Dear Friends,

This third edition of SPOTLIGHT, our annual juried literary magazine, exemplifies the vision and talent of our members whose joy of learning is ever apparent, as is the joy of serving one another as teachers and learners. Our gratitude and thanks abound because so many submitted written and visual work for our editors, Arline Heimert and Kevin Clancy, to review. A Herculean task at best for them to read and compile, but they did it so well that this edition is well over one hundred pages!

Now, find an hour or two and enjoy reading and viewing the rich fruits of the labor of your friends and fellow students of the Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Take pride, as I do, knowing diversity is prevalent in our program; we are blessed to have a cadre of members who bring their spark of vitality to everything they do. Relax, share and savor their passion.

Thank you for your part in making Osher LLI the quality program it is. Congratulations to all of you.

My best always,

Marilyn Blumsack, Director
Tufts University
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

“The greatest thing a man can do in this world is to make the most possible out of the stuff that has been given to him. This is success, and there is no other.”
-Orison Swett Maraden

Thank you Medford Vocational High School Print Shop students, William Mahoney, Headmaster, Roy E. Belson, Superintendent of the Medford Public Schools

ON THE COVER:
MOSS GLEN FALLS
Dana MacDonald
Dear Colleagues –

Welcome to the third edition of SPOTLIGHT, the magazine for and by your fellow knowledge seekers at Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

As our newspapers bring us increasingly grim pictures of war, our economy, unemployment and a wrathful mother nature, isn’t it curative to meet Marie with purple shoes and burnished gold feather in her hair or to help deliver a calf in the old west, or to contemplate a lovely waterfall, a “cantaloupe moon” or visit St. Petersburg or an open air market in Bergen?

What a delightful way to be introduced to the person sitting beside you in class who may have netted radioactive fish from aboard a minesweeper in the Pacific in anticipation of Atomic bomb tests or who fantasizes about dropping bowling balls instead of bombs on Vietnam. How nice to be able to share delight in Gershwin or the Etruscans or a fresh view of nature.

We thank our contributors for bringing such a splendid variety of perspectives, visions, and ideas with which to enrich our lives and stretch our own knowledge and sensibilities. We also thank Elizabeth Mahaffy for her immeasurable assistance in putting us and SPOTLIGHT together as well as Lisa Verdile who wasn’t supposed to help but did anyway, and, of course, the incomparable and invaluable Marilyn Blumsack, who opened doors and oh-so-gently twisted arms and demanded nothing but the best.

We hope that these writings, photographs, sketches and paintings will inspire you to further your own creativity and thirst for greater knowledge; and that whatever this might inspire could become part of Volume IV. We urge all to release their creative geniuses and submit their work to SPOTLIGHT.

Meanwhile place a copy of SPOTLIGHT on your coffee table for your friends and family to see. Quite possibly your children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews will see your name and ask questions about your life – where you’ve been and what you’ve done – beginning a new dialogue. We can always hope.

Above all we hope you have enjoyed SPOTLIGHT. We welcome ideas, suggestions and yes, even criticism.

With special thanks to all our contributors – including those whose works, alas, did not make it into these pages,

Arlene Heimert
Kevin Clancy
SPOTLIGHT Editors
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Life these days is quite a ride---
    off-kilter
    speeding
unrelenting change
May I please get off now?

Diagnosis, testing,
deny, accept, watch, wait,
grab the moment
as we barrel up and down
the tracks seeking balance
but then another whiplash---
From steady progress,
skyward views
with hope infused,
    we plunge
again
    to earth.

An un-chosen ride
with few straight-a-ways,
little time to catch a breath---
A force unseen runs this show,
leaves us dangling
between hope and despair
denial and death...
    yet once again,
we rise.
Last summer, I sold my home of twenty-one years and downsized. Encouraged by my husband to give away or sell our substantial library, I consigned hundreds and hundreds of books to our “estate sale” managed by a professional agent. She advised me to cherry pick my favorite volumes and simply walk away from the rest. While I knew I would only fetch pennies on the dollars of my literary estate, I had no idea the emotional return my college text on nineteenth century British literature would actually yield.

Naturally, packing up from two decades of parenting my two sons in 6,000 square feet was a road trip down Memory Lane. The emotional inventory of my house sale had me dual accounting all we had experienced in this beautiful home. “Credits” included extraordinary neighbors, gracious parties, numerous happy rotations in the circle of middle class life. One major “debit” I regretted was that my father had died thirty years ago and thus, he never knew me as an adult, as a mother or as a mistress of the manor.

A week before we were to leave our home, I told my husband, “I’m so sad…. I don’t have anything with my father’s handwriting on it. I can remember his voice, his looks, but not how he wrote.” My father had died of a heart attack at age 58 when I was 27. Because I had gone to Simmons and Brown and then lived at home and in the same town when married, I believed I had no letters from Dad since he’d always been nearby.

The night of our final walk through the estate agent called my cell. The book buyer of my college British Lit book had just contacted her and was returning some important notes she had discovered in her purchase. She thought I might want them back. Just imagine how I felt when nestled in a Spring, 1971 English class syllabus I found the following note:

“Dear Denise, [my father had written] Just a note to let you know I have not forgotten you, and love you dearly.
Mother told me you needed money for a book and the rest is for you. 
Hoping to see you real soon.
Your loving Dad,
T.J.D.”

Today, I have this letter framed and enshrined in my dressing room – a written reminder of what I tell my boys all the time: “Love never, ever goes away.” While it is addressed to me, I believe this message is for all of us so I have Xeroxed it for friends and relatives who miss a loved one now gone. I found my father in a book. I am so grateful to have him back.
As Jim Dooley started down Grove St. his mailbag over his shoulder, he found himself softly singing his favorite tune “The Last Rose of Summer.” Walking with measured steps, slow and steady, over the mail route he had covered for the last thirty years, his mind ranged over his life, his loves, and his sorrows.

It seemed like only yesterday that instead of walking his route he used to trot it. Young and healthy, proud of his strong legs and iron lungs, he could deliver his mail on the run in half the time of the previous carrier or, as far as that goes, in half the time of any other postman at the branch office. Although his admiring fellow carriers called him “Flash” Dooley, he was an object of suspicion for his supervisors. But he also had a quick come back that silenced his detractors at least momentarily.

“Geesh, Jimmy, you’re amazing!! Three hours for the whole route. Christ, kid, you’ll have to have two routes to keep you busy” said Ben Acorn.

“Hey, Flash, how about taking my route as well as your own?” piped in Joe Nasonsky.

“Jimmy boy, you should be in some record book!” yelled Mike Deeming.

Coming out of the office and beckoning him to enter the office the manager said, “Dooley, I’d like to speak to you.”

“Yes, sir?”

“Dooley, no one can work route #12 as fast as you do and do a good job,” said the manager.

“But sir have ye heard of any complaints? Sure, don’t I always deliver the mail to the right address?”

“Just slow down, Dooley,” said the manager patting him on his shoulder without smiling.

Although he did not slow down for about ten years, he learned not to go to the post office after completing his route until a respectably sufficient time had elapsed. In the interim he would sit in
the park reading the paper or feeding the birds. No more of that now. Now he was lucky if he got done before the post office closed for the day.

As he sat on a bench in the old days killing time he would remember his youth in Dublin, his dream of going to America, and of making his family proud of him. But things had not worked out as he had planned. His marriage to a Boston woman failed, his parents resented his going to America, and his son Shawn, a petty criminal, and he were hardly on speaking terms.

Me boy, are ye really in trouble again? God, ye will be the death of me! What would your sainted mother say to ye? Sure herself is turning over in her grave. Shawn, what do ye think yer doin’ with yer life? Don’t leave! Christ lad, talk to me! Don’t walk out!

His only joy and pride for many years was his work, his speedy and accurate delivery and now even that was leaving him. Now he was slow and made many more mistakes. “Oh, for me youth!” he thought. On the other hand, he still enjoyed his work but in a different way. He liked to stop and chat with people and savor passing through the neighborhood as he walked along on his daily deliveries.

For a split second he almost started to trot as he used to. He could feel a strong impulse to do so but he restrained himself. “No, Dooley, ol’ boy, yer trottin’ days are gone,” he said to himself as he turned into the path leading to the Schneck’s house. Jim reached into his bag and pulled out the Schneck’s mail: a postcard from South America, a bill from the telephone company, a couple of pieces of junk mail. He pushed the mail through the slot in the door, and started to walk away when the door opened. It was Mrs. Schneck.

“Why good morning, Mr. Dooley!” said Mrs. Schneck cheerily.

“Mornin’ Mrs. Schneck!……Say, I couldn’t help seein’ the card from South America. Is it from Mary? How is the darlin’?”

“Yes, it is. She is pretty good, I think.” she said quickly scanning the card. “But I fear she will not be coming home for awhile. I miss her so.”
“I do too. She was one of me favorite children on the route,” he said remembering how he would take a break to sit down and talk to the dark haired serious little girl on the Schneck’s front steps. He followed her career with interest as she got her PhD in Anthropology and visited exotic and distant places.

“Good morning, Mr. Dooley,” said Mary, sitting on the steps reading a book.

“Top of the mornin’ to ye me darling’” said Jim. “What are ye reading today?” he asked as he sat down on steps and looked over her shoulder.

“It’s a book about Indians in South America. I wish I could go there and learn all about them,” she said with a distant and longing look in her eyes.

“Why Saints preserve us! Why shouldn’t ye? A brilliant colleen like yourself could be about anything she liked. Why my girl someday ye could write books like that!”

“But mom says I should get married, and have children?” Mary said pensively.

“Does she now? Well why could ye not do both? Sure tell yer lovely mom that marriage and having children is not for everyone and is not as grand as they say. I should know, darlin’!”

“Mr. Dooley, what should I do? You have given me such good advice in the past. I would value it now. Should I insist that she come home? As you know Mr. Schneck is not well and doesn’t have long to live.”

“No, I don’t think so,” he said recalling of his own experience with Shawn. “She’s a grand girl, and has her own life. Let the darlin’ alone and let herself come in her own way. No, pressure unless ye want to lose her forever!”

After Mrs. Schneck thanked him he continued on his route. An hour later Jim Dooley turned on Short St. and started up the path to Oswald’s house. Sitting at a corner of the house tears streaming down his face was little Tim Oswald.

“Timmy ol’ sport, what ails ye?” said Jim going over to the boy. Tim pointed to his red wagon whose right front wheel had come off and was lying on the grass.
“Mommy said it’s my fault,” said Tim crying even more loudly.

“Your fault? Heaven be praised! Not a bit of it! Why it’s the leprechauns!”

“What are leprechauns?” said Tim who stopped crying.

“Why they’re littl’ green men that do bad things but ye can’t see them for they are make themselves invisible. I think they played a trick on ye and made yer wheel come off. But we can put that right again quick as anythin’.”

“Really, Mr. Dooley?”

“Of course, ol’ lad. I’m goin’ to have a talk with the head leprechaun and tell him to leave me Timmy alone ‘cause he is a fine lad.”

Jim Dooley proceeded to crawl around on his hands and knees searching the lawn around the area where the wheel came off. Finding the missing washer and pin, he produced a small utility tool from his pocket and put the wheel back on.

“Gee thanks, Mr. Dooley,” said Tim beaming.

“Just one thing, ol’ chum. Better not tell yer mom about the leprechauns. She might not believe ye!” So saying Jim winked at Tim and proceeded on his route.

He soon came to the small park where he used to pass the time by daydreaming before he returned to the post office. Yes, it was here that he had met Sharon. Sitting on a bench reading, she seemed out of place – as if she belonged in a hospital ward and not a public park. It was unclear what about her attracted him. She was thin and pale and not well dressed. But there was something about her dark and sad eyes that drew him towards her like a magnet. He fell in love with her at first sight and even now her presence and fragrance lingered in his memory.

“Pardon me miss, but do ye mind if I sit on this bench?” Jim said as he approached the young woman.
She looked a little startled but managed a weak smile and said, “No, of course not.”

“It would be grand, miss, if ye shared me lunch with me. If ye don’t mind me saying so miss, ye look as if ye might be a bit hungry.”

“I’m not really hungry. I have been very sick and don’t have much of an appetite. But you are very kind to offer.”

“I hope I am not too bold for askin’ miss but I would be pleased to take ye to the pictures—if ye don’t have other plans. Me name is Jimmy Dooley. Some of me friends call me Flash.”

She laughed softly. “Well, Jimmy Dooley, you work fast. I can see why your friends gave you your nickname. I would be pleased to go to the movies. My name is Sharon Gilbert.”

As he gazed at the park bench where they first met, tears filled his eyes and his throat felt constricted. The memory was too painful. Married in just three weeks, Sharon was in and out of mental institutions from the beginning of their marriage and eventually took her own life. After his mother’s death, Shawn was constantly in trouble and ran away from home in his teens to join the Navy. But after two years he was dishonorably discharged and returned to civilian life. He soon was in trouble with the law: armed robberies, auto thefts, burglaries. Yes, Shawn even burglarized a house on his route. Jim was so ashamed.

“Not much mail today” said Jim as he handed Mr. Adams two pieces of mail.

“Lots of excitement last night” said Mr. Adams looking Jim straight in the eye.

“Ye don’t say!” said Jim apprehensively.

“My house was burglarized. But the police caught the thief running away.”

Jim was silent.
“The kid’s name was Dooley—Shawn Dooley. Any relation?” asked Mr. Adams.

“Yes, sir. He’s me son. I am so sorry,” as he turned and walked down the walk.

For years afterward he hated to deliver mail to the Adams’ house. He would quickly slip the mail in the box and hurry away, his eyes lowered. Once Mr. Adams came out and said “Good Morning” and Jim mumbled a reply trying not to make eye contact. Jim was not sorry when the Adams moved away. Yet even now he still dreaded delivering mail to this house although the Adams have been gone for years. As he turned down Oak Street on the last leg of his route – passing the old Adams house – Jim was thankful that today the new owners had no mail.

Looming in the distance on the corner of Oak and School Streets was the Jefferson’s former house. Shortly after Sharon’s suicide, Mr. Jefferson had died after a long bout of cancer. Janet Jefferson and Jim would commiserate together when Jim handed her mail at her front door. Jim could tell that Janet liked him and he was not surprised when she invited him to dinner. Their dinner meetings became a regular part of Jim’s life. But for several reasons things between them never worked out. There was no doubt that Janet was ready to marry him. Indeed, one night after dinner she actually proposed.

“Jim,” she said, “now that Sharon is gone, what are you going to do with yourself?”

“Well, I guess I will continue me mail route and do pretty much as I have done.”

“No, I mean with your private life!” she said smiling.

“Me private life? How d’you mean?”

“What about getting married again?”

“Sweet Jesus! Janet, why would I want t’doo that with Herself barely in the grave?”
“I don’t mean tomorrow! Anyway it has been over a year, Jim!”

“Janet, married life for me was not all that grand. Sure I wouldn’t I
have to be daft to try it again?”

“But it need not be that way again. Married life has been rough for
both of us. . . . I am willing to take another chance if you are.”

“Are ye saying that you and me should get married?” he said in
amazement.

“Yes, dear, that’s what I am saying,” she said touching his hand.

For one thing, Jim was not ready. For another Janet was an
educated woman and Jim was not even a high school graduate. Although
Janet did not seem to mind the differences in their education, Jim did. Realizing Jim was sensitive on this point she
suggested that he go back to school and eventually to college. She
would subsidize his education. But this offer created more anxiety in
Jim’s mind. Janet was by Jim’s standards quite wealthy while Jim
was just scraping by on his postman’s salary. That she would have
the money to send him to school threw into bold relief a further
difference between them.

Yet despite all these things he was sorely tempted to marry her. He liked her enormously. That this lovely, kind and accomplished
woman had any interest in him was a source of amazement and
wonder. He could see that she would be very good for him and could
foresee that his life with her would be a happy one. But he could not
bring himself to accept her proposal and after over two years of
indecision, they drifted apart and she moved out of state.

He paused in front of the old Jefferson house imagining how
things might have been, feeling a lump in his throat and a deep sense
of sadness. Here he was close to retirement with little to look forward
to except inactivity and boredom, his son a criminal and object of
shame, his marriage to Sharon a failure, his last opportunity for
happiness with Janet lost, and his old friends dead. A refrain from
“The Last Rose of Summer” came to his mind:
“When true hearts have withered and fond ones have flown. Oh, who
could inhabit this bleak world alone?”
As he started up the path to the last house on his route he saw little Sally Cornford sitting on the steps of her porch. She had her checker board set up, waiting for him to arrive.

“Want to play a game of checkers, Mr. Dooley?” said Sally.

“Why, of course, darlin’! Sure haven’t I been lookin’ forward to a game all day with the best checker player on me route?”

As he took his bag off his shoulder he felt a sharp searing sensation down his left arm and a crushing pain in his chest. He collapsed dead on the path five feet from the mailbox with an envelope containing the Cornford’s telephone bill still in his hand.
“Arrf, arrf, arrf.” The sound makes me sit bolt upright in bed. Now quiet again. Maybe I was dreaming about a dog barking, I think as I lay back down. “Arrf, arrf, arrf, Mom- arrf.” The last sounds throw me into high gear. I slide my feet into my slippers and grab my bathrobe. Half running down the hallway I try to jam my arms into the sleeves. The full moon shines through the window and lights my way down the hallway towards the barking sound.

“Arrf, arrf” continues and then stops for a second when I open my son’s bedroom door. The moonlight makes a path to his bed. His three-year old eyes look large and owl-like glimmering in the light. When he sees me he raises his arms in the universal “pick me up” sign. I pick him up and feel him relax slightly. His Blue’s Clues pajamas that we picked out only a few hours ago are sweaty and stuck to his body. His breathing is labored and every time he takes in a breath he sounds like a badly played clarinet. Croup with stridor: I know that is what the cough is called and even the name for the funny-sounding breathing. Earlier in the day at work as a pediatrician, I had seen four or five kids with the same illness. Runny nose for a day or so, then a barking cough and fever with a sudden onset almost always in the middle of the night. It seems so run-of-the-mill at work. Most kids get over the croup virus in a few days like a regular cold. Some need medicine to stop the coughing fits, but most respond to some hot moist air. My brain tries to reassure my sleepy body as I hastily carry my sweating, coughing, frightened child to the bathroom.

“It’s OK; you’re going to be OK, Mommy’s here, shhhhh,” I repeat partly for my benefit.

I turn on the shower and close the bathroom door. The moon shines through the small window so I leave the light off. Steam quickly fills the room. I sit cross-legged on the floor, Jason in my lap with his head on my shoulder. His breathing is starting to even out, but it’s not time to leave just yet. I feel my eyes start to slowly droop. My body has relaxed now too. The adrenaline pumping through my veins instructing
me what to do seeps slowly out and mingles now with the steam floating near the ceiling.

Groggy, I get to my feet. With one hand I hold onto Jason and with the other lean over the bathtub to shut off the faucet. I grab a face cloth and wipe him off. I can’t tell anymore if he has a fever or whether his sweat is from the steamy bathroom. We make our way together down the hallway to his room. He barely moves when I place him on his bed and pull up the covers. I go back to the hallway and open the closet and grope around for a pillow and blanket. I know it won’t be long before he is coughing again. Back in his room I lie down on the floor and cover myself. I listen to his breathing, calm now. I lay awake for a long time.
INTO THE NIGHT

Jane Katims

It terrorizes my family, appears at dawn, flies briefly, ghostly, through our upstairs hallway, then oddly disappears. When the Animal Control Man, Mr. Greg Latang, comes, he finds no trace of the intruder. “The bat could be anywhere,” he says with a cavalier toss of his arm. “In the closet -- between your dresses, even.” Then off Mr. Latang goes.

My husband and kids desert me, too. I am alone in the house, except, of course, for the bat. Where would I go, if I were a bat? As I stand in the upstairs hallway, I look up. On the large, wooden ceiling beam hangs the bat, upside down and asleep. It’s a fuzzy little thing. How quickly, I wonder, can Mr. Latang get back here?

I call and wait. I drink a shot-glass of bourbon. I don’t like hanging with a bat.

Latang has special gloves. He’s tall, no ladder necessary. With one of his gloved hands, he picks off the diminutive animal. As Latang peels it from the beam, the bat clicks loudly and continues to click – klklklklklklklk. Latang carries it through the front door. I follow. “Go, go, GO!” I screech, pushing Latang and the caught creature toward the parked truck at the curb.

The next day on the phone, I ask Latang, “So what did you do with the bat?”

He says, “Destroyed.”

I’d like to tell you about Harry, and what happened three years ago. Harry was eighty-two then, and for several years he’d been in the literature class I teach in Watertown at the Adult Education Center there.

Harry’s a lean, distinguished man, medium height with extremely kind eyes and a soft, hoarse voice. Our class was studying the Literary Minimalists. Harry comes in late. He apologizes for interrupting. Harry finds a seat at the long rectangular table, his intelligent eyes focusing on class members as they comment. We are discussing Raymond Carver
stories – one called “Feathers,” and two others, “A Small, Good Thing,” and “Where I’m Calling From.”

“There’s an eerie quality to the stories,” says one young woman.

“I feel compassion for the characters in Carver’s stories,” says another student. “They don’t have a grasp on their lives. And the endings!”

Suddenly -- a furious knock on the classroom door.

A woman wearing a white smock, an apron-y thing over her jeans, and a wool turtleneck stands rigid at the threshold of my classroom, glaring. Her hair sticks up straight. A voice to match. She says, “I need to talk to one of your students – right now!”

“What’s the deal?” I say.

“My life-drawing class – with models—is right down the hall. It’s a discreet class. This guy, your student, he came right in. We don’t like voyeurs.”

“Oh, I see.”

“I want to talk to that guy,” she says, looking at Harry and pushing me slightly. “He’s obviously after an eyeful!”

I may be a coward with bats, but as a teacher, I’m The Boss. I shove her back. I’ll show this smock-bedecked wise-ass. “I’ll handle Harry,” I say.

“Lucy, my model, was very upset,” continues the art teacher, maneuvering her way into our classroom. She points at Harry. “I want to speak to YOU.”

Harry, flustered, rises from his seat. I wave my arm at him and say, “Harry, no! Sit down!” But he walks to the door, which I try to block. Harry looks me in the eye and says, “Please.” I reluctantly move aside. Harry walks out of the classroom and down the hall with the stiff-backed art teacher. I follow with my eyes. Harry is bent over; the art teacher’s head is bobbing as she yaks self-importantly.
Damn. Why should Harry be subjected to this indignity! What should I do? My students are waiting for me to return, so I go back into our classroom. We finish our discussion of the Carver stories and then move on to two stories by Richard Ford -- “Under the Radar” and “Winterkill.”

Finally, Harry comes back into the classroom.

“So, what happened?” I ask him. “We all want to know.”

“I got lost,” he says. “I mean, I wandered into her room. Lately, in many ways, I’m losing it. The other evening, I got all mixed up in Arlington trying to drive to Trader Joe’s to pick up soup noodles for my wife, Eleanor. But,” he smiles shyly, “I don’t want to stay home. I love the stories. Even if I get Ford mixed up with Carver. In my head, all the characters meet happily in some Netherworld, or Neverland – it’s fine. I don’t want to stay home,” he repeats, and then adds with a wink, “Too bad I didn’t get a peek at that model.”

The next week Harry does not come to class. He never returns. Things have become too confusing for him. Call it senility, or Alzheimers, whatever. He is taken from us, even though he wants to stay, and even though we want him. But, as the poet Dylan Thomas says, Harry does “not go gentle into that good night.” Harry puts up a fight. As I do. I send him stories -- by Tobias Wolff, Ann Beattie, Amy Hempel, and even Lydia Davis – long after he permanently leaves the class. I call him often. He thanks me with grace. But one day, he says, “I’m just too far gone.”

It’s been three years since Harry attended my class and two-and-a-half years since I’ve spoken to him on the phone. Frankly, my busy life has precluded thinking much about Harry. One day follows the next. I work at my job, I care for my family, and I fill the rest of my time doing stuff -- renewing my driver’s license, shopping at Shaw’s Market and shoveling snow in the driveway.

But since that morning when Latang picked the bat off the ceiling, my mind is etched with mysterious tracings of sudden disappearances. And, a curious and irresistible longing drives me. I constantly look up at the wooden beam, hoping to see some small, living creature there. And now, too, I often think of Harry.
When I’m alone in the house, as I am now, I keep the radio blasting. I want the buzz of human voices to occupy the emptiness. Here in the kitchen, on WBUR, someone talks about football players’ head injuries – the helmets, it seems, do not provide adequate protection. Blah, blah, blah. Upstairs, the television is on. CNN spews details about the death of Anna Nicole Smith. Even as I tell this story, I take comfort in hearing about Anna’s former suicide attempts and her adorable baby whose paternity was in question and whose future is uncertain. Sensational reporting. It swoops down on me. I welcome it. The swirl and drama are crucial. So, too, is the swoop of the dark, black bat. And the singular shadow of Harry.
POIGNANCY

Claire Flynn

Sun splashes through the tiny window
Stirring dust motes on the old maple chair.
The old woman was sipping tea –
English breakfast.
Staring at the chair, images of the past
Enveloped her mind’s eye.
Sitting on a yellow phone book,
Spindly legs barely reaching the top rung,
Sat a little boy slurping Cheerios with an oversized spoon
My son, the toddler, the love of my life!
The old woman stared.

A catcher’s mitt, folded like a mussel,
Lay by the chair.
Tousled hair, a bright red shirt, eyes
Shining with excitement, “We won. We won!”
My son, the little leaguer, the love of my life!
The old woman stared.

Gangling marionette legs wrapped like a ribboned
Maypole around the chair.
Furrowed brow, wry mouth trying to penetrate
The mystery of calculus.
My son, the student, the love of my life!
The old woman stared.

Back ramrod straight with muscles rippling
Like small waves through the sleeves of
His uniform. Shiny brass buttons illuminated
The pride and courage in his eyes.
My son, the soldier, the love of my life!
The old woman stared.

Her reverie heightened by the sharp ringing of a bell
Heard long ago
Two young men, sorrow flowing from their eyes,
Handed her a triangular flag.
My son, the hero, the love of my life!
Old woman stared….
"Did you see the monthly tonnage report?" Valdez blurted out as we approached my stateroom. "I've got a theory that they don't teach in War College". It had been an extremely nasty night off the ship with 5 foot seas and a low foggy mist hanging around. I wanted to get my "G" suit off and debrief. I offered him an invitation since my roommate "Twitch" was out flying. "Take a load off and we'll figure this out". I looked around the steel-walled state room and all I saw was gunmetal gray and lots of it. It made my head swim. Maybe it was the slamming sound of the hydraulic pumps catapulting the second wave of aircraft.

Being a junior Lieutenant I didn't rate the best room on the aircraft carrier but a room next to hydraulic pumps was gritting on my nerves. Every 42 seconds there was a gnashing, screeching sound of the catapult cylinder hitting the end of its stroke. We would stop talking just before the stroke knowing it was coming. There was nothing cheery about my temporary home sweet home these last eight months except for the picture of my wife on my desk rattling around.

Valdez continued as soon as he entered the room, "The report says a thousand tons of bombs have been dropped over the North, not including the part of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. Do you think the Air Force is trying to look stupid?" I chimed in my simple observation. "Every flight, all I see are the same trees knocked down and the holes we made in the dirt roads filled with rain water. You lock the door and I'll buy tonight."
"Here's the theory." Valdez started to finish his original thought, "If we had dropped the same tonnage of bowling balls with no finger holes into the rice paddies of North Vietnam from the beginning of this damn war the Viet Cong would have surrendered years ago and would still be trucking those balls to the coast."

I opened the safe on my desk meant for storing secret documents and out came the bottle of Chivas Regal. I had picked up a large bucket of ice for this debriefing. Chivas over ice had a nice golden hue to it and as I brought it up to my nose it had the effect of an ammonia stick and I shook my head. It's four in the morning and still a humid 81 degrees outside. The air conditioning was working overtime in my room and I shivered as the scotch slid down my throat. The midnight flying was going to kill me, not the surface to air missiles they fired at us every night. We'd been out to sea for thirty four days straight and I was getting tired.

"What the hell are we doing here?" I said "The Air Force gives us shitty targets every night. By the time we get the mission planned the Viet Cong move the ammo depot down the road and we knock down trees again. I feel like I'm in the lumber and swimming pool business."

My flight suit was still wet from the sweat in places so I moved around and pulled the nomex material away from my skin. It had been another night flight and my landing hadn't been stellar. The Landing Signals Officer had told me I was high in the beginning, low in the middle and needed power over the ramp. All true but I had made a save at the ramp, grabbed a wire with my hook and was back aboard. It's not so bad they're shooting SAMs at you as having to listen to the LSO rant about your landing every night.

"You want another?" I said as Valdez clinked his ice around an empty glass. "Yea, I have more to say about that ridiculous Air Force tonnage report." I figured it would take two scotches. "Then drink up and let's hear it." I lit my third cigarette in as many minutes. I wasn't chain smoking but it was close. The scotch was taking effect and the nicotine was kicking in so I unzipped my flight suit a little bit and took a deep breath. We had been out at sea so long I couldn't remember the good times I'd just had in Hong Kong. Get up, do paperwork, eat, bomb, sleep again, wake up to the screams of the hydraulic pumps. Was this ever going to end?
Valdez was on a roll now, "The skipper said not to hang around the target. Go in, get the job done, and come out. Don't get complacent about planning, missions and carrier landings." I added the obvious, "He's got 5,000 hours flying and 300 carrier landings so I think he knows what we're thinking or not thinking, gimme a light."

I'm thinking of my wife waiting in the Philippines not knowing when and if we're coming home. I want to go home. My wife reads the real newspapers and listens to other than Armed Forces Radio. She never thought much of President Nixon and now I'm coming on board with her. Here we are frustrated as hell and putting our lives on the line and they're arguing about the shape of the peace table in Paris.

My mind wanders as Simon and Garfunkel sing "Sounds of Silence" on the ship's radio.

"And the people bowed and prayed
To the neon god they made
And the sign flashed out its warning
In the words that it was forming
And the sign said, ‘The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls
And tenement halls’
And whispered in the sounds of silence"
MARIE

Claire Flynn

She wears purple shoes.
When it suits her, she is festooned in lilac
With a burnished gold feather in her hair.
    I love her craziness!

Her heart is full and fertile
As a well tended garden.
Her cornflower eyes twinkle and
Her crooked grin belongs to everyone.
    I love her craziness!

“Grab a bottle of merlot,” she’ll say.
“Let’s go to the beach and watch for mermaids.”
One morning we climbed a steep hill
In pitch blackness to be on time for the
Glorious sunrise.
    “Alleluia, Alleluia,” she sang as the sun rose.
    I love her craziness!

REGRET

Claire Flynn

Regret
Rides the cusp of despair.
Leaden boots mired in thick sludge.
Inky, black starless nights
Darken the depths of the soul.
Oh blessed forgetfulness,
    Where are you?
Shall I drink from the chalice of hemlock?
When Arabella was a child she didn’t much like adults - possibly because the adults around her didn’t like her much either. Nor did other children particularly like her – perhaps because she was so thin, shy and awkward.

Having a beautiful golden haired baby sister, who seemed to be much more beloved then she, rather soured Arabella not just on sisters but on the baby dolls that adults kept insisting on giving her. Even pre-sister she had already disliked dolls because they seemed so stupid, so helpless. She did however, love stuffed animals. Animals, she knew, could be trusted and they loved one unconditionally.

So immediately if she was given a baby doll, she stripped it of all its finery and used it’s clothes to adorn her animals. Thus Xenobia the Zebra with long eyelashes got the crown. Oblomov, the ever-drowsy bear, of course got the nightgown. Androcles, the lion, got the shoes simply because they fit his paws and so on. The animals had a wonderful life with her: they had tea with the tiny tea set on miniature furniture; the smaller ones lived in the large doll house, many of the others got snuggled in her bed in regular rotation, and all were covered on cold winter nights whether they slept in the doll house, the baby carriage or on her sofa. She tried to teach them math- especially the concepts she wasn’t quite sure of, and she read them Thornton Burgess, the “Just So Stories,” “The Wind in the Willows” and all the Babar books.

As she grew older the animals became slightly less central to her life. They were replaced, in fact, first by Wonder Woman Comics, then Nancy Drew and finally movie star magazines. She tried to have crushes on various movie stars as her classmates did, but in her heart she knew her crushes were false – simulated to be part of the crowd.

The beloved animals got shoved further and further back in her closet and finally, when she went off to college and was told to clean out her room, one by one she hugged each of her animals, told them she would be back soon and laid them carefully into a trunk lined with mothballs.
Only Jezebel, the maroon-maned lion with slanted green eyes and seductive maroon eyelashes stayed out of the trunk and went to college with her, sleeping in her bed and listening to her secret woes.

After college came a career, then a husband, then a variety of careers chosen to fit around her husband's somewhat migratory medical research job and increasing health needs. There were no children. Neither of them really wanted the bother.

Arabella's chosen work involved animal shelters. Everyone agreed that she was wonderful with the abused animals she worked with but that she was less good with the humans that wanted to adopt them. She found fault with all of them and communicated her suspicions of anyone's ability to nurture the animals as well as she. She experienced each adoption as a personal loss rather than as a testament to her success at restoring trust in badly treated animals.

Her husband was in medical research – research that sometimes used animals in very cruel ways. Their few dinner parties tended to be fraught with tensions between the shelter people she knew and the researchers who were his friends. Sometimes she wondered how she and her husband had ever gotten together, much less married each other. They were rarely invited back to other people's dinner parties. That sometimes bothered her, but her husband didn't seem to mind at all – he really didn't like going out.

Despite their differences, when her husband died – after suffering one gangrenous amputation after another because of his diabetes - his death left a huge hole in her life. Not only had she given up her job to take care of him but also, due to their peregrinations and his lengthy illness, most of their friends had seeped out of their life. Hospitalization and invalidism – even second hand - were not things most people wanted to hear about.

Although at one point she had a fairly full life, she had moved too often, too many friends had died or just disappeared and now her life was barely peopled at all. The fullness of her life had withered like a pricked balloon.

Her mother died not long after her husband; and with her mother's death arrived an ancient trunk that helped fill the void her husband's death had left. When she opened it, what to her wondering eyes should appear but all her stuffed animals from childhood. Silly, she knew, but it
warmed her heart to hug once again Alexander Aardvark, Adolph Anteater, Hortense and Harry Hippo, Richard the lionhearted, Buffalo Bill, Randy Rhino – the whole old crowd

Now it was true that her mind was much richer and better populated now than it had been when she was a child – outfitted with a myriad of human characters, who not infrequently bumped into each other, took over each other’s identities, wore each other’s clothes and even fought for her attention. Sometimes she confused the people in her mind.

But she was also much lonelier because most of these people were long gone from her physical orbit and lived only in her mind, and she really didn’t want to try to locate them or even lay them to rest with imaginary destinies.

Bit by bit her animals took over her life. At least they were real – in the sense of being physical presences. She could talk to them, hold them, scold them, or if necessary, banish them to the closet or under the bed.

Jezebel, for instance, the seductress lion who had stayed with her all these years, whose beauty was fading but who still considered herself irresistible to the opposite sex - well Jezebel had to be watched so she wouldn’t wander off to the nearest bar and possibly get drunk and pregnant. And Oblomov the black bear with sleeping sickness had to be wakened intermittently or he would starve. And Ursula the golden bear also had to be watched carefully or she would steal Arabella’s honey right out of the jar.

It became almost a full time job to watch out for all these animal’s needs, and as Arabella grew older and less and less physically capable, she became increasingly aware that her menagerie, much as she loved them was becoming more and more out of control.

She would hear angry quarrelling and see evidence of fights. Food disappeared and the house seemed to get torn apart when she slept—she would find her clothes on the floor, sometimes even the water left running, her pills scattered, her Metamucil in a horrid sticky puddle on the edge of her sink. It was even worse when she went out – say to her doctor’s or food shopping. She would come home and find dirty toilet paper strewn around her bathroom, soap powder all over her kitchen, dirty bowls slopped on various tables or on the floor – she could hardly
keep up with the mess the animals made. The worst part was that they never did these things within her sight – so she never knew who to blame.

It got so she hardly dared to go out any more. Not to the opera, which she used to enjoy, not to the movies, not to have an occasional lunch with an acquaintance, not even to go to the doctor or the grocery store. She was afraid the animals might hurt each other and she was certainly afraid of the damage she would find when she got back.

She wished she could put one of the animals in charge – but there was no one to be trusted: Utter Otter was too small and slippery, Atta Otter was too playful, Androcles the lion like most males of his species was too lazy – he just lay around all day waiting for his tummy to be rubbed, Sally Seal had already left the water running and was much too dithery, Harrison Hippo, at least she thought it was he, had already caused a small fire by leaving a potholder too close to a hot burner, and so on - no one was capable of asserting authority, commanding respect and taking charge.

She wished she had an elephant – other than that silly perpetual adolescent Dumbo, of course. She had always trusted elephants with their gentle quiet hugeness. But now she didn’t dare go out shopping for one, any more than she dared go to her ophthalmologist, her dentist, her doctor or the grocery store. Doctors didn’t come to the house these days, of course, but at least she could get food deliveries.

But recently she hadn’t liked the way the grocery deliveryman had seemed to look around her apartment when he brought in the groceries. She knew the apartment was a smelly mess but it wasn’t his business. She wondered if he was looking to rob her. She requested another deliveryman but he did the same thing so she stopped grocery deliveries all together and depended on her neighbor’s occasional casseroles. But she wasn’t very hungry anyway these days, – she was too nervous, had much too much to do – so much nowadays that that she often didn’t even have time to get dressed or bathe.

When the police arrived - in response to complaints by neighbors about the putrid smell emanating from her apartment, they found Arabella’s body, badly decomposed, ringed with a bunch of stuffed animals, and bowls of rotted and crusted food. At first they assumed
some sort of ritual murder but eventually settled on the medical examiner’s verdict of a coronary - a broken heart.

On the kitchen table was a note that read in big childish handwriting: “PLEASE, IF ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO ME, PLEASE FEED AND WATER MY ANIMALS AND SEE THAT THEY FIND LOVING HOMES – THANKS -- ARABELLA.”
PREMONITION

Claire Flynn

Bundled up.
My dog and I went for a walk.
A cantaloupe moon hung in
the dark wintry sky.
The branches of the old elm
trembled in the icy wind.
Wily, ghost-like, gray clouds
traveled the sky.
Premonition filled the air.
“It’s going to snow,” I said.

PASSING

Claire Flynn

You are alone now
In the black hearse.
Do not be afraid.
We are following behind.
The path is strewn with your favorite yellow roses.
We would like to be with you.
We would like to hold your hand
As you enter the gates of immortality.
But we cannot.
Soon it will be our turn, though.
When we pass through the gates,
We shall meet again.
Pain forgotten! Love remembered!
BROOKHAVEN BOUQUETS
Artwork by Artists in Sylvia Feinberg’s
Fall 2008 Art Class at Brookhaven

Janet Moriarty
Barbara Musiker
Howard Smith
Dene Roberts
Elaine Rothman
There have been many stories written about atomic development and atomic weapons. The details of these developments have been highly restricted for security reasons. There was one event, however, following the atomic bombing of Japan, that received international attention and was highly visible. It was called OPERATION CROSSROADS. The world watched and listened as the crew of a B-29 Super Fortress dropped an atomic bomb on a fleet of 95 ships. More than 175 reporters from around the world were there, as well as congressmen, senators, a cabinet member, United Nations Observers and military and civilian personnel.

The decision to conduct this operation was primarily motivated by politics and inter-military service rivalry. The United States had a new weapon but did not know what to do with it. Within days of the war’s end, the press, politicians, scientists and academic leaders began a public debate which among other considerations questioned how the bomb changed the face of war. In the public’s mind, the advent of the atomic bomb was a blow to the Navy. The conclusion at that time was that it made the Navy obsolete not only because the ships were vulnerable to atomic attack but also because the Navy could not deliver the bomb.

The Navy responded quickly to the challenges of these conclusions. They decided to make immediate preparations to conduct both air and under water tests of the bomb on surplus ships. OPERATION CROSSROADS was to be billed as a cooperative Army-Navy venture but in fact it was one more chapter in the decades old rivalry and mistrust between the Army and Navy and culminated over the role of airplanes and ships. The air arm of the Army didn’t become a separate service (U.S. Air Force) until 1947, a year after the CROSSROADS initial tests.

Eventually, it was decided to conduct the tests at Bikini Atoll which is located about 2500 miles Southwest of Hawaii. It is a very tiny pinpoint in the massive Pacific Ocean. It is one of 29 atolls and 5 islands comprising
the Marshall Islands which are scattered over 357,000 square miles just
north of the equator, an area of more than twice the size of California.
The total land area, however, of ALL of the Marshall Islands and Atolls is
only 70 square miles or about the size of Washington, D. C.

To the atoll dwellers of the Marshall Islands the world is a necklace-
like chain of low, flat islands surrounding a lagoon. Millions of years ago
a coral reef began to build upward from a submerged volcano that rose
as much as 15,000 feet from the ocean floor. As these coral polyps grew,
they formed islands and circular reefs of live coral surrounding a shallow
lagoon. Seeds blown by the wind were deposited over time and trees
and vegetation grew up on the exposed land mass.

Only a handful of the approximate 1200 islands are more than one
mile long. The highest elevation is only about 15 feet above sea level
and no single spot is more than a few hundred yards from the lagoon or
ocean. An atoll lagoon is completely surrounded by islands and reefs
that connect them. This chain is usually broken by several channels
which are deep enough in some cases for ships to pass through. Two
neighboring islands in the same atoll may be a short walk apart or they
may be miles apart depending on the tide. This prevents the population
from traveling back and forth except by boat.

The Bikini Atoll's 23 islands have a combined land area of about 1800
acres or less than 3 square miles. Only four islands are large enough to
support more than a few families. The entire population of about 160
people lived on Bikini Island, the largest in the Atoll. It had about 600
acres or an area of less than three quarters the size of New York’s
Central Park. The lagoon, within the atoll, is 25 by 15 miles and is about
180 feet deep.
Bikini was different than other atolls in the Marshalls in that it was spared serious fighting during World War II. There were six Japanese soldiers on the Atoll who maintained a weather station there. The station was destroyed by an American airplane in March 1944. Marines landed shortly afterwards and the Japanese killed themselves rather than be captured.

The actual steps that were taken to begin preparation for the buildup for CROSSROADS began in early 1946. I was aboard one of the four minesweepers that were ordered to make the 2500 mile trip to the Atoll from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. We arrived at the Atoll to find the lagoon practically empty but were glad to find a 400 foot supply ship that was assigned to service our needs as there were absolutely no supplies at the Atoll including water.

The lagoon began to rapidly fill up with ships of all sizes and descriptions. These included a great number of naval ships like our group who were needed to support and service the operations. Many of these ships carried both Naval Personnel and civilian technical people that combined to a total of about 42,000 people at the peak of the buildup. There were also 95 U.S. Japanese and German ships that would be used as bombing targets. Within this wide variety of target ships were 4 battleships, 2 aircraft carriers, 2 cruisers, 17 destroyers, 8 submarines, 37 landing craft, 2 cargo ships and 23 transports.

Minesweepers were involved in a variety of tasks besides minesweeping during World War II. We found that our tasks during the
CROSSROAD buildup were not limited to sweeping either. Yes, we were called on to use our minesweeping gear to do what was called a “drag sweep” where two sweepers operated side by side on a parallel course and at constant speed dragged a sweep cable set at a fixed depth to provide assurance that there were no coral heads popping up from the ocean bottom that could be struck by the deepest draft ship that would be coming into the lagoon.

Our strangest assignment involved providing a service to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They were called on to coordinate an operational study that was prompted by concerns expressed by the U.S. west coast fishing industry that the detonation of the atomic bombs would inflict serious damage to fish resources. Our four ships, as a result, were modified to fish the outside of the Atoll. Civilian technical fishing experts worked with us to modify and convert our topside minesweeping gear to make them suitable for fishing. Our right and left booms were lowered perpendicular to the waterline, becoming outriggers on each side of the ship. Fishing lines were attached at about 3 foot intervals along each of the 30 foot booms.

We operated six days a week from dawn to dark regardless of weather. We were requested to fish very close to the outer perimeter of the lagoon. This required constant course changes in order to conform to the irregular edge of the coral field surrounding the lagoon. The baited fishing lines attracted a wide variety of fish. Some were so novel that it created a great deal of interest by both the fishing experts and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff. They were found in all sizes and some were as large as 40 pounds. The fish, regardless of size and weight, offered no resistance when they hit a fishing line being towed behind a 400 ton ship.

We delivered the “catch” at the end of each day to a refrigerator ship after keeping enough for our frequent menu of fish. The refrigerator ship also received fish that were collected from nets, seines and poisoning in the reef areas. We later understood that by the time of the atomic test that there were about 20,000 fish caught. The refrigerator ship remained in Bikini Waters through August 1946 and left for the west coast in September. We learned that when they were about 30 miles from San Francisco the ship ran aground and sank. There was no loss of life but salvage efforts were only able to save 2 percent of the fish on the ship.
was not able to uncover any post atomic test reports that compared those fish to those that were found after the tests nor was there any indication that the tests had any effect on the Pacific fish resources.

Each day, following our fishing operations, we anchored in the lagoon mostly in a cluster of ships. It was customary to watch movies (sometimes over and over) that were in circulation between ships. We were often joined by the Bikini natives who would sail out from shore in their outrigger type boats to watch the movies. They were excellent sailors. The environment of the ship must have been unbelievable to them but the movies had to be an overwhelming culture shock. This practice soon ran its course as the entire village was moved, in anticipation of the bomb test, to a neighboring atoll about 12 sailing hours away. Our ship was called on to transport Naval Chaplains to visit the natives on several occasions. None of the crew were allowed ashore.

The bomb tests took place as scheduled and they received worldwide coverage. The first bomb, called ABLE, was dropped July 1, 1946 from a B-29 Super Fortress 518 feet above the lagoon. A cloud surged from the ocean surface where the fireball was over 100,000 degrees Fahrenheit and created a mushroom at 40,000 feet and fell over the target ships in the lagoon. It had an explosive energy of 23,000 tons of TNT. All personnel in the observing and support ships without goggles were instructed to look down on to the deck and cover their eyes with one arm against their face.

About three weeks after the ABLE Air Test, the BAKER Test took place. Its effect was completely different as the bomb was detonated underwater. The two air drops over Japan and the ABLE drop over Bikini were carried out at sufficient altitude that the fireball never actually touched the ground level. Most of the vaporized and radioactive materials rose up in the enormous updraft caused by the explosion so the surface contamination was minimized. BAKER, however, was detonated 90 feet below the surface of the Bikini lagoon. The test literally turned out to be a hundred times more destructive than was expected.

The water column surged upward from the lagoon to a height of over a mile in a second and carried 2 million tons of water. The hollow column
was nearly a half a mile across with a wall of water 300 feet thick. The column formed a cloud resembling a cauliflower top and collapsed back into the lagoon creating enormous rolling waves of spray, mist and air. The fallout engulfed all of the 95 target ships and heavily contaminated all but nine of them.

The Bikini Tests were inconclusive. The entire target fleet was not sunk nor did the fleet survive intact. Ships were heavily but not totally damaged. The verbal and written comments concerning atomic power and naval power continued. The prospects for world peace would have been a lot more promising if every ship had been pulverized. The destructive forces of atomic weapons were generally accepted by the public. With the advent of the cold war and continued conflict between nations, however, the desire for abolishing atomic weapons was tempered with the feeling that until they are outlawed it probably is a good idea to conduct periodic testing. So America ended up with decades-long pursuit of two nuclear policies: a call for international control of atomic weapons matched by a buildup of nuclear stockpiles.

The story of the Bikini natives’ quest for a homeland is a long and sad one but the account of it will have to be covered in another story.

For those interested in more about OPERATION CROSSROADS should read “Operation Crossroads” by Jonathan Weisgall. He has been the legal counsel for the Bikini natives for many years. I have found his accounts of the background very informative and he has personally helped me uncover details of the operation from his extensive resources.
At sunset, I walk
the neighborhood of silent streets,
appreciating the honesty
of winter trees.
Nothing hidden
by green gowns of spring
or bright tapestry of fall.
Unclothed branches open
up to clear sky, cloud,
and sunlit spaces.

Flaws and bends and twists
expose
ragged nests and naked limbs.
Each tree bares
its true self now...
a refreshing reality
in these winter woods.
As a young man, I scoffed at the notion of individual wisdom – a personal system of thought that helps one make the right decisions at the right time. It seemed such a nebulous concept. About halfway through my projected life span, however, that all changed. After a chance meeting with an acquaintance from college, I finally understood the way to wisdom.

My disdain for declarations of and beliefs in wisdom started in my sophomore year in college when I picked up a copy of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. Many friends and classmates were raving over its content – the wise sayings and lessons in the dialogue and philosophical proclamations. I found it all meaningless, such as “For what is evil but good tortured by its own hunger and thirst.” What gibberish!

As I read more literary and historical classics, my exposure to all things wise and weighty became ever more confusing. Wisdom lost relevance in the platitudes of purported truths by anyone and everyone with vocal cords, pen, or QWERTY keys. Most seemed bent on imparting or imposing wisdom upon humanity and making their mark on history. For example, Karl Marx’s pragmatic social wisdom became a revolutionary calling, as did the insights of American colonials that found their way into a bold declaration, and even a constitution. Wisdom could also be reflective, such as the notable but empty existential views expressed by Jean-Paul Sartre.

The wisdom of the day gained followers depending largely on the prevailing social and economic conditions. Often, those in charge promoted their brand of wisdom through armed conflict or religious proselytizing. Usually, the people had no choice but to accept the worldly wisdom forced upon them. Personal wisdom, then, developed as an extension or adaptation of the social, economic, political, and/or religious belief systems in one’s environment.
Many I knew refuted history’s effects and believed that personal wisdom is born only of experience. From the streetwise teenager to the swindled investor, wisdom can emerge only after life carves its lessons upon one’s soul – or so was the claim. Again, more nonsense. How many times have humans failed to learn the lessons of life, no matter how painful or profound?

In an attempt to bring clarity to the various views and assertions regarding personal wisdom, I developed a wisdom test. I would compare my life in relative affluence to that of an individual in an impoverished state, where satisfying one’s hunger was often the prime motivation of daily activity. Any wisdom that could survive such hostile conditions had universal merit. The test always failed. As a result, I became a mechanist, looking to science to improve my understanding of humanity.

Science also failed me. Scientific theory was on a path toward quantum mysticism, shrouding certainty behind probabilistic principles. If this weren’t enough, the mathematics of the new physics exposed multiple universes and dimensions, creating alternate realities. All this did was lend credence to every con artist conducting a séance. My zeal to find and share wisdom through science rapidly waned, and I gave up any hope that universal human wisdom or truths existed.

After stumbling through undergraduate and graduate level degrees, I entered the workforce and became an experienced project manager leading major industrial initiatives. Often, apprentices were at my side. Tainted by my search for wisdom, I was reluctant to convey my knowledge directly to them. Instead, I relied solely on Socratic questioning to help my trainees reason their way through the decision-making process. My approach, however, was about to change as I discovered a common element to wisdom applicable to all situations.

It happened seventeen years after earning my bachelor’s degree, when Lori Kaiser re-entered my life. I saw her at Boston’s Logan International Airport when I was en route to DC on business. Whenever I approached a woman with long, straight, jet-black hair and soft-white skin, I would check to see if it was Lori. Incredibly, this time it was. She was sitting in the waiting area prior to boarding. I worked up the courage
to speak, and as I drew closer, the aura of her beauty reclaimed me. Without my beard, she didn’t recognize me at first but instantly warmed up. She was coming from her fifteenth college reunion and returning home to northern Virginia.

After figuring out how to sit together on the Delta shuttle, we exchanged broad overviews of our lives since college, which included greatly abridged descriptions of our personal relationships – revealing that neither of us was currently married. But we both knew where our talk would lead. Predictably, Lori was first to reminisce on a shared experience from our undergraduate days.

Though we were two years apart, we were in the same English literature course. Lori and I rarely spoke until one evening near the end of the semester when I found her sitting alone in the student center. She had a book in her lap but seemed distracted. I thought this might be a good time to approach her to find out who this young woman was. I was happily surprised to find she wanted company. We launched into deep discussions of the readings in the course, our eccentric professor’s take on them, and their special meanings in our lives. It was fantastic. Lori’s intelligence and feelings gripped me, and I sensed reciprocal reactions to my words.

The student center was about to close on this brisk second Friday in December so I suggested we take a walk and continue the dialogue. We did, straying off campus unconsciously into a seedy urban neighborhood. Around 2:00 AM, we approached a railroad track, and suddenly the crossing signals sounded and flashed, followed by the lowering of barricade arms. A very long freight train was approaching. We stood silently mesmerized by the audiovisual display before us. There were no automobiles waiting to pass, just the clinking freight cars and us – until “he” appeared.

On the opposite side of the track, a tall, dark shape had emerged rising larger and larger and filling the gap between the slow-moving freight cars. A bright street lamp cast a long, sinister shadow in our direction. Our eyes could see human form but not substance, heightening our sense of danger. I could tell Lori was concerned. Based
on many battle scars growing up in similar neighborhoods, I too felt anxious. All I knew was that nothing good happens in this part of town at this time of night. Were circumstances and perceptions creating fear in both of us? Whatever, I felt obliged to pose an alternative. With the train chugging along in an endless procession, I offered Lori an option and broke the deadly silence.

“We could backtrack our way to campus instead of waiting.”

A long hesitation followed, her eyes glued to the eerie image flashing before us, and then calmly she replied, “No.”

Several more minutes passed before the caboose finally appeared and slowly drifted by, but the bright street lamp kept the mystery man as a ghastly apparition. I instinctively grabbed Lori’s hand. We moved towards him, and he towards us. We passed mid-track but in such situations, sound is one’s ally – one never looks back so as not to provoke unnecessary encounters. Then, in anti-climactic fashion, his footsteps faded into the night. I released Lori’s hand, and two blocks later, our conversation resumed, but it just wasn’t the same. We both seemed preoccupied by our phantom. Around 3:00 AM, I dropped Lori off at her dorm.

The next morning I awoke to find a folded sheet of paper slid under my door. My eyes watered as I read Lori’s heartfelt poem to me and for me. She captured our talk and experience, now only several hours old. Train cars became “passing boxes.” She also reflected on “a long fear” caused by a nameless, faceless shape – a fear she could not dismiss. But something was wrong. Her words both delighted and defused. I feared their implication, sensing a rather bizarre ending to our short-lived relationship. I must have read the poem twenty times to finally figure out that there was no future for us. There were “walls” and “barriers to true friendship.”

Mulling it over, I decided not to press Lori on the meaning of her poem. I thought I had the gist. I remained focused on the positive. No one had ever written a poem to me before, and I was flattered. At the
end of the next, and coincidentally, final English Lit class of the semester, I went up to Lori and told her how beautiful I thought her poem was. She thanked me, telling me how special it was to her as well, but two of her friends interrupted, pressing her to get to their next class. She turned back in my direction and smiled. I didn’t see her the remainder of the semester as finals and term papers filled our agendas. Winter break followed. Thereafter, our infrequent and momentary meetings on campus were the “Hi, how are you?” variety.

During the flight, Lori told me how intense our mutual experience had been for her. She had gained an inner wisdom. Her “no” on that early winter night was the first time she had conquered fear. Through high school and the first year of college, she had erected emotional walls, hiding her fears and keeping out others. The poem was a means of self-reckoning, a process to start bringing down the walls and facing her other fears. Her walls were now long gone, as ancient ruins weathered to the ground. As I gazed into her eyes, I saw someone free and at peace with herself. She was neither heroic nor reserved, but I could tell she confronted her fears with a common sense that shaped her responses to the physical and mental challenges life placed in her path. Those responses ultimately enriched her life.

Then, it struck me. Wisdom shares an inescapable relationship with fear. One cannot be wise if fear controls one’s actions. Fear impedes change and blinds understanding, as a fog concealing the paths to improvement and truth. Intuitively, I knew that Lori’s way of wisdom would pass my wisdom test. Hope for a better future, even for the destitute, relies on eliminating or minimizing those fears that build barriers to the smallest of successes. Though fears will always exist, the individual must master and manage them. Why it took so long for me to realize these truths, I can only attribute to my own arrogance – and fears.

By my extended silence, Lori could sense that I was reviewing my life and those personal fears I had failed to address, those still holding me back. I knew what I had to do – to take down the remaining walls of fear around me. Freedom from fear gave Lori the wisdom to deal with life’s curveballs and tragedies and to make the best of most situations. I wanted the same.
I felt euphoric for the remainder of the flight as our conversation lightened. We shifted from the past to share our expectations for the future. On the ground, we silently strolled to baggage claim, collected our belongings, and were about to head off into our separate worlds, when she turned and handed me her card.

“Call me if you like.” she said smiling.

“Thanks,” I replied, “perhaps I will.”

I returned her smile and watched her slip into the darkness of a long-term parking shuttle.

I stood on the terminal sidewalk as if frozen in time, reflecting on the past. Seventeen years ago, fear had prevented me from asking Lori what her poem really meant and perhaps from entering into a lifelong relationship. Today, Lori had helped crumble one wall of fear. I knew others were soon to follow, and I would become wiser. Already Wisdom was whispering to me, “Move on.”

I knew I would never call.
As a student of history and a reader of historical novels, I have always been interested in Russia. Lenin, Stalin, the Romanovs, the Czars, the Mongol Invasion, the sieges of Napoleon and Hitler at Moscow, Stalingrad, and Leningrad; War and Peace, Dr. Zhivago, the 900 Days, and Solzehnitzen’s books, I studied all of them. Thus, when we were going to be in Sweden in 1999 I thought it would be great to extend our trip to include Russia, namely St. Petersburg. I had heard from people who had traveled extensively in Russia that if I had only a few days, St. Petersburg was the place to go: better facilities, more to see, and a better appreciation of Russian history.

We made arrangements through a Swedish travel agency to take the overnight boat to Helsinki and take the train to St. Petersburg the next day which would allow us to see Helsinki as well. We were pretty well spoiled by our fabulous stay in Sweden. The ship had excellent dining facilities, dancing and gambling available and a large duty-free shop where the Swedes, who pay more than 25% tax on liquor, actually got on board with two-wheelers to cart away cases of vodka, wine, and other spirits. Helsinki as well was worth the stop, a pleasant city with friendly people and a few tourist stops.

Things had gone well when we boarded the afternoon train to St. Petersburg. The train itself was nothing special; it looked like the cars had been purchased from the Penn Central in the 1950s, but the seats were comfortable and it was only going to be seven hours. The first sour notes came from the conductor and the border guard. One kind of expects these people to be surly but these two were imperious and didn’t try to converse in English although they probably knew enough English to do their jobs. Instead they managed to make us appeal to our fellow passengers for help. The border guard in particular left us with a smirk on his face, having managed to make Americans uncomfortable. The countryside was not very interesting, flat, marshy, and dotted with rundown housing. Paint appeared to be in short supply in that area. Also, we passed several rail yards that contained rusted and decrepit tank cars.
and old freight cars. An EPA inspector would undoubtedly have condemned the yard plus the surrounding half-mile. The trip to the dining car passed the kitchen which would also have been condemned in this country. The menu was unintelligible but the waiter spoke a little English so we ordered a glass of wine while we decided on supper. Almost as an afterthought I asked if they took American Express traveler’s checks and he said “nyet,” only Russian or Finnish money. There went the wine and we only had enough Finnish money to buy one order of cheese on toast. Finally we arrived in St. Petersburg late in the evening but since it was late June it was still light. (Incidentally, St. Petersburg has four railroad stations, all in active use). Our guide met us and took us to our hotel, all Anglicized and quite modern. Unfortunately there was one more unpleasantness before we went to bed. They asked us to surrender our passports which I objected to, but to no avail. Apparently this is customary there but it didn’t give me a good feeling.

The next day began a series of contrasting impressions. After a fine buffet breakfast our guide met us with a driver and took us to the Fortress of Peter and Paul, built by Peter the Great to defend the city but never used in battle. (Another interesting point was that St. Petersburg was founded in the 1700s; it isn’t as old as Boston.) The Fortress contained a chapel with the catafalques of past Emperors and Empresses, all made out of semiprecious stones such as jasper, malachite and lapis lazuli. Ornate stonework covered the walls and beautiful chandeliers hung from the ceiling. As luck would have it, the remains of the last Czar, Nicholas, and his family were to be added to a place in the church within the next two weeks but they would be interred in wooden boxes. Also in the Fortress was the cell where Lenin’s brother was kept before he was executed, and that was well maintained. Now for some contrasts. On the trip to the Fortress it appeared that something was missing but it took a while to reach my consciousness. Aha, there was no construction of any kind going on. Coming from the city of the Big Dig I expected to see some cranes on the horizon. Also, the cars we passed were the sort you would only see in a parts replacement yard here in the USA, and if there was a car wash in St. Petersburg, no one had been able to find it. We were also treated to an interesting local custom. Our driver (we were in a Mercedes) was pulled over and had a little conversation with the traffic officer. When I asked what that was about, the driver indicated that the cops’ pay was so low they had to make ends meet by taking bribes not to hand out tickets.
Our next stop after lunch was St. Isaac’s Cathedral, across from our hotel. This magnificent building, no longer used as a church, was shrouded in netting to keep the façade from falling down onto visitors. Once inside it was very ornately beautiful: tall columns of the same precious minerals, altars framed in tapestries, marble flooring, and many frescoes on the walls. The next two stops that afternoon were to Emperor Paul’s Palace (where he was assassinated shortly after moving in) and the Blood Church where Alexander II was assassinated. Both buildings were shabby on the outside but beautiful inside. The evening ended on a more pleasant note with a visit to the theater inside the Hermitage for a ballet performance. They presented snippets of several well known ballets and we had intermission in the same room as the performers. Walking back to the hotel at 11pm was pleasant and it was still daylight.

The next day we visited the Usipov Palace, an elegant homestead of over 60 rooms right near the hotel on a branch of the Neva River. The Usipovs were merchants and the founder of this dynasty was an art collector. Many of the works now in the Hermitage came from here. Many rooms were furnished in Moorish décor, all the floors were inlaid wood and the library had carved oak walls and furniture. The room that everyone had to see was the cellar room where one of the Usipovs and his friends did away with Rasputin. It wasn’t easy. First they tried to poison him but that didn’t work so they shot him. Alas that didn’t do the trick so they engaged in a bloody knife battle before he succumbed. Next they bundled him up and dropped him through a hole in the ice outside but the damn guy floated to the surface. After all, he said he had supernatural powers.

That afternoon we went to the Hermitage, probably the art museum with the greatest collection of master works in the world. Notice I didn’t say the best art museum. The first downer was being met in the lobby by an earnest young American collecting money to buy air conditioning for the Hermitage. We were led through the numerous galleries by our guide and it became obvious that we had to select which galleries to see. There were just too many of them, whole rooms full of Matisse, Picasso, Monet and other French Impressionists, Reubens, Van Dyke, Rembrandt, and a couple of Raphaels and a Michaelangelo painting and sculpture. Each gallery was attended by what I would call a babushka, a little old lady with a shawl. As our guide explained, the government devalued the ruble but they didn’t adjust for the change in pensions so these poor women had their subsistence cut by 90%. The gallery job
allowed them to pick up some subsistence funds. As we walked through one hallway there was a woman selling books of the Hermitage collection and I decided to buy one for my son. I started to fumble around with my Russian money and she let me know immediately that she only accepted dollars. That night we decided to eat on the economy and we got a recommendation from our guide for a place within walking distance. It was a good suggestion as far as the food went but the restaurant staff was not at all friendly. Perhaps they thought we were spies.

The next morning we got up early and ran, a normal activity for both of us. There was a park nearby with an enormous statue of Peter the Great on horseback facing the Neva River. We have jogged cities all over the US and some foreign cities and it seems in most places when you meet someone coming the other way you make eye contact and nod and they will nod back. Not in Russia, they kept looking straight forward. The park, which was surrounded by official looking buildings and had benches and food stands, needed a mowing and shrub work. I would have thought that civic pride alone would impel them to keep the park looking right. We also passed some young men doing exercises in the park. It turned out they were Russian Navy recruits. My old top sergeant would never let us come out in the morning looking as shabby as these guys.

Our final excursion was to Peterhof, the Summer Palace. It was awesome in its splendor. A quarter mile of gold plated fountains going down to the Baltic Sea. There were rooms full of ornate furniture, paintings, oriental rugs, etc. It was a pleasant way to finish the trip. On the way back there were rows upon rows of depressing looking apartment buildings so we asked our guide about the housing. It was in extremely short supply with no relief in sight. Her family had to share a three room apartment with another family with just a sheet separating them from their neighbors. And that's an improvement! Before it was three families together, but when one moved out her family bribed the housing authority not to move anyone else in. We didn’t get into any personal matters with her but she was clearly not pleased with the way things were done in her city.

Having already checked out of the hotel we went out for supper and walked around before heading for the railroad station for our trip to Estonia. As the saying goes, “All’s well that ends well,” so we expected that all would be well. No such luck. We boarded the train and found our compartment for the overnight trip to Tallin. The woman who checked
our tickets was selling sets of bedcovers which we purchased and got ready for bed since it was close to midnight. After we got underway, the conductor came through and asked for our passports and visas, which he left with. Again, this is not an action of which I approved. We changed into sleeping gear, stowed our bags under the seats and got ready for bed. I was not going to go to sleep until I got the papers back. About 1a.m. the conductor returned with a uniformed officer who let us know that our visas had expired at midnight. Big deal I thought; the visa was for the hotel in which we stayed and we were on our way out of the country. However, he claimed he had to check this out and disappeared. At 2 a.m. another official came by and wanted to check our luggage. We got out of bed and I stood there in my skivvies while he poked through our luggage and then left. About 4 a.m. the guy in the uniform returned with our papers and at last I could get some sleep. To prove another adage, “If things can go wrong, they will,” we were woken up at 6 a.m. by the Estonian border guard who checked our papers and then left. I just about got to sleep when we arrived in Tallin. When I recounted this tale later to a Russian friend he quickly replied, “Didn’t you know what to do? You just tape a ten dollar bill to the compartment door and they won’t bother you.” Next trip I’ll know better.

And will there be a next trip? I would like to go back sometime when I have more time and perhaps travel into the heartland of Mother Russia. I’m confident that there are good people to meet and some interesting things to do and to see, and next time I’ll bring along some $5 and $10 bills to smooth the way.
Vast numbers of cultures have disappeared into oblivion. The story of any civilization wiped out by natural calamity: earthquake, fire or flood, drought or disease, is terribly sad. Even more tragic is the story of a people deliberately erased by another people. History is full of the atrocities men commit against one another. The suppression of beliefs, expulsion, absorption or outright massacre all add up to what we have come to call "ethnic cleansing", a modern term for an age-old crime. The Etruscans, precursors to the Romans, are but a single example of a people and a culture eradicated by their conquerors.

For more than four centuries before the birth of Christ, the Etruscans forged a great civilization in the part of Italy we know as Tuscany. They perched their fortified cities atop pine shrouded mountains or on precipices overlooking the sea. They cleared an undergrowth of heath and juniper, myrtle and lavender, rosemary and buckthorn to connect their twelve cities with expertly engineered highways. They tilled the rich volcanic soil and launched their ships from sheltered harbors.

The Etruscans called themselves Rasenna, meaning simply "The People". The ancient Greeks called them Tyrreni, from which we get the name for the Tyrrhenian Sea. They were dubbed Tuscani by the Romans who would eventually become their conquerors. Ancient Etruria, land of the Etruscans, stretched from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic and was watered by the Arno, the Tiber and the Po, when Rome was a mere cluster of huts.

Today an aura of excellence surrounds the words Tuscan or Etruscan. The Italian version of the King's English is "la lingua Romana in bocca Tuscanana", or "the language of Rome in the mouth of a Tuscan". Some Italian families boast of their Etruscan ancestry, recalling that the first kings of early Rome were Etruscans. A periodic "Year of the Etruscans", like the one held in Italy in 1985, celebrates Etruscan art. Almost every fine museum in both Europe and the United States owns a
collection of Etruscan artifacts, whether votive offerings, household articles or ornaments, especially gold. Etruscan goldsmiths were adept at creating filigree work, hammering the precious metal to an astounding thinness, or powdering and granulating it by a bonding process that has yet to be matched.

They were not always lionized. Years after the Etruscan cities fell, one by one, to the armies of Rome, the famous Roman historian Livy proceeded to distort and misinterpret their habits and beliefs. He portrayed Etruscans as coarse hedonists whose priests worshipped cruel gods. Greek historians, disturbed by the memory of an Etruscan-Carthaginian alliance against Greece, were equally vindictive. They described the Etruscans as an immoral people, as autocrats who mistreated their slaves, debauched their women and practiced piracy on the high seas.

Righteous warfare is still a matter of perspective. From a television screen or a newspaper it is a question of whom to believe: Russian or Chechen, Hutu or Tutsi, Kosovar or Serb. The demonization of an entire people is hard for an onlooker to accept. It is simpler and more straightforward for those directly involved. Men have always found reasons to justify war. Thousands of years ago Homer wrote that the cravings of a hungry belly made men fit ships to sail the seas and make war on other people.

Tuscany, because of its natural wealth and beauty, has always drawn both conqueror and visitor. For centuries poets and artists, writers and philosophers have rhapsodized about Etruria, the land of the Etruscans. D.H. Lawrence, one of the twentieth century's most ardent admirers of the region and its inhabitants, thought the Etruscans were the best integrated of the ancients. "How much more Etruscan than Roman the Italian of today is: sensitive, diffident, craving really for symbols and mysteries, able to be delighted with true delight over small things, violent in spasms, and altogether without sternness or natural will-to-power," he wrote.

We can smile over D.H. Lawrence's excesses, while conceding that even the mortuary figures in Etruscan tombs have energy. It is through their tombs that we have come to know the people interred within them. The artifacts taken from an Etruscan necropolis, whether accidentally by working farmer or builder, or deliberately by vandal or archaeologist, have always been valued by collectors.
An Etruscan City of the Dead mirrors the life they once led within the walls of a metropolis or in the nearby countryside. Vibrant scenes painted on the walls of Etruscan tombs show them as a sensuous, fun loving people who enjoyed feasting and drinking, stamping their round dances and diving into the sea. Much of their art work is playful, with even their monsters more like Maurice Sendak's goblins than terrifying fiends. Many of their sculptures depict tender couples, as loving in death as they were in marriage. The Etruscan culture gave equal importance to both sexes. Women kept their own family name, owned property, and took part in all social and religious gatherings.

They were an exuberant people who loved song and dance. They kneaded their bread, and hunted their quarry, and feasted to music. The same historian, Livy, who defamed Etruscans for the greater glory of Rome, said that Etruria filled the length of Italy with the noise of her name. A kinder historian might have described her music: the trill of pipe and double flute, the click of castanet, the beat of drum, the twang of lyre and zither and the blare of trumpet and horn.

Etruscans wrote ballads and verse. They read the literature of the peoples with whom they traded: Greeks, Egyptians, Phoenecians. They borrowed all that was fine from other civilizations, giving painting and sculpture, jewelry and pottery their own distinctive style. A passionate people produces incomparable art, a truth the Medicis, avid collectors of Etruscan artifacts, recognized. They commissioned a 16th century sculptor to set a mythical pair of twins, Romulus and Remus, beneath the bronze figure of a snarling she-wolf. In this way a tribute to Rome was added to an Etruscan sculpture.

The word Etruscan is often linked with enigma and mystery. "Enigmatic Etruscan" is a term used to describe the mysterious smile on the face of their most famous tomb sculpture. Their language is a mystery, its structure unlike any other known today. From the more than 13,000 Etruscan inscriptions in existence only about 300 words are understood. We recognize their archaic Greek alphabet and know that the text is read from right to left. We surmise that theirs was a language of hisses and clicks, with lots of z's and chl's, and quite a few lisping "th" sounds.

It is not surprising that the Etruscan language, unlike the Latin of their conquerors, has vanished. Not all that long ago American Indian
children, taken from their homes to be educated in government schools, were punished for speaking the language of their parents. A bitter disagreement exists between Kurd and Turk over the right to hear Kurdish songs sung in their original tongue. Etruscan writings, other than memorial tablets or names inscribed on artifacts found in the tombs, have completely disappeared. Their Roman conquerors, determined to obliterate as well as subjugate a culture, destroyed all evidence of their written work. Not a single poem, myth or saga is left to await the discovery of a bilingual text, a Rosetta stone.

We are accustomed to thinking that Rome owed everything to Greece. It is true that the seafaring Etruscans brought home much that was Greek, and that there were small Greek colonies in Etruria. But Etruscans drained the swamps on which the Roman Forum was built, invented the toga and the imperial symbols, laid the first sewer system, thought to mount a battering ram on a warship, and taught the Romans how to use surveying instruments. Etruscans were mining the hills for iron, copper and silver long before Rome existed. On Elba the slag heaps of ancient Etruria provided iron for Italy's armies during both World Wars.

Etruscans tilled fields drained by their own ingenious systems of canals. They were the first to build terraces dropping like staircases from the Tuscan hills to support olive groves, orchards and vineyards. They were renowned for the pedigree of their horses and the quality of their weaponry, for their covered wagons and their dentistry. Something as prosaic as Etruscan-made footwear: high-topped, laced sandals, is said to have given warriors an advantage over their ill-shod foes.

Although the Etruscans considered themselves one people, their cities were loosely allied. Perhaps their fate would have been different if they had helped each other to resist the Roman armies. When representatives from Etruscan cities came together it was not for mutual defense, but for religious purposes. And theirs was a fatalistic religion that believed in divine omens and destiny, in the finite existence of themselves as a people. After their final defeat the Etruscans melted into the Roman population, retaining a sporadic identity, like that of the Etruscan soothsayer who warned Julius Caesar to beware the Ides of March.

The ancients trusted their prophets, sibyls and soothsayers to reveal the mysteries of the future. We trust science to reveal the
mysteries of the past. Our technology, added to what historians, linguists and archaeologists have already taught us, may eventually solve every riddle. We shall be left with a single question, whether we are doomed to repeat the historic cycle of hatred, war and ethnic annihilation.
A mournful moon
Cries for the desolation below.
The finest of earth’s creatures,
Fueled with hate and discrimination,
Has defiled his home with destruction,
Violence, war and death.
Man against man spurred by greed and power
Is not mindful of peace or the power of hope.

The moon is weeping.
Silent tears fall on the bleakness.
Nourished by the moon’s tears
A small patch of white and purple flowers grow.

Holding hands, two tiny children
Pluck the blooms and present
Them to their mother.
A rebirth! A surge of hope!
The earth has begun to heal.
Resurrection!
This most remarkable man was the most famous man in South America throughout his lifetime. He was a revolutionary who devoted his life and fortune to eliminating all Spanish soldiers from the South American continent. Many wanted to make him king or dictator, many just wanted to assassinate him. He ended up liberating an area five times the size of Europe. He was a very liberal leader. He eliminated slavery 40 years before the United States did, he included in his program public education for the poor and laws protecting the environment. He led soldiers over the impassable Andes with equipment and clothes of 200 years ago.

He was born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1783, was orphaned at a very early age and became one of the wealthiest young men of his time with homes and plantations. A tutor who first gave him the idea of Freedom from Spain brought him up. He went to Europe – Madrid and Paris – and fell in love and got married. He then made the mistake of bringing his bride back to Venezuela where she promptly developed yellow fever and died. He returned to Europe to enjoy life in the salons of Paris. Reportedly, he met Alexander Humboldt and heard him say that South America was ready for freedom and that all it needed was a leader. He went to Rome where on the top of the Holy Mount Aventino he fell to his knees and swore that he would not rest until he had broken the chains of Spanish oppression. (Also worth mentioning is that the Pope gave him an audience but Bolivar refused to kiss his feet as he was supposed to do.)

Looking at the examples of the American and the French Revolution, Bolivar came back to America and waited while events in Europe weakened Spain. Few people in Venezuela shared his ideas; they only saw the loss of their slaves as a result of a revolution. In 1812 Caracas first declared independence, but was soon overcome. Bolivar had to go to Colombia, organize an army and plan his return. He entered Caracas on August 6, 1813 to restore liberty and independence. The Assembly granted him complete power and he made it clear to the
priests and bishops that they could not continue on the side of the Spanish. The multiple ethnicities of Venezuela made the job very difficult. The whites were always scared of falling into the hands of the blacks. His political philosophy could not prevail over vice and greed and he was soon defeated and was forced to escape first to Jamaica and then to Haiti. The President of Haiti gave him financial and military help that enabled him to go to Venezuela to abolish slavery. He would not give up and continued fighting, organizing an army and going over the Andes to take Colombia and finally entering Bogotá in 1819. He gave the prisoners two choices: “Either go home or join my army.” In 1821 he entered Caracas for the third time, overcoming the obstacles of distance, supplies, horses and money. He was proclaimed The Liberator, and named Supreme Leader. He wanted to turn the Indians into farmers and the blacks into free people, a concept terrifying to the current power structure.

Having liberated Colombia and Venezuela, he felt his duty was to eliminate all Spanish soldiers from the American continent. He went on the campaign trail, liberating Ecuador with a dramatic climb over the mountains to enter Quito and then on to Peru and Bolivia. He had a dream. His dream was “La Gran Colombia,” a country free of Spanish rule and free of slavery. He wanted schools, orphanages, roads and freedom for all. Everything went well as long as he was there, but as soon as he went somewhere else to solve a crisis this house of cards would fall apart.

He was a man who had a way with words. He could speak so clearly and convincingly that as long as they were in his presence everybody agreed with him. He was an orator and a natural leader, but he could not be in Bogotá and Lima at the same time and it took a long time to go from one to the other. There is a famous story of his attempt to climb Mount Chimborazo (6310 meters high) just because Humboldt had climbed it. During his trek he passed out and afterwards wrote a wonderful essay in which he described his vision of the future. He called it his “delirium.” In it he saw the American people united in a common cause.

As soon as La Gran Colombia came to be, it started falling apart. Colombia hated Venezuela; Peru had territorial ambitions over their neighbors. He had devoted twenty years to eliminate all Spanish soldiers from South American soil and he succeeded. He had the idea of planning an organization of American States to discuss the future (to which, incidentally, England was invited but not the United States). They
met but nothing was accomplished. He had devoted twenty years of his life to his military campaign and was successful, but the only political accomplishments were theoretical.

Finally in 1830 there was a serious military attempt on his life in which he was forced to abdicate all his positions, leaving him without a home, money, friends and sick with tuberculosis (his father and his mother had both died of this disease). When he died he was alone and frustrated. Supposedly he said, “I have plowed in the seas and sown in the winds.”

His dream of La Gran Colombia has still not come true. He devoted his fortune and his life to an ideal and a cause. He was successful most of his life but at the end he was alone and felt completely defeated. It was not until many decades later that his accomplishments were recognized and he became the hero of all the South American countries – though still nothing else unites them.

George Kaufman was a painfully shy man who rarely looked at people in the eye but had a devastating wit, delivered in a quiet voice. He enjoyed lifelong associations with many writers and composers and remained friends with all of them. He did not suffer fools easily.

Kaufman’s mother was an aloof and imperious woman. When Kaufman became famous, Nettie was told by a mutual friend that Gershwin’s mother wanted to meet her, “I don’t know her,” Nettie said. “My God” her friend said, “Gershwin is probably the most successful composer in the world today and he has collaborated with your son.” “My son,” Nettie said, “collaborated with all kinds of people.”

Kaufman was working on ‘Strike Up the Band’ and signed George and Ira Gershwin as the song writing team, as they were the most in demand and most reliable. The Gershwins signed up as they considered Kaufman “The funniest and most intelligent playwright in America.” Kaufman felt he had some important and strong things to say about wars. In this play he reminded people that many wars are begun to further special interests rather than for the good of the people, and talked about how wars bring soldiers’ death and mutilations more than glory. He wanted the Gershwins’ lyrics and music to be an integral part of the play and its political content, which for the time was very innovative. The tryout made Kaufman realize they had a disaster on their hand.

Selwyn, the tycoon who had put up money for the play, mistook Kaufman for George Gershwin and said “Tell me Mr. Gershwin, tell me one thing. With all the magnificent music you’ve written, with all the money your shows have made, why is it that I had to invest money in the only one that was a failure? Why wasn’t ‘Strike Up the Band’ a big
success”? “I’ve always flattered myself,” Kaufman later reported, “that I made the only possible answer. I said “Kaufman gave me a lousy book.”

Selwyn asked the Gershwins to rework the material. However, Kaufman was emotionally unable to as he couldn’t alter its essential message but fully supported Morrie Ryskind doing it. The new show opened and was a great success in 1930.

“Of Thee I Sing” became a great hit in 1933. Kaufman, Ryskind and Ira Gershwin received the Pulitzer Award but the Committee could not see that the music was an integral part of the play and passed over George Gershwin. This did not appear to affect the relationship between Gershwin and Kaufman. They went on to collaborate on “Let ‘em Eat Cake” in 1933.

George Gershwin and George Kaufman had some similarities. Both were workaholics and had to be reminded to stop to eat. Both were innately kind people, though unaware of how some of their words impacted other people. For example, Kaufman made a witticism of an actor’s name that resulted in the actor finding it difficult to find work. Kaufman beseeched his friends until he found work for this actor. Gershwin’s money enabled him to support many relatives, contribute to a lot of causes and subsidize many young composers.

Just before George Gershwin’s tragic death in 1937, at the age of 38, caused by a brain tumor, Kaufman felt depressed at seeing that his friend was not himself. Sadly, Kaufman developed atherosclerosis and died on June 2, 1961.

Source of information: George S. Kaufman and His Friends by Scott Merideth
Bergen Market by Frank Murphy

Boston Skyline by Len Rothman
THE JUNIOR PROM

Jerome S. Kornreich

I was desperate. No date, and the prom was only a week away. It was bad enough that Molly at Radcliffe had to fall and break her leg. But for Harriet to be laid up in New Rochelle’s infirmary, that was too much! The two most beautiful girls I knew, both unavailable.

I collapsed on my bed and beat my head in frustration. What to do now? I felt robbed, and angry. How could fate have been so cruel? Broken leg – diphtheria This wasn’t bad luck. It was catastrophe! How could I invite a girl to the prom with just six days to go? Was this God’s revenge for my inviting two shiksas (not Jewish) to the prom? Maybe I should have listened to my Mother. She always was after me to date Jewish girls. She never accepted my argument that the Jewish girls in town weren’t as good looking as the Christian girls. I started to think about the Jewish girls who were part of my Temple social group. The Fidersky identical twins were both attractive. If I invited one of them, maybe she’d be so flattered she’d swallow her pride and accept an invitation. After all, it wasn’t every Jewish girl in Waterbury that got invited to a college prom – and a Yale prom at that! I tried to convince myself that she’d grab at the chance, but I wasn’t convinced. Still, I had to do something. I decided to try, expecting a terse refusal and the end of my dream of a wonderful prom. I didn’t have the luxury of time on my side, so I decided to call her and tell her the truth – well, almost all the truth. I didn’t tell her she was third choice! I blurted out my tale of woe and waited for a response. After some hesitation, Myrtle said she could understand my predicament and would do me a favor by accepting my invitation. I thanked her profusely and told her I’d send her all the details.

I had a date. Halleluiah! That’s assuming nothing would happen in the next five days. Now I had to rush to prepare for the big weekend. First, to the Tux Shop, to rent a tuxedo. Little did I realize that meant renting a fancy white shirt, a black bow tie, cuff links, black socks and black patent shoes. The salesman didn’t seem aware of
the fact that he was dealing with a self-supporting student. Then the corsage. Ten bucks for a single white orchid! But what the heck - there was only one Junior Prom! Thanks to the arrangement that Yale had made with some landladies, I only had to pay $25 for the room for Myrtle. Because it was so late, I had trouble signing up classmates to dance with Myrtle. Her prom program looked awfully empty with only two lines filled in. She’d get to dance with Stan Simmer and Milt Bram and the rest of the time with me. At least we’d be dancing to good music. Harry James was the orchestra picked for the prom.

Myrtle was planning to arrive by bus early Friday afternoon. My plan was to let her settle in, and then we could take in a piano recital at Sprague Hall. After that, we would have dinner at Calhoun. I’d send her back to her room by cab so she could get dressed and then pick her up about 8:30 to go to the Glee Club Concert. Finally, the prom.

Friday arrived and I awaited Myrtle at the bus station, hoping that she would at least be attractive. She looked pretty much as I remembered her – pretty but not beautiful. She was wearing a yellow, short-sleeved blouse over a brown skirt. The yellow made her curly brown hair stand out. I felt a sense of relief; the weekend might not be too bad. Lucky for me, there was a local bus that took us close to her room and I saved on cab fare. I helped her carry her luggage into the house and waited for her while she freshened up. Men were not allowed beyond the living room!

It was a lovely day, so when Myrtle was ready, we strolled around the campus, giving her a chance to view Yale’s Gothic architecture. When it was time, we went to Sprague Hall to take in the piano recital. After the recital, we went to Calhoun for dinner. Myrtle was impressed with the dining hall as I knew she would be. Unlike today’s buffet style dining, we had individual tables with paper doilies and printed menus. We had waitresses in uniforms who inquired as to our choice of entree. I was hoping some other prom couple would join us so that I wouldn’t have to make conversation by myself. Myrtle was not an extrovert, so conversation was sparse. No such luck. Thanks to the beneficence of Calhoun’s Master, we went into the library after dinner to join other couples for a sip of sherry. Introductions were made and after exhausting queries as to residences and birthplaces,
we left. I called for a cab and instructed the driver to take Myrtle to her room. We agreed that I would pick her up at 8:30.

I returned to my room and started the struggle to fit myself into my rented equipment. The studs for the shirt and the cuff links gave me a little trouble and I had to squeeze my feet into the patent shoes, but I failed when it came to the bow tie. I found a fellow sufferer who agreed to tie my tie if I would do his. It worked! All dressed, I went into the bathroom to admire myself in the mirror. I confess I liked the way I looked. I called a cab and went to pick up Myrtle. I had the driver wait for us. Myrtle was wearing a Yale blue gown with long sleeves. It was tucked at the waist, revealing a quite shapely figure. Her shoes were matching blue sandals with high heels. I helped her pin on the white orchid I had brought, and we took the cab to Woolsley Hall for the Glee Club concert.

The cab pulled up in front of Woolsley Hall. I stepped out and turned to pay the driver. Myrtle helped herself out. As she put one foot on the curb, she looked up to admire Woolsley’s stately columns. Before I could catch her, she tripped on the running board. I started to apologize for not helping her when I spotted a look of anguish on her face. “Oh no!” she gasped. She reached down and pulled off her right shoe. The heel had snapped off!

I felt my blood pressure rising. I wanted to berate her for being so careless. I clenched my fists and clamped my teeth together. But Myrtle’s eyes were beginning to show tears and I decided to demonstrate my Yale gentlemanly qualities. “Don’t worry, Myrtle. We’ll find a way to fix it. Let’s get back in the cab and we’ll look for a shoemaker. I’m sure he’ll be able to put your heel back on.” I prayed I was right! It was almost 9 o’clock on a Saturday night. Where to find a shoemaker? We got back into the cab and I asked the driver to drive around the commercial district to see if we could find a shoemaker. We drove around and around without success. I stared at the meter. Tick, tick, tick. Each tick was adding 10 cents to the cost. This was going to be an expensive evening. Knowing that many of the shoemakers were Italian, I instructed the driver to go to the Italian section of New Haven. We spotted a couple of shoemaker stores—all closed. The tick, tick, tick of the meter seemed faster and louder. In
desperation, I had the driver stop in front of a pharmacy. I went into the pharmacy and asked the pharmacist if he knew of any shoemakers, active or retired, who could put a heel back on a lady’s shoe. He said he knew a Mr. Fasiano who had been a shoemaker but was retired now. “He might be able to help you and he lives on the next block.” The pharmacist gave me the man’s address. I rushed back to the cab, grabbed Myrtle’s shoe, advised the driver to wait, and ran to Mr. Fasiano’s address. He lived in an old tenement, up on the third floor. I hurried up the three flights of stairs and knocked on the door. A kindly-looking, stooped old man answered the door. I explained my predicament and showed him the shoe. “Sure,” Mr. Fasiano said, “I fix. Come in. I get tools.” He limped out of the room to get his tools. In a minute he returned with his tool box. It took only a few minutes for him to tack the heel back on.

“Thank you so much.” I said. “You don’t know how much this means to me. How much do I owe you?” “No owe,” he replied. “Go have fun.” I insisted he take some money and thrust a couple of dollars into his hand. I rushed down the stairs and back to the cab. I gave a relieved Myrtle her shoe and told the driver to drive us back to Woolsoley Hall. As we entered the hall, the glee club was singing the last refrain of Bright College Years. The concert was over! I thought of the money I had paid for tickets. Inwardly, I cursed my date. So far, the evening activities were draining my funds and I certainly didn’t have much to show for it. It was time for my luck to change. Maybe the rest of the evening would make up for the prior misfortunes.

We left the Hall and followed the crowd as it made its way to the Payne Whitney Gym for the big Prom. The gym was decorated with blue and white streamers and ‘39 banners. Floating against the high ceilings were blue and white balloons. The over-sized dance area was surrounded by chairs, providing a rest area for tired dancers. Considering the bareness of the gym, the room was reasonably attractive. Couples began to drift in and stroll about, chatting and comparing dance programs. The orchestra musicians started to unpack their instruments and tune up.

I sought out Stan Simmer who had signed for dance set #2 in Myrtle’s prom program and Milt Barker who had signed for #4. We
made arrangements where to meet. The music started and Myrtle and I made our way to the dance floor for dance #1. I had forgotten what a good dancer Myrtle was, so it was a pleasant surprise to find myself enjoying the dance. The Harry James Orchestra was superb, a sixteen piece band of top musicians. Their first piece was Duke Ellington’s “Sophisticated Lady”, a tribute to the room full of pretty girls. When the first set ended, I transferred Myrtle to Stan and met his date, a Jill something, a sophomore at Columbia majoring in French. She talked better than she danced, but I survived. Back to Myrtle for dance set #3. We found Milt for the next set and I met Sue Cohen, a Mt. Holyoke junior. She was an interesting conversationalist and a smooth dancer. I regretted that I hadn’t signed Milt up for another dance with Myrtle. I consoled myself thinking that Myrtle was at least a good dancer.

At first, Myrtle and I danced holding ourselves politely apart, but it was easier dancing close together. Gradually, I put my arm around her waist and pulled her a little closer. She didn’t seem to object and I enjoyed feeling the pressure of her body. By the sixth dance, we were dancing cheek to cheek and obviously enjoying ourselves. To show off our skills, we twirled and did deep dips. I learned what was going on in Waterbury and discovered that Myrtle and her twin sister were enrolled in a nursing program. Myrtle seemed interested in life at Yale and I entertained her with tales of hardship and glory. She was fascinated to learn that I was working part-time for a psychologist who was the head of Yale’s nursing program. She laughed to hear about my escapades as a tuba player in the Yale Band.

When the last strains of “The Ball Is Over” faded away, we joined Stan and Milt and their dates. We considered going to Louie’s for a steak sandwich and a cup of coffee, but Myrtle begged off, saying she was a bit tired and preferred to go back to her room to rest. After they left, I was going to hail a cab but Myrtle suggested that we walk. It was a warm, beautiful night with stars twinkling in the sky. Holding Myrtle’s hand, we strolled leisurely back to her rooming house. We sat in the living room and talked for a few minutes. I used the landlady’s phone to call a cab. When the cab honked outside, we both stood up. “It was a wonderful evening,” Myrtle said, “and I really enjoyed it, despite the horrible beginning.” “We still had a good time.” I replied gallantly. I reached for her, pulled her closer and gave her a
short, gentle kiss, like a bride would kiss her mother-in-law. Myrtle did not pull away. We kissed again, this time a much longer, sexier kiss. I pulled her closer and felt the warmth of her body. I could feel my libido stirring. The cab driver honked again. “Darn it! I guess I have to go. I’ll be back tomorrow morning about 10. Good night, Myrtle. Sleep well.” I left, silently cursing the impatient driver.

The next morning I arrived at Myrtle’s promptly at 10. She had to check out by noon, so I waited while she packed. I took her suitcase and we walked to Calhoun. I showed her my room and then took her on a tour of the Sterling Library. She was impressed with its size and opulence. At noon, we returned to Calhoun for lunch. There were no planned activities in the afternoon, so Myrtle decided she might just as well catch the bus back to Waterbury. I called for a cab and accompanied her to the bus station. Just before she boarded the bus, she gave me a kiss and told me what a lovely time she had had. I waved goodbye as the bus pulled away.

The big weekend was over. It wasn’t what I had expected but it hadn’t turned out too badly. The unexpected cab expenses Saturday night had used up all my savings and the waste of money really hurt. Even though I was on scholarship and had a part-time college job, there were expenses I had to pay. I wouldn’t have felt so upset about the cost of the weekend if so many things hadn’t gone wrong. Yet I felt proud of myself: I had overcome almost unbelievable obstacles.

Monday morning, a telephone call from my Mother woke me up. “How could you do this to us?” her anger exploded. I was dazed. “What? What did I do?” “What did you do? You made a fool out of us!” “Whoa, Mom. What are you talking about?” “The Waterbury paper this morning has a nice story about Molly Luchin going to the Prom as your date. Of course we told everybody how pleased we were that you were taking Myrtle Fidersky. How do you think that makes us feel? And how do you think Myrtle feels? How could you do such a thing?” For a moment I was speechless. How could this have happened? Then it dawned upon me. “Mom, I never told the paper about the prom. It had to be Yale. Two months ago when I purchased the ticket for the prom, I had to fill out a form. There was a line on it asking for the name and town of the girl I was inviting. I never
dreamed Yale would use that information for publicity purposes. Of course, at that time Molly Luchin was my date. It never occurred to me to tell Yale I had made a change. Gee, I’m sorry. Poor Myrtle – she probably told all her girl friends and she must be crushed.” “The least you could do,” counseled my Mother,” is to call her and apologize.” “That would make matters worse, Mother. Myrtle knows she was second fiddle, only now she knows whom she was second fiddle to. And now all her friends know she was second choice.” “Well, you got yourself into this mess. I hope you can figure out a way out.” She hung up.

The situation was hopeless. There was nothing I could do. Murphy’s Law was validated again: Anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Did I say that it was a pretty good weekend? Lord, have mercy on me! I crawled back into bed, hoping I’d never have to face Myrtle again.
During the fall 2008 “Nature through Literature” study group, participants were invited to keep a nature journal—a place to record observations and reflections on flora and fauna, weather, urban and rural landscapes, or the environment at large. The following contributions from Margaret Gooch, Natalie Klavans and Barbara Miliaras, with their sharply rendered details and emotional resonance, suggest the rich possibilities that open when we slow down enough to experience the non-human world.

– Brad Clompus, Study Group Leader

Margaret Gooch

Pale, swooping, circling birds against a pale sky. They curve in darting flight from one window pane to the next, and on turning back, are lost to the narrow frame between.

Cars lined up in a parking lot flash back, each one, from its windshield, a reflection of the sun – a line of little stars shining just up from the earth.

Treetop branches sway back and forth as clouds move behind, over, and past them in one direction only.

Gray window screen splotched with streaks of silver and brighter silver dots. Against it, green shoots of Amaryllis lift their way toward spring.

The ground, muddy, with mud-colored leaves so mashed into it they are almost invisible, is splotched with patches of short, yellowish grass, but is also in places beneficently covered with thick sprinklings of snow.
Against the gray sky a tiny bird – dove or sparrow – has the many bare up- and out-reaching branches of a wide-spread tree all to itself. With a fidgety turn of head, it opens and closes its wings just slightly, as if at less than perfect contentment with its chilly perch.

From within the gray cinderblock garage, I see slender streams of water – of light as much as water – fall from roof to driveway, making tinkling splashy sounds, half merging, half separate . . .

A snow squall – first it stings my face, quickly coats my wrap and hat – no point to raising an umbrella against it – then, later, diminishes to swirling fluffy flakes that suggest the realm of an overturned snow ornament as I drive down street after street toward home. Afterwards, many clouds still, but the sun again too. Winter says – think I’m over?

Rose-bordered billowy length of cloud overhead seems like the edge of a coverlet that, if drawn up and over the sky from dusky east to western glow, would bring night with it.
Haiku

Birds in patterned flight
Make circling swoops across the
Sky as one leaf falls.

*     *     *

From dark cable lines
Pearls of water and light drop
As tears one by one.

*     *     *

One leaf in pride rides
The dim air, its flash of gold
Reclaiming sunlight.

*     *     *

Gray figure walks my
Way, lightening the mist with
Little puffs of white.

*     *     *

Specks like mosquitoes
Swirl gray out of whitened air
One by one: snowflakes.

*     *     *

A line of small stars
Shining just up from the earth
Drive one off – shall we?
Natalie Klavans

September 9, 2008

Large leafed plants were drying out. Their leaves were beginning to curl. Corn flowers were in many stages of vibrancy and fading. The milkweed pods were full and seemingly ready to burst. Some vines that had clung to a fence had feathery milk weed seeds intertwined on their leaves. A golden finch landed on a fence post. I stopped and looked at her. We exchanged glances briefly before she flew away.

The sun’s rays illuminated a vine of rich green leaves that appeared translucent as the sun seemed to shine directly on them and only them. The day had a veil of fall, still high above the plants and trees but, nevertheless, filtered the appearance of everything below.

September 15, 2008

For the first time in many, many years I lay down on a bench and stared at the clouds. Some had the texture of thick cotton. Others looked like smoke moving in arabesque forms. And others appeared to have more substance and dimension. The edges of the clouds reflected the sun as though they were illuminated from within. As an aircraft pierced the clouds streaks of silver flashed through their whiteness.

I played the game so often played by children. What could I see in their abstract forms? I saw a fetus and a skull. When I was very young I remember seeing many forms that I was able to identify very easily – far more than a fetus and a skull.

How fast these clouds moved! Constantly transforming themselves and breaking up into smaller segments and continually thinning out until many simply disappeared.

October 9, 2008

. . . walking through Fresh Pond Reservation, I saw something that looked like a thin stalk of wheat. But as I looked closely at the stalk, I noticed that a praying mantis was clinging to the uppermost segment . . .
I peered at its face which looked like a triangle with the apex on the bottom, large globular green eyes and tall antennae at the top of its head. It reminded me of ET. Nearby a mother with her young son was walking towards me on the path. I had to tell her about the praying mantis. The little boy looked at this green eyed creature and told me that it was looking exclusively at him. I pointed out the thinness of the legs. They had the thickness of very thin needles. Compared to the long body, the legs appeared fragile. The mother pointed to the versatility of the legs and how they seemed to move at odd angles to each other. The three of us shared observations for another few minutes. We did not introduce ourselves, which underlined the idea that our identities were inconsequential. We were 3 human beings doing what humans have done since they became bipedal. We shared our curiosity, observations and appreciation of nature.
A Japanese maple tree grows in my front yard which must be over seventy years old. I don’t know whether this is a record or not, but in the forty-five years I have lived here, it has not changed much. Its highest branches reach to nearly thirty-five feet, which is about as high as this variety of maple gets. It is dome-shaped and looks like a Brobdignagian bonsai gardener pruned it . . . .

. . . . this particular specimen has endured the icy winds and snows of our severe winters and still proudly dominates our front lawn. Right now, its leaves remain green with a scarlet border. They have not turned rust color, then scarlet—almost purple in color sometimes, as they do in late October. When that occurs the tree reminds me of a Grecian dryad, tossing her hennaged tresses in the sun or rain. Then it goes out in a burst of glory. And as is its wont, stands naked in the early November sun after an autumn storm.

The ancient Greeks believed that the dryads—the spirits of the trees—lived 500 years. If that is the case then this tree, while old to me, is still in its childhood, not even, yet, in its adolescence. I look at the tree every day from my window as I sit at my desk in my third floor study. It gives me peace and focus as I contemplate its endurance while taking a break from my writing . . . .

The weather has vacillated between seasonal and nippy the past few days. As I drive around doing my daily errands, I notice more and more the increase in urban sprawl and the impact on our lives of the various threats to the environment from man-made as well as natural phenomena. On Thursday night, I had to pick Steve up from Logan Airport and I made the unwise decision to take the tunnel rather than to make the swing through Chelsea and the Mystic River approaches to the airport. It was dark —eerie, late enough, however, that I believed there would be little traffic to encounter. I was wrong. Mad drivers, texting on their cell phones, weaving in and out of traffic lanes on Route 93, made the drive nerve-wracking. Bureaucratic decisions to cope with the energy crisis by lowering the highway illumination to the degree that it is
virtually impossible to see, makes the city seem like a mirage—a ghost town—especially on a rainy or foggy night.

When I was a little girl, *Action Comics*, dominated my life and I remember particularly the menace that Gotham City of Batman represented. It was the source of all evil that the populace encountered in their increasingly-threatened lives. As I drove to Logan, I felt that I was lost in a Gotham City nightmare world. This was only intensified as I entered the approaches to the airport. All lanes have been moved. All signs seem like the signs Dorothy encounters when she is lost in the woods on her way to the Emerald City. The signs seem to point in both directions. Skyscrapers seem to assume personas of malevolent trees. The Zakim Bridge linguini girders seem ready to pop and strangle . . . .

. . . I have been back from DC for two days and find the trees in Winchester and Medford more beautiful than I have experienced for several years. I think this can be attributed to the fact that many of them have retained all their foliage while bearing their brilliant autumnal colors. Sometimes, as I drive along or walk through the woods around the town or through the Fells, I feel that individual trees have been transported through time from one of Turner or Constable’s canvases. In the past autumns have so often been water-soaked or beset by wind-storms that the trees are stripped early and the leaves carpet the area rather than adorn it. Maybe in a past existence I was a dryad. The trees perhaps now represent what they did to Shakespeare in his youth,

*That time of year thou mayst in me behold*

*When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang*

*Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,*

*Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang*

We know Shakespeare wrote these sonnets in his youth, a lament on the coming debilities of age. Funny, I am approaching the autumn of my life. I love the words, but don’t, as yet, feel: “Death’s second self that seals up all to rest,” but the sweetness of the moment takes hold and the beauty of the seasons prevails.

November 4, 2008

Today is our last class. I have enjoyed these sessions so much. Responding to the literature has led me to look more closely at the changes that have occurred in my own backyards in the past fifty or so
years since I was a little girl and rode my bike or cantered my pony through the still copious woodlands around the Winchester-West Medford border. Those woodlands have been pushed back so that they are no longer visible from Route 38 as it wends its way through both communities toward its terminus in Lowell, Massachusetts. The riding academies have all closed. The bridle paths no longer exist. And what has been left in their place is not necessarily an improvement, but the housing represents home to a cross-section of the population, who can’t miss what they never witnessed . . . . .
I’ve always thought that tools were a “guy thing”. If I couldn’t fix a problem with duct tape, it probably wouldn’t get fixed at all. Thanks to Pres. Bush I, I still have a supply of tape (and rolls of plastic sheeting), and the tape now comes in white and neon colors.

There are trees encroaching upon my house creating an interstate off-ramp for an army of squirrels. Not a good thing. I tried using a saw to cut back the branches, but I’m not good with heights and ladders and just couldn’t reach the more troublesome offenders. Watching one of those garden shows on TV, I saw a miracle. There is a tool called a pruner that adds four feet or more to your reach and brings down a branch with a single snip. I was put off a bit by the ropes and pulleys, but heck, I am a college graduate. I can handle that.

Off I went to Target. Lowe’s is too intimidating to me since the staff knows what it is doing and I haven’t a clue. There is no visible staff at my local Target. I headed to the Garden Shop, and there on the wall was my miracle. The ceiling lights created a halo around it. The Tool Gods had spoken. I knew it had to be mine when I noticed no ropes or pulleys – just an orange cuff – one pull and good-bye branch. My eager eyes scanned the other offerings. Hand pruners (for those pesky low branches), a folding four inch saw (no idea why but I had to have it!) and hedge clippers (the old fashioned, non-electric variety). My new neighbors don’t seem to know they are expected to trim both sides of their privet hedge, but what the heck, my upper arms can use the exercise. My tools. All mine!

I couldn’t wait to try out my new toys. Reach up, hook the blades around the branch, and snap – gone! There are some very confused Bluejays in my yard today. They keep trying to land where there was a branch yesterday. The squirrel highway, however, is even higher than my miracle tool can reach. I did see an advertisement for a nifty-looking ladder … at Lowe’s… maybe tomorrow….
THE THING

Sondra Szymczak

My house, a small farmhouse, is semi-old, having been built around the turn of the 20th century, with all the problems of age but little of the charm. Built when central heating was “the thing”, there are no fireplaces, a fact I regret whenever the electricity goes down. The garage is on two levels with stalls for two horses or cows on the lower one. Many memories down there, but now it attracts out-of-season lawn furniture and the occasional opossum. I’ve lived here for forty years, and I am sure the house is mocking me. When I really need my sleep, the heating system breaks out with the symphony of banging pipes and radiators. Floors and stairs squeak making me sure I am not alone. I generally check the cat; if he is still sleeping, all is well. But it’s always something!

When I first moved in, I naturally had the locks changed. The new locks were “the thing”. You had to turn that little knob to lock the doors, and they all worked with the same key. Last year, the lock on the front door gave up the ghost requiring a call to the local locksmith. The new lock, again the “latest thing”, locks automatically. You need the knob to unlock it from the inside and the key from the outside. Are you getting ahead of my story?

One lovely summer morning, eager to get some front yard weeding done, I bounced out the front door pulling it shut behind me. The minute I heard that “click”, I knew I was in trouble. Yes, the door was locked and the key was inside. Like many people who live alone (well, there is the cat), I keep doors and windows locked. I was saved that day by the cat. No, he didn’t jump up and unlock the door – his name is Buffy, not Lassie. He does, however, like to sit in the pantry window to watch the birds at the feeders, and that window was unlocked. I gathered up a hammer (who knows why) and a screw driver from the garage tool collection and pried up the screen.

Getting my ample self through that small window was not a pretty sight. Fortunately I had already done the dishes so the sink was empty.
when I fell into it. But I was inside and bruises do heal. When I returned the tools to the garage, I added a spare key to the collection.

This brings me to today. We had our first snowfall overnight. I had gone outside to shovel the path to the street so the newspaper could be delivered. Again I heard that “click”. Panic! What to do? Call the locksmith? The phone was on the wrong side of the door! But then I remembered “The Key” – not where it was exactly but there was hope. I searched the garage, finally found it and soon was sitting down with a second cup of decaf green tea and the paper. Now if I can just remember to put back the emergency key---and just where did I put it anyway?
QUIET, PLEASE!

Sondra Szymczak

I can remember when the biggest disaster in my life was when the elastic in all my underwear collapsed at the same time. A safety pin was a quick solution. Now my problem is batteries.

I was minding my own business watching the Red Sox on TV and eating ice cream when I noticed an annoying beep-beep-beep. It seemed to be coming from the carbon monoxide detector, but I wasn’t worried since the heat is off. Annoyed? You bet! The back of the device suggested I check the owner’s manual. Quick, do you know where your manual is? Neither do I. A closer inspection of the back of the “thing” said a beep every thirty seconds meant it might be time for new batteries. Okay, I have AA’s on hand so I put in new ones and pushed “test”. The blast drove the cat from the room faster than I thought a seventeen year old could move. And still there was a beep in the air.

What else beeps? My eyes fell upon the smoke alarm. After several tries I got the case open and removed the battery – one of those 9 volt thingies. The silence was wonderful but what if we actually had a fire. I searched my battery supply drawer – actually, I had to look several places because I’m not that organized. While searching the kitchen for a 9 volt (they were all out of date!) I heard yet another beep. Is there no end to this? The first floor smoke alarm was quiet so I felt covered for fire, but the downstairs carbon monoxide detector was joining the choir. Being smarter than the average brick, I knew what to do this time.

I listed 9 volt batteries on my shopping list, scooped out more ice cream to replace the soupy mess in my bowl and went back to the Sox. They won but it’s always something and it is what it is.
I have a picture of myself as a screen saver. I am 18 a full head of brown hair blowing in the wind. I sit astride “Apache” smiling, easy and comfortable in the western saddle. The T Rail Ranch in Patagonia, Arizona spreads out around me in black and white film. The detail in the picture is blurred. Not enough pixels for even this small screen. Give me a minute and my memory can provide the details. The tan sandy ground, a rock here and there, a cow plop dried and hard in the sun. The ground is packed hard because this is the area used by cars and trucks to go between the house and the corrals.

The mesquite trees are bare, bent, built by nature for the 13 to 16 inches of rain in a good year. The ground drops off behind me covered with dry bushy growth, on into the empty wash that can run fast and muddy when the clouds burst over the mountains. One year during a heavy flash flood ten cows drowned, having gotten caught up in a loose fence of barbed wire strung across the wash. Their bodies were deposited along the banks for a mile or more. One poor unfortunate was beached within easy reach of the ranch house. I was staying there at the time and sleeping in a
small bed on the front porch. The ranch puppy shared my bed. He would climb up the stones of the porch, hooking his head around the leg of the bed. One night he managed this maneuver and arrived on my pillow reeking of putrid beef. He had gotten big enough to accompany the other dogs on their nightly scavenge. I quickly lifted him out and deposited him on the floor only to have him return. I solved my problem by getting up and pulling the bed away from the porch wall. He sat on the floor and whimpered plaintively.

I complained the next day: “That puppy keeps climbing into my bed at night and he stinks from the dead cow.” Frank went down and burned up the old carcass. That solved the puppy’s and my problem.

On the other side of the wash the ground begins to rise up a small hill, the last crown of a local range. This hill has a name. It is “Frank Seibold, Jr.”. It’s name-sake tells me that Apaches, wandering off the “reservation”, repeating their old migration route into Mexico, fired a few shots at the Ranch house from this hill in passing. “You could hear the bullets coming. They were packed poorly into the rifle chamber and came end over end making a flipping sound. It gave you time to take cover.”

I can see the Indians on their little mustang ponies, their worn cotton clothing, a spot of red here and there, riding along in single file with stringy bundles of spare supplies hanging from their saddles. A mixture of boredom and resentment trigger the shots.

I have come down from Tucson for the day and my mother has taken this picture. I’m smiling. I’ve been riding with Frank. I remember saddling the horse, happy to have been able to catch Apache who I know is well broken, willing to respond to the reins and a light kick of your heels. I’ve put on a double saddle blanket and Doris’ saddle that is familiar and comfortable. I’ve tightened the cinch and buckled the latigo. Apache wears the simplest bridle, one split ear and no chinstrap. I’m dressed in blue denim frontier pants from “Porter’s”, a red and black flannel shirt over a white blouse. I would happily wear those same clothes now and they would look just as fashionable. They seem timeless.
I arrive at the Ranch with anxiety and hopeful expectation. Will Frank be there? Will he have chores to do that involve riding? Frank doesn’t ride for pleasure, only for work. The pace is always slow because “You have to save your horse for when you need him”, Frank explains.

If I hit the jackpot, Frank is there and planning a trip to the “range” and I get invited to go along. The task to be accomplished is not revealed. It becomes apparent, only as the work is being done. I don’t dare ask what we are going to do. That seems like taking liberties with my good fortune. I’m not sure how Frank will respond to too many questions. I just saddle up and ride into the unknown.

Today there is a young heifer expecting her first calf. She is small, a two year old, and the bull is big. Frank is concerned about her having difficulty with the birth. She has been hanging out at the furthest windmill up the dry riverbed. We head north-east the horses hooves sinking into the soft sand, dry now, and filled with old foot prints from cattle and horses. Mesquite trees on either side of the wash slip by. It seems a long ride to me and I think about the possibility of knee pain, a problem I have as my legs bend around the horse’s ribcage.

Roundup is a special problem, spending all day from early morning to sunset in the saddle. One roundup I was riding with one leg hooked around the pommel. “If you keep doing that you’ll give your horse saddle sores,” said Frank. That day I could hardly walk when I finally dismounted.

We plod along at a leisurely pace. The sun is hot and unforgiving but the breeze is cool. I do most of the talking. I’m a chatty young woman. I cover the subjects of rain, the chances of a good rainy season, the supply of dried grass still in place on the range, my classes at the University of Arizona, and what Frank is going to do with the rest of his life.

“I’ll probably spend it pulling reins,” he says.

We finally arrive at the windmill. There is the heifer. She is in trouble. The calf’s two front legs and its tongue extend from the cow’s vagina. There is a large blister under the calf’s tongue. It
looks like a hopeless situation to me. Here we are at least 4 miles from the ranch house with its phone. We have nothing but our selves and our horses.

Frank takes the lariat from his saddle and ropes the cow around her neck behind her ears and ties the other end of the rope to a nearby mesquite tree. He removes one rein from his horses bridle, leaving the other rein dropping to the ground, “ground tying” the horse that doesn’t move. He wraps the leather rein securely around the protruding crossed legs of the calf. The heifer sways at the end of the rope her eyes wide with a mixture of fear and exhaustion.

“Now I want you to get back here and catch this calf when it comes out. Don’t let that blister touch the ground and get covered with sand.”

I position my self, arms bent and extended. I’m holding my breath and I’m on my knees. Frank leans back using all his weight and strength. The calf emerges suddenly. I don’t expect the slippery heavy limp body. I fall forward under the unexpected weight. The calf’s head lands in the sandy wash. I feel like I’ve failed. If this was a cowgirl test, I just flunked. Frank is forgiving and accepting.

“That’s OK.”

I block out the rest of the operation. It is a big male calf with a large head. Is the calf going to live? Will the blister subside? Will it be able to nurse? We ride back to the ranch. Frank says he will come back tomorrow and check on the new Mom and baby. I think, “This man can handle anything.” This is what it means to come from a “pioneering ranch family.”

Viewing the picture I’m sure I am still there in that time somewhere. The people who share that time and place must be just off camera. Surely they are there too. I can see them moving, reserved, unsmiling, I hear their voices.

The family consists of the widowed Mom Sy, and the unmarried siblings in their late thirties and early forties, Doris, Helen, and Frank, Jr. Doris is a teacher and keeps her distance from the physical labor of the ranch. Helen is already suffering from “arthritus” exacerbated by the hard strenuous physical labor
of the ranch. Helen and Frank have tanned and creased skin on their faces and hands.

Helen’s travel to school was more difficult than mine. I ride in the car with Doris each morning to the 8th grade in the schoolhouse overlooking the town. Helen had to ride horseback to school every day. Her horse regularly threw her at the same place in the road. She complained to her father, hoping for a different horse.

“Who is going to be the boss? You or the horse?” He asks.

Helen does the evening milking. I am her assistant. After school I go to the pasture behind the house and collect the milk cows. I drive them toward the corrals and the waiting calves. As time lengthens from the birth of their calves, the cows are pastured further and further from the corrals. I drive the cows into the milking stalls where Helen milks them, not trusting me to “strip them.” When she finishes she turns the calves in with the cows to get their nightly ration of milk. Helen returns to the ranch house for dinner and after dinner it is my job to separate the cows and their calves for the night. The dishes are done and Helen says, “Did you turn out the cows and calves?”

I’ve forgotten and now it is dark.

“If you leave them together over night we won’t get any milk tomorrow.”

I grab a broom and flashlight and head for the corrals. Jersey, one of the cows has a bad temperament and likes to charge and butt you. I get the calves into their enclosure and turn to see Jersey charging me. The broom swings after the flashlight and hits it. The flashlight goes off.

“Shit”! I say loudly. I hear Frank’s voice coming from the top of the corral fence,

“Now what kind of language is that for a young lady?”

“Jersey is trying to butt me!”

The days blend into each other interspersed with memorable events: the sighting of a mountain lion, the deer hunter found dead
on the mountain side, after being gored by the buck deer he thought he had killed. Helen cooks. Doris as the eldest sibling, hands down judgments. Frank takes care of the ranch with Helen’s assistance. He is the “Hand”. I wash and dry dishes. There are three Foremen, Doris, Helen, and Mom Sy. Frank is definitely low man in the pecking order cast there by his youngest sibling status or perhaps ganged up on by the women. Doris says she saved him one winter, aged 4, from drowning when he fell in the horse trough and his heavy clothing held him down. “Biggest mistake of my life,” she says.

Frank is the one family member who doesn’t live in the ranch house. He has a small green tar papered cabin on the other side of the wash. I never go over there. It is a male domain. I want them to like me and approve of me more than anything else in my life.

One day I ask Mom Sy how she got to Patagonia. She was one of eight orphaned siblings born in Scotland.

“I came here from Paisley, Scotland where I was working in the Mills. That was about 1890,” she told me.

“My brother and one sister were already here. He was a jockey riding in the races in Patagonia and my sister was working in a boarding house for the Miners.”

“My brother wrote and told me to come, that there was a lot of work in the boarding houses.”

“I started working with my sister. I met a Miner, Frank Seibold. He was from Minnesota. I married him and we homesteaded this ranch.” (In 1895.)

The homestead is a quarter section allotted by the Homestead Act. Later it is realized that in this dry desert landscape a quarter section is not sufficient to support a family. They are allowed to add another quarter section. At some point Frank wants to move on to California. Catherine refuses to give up what they have, the first thing she has ever owned.

Their firstborn child was Catherine, named after her mother. She died at aged 2. The Seibolds blame visitors who brought a
sick child with them. The sick child later came down with diphtheria. Catherine was infected and died. I’ve visited her grave in the family plot in the cemetery south of town. Her grave has a small white marble lamb with “Catherine” inscribed. It is surrounded by a black iron fence. The other members of the family have spare notation, just names and dates. Doris, the last survivor, has an unmarked grave. Her heir, a distant cousin, did not want the expense of a marker.

I hear the flat slow drawl of their voices. I remember their issues, the internal family struggles. The horses become their surrogate children. Doris breeds a prize-winning filly, “Pretty Girl”. The filly is the hero of the family. She starts a quarter horse bloodline that gives Doris state wide recognition. Pretty Girl is spoiled like no Seibold has ever been spoiled. She regularly comes into the fenced area around the ranch house and causes mischief. I hear the pans for the milking process being scattered from their shelves near the back door. Helen complains.

Mom Sy starts receiving Social Security. She is also losing her short-term memory. “Doris you don’t have to take my Social Security. You have your own money.”

Now in 2006 they are all gone. Frank’s wife Irene is the last survivor. What they feared most has happened. The Ranch is no longer a functioning operation. The cattle have been sold off along with the horses. The lease on the forest land has been relinquished. The deeded land, the old homestead, is broken up and sold off in ten to forty acre plots. The ranch house went to a buyer this last year. Doris’ cousin and heir, Cookie made promises she didn’t keep. She and her husband bought some “western wear” and stuck around for about 6 months. Then they returned to Florida. They asked Frank’s widow, Irene, to run the ranch for them. With the help of a cowboy from Mexico, Irene ran the cattle operation for 3 years. Cookie complained that the cattle sales were not bringing in enough money. Irene was instructed to sell off the remaining cattle and horses. Cookie and her husband presided over the dismantling of the Ranch. In the process they stepped on just about every person they dealt with. I assisted Irene in retrieving a picture from the ranch house that had been left to her by Helen. Cookie swore out a warrant for Irene’s arrest that would be withdrawn only when the picture was returned.
I have been blessed to know this family, their ranch and to share a small period in their lives. My memories of the time with them are precious. They took me in, a confused adolescent girl who didn’t know yet what life was about. Through quiet discipline, work and structure built on economic survival they taught me about life and myself. I am so grateful that they had the patience and energy to accept me. Thank you, Mom Sy, Doris, Helen, Frank. Rest in Peace.
“IS THAT YOU JOE?”

Chaya

Beth thought she was going mad. Tackling paperwork for real estate sales was a constant struggle. Not only did she procrastinate, but she lost focus. Caught herself daydreaming. Multi-tasking made her feel like a failure. At home, too, things seemed out of kilter. One day she wrinkled up her nose and asked herself: When did I notice a difference? The goodbye kiss?

“Hey, what’s with the ‘airbrush’?” she chided Joe the first time. Turned from the sink to look over her shoulder straight at him.

“Ah, Beth,” Joe chuckled, a twinkle in his eye. Taking in her raised eyebrows and arched back, he grinned, returned to plant a solid kiss. The brush-off kisses continued to bother Beth, as she watched Joe turn on his heel and stride out the door, on to his beloved tennis matches. Actually, when was the last time he brought home a velvety red rose, wrapped his arms around my waist, whispered something sweet in my ear, or even nibbled my ear. And, when did he stop taking on new house projects? Many nights, Joe puttered in the basement, announcing himself by sharp, steady hammer taps. The aroma of fresh paint or stain might drift up the stairs, signaling “man-at-work!” Other times, he was sucked into the couch, glued to the T.V., watching the latest C.S.I. episode. Not anymore.

What’s luring you to that damn computer morning and night? You’re slip sliding away, Joe. What’s going on? Beth wondered, bending over to spray some extra jasmine behind her knees. She was tired of tiptoeing down the hall, curious to see what the magnet was. So, she summoned up the nerve to ask. At first glance Joe appeared to be surfing for tools. Wait. Is Joe actually changing the screen the minute he hears my footsteps? A little click’ll do ya. She caught only a fleeting glimpse of text. Tried for nonchalance in her voice.

“What’cha doin’, Joe?”
Joe responded calmly, his voice a light ruffley wave, meant to wash over Beth, dispersing each and every needless concern into the air.

“Just a friend I met online, honey,” he re-assured her.

“Yah? What’s his name?”

“Lena.”

“Lena?” Beth felt her tongue curl around the name. “And?”

“Oh. She’s a runner, works part-time in a real estate office,” he winked. Beth bristled head to toe, felt her hackles go up! Joe sold real estate. It’s how they met. He contacted Beth as soon as she passed the exam, brought her on board, and they clicked right from the start. She loved his deep voice and dark Mediterranean features. He liked to tease her about her freckles and curly red hair. He was drawn to the charged energy that circled around when she entered a room. Over a cup of coffee one day, Joe confided in Beth about his failed marriage and how, in an instant, things unraveled.

“You won’t believe what happened, Beth,” he said. “One night I called Heather at pottery class.”

“May I speak to Heather, please?” Joe demanded.

“Heather who?” the teacher responded curiously, “No one here by that name.”

“Oh c’mon, she’s been in your class since October.”

“Sorry, buddy. There must be some mistake.”

“You got that right!” Joe yelled, slamming the phone down. He hopped in his car and drove around aimlessly for hours that night. Got home, poured himself a Jameson, and sat in the dark, nursing his whiskey, waiting for Heather to return. At least the drink won’t let me down, he thought. Smashed his glass on the tile floor, when she finally arrived. Then Joe hurled his anger out like short bursts of firecrackers:

“I thought I knew you, Heather! How could you do this to me? I wonder why I’m attracted to a cheater!”
“Why don’t you look at yourself?” Heather countered, her face flushed, her breathing deep. “So, I slipped up,” she rallied. “Besides, you were always off to a meeting or conference. They tore you away from me week after week. You were never home. I got so lonely, Joe. I felt invisible. Don’t blame it all on me.” As Heather’s pleas washed over him, Joe struggled to understand the sea change.

“Hey, that guy meant nothing to me, Joe. The first night Len seemed really impressed with my bowls. Then, with me,” she enthused. “And stuff happened. It was easy at first. I pretended there was a second session. I felt so clever, but then it bothered me. I was going to end it. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt you, Joe, but you weren’t there for me. He was. You left me alone. Can’t you see it was a rough patch for us?” Her excuses stuck in his hair and careened off his skin.

At that point, for Joe, the marriage was over. They divorced. Joe bought a condo on the other side of town. Beth felt the pain of his subsequent loneliness, his keen sense of betrayal, adjusting to having his daughter, Jenny, only on weekends. And, Jenny didn’t believe the infidelity. Beth gazed into Joe’s sad hazel eyes, hung on his every word, and tried to console him.

“Jenny text messages me all day long, Beth. She really wants me back, I guess,” he confided in a raggedy voice. He seemed bewildered by the whole thing. Later, Beth shared her suffering at the loss of her husband in a random car accident. For months they comforted each other. Before long, they bonded - talked about opening their own realty office. Instead, Joe moved in with Beth.

Beth’s snug house hugged the Salem shoreline, the yard dotted with clumps of beach roses, an apple tree and a couple of low pines. At sunset Joe and Beth loved to settle into the porch rockers, and marvel at the pink glow cast on the water. Besides real estate, they shared a passion for tennis. While Joe was a faithful “early bird” player-out the door before 7:00 A.M., Beth played her matches in the evenings. Friday nights they’d be dancing on the courts in mixed doubles. But, then things fell apart. Maybe it all started when Joe won the custody battle.

“Why don’t you switch to a part-time schedule, give Jen some stability?” he said. Wanting to please him, Beth agreed. *Did I
lose a bit of myself, trying to establish a relationship with Jenny—painting our nails together, choosing sassy new colors for our hair, letting her paint that mural in her room with friends? Soon, Beth began to worry about Jenny passing under their radar. But, Joe was oblivious to Jenny’s risk-taking behaviors.

If Jenny missed curfew, he took her side. If Jenny acted belligerent or sarcastic, Joe softened the consequences that Beth set up. Joe seemed torn, wanting to trust Beth’s judgment, to be close to her, yet needing to get closer to Jenny. Maybe, he trusted no woman anymore. When Beth lashed back at him, Joe was astonished.

“Why are you turning against me? I’m only worried about Jen’s feelings,” he protested.

“What about my feelings?” Beth railed. And when a boy was relentless at trying to control Jenny, Beth asked Joe, “How is telling Jenny what to wear, a sign of love?” He had no answer.

The boiling point came at the third anniversary of Beth’s husband’s death. Smarting from Joe’s criticism, chafing at his interference with her parenting skills, Beth opened a new door.

“All right. I admit I’m not as willowy as when we first met. Is that it?” she asked.

“No. I would climb over walls for you,” said Joe. “And, just for the record, I love your curves!”

“Wow,” whispered Beth. “You never said a word. Say it again.”

“Hey, I love your curves!” he indulged her, with a pat on her butt.

“Mmm. Anyhow, there’s something I have to tell you. I’m going on a yoga retreat with Katie,” announced Beth. Joe’s eyes widened, he nodded his head. Gave her a hug. But, that week he called her twice a day.

“How could you turn off your cell phone?” he complained when they finally connected.
“Are you checking up on me, Joe? Don’t. I need some space. Please, trust me.”


After she came home, refreshed, things seemed better for a while. Until Beth learned about Lena.

What gives now? she thought, chewing on her nails. Oh, so it’s ‘only’ Lena...a runner. Aha. And I should not give a care? Sure, Joe. She pictured them on the phone, arranging a rendezvous next summer. Stamped her foot. Ooohhh! Are you bored, looking for a diversion, Joe? An on-line bud? Or is it Jenny? I know she drives you wild, sitting in stony silence in the car on road trips- ear buds in place, or moving her towel as far away from us as she can at the beach. She can be so difficult, so mouthy. Like when she turns her head away, holds up her hand when you confront her.

“Talk to the hand, Dad. The face doesn’t want to hear it!” she says to you. That’s the way high school sophomores are, Joe! Get used to it. Damn-it, Jenny would never try that with me! But you feel guilty about the divorce and so you take it. And what about the time in the car (in the car!), when she let it slip that she had a date with a girl? You couldn’t tell if she was toying with you. Didn’t ask. Well, it seems you have a new toy yourself, huh, Joe, you rat? thought Beth. She began to search for old emails.

“Now!” he had written, demanding that Lena come to him at once, through the net. And, she would, over and over.

“O.K. O.K. Joe.”

Why he’s flirting, thought Beth. But, her stomach still fluttered at his touch, his jokes, his very smell. Who can resist such a charmer? She decided to bring it up, again.

“Joe, Lena’s writing to you before she goes to work in the morning!!”


“What do you think’s going on in her mind? You’re not being
fair to her. I wouldn’t have time for that before work. Not unless…” she suffered a silent scream. They’re hooked! “What if Lena hopes for a relationship with you, Joe?” Instead of backing down, he slid easily into his rationale:

“Lena has lots of other guys she writes to. Don’t worry.” But, Beth had a gut feeling that she should worry.

“I don’t like this, Joe,” she shouted. “I want you to stop.”

“Don’t tell me what to do.”

Beth jumped off the couch. Slammed the door on her way out of the room. That night she had the shock of her life. While she was emailing a friend, an IM from Lena popped up on the screen, “Is that you, Joe?” A shiver flew up and down Beth’s spine.

“No. Leave my husband alone!” squawked a voice inside her head. But, instead of typing those words, she caved. Clicked out of email, stared at the screen, transfixed. Wrapped her arms across her stomach and rocked back and forth, tried to slow the trembling. Waited for the awful feeling of being invaded to pass. She shut down the system, found her way upstairs in the dark and crawled into bed.

For months Joe continued to email Lena. Besides the evening rituals, he propelled himself into the home office on weekends. Throughout the day she heard him in there, clicking away. He began to skip lunch, to close the door to his office, to insist that Beth knock before entering. That was the last straw.

Beth decided to tell her friend, Katie. Stopped by the house one Saturday, between errands. Started off rambling about yoga and their constant struggle to lose weight. They had a pact— whoever lost ten pounds first, had to pay the other one ten dollars.

“I just can’t give up bagels, and butter, and beef,” Beth grumbled. They laughed about their cravings for carbs and fat. Suddenly, Beth blurted out:

“Joe has a girlfriend.”

“No.”
“Yes.”

“I don’t believe it.”

“It’s not fair, Katie. He met her online, a jogger. From California! What if he plans to meet her some day? This lean Lena, this Lena stringbeana, this California jogga…I hatea!” Beth exclaimed, her voice trembling.

“What are you saying, Beth? If you say it bothers you, and he loves you, then he’ll stop, right?” asked Katie, tenderly.

“Wrong,” groaned Beth. “He won’t stop. It’s like his manhood’s at stake!” Katie reached for a hug, and Beth held on tight, but she still hurt. No relief in the telling.

Beth began to look for triggers, what was pushing Joe away from her and into the throes of an imaginary relationship with lean, mean Lena. She tested a theory and was shocked at what she found. There was a definite pattern to the email threads! He writes to her on the nights I go to yoga. Unbelievable! Beth called Katie.

“Joe doesn’t have guy friends to lean on like we do.”

“Yah, I know all about that,” said Katie, who had a husband and two boys.

“He has tennis. I have yoga. We follow our dreams. Why can’t we keep it together?” They talked on and on. How Beth’s bad knees kicked tennis right out of her life. How yoga filled the hole, sort of.

“What about golf?” asked Katie.

Beth knew golf was shimmering on the horizon. Offered a chance to learn something new, together with Joe.

“I know, I know, Katie. We’ll give it a try. I promise.” There’s simply no room for you, Lena. How dare you find a crack in our foundation? And you’re steadily prying it open. Life can’t go on like this. But, how can I stop it? Beth asked herself. There was an unsettling rhythm to this new flow of energy, blowing through the house, slipping through the cracks, like an ill wind. No. A night train, charging through the woods! Beth knew she had to come up
with something. She began to fight back.

Late one night Beth figured out how to block instant messages. She blocked Lena. Never said a word to Joe. Then, she began to touch him in a physical way, stopped waiting for him to make the first move. Kissed his eyes in the morning. Curled her fingers into his hand under the sheets. Snuggled. Took extra care when she blow-dried his hair. \textit{Italian men!}

“You look fabulous today,” she murmured in his ear.

“Not bad,” he grinned into the mirror.

Beth offered to trim Joe’s hair once a week instead of every two. Folded his laundry. She created a picture in his mind of how they “fit” together, like pieces of a puzzle. Pointed out how lucky they were to have each other, their health, their amazing Jenny.

Katie suggested Beth call Joe during the week to tell him about new movies playing at their favorite theater, and invite friends over for Sunday brunch.

“Great idea,” exclaimed Beth. Beth and Joe prepared breakfast together for a few weeks. Pretended they still had something special. Yet, Beth was uneasy.

One morning desperate for him to stop emailing Lena, Beth shared how she suffered at night.

“You’re robbing me of sleep, damn it!”

“C’mon Beth.”

“I am so mad I want to stab you.”

“I’ll have to hide the knives when I go to bed, then.”

“Joe, listen to me. I am serious. It’s too much.”

“All right. I’ll quit.”

“What do you mean?”

“Cold turkey.”

“Huh?”
“I won’t open her emails,” he declared. Beth looked deep into his eyes. Stayed there a moment. Maybe two. He seemed so sincere, she decided to believe him. They spent a weekend in Vermont, snowshoeing through glorious open fields. Three weeks later, she couldn’t get to sleep again. Thoughts swirled in her head. Dream fragments woke her up—fleeting images of being chased, lost, wandering into empty rooms. She tossed and turned, kicked off the blankets, and found her way to the office. Checked the email.

Lena: “I miss you. I miss our chats.” It’s not over. He can’t stop. What shall I do? Next morning she had a plan.

“We have to talk, Joe.”

“O.K.” said Joe. They moved out onto the porch, sank into the wicker rockers, facing each other. Joe gazed solemnly at her. Inhaled deeply. He swallowed, told Beth how hard he had tried to stop.

“In the beginning I watched the clock. It felt like I lost a friend. I stopped once for nine days and one hour!” he moaned.

“You want my sympathy, Joe? Give me a break.”

“You’re always on the phone or at yoga,” he accused her. “Admit it.”

“Yes, but…” Beth’s voice faded out. She glared at him. Joe looked away. O.K., she thought. So, this is how it ends. Joe slid over, mussed her hair with one hand, grabbed her for a squeeze with the other.

“I’ll end it, I will,” he whispered in her ear. Beth softened. Let him hold her. “Come,” said Joe, taking her hand, leading her inside. He reached for an old movie, slapped it into the DVD player and pulled Beth down on the couch. Joe laid his head in her lap. The old Joe is back? The next night Joe slid the Scrabble game off the shelf and set it up. Although he was hungry to win and ahead for most of the game, in the end, Beth beat him by one point.

A month passed. Another. Dark crisp winter days gave way to soft blue skies, filled with puffy clouds. Purple crocus peeped out by the front walkway. Spring was in the air. With the help of a
therapist, Joe and Beth tried to sort things out. Joe traveled less. Beth planted primrose and persuaded Joe to design a brick garden path. Still, there must have been a strong voice in Joe’s head telling him he deserved something more.

One night when she couldn’t sleep, Beth crept down the stairs, plunked herself down at the computer, and took a good look. There she discovered old emails, carelessly left behind. Droppings. The words sat there on the screen, like mourning doves, clinging to a cable. Chitchat about daily changes in their lives- houseguests arriving, a foreign student moving in. Just words, she said to herself. But each one felt like an arrow, zinging through the cool piney night air, lodging in her heart. Creating exquisitely tender, hot spots, like splinters aching to be plucked out and flicked away. Beth confronted Joe.

“Joe, not again,” wailed Beth.

“I'll find another counselor. I will Beth,” Joe promised.

The new counselor urged Joe to monitor his time on the computer. Could he check personal emails only once a day- at lunch, perhaps? Would he consider substituting something else- other than email, to anticipate in the evening- a call to a friend or a walk with Beth? He was encouraged to pay attention to his breathing, to take a few long slow breaths, the minute he thought of checking emails. To notice if the urge disappeared or poured over him in waves of clever arguments that justified his cravings- “Why deny yourself? You had a tough day! You deserve a break.” The goal was for Joe to try and control his desire to sit, with a drink at hand, and type on his swiveling leather throne, beyond what was required by his work responsibilities. Beth thought Joe was learning to recognize the compulsive energy, the voice of addiction. She thought the urges were less insistent.

Then one night when Joe was out at a meeting, Beth showed Jenny how to make pizza dough from scratch. They covered the dough with tomato sauce, chopped up crunchy peppers and sliced sweet red onions. Sprinkled them all over. Breathed in the fragrant garlicky aromas.

“Who’s Lena, Mum?” asked Jenny airily. Beth slammed the chopping knife into an onion with such force that it slipped from her
fingers and clattered to the floor. She caught her breath, and took a step back, like she’d been smacked in the face.

“Lena?” The sound hung in the air. Flapped around in her head.

“Yah, she called today-asked for Dad,” said Jenny, licking tomato clumps off her fingers, eyeing Beth.

“Just an old friend, Jenny,” said Beth, sprinkling cheese and oregano over the top. While she tried to be calm, her heart was racing wildly. *Why is life so darn messy?* Beth asked herself. She popped the pizza into the oven. Half an hour later, they had cleaned up most of the mess they had made. *Something very Zen about washing dishes,* thought Beth. The dinger went off and she turned to Jenny, looked her right in the eye.

“Let’s eat!” said Beth, with gusto.
Write about a favorite food from childhood and its significance in your life

When I was a little girl, eating an artichoke meant eating only its leaves. One by one I would pick each leaf off the middle stem, starting with the small ones, proceeding to the outer most layer and ending with those closest to the heart. I always debated how close to the heart I could go without sacrificing taste because when the leaves were too thin, they became difficult to eat and had a less strong flavor.

I would dip each leaf into a lemon butter sauce or mayonnaise and my first bite would be taken into the perfect “middle” spot, i.e. the exact spot where the leaf starts to become tender. I then let my teeth scrape down the rest of the artichoke leaf until I reached the part with the sauce – this would allow the tastes to blend perfectly. Balancing the flavor of the sauce with the artichoke leaf was vital, as the ratio of leaf to sauce had to be a complimentary one. This taught me an early lesson in how important it was to balance what you loved.

One day I discovered a very special way of eating my last leaf – a way which allowed its delicate flavor to linger. I would drink a sip of water right after I had my last bite and something about the water mixed
with the aftertaste of the artichoke would bring out this deliciously sweet aftertaste in my mouth. I learned that if you swirled the water around in your mouth a little bit before swallowing, the flavor intensified. I was never very good at letting things go quickly. I wanted everything to last.

I would often share an artichoke with my mother because she loved eating their hearts. For some reason I had no interest in this particular part – possibly because it involved peeling and scooping the fuzzy layers between the leaves and the heart. I think the truth was I never felt confident enough regarding how to get to its heart so I just left it alone. The same could be said about the way I dealt with my feelings in my childhood. I preferred to live as far away from my emotional center as possible.

I grew up and a man fell in love with me and wrote me a poem called “The Artichoke.” I guess I was not the only one who knew my attraction for this vegetable ran much deeper than the obvious. “A life lies deep inside you, out of reach from all known men. Many have succumbed in the spiral of your leaves and others not even tried, such is their fear of your prickly ends. Like cowards and fools, they turn around and ignore the greatness of your soul”. Unfortunately, a few months after he discovered my soul, he ran from it and became the man he wrote about.
I spent a week with a French boyfriend in the countryside and when he saw my face light up upon seeing an artichoke at the market, we went home and he made me home-made mayonnaise. I fell in love with him more than I already was, and he ended up being the first man to help me reach my own heart.

I love artichokes now as much as I always have but the difference is I love them completely. I love the leaves because they offer a taste of the pleasure to come and I love the heart for its wholeness. I will now fight to have the hearts - both mine, and the artichoke’s.
TO LEAVES
Margaret Gooch

Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Why not give every spare moment to leaves?

Quick-passing beauty
Days filled with glory

Days still so warm
Yet let them go by
Why do I?

Oh, how best to see
As they glitter above
As they lift on the wind
As they drift, as they fall
Golden leaves?
To leaves –
Why not give every spare
To leaves
Golden leaves
As they drift, as they fall
As they lift on the wind
As they glitter above?

Oh, how best to see?

Why do I
Yet let them go by
Days still so warm
Days filled with glory
Quick-passing beauty?

Why not give every spare moment to leaves?
Our Contributors

Frank Camelio
Frank Camelio grew up in the Boston area and taught public school for several years before becoming a U.S. naval officer. In the Navy, he specialized in engineering, submarine maintenance, and industrial management, and later become chief executive officer of a 5,000-employee industrial facility, operating on over one-half billion dollars annually. He has extensive experience in federal government operations and practical knowledge in strategic planning and management. He holds a bachelor’s in Physics and a Master’s in Education from Tufts University and a Master’s in Mechanical Engineering and Naval Engineer’s degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 2008, he authored the book One Last Hope: Strategies to Prevent Imminent National Decline and Create a Better Future, which details how to effectively implement national strategic planning by incorporating I with a novel decision-making process based on the physical law of entropy. He has also co-authored articles appearing in Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research, The Clearing House, and Naval Research Lab Memorandum Report. In June 2008, he contributed an essay published in SPOTLIGHT, a Tufts University literary magazine. He lives in Oahu, Hawaii.

CHAYA (Cynthia George O'Grady)
Chaya has studied watercolor at the Museum of Fine Arts, Montserrat College of Art, the DeCordova Museum, and Snow Farm. She draws inspiration for her art from her family, biking, hiking, and knitting. She is a member of Confetti, eight artists who meet weekly and occasionally travel together. Chaya is also a member of the North Shore Writers Group, which meets in Salem. A retired Guidance Counselor, Chaya lives in Beverly with her husband, Kevin. They have been blessed with two daughters, Melina and Erin, a son-in-law, Chris Arnold, and a granddaughter, Niko. Chaya is currently writing and illustrating a children’s book about canoeing.

Kevin Clancy
Kevin loves flying and traveling. As the number two son of a career Naval Officer he crossed the United States by car four times before he was thirteen and spent 8th and 9th grades in Naples, Italy. After attending the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, Kevin received his Navy wings and flew A7s off the USS Enterprise (CVAN 65). Kevin then flew for the Airlines for 31 years piloting the B-727, B-747, B-757 and B-767. Recently the law concerning mandatory retirement was changed by Congress and Kevin will return to flying for JetBlue here in Boston. Married for 39 years, Kevin and his wife have moved 25 times. They've been in Boston for 12 years.
Sunshine De Leon
“After graduating from Tufts University in 1993 with a BA in International Relations, I moved to the Philippines for 2 years, where I worked in Account Management at a multinational advertising agency. In 1995, I moved to New York City where I worked in the Public Relations, Marketing Communications, Special Events and Hospitality industries. I eventually moved to London in 2005 to work in marketing at a non-profit start-up project called 21st Century Leaders. I returned to the Philippines in December 2006. I am currently based in Manila but have frequent trips to the beautiful island of Boracay, where I am involved in the restaurant industry. One year ago, I began a new career path and have decided that of all the areas I have worked in, this is the one that feels like home. I have been working as a freelance journalist/writer for magazines in the Philippines and most recently have been hired as a stringer for the Philippines for a public radio news program in the USA called THE WORLD. (www.theworld.org). In addition I am attempting to write a book detailing the life and experiences of my currently-97-year-old grandmother, whose very humanity and breadth of experiences are inspiring to all who meet her.”

Barbara Feehrer
Barbara is a retired educator who lives in Bedford, MA. She is a 1961 graduate of Jackson College at Tufts University and holds a M.Ed degree from Boston College. Barbara and husband Carl (Tufts PhD. 1965) are parents of two children and grandparents of seven. She taught in the Bedford Public Schools for many years, prior to retirement. Barbara is a member of the Bedford Garden Club, has been active in the MILES Program at Middlesex Community College, and enjoys writing both poetry and memoir. She and Carl enjoy biking, kayaking, walking and recently snowshoeing! Spending time camping with the family in Maine is a favorite activity.

Ken Fettig
Ken is a graduate of Tufts (E52) who also holds degrees from MIT (MS 53) and Harvard Business School (MBA 57). He worked in management positions for Texas Instruments, Jostens, and Bangor Punta Corporation before starting his own company, Cornell Concepts, from which he retired in 1991. Since that time he has served as an international tax consultant. Ken has been a member of the Tufts Alumni Council since 1993 and was a founder of the Osher/Tufts Lifelong Learning Institute in 2000. He has led over a dozen courses including The Crusades, World Wars I and II, and Darwin. His latest course, Between the Wars, is being offered Spring 2009. With his wife Virginia, he lives in Walpole, MA, where Ken is active in community affairs. The Fettigs have two children and three grandchildren. Ken continues to play golf and tennis and enjoys skiing with the whole family.
Claire Flynn
Claire received a BA in English and History from Regis College and a M.ED from Suffolk University. She has taught in the Reading Public Schools system as a classroom teacher and reading specialist. Currently, she is an adjunct instructor at Middlesex Community College. Reading and writing poetry has been an avocation for many years. The moon, the color purple and the conquest of good over evil hold much fascination for her.

Tania Friedman
Tania was born in New York City, a first generation American. She grew up in N.Y. where she studied ballet and piano. In 1967, after moving to Boston, she became Administrator of the Harvard Medical School Admissions Office. Since leaving Harvard, she has studied sculpting, takes courses at Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, belongs to a book club and arranges speakers for the MIT Honorary Matrons Luncheon.

Margaret Gooch
Margaret, a native of Jackson, Mississippi, graduated from Texas Christian University (TCU), obtained a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and after teaching English for several years at Meredith College and elsewhere, received an M.S. degree in librarianship from the University of Denver. Thereafter, until retirement, she worked as a reference librarian at the Tisch (Wessell) Library of Tufts University. In addition to taking Osher classes these past two years, she has participated in EdVentures interest groups and presently serves on the Lunch and Learn Committee. She has enjoyed numerous vacation visits to Colorado, along with occasional travel elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad, and enjoys keeping up with family in Mississippi and Tennessee.

Sara Whitaker Hale
After graduating from College, 1955 University of Arizona, I married a local rancher’s son, Kenneth Hale. Ken had an all consuming interest in language, any language, which he learned quickly and with fluency. He decided he wanted to study Linguistics and pursued a PhD at Indiana University. Our lives proceeded with an academic career at two state universities and finally in 1967 he was appointed to the Linguistics Faculty at MIT. Along the way we did three years of research on the Aboriginal Languages of Australia and raised four boys. Ken kept his interest in the Native languages of the Americas and we continued to visit, teach and do research in Arizona.

In 1977 I returned to school and completed work for my RN. I pursued a second career in Psychiatric Nursing until I retired in 1996. Ken died in 2001 and I had to start a third life as a single woman. Since then I have done some traveling, moved to a small house, and enjoy my courses at the Osher Program.
Arlene Heimert
Arlene is a graduate of Harvard College and the Simmons School of Social Work. She worked as a reporter and feature writer sequentially for the Boston Herald and the Boston Globe. Later as a psychiatric Social Worker she was employed at MGH and McLean Hospital, at a battered women’s shelter and as a facilitator for parenting groups. She and her husband, Alan Heimert (Powell M. Cabot Professor of American Literature) were for 23 years the Masters of Harvard’s Eliot House, working to create a community of some 450 undergraduate, graduate students and faculty. With their children they traveled to almost every continent (not Antarctica). At the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Tufts University Arline currently serves on the Curriculum Committee and as an editor of SPOTLIGHT, and writes when her dogs permit (they find her hard to train).

Jane Katims
(BA, University of Wisconsin; M.Ed, Lesley University) presently teaches contemporary literature and creative writing at The Cambridge Center for Adult Education and at Tufts Institute for Lifelong Learning. She has previously taught at Middlesex Community College, Buckingham Browne and Nichols, and The Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis. She has authored numerous radio series for Wisconsin Public Radio, one earning her a George Foster Peabody Award in Broadcasting. In 2004, she was awarded a John Woods Scholarship in Fiction Writing. She is the author of the poetry collection Dancing on a Slippery Floor (2007). Her short story "Until Now' will appear this spring in Pearl Magazine (#40). Jane is presently working on a collection of short stories. www.janekatims.com

Jerry Kornreich
My interest in writing began in my high school days when I became editor of the high school newspaper. At Yale, I took a course on daily themes and actually won honorable mention in a writing contest. During four-and-a-half years of service in the Air Force during World War II, I picked up more than enough material for writing short stories and recently brushed up on writing skills. Most of my output has been biographically based, though I have tried some experimental approaches. After many rejections, one of my stories has been accepted at the University of Wisconsin Review. Although there is no direct relationship, my Ph.D. in Industrial Relations may have helped me to develop my communication skills.
**Dana MacDonald**
Dana now finds himself coming full circle since entering Tufts in January 1943 with a degree in Management in the Tufts Class of 1948 and now an active participant in the Osher Program since it was first established on the campus. He has been involved in many things between these two milestones. He was commissioned in the Navy and served on three minesweepers in the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II. He was recalled to active duty in the Korean War and promoted to be the captain of a fleet minesweeper. He held a variety of senior manufacturing management positions in 6 companies in different industries. This was followed by a 20 year span as a management consultant completing about 45 problem solving assignments. Dana has been a very active volunteer since his retirement. This has included such activities as PRO BONO consulting assistance to nonprofit organizations, serving as an administrator of a 250 member professional organization, developing and running a monthly program to assist retiring military to make the transition to civilian positions and chairing a committee that ran an annual gathering for 300 military retirees. He is an avid reader, enjoys doing woodworking projects and acrylic painting. He has exhibited his work at both the Belmont and Watertown Art Associations annual juried shows and has received a number of awards.

**Mike Martin**
Mike is a dutiful father of two, a proud grandfather of four, a happily married man of forty-six years, a contented retired philosophy professor, an author of many obscure but profound books and articles, a tough but mild-mannered ex-Marine, the oldest graduate of ImprovBoston’s five-level program, the strongest man in the Brookhaven community, and a modest, self-effacing mensch. He is spending his golden years working out in the fitness room, teaching improv classes and a course on Ethics, writing funny short plays and short stories, and defending non-belief.

**Albert Muggia**
Al (B.A., Biology, Harvard University; M.D., Yale University), a former assistant professor at Tufts Medical School, he has always been interested in literature and has been taking classes at Osher LLI for three years. He is a member of the Curriculum Committee and practiced medicine in Winchester and Medford for many years. Now retired, he hopes to get more involved giving courses.

**Francis (Frank) Murphy**
I retired in December 2007 after a 49 year career as an engineer, manufacturing executive and Chief Financial Officer during which I was fortunate to travel the world and make friends in many places. I now spend the summer and fall in Lexington, Massachusetts and the winter and spring in Naples, Florida with ample travel to other places sprinkled in. Participation in life long learning programs both at Tufts and Florida Gulf Coast University along with walking, golf and bike riding are keeping me intellectually and physically healthy. Everywhere I go I am accompanied by my camera and I am accumulating photographs to share from trips and especially of the southwest Florida wildlife.
**Denise Doherty Pappas** has been a study group leader for three classes in memoir writing and one class in adoption in literature at Osher. An English teacher with a master's from Brown and an MBA from Simmons, Denise also teaches Business English for Diplomats at the Fletcher School. She and her husband, Dr. Dean Pappas, have two sons, a videogame designer and a student at Brooks School in N. Andover.

**Elaine Rothman**
Elaine Rothman moved to Brookhaven with her husband Leonard in 2007. After retiring from her job as a high school guidance counselor in Tenafly, New Jersey, she embarked on a second career, that of a writer based in Connecticut. She has published several pieces of short fiction, as well as countless essays and feature stories which appeared in newspapers, magazines and newsletters.

**Leonard J. Rothman**
Early in 2007 Leonard Rothman and his wife Elaine moved to Brookhaven from Litchfield, Connecticut. Len served in World War II, graduated from George Washington University and had a professional career with the Internal Revenue Service’s Office of International Operations. One of his favorite pursuits, ever since his teenage years, has been photography. He also enjoys wood working.

**Amanda Spiro** graduated from Tufts in 1987 with a degree in Social Psychology. She then went on to Albert Einstein College of Medicine where she met her husband of 16 years, Ken Weintraub (Brown ’87). She currently lives in Nashua, NH where she is a part-time pediatrician and full time Mom to Rachel, 13 and Jason 10. Over the last few years she has taken a few writing courses including some with the online Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. In her free time she enjoys writing, reading and yoga and spending time with her family.

**Sondra Szymczak** (J59) is enjoying retirement after 34 years of working at Jordan Marsh. She is very active at Tufts, having been, among other things, chair/president of the Tufts Alumni Council and president of the Association of Tufts Alumnae.