

# Ripples

Stories & Poems by or about Yellow Springs Elders • Volume 8, Summer 2021



Dear Readers,

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Ripples*. This issue marks the eighth edition of this publication.

I hope you enjoy the wonderful writings in this issue. This issue is full of stories about life in a pandemic, social justice, immigration, and many others. Every story or poem is a wonderful read.

Always, I give my heartfelt thanks to all those who submitted items. Also, many thanks to those who are involved in this project each year. Without the inspiration of the writers and the dedication of the working committee, this publication would not happen.

It has been my sincere privilege to be the executive director of the Yellow Springs Senior Center. As I write this message, I am a few weeks away from retirement. I look forward to my next adventure.

Be well, take care, and keep joy in your life,

Karen Wolford  
Executive Director  
Yellow Springs Senior Center  
May 4, 2021

Dear Readers,

Do not just dream about writing. Wake up. Open the door and amaze yourself. *Ripples* is waiting to receive your submission. Enjoy this issue!

Sincerest gratitude to Pam Geisel for her help with completing this project.

My deep appreciation to all,

Suzanne Patterson

**Front cover photo** "Friends Care Community Walking Path" by Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

**Back cover artwork** "Lady Liberty" by Uta Riess Schenck

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## Pathway

Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

Fifteen years ago we were trying to decide whether to move to Yellow Springs. We'd already checked out Park Meadows and a house near downtown, and were now exploring the options of Independent Living at Friends Care. I took a walk on their path through some tall woods near the pond. Only a few yards into the trees I decided this was home.

Later I would realize that place on the path reminded me of a picture over my childhood bed – little girl, with pig-tails like mine, leaving a deep forest trail. The thicket and tall trees behind her are portrayed as her guardian angel. *Guardian Angel* by Lauren Ford, since found online, now hangs over a bed in daughter Karen's home in Trotwood.

We moved to Friends Care Community. That paved path would be extended a few years later, providing a way through more trees bordering the two courts of duplexes, as well as curving through my favorite woods and around the pond. But mostly, until this last year, my walks were exploring our new town, its churches, college classes, stores, Senior Center, library, Peace Vigil; and, with the little push cart I found at one, almost every yard sale.

It was in the early throes of Pandemic panic that I began taking masked, daily walks through the woods and around the pond. As

I set off, even on the cold or rainy days, I'd pass the re-hab wing where faithful, masked visitors were chatting through a loved one's window.

My half-mile stroll is punctuated with a stop under the mammoth tree where Chris, whose devotion to such walks preceded mine, placed a plastic-cushioned chair with plastic-bagged sign: "PLEASE LEAVE THIS CHAIR HERE FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE A REST OR QUIET TIME HERE BENEATH AN ANCIENT TREE."

In the first weeks of my walks the path was littered with feathers of visiting black turkey vultures. Perched still and silent on high branches they seemed in a strange harmony with the fear and sadness of the times.

My year of daily walks included the wonders of each season, scurrying squirrel, deer who hung around for a whole verse of whatever song I sang to them. Once I discovered, just in time, that the good-sized stick I was about to kick out of my way was a snake soon on its way off the path.

Pen and paper in my pocket allowed pauses to write haiku-sized notes about such dramas or whatever my thought or the surroundings dictated. Most times I met no one and it was a treat to encounter our masked neighbor trying out her new tricycle or someone walking a dog. Once a curious child from an

adjacent back yard ran over and interviewed me.

Even the sounds of the highway and a view of the new fire station near the mid-point of my walk seemed welcome reminders of a world now struggling to hum. Home, Inc. housing going up between Xenia Avenue and the path provided me anticipation of their remarkable, almost daily, progress.

I heard peckers, bird chatter, smelled cookouts, and for weeks the beautiful fallen leaves I gathered decorated our kitchen table. An I-Phone helped me capture strangely twisted tree trunks, bare branches reflected in puddles, snow on red berries, spring's myrtle and daffodils, and today's violets. I giggled one beautiful day, realizing I was so "high" on the glory around me I had just forgotten all the invasive honeysuckle. Near the end of my walk I might hear the plop of a frog as I approached the pond where ducks and geese and once a great blue heron got captured in my photos.

Still, after a ritual wave to Ed Ayoub who told me he sees me every day from his computer desk, I enter those woods. Almost always I pause in involuntary awe at that first loved place. And always, as I leave the pond behind and head for our Apsen Court front door, it is with gratitude for the presents of the path.

## Arrival

Artie Isaac

First, a kettle of water  
on the smallest burner,  
to stall the boil,  
an infusion of leaves  
in the mug at the ready  
– the naturally sweet tea  
from the Aveda salon,  
where I last delegated  
the styling of my father's hair.

*Thé réconfortant sans caféine*  
of licorice root and peppermint,  
the only responsible delight  
at this time, the middle of the night,  
just barely late enough  
to slip into the elegant robe  
our mother sewed for my father,  
our shared initials,  
embroidered on the breast pocket.

I go to work with pen and paper,  
not a pencil, use the ink, *don't go back*,  
like my friend's father on Metro North  
who would start the *Times* crossword  
as the doors closed on 125th Street  
and finish upon arrival at Grand Central.

I scribble against the rush of forgetting  
the ideas for the essay – the attempt –

the rockslide of the night's sleep,  
scrambling to stay atop,  
not buried in the juggle of stones,  
chopping and throwing onto the pile,  
for the daytime work of sorting and placing  
each in the river for crossing with you,  
some stable enough for stepping,  
some too small,  
some unnecessary  
because the river is only so wide.

I couldn't sleep  
with so many stones in the bed.  
Now they are sorted, stacked,  
and stored in my journal.

Perhaps I'll return to bed,  
awake with the thought  
I would be better rested  
if I enjoyed more sleep,  
and I could delegate my sleep  
to someone who does it better,  
off-shoring or cross-mattressing  
to my beloved  
always fast to sleep  
and fast asleep now.

But now the kettle calls  
and I will rest  
with a mug of sweet salon tea.

## Fall Morning

Bill Mitchell

Leaves gently rustle in a cool breeze  
The cat meditates  
A sphinx warmed in a sunbeam  
senses alive without judgement  
a rush of peaceful presence.

## Let It Rain

Rick Donahoe

One of the things my late wife Mary and I liked best about living in southwest Ohio was all the rain. We liked to sit on our front porch and watch the water come down. Down from the sky. Because where we lived and farmed and raised our kids for much of our lives it didn't. Water came from the ditch.

The ditch, as we all called it, was the final leg of a miles-long system of streams, rivers, reservoirs and canals bringing water from the line of snow-capped peaks beyond our western fence line to our farmstead on the Central Oregon high desert.

A three-county area almost the size of Vermont, Central Oregon is a rock-strewn land of dry canyons and buttes that starts at several thousand feet and goes up from there. Its desert classification comes from receiving less than ten inches of rainfall a year.

As with most of the rural population, irrigation water was the lifeblood our young family relied on for everything; raising crops, watering livestock, filling the cistern that provided our household needs, including the water we drank. We liked to say our water was "well pasteurized," having come down through everybody's pasture.

Our one-hundred-acre farm came with eight acre-feet of water rights, an acre-foot being enough water to cover one acre, twelve inches deep. This we received over the course of a season that ran roughly mid-April to mid-October. Our remaining twenty acres of dry land consisted of the sagebrush and

juniper that defines Oregon east of the mountains, the eastern two-thirds of the state.

A canal almost too wide to jump across ran through the middle of our farm. From this we accessed water by means of head gates, mini-guillotine-like devices, one on each side of the ditch, that could be raised and lowered to let water through. It then flowed over a weir, where it was measured to within a fraction of an inch—and not one drop more.

The entire system was owned and maintained by an irrigation company responsible for delivering water the property owner paid for each year. If this sounds fairly straightforward, it wasn't. The system was based on available water, which could vary from year to year, depending not only on the amount of snow that fell in the mountains (usually twenty to thirty feet), but *when* it fell. Late-fall and early-winter snows were the most valuable for snowpack, as they compacted more densely and released water longer into the summer months than spring snows, which tended to melt and be lost to runoff.

Besides a crew to maintain canals and the system in general, the irrigation company had a team of "ditch riders" to monitor water flows and keep an eye on things. Being a large area, the system relied to some extent on the honor system, so you can imagine how, in the middle of a long hot summer, a property owner might be tempted to crank their head gate up a notch.

It's said that a man from the west will fight over three things,

water, women and gold, and usually in that order. And did we ever! Not only with neighbors up and down the ditch, who we suspected of taking our water, and who suspected us of taking theirs, but with ditch riders not always above playing favorites. By the time to shut the water off in the fall, I felt like I'd been run through the proverbial wringer and hung out to dry.

If only it ended there. About the time these battles slowed to a halt *outside* our house, the water battles resumed *inside*. Our cistern, which took up half the basement, held something over a thousand gallons, not much when you consider that the average American uses over a hundred gallons a day.

During the winter the irrigation company ran water once a month for several days, to fill stock ponds and cisterns. With our family of four, especially during the kids' teenage years, too many interactions swirled around who was wasting how much water. "Turn the shower off, NOW!" We were all so relieved come spring, when they turned the water back on and we could get back to our outside water battles.

Every few years we cleaned the cistern. This meant shoveling several inches of muck off the bottom, which invariably held skeletons of frogs, mice and snakes.

One cold winter day the phone rang, and it was local well driller Johnny Johnson. I'd never met Johnny, though in the way of rural communities, I knew who he was.

"Rick, I'm looking at my map and see you don't have a well."

"You're right, Johnny. Don't have any money, either."

"Not a problem. You're not going anywhere, Rick, I'm not going anywhere, and I've got a drill rig just sittin' here. I'm gonna come drill you a well, the wife will make up a book to keep track, and you can pay when you can."

Johnny's call came at just the right time. A few days before I'd been working up at the main canal, dry at the time, when a cat walked out of the weeds and scratched a hole in the sandy bottom.

Our farm consisted of two parcels of fifty acres each. The fifty acres we lived on was flood-irrigated hay and pasture ground on which we kept horses and a small herd of cattle. Flood irrigating involved running water down one of the many

small ditches bordering our fields and setting canvas dams that sent water out over the thirsty ground. As dams needed to be moved several times a day, and during the summer even at night, with kids in school and parents with day jobs, "chasing water" was a family affair.

I don't think we realized the influence irrigation had on our lives until, on a family trip to the Oregon coast, our four-year-old son looked out over the Pacific and exclaimed, "What a big ditch!"

Our other fifty acres we grew commercial peppermint under an old "hand-line" sprinkler system. A forerunner of the automated wheel-line and circle-pivot systems, it meant moving one hundred (thirty foot-long) aluminum pipes by hand back and forth across a

grid each morning and evening during the growing season.

Murphy's Law — *What can go wrong will go wrong, at the worst possible time* — pretty well describes the endless succession of burned-up pumps, leaking valves and plugged up sprinklers, not to mention trudging miles in hip boots through waist-high wet peppermint, day after day, year after year.

Long gone now, those days are a far cry from life here in Yellow Springs, where it's not likely to freeze on the Fourth of July, where the soil is so rich and deep you plant a seed and jump back, where the rains come like clockwork — and where on a hot summer day, Mary and I liked to sit on our front porch and watch the water come down. Down from the sky.

## A Summer Day

Linda Chernick

The long front window  
Frames a Hopper painting of a tree;  
Sun-stippled green on dun branches.  
Clear light cleanses every surface  
On this June afternoon.  
It could be any summer afternoon.  
Memory stirs,  
Images adrift in time float up and by.  
After school let out in June,  
Summer days stretched from first light  
Until first stars emerged;  
Each day a promise and a tease.  
Released from schedules, how to choose:  
Biking, swimming, playing tennis, whiffleball,  
Exploring secret spots in the forbidden field.  
Day after day after day.  
Racing down the driveway to catch the popsicle man!  
Twirling in a sudden downpour.  
Summer's span seemed endless, then;  
All the time in the whole damn world.

## Payback

Linda Chernick

You can see it in their faces.  
Their utter certainty of the absolutely unique quality  
Of their experiences,  
Their feelings.  
Their "NOW,"  
Completely unlike any "THEN."  
A sort of pity  
Steals across their faces for me –  
For anyone so much older than they –  
Who presumes to understand.  
Funny.  
I remember feeling exactly the same way,  
Way back when.



"Reflection" photo by Katie Egart

## Haiku

Katie Egart

### Spring

Daffodils bow down  
Chirping birds don't seem to mind  
This frosty morning.

### Summer

Chasing a great hawk,  
a murder of crows screaming  
across a blue sky.

### Fall

The last dry leaves fall  
with a soft clattering like  
applause for the wind.

### Winter

Now, after dinner,  
the clock ticks away at time –  
where has it all gone?

## My Place in the Sun

Pat Stempfly

When the pandemic began I decided to isolate and wait it out. I have food, water, shelter, friends, family, a dog, and am grateful for these gifts. I would weather the storm somehow. I live at home alone with my rescue dog Lily who gives me unconditional love, but we are stuck and isolated in an unknown time frame. I long for a quiet place without the chaos, suffering, pain, loss, and noise of the Pandemic. For many years I have visited a beach by the sea with family and friends on an island far away to live simply and in present time, but the Pandemic only allowed me to hold it in my heart in 2021. I held it in my heart and dreamt about the wonder of the sky, the warmth of the sun, the beauty of birdsong, the brilliance of stars, the mystery of moonlight, the marvel of washed up shells and smooth glass, big and little footprints in the sand, and the Islander's joyous warm welcome like we were family. I heard the Tree Frogs and sound of the ocean at night and fell asleep knowing all was well.

I awoke from my dream in my quiet refuge and told myself I could bring home lessons learned from the sea. The time had come to shift to a new chapter of self-discovery of who I am and why I am still here. My new beginning felt like spring waking up from a nightmare winter. The search for a quiet place to detach from the time of now was a challenge living on a busy street in a noisy neighborhood

with my ever present noisy television. Taking care of our home and Lily and me was a given but I needed a personal time out to create a daily practice of doing something new or something I loved doing. My inner compass pointed me to explore my deep feelings about this surreal time of now. I learned the value of writing quickly whatever I scribbled in Yellow Springs Senior Center's writing classes from our teacher and each student like me. Good dialogue resulted in good communication that connected us in a special way. I never would have believed I could write anything fast. I decided to begin writing Short Scribs about the time of now. Creativity and gut feelings became my constant companions that took me on a journey to an unknown place where I discovered something very unexpected.

I thought about the quiet place I was longing for. I gave my muddled mind a time out and took some deep breaths to relax. I said to myself out loud as some who live alone frequently do – maybe it was time to let it go. I was breathing and talking to myself at the same time and in an awesome aha moment it came to me that I had found the quiet place in an unexpected silent realm of the space between each word and breath. The Silent Realm – in the space between each word and breath lies a silent realm where the quiet mind and soul's wisdom waits to be heard. The Short Scribs continued to flow to the time of

now. *Suffering* – I feel human suffering as one not with what we have or have not but longing for each other. *Grief* – Grief comes, grief teaches, grief holds my hand as I say good bye to loss. *Earth* – The earth quakes its silent roar waiting to be heard for future generations. *Knots* – I am tied in knots but free to be me to unravel the wisdom of the journey of the time of now. *Friend* – Synchronicity suddenly appears and quickly disappears until the next time I need a friend. *Shift* – I shift to the time of now to keep my balance while my heart adjusts to a new resonance. *Hope* – Gratitude dances my spirit in the rain waiting for the sun that gives me hope. I was elated I brought lessons home from the sea to feel the joy of My Place in The Sun. I could watch sunrise and sunset. I could look up at the brilliant night sky. I could answer birdsong tweets with the sound of my old rejuvenated whistle. I could see footprints in the snow of big and little feet. I could see friendly deer with their animal relatives. I could collect fall leaves and relics of nature. I could hear the happy sound of the song and dance of the beach and sing to Lily, my plants, and myself to my heart's desire. I could welcome myself home and sit and be still in my quiet place. I could become mindful of my inner journey to the time of now. I look forward each new day to a brand new morning waiting for the sun.

# *Breathing*

Abigail Cobb

I've waited my whole life to do nothing,  
for time to be a vast blue sea  
punctuated by diamond lights of joy,  
gently swells rising and falling,  
rocking me in a cradle of dreams.

I've waited my whole life  
to lie on the sun drenched floor  
stretching my body this way and that  
on the golden wood boards,  
warm rays caressing my bones,  
watching the sun glide slowly across the southern sky.

A plant has taken root in the pot on my windowsill,  
a turmeric root from the Mexican market,  
forgotten in my suitcase  
until she began to sprout leaves,  
now unfurling and growing tall  
in the space she shares with an old domesticated aloe,  
and there she is, far from home,  
bright green and reaching towards the light.

She has no language,  
no words or thought,  
good enough for her is breathing,  
and she does that gloriously,  
effortlessly,  
day and night, and again day,  
synchronizing her rhythm with the sun.

Not counting, not worrying,  
not planning, or regretting,  
serenely here,  
being.

Before this time  
only princesses and queens  
were able to do nothing,  
eating bread and honey, if they wanted,  
or, simply stretching out on the floor,  
rocking, floating  
like transparent, bejeweled jellyfish  
in a vast sunlit sea of time.

# *Breathing II*

Abigail Cobb

Today,  
if you're alive on this planet,  
come sit with me on the porch  
and have a conversation.

It doesn't matter  
what you have or don't have,  
what you did or didn't do,  
what language you speak  
or even if you remember any words,  
although words can help, too.

It doesn't matter  
if you have a place to stay,  
a whole house in your name,  
or if you sleep on a couch,  
or under a bridge somewhere,  
or on the forest floor,  
que bueno!

We all need to lie down to sleep,  
to breathe,  
to eat,  
to poop and pee,  
we move,  
we touch,  
we see.

We are all refugees,  
survivors of this harsh age,  
ten thousand years of acquisition,  
bitter fighting,  
stockpiling and hoarding,  
laying claim  
to all that it means to be human.

The Earth can't take it anymore.  
Death and waste stomp mercilessly  
through the community  
leaving loss and plastic trash in their wake.

Deep grief  
searing us like a hot, dry wind  
on an empty horizon.  
But, we are still here.  
By simply breathing in and out,  
a silken ribbon of chi,  
we reclaim our humanity.

Talk to me.  
I need you.  
As the tiniest green shoots of a new spring  
break through the hard crust of what's been,  
life that could be, will be,  
sustainable,  
for all of us,  
kind.  
That is it.  
There is no other way.  
Take a tiny step  
and celebrate today.

## Juliana's Journey

Marguerite Heston

*My grandmother, mother's mother, journeyed from Paris to America. August Dernovich sent passage money so Juliana, age 16, could travel to Centerville, Iowa, USA, to marry him.*

*Juliana travels with three companions from her village Markopalj in Croatia: Draga Starkevich, age 28, who will play the piano in her brother's saloon; Josephina, age 17, who was sent passage money by Lawrence Blasevich, who will marry her; and Marko Gurgurich, age 18, who will get a job. They travel by train together from Croatia to Munich, Germany, and then to Paris, France, where we take up their story on board the ship La Gascogne. I present their travel to America from grandmother's point of view from her stories and from my imagination.*

Draga, Josephina, and I are assigned cabin 202A along with another woman, Madeline, and her child, Tessie. Draga asks, "I do not understand. If four are assigned to each cabin, why do we have five?"

Josephina replies, "Well, I am not sleeping on the floor."

I looked through the chest of drawers along the wall and found a sailor's hammock. "This will work for Tessie," I said when I lifted her into the hammock and swung her. She giggled and clapped her hands.

Later that night we entered the cafeteria and smelled cabbage and sausage. We filled our trays and sat at long tables. Along the wall to the far right was a stage with a piano. Draga poked Marko, "Look at that, we have music."

Marko grabbed Mike, a young man we met on board, and pointed

to the stage. "We can play our harmonicas."

After dinner we all went to the ship's railing and watched the moon and stars over the vast ocean we had yet to cross. Madeline told us her husband was waiting for her and Tessie in Chicago. Yes, we had a long way to go.

The next morning hundreds of immigrants boarded the ship. Some of the sailors hauled up the stairs; others battened down the hatches. The motors started, the ship's horns blasted out our departure, and the people on the dock waved and cheered, "Bon Voyage." We slowly moved out to sea.

It was a bright sunny day, April 23, 1904. As we left the dock, a flock of white seagulls followed in our wake. We watched as they dove into the water, plucked a fish up, and flew away. I had to get used to walking on the ship's deck.

Marko met Joe Radosevich, a Croatian who was returning to the States with his mother, brother, and sister. Joe was teaching the "American" language. He told us that on Ellis Island they inspect you and ask your name, birthday, age, what country you are coming from, if you are single or married, what town you are going to, and to whom.

I had a letter from my fiancé August, and Joe helped me spell and pronounce everything in "American." Juliana; March 16, 1889; age 16; Markopalj, Austria; single; Centerville, Iowa; to my sister Victoria where I will marry August Dernovich. Other words we learned: ticket, Chicago, thank you, eat, and toilet.

After dinner different groups would play music and sing and do their folk dances. Anyone could sign up. Marko, Mike, and Draga played music one evening. They got Joseph Muler to play the fiddle and started out with a rousing polka. All the men grabbed their partners, and mothers and kids clapped the beat. Round and round the floor they went. When Draga played a waltz, Marko and Mike danced with all of us. We went to bed at night fully satisfied with the entertainment.

One day we stood at the railing looking out to sea. Josephina pointed, "Look, the fish are flying." Sure enough a fleet of ten or twelve dolphins were diving down and up, down and up, following our ship. They seemed to be saying "Look at us, flying and diving, chasing and playing with each other."

Another day a sailor yelled "Whale, ho" and pointed off in the distance. We spotted three whales dipping and spouting water. Further out a foreboding black sky covered the horizon. Then the wind struck our faces and was churning the waves below. We heard three blasts from the ship's horn and the sailors came rushing on the deck motioning and yelling, "Go to your cabins! Go below! Take shelter!" We frantically ran down the stairs, holding on the walls until we reached 202A.

Looking terrified, Madeline sat on her bunk holding Tessie. Draga and Josephina went straight to the port hole. Darkness. We held on to our bunks as the ship hit the oncoming waves. I searched my knapsack

and found my rosary. Madeline pulled her rosary from her purse. As the wind pounded and the ship rocked, we whispered our prayers.

The raging storm continued night and day. Lightning, thunder, rain flooding the deck, coming down the stairs, the ship constantly rocking. Imprisoned in our cabins, we only ventured out to go to the toilet or to fill our water bottles.

Josephina began to cry, "Are we going to die here? Why did I ever leave home?" Madeline held Tessie tightly.

Draga held Josephina. "Let's have some hope and stop feeling sorry for ourselves. We can be strong a little while longer. Let's sing for courage." Draga sang a Croatian march and we sang along. And clapped the beat. We sang two verses and felt new courage build within us.

Later that day Marko came knocking at our door to tell us, "The storm is letting up. We saw an opening in the clouds to the west. And Draga, I need some of my money. The guys are gathering for a game down the hall."

"You give me good news, the storm is over, but you need money for a game! Get out of here!" she shouted as she shoved money into his hand.

We were brave again. We all took showers and washed our hair. Madeline showed us a magazine with new hair styles. She gave each of us a new cut and curls with rags and ribbons. The next day Marko came knocking again. "I have more good news. The sailors said we will see land in the next hour. We need to get on deck."

We all rushed out on deck and gathered at the railing. Suddenly the ship horn blasted two long honks. Everyone looked forward and Marko yelled, "Look, the Statue of Liberty!"

The sun setting in the west burst forth and outlined the statue, her arm held high, the torch lighting the way for all of us immigrants. We marveled at the silhouetted statue bathed in golden light welcoming us to a new world. We stood there in awe—immigrants from Croatia, France, Germany, Spain, Italy—yearning for a new life, good work, new friends, and good times. Would this country give us that?

As we sailed into New York harbor, we felt the happiness of the moment. We cheered and clapped and hugged. We finally arrived! Thank God! It's America.



*Juliana, sitting at left holding a daughter. Photo taken in Tipperany, Iowa, in 1921, provided by the family.*

## Happy Mother's Day 2021

Peter Whitson

*To the Ripples reader: This story is true. And while most of what is here represents a factual reality, it is done so in the history of a distant, far away galaxy. Such is the limitation of anecdotal data, and failing memory. That's not to say there isn't a stretch here and there. I do admit to some, but I can only plead to working with a difficult, embarrassing topic as opposed to any intentional deception. So here goes.*

Today is a rainy gray Mother's Day. Today is a likely day to miss my mother. And, of course, there's the pandemic. Do you hear me, Nancy? You know I do miss you. How long has it been now? Has it been twenty years? God, it probably has been that long. It has been a long time. And that feels pretty sad.

You know what is even worse, Nancy? Worse is knowing that when you were here, I spent most of my time ignoring you or just not paying any attention to you while I went through the wiles and woolies of my own life. You were on the back burner. I spent all my adult

life on this side of the mountains, far – far away, just visiting you once in a long while... and calling you even less. Could I have done better? I have no doubt I could have. It was so easy to kid myself that I was too tired, too busy – "I'll do it this weekend. My brothers live closer, let them do it." It was so easy and then one day, there were no more days.

Yeah yeah, I heard you, "Don't worry about me. I'll be all right! Just take care of your life. I'll be all right." Are all children that way, Ma? Do we all ignore our mothers the way I did you? Do all of us take this wonderful woman for granted? This woman who brought us from a sniveling snot-nosed brat to an ungrateful adult – God! I hope not. But I know we do. Ma, please don't give me that, "it's all right crap," It's not all right, and you know it's not. And, I mean, who was it that used to say, "Chickens come home to roost?"

So now I guess it's payback time. Now when I talk to you, I can only hope you can hear me. Now when I could use a reassuring word

or light that would help – all I can do is close my eyes and pretend. God! I miss you. I'm such a dumb ass! You really never know how much you miss someone till they're gone. Now I pray for redemption. The last prayer of hope is redemption. And that's all I have left, and I did it all to myself. I have no one else to blame but me. It was so easy to let it slide; to put it on the back burner; to come back to it later. But now later is gone, and so are you.

So look, if your mother is still with you, for God's sake, don't do what I did. Go to her today, right now. Give her a huge hug and tell her that you love her. And mostly, tell her that you appreciate all she has done for you. That's all it takes, but it is only a beginning. Do it again, and again. Every chance you get.

That's the kind of thing you can do to help make the world a better place. And guess what? Just my standing here and saying something to you and mentioning this to you seems to help me too. Thanks, Nancy. I love you. I miss you. Happy Mother's Day.

## Welcome Spring

Martie Jensen

Rounding the sun once again  
The cardinal, robin and wren  
Are starting to sing  
A welcome to spring  
And Trilliums wake in the Glen.

## Lunchtime for Benny

Lee Huntington

Every day at noon, when Lila is at work in her office downtown, she pushes a button on her phone and remotely releases Benny's lunch. She can watch it pour into his bowl if she wants to, and usually she does. He seems to be waiting patiently for the cascade from the food container, but, in fact, his tail is wagging furiously, giving him away. She could talk to him, too, but it upsets him. As soon as she says "Hi, Benny," he starts looking for her. She is thinking of getting a camera that will send video as well as audio to him.

She likes to observe Benny eating his lunch. When he is finished, he will go out through the doggy door in the kitchen to pee. This is the way their days go, Monday through Friday. On Saturdays and Sundays, when she is home, she maintains the auto feeding at noon. She talks to him through the camera and lets him find her.

She is pleased that he is so well-trained.

When Lila gets home from the office, she eats dinner while Benny has his second meal of the day, and then she takes him for a walk. He sniffs every tree and bush, usually leaving his own signature. When he does his big business as he always does at the empty lot on the corner, she takes out the plastic bag

that the newspaper came in this morning, puts it on over her hand and scoops up his mess. She removes the bag, turning it inside-out. The feces are still warm in her palm. She makes sure that she praises him. Back home again, Benny waits for her to put the bag in the garbage can. Then they go into the house.

She is glad that he is so well-trained.

In the kitchen she washes her hands and wipes him under his tail if he needs it. Then Benny hops up on the sofa facing the television. They watch the News together, then Lila streams *Best in Show* for Benny while she cleans the kitchen and calls her mother. Benny does not move while the movie is playing. He is so well-trained.

When Lila goes to bed she lies on her side and pats the space beside her. Benny leaps onto the bed and Lila holds him against her. Benny lies very still. Lila's body is warm. She strokes his silky ear. Benny sighs, the sound a dog makes when he is perfectly contented. His day has gone well. Everything happened as anticipated. He closes his eyes, basking in the sensation of Lila's hand stroking him, grateful that she is so predictable, so reliable, so well-trained.

## A Modern Parable

Lee Huntington

They met  
On the net.

They meet  
On the street.

They drive  
To a dive.

They eat fries  
Telling lies.

They park  
In the dark.

And conclude  
In the nude.

Next time one logs on,  
The other is gone.

*Burma Shave*

## Our War Effort

Dan Beverly

I was born on a small Appalachian farm in Pulaski County, Kentucky in January 1938. The farm was mostly worked by hand, with the aid of two horses and a mule. When I was about 3½ years old the event that I describe was so unusual that I still clearly remember it. I was the youngest of five children that survived. We children slept in the overhead loft. My three older brothers each had a bed. I shared a bed with my sister. We stored our treasures under our beds. When I was alone I had the chance to examine everyone's treasures.

My oldest brother, Brady, had acquired a large stack of pulp books, showing WWI fighter planes with two wings and some with three wings, fighting each other. Brady wanted to become a fighter pilot.

When Brady was 17 years old, in 1936, he asked our mother to let him enlist in the Army Air Force, and skip his senior year in High School. He said he did not wish to be a farmer and he could not stand the sweat-bees any longer.

He enlisted and after taking lots of tests was told that he could not be a pilot without having a high school diploma, but he could be a fighter plane mechanic. He was trained at what is now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and was then sent to the Panama Canal Zone Air Base.

In 1939 when Germany invaded Poland, the American Air Force was very impressed by the use of the German fighter planes, and decided that the US Air Force needed lots of fighter plane pilots. So Brady

was invited to return to his high school for the 1939–1940 class and get his diploma and then become a fighter pilot.

In 1940 Brady received his pilot training in Texas. Part of his training was to fly P-40 fighter planes from Texas to New York state. It was only a little out of his way to fly over our farm. We never knew when he was coming. We just heard a loud roar and chickens, pigs, cows, and horses screaming and running for the hills. We ran outside and there was Brady, in his P-40 fighter plane with its canopy open and him waving at us. Egg and milk production fell for a few days.

In New York he was told to land at a base near the Canada border. He was told where to park the plane and where to eat and where to sleep. In the morning when he went to get the plane it was gone. He was told that some thieves put a hook on the plane and towed it

across the border. Brady said that other P-40 pilots had similar experiences.

In 1940 our Congress was very isolationist and forbid any action that might cause the US to get involved in the War. But President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were best friends and England was being bombed to death. England was losing lots of fighter planes. Lots of Canadian men wished to help fight the Germans. All the Canadians needed were pilot trainer planes, and the USA had lots of P-40 planes.

1940 was an important election year. President Roosevelt was running for a third term. Any assistance to England could affect the election. Thanks to those thieving Canadians, we were able to help England at a critical time.

I can remember three of Brady's bombing runs over our farm. So Brady was involved in an action that was a little bit against the law.

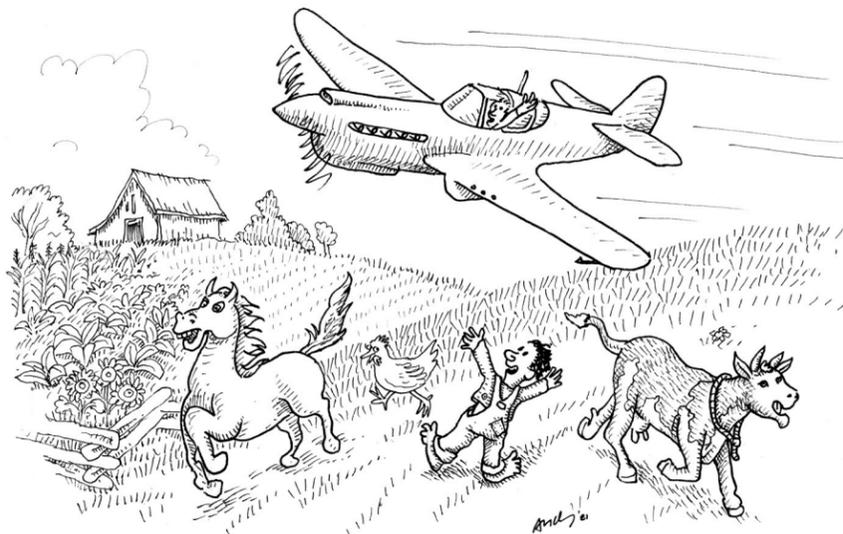


Illustration by Andy Beverly, the author's son

## Silent Symphony

Judy James

I love the wind.

Sometimes,  
speaking softly  
in a summer breeze  
carrying  
yearning lovers'  
Cri de Coeur, or  
in the harsh shriek  
of the trumpet's  
war signal  
at dawn's first light,  
her voice may  
comfort or frighten,  
enlighten, or stultify.

Her currents have  
spread the philosophers  
deep thoughts  
far and wide, and  
wrapped the  
wisdom of the sages  
in her ethereal voice.  
She has carried  
the muses melodies,  
inspiring poets  
and musicians,  
while birds  
float freely  
on her breath.

Blow wind, blow  
bring your wisdom  
and warnings,  
sonnets and songs  
and play for us  
your symphony.

I love the wind.

## The Beauty of The Moment

Judy James

Breathe in the beauty  
of each moment

witness  
raindrops dancing  
on windows,  
the daisy  
in a sidewalk crack,  
a leaf growing  
in the stump of a tree,  
the silence  
of falling snow.

Savor these moments  
of joy and of peace

## Upon Ahmaud Arbery's Death

Sue T. Parker

My Black Lives Matter banner sits in its third house.  
When John Crawford was killed in our local Walmart  
I knew that in our small and liberal town in Ohio  
My amazing PhD'd boss might be in danger if he ran  
Or walked our bike path  
In casual clothes (And be mistaken for what?  
An *ordinary* African American man?  
Would a suit help?)

Ahmaud Arbery's tragic death brought back  
The Civil Rights movement when it  
Was the sixties and we marched in Selma and it was  
In Black and White.  
What does one life cost?

I am at home staying the distance and  
Contemplating the future and my own death  
As my mixed-race grandchildren chalk colored hearts and flowers  
on my doorstep.

5/13/20

# Remembering Charlotte

Rubin Battino

When you throw a pebble in a pond, ripples spread until they fade away. With relationships, those gentle waves can lift others for years or even generations. My wife of 61 years threw many pebbles that have rippled through the lives of all the people she met.

We met on a Friday night in 1959 at a tavern near the University of Chicago. My friend John went there to meet his date Jan and brought me along. Charlotte was sitting with Jan, and the four of us spent a pleasant evening talking. I walked Charlotte back to her dorm and kissed her goodnight. That surprised both of us since neither had moved so quickly before.

We dated, enjoying dining at an Italian family restaurant and in Greektown. (My background is Greek-Jewish.) Charlotte and I had many common interests like theater, foreign movies, classical music, opera, reading, and especially hiking and traveling. That December we traveled to New York where our parents lived. Charlotte had told her parents we were planning to marry in January, but I had not told mine, so it was a bit of a shock to them and my four older siblings. Charlotte was the first gentile to join our traditional immigrant family, but soon they all learned to love her as I did.

Friends have told me Charlotte was the smartest woman they ever met, and I feel the same way. She was curious about everything she experienced, and her analytical mind worked nonstop to understand the people she encountered and the world around her, whether

it was a painting or artifact in a museum or an odd-looking tree on a trail. It was hard to keep up with her, yet she kindly (most of the time!) enlightened me as needed.

So, living with Charlotte was a lifelong adventure. She just liked and was interested in people, and they responded to her attention, care, and evident concern. A couple in Italy who met her only once wrote, "A few hours were enough to appreciate how great a woman Charlotte was: She was able to mix wise and sweet moments at once, and that is the most difficult thing a person can do."

Because we were both working during the winter we got married, we decided to take the entire summer to honeymoon in Europe – on a camping tour. We landed in Brussels and had our first interesting exchange that morning when our hosts served us eggs on steaks. (Ever since my mother forced me to eat glutinous soft-boiled eggs as a child, I have had an aversion to all eggs except the hard-boiled ones severed at Greek ritual events.) Charlotte laughed at the look of distress on my face. (The dish was taken away and I ate something else.) That was the beginning of our learning that we had different tastes in many things.

We camped all over Europe, climbing church towers, visiting museums and historical sites, and hiking in many scenic locations. When we got to Rome, we were so sated with sightseeing that we stayed in our campground all day and read mystery paperbacks! (We did get to see the Sistine Chapel

and the Coliseum and an incredible production of Aida in the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla.)

Our son David was born in 1964 on a cold, wintry night in Chicago, and that started our life as parents. Charlotte was an amazing mother, David was a wonderfully happy child, and we adapted to parenthood. In 1966, I was offered a position as one of the first faculty members at Wright State, and we moved to Yellow Springs. Our son Benjamin joined us in 1969. Charlotte and I never figured out how it happened, yet David and Ben both turned out to be fine human beings, married wonderful wives (Hazuki and Jill), and blessed us with eight super grandchildren.

Charlotte and I had a number of differences. She was always much better organized, especially about houses and kitchens and finance. She was more aware and sensitive to clothing – I typically dress for comfort and utility, not appearance. Someone once asked the famous psychiatrist Milton Erickson about the main issue he observed when working with couples. He responded that after the first blush of romance and living together, couples started attempting to change each other! After a number of altercations about what I wore to various events, Charlotte and I resolved the clothing issue by having her select what I would wear to significant outings. One of the things she always pointed out was when my shirt buttons, belt buckle, and fly were not in a straight line. (This was then corrected!)

Charlotte was impressively curious about everything around her. When we visited museums, for example, she read all of the information cards on the exhibits and learned much more than I did. We invariably split up when entering a museum and worked out when and where we would meet again during the day.

Whenever we hiked, Charlotte took in more of the scenery than I did. We were passionate hikers and travelers and when David and Ben were small, we took them on many trips. During my sabbatical years at Wright State, the family got to live in Australia, New Zealand, Austria, and England. Charlotte and I visited New Zealand seven times and hiked all of its major trails. Over several years we hiked the Rocky Mountains from Colorado Springs to Jasper National Park in Canada, sometimes on our own, and sometimes in Road Scholar groups.

Charlotte's mother Ellie joined us on a number of these trips, including one to Mt. LeConte Lodge at the top of the Smoky Mountains. On our way down the trail, Ellie was in the lead when she came rushing back to tell us a black bear was approaching. We nervously stepped off the path and soon the bear rounded the corner nonchalantly waddled by. Ellie was also an amazing woman who learned how to swim after retiring, and went on to win many medals in the Senior Olympics. Both Ellie and Charlotte were born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. After Ellie died, we visited the war memorial there and some family sites, and spread some of Ellie's ashes on them. Charlotte's ashes will be appropriately spread.

I am rather tone deaf, but Charlotte loved to sing. She sang in

church as a teenager; at the Berkshire Choral Festival in the Berkshires, Santa Fe, and Austria; in the Yellow Springs Community Chorus; and in the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas put on by Center Stage. She delighted audiences with her comedic exuberance as Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance* (opposite Pirate King Bill Chappelle), and Eulalie Shinn in *The Music Man* (opposite Mayor Paul Webb). Our son David played the child lead in that show, singing "Gary, Indiana." Being nonmusical, I envied not only Charlotte's musicality, but also that of David and Benjamin.

After retiring from singing and theater, Charlotte poured her energy into the Yellow Springs Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, working intensively on financial matters, and making many contributions to

committees and the running of the organization.

In our 60-plus years together before COVID-19 hit, we never stopped going to theaters, movies, concerts, and opera; nor hiking, traveling, and visiting friends and family. And we never stopped sharing our thoughts and dreams, caring for the environment, and loving each other.

Charlotte and I deeply studied end-of-life issues, and she died in a way she had planned: with dignity, choice, control, comfort (minimal pain), companionship, and consciousness (holding many long conversations with family, and regaling us with family history). Her ripples continue to spread...

*Charlotte Alice Battino (née Ridinger):  
April 19, 1936 – December 28, 2020*

## Three-Line Poems Remembering Charlotte Rubin Battino\*

we do mundane things  
do we not?  
while loved ones are dying

what do you say?  
(after what has already been said)  
I love you is all there is

and, though it all, somehow  
laughter and smiles  
tears always waiting

I wonder...I marvel  
those magical early days  
still alive in old photos

I am not she or her  
I am Charlotte  
that's my name

helpless, I watch my son and  
grand daughters  
help Charlotte sit up  
and touch her bare feet to the floor

so much to say to her  
now, who will I tell it to?  
the moon still rises

I didn't expect to cry  
and yet, and yet, and yet  
the tears just came

*\*To cope when loved ones die I write  
poems and remembrances. RB*

## Vespertine: of the evening

Robert Paschell

The Good Humor Man  
Pied Piper of suburban streets  
drawing us from shuttered hives  
to frozen sugar treats

with no challenge of "Who goes...?"  
As if our tummies answered  
to the doorbell of C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>22</sub>O<sub>11</sub>  
*sucrose!*

As if our internal wiring  
jingle-jangled to the scrumptious  
summons/tango of that soft-nosed  
ardent carbo siren.

Vacuuming us from our familial homesteads.  
Casting a floating lariat of delectable bells  
about our heads,

as we swarmed outside to exorcise  
our bitter bogeys.  
Evening round-up in the street  
of neighborhood sweet-ogling/craving  
hot dog-powered doggies.

To the "Just Imagine" chuck wagon  
bringing our yearning stomachs  
in search of Popsicles, Creamsicles, Dreamsicles,  
ice cream sandwiches, sugar-webbed crunchy  
cones, and chocolate-coated nutty Drumsticks.

Vespertine hawker of disarming luscious bites.  
White-robed Sven-golly/snake charmer/  
of our torrid appetites.

Twilit wizard ringing tinkling tones.  
If not a pointy-hatted witch  
in a candy-studded gingerbread house,  
a benevolent Nehru-capped warlock  
piloting a jovial mobile home.

Change-dispensing itinerant preacher  
of a soothing toothsome gospel.  
Offering nirvana to our palates  
in exchange for silver moolah.

Anchoring hot summer nights  
with icy-flavored, yummy-laden,  
melting, clement Hallelujah!



"Boundless Sea of Consciousness" illustration by Ardis Macaulay

## 3 Poems (or Miscellaneous Meanderings)

Ted Chapman

### Ocean Waves

The ocean waves  
I try to wave back a little  
But I'm cold and stiff  
And only manage a ripple

### Mistaken Assumptions

Mistaken assumptions written  
in stone and piled away for  
future misuse.

### The Hill

It will be a while yet before I'm  
over the hill. I've got to get up  
the thing first.

## Sheltering in Place Flash Back

Ardis Macaulay

Summer of '69  
21 years old,  
Brimming with glee,  
Cruising Chicago's Dan Ryan  
In my blue OLDS sedan.

Warm wind swirling  
Through windows  
rolled down.  
The world in my oyster  
I'm in love  
with this town.

From WLS radio station,  
Visionary lyrics now blare.  
At the top of my lungs  
I sing through the air,  
"This is the dawning of the Age of  
Aquarius, Aquarius, Aquarius..."

Belting out this message  
to a world still asleep,  
My heart space expanding,  
Breathing a sigh of relief.  
Could it Be,  
A new ear's rising  
Where hearts open wide?

Yes, 21 and wondering  
If not now, then ... when?  
Ahh, 50 years later  
And 73 years, young,  
Sadly, still waiting for  
Humanity's LOVE, to...  
"LET THE SUN SHINE IN"

## Musings on Cats & Other Creatures

### Joy Fishbain

Owning a cat is not a small or inconsequential matter. Owning two cats...well, you get the idea. It didn't take long to discover that plants on pedestals don't often survive the first year of cat ownership.

I also learned quite a number of other things over time. For example, don't play favorites, even with cats—they understand. And I have seen from my cats, in close-up confrontations: don't stiff around each other uninvited; you can get smacked down in no uncertain terms. I can testify that being called "my big handsome baby" gets amazing responses from men *and* from male cats. I also know for a fact that humans and cats can both get mad when their partners stay out all night. And like humans often do, cats may know you're there, but pretend not to see you, and keep on walking. I hate to get personal, but I notice cats, like us, do know the most important places to keep clean: face, paws, and private parts.

One major observation I have made is that cats have superior confidence that they can outrun a dog. They race full force like a tiger, using complete concentration. My black male cat Archie is 13 pounds, rather majestic, and usually saunters around in casual, kingly fashion. But he ran like hell several months ago with the neighbor dog close behind. It was a scene of sheer drama watching them cross the yard at rocket speed. There was no way to intervene. It was too fast and furious. Archie knew to head for the dense growth of trees in the next property and disappeared.

However, it's possible he forfeited one of his nine lives that day.

I've learned that it can be a serious predicament when your animals get sick or injured. When is it time to let them go, or work to extend their lives? I know some people spend hundreds, even thousands of dollars, no matter the prognosis.

One of my two cats has developed diabetes and a chronic form of pancreatitis. After I accepted the shock of the diagnosis, I went to my bags of diabetic cat food, at \$55.00 for a 10# bag, then bought the expensive insulin and syringes for two injections a day; plus a series of visits to

the veterinarian. Uh oh, I'm already well on the other side of \$1,000.00. Somethings I was certain I'd never do, especially with an iffy outlook.

Even though the routine with my cats has become more cumbersome, I still enjoy their presence, following me around, telling me things with their eyes or meows, waiting for their food or doses of affection. They sleep peacefully at night and roam the backyard or woods by day, coming and going as they please. Just one more day in the sun, then another, and maybe another. One day at a time, as it is for all of God's creatures, great and small.

## Four-Legged Neighbors

### Joy Fishbain

The two little matching dogs next door are barking wildly behind their chain-link fence.

Is my handsome, haughty feline sauntering by,  
Filling them with doggie rage?  
My curiosity urges me to investigate;  
I peek out the front door.

There he is, my cat, stretched full-length, lean and black,  
twirling from side to side on the front step,  
where he has just arrived.

"Pet me, pet me," he begs in kitty style,  
even though he's fully grown.

I tickle his ears, and stroke his glistening black fur.

He's still a kitty to me,  
as our children are always our children.

I speak firmly but in a low voice to him:

"Now get in here and quit aggravating those canine kids next door.

They're our neighbors, after all."

He stares at me for a long moment and his penetrating eyes tell me:

"Don't be so serious. We're all just expressing ourselves."

Then in princely fashion he meanders inside

I roll my eyes and quietly close the door.

## Connections

### Joy Fishbain

The crickets call me out; the air is damp and sweet  
I hear a lone bird calling in some dark distant tree.  
Suddenly, the sun lights up the earth, the trees, the grass ahead of me;  
Transforming all I see to a hundred shades of green.  
I sit here quietly and see...ah, yes, I am connected up with thee.

The infant tree I chose, adopted oh so carefully;  
So small, well-formed, waiting just for me.  
Five years perhaps now it has been, my tending to its care,  
I watch it growing tall and strong, its arms outspread with star-like leaves,  
Gracing the yard so happily, blowing gently in the breeze.  
Ah, yes, I am connected up with thee.

I wander through my space on earth, my yard and woods,  
With gratitude and love for all that I behold.  
How it fills me every time with deep serenity, feeling God in every thing I see.  
I marvel as the miracles unfold, stepping carefully through the trees.  
Ah, yes, I am connected up with thee.

It's autumn now, those sweet, warm melancholy days.  
"Don't be sad, though," nature says—  
"I'll bring you great blasts of gold, purple, yellow, red...  
To leave you breathless and in love with me.  
I'll follow that with winter peace, soft snow and rest,  
And time to plan new life again."  
Sounds like the perfect plan to me.  
I softly sigh: Ah, yes, I am connected up with thee.

If God is near, I give my thanks, wherever you may be.  
I see you in the lustrous clouds moving past above me,  
And in the plants of ruby red just outside my door.  
They seem to note my rapt attention and blush a little more.  
Can it be? This beauty all around, so free, to you, to me?  
I close my eyes; I feel the earth, the misty tender breeze...  
Ah, yes, we are connected up with thee.

## Autumn Harmonies

### Shirley Kristensen

Cicada in synchronous cacophony  
Birds calling, chirruping,  
singing, squawking  
Cool breezes  
Trees rattle  
Leaves quietly spiral to the ground  
Leaves crunch underfoot  
Different sizes, different patterns  
Green, scarlet, golden, brown  
Campfires  
Skyward geese in honking 'V's,  
Wings rhythmically beating.

## Becoming American

Uta Riess Schenck

Standing on the deck of the S.S. General Langfitt, the nine year old girl breathed deeply. The salty sea air relieved the seasickness that had overcome her soon after the ten-day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean began. The wavy dark green water seemed endless. At one point no one was allowed up on deck for three days as a raging storm tossed the ship like a toy in a bathtub. Not only did seasickness but fear overcome all on board. The liberty ship that was bringing her and her family to a new land had undertaken the trip many times, ferrying soldiers to and from Europe. This could not be her last, she prayed. Days later someone called out that land was in sight. Soon the ship passed an immense statue of a woman holding a torch. The girl

did not know then what a beacon of hope that lady had been to so many before. As they docked on the Hudson River, an immense landscape of buildings touching the clouds appeared. She could hardly believe what she saw. Wow, I'm in America, she thought.

That was sixty years ago. Today others are coming, knocking on our border doors. Many are coming because they and their children's lives are threatened. Barriers, physical and political have been erected. Children have been ripped from families. With the Covid pandemic, solutions to address these wrongs seem more complex. Nevertheless, I feel it is important that we, the U.S., can and should once again be the beacon of hope that brought all immigrants here.



Uta Riess Schenck on the S.S. General Langfitt in 1956

## For the Birds

Uta Riess Schenck

While heating coffee, I lean on the tall table pushed under a north-facing window in my kitchen. I watch a squirrel gymnastically jump from branch to branch all the time eyeing its target; the thing that has caused frustration and several saunters into the scrubby undergrowth. Yesterday I watched alarmed as one of its buddies fell six feet into the pointy growths and lay stunned. Thinking that it was dead, I felt relief when after a few vigorous wriggles it freed itself. Dashing away, it stopped once to look back in anger flicking its fluffy tail. I confess to feeling guilty with only a hint of schadenfreude.

The squirrel-proof feeder was meant for the birds, birds like towhees, nuthatches, cardinals, chickadees, finches, flickers and even the fresh sparrows. I think, let those pesky rats with bushy tails dig up those juicy black walnuts. But no, what I am observing is nature's order, survival of the fittest. The biggest and most bossy seem to win there. I think of my spending more time than usual at the window, in quarantine. I recoil at the thought of how we humans act when not leveraged by empathy. We must do better. We need bully-proof government. We need to live with the conviction that the other is us.

## Foreign Dream

Jo Ann Kiser

We're at Heathrow, perfect family row of us,  
nearly having a row,  
hustling among escalators, buildings, trains  
in the slightly soupy rain.

On our way to nameless dreamed land,  
our features alike,  
through birth and circumstance.

Apparently we left in a hurry:  
I have misplaced my passport  
and at some unspecified last moment  
have acquired a kitten—

its blunt head, tiny distress mewing  
and its gray coat, oh its gray coat,

Avatar to its great-grandmother  
who in the foreign city of my past  
wished me godspeed and fine rest.

The others wait quietly for me to cope,  
acknowledging our common ground.

## Hunger

Jo Ann Kiser

Your husband of not so many years  
was away  
working at the mine, at the job  
he had just got, was already  
afraid of losing,  
too proud to take government issue.

Alone in the cabin you found only onions,  
fried them for your supper.

It was winter that Depression year:  
sun laid on branch and land  
a glittering blanket  
while you sat inside, looking, listening  
to the sound of winter birds.

You sit here now  
wrapped in old age  
against a different kind of cold,  
remembering your young self,  
telling your daughter  
herself old enough  
to look upon that young wife  
as a mother might.

## *Jeopardy* Sheila Filler

At 7 pm, Phoebe and I will watch Jeopardy together. She'll cuddle with me on the couch. I supply the answers. Phoebe is only there to keep me company and she silently cheers me on. Did she sense my excitement last night when the category was "James Garfield?" I read a biography of James Garfield in 2013. I remember the year because I was dating someone back then, and I told him more about Garfield than he cared to know. Our twentieth president, elected in 1880, was committed to protecting the former slaves of the south – the last of the Radical Republicans. He

was assassinated six months after he took office. His murderer pleaded "not guilty" because he claimed that it was the doctors who had actually killed Garfield – probing his wounds with their filthy fingers. (What chutzpah!) See, I know stuff. I couldn't believe that the contestants chose "James Garfield" as the *last* category!

Phoebe is with me all day because I'm not going anywhere. We do take two daily walks together, which is beneficial for my physical and mental health. Let's face it, I don't know what I would do without her. When I wake up and float

towards consciousness – when I reach the surface and the dread that lurks there – I long to close my eyes and sink into oblivion again. But I can't. Phoebe is waiting. And I can't let her down. She's a good girl and won't pee in the house unless she absolutely has to. Her wriggling body and vibrating tail tell me that "It's going to be another great day!" I owe it to her to get up and out. And so we navigate these strange days together. I find that the days pass both slowly and quickly. Time is a complicated concept for me, but not for Phoebe. For her it's always "now" and she's the wiser for it.

## *No, This World Is Not Your Oyster*

Artie Issac

floating softly on our shells  
we six or more  
glisten in grey surrender

smelling of the sea  
a sophisticated silkiness  
harmless in our home

pried from our bed  
pearl plundered  
rumored to ready your rage

shameless power cracks  
our world and yours  
in your slurping lust

calcium carbonate  
constructed to last  
now ground for chicken feed

or ranked on your bocce court  
your white strip of amusement  
between your imperial feedings

## *Bios*

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

**Linda Z. Chernick** returned to her home base in Ohio five years ago after a long sojourn in Massachusetts. Her chapbook, *The Turning: Poems of Love, Loss and Renewal*, has been used in a class on death and dying. Other poems have appeared in Ripples. She is fortunate to be a member of Tower Poets and to have known, and learned from, its founder, Conrad Balliet, while continuing to gain knowledge and inspiration from its members.

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

The path of Chris and **Janeal Ravndal**, now married 63 years, has taken them to homes in Newfoundland, New Hampshire, Belmont County, Ohio, and they moved here from Pendle Hill near Philadelphia, PA. They have three children, lots of grandchildren, and a recently arrived third great-grandchild.

