

Ripples 2023



Stories & Poems by or about Yellow Springs Elders • Volume 9, Summer 2023



The Gift of Love

Pat Stempfley

I came across an old round metal button in my belongings with an anonymous message that touched my heart: "We All Walk under the same Sun, Sleep under the same Moon, Wish upon the same Stars." I felt truth in its simplicity and comfort that I am one of many. The old blue button with the attached pin spoke to me with the sun, moon, and stars shining brightly. My imagination took me on a beautiful journey of looking into someone's eyes and seeing their heart. The feeling that we are all one resonated with me, and I am grateful for the gift of love.

Grandma

Warm Cereal was a joy
so was Grandma stirring oatmeal for me
so I could do my best

Change

Change comes bringing a chance
to change my ways and days
like a skinned knee that heals and goes away

Balance

I strive to keep my balance
while my heart adjusts to a new resonance

I like to be in a zone of creativity like a runner's or artist's high in the space of possibility.



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Mr. Katz

Michael Kraus

Sleds were not kind to the boys of the Kraus family. At age six my brother Richard lost four teeth – and a lot of blood – to the front, steel rim of an **American Flyer** slung at him as he descended a hill in Herring Run Park, across the street from the row house where we grew up in Baltimore. My turn came three years later, when at age thirteen and in the eighth grade I wrapped myself around a bridge support (like a barkless tree) in the same park. The bridge carried a bridle path across a descending watercourse from the streets above, designed to empty gutter overflow into the Herring Run. The sewer effluvia harmed no fish, which had long before departed the polluted stream.

As I lay groaning on the ground my playmates decided to put me on my sled and drag me home, about a mile away – it was a **big** park. This they did, but the groaning did not subside overnight, and the next day, a Saturday, I was taken first to the family doctor and then to Mercy Hospital in downtown Baltimore. No one knew what the damage was, but – thankfully – they decided to err on the side of caution; and so I wound up in the accident ward – no semi-private rooms in those days! – of the largest Catholic hospital in town.

A medical consensus was quickly reached that I had damaged, perhaps even ruptured, my spleen, but no immediate surgery was deemed necessary. Young bodies often heal themselves. And so I was kept immobilized for four days, from Saturday to Tuesday, while they X-rayed the area around my left-waist and fretted that my blood-count was going lower and lower, though I passed no blood in urine or stool. Where was it going? When Mom

and Dad arrived for their Tuesday evening visit, they were surprised to find me getting a blood transfusion. Perhaps “shocked” might be the better term; they had thought I was mending. The mystery, if probably not all their distress, was resolved when I woke up Wednesday morning, took a deep breath, and thought I had been stabbed in my left armpit. When at once I was X-rayed higher up, there was all the blood, nearly filling the pleural cavity, where the lung expands with every breath. The leaking blood vessel was found; what to do?

What followed I’ve always thought of as ‘hand-pump and cookie-jar therapy.’ Those two items were brought to my bed in the ward, the curtain was drawn (routine, though perhaps they thought I would faint), and I was put seated on the side of the bed, my feet dangling. At the end of the tube attached to the pump was a l-o-n-g needle. The large glass jar was put beside me on the bed, a pain-killer was injected into the muscle between two ribs, and the needle inserted into the pleural cavity. (How did they know **exactly** where it was?) As a crowd of medical people huddled about, at least one doctor and several nurses, I watched as the missing blood was pumped into the ‘cookie’ jar. Afterwards, I remember coughing a lot, and being laid back to rest. All this happened on the Thursday of my first week (of four) in the hospital and the procedure was repeated at least once, perhaps twice more during the second week. By Monday of the third week, another huddle of nurses was dispatched to get me on my feet.

The accident ward featured rows of beds on either side of a central

aisle, and I had noticed nearly opposite me a middle-aged man who was ministered to daily. This was Mr. Katz. By Wednesday of week three, when I was steady enough on my feet to move about unattended, I went to make his acquaintance. He was the victim of an industrial accident at the Sparrows Point plant of Bethlehem Steel, where a ton of the product had fallen on his right calf. When he was brought to the hospital, some while before I arrived, they had wanted to amputate the leg, hanging by a thread. He said, “No, don’t take it off.” And they didn’t. By the time we met, the leg had no doubt been pinned, the sinews sewn back together, the blood vessels reattached; there had been skin grafts, and the dressing was changed daily. Mr. Katz never got out of bed, and seemed to have few visitors, but I never heard him complain.

Once I could visit him at will across the aisle, I proposed a diversion: did he play pinochle? I had played the three-handed (cutthroat) or four-handed (partners) game for years, but neither of us knew the rules for the two-handed game. We made them up. It was such fun that after our second or third game I asked if we could play for money, something else I had done for years. He agreed.

Then, as the phrase goes, all hell broke loose. Someone no doubt reported to Sister-Whatever-Her-Name-Was, who had charge of the ward, that a grizzled Jewish steelworker and a tow-headed Catholic choirboy were playing cards for money in her ward, and probably she concluded that the devil was at work. When I understood what she was upbraiding Mr. Katz *for*, I remember quickly

leaving my bed and crossing the aisle with the words, "No, no, Sister, playing cards was my idea – and the money, too." As I recall, Sister looked abashed, told us to quit, and left. Perhaps for this delinquency, but also certainly because by the fourth week of my stay I had begun to use the laundry carts as scooters, my time in Mercy's accident ward ended after twenty-seven days. I was ordered to avoid all contact sports for a year, and I departed.

This stay in the hospital took place during January and February of 1951; the following Fall I began my four HS years at St. Charles, the 'minor' seminary for the priesthood of the Baltimore Archdiocese. My parents had decided that my badly misaligned teeth required braces (no sledding accident here, the cause my mom's small jaw and my dad's big teeth!), and so I was excused from the seminary, a boarding school, once every two months

to go have them adjusted at the orthodontist's in downtown Baltimore. In November, as I emerged onto Park Avenue, hurrying to catch my bus back to Catonsville, whom should I see but – you guessed it – Mr. Katz: on crutches, but with both his legs. We spoke, and I hope I'm not misremembering that I gave him a big hug before taking my leave.

Staying on Course

Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

Does something from third grade, or perhaps a special high school class, still regularly visit your memory? As a pest maybe, or a helper, a sigh or smile producer, perhaps even a life changer?

For instance, I almost married the guy in front of me in high school Latin, and he ended up marrying Anthea, who had the desk in front of him.

A class required by Ohio in the fifties, though I'd guess only for girls, was called Personal Regimen. That one still has a grip on me at the bathroom mirror every morning as I wash and dress and fix my hair. I think the shy teacher did manage to mention Kotex, but mostly it was crucial details of propriety and fashion: daily sponge bath, shaving legs and under arms, designs and styles to enhance or subtract from body shape, skirt length (crucial at the

time), and colors. Still today, my pants may come from Goodwill, but I'll find brown hair clips to go with those brown corduroys.

Earlier, in Latrobe, a Pennsylvania health class had similar intentions. Music teacher, the very-corseted Miss Clawson, had to teach health and phys. ed. to her fourth-grade homeroom. In gym-less Second Ward School that meant a weekly hour of waltz training in a desk-less classroom.

Our old health text included a warning against sleeping on your right side, lest heart damage result. One day in health class Miss Clawson, perhaps assuming the preacher's daughter would be a good example, asked me: "How often do you wash your hair?" I answered, "Once a month." Horrified, she accused me of lying. Blessings on my over-worked mother, who at the supper

table confirmed she likely managed to wash my long hair at the sink only about once a month.

Most crucial to all my life since is a course in my Social Science major at Wilmington. The professor had just arrived from NYC to teach "Marriage and the Family," and I'd just gotten engaged. In his lectures I found myself scribbling negatives after the letters of my fiancé's name! Doubts surfaced! But I had promised! The wedding was only a month away! And Larry was depending on my working to help him through med school!

Finally I took my dilemma to that teacher. He explained: rather than commitment, checking on certainty was one important function of engagement. Relief! And soon after, now more than sixty-five years ago, I met Chris. For that course helping me get "on course" I have been thankful ever since.

Illumination

Linda Z. Chernick

On the back porch on a mid-June
evening,
The last light slowly dies away.
Watching.
Waiting.
Maybe it will happen tonight,
The first time since last summer.
Smoky barbecue aroma,
The soft cry of a cat
My companions in the deepening
dark.
Suddenly,
Was that it?
Or am I just too eager.
Panning the yard –
Scanning the neighbors' –
Yes!
A tiny light sparks on and off,
And on and off again.
Flying nearer now,
It's echoed by a second glow.
Dancing luminescent duet
Twinkling in counterpoint,
They illumine the gloaming.
When I was a child
I caught fireflies in jars.
But I learned this:
You can't capture magic.

An Ode to Me in COVID Isolation

Nancy Mellon

What a Lovely Bag of Bones, I am
So Fragile – yet so Sturdy

My Skin – like unpeeled fruit,
Holds secret smells inside –
Some Good, Some Bad,
Some Stinkeee.

My Skin – so soft,
so springy,
wraps round my inner stones.
Keeping Everything,
Keep Everything!
inside my lovely bones.

A curling ribbon of thought,
Dancing,
Prancing about.
Sings an ode, to the gift,
Of my lovely bag of bones

On a cold winter night,
Beneath a downy quilt,
I snuggle up
with myself,
Content
in the content
of me.

Paint Your Dreams

Judy James

Let the sky be your canvas
peer through the veil of early morning
color your spirit with the sunrise
bask in the purity
of ever-changing puffs of white
welcome the pensiveness
of thickening grey clouds
feel the joy and optimism
of the rainbow.
At day's end
let the sunset's colors
calm your spirit
watch the moon rise
lifting your soul with it.

“Life Finds a Way”

– Jeff Goldblum as Dr. Ian Malcolm in *Jurassic Park (the first one)*

Cynthia L. Pauwels

“What the hell was that?” Hubby frowned at me across our adjacent desks. We waited, listening, not breathing.

There it was again: a garbled, warbling, barely-audible *cock-a-doodle-do* from our backyard chicken run.

“Uh-oh!” we said in unison.

After struggling to rehome five different roosters over the past eight years to stay in compliance with local zoning, to say we were surprised completely misreads the jolt of anxiety that hit us. Was one of the newer birds maturing late, leaving us with yet another male to pass along? Hubby hurried outside to lurk near the run, far enough away to not startle the girls, and waited.

Rose, a Buff Orpington layer from our first batch of chicks, hopped up on a stump in the chicken run, cleared her throat (I’m guessing) and let out a strangled, wimpy crow. Somehow, after six years of providing us with lovely, rich brown eggs almost daily, our hen appeared to have become a rooster.

Her crowing got stronger, and louder, over the next few weeks as we searched madly for an explanation. Fortunately, our neighbors didn’t seem to mind about the noise. One of Hubby’s many chicken-tenders social media groups finally pointed him in the right direction.

According to Remy Melina in “Sex-Change Chicken: Gertie the Hen Becomes Bertie the Cockerel,” from *LiveScience.com*, “Chickens really can undergo natural sex changes. ... This transition is limited to making the bird phenotypically male, meaning that although the hen will develop physical character-



In addition to taking up crowing, Ross grew saddle feathers, a wattle, and a larger comb, and the color of his feathers darkened. As Rose, he had been a twin to the pale hen on the left. – Photo by Ash Dasuqi

istics that will make her look male, she will remain genetically female.”

Somehow, on rare occasions, as a hen ages, her single ovary stops producing eggs (much like menopause in mammals), and the standard second sex organ, which has been dormant, kicks in. In Rose’s case, besides the crowing, her feathers darkened, she

grew wattles, and her comb got larger – all masculine traits in the chicken family. The once mother hen now rules the roost as Ross the rooster. He’s eight years old and still going strong.

I’m waiting for the day we have to explain that to the village zoning board.

And Bingo Was His Name

Maxine Skuba

My two young daughters and I had recently moved to Yellow Springs, Ohio, home of Antioch College. Along with an old house, I bought a new dog. He was an Airedale, with characteristic black and tan color and full of puppy energy. We quickly discovered one of his quirks was to catch flies on the run and eat them. Even from the other room, I could hear his teeth gnashing when he captured a fly. Given that there were a lot of flies that season, I appreciated his killer instinct. We named him Bingo after the song and would serenade him whenever the mood caught us with the old children's song: "Once a farmer had a dog and Bingo was his name-o, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O and Bingo was his name-o." Sometimes I liked the song more than the dog.

Bingo was a sweet and energetic pup. Problem was, he was too friendly. With everyone. All who passed through his vision were his friends. He would run to total strangers like a long lost friend asking for love. At first, I was hurt. He showed no special affection for the girls and me. I believed Bingo would outgrow his adolescent phase when he grew to love and depend on us more.

Then he began to run with a pack of dogs. There was Patches from a block away, Mi-mi who lived across the street, and others they picked up along the way. The first time he ran off, I got a call from the police; the dogs were spotted at the other end of town. They had only caught Bingo who had run towards them while the other dogs ran away. Bingo's tags included his name, address, and my telephone number. The first time the police caught Bingo, I got a warning. After that, I was

fined. I think Bingo was the reason they began enforcing the town ordinance requiring all dogs to be leashed.

A pattern began to appear. One day I got a telephone call from a villager who said that Bingo had befriended her, then attached himself to her papergirl. She gave me the papergirl's route so I could find him, assuming that I was going to fetch him shortly. I didn't. I had outgrown my "rescue Bingo phase" and was now allowing Bingo to find his way home.

Then one day, I was coming out of Tom's and saw Bingo on the sidewalk out in front. He had been missing since morning. He recognized me, began to walk with me, but then spied a car parked next to the sidewalk. The car's window was open and two children were inside, sitting on the back seat. He took one look and hopped through the window to join them. He turned his head toward me, panting, and I could swear he was grinning at me. It was during that time period when I began thinking he had a bad case of ADHD.

Finally, Bingo had been missing for a few days and there had been no phone call from the police or another Good Samaritan. That night, an Antioch student called, saying that Bingo had been in his care for those three days. He was getting ready to leave on Co-op and couldn't take Bingo with him. He wanted to return him to me and called to make sure I was home. I thanked him. There was a moment of silence. Then he asked me, "What do you think you're doing wrong?" I couldn't begin to tell him the long version or even the short version ("My dog is on speed"). I waited a half hour, then called back to see what had detained him. He

said he had gotten on his bike and had set off with Bingo by his side. Halfway to my house, Bingo saw a couple walking in the opposite direction and turned around to follow his potential new caretakers.

That same day, I submitted an ad in the newspaper saying "Energetic Airedale, free to a home in the country with lots of land to run and roam." I found a couple who lived outside of town who were excited to train Bingo. I told them I thought he was trainable which wasn't really a lie as he had never stuck around long enough to be trained. He willingly went with them and I was free, free at last.

A few months later in the middle of the night, maybe 2 or 3 in the morning, I was awakened by a knock on the front door. I had fallen asleep, fully clothed on the living room couch. Without thinking about the time or who it could be, I got up and opened the door. Outside on the porch was a young woman who asked me where she could find Bingo. I said, "Bingo isn't here. He's in the country. He no longer lives here." For added emphasis, I think I raised my voice and may have stepped forward. I believe that was when she backed up towards the porch railing. She persisted. "Someone told me Bingo was here (near?)."

I repeated myself, deliberately articulating my words in case she hadn't understood me. She must have heard me the second time for she left, quickly walking into the night. I retreated to my couch, unable to understand what had just taken place. Why would this young woman be looking for Bingo? And how did she come to have Bingo in the first place? I could only surmise that Bingo had run off and still had his identification tags on. Was

I doomed to be Bingo's owner forever?

A few months later, I was in Chicago visiting Steve and Leslie who had both attended Antioch. I told them the story of Bingo and of course, ended it with the woman on the porch searching for Bingo. Steve was rocking in his favorite chair,

puffing on a pipe, head bowed. He finally looked up and said, "You know Maxine, North Hall on campus has three floors, all with different names. The third floor is called Bingle Hall." Oh! The woman who knocked on my door had been lost and was looking for the campus! And I, fully clothed and quickly

answering the door, insisted that Bingo didn't live with me anymore. He was living in the country!

I think Bingo would get a kick out of this story if only he had the brains, and could sit still long enough to hear it. Oh.

No Small Thing

Frances J. Simon

I had some thoughts/feelings a while ago that I was leading a small life and small was not good or at least not good enough. I've been staying with this thought, haven't been rushing to answer it or to push it away or to use it as a club to batter myself.

Rather, I've floated this thought/feeling in a bubble, looked at it, turned it round and round. Thoughts of joining the Peace Corps or selling everything and hitting the road emerge. The Peace Corps seems serviceful, useful; the hitting the road, like lots of fun. Yet, would either of these choices lead to a "bigger" life? My best guess is that right now the answer is not right now.

What would I do in the world at large? I've been out there – lots. I've lived in other countries for months at a time, been completely away from my own culture for months at a time. And what did I do?

Well, bare bone truth is – the same things I do here: cook and feed people, share myself and my time, get involved with conversation, help if I can when asked, listen, write, meditate, play cards, do laundry, get bored, get creative, feel rich/worry about money, befriend animals, get involved with people and their interests and so on.

So, I wonder: why am I seeing the life I live here in YSO, today, as less important, less vibrant and vital. If I am the grantor of significance (and I do believe that I am) then what is there for me is the same thing that is here for me – now – my life to be lived to the fullest, consciously and deliberately.

When these questions tug at me or when I'm feeling depleted or when "over there" looks better or seems as if it might nourish me better, I think I'm feeling the smallness of a box I've put myself into and then pretending I don't know how I've gotten stuck in here.

What constriction have I taken on as a way of being? What wall needs to be taken down? What window opened? Where am I holding back? Settling? What rut am I walking in and complaining about yet not taking any action to climb out?

Sometimes the answer is to "get out of Dodge." The movement of my physical body through time and space is often wonderfully clarifying – it gives me a new perspective. Other times, sitting, dropping the surface activity and entering the deep center point of myself has the same effect. I wonder, when I don't do either of these activities, if I'm actually resisting seeing what

would emerge if I jiggled the structure in which I've placed myself. For the most part, regardless of the size of the box or cage, the lock has always been on the inside and I'm always holding the key.

So, why is it that I am granting more significance to donating money to feed children in Africa or India than I am to feeding children here in the U.S. or Ohio or Yellow Springs? Why is being a beneficial presence in my grandchildren's lives here not full of the same merit that I say being with children in India would be?

I can do both, have done both, am doing both. It doesn't matter that I'm not Mother Theresa or Gandhi unless I make it matter more. It doesn't matter where I show up – only that I do show up.

Just yesterday, as I was walking down the hallway in my home, I was remembering some wonderful event from my childhood with my grandmother and I heard myself thinking that when Paloma, my granddaughter, is an older woman, she is going to have loads of wonderful memories of the two of us together, of how much I loved her and gave myself to her and, I said to myself, "This is no small thing."

Last Hike in Glen Helen

Rubin Battino

Recently (8/19/22) my son Ben and granddaughter Anabel took me on a hike in the Glen Helen forest preserve in Yellow Springs to see the beaver dam. I had not hiked in Glen Helen for about three years due to the Covid pandemic, the trails were too hilly for me, and the stepping stones across Birch Creek were too far apart for me to easily walk across. The Glen was owned by Antioch College (it is now owned by the Glen Helen Association) and I have hiked its trails since moving to Yellow Springs in the summer of 1966 with my wife Charlotte and our 2½ year old son David. A few years ago I put together a PowerPoint presentation entitled “50+ Years of Hiking in Glen Helen.” I have taken many slides of the Glen over the years and even had some of them published in the annual Glen Helen calendar.

First, a short history of the Glen. The land was owned by Hugh Taylor Birch, a rich realtor. Lucy and Arthur Morgan (he was president of Antioch College at the time) visited Birch in his estate in Florida. His daughter Helen had died in a riding accident on October 24, 1925, just five years after she had married F.C. Bartlett. (Helen and her husband were art collectors and donated their impressionist paintings to the Art Institute of Chicago where, for example, Georges Seurat’s painting “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” hangs). The Morgans suggested that Birch donate his forest holdings in Yellow Springs to Antioch College as a living memorial to Helen. Helen Birch Bartlett was a minor poet in the early 1900s and her poem “Up In The Hills” (quoted here) is on a bronze plaque on a large stone beneath a tall white oak tree (sadly, this tree died).

*the earth smells old and warm and mellow
and all things are at peace.*

*I, too, serenely lie here under the white oak tree
and know the splendid flight of hours all
blue and gay, sun-drenched and still.*

In the late 1800s Yellow Springs was a tourist destination and had a large hotel with a lake behind the old dam, and even an outdoor dance pavilion. Chautauqua lectures were held on an old Indian mound.

When sons David and Ben were young I took them on many hikes in the Glen. Charlotte was with us most of the time. All of the people who visited us – family and friends – were taken on hikes in the Glen. I hiked the trails in the Glen many years by myself and loved walking on little known trails (all of which have since been closed and overgrown). Perhaps thirty or more

years ago I met an older man in the Pine Forest who told me that he was part of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) that planted it in the 1930s. Also, thirty-five or so years ago Charlotte and I took a second marriage vow there, so it has always been a special place. Sadly, since the planted pines are not native species, the Pine Forest has almost disappeared. All of our eight grandchildren have attended the Glen Helen summer Eco-camps, a few went many times.

I am 91 years old now and am limited in how far I can walk without taking stretches to relieve pressure on my spine. Also, there are few opportunities for me to go up and down stairs. So, on this hike to see the beaver dam, we chose a trail that led gradually down to the wooden walkway across the old dam site, and then to wooden walkways to the beaver dam. Ben and Anabel walked with me, we stopped to take photos, and for me to stretch. There is a walkway just below the beaver dam and a shallow lake that spreads almost all of the way to the old dam. At the foot of the 125 stone steps that lead up to Trailside Museum you can see marsh cabbage in the Spring. Not having any opportunities to go up and down stairs, I now needed to hold onto Ben’s hand on the way up, and also to rest several times. On my last hike to the Glen several years ago (and all previous visits) I could always walk all the way up to the top of the stone stairs without stopping. Reality has appeared.

When we are young or in middle age or not “old” death and the physical limitations that come with aging are just somewhere out there in the future. I am fortunate at 91 not to have any dementia (except for “variable time delays” in recalling events or names). Perhaps ten or more years ago there was an occasion when it was important to read one of my old chemistry publications that for reasons unknown to me was being cited fairly frequently in the literature. When I re-read that paper I was impressed at the scholarship involved, and then stunned to realize that I was no longer capable of repeating such an endeavor. (Since that time I have published other chemistry papers and co-authored more.) After I retired from the university in 1995 my main publications were in the field of psychotherapy (11 books, and many articles). These publications involved research but not scientific calculations!

My mind keeps working. That is the most important thing for me (as it also was for my wife Charlotte). Yet, there are several things which I no longer can do or only do in limited ways (like going up those stone steps!).

Three years ago I did my last chemistry demonstration show for school children – with a colleague I had done 15 or more shows per year for over 40 years. Also, three years ago, I facilitated the last meeting of the Charlie Brown Exceptional Patient and Caregiver group – something I had done for 35 years. And, I am no longer capable of doing those wonderful long hikes that Charlotte and I did in places like New Zealand and Europe and many national forests in the U.S. and Canada. For the last fifteen years or so I have done biweekly travelogues for the residents of the local nursing home (Friends Care Community), and get to “relive” those hiking trips (and other trips). For many years I have attempted to catch an idea, a feeling, or an image in three-line poems – some are printed here.

I believe in the old adage that “You have to give the Old Guy with the Scythe a moving target!” Please keep moving...

woodland path
random roots, trees and bushes
brittle winter sun

a spot of sunlight
wind wavering on the forest floor
treetops tremble

heavily mossed trunk
on its leafy sepulcher
midges dance a dirge

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

morning angel light
a small irradiated cloud
we watch and wait

thunder in the night
throbbing pulses of sound
cicadas

low morning sun
trickles through the trees
long shadows touch me

across the morning
half moon greets the sun
the meadow wakens

Freedom Misconstrued

Ardis Macaulay

UTOPIA, where are you?
No place to run. No place to hide.
Once again awakened mortified.
Our journey through darkness has no end in sight.
Collective soul lessons still awake us in fright.
This day not by earthquakes, floods, fires, or droughts,
although plenty of these are coming about.

But by assault weapons bullets,
tearing through flesh, shattering bones.
Silenced hearts, lifeless,
will no longer find their way home.
Blood flows in rivulets staining the streets.
These innocent lives mattered. We will never meet.

Guns have a sole purpose and that is to kill.
With Soul life disrespected, they certainly will.
Centuries old patterns of violence and war
no longer a path for us anymore.
Through mass pain and confusion,
a new paradigm is emerging upon planet Earth.
How many of us will it take to usher in its overdue birth?

Insights evolving through our awakening genes
are shifting collective understanding of what
TRUE FREEDOM means.
Ancient Heart Wisdom knows Respect is the key
to a way of living where we may reign free
and honor a future where the
MASTERPIECE OF LIVING
Is to
MASTER PEACE.

Today

Abigail Cobb

Summer lasts forever.
Until one day
the leaves turn golden and brown,
lift and swirl and come down.
Frost sparkles the ground.
It is bare branches cold.
But holidays are spinning
magic pumpkin faces,
and fragrances
of turkey and cranberries,
cinnamon and pine,
in these days of auld lang syne.
Like silver bells
we laugh,
with something bubbly in the glass.
Then, boom ! that one's done and another year's begun.
The wheel slows.
It snows, and rains, and blows.
Treading winter water weather,
clouds by day and stars at night,
more night, and then,
another cloudy day,
gray stretching from here to May.
Wrapped in wool
I nestle into flannel,
dreaming of the more that could and should be done,
the old do-be-do-be-do song.
I choose Be, and I sleep.
But today, I am
standing
barefoot on the cold kitchen floor,
stirring together
flour and water and salt,
the elements of life.
I am
baking bread while
the pale grocery store roses,
loving the warmth,
loving being loved,
reach out from their vase,
opening right into me,
a sudden ray of light
igniting
all their glowing colors.
They are so beautiful.
I am so happy.
This is enough.

Senior Off-Center Sonnet

Janeal Turnbull Ravndal

Today a sonnet to an absent mind
Which wanders off, despite intent,
Then wonders on what errand it was sent
Unto this opened drawer. What shall we find

To celebrate in "never mind," well meant
But focused not? Or should we be more kind?
Perhaps in flight there's pasture more aligned
With green, sweet whiffs of playing hooky scent,

Skipping instructions to address its muse
Or practice pause – amid the brain's demand
Performance, Intermission. To expand
Appreciation of such cause, I'll choose,

For now, to hope no matter where it went
It's just vacationing, still friend, not spent.

Nocturnal Fictions

Anna Cates

In my dream, I strolled through mansions, debating
which to buy. The realtor informed me that one old
Victorian was owned by a member of my poetry group,
who, along with one other member, had acted in *Game
of Thrones*. Dreams are full of surprises!

her* little white bun –
her* sonnet full of angst –
goldfinch cadence

**Janeal Turnbull Ravndal*

Mad Dog

Dan Beverly

I have wonderful memories of my first 6½ years living on a 100+ year old dilapidated, worn out Appalachian farm: house, barn and fields. We worked as long as the sun shone, and used lanterns to extend the work day, if needed.

I suspect my mother and father did not trust my judgment to do any heavy work with the horses or mule. So I had the fun work of feeding the chickens, picking blackberries, playing with the piglets, picking off tobacco worms, carrying in water from the well, and carrying in firewood.

The year was 1943. We were at war. The U.S.A. had sent many soldiers to England to prepare for the invasion of France. My three brothers had enlisted. My family could no longer do the farm work. England was running short of food. The U.S.A. was concerned about so many Appalachian farms being abandoned, and the migration of the farm workers to the North.

My family was planning on joining the migration to the Cincinnati area, where my father's wages would be \$.50/hour and my mother's would be \$.37/hour, with lots of overtime. I believe my mother and father were visiting Cincinnati when the mad dog attack occurred.

I remember one summer day when a commotion in the barnyard caused my sister Joyce and me to rush outside. Chickens screamed "Help, help, murder!" We saw a strange dog attacking the chickens. Our grandma, the only grownup at

home, came and looked and started screaming for us to hurry and get in the house. We got into the back porch and Grandma locked the screen door and said do not go out, that dog is mad. Grandma did not have to say any more. All country children knew about the terror of a mad animal.

Joyce and I watched the dog attack our chickens. The dog killed some and bit and ripped out feathers from others. It was terrible to watch. The dog was dripping saliva from its mouth. Joyce and I were screaming

at the dog to stop. Finally someone came and got Steuben's gun and shot the dog. Grandma must have gone to the phone and called for help.

When Mom and Dad came back, they killed the injured chickens and dug a deep hole and buried the dog and the dead chickens. In those days to be bitten by a mad dog was often fatal. I was confined to the house for a few days and everyone had to wear shoes outside until the ground was free of rabies germs.

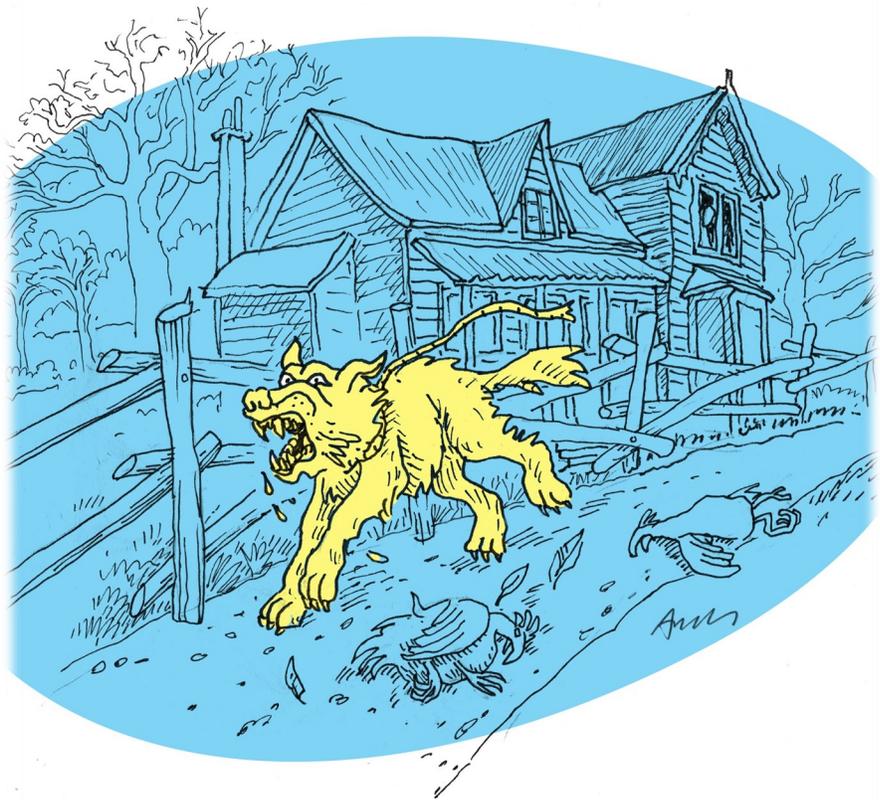


Illustration by Andy Beverly, the author's son

The F-Word

Joy Fishbain

It has been reported that there are 504 “F-words” in the movie “The Wolf of Wall Street.” It is a movie depicting excesses of all kinds, a theme of overindulgence and extravagance, repeated over and over in a 3-hour format. I tend to avoid violent or over-long movies, but I was amused that someone actually reported the exact number of F-words in this particular film. I certainly know people who have zero tolerance for this bad word.

As for me, sometimes a well-placed F-word, in a story for example, can seem just right, even funny and worthy of a chuckle. But when I find it used in anger, it becomes an ugly, violent word, and I draw back.

When I was young, I flung the word around a lot. It was the late '60s, early '70s, and I was in my 20s. I was a young R.N., landing my first job at the Ohio State University Hospitals, making a fabulous salary, \$6,500 a year. On my 21st birthday I bought a brand new powder blue Volkswagen Beetle with an optional, but irresistible sunroof. I knew I was young and carefree and on my way. With my long blonde hair, short skirts, a great job, lots of money and the cutest car imaginable, I was coming into my own. I don't think I used the F-word excessively, but I thought it was cool to say it sometimes for emphasis or for its shock value. I dropped it in front of my mother a few times, and she remarked that she hadn't taught me to talk like that. That seemed like an odd statement to me. Of course she hadn't. This was the “grownup me,” – liberated, young, and free to add the F-word to my vocabulary, to flaunt whenever I wanted. Yet my mother's words gave me pause.

Fast forward to the early 1980s. I'm a new mother, and my use of

the F-word drops precipitously, and then disappears. Everything has new meaning and I'm happy. I have a new baby, and the F-word doesn't sound right anymore.

Fast forward once again, to the present, 30 years later. Things are dramatically different; irreversible. I'm in my 60s now, and a widow. My mother has been gone for more than a decade and my son, my baby from the '80s, is a grown man in his early 30s, sporting a beard, which I can't seem to get used to. He uses the F-word, mostly if someone cuts us off in traffic, or some similar event. I think of my mother, and I try her tactic. “You know, I never taught you to use such profanity,” I say lamely.

My sister swears her son learned the F-word from me when he was a little boy and I was visiting them out-of-state. I have protested against the accusation, but I was 20-something at the time, letting the nasty word fly at random, so it's probably true. Unfortunately, my nephew – about 6 years old at the time – used it in the doctor's office soon after my visit. When a child is 6 years old and says “fuck you” to the doctor, it can make his mother nearly pass out from embarrassment.

It's cold outside today: 5 degrees Fahrenheit, with lots of snow on the ground. But I'm warm and comfortable, sitting at the kitchen counter. I have a little tea light burning, the evening news is on, and I'm casually looking through one of the newspaper inserts. Taking a break during a commercial, I head for the bathroom for a minute or two. But I'm rudely interrupted. Not by the phone or the doorbell, but the smoke alarm in the hallway near the kitchen. For a moment I'm stunned. The smoke alarm is urgent, screaming at me to come quickly.

But I was just in the kitchen! Yet I'm sure something has happened. Do I take one and a half seconds to flush the toilet? I do, just in case I die in an inferno. ‘Doesn't she know how to flush a toilet?!’ would be my lasting legacy. I quickly cross the foyer and round the corner into the kitchen. To my horror, the newspaper insert has ignited, scorching the placemat underneath and sending up flames two feet in the air. The friendly flame from the tea light had touched the edge of the insert, and its innocent glow had turned into an enemy of flames rising from the counter.

But despite this frantic situation, I don't use the F-word. I have become more reverent in my exclamations as I've gotten older. “Holy Shit!!!” I yell as I spring into action.

Two Limericks

Amy Achor

My father grew up in rural Kentucky and had a fondness for outhouse humor. I wrote these limericks for him for one of his birthdays.

Exclaimed a rich gal from the city,
“This privy's a mess! What a pity!”
So she hired a crew
To make it brand new
Now the damsel is sure sittin' pretty!

A man with an ache needing soothed
Took a laxative – and its claim he
proved!
To the outhouse he dashed,
Dropping pants, in he crashed.
Never had he been so moved!

You Have Carried On

Brenda Jean Hubbard Ibarra

Up on Parsons Avenue four white boys hit you with a baseball bat
over and over and over again.

You carried that with you for over forty years.
That beating lived in you, took up residence in your mind
and sat upon your heart like a heavy weight
while a thousand other jeers and slights, punches and rebukes
rattled through your veins.

Too black or not black enough?
And all your hard-won accomplishments attained in the face of their hate
could not rebuild the bones they broke that day,
the splintered fragments scattered through muscle and sinew.
They served as a constant reminder that you were never safe, never loved,
and always hated by a world that didn't even know your name,
let alone your favorite color or how you liked your shirts pressed just so
or what your mama called you when you were a baby.

They hated all of you, or the idea of you, or just the fact that you took up
space on
the street, at the office, in the store, at the school
or dared to breathe their air.

You dared to be.

Four white boys beat you with a baseball bat.
And yet – you have carried on.

Unmindful

Karl Koehler

A lock on the book.
A lock on the door.
A lock on the phone.
A lock on the stove.
A lock on the mind.
There is no more.
Friends in the past.
Friends of today.
Where have they gone?
I cannot say...
It started years ago.
When a stranger came.
His first name was Al.
His second I cannot say.
I do know however,
Since that day,
Nothing's been the same.
He never went away.

In the Crowded, Singing Dark

Jo Ann Kiser

In the crowded, singing dark ululations of millions as meanings mingle,
merge harmoniously here and there arias or else dissonance scrolling
as we join at midnight to celebrate unspoken lifetimes,
go down Main Street, past Parthenon, past Moulin Rouge,
into Elysian Fields bearing peoples sung in the dark.

Looking Back

Joyce McCurdy (1941–2023)

It's November, it's getting colder, and springtime is far away. The darker days begin in the late afternoon. As the days get shorter, I look forward to the coming spring. I would like to be able to plan a garden but I'm not sure that I can do the physical work.

I know how to place a garden and make everything work. My grandfather would lay out his garden, which was probably a half block long, and he would start planning things starting with a couple rows of beans and cauliflower. He would put all the rambling things together and in the middle with thick plants that sprout like carrots and onions. The interesting thing about the garden was its symmetry. He weeded the garden at least once or twice a week very carefully removing anything that was not in sync with his original plan.

My grandfather was from Germany and in his way of thinking everything had a place. He would listen to the soil so that it was a continuous process of tending to the garden. I was delighted to help weed his garden through the summer and when it became August it was time to bring in the harvest.

There were also cherry trees on the other side of the garden, and we had to pick the cherries before the birds stole them away. My grandma and mother canned the cherries, and they would make the best pies.

The harvest was constant and continuous work. Everything that we were going to eat in the winter was put away. It was a lot of effort but at least we knew where the food came from, and no chemicals were used in the ground. We knew the food was clean, homegrown, and part of the labor of everybody in the family, a way of life which is lost now.

We've lost the art of self-preservation and of understanding the cycles, and the art of producing our own food.

My grandpa was a hard-working person, and in addition to gardening, he rode the bus to work at International Harvester every day. He was a piece worker, which meant the speed that he could do the work would determine his salary, and he was one of the fastest piece workers on the line. I was very proud of him when we toured the plant because he had quite a few awards for his skills.

Another thing I remember is that my growing up years were slow because there was no television and no external entertainment center to distract you. Instead, you had to use your mind so everything that you had to do you did of your own ingenuity. I found that I enjoyed reading and thinking about things that I didn't always understand. I wanted to know more and more so I was constantly going to the library and trying to build up a kind of an encyclopedic knowledge of what was important in life.

My grandparents and parents encouraged me to be a good reader. Even when school was out, I was encouraged to go to the library every Saturday and check out at least six books (that was the limit). I would then return them the following week and take out another six. I read history books, biographies, and books about notable explorers of the world.

I wanted to go out to see more and learn more. I found it to be almost like conquering each of the areas in the library by going through and taking them out in an orderly fashion. I liked the silence of the library and the fact that it was a ritual for me – walking into the building downtown that was built by Andrew Carnegie

and walking up to the children's room to select my books.

Afterward, I would meet my mother who was the person that I enjoyed being with more than anyone else. She would always hold my hand and talk to me. She worked on Saturdays as a bingo caller in a building that had a pool hall upstairs. My mother said that it was awfully noisy and that the people smoked, and she didn't want me to come into the room. I waited outside and when she was finished we'd go on a shopping trip and it was like when we were picking cherries; we would have a delightful time every Saturday afternoon.

At that time the downtown had many interesting places including five movie theaters, many banks, a dance studio, a newsstand, and a record shop where you could listen to the record before you bought it. One old building had an elevator that was quite rickety and a little scary. One of the department stores had a basement cafe. They had a separate section for businessmen and -women and it was all blocked off from average people. The waitresses for the most part were out front serving and the people who were doing the cooking were mostly African-Americans because the store was segregated.

I remember once when we were getting an outfit altered that the people doing the alterations were people of color. In the '40s they were allowed to do the alterations, but they weren't allowed to be clerks, although that was beginning to change. In my childhood many issues of race were very noticeable to me.

I remember my aunt complaining that a clerk in a store was a "colored woman" who touched the items,

and my aunt said she couldn't buy any of the items that were touched. I remember wondering why this bothered her. I brought it up and it was the wrong time to say anything because my aunt felt very threatened by the social changes occurring. It seemed to me that the whole world was shifting.

But some things stayed the same. I remember those Saturdays with mom, shopping and walking around the block and laughing. I would feel her love for me. It wasn't just that she was buying me some nice outfits, she was showing me how important it was to give to others.

She had such love for our family. She told me that she enjoyed doing the dishes because that was the time that she and my dad would talk. She would wash and he would dry, and they would joke around. I could tell they loved one another, and I felt happy that we were not a fighting type of family where people are afraid of one another. I thought it was good that they talked to each other. I knew that she had missed him considerably during World War II and that she had wanted another child but that had become an impossibility.

I guess you could say I was really spoiled but mother said as long as you read, everything will be all right. My life was structured by a strong support group; at the top of the hill were my grandmother and grandfather, at the bottom were mom and dad. This stability was a great security blanket. At that time, I did not realize how lucky I was nor did I realize the stability that my parents and grandparents gave me was not universal. I was lucky, many of my schoolmates likely did not have that sense of family.

My mom and dad were also interested in traveling and they were interested in different activities such as fishing together that gave them

a compatibility and gave me a model of what a relationship should be like. Some of the early trips my parents took would also include his dad or her dad and mom and we would make it into a generational get-together. We'd head out together to some small cabin somewhere next to a good fishing lake. It was good because this created harmony and respect and it linked me with the past.

So many people probably don't even have a clue about their family

history beyond where a grandparent came from. I'm sure that's why so many people get obsessed with searching out their ancestors. I only wish that as a child I had listened more to the stories that my parents told so I could've continued the oral tradition in a better mode now. I can look at it with genealogy, but I can't recall the little personal quirks that give more meaning to my family, other than just the biographical facts.

How to Be Perfectly Mad

Nancy Mellon

Make a grumpy face
Let all your muscles get tight
Feel your heart go hard against that person
Go over and over how mad you are.
Practice scowling in the mirror.
Make a fist and pound your pillow until it pops and the feathers fly about on everything.
Dance around in the flying feathers with an evil grin!
Tell them what they did to make you mad. But do it in your head – so they won't get mad at you.
Go over and over how mad you are.
Forget about what a wonderful day you had to concentrate fully on being mad.
Do not make eye contact with the person you are mad at
Ever
Again.
You Are Mad!
Think up great revenge scenarios
Enjoy them – chuckle.
Blow steam out of your ears. First put your head over a screaming tea kettle to get a full head of steam.
Feel the burn.
Stay up all night thinking of what you should say to them.
Say it about one million times to yourself, so you will remember.
Clear your mind of everything else so you can only think about HOW MAD YOU ARE!
Make everyone around you cower because they know, You Are Mad!
Hold your mouth so clenched that you break your teeth, that will show them! Now your jaw. That will really show them!
Run naked through downtown, Howling about HOW MAD YOU ARE!
Do it all over again.

Practice as a Form of Prayer

Marna Street

Through different difficult times
when I had no words
I returned to music.
When I was 13,
it was announced over
the school intercom
President John Kennedy
had been assassinated.
I wandered home from school.
I returned to music.
That week I learned
the C minor 2 part invention
on the piano.

The death of my grandfather,
MLK's murder
many times
When I had no words
I returned to music.
Most recently,
I learned by heart
the g minor fugue

We knew from antiquity
about bone flutes,
instruments made from reeds,
stones, wood, animal skins.
The Psalmists had lyres and timbrels,
In Teresenstad there was an orchestra,
violins made there survived.
Toured and played by major
symphony players.

In these days of isolation,
when few words by our leaders
are barely civil
let us heal.
Let us return to the music.

Those Hungry Ghosts

Jane Blakelock

that swarm of
hungry ghosts orbiting
Is Emily's an orbiting
ghost, little Emily Jane's
that lovely lovely
face that
Inuit
baby first baby baby
with all that hair
though of course
babies generally lose
first hair
that film those...stones
that almost always
abandoned...grave and
still denying the dead
why of course they haunt
as the scrub jay
flies up into the poplar
they haunt
as the rain blows
toward
from an opposite ridge
they haunt
as coyotes cross pasture
in cunning March snow
as flames threaten
through summer...smoke
Make your go list
before your babes go
to horizons ceded
to ghosts

Rough Draft

Artie Isaac

Sick without dying
is training for
sick while dying.
When due,
I want the quiet death:
pain without suffering,
shalom, completeness
in relationships, legacy,
you sipping tea
outside my chamber
while I meditate,
meditate myself to death.

*Rattling in,
I am aware I am rattling in.
Rattling out,
I smile,
relaxing into the rattle.*

This week, grateful not dead,
sick without dying,
not feeling threatened,
I meditate naively
to practice how to meditate
when you
at last
sit outside
sipping tea.

The Door

Frances J. Simon

She was looking for the door to his soul. He closed the door a little over two years ago and it had become more and more hidden as the months passed. Up until then, he had been bright, sunny. His eyes were Siamese-cat blue and his hair, as white and soft as young corn silk. His very presence had brought joy into her life.

And now, his eyes were still that beautiful blue but no longer sparkled, no longer danced with delight.

At four, he sat on the cool green and white tiles of the kitchen floor... rocking back and forth, back and forth, sliding a turquoise Melamine plate under his left hand. Whether she spoke to him, or not; whether she sang to him, or not; whether she sat with him, or not; he rocked, back and forth, forever sliding the plate.

Sometimes, and she never knew when these times would occur, he would allow her to hold him in her lap...as long as she rocked him. And, when she was holding him, she would look into his eyes, searching for the boy she had once known and, always, behind those blue-sky eyes, a cloud and behind it, she assumed, was the door, the closed door.

Today, she and his father, as well as both sets of grandparents, would celebrate his birthday – he wouldn't. "We'll have dinner on the patio which he won't eat much of and have a cake whose candles he won't blow out." And, for a moment, the thought, "what's the point?" entered her mind. Quickly, it exited, yet it had lingered...lingered long enough to make her body shiver as if to throw the thought out into the ethers.

The point, she thought, is to love him as he is. If there is any way to find the door and to find the key to the lock on his door, if the lock is even on the outside of this door, it has to be loving him.

She reached down to touch him, and he didn't pull away. She sat down behind him, their bodies barely touching, and rocking in his rhythm, she recited her song of love to him:

*I love you, my beautiful boy,
my beautiful blue-eyed boy.
My loving will rock you forever:
whether you come out or stay in,
I will love you and rock you forever.*

Moments like these, doors, found or hidden, open or closed, didn't matter.

Bloody Sunday and Dixie

Henry Myers

In January 1965 I was sent to attend a three-month Air Force professional school at Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, Ala. It was a rather intensive school and my only knowledge of the outside world was my weekly *Newsweek*. On our last Sunday, after studying for finals, three of us decided to go for a beer at the "bar/dance joint" we and many others frequently went to on weekends.

That Sunday, not surprisingly, it was dead. Besides us, there were maybe two guys at the bar and a three-piece band. We each got a beer and went to a table. Somewhat later three or four people came in. I couldn't see as my back was towards the bar.

Shortly thereafter the band leader announced: "Sheriff..., we are proud of what you are doing over there and this next piece is for you." And they started playing "Dixie."

We three were myself from the Northeast and my two classmates from Texas, one white, the other Mexican-American. The white classmate stood up. I suspect the others behind me did too from the noise I heard. The Mexican-American and I eyeballed each other and were of one mind. We stayed put. (Actually, I put my feet on the floor. They were up on an adjacent chair). "Dixie" ended and without a word we finished our beers and left.

The following week was finals, and I think, graduation. I probably only skimmed the next few *Newsweeks* if I even opened them. I don't know when I connected that Sunday with Bloody Sunday and don't really know which sheriff entered, but that, along with seeing the confederate flag above the U.S. Flag at the Alabama capitol cemented my attitude about that state.

The only other time I heard "Dixie" live was at an off-base unit party in Omaha. When the three-piece band started playing it, Ruth and I walked out.

McHale's Navy

Jeff Simons

It was an evening in early September 1965 when my life took a strange turn. LBJ was President, Vietnam was a real war, and the Beatles ruled. But even so, the airwaves were flooded with a steady stream of Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," Stevie Wonder's "Uptight: Everything's Alright!" and Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction." I was a couple months shy of my 18th birthday and a week or so from heading off to Athens for my freshman year at Ohio University. I'd just finished my last shift of a summer job as a commissary manager at Cleveland Municipal Stadium. For three months, I'd been in charge of keeping the books and counting the cash. The rest of the crew dispensed racks of hot dogs, popcorn, Pepsi, and cases of Budweiser to the vendors who climbed over the seats to hand off their drinks and snacks to the fans suffering through yet another dismal season of Indians baseball.

After work, I met up with my good friend Dave. Our plan was to grab some dinner at a deli, catch a movie, and then shoot some pool in his parents' basement.

As we drove along Euclid Avenue in my mother's red Corsair, we spotted a tall attractive woman who waved us down. Maybe a working girl? Since this was pretty much a farewell night for us, we figured, why not check it out? We pulled over.

"Hi! I'm Dorothea," she said, leaning into my window. "You guys lookin' for a date?"

"Uh, how much?" Dave asked.

"Well for a couple pretty boys like you, ten each." (*Note: Adjusted for inflation, that's about \$100 today.*)

She showed us where to park, a side street just off the main avenue.

We got out of the car, followed her into an old apartment building, where she led us up a long flight of stairs. My heart was pounding because I'd never done anything like this before. Up until that moment, the sum total of my sexual experience was the occasional Playboy centerfold fantasy and a couple of pathetic attempts to get to "first base" in the backseat of a car with a girl who couldn't figure out what the hell I was trying to do.

But I knew enough to ask Dorothea if she had any rubbers. She looked back over her shoulder and stared me down. "You boys gotta bring your own equipment!"

When we reached the door of one of the apartments, Dorothea knocked, and a tall, imposing middle-aged man gave us the once over. He scowled and ushered us inside. Moments later another woman coozied up to Dave and said, "This one's mine!" and just like that she led him off into another room, closing the door behind her. Dorothea told me to take a seat on one of the couches. "I'll be just a minute," and she slipped off into another room. Sitting next to me was an older woman, working her way through a box of Colonel Sanders and watching a popular TV show: *McHale's Navy*. It was a half-hour comedy sitcom that starred the late Ernest Borgnine, and one of my parents' favorite shows. As I sat there watching a crew of blundering sailors in their PT boat bouncing through a stormy South Pacific Ocean, it suddenly hit me that less than 10 miles away my parents were tuned into the same program. I immediately felt ashamed. There I was, sitting in the apartment of a pimp and his hookers waiting my chance to satisfy an adolescent

fantasy. And all the while, my mom and dad thought Dave and I were eating matzoh ball soup at Corky and Lenny's up in Cleveland Heights.

A couple minutes later, Dorothea opened the door to her room, glanced out and waved me in. I took one last look at the TV just as one of McHale's sailors stumbled overboard, and then followed her into a dimly lit room with peeling yellow wallpaper, a small bed covered with wrinkled dirty sheets, and a plastic ashtray holding a half pack of Newports sitting atop a small wooden nightstand. Dorothea was stripped down to her bra and panties, and at that moment I felt my life would never be the same. She sat down on the edge of the bed and gestured for me to pay up. I pulled out my wallet, which she could see held a ten and a five, and handed her the Hamilton.

"The ten's good for the nasty," she said. "But for another five I'll throw in a French." Despite my inexperience, I knew what she meant. But no way was I going to cough up any more money. Dorothea told me to undress, but seeing me naked must have stunned her. She gave me the same incredulous look I often got from some of the girls at my neighborhood swimming pool when my 115-pound body stood at the edge of a diving board. "Ooh! Look! It's Bones!" they'd shout. "He's gonna jump! Yuch!"

Sitting down next to Dorothea, I really didn't know what to do, how to begin. And apparently, she didn't know what to do with me. I reached over with my left hand and cautiously touched her shoulder. A stupid, clumsy move. She leaned back, glared at me, giggled, and

uttered four words that after more than 50 years I've never forgotten: "Honey, this ain't love!"

And it wasn't. My most striking memories of that first sexual experience were Dorothea staring up at the ceiling while I squirmed on top of her, and the loud, canned laughter from *McHale's Navy* sifting through the bedroom walls. Laying atop a woman twice my size, I couldn't help but feel that my parents knew exactly where I was and what I was up to. When I heard a commercial for Lucky Strikes on the living room TV, Dorothea shoved me off and slipped out of bed.

I got dressed and walked into the living room. Dave was sitting on the couch watching the closing credits to *McHale's Navy*. He got up and the pimp ushered us out the door. As we started down the stairs, Dave turned to me. "I think we're gonna get rolled!" Those words scared the hell out of me. "What makes you say that?" I asked as we slowly made our way down. "Because that old guy said, 'I run a safe place up here. What happens on the street ain't none of my doin'!"

When we hit the landing, a side door burst open and three tall young men came rushing at us. Dave broke for the exit, but I froze. Bad move. One of the men slammed a fist into my forehead and knocked me to the floor. As I lay there, he straddled me and grabbed my collar. "Gimme your wallet!" he shouted. I reached behind to my back pocket and handed it over. He pulled out the five-dollar bill, and surprisingly handed back my billfold. At that moment I knew it was a good thing I'd passed on the French. My assailant stood up, slipped the money into his pocket, reached down and pulled me to my feet. While I stood there, stunned, another one of the muggers dusted off my jacket from behind. Looking back, I'd have to say that despite the

blow to my forehead, it wasn't such a bad way to get jacked. One of the assailants pushed me toward the exit with a few parting words.

"Your buddy took off like a scared rabbit! Now get your ass outta here!"

I got into my car, made a U-turn off the side street and headed east on Euclid Avenue. Dave was running down the sidewalk just short of University Circle, probably a good half-mile from where he'd first bolted out the door. I blew my horn, pulled over and Dave jumped in the car.

"Jeff! Oh my God, what happened?" For a moment I didn't quite know what he meant. But then I looked in my rearview mirror and there it was: an ugly two-inch diameter purple bruise smack dab in the middle of my forehead. I told him how it all went down, and that's when I knew I'd have to figure a way to explain it to my parents when I got home. We drove around for about an hour, and around eleven o'clock we pulled into his parents' driveway. Fortunately, they were asleep. We slipped into the house, grabbed some ice out of the kitchen freezer and snuck into the basement. While I lay back in a chair holding an icepack against my head, we concocted a story about my bruise – one I could pass off on my skeptical Jewish mother.

By the time I got home the bruise was a whole lot worse. My only hope was maybe after a good night's sleep it would be gone. Of course, that was pretty stupid thinking. And when I opened the door to our apartment, just my luck, there was my mother, waiting up for me.

"What did you do?!" she asked accusingly. "Were you in a fight? Who hit you?!" I tried to explain. "It happened at work at the stadium," I said. "One of the guys opened the big freezer door just as I was bending

down and the handle smacked me right in the head." I thought it was a perfectly good explanation, but I could tell my mother knew I was hiding something.

"We need to take you to the hospital," she said. "I want a doctor to check you out." But I managed to convince her I was OK. As I headed off to my room my mother said, "Sometimes I wonder just what you and your friend Dave are up to coming in so late."

The next morning the bruise on my forehead was uglier than it was the night before. When I sat down for breakfast, my mother told my stepfather we needed to go to the hospital. But that was the last thing I wanted. I knew if a doctor examined me, he'd probably figure the bruise wasn't from a door handle.

"Mom, it's OK," I said. "It's no big deal. I'm not the first guy in the commissary to get knocked in the head. It happens all the time." But I could tell she wasn't buying it. She insisted I needed medical attention and decided to make an appointment with our family doctor. Fortunately, my stepfather spoke up.

"Bess," he said. "C'mon! It's no big deal. It's just a bruise. It'll heal up. Forget about it."

To my relief, my mom backed down, and that broke the tension. No more discussion about my bruise. We talked a little about the Indians game (they lost) and then some reminders about what I needed to pack up for college. I asked my parents what they did while I was at work.

"We ordered pizza," my stepdad said. "Really delicious. And then we watched *McHale's Navy*. It was hilarious. Too bad you missed it."

*What good man would prefer a country covered with forests
and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic,
studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished
with all the improvements which art can devise or industry
execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and
filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion?*

*– Andrew Jackson’s Speech to Congress
on Indian Removal (December 6, 1830)*

Taken Before My Birth (Land Acknowledgment)

Artie Isaac

Before my forebears arrived,
this forest was home
to civilizations rich with culture,
nurturing and nurtured by the land:

Shawnee, Delaware, Potawatomi,
Miami, Wyandot, Seneca,
Chippewa, Ottawa, Wapakoneta,
and more than thirty-nine other Nations.

*

My hungry ancestors, on the run
– as invaders today, so have all long done –
reported this valley empty,
called the inhabitants savages,

claimed ownership
as birthright for the taking.
Take and take and take they took
– brutal, self-righteous, entitled.

*

Not yet here, I did not will this,
but dignity requires humility,
recognition that I have inherited
what was not my parents’ to bequeath.

Now, you and I stand on this land,
stake it as our own, our sacred right

land of the free

home of the brave

Lap(top) Day

Artie Isaac

*I cannot imagine a day without exercise
says a wiry friend.*

Whatever his personal fitness goal,
the sweat isn’t making him more pleasant.
I hope he outlives me with all his aerobics
so my absence at his funeral is excused.

Perhaps my powers of imagination
are buffer, more ripped, with greater stamina.
For I can surely imagine a day without exercise.
That day is called yesterday, today, tomorrow.

Oh, I get around, walk the Glen,
have placed around the house
weights and straps, a balancing step,
and a big blue half sphere,
which all remind me that I should
squat, lift, and stretch.
I’m a three-time Ta’i Chi School dropout,
but can summon up The Fundamentals
while waiting for a long sit on an airplane.
In the basement, not one,
but two exercise bicycles stand bridled,
locked in a perpetual, stationary race.

I conserve my deep breathing for meditation:
both mantra (which I can teach)
and carnal (forever an amateur hobbyist).

So today won’t be Legs Day here, except that –
when I had a sudden idea for this poem
– my legs walked me across the room
to the only exercise equipment I use,
because today is everyday: Verbs Day.

Love

John L. Herbold

It was years ago when I first saw her coming down the steep steps on the outside of the gray, two-storied office building, just across the busy, two-lane roadway from where I was working that day. It was a hot day. My sky blue T-shirt was wet with sweat.

She looked as cool as could be in her calico, spring-like dress. She moved easily. She floated down that stairway from step to step, like a leaf might float down a stream.

She must have seen something by the stair's landing. She paused for a moment to glance inquisitively to her left. I guessed that she may have been intrigued by the beautiful blooming hedge of red hibiscus flowers that lined the parking lot. The red flowers of that hibiscus were the exact same hue of redness as the feathers of a cardinal's body,

that is to say so deep and pure and stunning.

Her calico dress had no red colors in the print. It had a lot of black background to it. Against the brilliant red flowers and the deep rich green leaves of that hibiscus hedge, she, in that dress, stood out as if silhouetted by the moon.

But there was no moon that day. There was sunshine – hot sunshine. I was sweating from my labors. She was floating, like that leaf on the cool stream, as she made her way across the parking lot to the roadway.

I tried not to look...tried not to be obvious...tried not to pay attention. But I was intrigued.

I was so thoroughly attracted to this woman that all sense of what I was doing was lost in that stream in which she was floating. I was ready

to go over the waterfalls when she crossed the road towards me.

In her hand was one of the brilliant red hibiscus flowers. She was placing it in her hair, her lovely brown hair, behind her ear, as she walked by.

I looked aside, so as not to be staring, but not before I noticed a smile, a simple friendly smile on her face, directed at me. On her face, with the red flower above her ear, her mouth opened slightly. Her smile, sent in my direction, like the leaf that spins in the whirlpools of the stream, entered my brain through my eyes, just as I was turning aside, so as not to stare.

Now I was floating downstream. I was over the waterfalls as she was drifting into the doorway of the deli. She was going to get herself some lunch and I was left staring, as I plummeted over the falls.

The Old Man

Lee Huntington

The old man waited until everyone had left – his wife and daughter to church, his brother gone fishing, his grandchildren screaming at play in the neighbor's backyard.

He wasn't allowed to go up into the attic. Well, they didn't use the word "allow." They just kept the ladder in the garage where they knew he couldn't bring it into the house and take it up to the second floor where he'd have to climb the ladder and push up the door in the ceiling and then lift himself over

the edge onto the attic floor. There was something in the attic that he needed to destroy before he died. It was important.

He got the ladder as far as the house. He got it upstairs. He stood it on the floor beneath the trapdoor. He rested. Then, slowly, he mounted the ladder. Each step required him to lift his own weight. At the top he had to let go of the ladder so that his hands could push the ceiling panel up and sideways onto the attic floor. He nearly fell, twice, but

he managed to grab the bars that his son had installed and with those he was able to pull himself all the way in. He lay still, breathing in the air that was hot from the sun cooking the black roof. Light from the hallway below illuminated dust motes. He lay there for a long time, trying to regain his strength, planning how he could make his way across the splintery floorboards, thinking, trying to remember what the hell he had come up here for.

How to Survive a Crash

Peter Whitson

Actually, I don't like the title but I do like the wall plaque. It's a molded aluminum plaque of a pilot holding up a big propeller next to him. He has an old-fashioned flight suit that definitely is out of the thirties and forties. There are the remains of an airplane beside him. He made it through the crash. The plane did not. I took a picture of it, so you could get an idea of what I'm talking about.

He has a grin that at times looks smug and at times, more like astonished. I think the sculptor wanted it that way. There seems to be a high degree of ambiguity throughout the

piece and this helps to enhance its curiosity greatly. There is no indication there were other people involved in the crash. I think this was intentional. It helps draw the viewer to the event.

There is no name on the piece. This allowed me to give him my name. And this connects me to my brave little pilot. Him and me – it's all beginning to fall into place now. I'm saying to myself at this point, "This is everyone's crash." This is a universal crash! I'm saying it, but I'm not sure I believe it. How often do you crash a plane and live to tell about it – let alone walk away from it

unscathed, physically and mentally, holding the propeller yet?

And I wish that was the only thing strange about this work of art. Stranger yet, strange – this is really strange! I have no idea where it came from or how it came to be in my possession. Just one day it was there in my garage. Staring at me – ambiguous as hell! I wish I could say its appearance took me by surprise, but things have appeared suddenly in my garage for years.

And now that the aluminum pilot is here daring me to use logic and proportion that has fallen sloppily dead, I have to admit I am rather confused as to which way to go. (Do you remember what the Dormouse said?) Do I tell you it's best to accept life's crashes and hopefully survive like the little pilot did? I think that is what my father would say. My mother would probably have looked at it a bit differently. She would have said you have to fight for survival. And sometimes the fight is raging on your doorstep well before the alarm goes off.

I'm sure my little pilot didn't have much time to analyze his situation before he was right in it. And now my head is beginning to spin and, when that happens, it usually means I am trying too hard to think. And that usually means I am thinking way over my head.

Well... last month I crashed my airplane. Not all at once, but definitely a crash. Let me tell you about it.

It all started with a routine cardiac appointment at the VA Medical Center in Dayton. Although, at 83, there are no routine cardiac appointments, and today was going to prove that point! Unfortunately, the target was me. I was the one.



"What's the matter?" I said to the VA cardiac physician's assistant. "Is there something wrong with my EKG?" Not really wanting to hear what he was going to say next, I rephrased my question – "Is my EKG okay?" "No, it's not," he replied. I had to appreciate his candor, but it was also the only time I had heard a cardiac report like this since I had been under the care of the VA. That was many years ago. "I want to run some tests on you to develop baseline information," he added. "What kind of information?" I asked. I could feel my airplane start to shake, rattle, and roll. I was getting anxious and began shaking all over.

"There is something that doesn't look quite right." His voice was calm and quiet. To me it also sounded

cryptic. I don't think he intended it to be that way, but that's the way I heard it. When I get nervous, I start hearing things like music lyrics. I was aware of my increasing anxiety.

So who do I find with the right answers? Thankfully, in this circumstance, I've run into a bit of luck. My wife is a retired occupational therapist and my daughter is a registered nurse with years of cardiac experience. Both they and the VA were in agreement that the proper course of action is to wait for the test results, and then gather for consultation and evaluation. This is the path I have decided to follow. And just so you know, the music lyrics in my head have all but gone.

There is only one small glitch – the consultation meeting is scheduled

for the end of the month. That means I will not be able to provide you with the outcome of this story. But if you see me wandering around downtown, that in itself would be a good sign! Please feel free to ask, and I would be more than happy to tell you. By the way, the Dormouse said, "Feed your head." By following his advice, I hope your life and mine will be filled with safe landings.

One final note: I have had health care from the VA for many years. I could not ask for better medical care, and I recommend it highly. If you know a veteran who lacks good health care, keep in mind that the VA is available to all veterans. Give them a call – their number is 937-268-6511.

How I Met Greta Garbo

Anna Vandaca Hewes Hogarty

As a young child, I lived in New York City at 254 East 53rd, between Second & Third Avenues. On some Sunday mornings my mother, Anabel, and I would take a walk down Second Avenue. I don't remember my father, Alanson, or my little brother, Timmy, ever going with us. It was just the two of us, our special time together. On these walks, there was this one shop that I just loved. I knew exactly which block it was on and would run as fast as I could so I could stand in the entrance area while my mother continued walking slowly from the corner. I don't know exactly what was sold in this store, but hanging in the windows were all kinds of herbs and on display were various herbs and spices, teas and coffees from all over the world. The appeal

to me, as a little 6-year-old Taurus child, was the wonderful smells that emanated from the store.

This was the early '50s when almost every store was closed on Sundays. So I would be standing there all alone, with my nose pressed against the window, inhaling all the wonderful, pungent, sweet smells. I loved it. One morning, there I was, standing with my eyes closed, my nose pressed against the windowpane as I inhaled all the wonderful aromas. I heard a car drive up, stop by the curb, the door opened and closed. I opened my eyes and looked over my left shoulder to the curb where the taxi was idling. Standing next to the cab was a tall, slender woman in a full-length fur coat, which almost touched the pavement, big sunglasses that

seemed to cover her whole face, and a blue babushka totally covering her hair. She came walking toward the shop and stopped right next to where I was standing. She was just standing there, and it seemed to me that she was doing the same thing I was, enjoying the smells. I had never seen a fur coat up close before and I just couldn't resist touching it. The next thing I knew, my mother was nearing the shop entrance. The woman heard my mother's footsteps, turned and disappeared into the waiting taxi. My mother came over, knelt down and asked, "Did she say anything to you?" I replied, "No, but she smiled at me when I petted her coat."

Then Anabel smiled at me and said, "That was Greta Garbo."

Abba

Marna Street

Do you remember the day we went to get my first
full size violin?

It was snowing and gray
I was excited and chatty
climbing into your red VW bus
driving downtown, after school

You were warm and fun
Glad to share and be able to buy me
A German hand-made Hope violin
with dark chocolatey varnish

You flicked on the radio
"Ninety miles from our shore..."
Looking over, I saw you,
your life flashing before my eyes
in a shorthand I immediately deciphered
Childhood in Berlin during WWI
Bombs, Hunger
Then adulthood, gestapo, signs, NO JEWS Allowed
Camps, Death

You flicked back on the face
of the father I knew so well –
Strong, Survivor, my Protector
I knew my role instinctively;
I was not to show I had seen your terror

We went to get the violin
Celebrated, took it around
for all to see
It was apparent that this was
a rite of passage for my musical career,
but I am still learning the lessons of that day
about feelings, vulnerability, and parenthood

Two Haiku and a Rhyme

Sue T. Parker

Your face is a blur
Body language too late
Misunderstandings

Even before I
Couldn't see, I was
Blind to my own faults

If you are the doctor
And I can't see
Don't take your religion
Out on me!

History

Jo Ann Kiser

Strip miners razed our Kentucky home,
Dirt road leading to one-room school:
All that's gone now.
Tarpaper shack by Florida swamp
Has surely fallen and even if not
We won't find it walking backward.

Pear orchard that blooms still in our dreams
Has been paved, and pond where we played
After work has been filled in, butterfly bush
Torn away, wood house become cement block.
Farmhouse where we toiled and dreamed,
Barn roof from which we jumped,
Chicken coop where Old Cripple dwelled:
Cookie cutter houses now.

Our life implodes behind us, falls into abyss.
Memory's tragicomic dust blinds us.

Author Bios

Jane Blakelock is a 37+ year resident of Yellow Springs and a retired Senior Lecturer at Wright State University.

Linda Z. Chernick has been a writer since producing columns for her Springfield, Ohio, high school newspaper. Her chapbook, "The Turning" has been used in a course on grief. She has published other poems in "Ripples" and the newly published book "Little Black Box," a collection of speculative poems by Miami Valley poets. Linda is a member of the Tower Poets group founded by the late Conrad Balliet.

Abigail Cobb is a poet, grandmother, and retired nurse, who lives with her family in the Vale Community, just south of Yellow Springs, where they have lived for 36 years.

Joy Fishbain came to Yellow Springs in 1975 as a young nurse, after working for 7 years as an R.N. in her hometown of Columbus, Ohio. She and her late husband, Dr. Harold Fishbain, built a country home in 1981 just outside the village and raised their son there. She likes to dabble in writing about human experiences, and in using poetry to describe her love of nature.

Raised in Ohio, **Artie Isaac** is husband to Alisa and human to Margo (the dog). Artie writes poems and essays, teaches about ethical wills, and invites everyone to come to the Emporium on Mondays at 4 pm to write whatever they want. Questions? artieisaac@gmail.com

After **Henry Myers'** final assignment in Omaha, Henry, Ruth, and Jessica returned to Yellow Springs, where Henry opened Clockworks of YS in 1980.

Janeal Turnbull Ravndal married Chris in 1958. They worked, taught, and raised their three children in Quaker Communities before moving to Friends Care in Yellow Springs in 2006.

Jeff Simons has lived in Yellow Springs since 1980. He's an adjunct professor with the University of Maryland's Global Campus (UMGC). He's married to Amanda Wallace, who is an STNA at Friends Care Community. Together they have two adult children, Oliver Simons, his biological son (her stepson), and Lucas Chard, her biological son (his stepson).

Marna Street retired to Yellow Springs in the summer of 2018. A graduate of the Juilliard School, she played Principal Violist of the Cincinnati Symphony from 1980. She learned about Yellow Springs when she came to give master classes for Shirley Mullins and the late Mary Schumacher. Her quartet helped start Chamber Music Yellow Springs when its concerts were held at Kelly Hall under the auspices of Antioch College.



"Friends Care Pond" photo by Patti Dallas

A Walk in the Woods

Robert Paschell

We are walking,
my friend Jeannie and I,
through sun-dazzled snow.

Jeannie has spent a good part of her life
in Australia, and has forgotten snow.

But now a big-beamed snowy house has fallen all around us.
Snow folds over a log like a glittering seed-beaded blanket.

Ice glids the stream, veined and ribbed like fairy wings
in a playhouse prop room for giants.

As we approach a ½-frozen waterfall she is
making soft sounds, talking to herself in snowy delirium.

Tucking the scene around her like a shawl.

Walking to the grotto falls and back, one can't tell
if the light is coming out of the friendship, the snow, or the sun.