple
stem and register at least a surface
purity on coats of sapling congregants.
How fine that, while I can no longer bow
before that treasured bark, this flat land has
supplied a senior substitute on a
far larger scale. And, while so far from reaching
white birch primer elegance, or Frost's free
swinging innocence, these giants raise gnarled,
tarnished silver to Ohio's sky in
double gift to me. Their own grotesque beauty
lines this, and my birch road of memory.



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