

Ripples 2022

Stories & Poems by or about Yellow Springs Elders • Volume 9, Summer 2022





*A message from the
Ancient future past
Whispers in our ears.....
Once Upon a Time is NOW,
Honor Earth as, "Self".*

*"A Message from the Ancient Future Past"
illustration by Ardis Macaulay*



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Barefoot

Diane Chiddister

You might ask why I recently found myself walking barefoot the six blocks to my rented apartment, at night, in late winter. I was visiting my daughter and family in her small city and realized too late that I left my shoes in the baby's room just as the baby was falling asleep. Retrieving them would wake up the baby. But I had to go home. My daughter's shoes were too small for me, her husband's too big, and I hadn't worn socks. So I did a quick calculation – not too cold, no snow on the ground, not too far. Sure, I could make it. So I set off in the dark – barefoot.

Here's what I didn't expect – those six blocks became an adventure.

Immediately I realized that my notion of sidewalks was flawed. These were not the smooth, creamy surfaces of my imagination; no, these sidewalks were spiky and prickly, studded with a million uneven pebbles. Yikes! This was painful! So I quickly veered into lawns, where the grass, after a rainy day, was still wet. While most houses had lawns, some didn't, so I found myself leaping from sidewalk to mulch to lawn over and over again, trying to find the least painful surface.

When was the last time I walked barefoot on grass? I couldn't remember the last time. Doing so brought back childhood memories of summer evenings dashing through yards with my neighborhood gang. I had loved that time of day, hovering on the edge of a dark scary night, yet knowing we wouldn't hover too long, because soon our moms would be calling us home. I felt once again the wildness, the freedom of childhood.

But there's another thing about walking on people's lawns in the dark: it feels vaguely criminal. I'm a 71-year-old woman and it had been

a long time since I broke the law. And now I was trespassing! It felt pretty good.

There were other challenges, too. Some people were out walking, and I had to cross a big street. What did I look like? I was an old woman walking barefoot at night. I looked homeless, that's what. And I felt a bit homeless as well. It didn't feel bad. My inner raggedy self seemed to step forward, the self that connects with homeless old women everywhere, that feels not so different from them. There's something fierce about this raggedy self, fierce and scary, and I felt empowered, feeling this toughness. Would I scare people? Maybe. That felt just fine.

The sidewalks felt especially prickly the last few blocks, and I worried. What if, when I got home, the soles of my feet were covered with blood? What if I bled to death? But when I got home and turned on the light, there was no blood, not even dirt. The soles of my feet looked sturdy and strong. Actually, my feet looked pretty young. They looked ready to do it again. I was proud.

It wasn't until I woke in the middle of the night that I remembered – feet had been a theme in my day. Earlier that morning, I'd seen a photo that was haunting, harshly compelling. It showed a morgue, with the camera focused on the bare feet of the dead. There they were, lifeless, some angled in strange positions, and though I couldn't touch them, these feet looked very cold. I hadn't thought about this photo during my six-block walk, but thinking about it that night took my breath away.

The simple act of not wearing shoes on a cold winter night turned out to be thrilling. What was it about that barefoot journey that made me

feel so deeply alive? Perhaps it was feeling like a child again, with a child's sense of freedom and wonder. Perhaps it was because my escapade, which could have turned out very badly, ended instead as a victory. But a victory for whom? Perhaps for old women everywhere, who may still have a surprise or two up their sleeves. And more than anything, it might have been the jarring juxtaposition of the cold, still feet in that photo with my own strong, moving feet, my realization that all of these feet are me, some in the present and some not that far in the future. In my best moments, this sober truth helps me live better.

I'm glad I risked going barefoot on a cold winter night. I'd do it again. Want to join me?

Shadows

Shirley Kristensen

A cool day.
A clear blue sky.
Sunlight shafts thru branches
thru shrubs.
Dark shadows on road path
straight, branching, defined.
Dark shadows on road path
soft, nebulous, ill defined.
A breeze.
Shadows shift
New patterns emerge
Nature exhibits its artistry.

Inheritance

Artie Isaac

My mother left me
an empty attic
and an empty basement.

I didn't realize, until the
week after her death:
a gift of simplicity and ease.

She also left me her dog,
Beauregard the shih tzu,
survivor of three humans.

I didn't realize, until the
week after her death:
a home of smiles and paws.

She also left me a letter,
describing who she was,
what brought her joy.

I didn't realize, until the
week after her death:
her values were her bequest.

*Imagine if each of us (those who
want to) would write an informal
letter of kind encouragement to
our Village neighbors and our
descendants.*

*If you do, please send yours to the
Senior Center for safekeeping —
and, if you want, for sharing when
you are gone.*

Sit. Stay.

Artie Isaac

You always return.

We are both thrilled
to see one another,
to smell what happened.

I love you.

I tell you every day,
in your comings and goings,
in my runnings and lyings down.

I bring the ball to us.

Yes, for the treat (and thank you),
but — surely you know this —
for your words of affirmation.

Good boy! is my love language

and so is physical touch,
where I can't reach,
like behind my ears.

Someday, I will leave you

after a fairly unexciting life,
but an extremely happy
and fulfilled one.

I love you, every one.

*This is an imagined letter left by
Beauregard, my mother's dog, who
died many years ago.*

Sunflower Reminiscence

Linda Z. Chernick

Green and gold giants
Bob in the breezes,
Saffron-studded faces
Hung heavy with seed.
This sunny sea waves
Seekers into rows.
They roam among towering
Stalks thick with winged ones.
Deep in their drink,
Buzzed and buzzing,
Bees hum a soundtrack
For those wandering
The lanes.
These long, lazy days,
Drone on, seemingly
Endlessly.
Yet, even now,
Are —
Bit by bit —
Bidding us goodbye.

Snarky PARKY & Me

Nancy Mellon

A Parkinson's Journey with Nancy Mellon

It's been 11 DAYS since my neurologist casually said, "Yes you have Parkinson's. But I already told you that the last time"

NO YOU DIDN'T, I think in my head. You said I had some things that suggested Parkinson's but not others that you would have expected. (Do you hear the anger? I think I'm in that stage. Yep, Denial, been there done that, Anger, and then something like negotiating, and acceptance. Some days I spin through 3 or 4 stages one after the other.)

"Let's do a DatSCAN," she says. "It can tell us for sure."

Do you know your exact diagnosis date? I have read that many people with Parkinson's do. It wasn't a surprise. I knew beforehand; for 2 years I had struggled with a growing rigidity, fatigue, weakening

hands and a strange soft voice. I had even practiced, in the middle of the night, hearing the diagnosis in my head so I wouldn't be too shocked.

But I hoped. I had a stiff neck and shoulder problem for years so I could be stiff from that, and I had a mild heart attack 2 months before my Parkinson's diagnosis so the weakness and fatigue could be from that...

Hello, welcome to my blog! I'm thinking if you have found yourself here it is either because you are my friend already or part of the Parkinson's community and will hopefully become my friend.

This blog will be coordinated and added to by my friend and art mischief maker Corrine Bayraktaroglu. You will love getting to know her, she is FUN. She has blessed me with this gift, because I am totally not a computer person. She is. She loves me and is walking this walk with me.

A bit of my twisty Background:

Thirty years ago, my mom was told she had Parkinson's. There was no DatSCAN to prove it, but she struggled with it and the increasing medications for 10 years. Her last 3 years we lived together and I was her care partner. I was a home-schooling mom, living with my rocket science husband and our 2 little boys in California.

My elfin dad had died of a heart attack when I was 16 and mom had been on her own in Illinois for many years. She loved her hometown, writing, cooking, and interviewing people. She had been the first woman editor of the local paper and knew many people.

But it had got to the point when she needed to be with us. We had tried helpers to live with her and going back and forth as much as I could, but it was time. It was a hard time for all of us. So I came to Parkinson's with an image of my mom with Parkinson's. It scares me.

I have taken to telling myself, "I am not my mom, we are all different." I have an amazing, supportive husband (Steven, I adore you and appreciate you immensely), and 2 grown up sons, Kelsey and Brendon, a daughter-in-law who smiles at me, Zyn, and 2 darling little perpetual motion, granddaughters, Shiloh and Emberlee. We are all living together in a shoe. Well, not really, though sometimes it feels like it.

So welcome to my world as I try to make sense of this new time in my life.

To read more of Nancy's blog, use the address in the Bio Section on the inside back cover.



Nancy Mellon

Two Black Snakes

Michael Kraus

My childhood home was a Baltimore, Maryland rowhouse that fronted the large Herring Run Park, named for the typhoid-polluted stream (long without fish of any kind) which ran through its middle. Less than a mile away, the countryside began, where now suburban sprawl stretches to the northeast for miles. In those days, the '40s of the last century, a firehouse marked the limit of city utilities, and beyond it a little-travelled, two-lane country road, Bowley's Lane, began its winding course.

Once when I was nine or ten, as I was out there exploring, alone and on my bike – it must have been summer – I came upon a small knot of women at the end of a driveway serving one of the few houses along the Lane. They seemed quite agitated, pointing at something on the ground beside the road. When I crossed to see what the 'thing' was, there lay a snake, large and coiled, black, its head protruding to one side. Perhaps imagining myself a savior, I grabbed the largest nearby boulder I could carry and dropped it, several times, on the writhing creature's head, until it was still and dead. Ignorant city-boy to the rescue!

Draping my trophy across my handlebars, I headed for home, but the snake would not stay put; finally I knotted it around the bar to one side, and carried it hanging thus to the yard behind my house. But what next? At first I had no idea, but then, not waiting for playmates to admire the kill – none were around – I conceived the mischief of frightening my grandmother, who lived with us. She was not a beloved Nana: she whined a lot, cooked (no, overcooked) flour- and bacon- grease-laden vegetables we kids were made to eat; and walked with difficulty. When she was out of

the kitchen I coiled the snake on the kitchen table, its crushed head buried under the carcass; when she saw it, she fled as fast as her bowed and aging legs would carry her. Grandma was *quitte pour la peur*, but I remember getting the worst spanking of my young life from my father, her son.

Among the other living things I have killed since then, for the most part inadvertently and with my car – a couple of squirrels, a cat, a skunk and probably a deer – there was one I shot with a BB-gun: a songbird taking cherries from a tree in my back yard on Stafford Street. It and a flock of its fellows I had been scaring off for some minutes by shooting the branches they perched on, until my poor aim cost the bird its life. Chagrined, I stopped shooting, and have not touched any sort of gun since.

Nowadays, on my long bike rides on the trail, I delight in the birds I hear and the many animals I see every day. And I brake or turn aside to avoid all ophidians, mostly garter snakes sunning themselves or swiftly slithering across the asphalt surface. Once, in the wetland nature preserve the state maintains where Greene meets Warren County, I even stopped to watch a rattlesnake lazing at the edge of the trail; it didn't like the company and soon, without vibrating its tail, slid into the weeds. I hadn't known that pygmy rattlers still survived here.

But here as in Maryland, black snakes are common. As I was returning to Yellow Springs from Xenia last summer, after a day-long ride, I had an encounter with one. There had been a thunderstorm, with gusty winds, just the day before, and the trail was littered with debris: leaves, walnuts, twigs and branches of every

shape and size. I was on my trike, and when I am thus closer to the ground than on a bike, I make a game of clearing the trail of obstructions, mostly without slowing down, snatching up and throwing aside whatever I can reach. (Two years ago I snagged some animal scat that looked 'twiggy'; oh well, just wash the hands!) On this occasion I saw what appeared to be a long, thin, straight branch, stretching nearly from one side of the trail to the other; a closer look revealed it was a snake, thinner and much longer than the pygmy rattler, and very black. On a bike I might have stayed on the asphalt and still avoided the creature's tail, but not on my three-foot-wide trike, and so I came to a stop, perhaps just that distance from the snake.

What then occurred amazed me. Anticipating being run over, the snake had tensed its six-foot body into what seemed a series of knots thinly covered by skin. When I stopped short of running it over and while for half a minute I watched, it relaxed; collected itself into a clump just left of the center-line while leaving me room enough to pass on the right; and then, as I started and passed, raised its head eight inches from the ground and looked me in the eye. I took the visual high-five for mutual content, and off I went.

Once in a film I saw a cobra so raise its head, as it swayed to the music of a flute; but never had I seen a common, local, earth-bound sort of snake do the like. We have all, I think, exchanged glances with animals: with our pets every day, and not uncommonly with the beasts we encounter in the wild. But with a snake? a reptile? Perhaps I was being appreciated, if not at last forgiven, for learning the value of that worthy creature.

Dancing on the North Star

Jo Ann Kiser

Magic of our youth,
We were at a party in the dark,
That dream of a dark that never was:

There were outlaws there
 and movie stars
And a lonely girl
 dressed in silver
 Who wept
As she danced:

We were all high, we were all low
 and a terribly serious manchild
 sprouted Philosophy.

We were all on ego trips, yes,
We were innocent, we sought
What we did not know, but we sought.
You were there and I was there,
 dancing on the North Star.

Night on the Farm (Homage to Janis Price)

Jo Ann Kiser

Above my bed
Her painting dissolves the wall,
near to me as sin, remote as sky.

Its homely beasts
graze dark blue landscape,
spill into my dreams.

I join the watching farmer
standing before barn's maw.

To his left
orange house aglow,
row of red maples,
God's candles lit.

I never met her, who lived quiet
somewhere in Ohio:
eyesight ruined, she could no longer paint.
Soon the gallery owner said she died:

Her legacy to family maybe a farm;
But to the rest eternal spring night.

Puzzle People Friends

Pat Stempfly

I never did puzzles as a kid. A lot of checkers, but never puzzles. The Yellow Springs January/February *Senior Notes* with the Director's comments were heartwarming. It triggered a memory I experienced as an adult with puzzles.

It was a long drive for a week-end visit with Jo, my mentor of many years. With the joys and sorrows of life and loss of some of her family, she moved into a beautiful new Retirement Center and continued her elderly life as a community volunteer giving back to her church and several organizations she supported and loved and had worked for.

Jo and her friends each had their own apartment. She picked one up high with a southern window where she could see the sun and remember her many joyful days of travel to see the world.

She and new and old friends met each evening in the dining room sharing their stories of the day's

happenings. I was Jo's guest and enjoyed all the stimulating conversation. Soon after dinner it was puzzle time. We all went to Harriet's apartment, which was the largest gathering space, to bring their puzzles to life.

Since I wasn't a puzzle person, I decided to be a polite observer. I watched them work from the edge in and noticed that each one worked on a separate piece of the puzzle that slowly began to overlap! Jo invited me to join them anytime. I tried several times to add a puzzle piece, but to no avail.

I still remember the smell and taste of warm cookies that accompanied their encouraging words. I was grateful I was staying in a guest suite with a quiet space to think through what I was feeling. I knew about the importance of a sense of place such as this was, but I was beginning to feel the sense of community they had created in a natural, warm, easy,

and real way. I realized they were becoming my extended family. I learned from them that in the grand scheme of things we each have a unique piece of the puzzle that is equally important as part of the whole and interdependent with all the other pieces.

Jo lived to be 90 years old and her presence in my life has been a true blessing for many years. The Puzzle People Friends came into my life unexpectedly, sharing their stories and puzzles with joy, kindness, and humor. They taught me how each of us can create our own purpose and passion in little or big ways that can make a difference and be passed along to others. Their creative spirit-in-action was true inspiration and made me think how I play the game of life with poker or chess or pure love. They became my forever friends and extended family and have made a big difference in my life.

Sitting Up With the Dead, aka The Wake

Diana J. Atkins

I was 10 years old in 1966 when my grandpa passed away in Tennessee. I was always scared of him for no reason. He was a half Cherokee Indian, tall and thin, and long in the tooth.

He died while plowing behind his mule. One of my uncles found him being dragged around the field behind the unsuspecting mule.

Grandpa always lived a hard farming life in a log cabin without running water and modern machinery. We would be making a trip to Tennessee to attend Grandpa's funeral which would take place in his cabin.

A funeral home brought a casket to be set up in the front room of the cabin. He was washed up by the relatives and placed in the coffin for viewing and a wake.

They did what was called "sitting up with the dead." All family and friends were welcome to spend the night with the deceased person.

Grandpa was the first dead person I had ever seen and I was scared to even look into the coffin. Mom said I should touch him so I would not have nightmares about him. His eyelids were coming unglued so he was peeking back at me!

I told my Mom there was no way I was going to sleep in the same room with dead grandpa and begged to spend the night with Cousin Betty. There were plenty of people to spend the night with Grandpa in that small cabin. She did let me spend the night with my cousin.

The next day they loaded Grandpa into a hearse to take him to his final resting ground. My grandma was already buried there and the tombstone had an old picture of them on it. I don't know if this is still a custom in rural Tennessee but I will never forget this life event.

Grateful This Thanksgiving

Peter Whitson

Yes, Thanksgiving is the day even the most ungrateful of us seem to melt their cold hearts and admit to gratitude for something. I don't quite put myself in the category of the ungrateful, but sometimes I wonder. And that's another story entirely.

Today is about gratitude, about giving thanks for that for which I am grateful... for that which would have led to an entirely different outcome if not for a needed change in the course of action or perhaps – a synergetic of what needed to be corrected. So, who am I talking about here? My wife, Joann, my children, Leanne, Robert and John. Their children, my parents, Nancy and Saul. My brothers, John, Paul and Lou. And my grandparents. Oh and my friends. Oh, yes, my friends. I get by with a little help from my friends. I'm so lucky and I love them all. Friends and relatives. It's all good. And for all, I am extremely grateful.

But while I was talking here, I got to thinking about someone in the crowd you might like to know about. I am speaking here of my grandma on my father's side: Grandma Politan. Yup, you guessed it... Carmela Politan. The original Grandma Politan. She was the one with the black, laced grandma shoes. Knee-high stockings and print dresses. And she always wore her hair in a tight bun. Well, I bet you didn't know this story about her. My father told me about it because it was about him too. And he loved telling this one.

You probably know that before the Covid pandemic there was the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. A pandemic that, until just recently, had been the deadliest in modern history. As told by my father, the bodies were stacked up at the curb like so many cords of wood. It was a

very bad time in Newark, New Jersey. It was a very bad time in the whole world. Not unlike today. But now we have body storage freezers. Bodies don't get stacked up at the curb any more.

Back then, all seemed to be going as well as could be expected until my father came down with the Spanish flu. It was bad and he was very sick, and the Spanish Flu was quickly hurling him close to the end. He was just a kid, and there was no such thing as vaccine yet. But according to Grandma Politan, there was prayer. And she knew a lot about prayer because she did a lot of it. (Bena Deid. "God Bless" in Italian.) Back then, I think they did a lot more praying than today. It was a lot harder times. So, according to my father, Grandma Politan's prayer bargained a deal with God. "God, spare my son, and I will honor you with another day without meat."

Catholics at that time did not eat meat on Friday. Grandma proposed to add Wednesday to the list. "Spare my son, Saul" or "Salley," as she would call him, "and there will be

no meat on Wednesday in this house, in honor of my son being spared." Well Saul, or Salley, my father, was spared! My family was grateful. If I had been there, I would have been grateful too. To this day, no one in the Politan family eats meat on Wednesday.

Grandma Politan? That's interesting. Several scientific journals picked up on the story. As it turns out a group of nutrition scientists consulted with her and concluded that a diet including no meat two days a week is a very healthy diet. And finding that out, we have to thank (*or owe a debt of gratitude to, if you will*) the grandma with the black, laced grandma shoes and knee-high stockings who prayed for her son to be spared by the pandemic.

So, am I grateful for a grandmother with extraordinary negotiating skill who was not afraid to ask for what she needed? Why heavens yes. If it weren't for my Grandma Politan with the black, laced shoes and her knee-high stockings, I would not be here today... telling you my tale of gratitude.

3 Haiku

Frances J. Simon

Forgiveness

My forgiving you –
An act of liberation
You might not notice.

Transition

Icicle hanging
The cold finger of winter
Dripping into spring.

Zorba the Greek

The sweetness of the honey
The sting of the bee
Life: the full catastrophe

An Audrey with Norwegian Name Should Ski

Janeal Ravndal

The second pandemic year of Scrabble-deprivation may be a root of my current solo sport: concocting villanelles. While old familiar ones, like Edward Arlington Robinson's The Home on the Hill may seem simple, I find the villanelle a pretty strict taskmaster in its demand for 19 rhymed lines arranged in five three-lined verses and a concluding quatrain. What's more, besides the pattern of repeating lines, every line ends with a choice from the offerings of only two rhymes, so:

Villanelling

From line to line the words fall into place.

Perhaps a villanelle is on its way
propelled by rhythm, rhyme, and hopes for grace-

ful aim in lassoing, on this word chase,
end product with a bit of sense in play
as line by line more words fall into place.

No need to strain. Let's keep a gentle pace,
note clouds and scenery along our way
propelled by rhythm, rhyme, and hopes for grace

in verse. What's smooth and simple has at base
labors including every live-long day,
so, line by line more words fall into place,

cooperate to fill the prescribed space
and move toward villanelle. The process may,
propelled by rhythm, rhyme, and hopes for grace,

even exhilarate near close of race,
wordsmith near victory feel almost gay
as, line by line the words fall into place
propelled by rhythm, rhyme, and hopes for grace.

My villanelle play is sometimes triggered by wonders on my daily walk, or takes off from the day's journaling. A few appreciate Chris and our 64 year partnership. After she excelled in her ski lessons, Audrey Ravndal, our twelve-year-old Michigan granddaughter, got one with echoing lines:

An Audrey with Norwegian name should ski,
stand tall and proud, and live life beautifully.

After disappointing myself by responding to a friend with a dismissive "Whatever!" I wrote:

Whatever words we use define the day,
give sentences to us, or smooth our time,
add to the world, or take something away.

Our editing, our sport of quick word play,
love talk, hate speech, my present try at rhyme,
whatever words we use define the day.

Too few of us may let our Yea be Yea.
Words some among us have been known to whine
add to the world or take something away.

By class and character, bright hues or gray,
in rainbow after storm, or grocery line,
what words we say define the day.

and often the tomorrow, when we pay
for gaffes, or joy at fitting words we find
add to the world, not take something away,

with thoughtless or dismissive words we say
in frequent proof that we are not divine.
Whatever words we say define the day,
add to the world, or take something away.

My foibles, for instance my love affair with Goodwill purchases and other leftovers provided ample fodder. Philosophizing about the progression of my macular degeneration resulted in:

Because a loss of sight improved my view
of that great gift to which I had been blind,
I note subtractions bring additions to

this time of epidemic pain. Review
of old assumptions gives new room to mine
what had been lost to sight and hid from view

when I thought all was well. Truth overdue
may come from knee on neck, allow we find
tragic subtractions act to bring additions too.

Oh, may more move toward inward listening undo
some pride and prejudice, stretch heart and mind.
Let former loss of sight improve our view

of other's need, our planet's fate, bring new
awareness and resolve, till, truth aligned,
we find subtractions bring additions to

our lives. What masks and distances now do
to shake us up might also help us find
some loss of sight may yet improve our view
and new subtractions bring additions too.

Sitting By the River

Judy James

Dreams dance
on the water's ripples
within the sun's prism.
Memories of a past
long since faded,
visions of a future
not yet realized, all
play among the water's
diamond rainbows.

Countless dreamers
sitting by the river
have relived glory,
suffered regret,
and set their destinies,
all by the gentle undulations
of the river's sighs.
The sun, the moon,
and the stars have
imprinted it all
in eternity. Infinite dreams
carried through eons
create the tableau vivant.

Sit dreamer, and
partake of the grandeur.
Drink the sweet wine
of the gods and angels
who weave our dreams
into their garments, and
listen to the harmonies
created by our musings.
Sit by the river dreamer,
and offer your story
to unending time.

Mostly Moon Poems

Rubin Battino

hazy high moon
blue clouds blend into purple
a lone goose cries

ground fog luminous
and the moon in the morning
a single bird sings

across the morning
half moon greets the sun
the meadow wakens

this march morning
thinnest sliver of the moon
with wisps of clouds

orange moon
through the treetops
soft shifting shadows

barely lighting the night
perfect half moon
magical shadows

perfect half moon
illuminating that tree
lights my wonder

In Memory of Mary Chapman

Rubin Battino

can I breathe with you
while you lie there comatose
spirit to spirit

through her haze she said
I am only twenty per cent here
Mary dying ...

at the end of life
rest home with stuffed animals
tremors and sleep

breathing softly
she sleeps in a peaceful coma
still full of dreams

mostly sleeping now
Mary of the peace marches
continues to witness

with her strong hands
she molds another earthen image
for Potters for Peace

Dogs Run Free. Why Can't We?

Pat Dewees

When I moved to Yellow Springs in 1976, I brought along two young children, several cats and a lively reddish retriever dog named Pepper. We were moving from the country to a village, and I worried about our adjustment from open spaces to a place with neighbors. I especially worried about Pepper, who grew up running in the woods and fields unleashed. Both Pepper and I were relieved to see the declarations of Antioch College students, signs reading "Dogs Run Free, Why Can't We?" and Pepper quickly integrated unleashed into village life.

First thing in the morning, Pepper walked the kids across the "Antioch Golf Course" to the Antioch School. Once there she enjoyed playing with all the kids and the occasional bite of a peanut butter sandwich given in exchange for showing off her tricks. "Sit!" and "Gimme paw!" were her strengths. Sadly, once school started, she was usually told by Bill Mullins or another teacher to "Go home!" She trotted off obediently, but not for home. She headed for town where she enjoyed hanging out with the

downtown sidewalk crew, drinking coffee in front of Weavers (now Tom's). There might be a bite of doughnut, and certainly lots of petting and conversation. However, Pepper kept her eye on the clock because she never wanted to miss the midmorning break at Vernay Labs. Workers were gathered on the loading dock for their morning smoke and snacks and again, the possibility of a treat, and the certainty of pets and rubs. It was on her daily schedule.

Around noon, she usually came home for a nap and made sure there were no squirrel incursions into our yard. She might also count the cats and possibly curl up with one of them for her snooze. Toward mid-afternoon she headed out for school again and was sitting and waiting at the school door when the explosion of children poured out to the fields. Then it was time to play in the neighborhood with the kids and the other neighborhood dogs. By the time I came home from my job at 5:30 pm, Pepper would be sitting in the driveway waiting for me, all wags and happy noises. After supper, I might fancy a walk downtown for some air

and social life. Pepper accompanied me, unleashed. Frequently, a total stranger to me would pass us and say, "Hi, Pepper." And she would wag her tail in reply. Sometimes the stranger might say to me, "Pepper is such a sweet dog." "I know" I would reply, and Pepper would continue wagging.

Well, those days are gone and probably for the best. Every dog owner knows about the bad habits of dogs who love garbage and trash and drag it all over the yard and street and then, inevitably, take a dump in your neighbors' beautiful flower garden. Or worse, poop on the sidewalk and old ladies like me step in it and slip and fall down! Pepper was social, sweet, and very fond of children. Not all dogs are like that. Things had to change.

The village remains dog friendly with a great new dog park for dog play. Peace officers and citizens quickly capture runaways and bring them back to owners. Nowadays there are mostly well-mannered dogs walking politely on leashes. It is a lucky dog who lives in Yellow Springs; it was paradise for Pepper when *Dogs Ran Free!*

Autumn / Winter / Spring

Pat Stempfley

Autumn

Leaves dance coloring
the earth with splendor
trees sway in the wind
with deep roots awaiting
the beauty of fall.

Winter

I'm chasing the sun looking for
a warm place for my heart to rest
with the shortness of days and
the glitter of snow I await the joy
of spring.

Spring

I see sunshine and hear birds singing
my tears weep the sorrows of the world
and I awaken to bloom the joy of a
new beginning.

Yellow Springs Unearthed

Susan Harrison

I never thought I would be writing this article solo. I always thought Don Lewis would be there for the writing, and to read his article published in the *Ripples Magazine*.

I am a homemaker, and Don was one of my favorite clients. (Actually, each of my clients is my favorite!) Don and I had stimulating conversations, "Tuesdays with Don," and this is how I learned the many ways that Don invisibly helped shape the face of Yellow Springs. A remarkable fountain of local progress!

Did you ever wonder how Yellow Springs and the surrounding area changed from around 1960 and a few decades forward? Behind most visible changes are those essential invisible ones. Just like in the movies, everyone remembers the star, but what about all the behind-the-scenes tech artists, without whom the film could not be produced? Don was one of those behind-the-scenes stars!

Enter the "dirty world" of excavation. Look around, and subtract roads, water and sewer lines, building foundations, bridges, in-ground pools, etc. Can you imagine a world void of these? Sure, the wild west, perhaps!

R H Lewis and Sons Excavating should be a household word around Yellow Springs, but have you heard of it? Have you walked to the Yellow Springs in Glen Helen? Driven on Corry Street to its southern most point? Sipped a cool glass of water on the south end of the village? Biked on the bike trail? Attended Mills Lawn School? Enjoyed the pool at Gaunt Park? Shopped at Tom's Market?

Now remember, the article I am writing is based on conversations with Don, and we all know how our memories fade, and perhaps embellish over time. So, while there are kernels of truth, the details could be sketchy as

Father Time adds his two cents. In this life there are doers, and those that view from afar. Don was a doer!

Remember the questions in paragraph 5? Yes, I see all of you readers looking above and counting down to paragraph 5! About the rocks at Yellow Springs in Glen Helen? Well, the ones you see today were not naturally there. Huh? They were hauled in by R H Lewis & Sons, as memory serves, in the '60s or '70s. We can thank Don for most of our treasured miles of bike trail in Yellow Springs and surrounding Greene County. Allen Street used to mark the end of Corry Street until extended to Hyde Road by Lewis.

Some of you senior members of the community may have heard some explosions? Rocks were dynamited out to lay the 16-inch-diameter water line from Jacoby Road to Spillan Road. Now, speaking of Jacoby Road, there is a low water bridge near the canoe lodge that was, you guessed it, used for crossing the river when it was not high. Hmm, I wonder who was responsible for this?

The current Mills Park Hotel's architecture is based on the former Mills House that once graced the now green space of the Mills Lawn School property. The House was razed in 1966, by R H Lewis & Sons. No doubt, the removal of this historic house was controversial! Don was also pretty sure that his father dug the footers for Mills Lawn School, but since that would have been in the early '50s, maybe not.

How many of you remember the old aluminum pool at Gaunt Park? Yes, it was not always concrete, as it is today. Don's company removed the old, and dug the hole for the new. Think about that the next time you dive into the deep end.

One of the more current projects, in 1993, was the addition of the gabled roof to everyone's favorite market, Tom's! So, you see, some of the things we may have taken for granted, or given little thought to at all, R H Lewis & Sons Excavating made it happen!



Don Lewis in his backhoe

Bonus, Don Lewis unearthed! Of course, the next logical question for many of you may be, "How long did Don live in Yellow Springs?" Great question! Don was born at home in a two story house on South College, with no indoor plumbing, in 1943! In fact, at that time, South College was gravel, and the houses were "spotty." None of the houses that are there now were there then.

Oh yes, I also hear your second question, "Was Don all work and 'no anything' else?" Nope, Don was the full package! He was very civic-minded, an active Mason and Shriner until 2022, over 50 years. Fun fact, "All Shriners are Masons, but not all Masons are Shriners." And finally, his pride and joy was his show quality 1957 Chevy!

The Gift of Language

Patti Dallas

Language is the miracle
That frees the soul.
It gives voice to the innermost
Complicated concepts
And the sweetest sentiments.

Language gives expression to our joys and sorrows
And allows us to lighten our pain
With the feather of expression
And blow it away
To the ears of compassion.

Language is an early hurdle
That gives us the delight and humor
Of a child's first words
Like a flower unfolding its petals
A young heart begins the dance
Of self-expression.

Language is the web
On which we hang our culture,
And the vehicle with which we commute
From heart to heart.

What a gift, this verbal capability
That allows us to release
Our innermost self.

May we always hold sacred
This gift of expression
That allows consciousness to bloom
As our words leave our hearts
To fly through the air with the angels!

How the Rainbow Came to Be

Patti Dallas

(Written to be a picture book for children)

The Sun shines so big and bright
All the day, but not at night.
He has a secret you can know
For it is hidden in every Rainbow.

The secret, you see, is all about Love
Not down here, but up above.
Inside the Sun's heart there is a little pain
For he is in Love with the gentle Rain.

The Sun's so sad 'cause the Rain stays away
For it's seldom sunny on a rainy day.
Now, tell me, if I asked you
Wouldn't you say this is usually true?

However, every once in a while
This Love of the Sun makes an upside-down smile.
Such beautiful, elegant colors has she
Look, look up there – can you see?

On such a special occasion as this,
When the Sun greets the Rain with a gentle kiss,
A beautiful RAINBOW appears up above
This wonderful treat – to celebrate their Love!

December 7

Dan Beverly

I was born on a small Appalachian farm in Pulaski County, Kentucky, in January 1938. I was the youngest of five children that survived. The farm did not have electricity. The farm was mostly worked by hand, with the aid of two horses and a mule. When I was about 3 years old the event that I describe was so unusual and upsetting to me that I still clearly remember it.

Our farm, like most of our neighbors', had two main sources of income, tobacco and cream. Growing tobacco was a lot of work and the daily morning searching for green tobacco worms on each leaf was hot work and the sweat-bees were vicious if you did not wear a shirt. But normally it was too hot to wear a shirt in the summer mornings.

We milked 4 to 6 cows and separated the cream from the milk. The cream was stored in cream cans and picked up by the Creamery truck two or three times a week. The skim milk was fed to the chickens and pigs.

When my oldest brother, 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. So the farm lost a needed worker that year.

My second-oldest brother, Bill, was 17 in 1937, and asked our mother to let him also skip his senior year and enlist in the Navy. The farm lost another needed worker.

The military services were accepting only men 18 years or older, or 17 years old with the mother's permission.

My mother gave birth to me, in her farm bed, in January 1938. I saw Brady a few times before the war started and I saw Bill once. I have a photo, taken in the summer of 1938, by a travelling photographer, showing our family of seven in front of the porch of the farm house. We were dressed in our Sunday clothes,

or perhaps clothes on loan from the photographer. This was the last time that we would be together until after the war.

Sunday was the day of rest, or at least, the day of some rest, for us and our neighbors. My mother liked to have friends over for after-church dinner and sit and talk. And then everyone left to go home, do their chores and have supper.

This Sunday was December 7, 1941. It was almost supper time. The chores were mostly completed, the cows were being milked by my father and my third brother, Steuben. Daylight was fading away. Mom lit the safety lantern and set it on the table. I was locked in my high chair, to keep me out of the way. Mom and my sister Joyce fired up the kitchen range. And as normal, at 5:00 pm mom turned on the radio that was connected to the car battery, to listen to the WLW farm wife program. Something was wrong – the announcer was very excited and was telling about the surprise Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor naval base and airfields that morning and that lots of ships were sunk, and lots of soldiers and sailors were dead.

Mom screamed and grabbed the lantern off the table and said, "Joyce, we must run and tell your father!" and out the door they ran. I yelled "Wait, take me, I want to go to the barn!" But I was left in the dark room locked in my highchair, not knowing what would happen to me, so I cried and screamed.

Then I heard my father, at the barn, yell "NO!" Soon Mom and Joyce returned. Mom was crying. I thought she was crying because I was crying. I said, "Mom don't cry, I am ok now." Mom gave me a hug and said, "I am crying about your

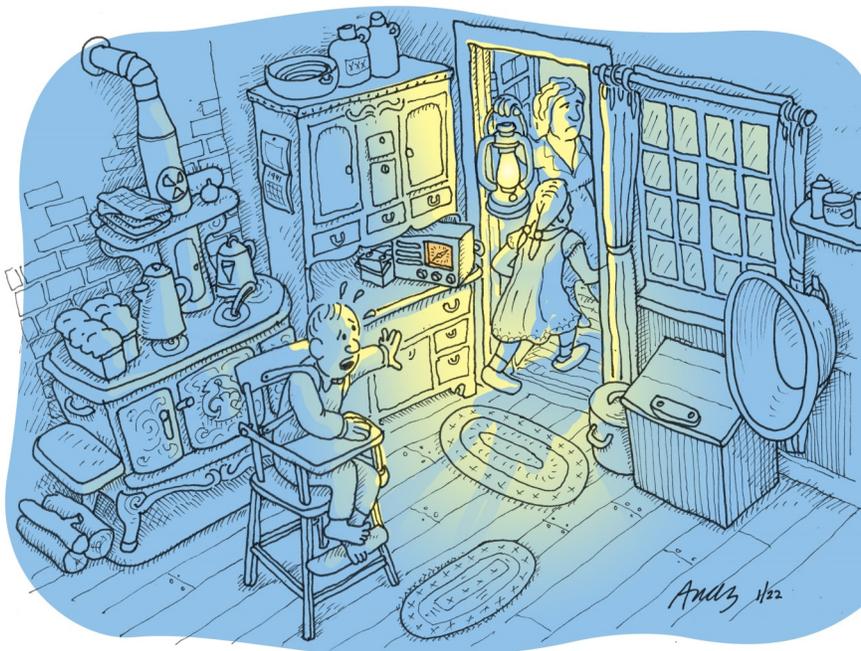


Illustration by Andy Beverly, the author's son

brother Bill." She continued to cry while working on supper. Soon Dad and Steuben came also, the shortest milking on record. When the neighbors came that evening to listen to the radio, I suspect they stayed very late.

The navy was so disorganized after the attack. Before alerting Washington about the attack, they had to put the report in secret code before transmitting it and Washington had to decode the report before reading it. This took too much time. Some newspaper reporters were able to send wireless reports to their US offices, and the most alarming report was one that was broadcast on the radio and in the newspapers. Then the navy clamped down censorship

so that we could not get any news about which ships were damaged and sunk. We knew that my brother Bill was at Pearl Harbor on the battleship USS Maryland. About a month after the attack, we got a postcard from Bill that said, "I am well."

Soon after the attack Mom gathered all the items that were made in Japan, which included her treasured souvenirs and my treasured toy blue car with wheels that turned and holes for the windows. When you looked in the windows you could read "Texaco" on the inside of the car. She smashed all the Japanese-made items and buried them deep in the garden.

Eventually Bill told us the story. Bill was in charge of an anti-aircraft

gun. At 8:00 am, when the "man your battle stations" alarm was sounded, Bill woke up, but could not get his crew up, so he began to beat them with a broom handle. Only when the ship was hit with two large bombs and jumped in the air did his crew jump out of bed and rush to the battle stations. They missed the first attack but were ready when the second attack came. His crew did not understand how they got so many bruises, and Bill never told them.

The USS Maryland was badly damaged and was sent to Washington state for a two-year repair. Bill was offered a transfer to submarines or mine sweepers. He selected mine sweepers and had an interesting rest of the war.

A Word

Lee Huntington

When Joan gets home from school, she has chores to do.

Today Mrs. Russ had called her "dear."

When Daddy gets home, he makes her unlace and pull off his boots. His feet stink.

Her teacher had called her "dear."

While she is shucking corn, peeling potatoes, chopping eggs, she is thinking, "My teacher called me 'dear' today."

When she goes to bed, she says "Good night" to Mother and Daddy. They scarcely look up from their books.

She lies in bed, folds her hands on her chest and closes her eyes. Mrs. Russ pulls the covers up to her chin and says, "Goodnight, dear."

The locust tree leans towards the house. Its branches are laden with pods that have leathery brown skin that reveals seeds hidden inside. On the ground the pods look like the waste product of geese. When the wind blows, we wonder if the tree will fall on the house this time. We do have tree pruners come out and cut off the dead branches. But there is always enough left to threaten us in a storm.

The locust tree has been there since before we moved into the house. It must be at least sixty years old. In the spring it is the last to get its leaves and in the fall it is the first to lose them. During storms it drops big and small branches to the ground.

There is nothing lovable about a locust tree. Homely and spindly, its wrinkled trunk is like old skin. When

The Tree

Lee Huntington

mourning doves nest in it, the first strong breeze knocks their eggs to the ground.

The roots of the tree are tilting our front walk so that every day the walk becomes more perilous.

The tree blocks our view of the street. It also blocks the street's view of our house. This may be its only virtue.

Ten years ago we planted a sugar maple in the front yard. The maple is young and flashy and beautiful. The leaning locust has pride of place, though, and reminds us that we are more like the locust than the maple. We have grown old with this locust—wrinkled, tough and stubborn. We have both withstood storms and shed tears like pods, and we are grounded like the locust whose roots are deep enough to keep it standing.

Reflections on a Yellow Rose

Marna Street

She was 46
My age
A single yellow rose
by her bed
Yesterday I received a
single yellow rose

Thoughts of her
Mother's youngest sister
the one who always had
time to listen

It was Spring
this time of year
She died
A single yellow rose
by her bed

At her death
a friend comforted me
You don't judge a melody
by its length
but I feel wistful and sad
when I see a single yellow rose
Like a melody
I don't want to fade

Reflections on a Wild Violet

Marna Street

She hands me a
wild purple violet
Today I wrote about a
single yellow rose
an elegant rose
sent from a florist

The violet probably came
from someone's yard
the variegations of color
light to deep purple
the one petal furled
not wanting to be straightened
like a child's fingers in sleep

How unposed
in contrast to
my regal yellow rose
tucked in the bud vase
with greens just the right length
to surround it

The wild purple violet
simple, beautiful
Un-tended and yet
perfect in its integrity

Snow Globe (on Mother's 104th Birthday)

Marna Street

Snow blows around children
building a snowman
Turning the glass ball
over and over in my hand
I stare entranced

There is Mother
blinded by snow
fighting her own elements
trudging through
carrying a heavy burden

The glass is very clear
When I hold it
in a certain light
I see inside yet
see my reflection at the same
time
Two different realms
separated by the hard glass

Pulling a blanket around me
I continue holding this winter scene
Let the snow settle

Looking out
From the glass globe
She sees
the lines of my hand
the yearning expression

Things I Now Know About Canoeing

Andy Holyoke

Thing ONE

When you travel by paddle in early May in northernmost Maine be prepared for cold, wet weather. We knew that. We had that in the bag. The dry bags. We camped in Allagash, left Alban's car there, and got the 3-hour logging-truck-road ride with our rented canoe to Baker Lake, 114 miles upstream on the St. John's River. The weather was great, sunny 50's, but we were weather-report sure that the middle two days of our six-day journey were going to be drizzly and cold.

Thing TWO

Moose are hard to find, but moose poop is easy. We had hoped to see a lot of wildlife canoeing down a river that is very remote and sees very few humans. Unfortunately, we did not. We saw a bald eagle, a few hawks, a couple beaver, and a lot of ducks and geese. We did see two moose, but from the car on our way north. Moose poop balls, however, were everywhere, as well as numerous moose tracks. We got the feeling that, though we saw no moose, many moose may have seen us.

Thing THREE

There's a sweet spot between too COLD and too BUGGY. We hit that sweet spot! It got down to frosting temperature at night, and there was a bit of ice in my water bottle one morning, but in six days we saw two mosquitos and one tick, and none of them managed to bite us. Cold and clear nights in the middle of nowhere at the beginning and end of our trip also made for amazingly clear stargazing. The Milky Way put in an appearance, and we both saw shooting stars, but going to bed soon after dark

means the only time you see the stars is when you get up to pee, and standing there in your boxers in 30 degree weather gets old real quick. About the time of your average pee plus maybe eight and a half seconds and then you're done, back to that nice warm bag.

Thing FOUR

You need A LOT OF STUFF to stay happy, healthy and safe canoeing through 114 miles of wilderness, knowing that if you get in trouble you can't count on anyone being there to get you out of it.

Thing FIVE

It's hard to move a heavy canoe with a lot of stuff through the water.

Thing SIX

It's even harder to move said canoe through the water, towards the shore, for instance, when said canoe is full of water and you are in the water trying DESPERATELY to reach safe harbor.

Thing SEVEN

It is prudent to tie EVERYTHING to the canoe. We knew that. We lost one water bottle.

Thing EIGHT

There is no substantive difference between capsizing and getting swamped. I know that but yet I want the record to show that we did not capsize. We just ran into too many big waves and before we knew it the boat was full of water. Water temperature in the 50 to 55 degree range. Air temperature also in that range. Even if I had been quicker to try to find the string that held the bailer/cooking pot, the pot was too small and I never would have been

able to keep up. We struggled for what was probably 15 minutes to get to shore, and finally did. If we had missed that gravel embankment I had already announced that I would have to abandon ship and swim for it. It hadn't occurred to me that without the canoe and its tied-on cargo I wouldn't have any dry clothes. Which brings me to the next thing.

Thing NINE

Besides having everything tied to the canoe, it would be wise to have the survival essentials in a single dry bag tied to the canoe separately with a quick-release knot, so that in case of having to leave the canoe behind you can still get warm and dry. Alban says the emergency bag should be tied directly to your person (or life jacket?). Perhaps he is right.

Thing TEN

Next time we will either have a spray skirt across the top of the canoe or else we will not attempt to go through big waves. My apologies for no pictures of the big waves. I was busy. Use your imagination.

LAST THING

It is an excellent idea to have as your paddling partner an Emergency Room Doctor. He may get you in over your head, but he will be great at getting you back out.

The Car

Luisa Lang Owen

When it came to buying cars, I was lucky. I never gave much thought to what kind of car people drove. Buick, Chevrolet, Pontiac, Honda, Volvo, Audi all were names only, kinds of vehicles. Cars. Seeing them in traffic, I could not distinguish one from the other. Selecting one to buy was difficult, since I was not interested in any of them. Having to make a choice between them brought on an anxiety not easily ignored. It was my son who knew and cared about cars. By the time Erik was 45, he had owned more than fifty cars. My father, who drove his white Ford and kept it looking like new for 20 years, expressed concern. "Better cars than women," my mother offered in jest. "Even that may be to the good," she considered. "A lady I know suffers from insomnia, nightly counts up her son's mistresses and always falls asleep by the time she recalls number 33." Friends and acquaintances who valued Erik's expertise always consulted him before buying a car. He picked out the cars I bought.

At 84 I have owned only four cars. The first was a Volkswagen Beetle. Tan. Fit like a glove. One could get ever-so-close to things without hitting them. I know. I learned to drive in it. Drove it for 13 years. Through snow and ice, pelted by wind and rain, lashed by the whip of speeding trucks passing, even skirting a tornado with baseball-sized hail—it survived! And I drove it long after it had a hole next to the gas pedal, the size of a silver dollar, showing the road.

The Scirocco that replaced it was silver with a plush light-blue interior and that distinctive new-car scent. It sat in the garage, next to the Beetle, for a month or more before I drove it. Afraid of change, I claimed loyalty to the Bug. The Scirocco was

a step up, I heard tell, but the only sign of distinction I noticed was a sticker Erik had placed on its rear bumper which proclaimed in solid black letters with a red heart (the symbol replacing the verb): I Love Mahler. This sticker earned attention on various occasions, even after I had forgotten that I carried its sentiment in full view. When the young man who placed my groceries into the trunk of the car suddenly asked, "Where is Mahler?" giving the name of the composer an American pronunciation, it took me awhile to gather that it was in reference to the bumper sticker. In my confusion, and reaching for humor, I dryly answered that he, meaning Mahler, was at home, playing. I did not explain. Yes, I know. It was not nice. Nor was it funny. I tried to do better next time. When a truck driver pulled up his rig next to me on a busy highway, rolled down his windows and yelled: "I love Mahler too! Like to watch him play. He is terrific!" I smiled back in friendly approval, affirming our mutual passion through open windows. It seemed insignificant that he meant the baseball player and I the composer.

After 14 years the Scirocco, sticker and all, was replaced by a delicate-smoky-gray Mazda, whose beauty even I could not ignore. Its body, sleek and lithe, moved in sounds of whispers. Ah, love! We were a pair, like horse and rider. One mind and one body. A perfect fit. There was no parking space we could not glide into; a miracle to the good, and a blessing, since I never could master the craft of parallel parking.

For more than 20 years, I have taken my cars to be serviced at the village auto shop on the south end

of town. It is a family-run business. Though the family does not live in our village, one knows them, through the interactions at the garage, by their friendliness and good work. A visit to the garage is more like visiting neighbors, people one trusts. We address one another by first names.

The grandfather, a quiet gentleman, is usually sitting at the till, doing paperwork, answering the telephone, taking care of people arriving and leaving. Sometimes his granddaughter, Christa, manages the till, charming us with her youth and good looks, her smile and infectious laughter. Her brother, Tyler, works in the garage with their father and the other mechanics. One can see them through the open door at the end of a short hallway. On occasion, a much younger boy appears in the waiting room, playing with toy cars and trucks. Even the family dog is present, living out the work-a-day in the vicinity of his master, standing at safe distance, sizing up customers and, showing no further interest, lying down, sleeping mostly.

Todd, the father of the family, a man in his early forties, self-assured, blue-eyed and very handsome, is the owner and boss of the business. One knows this by his bearing and demeanor. Friendly, confident, aware of his authority and skills. He explains what needs to be done, what it entails in labor and cost, and when work is finished, goes over all that was done in detail. My dealings at the garage are mainly with him.

I noticed his son, Tyler, even when he was just a boy, perhaps because he looked so much like his father. It struck me, at the same time, that he was not at all like him. And the more I focused on how they looked alike, the more clearly I "saw"

the boy and later the young man. I got to know him, so to speak, in relationship to his father. This awareness was based on casual observation only. The young man and I had no occasion to talk to one another, except for a word or two in passing, a smile or nod in greetings across the space between us.

On one occasion, when work was being done on the Mazda, Todd told me, in his son's presence, should I ever think of selling the car, to let them know. Tyler would like to buy it. I affirmed the request with a smile, reassuring the young man I would do so. I could not have known that the Mazda would come to a bad end. Blind-sided, struck by an SUV at the crossing of two highways, outside Lebanon, Ohio, we were flung, my Mazda and I, toward the underbelly of a huge still-standing truck, stopped by a set of its large tires from being decapitated. The Mazda was totaled.

Because I am still black and blue and hurting, and can't be going out to look for a car, my son explains on the phone—he has found a car for me. On the internet. The car is in New York, he says, and goes on to describe it. We are in Ohio, I mention. "Not a problem," he says and continues describing the car. "No! No!" I shout into the phone, "I do not want to be riding about town in a glass coffin!"

The momentary quiet on the line is broken by Erik's voice. "Oops," I hear, "I just bought it." And that was that. I now drive a Mercedes. Silver. Solid. Top and sides all glass.

In time the Mercedes makes its debut at the village auto shop. Some years later the mechanism to the windshield wiper has to be replaced. Tyler, now in his thirties, was working on the car when what should not have happened did. "...The windshield is shattered and has to be replaced." I hear the young man voicing what has to be said. I hear his apologies. The price of the windshield quoted. The time required for the repair... I understand. I hear the regret in the voice on the phone. Listening to it I "hear" that which I "saw" in the boy, and later in the young man when comparing him with his father. "It happened!" I hear myself saying, giving full weight to the loss, accepting it. And, inviting him to participate in the assessment, I add: "You know what they say— 'Shit happens.'" I imagine hearing a sigh of relief, but there is only quiet between us. Days later, the Mercedes finds its way back into my garage, its windshield gleaming.

Once or twice yearly I take the Mercedes to the Village Automotive. Tyler and Christa manage the shop, now that their father has retired. Last fall, when I made out the check for

less than what I expected the repairs would cost, Tyler is at the till. I express my appreciation for work done, saying good things about him personally. To lessen any discomfort he may have in accepting the compliments, I add: "As nice as you are, you probably get tired of all that praise; people telling you how much they appreciate, how much they like you." He looks at me and says, less shyly than I expected, in a calm voice, with even cadence: "Yes, in general people say nice things; they like me. But no one likes me as much as you do, Luisa." The unexpected clarity of expression brings together all that went before and quickly turns the wonder of surprise into complete acceptance. My mind has to catch up with what I already know. And I say without hesitation: "You mean it shows!" He looks to the floor momentarily, nodding his head. Yes. I have to will myself to remain grounded. To stay an energy that could propel me to the moon, I stand firmly holding to the ground. I hear my voice brimming with joy and affirmation: "Well then, I am doing this right!" Together we smile one smile. He standing in the open doorway. I next to the car outside. There are moments one is given to witness in which there is nothing needed, nothing left to want.

Miscellaneous Meanderings

Ted Chapman

Bitching is as easy as falling off a log.
But at least falling off a log is proactive.

Some folks get tools for living.
Some just get baggage.
Empathize.

The bumblebee
hovering there
undecided
up in the air.

Biased reality checks bounce.

We ride the glowing dust
of the universe
together.

The Thing About Getting Old

Abigail Cobb

The thing about getting old is
everything changes,
and keeps changing.
The wheel turns.
Fine sand spills through fingers
cupping life.

The places I knew,
the people I loved
keep leaving me.
The comfortable, the familiar have vanished
into the awkward, the painful,
the shockingly strange,
as we find ourselves on different sides
of the many lines
now fissuring our world.
The long human history of violence and greed
in which we have all played a part
haunts us.
There is no next step
where I can let my words fall
without fear
of offending someone who may never speak to me again.
Such is the state of things,
and so I am alone a lot.

I, who have birthed and raised five children,
constantly cooking up big pots of something hot,
pans of biscuits,
endlessly folding clothes,
never a moment to myself,
even in my sleep feeding someone.
Now they are gone.
My loneliness cries out to be filled
but, in the empty space I find my truest self.

Breathing in, the Earth holds me,
Breathing out, I am one with the wind.

Before dawn Venus awakens me
beaming her headlights of love
into my sleepy eyes,
saying, wake, wake up and remember
what is true and real in this world
and the next,
beyond cooking, and laundry,
endless wars,
and all you ever believed in and tried to do –
wake up!

Sipping my coffee in the noonday sun
the abundant light
makes rainbows on my eyelashes
the colors of bliss
as personal and intimate as a kiss.

Toward evening
I take my walk to the river's edge
trailing my fingers in the water until
with my hands and breath I enter the flow
letting go
into the never-ending Universe
of black holes,
the death and rebirth of light,
the fierce, dazzling light of the stars.
And I remember that I, too,
am molecule for molecule
a part of all that is,
ever changing,
becoming, and becoming again,
here, and now here, and here, again.

Breath.

Overhead, the half moon
smiles her half smile
and winks one eye,
and says,
hello, old friend.

Ding-dong Dodgers

Joy Fishbain

I've always enjoyed taking walks, but I do so more regularly these days, enamored of the beauty and peacefulness of everything around me on the pastoral country road that I've always loved. As I head south on my road during the summer, tall trees, wildflowers and fields of corn adorn the way, with deer often crossing over on their journey from one place to another. A few long lanes lead to farmhouses in the distance.

At other times, I turn north from my driveway, passing the homes of people I know, as I enter our friendly village. I have several routes I take in that direction—maybe past the high school, or around a quiet, rather private housing circle, or along my usual pleasant street, where I wave at homeowners working in their yards. I watch young guys playing basketball in a driveway, or stop to gaze at a serious baseball competition at the park, as observers and participants hoot and holler with excitement, cheering on their respective teams as they run the bases.

This summer I have occasionally extended my walk by a few steps into a compact court, a small intimate setting of a few homes, including a sidewalk circling throughout. On a recent day, as I entered this cul-de-sac, my attention was taken by a group of four young children, two boys and two girls, approximately between the ages of six and eleven. They were having a race—excited, exuberant kids laughing happily. I greeted them, and after a moment, they gathered around me, chatting, jumping up and down, and telling me things. One of the boys abruptly exclaimed that there were “Ding-dong Dodgers” in the neighborhood. I had never heard of this new term, but it certainly piqued my curiosity.

“What are Ding-dong Dodgers?” I inquired with exaggerated emphasis.

“It’s when someone rings your doorbell, then runs! Then, after a few times, when no one’s at the door, the person who answers gets a camera for their house!” To convince me, he pointed gleefully to a nearby expansive two-story home, which appeared to have a security camera.

“Oh...” I said, with an understanding nod. I remember knowing of those high jinks from the past, but without such a descriptive identifying title. The two boys then ran off together, laughing, seemingly energized and ready for any upcoming adventure that might await them. The older girl stayed back to chat. She asked where I lived, and I pointed to the south. “Just down that road,” I said.

We introduced ourselves and she pointed out her younger brother among the others. The two younger kids were visiting cousins, she added. She told me she was in the fifth grade. She was an “older sister”; that was easy to see. She was a Black child, very pretty and lean, and with an air of quiet maturity. She wore a soft, summery blue and red polka-dotted dress, and we seemed to become friends right then and there. She was enjoying a lollipop, half-consumed. Her cute little female cousin also had one, reduced to the size of a pea, as she relished the last bit of sweetness it had to offer. The lollipop stick was so soggy it hung down from her mouth like a wet noodle. I smiled at the sight of it.

Then my charming new acquaintance gave me some serious details about her brother and his buddy. “They’re the Ding-dong Dodgers” she confided, with a hint

of irritation. “They’re troublemakers,” she concluded.

“Well, they seem like nice boys, really,” I commented, defending them a little.

“Well, yeah, they are, but they’re still troublemakers.”

I nodded, but with a feeling of optimism I decided that she would probably set them straight in due time.

After that, we chatted a little, then said goodbye. As we parted, she turned and added, “See ya later.” I finished my walk, feeling content, lighter, and even smiling at the comical encounter I had just enjoyed.

I’m looking forward to saying hello again sometime to the Ding-dong Dodgers and to my delightful newly found friend. At Christmas-time, I imagine that this ding-dong dame will likely leave an anonymous colorful mystery tin of delicious multi-flavored lollipops at her family’s front door. I’ve decided to ring the doorbell and run!

Aftermath

Shirley Kristensen

A cold, clear day
A breeze
Sunlight on trees
 sparkling
From branches above
 ice crystals falling
In the woods surrounding
 drumming resounding.
Rat ta tat ta tat ta tat ta tat.....

Snowflakes & Sand Shovel

Joyce McCurdy

I do have the memories that I want to relate stored in my head. I am sure that my interpretations will be slightly distorted by future generations.

My father's Great Aunt Mildred was an eccentric woman of few words. She would stop by our house to store in the attic her cherished items, their boxes delicately wrapped in tissue and secured with twine. She always neglected to leave any clue to a box's content, except to say that it was important, and worth keeping. Her reticence illustrates for me how our imperfect views of the past influence the present.

I have several memories that I told my granddaughter recently, comparing my newsreel memories of WW2 with those televised now on the Ukraine War. These memories recall to me how I felt when Dad left for Camp Pendleton.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, I was only one month old,



Lester Allen McCurdy

but I heard my parents' whispers. I am sure they often discussed the fact that Dad might be drafted. The question was when? The tensions caused by the unknown and by feelings of no control were leading every industry to convert to wartime production in order to provide for the Allies.

Dad rode me in his bicycle basket, took me mushroom hunting, and watched me learn to walk. Then the draft notice arrived. We rode with him from Dayton, Ohio, to Topeka, Kansas. The trains were overbooked; people were leaning on knapsacks; tobacco smoke and sweat mingled with shaving cream and Wrigley's Spearmint gum to permeate the air. This trip was a real-life newsreel. Fear was present: many riders wondered where we were going, but most were chanting that we were on our way to war.

My mother was losing her best friend, her fishing partner, and driver. She had enjoyed dancing with him and pitching horseshoes and rides in the Plymouth. Even during the Depression, she and dad had traveled to the Chicago World's Fair and seen the Hoochie Coochie dancers; later on they went to Atlantic City with my grandparents. My grandfather found a red sand shovel. He gave the shovel to my mother and said, "This is for your son, Spike. After raising three daughters it's time for me to have a grandson." I still have the red shovel.

Recently, I shared with my granddaughter how war made life different. For example, we had to go to Osborne and Fairfield for military rations. As a military family, we had special coupons for food and gasoline. While redeeming these, we would pick up rations for the month:

my mother would grumble that we were using our gas to pick up food. Call it as it was. I understand why she had the right to grumble, because she was missing her husband during this time. We drove a black Plymouth and worried about the old tires. We saved anything that might be useful.

As the war continued, we wondered where Daddy was stationed. Weekends at the movies were double features, and between each show a newsreel played scenes from the European Theater or the Pacific Theater. Mom believed we could find Daddy in the newsreels. After Daddy left Camp Pendleton, his whereabouts were top secret. He would write home four-page letters which had been heavily censored. I was four, and I thought that someone had taken his letters and made snowflakes out of them. When we looked at the letters, they had so many things clipped away that we had to provide the words that he might have been saying. Mother thought that we could find the words to fill in the holes, but this was without crossword puzzle clues. It made her feel bad; we never did find him.

We didn't find out until he came home, but then he told us about places he had been. He didn't talk much about the war, and I think he mainly remembered its devastation. While waiting for the war to end, he enjoyed swimming and collecting shells when he could. While he was swimming one afternoon, a helicopter pilot shouted that he had a briefcase for Admiral Halsey that he wanted delivered ASAP. With a quick salute and "Yes sir, right away, sir," Daddy ran the briefing to the Commander. That is when he learned the war ended in the Pacific.

A Walk in the Glen

Robert Paschell

Sun sparkle on the water.
Tinsely flags all pointing downstream.

So nice.
Meeting strangers in the Glen.
Walking together and talking.
Sharing stories and bits of our lives.
We part where the swinging bridge once stood.
Where our conversation ends the gurgling rush of the stream begins.

Sitting by a creek on a warm day in early Spring.
Sun pouring down.
The original streaming platform!
Sparkle on the water.
Rush of the current.
Soundtrack for all souls.

Walking back to town through the Glen
on a sunny day in early Spring.
My footsteps quickened with thoughts of food.
My footsteps lingering in Nature's warm embrace.

Indian maiden waterfall.
Her spritely feet splashing over rocks.
Her flowing hair shining in the sun.

The log by the stream that I sat on as a youth
is now more of a mossy bean bag affair.
I too reflect the toll of time.
The stream promptly updates its posts
with sluicing swaths of rain.

Emerging from the Glen after a day
of hiking her trails, we're small hot air balloons.
Mind baskets filled with sights and sounds.
Hearts buoyed with friendship with the Source.

The simplest pleasure:
sitting by a stream in full sun.
And doing nothing.

The Guy in the Sky

Joy Fishbain

When I was small, and on my knees at night,
My guardian was up there, very high.
The world was good and right; after all,
He was watching over all, the Guy in the Sky.
He had a beard, very long, that was sure.
And he was big and strong, Father of All,
And we were pretty sure that he could fly! No lie.

Santa was so fun, so jolly, so red and white;
But after December, whizzed away, like a comet on high.
In spring, the Easter Bunny came hopping by,
Bringing eggs and candy, then leaving: Hi and Bye.
The thrill of the magical Tooth Fairy,
So sweet, so tiny, so carefully sly;
A quick visit, leaving a quarter, wanting to say hi;
But whispering instead: "Sorry, I have to fly!"

Slowly disappearing—all. Except for one, ever nigh:
The Guy in the Sky.
We learned to be good, we knew not to lie;
We had to believe, we never asked why.
How could we? He even had his eye on the sparrow,
that's why!
Heaven awaits, we were told
With angels singing and streets of gold;
Life eternal, no worries or cares;
The Biblical story of old.

Then decades unfolded; as quickly we've grown ...
Grateful for love and a place to call home.
So where is God now, as time hurries by?
Life offers us happiness, yet calls us to die.
What then should we think of the Guy in the Sky?
Is he really real, or a fanciful lie?
Is he an answer to life, or a deafening sigh?
I smile about Santa and Bunny and Fairy, more fantasy
than lie:
They kindly moved on to the sweet by-and-by.
Regarding the other ... I think I'll just try
To honor the mystery of the Guy in the Sky.

A Night to Remember

Sheila Filler

Outside – a world of howling winds, blinding snow, and arctic temperatures - inside, four fractious children and a tired parent in want of adult company. I'm sitting in front of the fire, calculating when I can send them to bed. Thankfully, it won't be long.

Then Abby runs in from the front room bearing dramatic news. "There's a fire truck outside," she says. I don't believe her; snow drifts are almost as high as our house. How could any vehicle push through that? Furthermore I don't feel like getting up for I would have to resist the torpor that engulfs me. Insistent, she grabs my hand and walks me to the living room. I can't deny that there's a fire truck in the road, lights flashing. All of the children are at the front window with me now, our boredom dispersed. "That's the Fergusons' place," I think. I only know this much about my neighbors; Mary Carol (Mac) lives there with her husband Art – Irene, his elderly mother, lives in the apartment at the back of the house. I am about to know them better.

There's a knock at the door. It's Mac. I invite her in, and she tells me about the fire. Their power went out earlier in the day. They bundled up and piled wood in the fireplace in an attempt to keep Irene comfortable. The chimney caught fire. (I didn't know that chimneys could catch fire!) Fortunately, the township fire truck managed to get through the snow and the squad put out the blaze; but the house is cold and smoky. Mac asks if Irene can spend the night with us. Of course, I agree, realizing how much harder our day would have been with no power. The transformer gods have been kind to us. We can help our neighbors.

Irene can't wade through the snow, so Mac brings her over in her car – rear wheel drive, perhaps? We watch the car crawl into our driveway, and Mac get out of the car and walk around to the passenger side. The children are hopping with excitement. But suddenly nothing to see. I open the front door and call out, "Where are you?" Mac yells back, "I've dropped Mother in the snow." In that instant, and even now, more than forty years later, I find this incredibly funny. Mac retrieves her mother-in-law, no harm done in this deep snow blanket.

The visitors come in. Irene doesn't appear to have suffered from the ordeal. She is pleased to be in a warm house and is remarkably cheerful. She greets the kids who know her far better than I, for she periodically invites them over for some home-baked cookies. Sometimes they go over spontaneously, to get some grandmotherly love and affirmation. (Their grandparents live far away.)

After we chat for a bit, I tell the kids to get ready for bed. And I give Nell a heads-up that Mrs. Ferguson will sleep in the only available bed, the bottom bunk in her room. Then I tell Irene. But she demurs. "Oh, no dear, I'd actually rather sleep with you." I am a bit taken aback – having been divorced for a couple of years, this is actually not my number one fantasy. But I agree, of course. We are all tired. The children settle down quickly as do Lady and Shem, our Sheltie and Siamese cat. This pair frequently sleeps together on Lady's bed luxuriating in their shared mammal warmth.

I love this time of evening, the house quiet after a day of teeming family life. I can hear the bedside clock ticking. But Irene is not quite

ready to drift off after her momentous day. "You know, dear, I have almost died three times," she tells me. She lists, in detail, the three times. The latest struggle is with bowel cancer. But there have been heart attacks as well. I make a silent wish that for her sake and mine, this won't be the fourth time. I ponder that probably an old person like Irene thinks about death a great deal. (I have learned that this is the case.) At this time of my life however, old age still seems like a distant rumor. After a few minutes more of conversation, my bed partner and I fall asleep.

In the morning, the power is back on all over town. The storm has abated, Irene lives on, and our adventure is over. I remember that evening so well because it marked the start of a long and deep friendship with Mac. Soon after this, our weekly custom began. I crossed Meadow Lane every Friday after work. Snacks and wine were provided by the Fergusons. We visited for an hour or two, and over the years covered almost every conceivable subject. We supported each other as we weathered life's challenges – our own personal storms. And it all got started that stormy night, the winter of '78 – a night to remember!

Author Bios

Diana J. Atkins was raised with many Appalachian customs. She knows how to churn butter and eat wild game such as squirrels, deer, frog legs, and turtles. Her favorite activity is riding the local rail trails with her husband.

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

Diane Chiddister is a longtime resident of Yellow Springs and the author of the recently published novel *One More Day*.

Susan Harrison lived in Yellow Springs from 2014 to 2021 and worked as a homemaker for the Senior Center. She feels honored to have been Don Lewis’s homemaker during the past few years. **Don Lewis** was a lifelong resident of Yellow Springs. He passed away in February of 2022.

Lee Huntington is a Yellow Springs fiction writer and playwright.

Joyce Allen McCurdy is 80 years old, taught at Yellow Springs High School, Springfield High School, and Wittenberg University. She received a BA in History and English, an MA in history from Ohio State University, and attended OSU Law. After retirement she subbed until 2015, then tended to her husband, who was ill with Alzheimer’s until his death in October 2019. She has four children and seven grandchildren. In her own words: “I tried to recall why this desire, whatever, to be able to write without making mistakes is challenging. Proofreading is important. Yet, my eyes have a limited range. After two years of silence, I wanted to tell stories again. I have noticed some people are polite and listen to the story half-heartedly; others cut me off and say ‘You’ve already told that story.’ Those who are most infuriating go about their chores, pretending that they are interested; interrupt with comments such as ‘Lovely,’ but they have not heard a word that was said. This is the frustration of elderly people, who clam up and seem to lose their desire to share memorable stories knowing that others find the tales an annoyance. I have submitted items to *Ripples* and was often published before my stroke. I wanted to try again.”

Nancy Mellon started a blog in September 2021 and writes posts about dealing with her Parkinson’s diagnosis. The blog posts can be read online at nancymellonparkinsons.blogspot.com

Pat Stempfly enjoys the comfort and joy of writing about the ups and downs of life and living in the zany, unpredictable, amazing village of Yellow Springs. She wasn’t born here, but feels right at home.

Peter Whitson’s story is true as told to him by his father, Salvatore. It was originally told at a Yellow Springs Unitarian Universalist group Thanksgiving meeting. The author is a seven-year resident of Yellow Springs and, for the most part, has enjoyed every moment of it.



"Stay a Little Silly" photo by Colette Palamar, submitted by Sue T. Parker, on the right, with her family.

Inspiration

Judy James

Morning
still and quiet
gives space to my muse
space to dance
and weave the words
that will float
into my awareness
like flower petals
carried on a summer breeze

My muse speaks
when thoughts are quiet
wisdom wrapped in script
and carried by angels
finds its way
to the tip of my pen
onto the page
and into my soul