

Ripples

Stories and Poems

by or about Yellow Springs Elders



Volume 7, August 2020

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the Yellow Springs Senior Center I want to welcome you to read this, our seventh, edition of *Ripples*. I do not know about you, but being able to read *Ripples* brings some normalcy to my life. Perhaps reading this issue will bring some normalcy to your life in the wake of all that 2020 has brought to us so far.

I am thinking what the next edition of *Ripples* will bring to us. I envision stories written of quarantining or protest marching or learning about Zoom. Whatever the “next normal” for your life is, I encourage you to stay safe and be well.

My heartfelt thanks to all involved in this project each year. I know for them it is a gift of love they present to our community. They truly enjoy reading the stories and poems by and about the older adults in this village we call home—Yellow Springs—and to share that with you, the reader, is a treasure.

Karen Wolford
Executive Director
Yellow Springs Senior Center

Ripples features introspective and retrospective stories and poems from our senior community. We hope that these writings inspire others to do the same.

There is great appreciation and thanks for the *Ripples* Committee, and especially for Jane Baker who has patience and expertise to see us through a difficult and tedious process. And a special thank you to Teresa Bondurant as the YSSC staff organizer for entries.

I am knocking on your door right now. Let the writing begin. You have a story like no other.

Suzanne Patterson

Front cover photo by Pat Dewees, August 2015

Back cover photo by Matt Minde

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Contents

Stories

The Wheat Harvest <i>by Dan Beverly</i>	2
Grandfather, Father, and Son Stories <i>by Rubin Battino</i>	4
The Yellow Springs Peace Corner <i>by Pat Dewees</i>	9
Kind Ness <i>by Pat Stempfly</i>	10
Skipper <i>by Diane Davis</i>	12
Hill Storm <i>by Jo Ann Kiser</i>	14
Disposing of the Body <i>by Joy Fishbain</i>	20
It Must Have Been Last Thursday <i>by Peter Whitson</i>	22
Chop Suey Carryout <i>by Peter Whitson</i>	23

Poems

Resolutions for 2020 <i>by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal</i>	8
On Line <i>by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal</i>	8
At Tom's Market <i>by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal</i>	8
Autumn Icons <i>by Jo Ann Kiser</i>	13
The Goldfinches <i>by Jo Ann Kiser</i>	15
Australopithecus <i>by Jo Ann Kiser</i>	15
Let's TRANSMIGRATE Together <i>by Ardis Macaulay</i>	16
Dropping Out <i>by Judy James</i>	17
Home <i>by Abigail Cobb</i>	18
Untitled <i>by Robert Paschell</i>	21
Almost, Kind Of <i>by Bill Mitchell</i>	24
Untitled <i>by Robert Paschell</i>	24

The Wheat Harvest

by Dan Beverly

I was born on a small Appalachian farm in Kentucky in 1938. The farm was mostly worked by hand, with the aid of two horses and a mule.

1943 was the critical year for the farm. My two older brothers had enlisted in the Air Force and Navy. Our parents had promised the next brother that he could join the Navy when he was seventeen years old, in 1943. There were not enough hands to do all the farm work. Something had to change. The government guaranteed a good price for wheat planted in 1943, and raising grain required less labor than corn and tobacco. In September my dad and brother plowed, disked, and smoothed the two ten-acre fields and rented a wheat drill and planted the winter wheat crop.

In June 1944 the winter wheat crop ripened. It had been decades since wheat had been grown in that part of Kentucky so the normal diseases that plague wheat were not present and the crop was really good. To harvest the crop we needed a combine machine and a threshing machine. The state Agriculture Department arranged for the machines to be rented and to serve the small farms that had planted wheat. On our day for our harvest, I woke up to lots of talking in the kitchen. The kitchen was full of neighbor women cooking, baking, talking, and having a good time. In the front yard, tables were set up and piled high with food. One table had only pies. The tables were covered with white sheets to

keep away the bugs and birds and me.

I will never forget that day. Someone yelled, "Here they come!" and we all ran down to the road and looked toward the railroad tracks. We could see a puff of smoke, then another puff and then a puff, and a puff, and then we saw a monster steam engine tractor with large iron cleated wheels rolling across the fields. The steam-powered tractor was pulling a threshing machine followed by a combine machine, truly a steam-powered train moving slowly across the fields. The steam engine was too heavy to run on the roads and bridges so the crew had to pull up the fence posts and lay down the fence and run over them and then set the fence back up. These machines were all antiques, made in the 1900s. But the tractor did not use scarce gasoline. Because of the black smoke I suspect it burned coal. If it were not for the war these antique machines would not have been used.

First the steam tractor and machines stopped at the edge of the wheat field and the combine machine was detached and two horses attached to it and it started combining the wheat in the middle of the fields while everyone else sat down and feasted on the food. The combine machine was developed about 1840 and did three operations: it mowed the stalks of grain, gathered the stalks into a bundle, and tied the bundle with a straw to form a loose sheaf of grain and dropped it on the ground. This

was all done gently to minimize the grains shaken loose from the stalks.

After the center of the field was combined the tractor crew towed the threshing machine to the center of the field and moved the tractor some distance from the thresher and connected a long power-drive belt between the steam engine and threshing machine. The one-cylinder steam engine was rotating slowly and at each stroke of the large cylinder a big puff of smoke came out of the stack and was sent up to the sky, and the ground shook from the thump.

Our neighbors used their own wagons and teams to gather the sheaves of wheat from the field and lined up at the thresher machine. The sheaves were tossed into the hopper and the thresher made a wonderful noise as it blew out dust and straw to the side and a flow of wheat grains at the bottom.

The wheat flow was continuous and consisted of a "Y" duct connection with a diverter damper. Each duct outlet had a feed sack strapped to it and as wheat filled one sack that damper was switched and the filled sack was removed and tied off and an empty sack clamped on the duct. By the time the new sack was attached to the duct the other sack was full, and the process continued until all the wheat was harvested. Filled sacks were piled on wagons and hauled to the grain elevator, about four miles away, for storage and shipping away by train.

After the threshing had stopped I wanted to climb the mountain of straw. It was a lopsided mountain. The side near the thresher was not so steep so I climbed up to the top

but the side far from the thresher was a steep drop.

Straw is very slick so I fell off the steep edge with a loud thump at the bottom. The wind was knocked out of me. I tried to cry but had no air. I heard someone say, "He is hurt," and Dad ran to me and carried me to Mom. Finally I got some air and yelled out my displeasure, but actually I enjoyed the attention and being held by my father.

In only about four hours of machine operation our farm's wheat was harvested. The tractor crew had a supper from the remains of dinner in our house, then formed the harvesting train and set off over the fields to the next farm where they would sleep in the barn and repeat the process of directing the threshing for the next two farms.

In the morning after breakfast Dad and Mom hitched up the wagon and went to the neighbor's farm to help with the harvesting.

That wheat crop was the first time that the farm made a good income for the year, but not enough to keep us on the farm. Soon we moved to Cincinnati.

The moving van was an old truck from the 1920s. The driver, Dad, and I rode in the front of the truck and Mom and my sister rode outside on the couch facing backwards. Facing backwards was a good idea; Mom could get a last look at the place where she and Dad had spent sixteen good years of hard work raising their children. It must have been a sad parting for her.

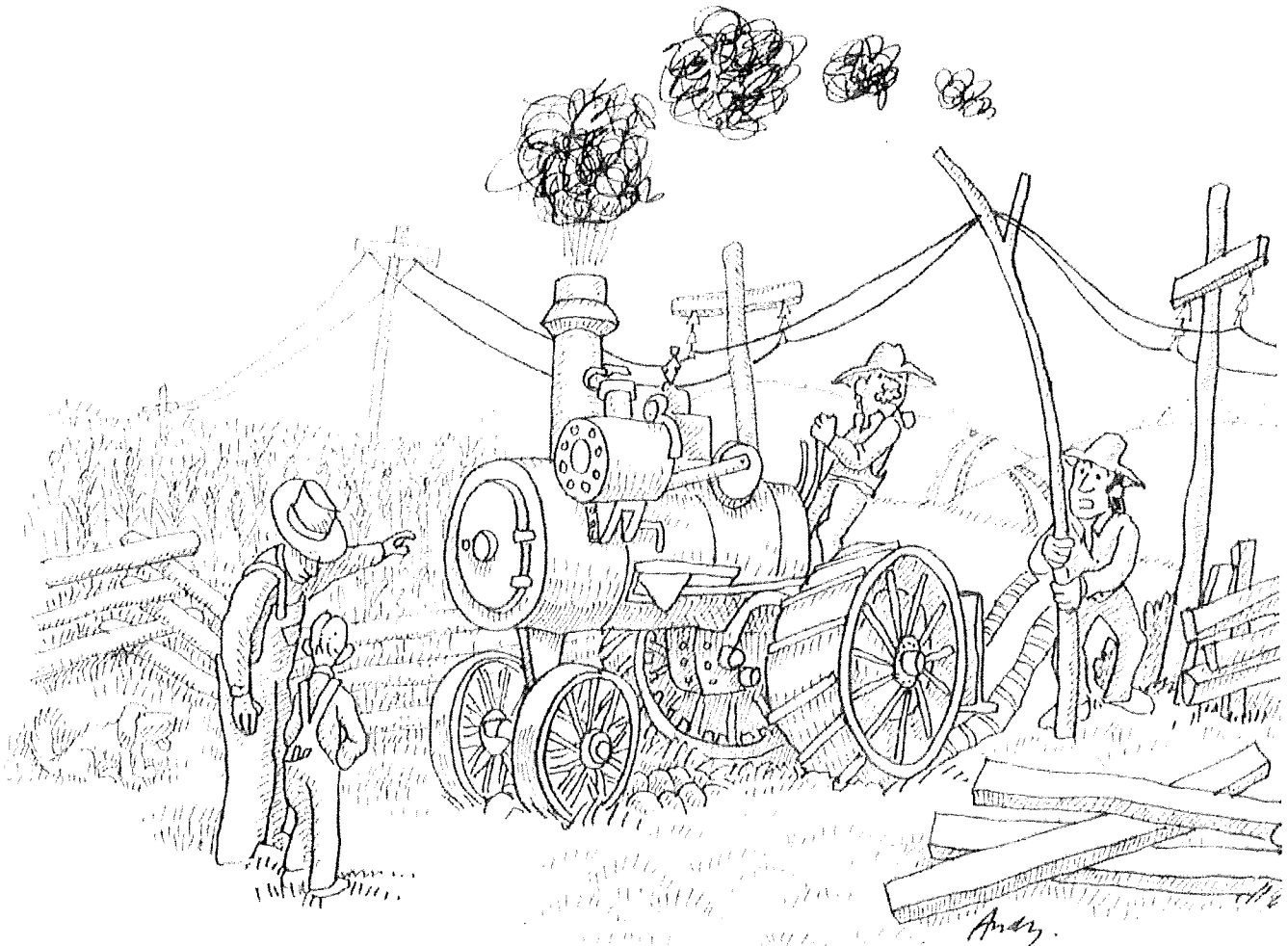
Dad was sitting next to the

truck window and was talking to the horses as we drove slowly along. The horses were keeping up with the truck until they came to the end of the field and had to stop. My father was sobbing with his face in his hands. For sixteen good years Dad and the two horses had been a farm team. Even a six-year-old boy could see the love and longing between a man and his horses.

And so ended my family's life on the farm.

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.

The illustration is by my son Andy Beverly.



Grandfather, Father, and Son Stories

by Rubin Battino

At eighty-eight years of age I am a grandfather, a father, and a son. I occasionally marvel at this since there are so many memories and feelings that go back to earlier times. How can I still be the little boy who was always called "Ruby" and the grandfather who is called (in the Greek tradition) "Papou"? When I was growing up in the Bronx (I actually "grewed" up there, did I not?) people and relatives in their fifties looked ancient and *old* to me. Most of them had complete sets of false teeth since the dentistry of that time was to pull teeth. And, they talked funny (to me) because of this! I still have all of my teeth, albeit with fillings and crowns and root canal work. Amazing.

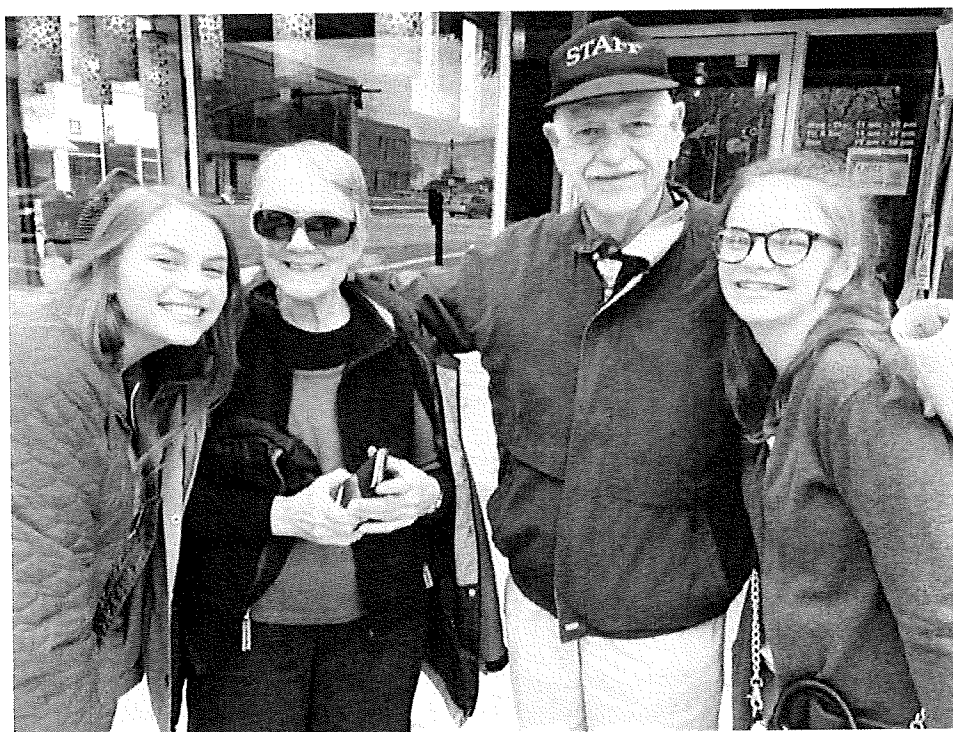
I begin with stories about my father, Sadik Battino. (All of my family members and almost all of my relatives have biblical names. The definition of Tzaddik is a righteous and saintly person by Jewish religious standards. It has many spellings.) He was born in 1891 in Ionnina, a small town in the Zagoria area of northwest Greece. There was a small Jewish community there that had existed from Roman times (traced back to ca. 250 BCE), and they were called Romaniote Jews. We believe that the Battino family there was actually started by a man named Battino who lived in Milan, where there were many Sephardic Jews. He was looking for a wife and heard that there were many young and beautiful unmarried Jewish girls in Ionnina. So, he traveled there and married one!

My father was trained as a cabinet maker and carpenter in one of the free vocational schools supported by the wealthy French Rothschild family via their charity foundation, *Alliance Française*. As a graduation present he received a set of wood-working tools—I still have some of them, and have given others to my sons. When he was nineteen the village elders were told that he was going to be drafted into the Turkish army. (Greece had been under Turkish rule for about 500 years, and it is amazing that during that time the Muslims, the Greek Orthodox, and the Jews lived in peace together.) His family got some money together and one evening my father walked out of the walled city with his tools. He told the guards that he had a job to do outside the city. He kept walking, and I was told that for part of his journey to Athens he actually traveled with a group of nuns! A relative there rowed him out to a ship going to New York. He knew that there was already a group of Greek Jews from his village there. (Incidentally, we found his name on the memory wall in Ellis Island.)

I believe his first job was as a carpenter in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The prejudice was so open there that he left after a few months, and joined my Uncle Joe in the garment business. They had a small storefront on Orchard Street, and used garment workers in the surrounding tenements on a piece-work basis. With various partners they eventually formed

the National Pajama Company, based in a loft in the garment district in lower Manhattan. My father was the salesman of the group. I worked for him one summer when I reached the then legal age of fourteen, and earned enough money to buy my first camera.

My father was wonderful with young children; he was a storyteller and always had a treat to give them. He taught his four sons how to play pinocle and backgammon ("Tavloo" in Greek). As my brothers and I grew older he did become a bit more remote, and rarely noted any of our accomplishments. After he retired he worked part-time in my two older brothers' contracting business. Their dream was to change the name of their business to "Battino & Sons." Pop (we always called him Pop or Pa) was not interested. When I was in my forties I asked him one day if I could call him by his first name (he used "Dick" then), and he told me "No," and said, "I am the Papa!" When I was in graduate school I got into acting with the Duke Players, and had the lead role in one of their plays. I sent home clippings about this and how well I had done. On trips home he never mentioned this at all, just like he never attended one of my wrestling matches when I was on The City College wrestling team (he did watch wrestling on TV). My brother Ralph (the oldest) told me once that Pop carried those clippings in a suit pocket, and showed them to his customers and friends. So I learned he was proud



Rubin with his wife and two granddaughters.

of my accomplishments, but just could not say that directly to me.

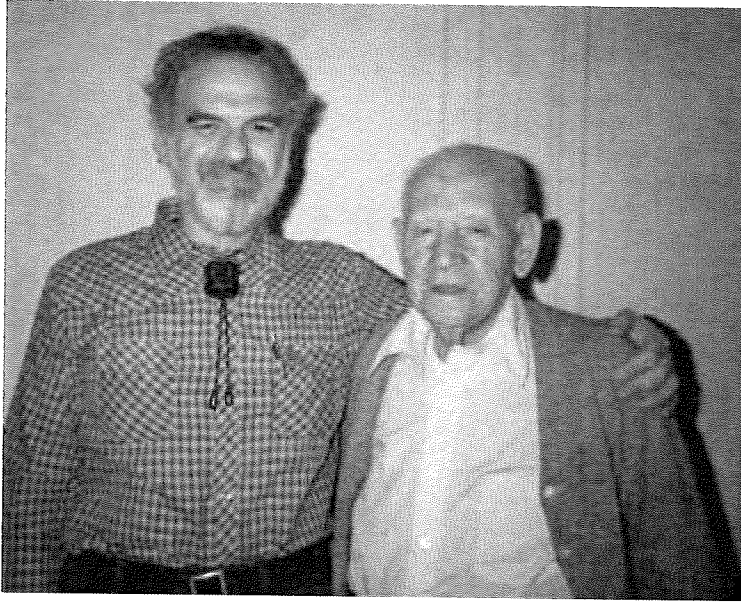
Here is a Tavloo story. I inherited from my father an interest in woodworking and have made pieces of furniture, turned bowls, and done many other small handyman jobs involving wood and metal and glass and electricity. Perhaps my best bit of craftsmanship was making a walnut and maple backgammon set as a gift for my father. It took me a while to get up the courage to give it to him. On a trip to New York I thought in the airplane that he would say two things when he received this gift. They were, "Why do I need this, I have one already" and "Look over here, you could have made this much better." That's exactly what happened! He kept his old set, and the one I made was given to my brother-in-law who eventually gave it back to me.

In 1986 my sister Lillian (my oldest sibling) had a recurrence of

breast cancer and it was likely that she would not survive it. I was going to fly to California that spring to spend some time with her. The only convenient flights I could arrange went from Dayton to New York, and then directly to California. I used this as an opportunity to visit Pop who was then living in the Sephardic Home in Brooklyn. Brother Ralph met me at the airport and took me to the home. Pop was ninety-four then and we spent some time together, but he had aged enough that playing Tavloo was not possible. He had to go to the toilet and I helped him. He asked me to wipe him as he could not do it himself; I did so. That night he died in his sleep. The next day the four brothers got together in Pop's room. The only thing of value there was his Tavloo set. Ralph had some toothpicks with him and shortened one of them. We all picked one, and I got the short one and the Tavloo

set. I eventually gave that set to my youngest son, Benjamin, who had a close relationship and identity with Pop—Ben has Sadik as his middle name. (Also, Ben has become a remarkably excellent woodworker, making furniture and objects way beyond what I did.) My older son, David, knows that he will inherit the one I made for Pop. Perhaps one of the most poignant experiences in my life was helping Pop at the toilet as that act was a reminder of what was done for me when I was a baby. There are really cycles in life.

Here is another Pop story that is really a "popcorn" story. When I was growing up we lived in the Bronx in the Southern Boulevard and Tremont Avenue area. The Bronx zoo was a relatively short walking distance from our apartment, and my father would occasionally take me there on a Sunday afternoon. Once there, he would find a comfortable bench after



Rubin with his father.

buying me some popcorn. I was left to wander around on my own for an hour or so (eating the popcorn) while he took a snooze on the bench. When I finished, I would return and wake him up and we would go home. On some Sunday afternoons (to get some peace and quiet on his own) he would go to the Loews Elsmere or the Vogue movie theaters, both of which were within short walks. He did not go there to see the movie, but to be in a quiet place where he could take a nap. (The Vogue was preferred since it had more comfortable seats!) The Bronx zoo excursions are the source of my addiction to popcorn. Even now I occasionally go to an escape movie on my own, do not eat supper beforehand, and slowly devour a large bucket of popcorn! Pop also liked to go to a Greek coffee house where he could be with other men and play pinochle or Tavloo. Is my going on solo hikes on Sundays in our local forest preserves my way of keeping in touch with him?

When I was growing up and younger there were many times

when I did not like my parents and resented what they were doing or not doing in my life. They were not readers or involved in the kinds of "intellectual" activities that I treasured, and in which I was involved. That is, they were not there to give me any guidance in my life pursuits. Later, there was this remarkable insight and revelation I had when I was in my late thirties. I thought about my parents, and knew they were good people who had our best interests at heart. And, then I thought that they just really did their best for us, but didn't know what our lives and wishes and dreams were really like. The word *fallible* came to mind, and I realized that they were human and fallible just like the rest of us. They did not know everything, and were controlled by their upbringing and beliefs just as I was. It was like that proverbial light bulb going on in my head and I simply forgave them, and also forgave myself for all of the not-so-good thoughts I had about them. All of a sudden, I loved my parents again in an open

and comfortable way. (I occasionally wonder if my sons have ever reached that understanding of human fallibility with respect to their parents and themselves.) We are all human and fallible!

The preceding are stories of being a son. Looking back now I realize that I was not prepared to be a father. Becoming a father was not one of my dreams, and I had no idea of what I would or could do. When David was born there was this infant who occupied all of Charlotte's time and energy—I never realized how much energy it took to be a mother. At the same time I was teaching and working hard at chemistry research hoping to get tenure. Getting tenure and being able to support the family was now a major need. (I do recall one of my father's favorite statements about his life and being the sole provider for his family of five children. It was, "I always made a dollar." That is, he always provided for his family, even through the Great Depression.) I do recall not being able to give Charlotte all of the support she needed—I just did not know how. Looking back, I learned enough to get us through that early time, and I "always earned a dollar." A challenge arose when I did not get tenure, but I did get offers of jobs at two universities and one research establishment. In those days I had quite a bit of research money and was able to move my entire laboratory (along with a postdoctoral fellow) to Wright State University. I started there as an associate professor and made professor within three years.

But, what about being a father? Recently, I purchased a device that lets me convert my old 35 mm slides to digital copies, and I

have been doing this. I have been surprised to find so many photos of our sons when they were small, and many of them with me reading to them or playing with them. (They are in their early fifties now and both great sons and wonderful people. Charlotte and I do not know what we did to get them to be such good people, so we just accept the result!)

Just one father story—and it has to do with fishing. I learned that a good friend of ours taught his two sons how to fish, and went out with them regularly. (There was no place to fish in the Bronx where I grew up except the Bronx river which was more of a sluggish stream. I do recall going out with friends when I was younger, using bent straight pins as fishing hooks, and actually catching a few minnows with the worm baits we put on those hooks!) So, I got a book about fishing and bought two outfits from Sears and

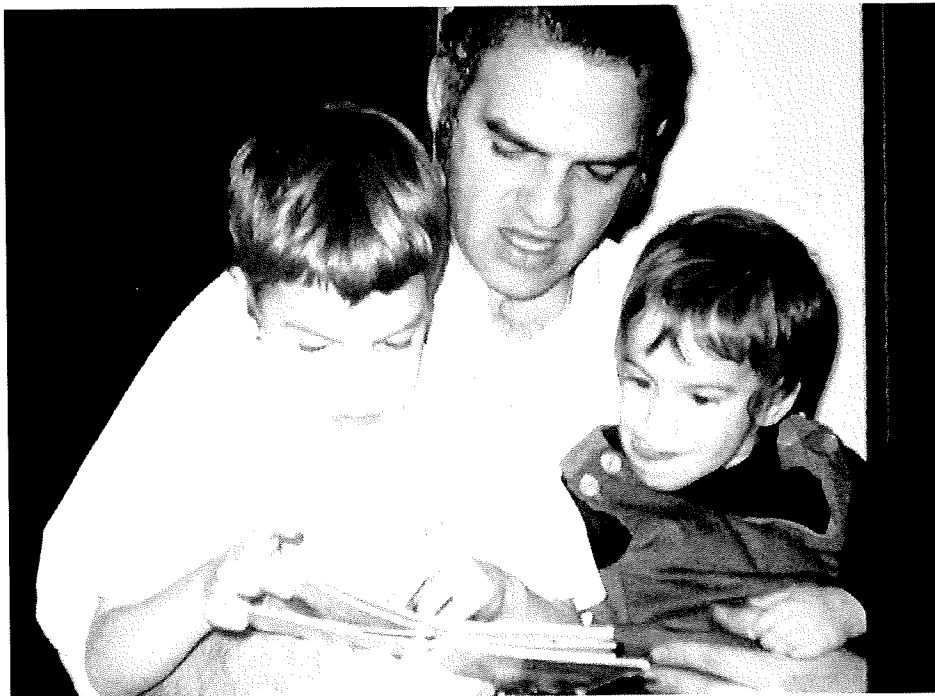
took David and Ben fishing. This was pretty much a disaster and was not repeated, and neither of them fish. On the other hand, we took them camping and hiking and biking and they do that to this day.

I know many people (including family members and nephews and nieces) for whom becoming a grandparent was (and is) a major goal in life. We knew that our sons would marry and have children some day, and that we would become grandparents. (David and Hazuki have two sons, and Ben and Jill have three daughters and three sons.) We spent quite a bit of time with the latter group when they were both residents in medicine in Cincinnati. D & H live in California and it was difficult to find the time to visit with them, but we managed to do so once or twice each year. There is a good relationship with both families and their children, even with the restricted amounts of

time spent with them. On the other hand, distance has minimized the amount of contact and the opportunities to share experiences and have conversations with our grandchildren. As they grow older there seems to be better contact. I do not know who gave me the advice that the primary role of parents and grandparents and in-laws is "To stand on the sidelines and cheer. And, if you do anything else (like respond when asked for advice), you will inadvertently do something wrong!" This has served us in good stead.

So ends the tale up to this point for son, father, grandparent, and in-law.

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 with his sons.

RESOLUTIONS FOR 2020

by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

Today, as eve approaches,
I struggle to be clear;
there're oh, so many options
for a brand new year!

I could stir a bit of hell up,
Try a virtue to develop,
commit myself to weight loss,
or check out our local beer,
take a trip to, say Botswana,
or just one on marijuana.

Shall I vow to stand in protest,
and uphold a higher law,
or aim more for a comfort fest
—abandoning the bra?

Ah, well,
I guess I will default,
will halt this New Year quiz
since, pretty much, I like my life
just the way it is.

AT TOM'S MARKET

by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

Whatever is marked down goes up
in my own estimation. I
cheer for cauliflower quite tired, for
yoghurt's dates that just expired, and
am enthusiastic fan of
taped-up box or dented can whose
contents will provide me thrill
beyond mere, ordinary flavor,
besides, of course a less of bill
for me to savor.

ON LINE

by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

In Amish neighborhoods it may live on,
that clean review of others' underwear
and sheets and overalls; though here it's gone,
and likely little mourned. But I declare
the loss of:

basement laundry tubs, hose from the spigot
to the swish machine, the wringer,
loaded baskets lugged each Monday
up through open cellar doors
to backyard lines for our display
of cleanse accomplishment.

Sometimes I'd count the diapers
as I pushed those wooden pins,
arrange my weekly work as fabric art,
or, in a winter wind, *hang out* as heroine.
Always the weather played its lively part.
I'd check that morning sky's template,
might sing a line or two to celebrate
its *bluing* span.

There are some limits to these gems my memory stored,
I've no nostalgia for the ironing board.

Janeal and Chris Ravndal, moved to Friends Care Community in 2006 after spending most of their fifty married years together living and working in Quaker educational communities. Sue Parker, Janeal's sister, clued them in on the wonders of Yellow Springs and daughters Helen and Karen live nearby in Dayton. After writing about her dementia in last year's Ripples, Janeal decided to keep it light this year.

The Yellow Springs Peace Corner

by Pat Dewees

Years ago, my teenage granddaughter, Tenisha, was visiting for the weekend. On Saturday morning I told her that I would be going to the weekly Yellow Springs Peace Vigil at noon. She responded, "Oh Grandma, that is so cute! You are going to a protest." I corrected her that I was going to a vigil, a Witness for Peace that had been happening in Yellow Springs for many years. She laughed, still finding it quaint, sweet, and funny that this gang of seniors would gather for peace.

At that time some of those who actually started the vigil in 2003 were still on the four corners—Quaker pacifists, Hazel Tulecke, Bill Huston, and Peg Champney among others. The corners soon bloomed to be an interfaith and Peace Activists location every Saturday. Gordon Chapman always wore his *Veterans for Peace* T-shirt; Mary Morgan carried a Real Estate sign reminding us that the US Congress is always "For Sale." Sylvia Carter-Denny, one of the oldest members present in all weather, held up her prayer, Sisters and **Brothers ALL!** Her partner, Byron Dann, was a faithful presence too. Terry Snyder always waved the Earth Flag on his corner. Now, Janeal Ravendal pushes love, and Ruben Batino still carries his hand-made sign declaring the importance of funding schools and "Bridges, NOT Walls!" O.K. there is a little bit of protest. In 2016, we were joined by many villagers on the corners in a sizable "Take the Knee" protest,

supporting NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick's action against racism and police brutality.

I told Tenisha that most of these elders had been arrested at least once, had even spent time in prison for their commitment to peace. It was not a joke to stand against power. Hazel Tulecke and Janeal Ravendal had both spent time in federal prison, Hazel for protesting the brutal School of Americas, a CIA Training school for Latin American soldiers, and Janeal for protest against the war in Iraq. I had once climbed the fence of the Seneca Army base to stop the Cruise Missiles. Peg Champney and her family chose to live below the poverty line to avoid paying for any war taxes. Andrée Bognar lived through World War II as a child in Belgium and knew the cost of it deeply. However, I also wanted Tenisha to understand that this Yellow Springs weekly gathering of interfaith folks was not a really a protest, was really a vigil, a kind of prayer of peace, a Witness.

As Saturday traffic flows past the corner, those in cars and trucks still respond to the Vigil. Yes, there is the occasional rude gesture or shout. Terry would always respond to this behavior with a cheery shout, "*Peace to you Brother!*" Once, we were all dumfounded when a decorated pick-up truck came by festooned with Confederate flags and filled with young guys offering those familiar rude gestures. We waved in a friendly

way, of course. Abby Cobb often holds up the World flags to remember our love for Terry. Often, much more often, people give back the peace sign, blow their horns or even, while stopped for the red light, roll down their window and say, "Thank You." Sometimes a semi driver gives us thumbs up. Sometimes, a child in the back seat is the one offering the peace sign back to Margo Bode as she smiles and waves to those driving by.

On occasion, younger people walkinsg by stop to talk or take selfies with us. Visitors to town or new people decide to stand for a while. Suzanne Pattersson faithfully volunteers to bring the posters and flags each Saturday. She considers herself "new" to the corner as she completes year two this June. Lucia Livingston also calls herself "a newcomer" with just a few years on the corner. Lucia often brings a petition to the corner, this month against gun violence. Some current issues are put out there—"Black Lives Matter," "Listen to Women!" and "Protect the Earth"—but the overwhelming message is that we, as a people, long for Peace. As elders we know Love is possible and we stand for it. It is a kind of prayer. Sometimes it is a rowdy prayer as we laugh and sing old protest songs on a very cold or miserable rainy day. We miss Shawn Tulecke, who always brought recordings of those old favorites that his grandmother Hazel remembered and could sing

(continued on page 17)

Kind Ness

by Pat Stempfly

The big bold Kind Ness banners to and from the Village give a great big smile that says “hello, good bye,” or “think about it”. I miss them when they’re not there because they remind me that kindness matters. It feels as though kindness starts somewhere deep inside, bubbles up, comes alive, and finds expression in both simple and profound ways. It seems that many children, adults, and even our furry friends give and receive acts of kindness. It’s the pay-ahead person behind you at the drive-thru, it’s a good cook who knocks on your door with a welcome pot of soup, it’s someone who shovels your snow just because, it’s a stranger’s smile with a big hello, it’s a friend who stands with you at a scary time, it’s a snugly pet when you’re feeling down, it’s a neighbor who helps you chase your playful dogs who have learned to open the gate and are on the run, it’s an off-duty fireman who stops to change a flat and will take no money. I have experi-

enced each of these acts of kindness in Yellow Springs and will never forget them.

I received a profound act of kindness when I was a camp counselor at a YWCA camp I began attending as a youngster. The camp was my home away from home each summer. The counselors became my heroes. Their rich diversity of culture, color, creed, and class, from the USA and foreign countries, awakened me to see beyond the world I knew.

I hoped that someday the world would be like our camp and decided at a young age to diligently work my way up from camper to junior camp counselor to a full-fledged counselor. Jo was the Director and Super Hero who became my mentor. I wanted to be just like her someday. When I achieved my goal of full-fledged counselor she became my boss, I was still a kid wanting to be an adult to make a difference in the world . . . but not knowing how. She helped me grow

up with an unexpected act of profound kindness.

On a warm summer night we had an International Dance program with a big outdoor sound system and many waiting dancing feet. Jo taught the first half of the program in her jubilant way and then in her boss-like voice turned to me and said, “You know all the dances and I want you to teach them because I know you can do it.” She handed me the mic . . . and then turned away and quietly disappeared. I began to sweat with fear and self-doubt.

Overwhelm overtook me but I knew I had no choice. I stood alone in front of a large bunch of campers and my group of peers. It seemed like an eternity but in a nanosecond happy clapping and smiling faces cheered me on; my overwhelm quieted and suddenly I took a deep breath, jumped in with both feet, and hoped for the best. My heart was pounding out of my chest but when I heard the music my feet started dancing. I forgot myself and my quivering fear. In that magical moment I knew I could do it . . . and it seemed like we danced the night away.

Later that night after the camp was asleep I took a long walk under the stars to ponder the amazing night and the wonder of my beloved camp. I wasn’t sure what it all meant, but, deep down I knew I couldn’t stay in my comfort zone forever. Walking alone under the beautiful night sky comforted me, but my scattered mind kept swirling with thoughts of joy and sadness. Joy that camp was my place of shelter, caring, and community and sadness for when I would leave it and go out into the big scary world all alone. I walked and followed



These signs have recently sprung up all over the village.



Photo by Dylan Taylor-Lehman, courtesy of the Yellow Springs News

the stars to a silent campfire circle and sat on a lonely log in pensive thought. I had loved each campfire with the sharing of friendships and song and dance and smores! Happy camp memories began to dance in my head with the message that wherever I went they would go with me. Tears filled my eyes with a river of truth and I knew I was on the journey of coming home to myself. My time had come to step through the door. The night was done but I was just beginning.

I felt deep gratitude for each experience under such an extraordinary tent of inclusiveness. Jo was a beautifully gifted and giving person and teacher who showed us how to get along and understand the wondrous gift of diversity. She welcomed me to the grown-up world of possibility by simply pushing me to believe in myself. Her pro-

found act of kindness helped me to be unafraid to try and realize that if I didn't try I would never succeed and become the teacher I wanted to be. I learned on that warm summer night that real acts of kindness are not meant to be reciprocal or done for recognition, but come from a knowing somewhere deep inside. The sweetness of an act of kindness may have the magic of spreading endlessly like ripples in the water. Whatever they are, they are a wonder of life at it's best in all the little and big ways. I wonder what would happen if each person gave one act of kindness each day by sending a bit of spontaneous joy to wherever it's needed. Cheers to the Kind Ness banners before and aft that bring out the best in us and proclaim that kindness matters. May kindness always be the first word of our Yellow Springs story.

I am not a native Yellow Springer but am slowly becoming one. I enjoy the endless treasure hunt for words that say what I mean and mean what I say. I love to write for the joy of it.

Skipper

by Diane Davis

Our tall white frame house on Harvard Boulevard had a big front porch with wide steps down into the front yard. It was shaded by a huge maple tree which technically belonged to the Lewises next door. My dad said that when it was planted a long time ago it was on their side, but as it grew its trunk had expanded across the property line. It didn't require much imagination on my part to think of it as ours.

In the spring, summer, and fall, I spent a lot of time hanging out on the porch steps, doing homework or reading, and watching the squirrels run up and down, round and round, playing tag on the big maple in the dappled sunlight. During the summer I was out there almost constantly, quietly observing the squirrels, but they never ventured far from the tree. I guess they thought I was a menace. In the winter when the leaves were gone, from the front bedroom window I could see three or four nests in the treetop, but rarely spotted the little guys. I missed them.

One year in the spring, when the buds were opening to leaves and I was ten years old, I noticed one young squirrel, probably born in the late summer the year before, who had a particularly bushy tail. His coat was a lovely gray and he seemed more inquisitive than the others, displaying some actual interest in me and not running off every time I blinked. Hmm, I thought

... I named him Skipper.

My head was full of stories at that age, picked up from the wagonloads of books I hauled home weekly from the library. Many were about children and animals, and although lots of them were probably total fiction, I nonetheless believed it was possible to interact with wild creatures and make friends of them. So my summer project began.

I started by sitting on the top step every single morning at the same time, for about fifteen minutes. I'd come back in the afternoon and sit in the same place for fifteen minutes and go back in the house. Tricky person that I was, I'd always leave peanuts near the tree for Skipper and his family, and peek out the front window to watch them come down, look around, and snatch peanuts before running back up to the safety of the higher branches.

I did this methodically for about a month, gradually moving my peanut offerings away from the tree and closer to the steps, so that the squirrels had to be a little braver every few days to get their treats. I'm not sure if they noticed at first, but I gradually moved myself a little closer, too, descending a step every week or so, nearer to the ground. Eventually all the others chickened out, until Skipper was the only squirrel eating peanuts, while I perched on the bottom step watching quietly and talking to

him in a soft baby voice. Of course he watched me back, alert for any misstep on my part, but soon he didn't bother with that, and began to tolerate my small movements, I don't know if my soft baby voice made any difference, but it seemed like the right thing to do at the time.

A breakthrough to a new level of trust for him and excitement for me happened the day in July when I actually moved my hand enough to toss a peanut in his direction, after he'd eaten all I had left for him. He seemed startled for a second, but quickly recognized the peanut for what it was—free food—and got over his initial upset. He stayed put after grabbing it and stuffing it in his mouth. By this time we were only about three feet apart. The whole experience was so wonderful to me, every bit as good as taming a tiger! I imagined writing a book about the adventures of Skipper one day.

By August, the peanut tossing brought him to my very feet on the lowest porch step. My dad and some of the neighbors had noticed what was going on, and Skipper and I had an audience peeping through curtains from my house and the Lewises' next door and the Taulbees' across the street. I guess we were putting on quite a show and I loved it!

Patience and slow-going paid off. I didn't know I could do either of these until this squirrel-taming

project. But by the time the school year approached, Skipper was sitting beside me on the step taking peanuts out of my hand and sticking around to eat them, and waiting for more. Boy, was I proud of myself! I had taken the entire summer and made friends with a squirrel. Ha!

I think by late August Skipper sensed a change was coming. Perhaps the approach of fall reminded him that the days of easy living on peanuts were drawing to a close and that he'd better get busy and start burying some acorns. Maybe I gave off some kind of vibrations as I was thinking more about school. At any rate, both of us seemed to have other things on our minds. He spent more time up in the tree and roaming around the neighborhood, although he still arrived promptly for the feeding sessions.

I had read about wild animals becoming too dependent on humans, and I knew that Skipper would never be a house pet—my dad had explained all that. I began to worry that my daily feeding sessions might have corrupted his squirrel instincts, and that he wouldn't remember all the stuff squirrels were supposed to do for survival. So every few days I cut back on the number of peanuts, though it was really hard for me to do this. Every day he'd still approach and sit beside me, waiting, and I still talked in my soft baby voice and let him take fewer and fewer peanuts from my hand.

I was sad as the time for school drew near. It had been a special summer because of Skipper and the trust we had built. I had learned much about myself, and it was all good. Then one day he made the approaching end of our time to-



Diane Davis

gether even more wonderful—and terribly hard—when he popped up and sat on my knee, ready for his treat, unafraid, bushy tail twitching. Skipper was my best friend.

The Taulbees across the street and the Lewises next door watched the whole thing. My dad grinned inside at the front window. When the peanuts were gone that afternoon, Skipper hopped down and ran to the tree in the dappled sunlight to rejoin his family.

I went into the house smiling and began to cry.

Diane Davis: "I graduated from Antioch College and have lived in Yellow Springs for over thirty years. I'm retired, but involved in community service, and love to garden. Writing is fun, and I enjoy the support of the Writers Eclectic group at the YS Senior Center. Still seems strange to be a senior—my mind says I'm only thirty-five!"

AUTUMN ICONS

by Jo Ann Kiser

The trees are drunk with wind:
Listen to the dissonant elms
Hissing their golden breath
Recalling to us
That other time and place
When the whole world sang
Sunday songs: and we were full of
grace.

Yellow leaves like scarabs race
Across the pockmarked lane
Scrolling summers behind them:
Regiments on parade, yes,
Present tense:
Swollen with springs to come:
Played symphonies: not images but
icons.

Hill Storm

by Jo Ann Kiser

Rain started to fall. Splinters of it struck the potato vines lightly and bored into the open brown soil. "Hurry up now," the woman said, and they scrambled, picking up the earth-clodded potatoes, dropping them into the bushel basket. "Fooled me," she grumbled. "I coulda swore it wasn't goin' to rain today." They saw the hard rain coming in from the west. Vast sheets weaving, moving walls between earth and sky, shutting out the house on a neighboring hill where just before they had seen white light blossom in the windows. It was almost dark in the field and yellow shadows swelled over the potatoes, smudging contours and making the brown skins thin and luminous. They looked up at the obese sky and quickly back down to the ground. The walls of rain came, dissolved into each other, poured over the curves of their stooping backsides, and made maddening blinders around their eyes and nostrils. They kept putting the potatoes into the baskets. The woman took a full basket toward the bare outline of a shed.

The girl, who had not seen that the basket was full, came running toward where it had been with potato-heaped apron and dropped the orbs onto wet lumpy soil. She straightened up, rubbing the middle of her back, to look for the other basket, and saw lightning stab between the hills where their unpainted frame house sat. She shut her eyes and opened them, collid-

ing with rain; the house was still there, wind-trembled cluster, wan. A flabby roll of thunder passed. She clutched at her skirt, releasing it from her thighs; briefly watched the returning woman whose contours were shorn to granite by the rain; then carried her harvest to the second basket, and crouched again over her row. The potatoes were clean knobs now but her fingers mashed into the earth and came up tipped with mud.

Lightning came closer and tore about the weighted clouds, filling up the field with diseased sunshine and flickering back into darkness. All four of them were picking, spread out across the final rows, separated by their sexes and years. The boy, tall and skinny, his fierce arms waterlimned, cropped hair rain-plastered, was out in front. A few feet away, to his left, the squat woman dipped her heavy arms devotedly; she stood with her legs across the row, her torn brown shoes moving from stance to stance, loaded down by her weight and by the gathering mud. The two of them went toward a basket, unaware of each other, and bumped heads as they emptied their buckets.

The boy rubbed his forehead, and said, his eyes on the ground, "He ought to be here helpin' us."

She flushed. "Now, you know he's down at Mackston lookin' for a job."

He turned away.

The woman looked after him, her cheeks bunched up to protect

her eyes. "There's no work to be had," she shouted against the rain.

The girl plodded, and kept looking to see how far ahead the others were. Awkward young breasts bounced in the faded dress.

Behind her the child worked alone. Fine hair wrapped itself about her round baby face. Her feet were covered with mud. She picked up the knobs doubtfully, and carried them a short distance to a mound. After a few minutes, the older girl would come and collect them, but, seeing the end of her own last row near, kept to her work and forgot the child.

The mound grew larger and larger until potatoes began to slide off and scatter. The little girl lifted her arms and crooked her elbows, bowing her head and shaking it to and fro. She tried to restack the crumpled pile.

The boy finished and pivoted around, without rising, to help the woman.

A shout wavered. They turned. The child had fallen. Her bare foot was caught in the hem of her dress, which had ripped, weak from a hundred washings. She lay sideways on the ground, wailing, her potato-and-earth-stained hands clutching her eyes to ward off the rain.

The boy moved. *I told you*, his voice clattered, *I told you she was too little*. He ran fast and was to the child before the woman or the girl. He lifted her and looked at the other two, still dancing heavily forward in the mud. Deprived of the grace of their skirts, they stuttered against the air like wingless birds. He went on, abandoning them and the field, clumsily patting the child, hiding her under his upper arm, calling her by the silly pet name he

THE GOLDFINCHES

by Jo Ann Kiser

(To Mom, in her last year)

Only these you can see, miniature suns
by which your universe ebbs and flows
this spring.

Hummingbirds you know by hungry whirr
at the feeder that,

feeling your way down the steps,
you carefully replace
so its sugared water will ensnare
the rushing sound
where once sight brought you quick color.

We sit on the sunny porch.

How many other porches have we sat upon since the time

I pulled your long black hair with infant fingers.

Now I, too, am gray.

As we speak your eyes seem to look beyond me,
your urgent tone (I'm drowning now, dear daughter)
belied by

their calm reticence.

had given to her.

The women stopped and
watched them until they disap-
peared into the house. A meager
forest of lights appeared, warmer
than the lightning. The old house
looked peaceful beneath the thun-
der and rain. They went back and
bent down over the last potatoes.

*Jo Ann Kiser is a native of eastern Ken-
tucky, and the rain-filled potato field or
cornfield was once a homely sight.*

(On first learning that an archeological dig had
revealed that a murder had been committed by
an Australopithecus.)

AUSTRALOPITHECUS

by Jo Ann Kiser

We knew him first as child:
shorn pathetic head
rocked by a miner's blast
from its oblivion,

those wide sweet sockets
in the fragile skull
persuading us:
how to encompass
that innocence.

Australopithecus the hun
who took a stick to his neighbors
and won:
buried with his weaponry and prey,
Australopithecus carnivore

provoking our guilty tenderness.

Let's TRANSMIGRATE Together

To an awareness beyond memory,
To an inner knowing. There,
Releasing the familiar
Haven of *yesterday's patriarchal lure*.

Let's Awaken to a morning
When our glances become
A soul windows journey.
Where we *behold* each other.

In ever new wonder,
Assimilating....
Truly understanding, for the first time
The Mayan greeting:

"In Lak'ech:
" I am you."
"Ala K'in :"
"You are me."

Envisioning: through the
Lens of compassion,
A New Partnership
A new Paradigm.

Manifesting unconditional love
Honoring Earth,
and *all* her creatures as,
"Self"

HEARTSMILES
Ardis Macaulay 2020

DROPPING OUT

by Judy James

"Drop out" we used to say
when flowers, feathers,
and beads adorned our hair.
We dropped out of classes, dropped
out of society,
and out of the norm.
We dropped in
to protests,
to rock & roll festivals, and
into the Age of Aquarius.

Today I drop out by dropping in . . .
to the used book store.
Old books on old shelves, the
smell of time past,
the sound of whispers,
the touch of worn covers.

I can drop back in to protests
and rock festivals,
or
join alien species
on a trip to another galaxy.

I can ride a stage coach
over dusty roads,
or
sit with a guru
high atop the Himalayas.

Each worn cover,
each delicate page
is an invitation . . .
an invitation
to cease being me.
just for awhile.

"I am an avid reader. This poem is an homage to brick and mortar bookstores, and the owners who keep them alive — thank you!"

Originally from Massachusetts, Judy is retired from the U.S. Air Force, and calls Yellow Springs home.

*"The Yellow Springs Peace Corner,"
continued from page 9.*

ALL the words to—"Carry it On,
Carry it On!"

Some say that a place, coordinates on a map, can really hold the energy of those who stop there. If true, this Yellow Springs Peace Vigil corner is filled with light, with love, a commitment to justice, and a deep longing for Peace in the world. We understand that Peace is the absence of war. It is also global justice and human rights. It is safety for families, care for the earth and her creatures, and nations working together for world order. I reminded Tenisha, "Remember the Beatles song 'You May Say I Am a Dreamer—But I Am Not the Only One?'"

One sign declares, "Join us."
Please do!

I am certain I have forgotten some who poured their energy into the corners. I am a relative newcomer (since 2011). Please forgive me if I left someone out.

I lived in Yellow Springs during the 1970s with my two children and worked in Springfield and at Vernay Labs. After a career at Ohio University I retired in the village. I am a member of the Yellow Springs Friends Meeting that started the "Peace Corner," and continues to see it as an important Witness for World Peace.

HOME

By Abigail Cobb

I'm not from here.
My friend assured me recently
that if you didn't grow up here
you can never really be from here,
never really understand this place,
never know, really, what it means to call this home.

And though I've lived here forty-five years,
and more,
my whole adult life,
she is right. I'm not from here.
I have no roots. I don't belong.

My ancestors came on boats with bundles
over their shoulders,
youth and hope,
and a few dollars.
They spoke the language.
They were confident, and worked hard.

One went to San Francisco,
and two to Buffalo,
one rode his horse to the hills of Kentucky,
one went to Utah and became a Mormon.
Most stayed in New England and built boats and
towns.

My ancestors were not dragged from their homeland
in chains,
shoved naked into the holds of lurching ships,
rounded up like animals on auction blocks,
beaten with whips.

The village of my ancestors were not burned to the
ground,
wegiwas torched,
throats slit,
women shot in the back,
babies and old ones gunned down.

People who look like me destroyed this place.
They cut the trees and burned the forests.
They dug coal, and pumped oil, and burned it and
sold it,
and gambled in the stock market
In starched white shirts and shined shoes,
driving their cars, and planes and helicopters.

And now the Arctic is melting,
the winds are wobbling,
the seas are flooding,
the land is burning,
dangerous fault lines are opening,
and it's the fault of people who look like me,
addicted to comfort,
willing to kill for it.
Taking more than their share.
Taking and taking it.

You're not from here, she said.
And here I stand, breathing.

My roots are like a rising tide
In a storm,
smashing down
and blowing away
the whole community,
frightened people scrambling for safety.

I'm not from here,
but I landed here,
breathing and walking on this ground.
I ask your forgiveness.

The sun,
looking right at me,
touches me deeply
caressing my face.

The river,
lapping against my fingers,
says, shhh . . .
you are from me.

Water joyfully bubbling up from rock
and laughing down the hillside,
becoming stream,
becoming river.

Sunlight dancing on the water
becoming clouds in the sky,
becoming rain falling down,
becoming life,
becoming me.

Rock and water,
bone and blood.
Molecules from the outer reaches of the universe
coming together
with Sacred Breath.
Life giving Spirit.

At the root of me
is a warm fire.
Your hand in mine.
There are no words,
only the music of our voices,
lips, eyes, skin,
colors, and light.
and in the soothing darkness
the quiet drumbeat of our hearts.

I am here now,
belonging to you.
Together, we belong to this Earth,
our Home.
The Home we share with all of us.

Abigail Cobb is a retired nurse and grandmother who has lived for more than thirty years in the Vale Community, just south of town in Miami Township. Before that, she lived in Yellow Springs. She is a white woman who was raised in California, Massachusetts, and Ohio.

"I wrote this piece in the early winter of 2020 following a conversation with a friend. I did not know the national reckoning with the racist past and present of the United States that was coming with the murder of George Floyd on Memorial Day. This piece speaks to issues I have been grappling with for a long time, and I believe has relevance to the current national conversation."

Disposing of the Body

by Joy Fishbain

My sixty-five-year-old sister Pam has a magnet on her refrigerator. It reads "I'm going to live forever: So far so good!" A witty, happy-go-lucky outlook—my sister's style. She has a good life with her husband; she has hobbies, she volunteers, exercises, and has a close, loving relationship with her twelve-year-old granddaughters. She has friends nearby and far away. She is tender-hearted and caring, helping out in her church and volunteering in the local elementary school.

Our eldest eighty-one-year old sister Barb and her husband Ray have a comfortable, solidly-built house with a lovely, well-kept yard and an expansive front porch. Barb rides her bicycle around the town every day and has in five years pedaled more than 9,200 miles according to her odometer. She is a well-recognized person, even if people don't know her name. She is the de-facto mayor of the town, keeping her eye on things.

She lives across the street from the local funeral home, and has all her after-death arrangements made. She warns us, her siblings: "Don't let them charge a transportation fee when I die. Just drag my ass over there!"

I don't think any of us have figured out exactly how to accomplish that, but maybe we should form a plan, because I'm pretty sure she's serious. I actually have visions of my two brothers and two brothers-in-law tending to this task in short order, delivering her to the

front door of the funeral home on a reclining summer lounge chair, or some such contraption. I can see them, all four, tight-lipped and determined, firmly pressing the doorbell. I doubt the funeral director would be shocked or alarmed. He's probably seen almost everything by now anyway. This could complete his experience. But the more I think about it, maybe I should convene a family meeting just to be confident that we do the right thing . . .

A week later. Family Meeting Results:

Brother Thurman: "I reckon you'll have to ask Linda. She doesn't like me lifting too much with my arthritis and all. And I haven't forgotten that fight Barb and I had in the living room when I was fifteen and she was twenty-two. She almost choked me to death! Remember that?"

[We did. It was one of those vivid moments from childhood, watching in fascination and fear as our oldest brother and sister careened through the living room, screaming and yelling, knocking over furniture, trying to kill each other. They were both fiery redheads with bad tempers. We three younger ones stayed out of the way. Phil was under a table and managed to snap a few pictures, which one of us still has. The entire episode probably lasted no more than three minutes, and miraculously, no one was even scratched. But it is etched in our memories and we laugh hysterically, recalling it now.

Anyway back to our family conference: the serious matter of dealing with Barb's body].

Next response:

Brother Phil: "Well, how 'bout revvin' up her ol' '75 Corvette Stingray and drivin' her through town one last time; rig up a CD with an Elvis Presley song, turn it up full-blast and wave to everybody. Put a sign on the back: 'Sister Barb's last earthly ride.' I'll drive. We'll deliver her to Johnson's Funeral Home, right to the door. She might like that." [Phil used to own the Columbus Corvette Center, so none of us would dispute giving him the Corvette driving honors.]

Sister Pam: "Now, I know we all love Barb, but *I've* had to put up her shenanigans in this town more than anybody. I'm not doing it! Plus we're all getting old ourselves. Maybe I can get Jason [her son] and some of the kids from his football team to wrap her in an Ohio State blanket and take her over just after dark, ring the bell and run. That'll work. I'll just tell Jason that will be his one last favor for his aunt Barb. He won't mind."

So that was it. Everyone had a suggestion, an opinion, or a plan. My own rather proper idea was to buy a cardboard body box from the Unitarians for \$15.00 to haul her over in, but everybody else thought it was a waste of money. They liked the OSU blanket idea better.

As it turned out, as in so many meetings, we decided to postpone any decision to a future date yet



Top, left to right: Harold Fishbain, Joyce, Linda, Thurman, Phil, Ray
Bottom, left to right: Joy, Pam, Jerry, Barb

to be determined. Okay with me. No one consulted Barb. Her secret scheme is to outlive us all anyway.

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.

UNTITLED
by Robert Paschell

This humid summer day is bait for clouds,
and sure enough, by afternoon
a gaggle of cumulus has gathered
around a clear blue sky.
They may maintain their social distancing
or rub shoulders, schmooze, and tell stories,
which fall to ground as rain.

(See author's note on page 24)

It Must Have Been Last Tuesday

by Peter Whitson

Monday was a holiday, and the banks were closed. I wanted to get my check cashed, and I didn't have time to go clear across town to my bank in Yellow Springs. Instead, I decided to go to the bank where the check was drawn. As usual, it was very crowded in the bank. I can remember wondering if there wasn't a better way to do this . . . or maybe if it would be better to come back later. Well no, I had some bills to pay today or else. I also needed some cash for lunch later. Lunch, of course, was the more important reason.

You think of all sorts of things when you are waiting in a long bank line. Today was no exception. And I was fast running out of happy thoughts, especially when I realized two of the tellers were doing other things besides waiting on customers. The tellers actually waiting on customers seemed mercilessly slow. But then, the "make it all better" word—"next."

I walked up to the teller of magic words. She didn't really look up but then I was paying more attention to getting my stuff in order, too. It was only then that I realized I did not have my license or other ID with me. In fact, I remembered I didn't even have it in the glove box of my truck where I keep it sometimes. I had left it at home this morning in my briefcase. Oh, I was mad at myself. I tried to explain to the teller. I gave it my best shot. She tried to appear sympathetic. We both failed.

"I'm sorry, sir; I cannot cash your check without some form of identification. If you like, you may talk to the branch manager. She may be able to help." The teller then looked beyond me towards the next person in line—"next"—the word that once was a happy word was now a word called indifference—a bad word in the scheme of life.

Isn't it strange how with just one glance you can go from living breathing human bank customer to a non-entity. Maybe this is where Andy Warhol got his fifteen minutes of fame idea. Sort of a consolation gift for all those hours and years of our lives spent as the target and consequence of indifference.

I did go over to the bank manager's area. She was a pleasant woman who was perceptive enough to steer clear of my frustration. What was also clever of her was that, as she was talking, she was also steering me toward the front door of the bank.

"I'm sorry, sir, I wish I could help but there is nothing I can do. The bank rules are such that unless you have some identification or someone working at the bank knows, and can verify who you are, we cannot cash a check for you."

It's at times like this I wish I could let go of it like others seem to be able to do. But I can't. I get bent out of shape, my anger boils, and I stop thinking clearly. But somehow I was able to turn to walk out the door. The bank manager was shepherding me well. She probably had

a lot of practice.

And as I was leaving, I happened to turn into the path of a little old lady who had managed to push open the bank's huge door with a very difficult effort. I remember she had a black coat on and a silly hat that keeps changing in my mind every time I recount the incident. She reached forward with her hand as she took another step. Instinctively, I reached for her hand. It was warm and kind. It was healing and loving. It was frail.

"I'm not cutting in," she said and paused. "I'm just passing through." Those were the words she said. I still hear them today. She smiled at me and she continued on in her wonderful journey through life. I looked at my hand. It was open. It was unclenched. My anger had touched a grounding rod and was gone. The storm was over. Her words had started my mind moving freely again. I wanted to shout out to everyone in the bank, "Don't you see, we're all just passing through." I looked over at the little old lady who by now had made it up to the end of the line. Her hat still looked silly.

I turned to walk out the door. I was not happy but I was at peace. Just as I began to leave the bank, I turned and looked back hopefully one last time. And over beyond where the tellers were, I saw Max as plain as day. Max worked at the bank. We knew each other. He came out from one of the offices in the bank and was about to take over for

Chop Suey Carryout

by Peter Whitson

one of the other tellers. I walked to where he was standing. He looked at me. He smiled and waved. I smiled and waved back.

"Excuse me," I said, "but I was hoping you might remember who I am?" He looked at me a bit puzzled. "Of course I remember who you are. You are the fellow who comes out every year and sweeps our chimney. Where's your silly-looking top hat?"

We laughed. "Yes! Yes! that's just who I am. I left my hat at home along with my identification" and I wonder if you wouldn't do me a favor? I have a check written on your bank, and I forgot my wallet."

"Well, certainly," replied Max, "I'd recognize that hat anywhere." We both laughed—but probably for different reasons

Now all these years later, do I know if there was any connection between that woman's touch and what happened at the bank that day? No, I do not. But I do know what did happen that day was powerful and immediate—and yes, I'll say it: It was a very scary and wonderful event for a skeptical curmudgeon like me.

Have I ever experienced anything like that day again in my life? You may choose to believe it or not, but I have. There isn't always the intensity of a sweet woman's hand touching mine in passing through. And there isn't always a silly hat involved. But there is always a hopeful sense of imminent change to a bad situation. Thank God, a gentle power which is there to intervene, ground, and despite frailty, save the day—even if s/he is wearing a silly hat.

If you are ever down by Dorothy Lane and Wilmington Pike and are looking for a good lunch special, then you want the Chop Suey Carryout. It's a simple name for a great place to eat. Every day is a different house special. All are good and, at \$6.30, tax included, there's nothing better in town. Soft drinks are extra; hot tea is free. Well, that's where I was last Wednesday, waiting in line, standing behind a senior couple. They had just ordered and were turning to go past me, to the dining area to sit down.

The woman turned first, and then said with lifelong familiarity, "I'll get us a table." And as she did, she lovingly patted him on his butt. Oh Lord, I just had to do something with that. It was too good to pass up. Everyone saw it happen.

"Why you just patted him on his butt." I said, hoping to get a laugh.

"I sure did, sonny. Why, do you want a pat too?" Without hesitation, she patted my bottom as she walked by me. I sensed I was probably not going to get the last laugh today at the Chop Suey Carryout. From the corner of my eye, I saw her husband smile knowingly. I laughed out loud at myself . . . I was snookered. I was way out of my league. The audience roared with laughter.

And yes, she wasn't through with me yet. A couple more steps, she turned, looked back at me, and said—nice and loudly for all to hear—"At our age a pat on the

butt is just about all that's left to sex, lovemaking, and passion. But it sure is fun." She patted his butt again, as if to make sure. They both smiled. The affirmation let them know their libidos were still on the job. And there's no telling where that can lead.

The other restaurant patrons roared. After I ordered my lunch, I made it a point to sit at a table close by them. Once seated, I smiled at them, tipped my hat and added, "Most exciting pat on the butt I've had in years."

The lunch and the entertainment was the best, as always, at the Chop Suey Carryout.

Peter Whitson and his partner, Joann, are Senior transfers to Yellow Springs. Since arriving, they have been amazed at how friendly everyone is—well, almost everyone. Another important thing of note is the true sense of caring that seems to resonate from within the community, making these really difficult times much more bearable. Thanks All.

ALMOST, KIND OF

by Bill Mitchell

A trip to the library
You know
Curiosity leading to who knows what
Then peering from the shelf
RIPPLES
How cool
Local Springs poets
Oh to be part of that crowd
Shudder
Bar too high
Home of Conrad and all
I'd have to be loose
Let it fly
But wouldn't it be something
I feel a lightening
A glimmer of what not sure
Wait
What?
Oh damn
Where was I?

UNTITLED

by Robert Paschell

(The primitive-looking coelacanth (pronounced SEEL-uh-kanth) was thought to have gone extinct with the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. But its discovery in 1938 by a South African museum curator on a local fishing trawler fascinated the world and ignited a debate about how this lobe-finned fish fits into the evolution of land animals.)

When I was young they had to dredge
me out of the Glen like a coelacanth.

The cowbell of the moon would ring
and I'd come swimming up from a ravine
trailing kelp fronds and swarms of bees.

I'd come trundling home smeared with sunset jam,
draped with dragonfly trceries.

Anointed with pine sap, I'd climb out of the Glen
like the first animal venturing on land,
having passed nodding Indian pipes
and strummed the hurdy-gurdy of leaves.

My hair tufted with owl hoots,
I'd return to the haunts of men
and brush away my footprints
with the fox tail of a poem.

*Long-time resident of Yellow Springs Robert Paschell
writes poetry and creates punny T-shirts.*

Remembrance Vignettes about Sylvia Carter Miller

My favorite memory of Sylvia is meeting her downtown and chatting about her new interest in singing in public—and she meant all types of public: on the sidewalks, in Tom’s Market, and anywhere else she would find willing chanteurs! She was so animated and enthusiastic. Such a bright light in her eyes. She was certain this world would be more harmonious if we all were brave enough to sing wherever and whenever we wanted to.

—*Moya Shea*

I remember Sylvia once saying to me: “Smile and laugh more. It’s contagious, you know.” To me that embodied her spritely spirit.

—*Marsha Bush*

Sylvia loved to sing and always spoke fondly of my predecessor at the YS Unitarian Fellowship, Mitzi Manny. We became next door neighbors in 2014. I observed her disbelief of Byron’s growing weakness and her valiant efforts to redirect her life after his death. She was an enthusiastic Bernie fan, once shouting across the street at me “You WILL be voting for Bernie, won’t you, Barbara?” I will miss her passion, her style, and her presence in YS.

—*Barbara Leeds*

My Wife Dianne and I were at The Emporium on a Friday night listening to our favorite band. Out in the dance crowd a slim gray smile gracefully orbited. She looked like stepping inside a trumpet would be lovely. A year later I met Sylvia at the YS Unitarian Fellowship. I couldn’t believe how she could ask a question of me and then comfortably just listen. We exchanged poetry and became friends. Sylvia had an agenda to do good, and was always willing to risk some skin. I will remember all the times she said “You know what we ought to do.” The effect some people have on us extends their story beyond death.

—*Jerry Howell*



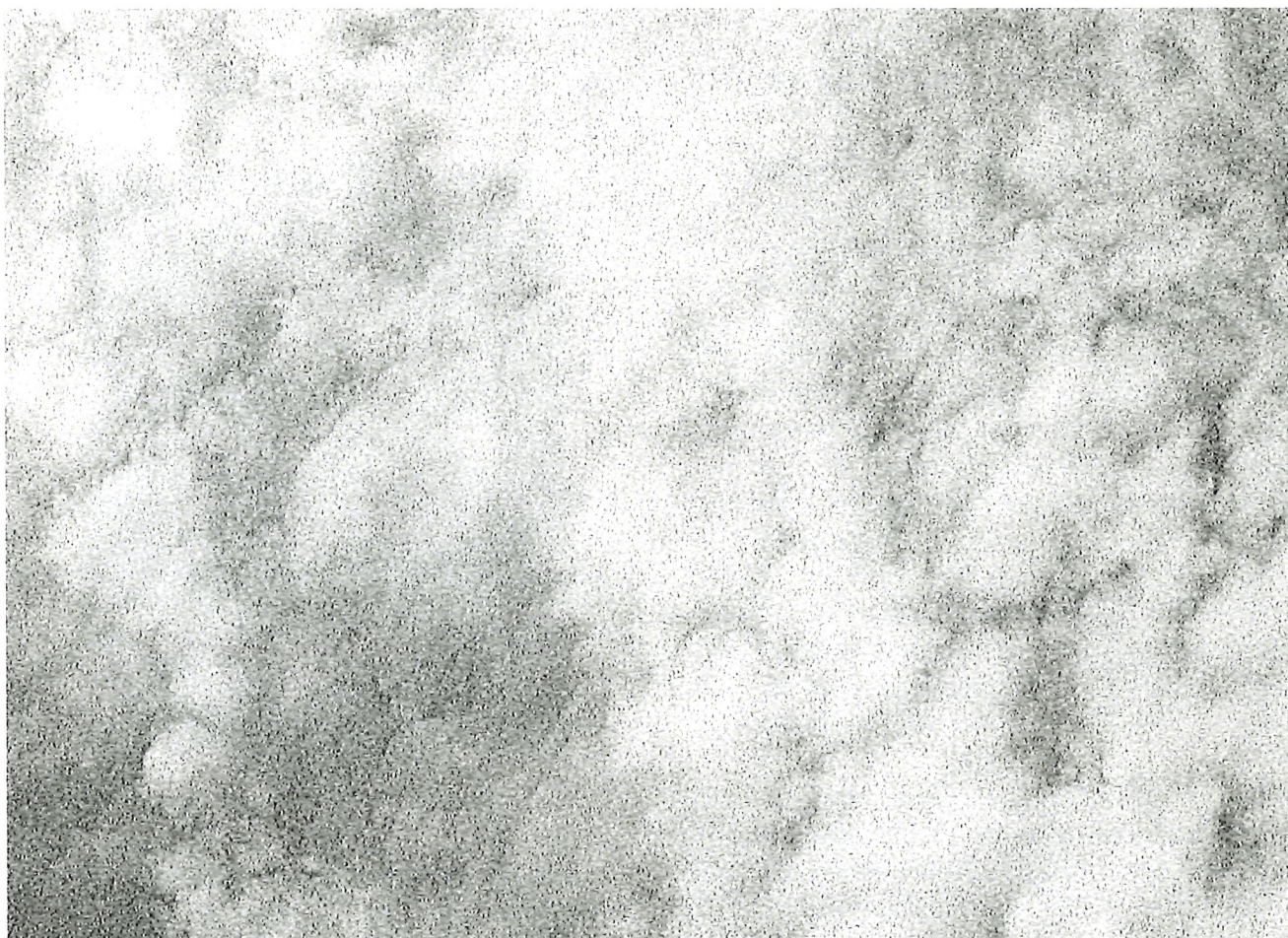
Sylvia Carter Miller, 1933-2020

Sylvia is my all-time favorite Yellow Springer. Her enthusiasm for the Yellow Springs Unitarian Fellowship, the environment, Bernie Sanders, peace – you name it—all the “right” things. I can picture her in the entry way at the UU Fellowship from the first time we visited, with her (at the time) ponytail swinging and her welcoming smile. Sylvia’s heart was always in the right place. I miss Sylvia!!!

—*Nancy Lineburgh*

I will always remember Sylvia as being an outspoken and steadfast member of The UU Fellowship. She always had energy for causes, and liked to share her perspective on different issues of the day. She was especially interested in environmental and social justice issues. I also remember another time when I was going to a march in Washington DC against the Iraq War. Sylvia brought melatonin onto the bus for all of the folks who were going so that we would sleep on the trip on the way to Washington. She was very excited about the opportunity to go to the march.

—*Holly Keil*



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