University of Southern Maine
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
2020

reflections

Ciao Bella! Photo by Ann Marie Olson
"Beautiful spring light on Icelandic poppies"

ART and Literature

Falling Water in Northern Maine Soft Pastel by Kathleen Sutherland

"I love waterfalls, as I love scenes of water: sea, rivers, lakes! :-)"

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"From the humorous to the haunting"

From its start, *Reflections* paralleled the emergence of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute: the seeds of both were planted in 2000 and burst forth to begin their steady growth in 2001.

On September 22, 2000, Keith Sherburne, one of the early movers and shakers, who introduced *Wrinkle in Time* among other ongoing traditions, proposed to the Board of Senior College "the long-term undertaking of a periodical publication by the participants of Senior College Portland…drawn from submissions in all forms of expression (painting, photography, creative fiction and nonfiction, music, opinion) and would relate to an announced theme. The theme for 2000–2001 is 'Imagine that…'."

The Board approved, and in Spring 2001, Keith could write: "Welcome, everyone, to the first issue of *Reflections*—living proof of the vitality of Senior College." Edith Yonan, who served as one of its first editors, is quoted in the title above: it was how she described the scope of this new opportunity for OLLI members to share creativity, insights, and entertainment. There has indeed been whimsy, but also opportunities to explore and to share even what is painful. Early on, Charles Acker's poem "Terror and Dust" and Martha Keller's "September 11" were eloquent testimonies to shared grief.

Keith Sherburne, originator, leader, and contributor to *Reflections*

The first issue cover (shown below) included a painting "House on the Rocks" by Julian Sacks.

LOOKING BACK

"*Before OLLI started, we were known as Senior College—apt description—with classes held only on Fridays. We early members took classes together, ate lunch together, and made deep, long-lasting friendships. It was through these connections that Keith Sherburne saw just how much talent abounded in the membership, and he felt this talent should be shared. With support from the Board,* Reflections *was born. Many people have worked very hard to keep this unique publication alive. I know Keith would be very happy to know that* Reflections *is valued enough to continue to serve as a vehicle for sharing.*

As his wife, I thank all the editors and their staff for the hard work and dedication put into continuing this excellent journal and to the contributors who share their talents. I consider this a tribute to a very special man." — Dona Sherburne

Keith Sherburne had had conversations with Rabbi Harry Sky, who in 1999 initiated a one-time publication called *Senior Perspectives: Spirituality.* That publication's reception was proof of the benefits such sharing could have for both reader and contributor. OLLI member Holly Lord remembers how important it was to her father, C. Philip Lape, MD:

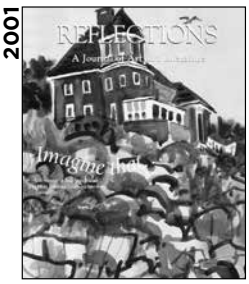
"*He had been writing poetry and philosophical thoughts for himself for several years, but I think having his poem and his article on aging printed in* Senior Perspectives *got him thinking about doing more with his writings. He went on to self-publish a small book of poems and a short book about our family. He continued to write and share his writings with family and friends until just before his death. OLLI meant a great deal to him!*"

Another OLLI member, whose essays were published in the first *Reflections*, is Pat Davidson Reef, journalist and author of three published books. She looks back fondly:

"*Keith was such a wonderful human being with creative ideas and a sharp intellect and great sense of humor. He was both dedicated to* Reflections *and very gracious in working with those of us submitting ideas and images.*"

Harry Sky took enormous pleasure in the development of an annual journal:

"*From its inception, I've been convinced that Senior College is a mine lode—so many great ideas, so many great human adventures, so many insights into life. Convinced of this truth, I've asked "Why not record it for posterity?" After all, life, just as any structure, is built on earlier foundations…we have taken it upon ourselves to*

2001


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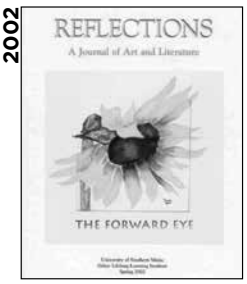

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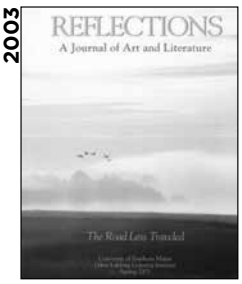

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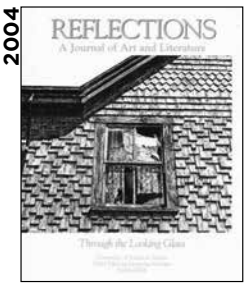

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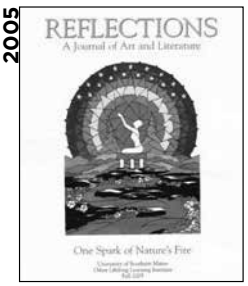

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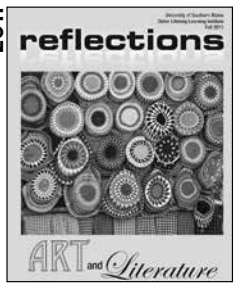

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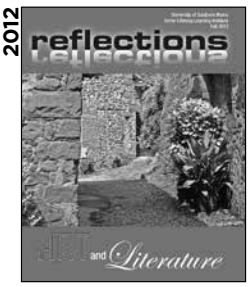

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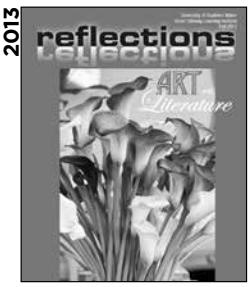

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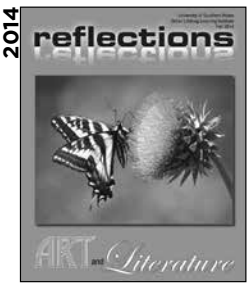

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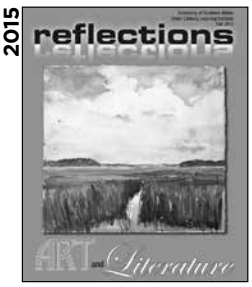


The First 20 Years of a Journal of Art and Literature

be the distillers of what was and the producers of the intoxicating notions of what will be….”

“Harry Sky had another good, forward-looking dream, and Keith Sherburne was in place to make that dream come true with vision and experience. He invited Charles Aker, Julian Sacks, Edith Yonan, and me to a discussion. Reflections *had its start, and here we are, two decades on, once again celebrating the incredible talent of OLLI members. Through the dedication of all involved in the selections and publication, the quality of* Reflections *has not wavered. Thank you each and all. I have been thrilled and encouraged to see my poetry in print. I look forward to each publication of new contributors and longtime friends. What joy!”*
— Natalie Murray

“For two years I worked with a wonderful editorial team that decided on selections by consensus. Everyone was aware of the trust placed in us by those who submitted their work. And we always wished there was room for all to be published…. The publications always made us proud. Each year there were so many dedicated people involved in creating a journal to honor the writers and visual artists in OLLI.” — Domenica Cipollone

“I was there in the beginning with Keith Sherburne, the paste pots, the scissors, and Donata’s cookies to nibble. Years later I found myself as editor in 2014 and 2015, enjoying the automated submissions process (many thanks to Tim Baehr who allowed us to read submissions “blind” just like the “real” journals out there) and the new computerized selection and layout process which yielded a computer file to the printer. Over the years, I am pleased to say, many of our writers have published in journals and magazines, published books, several have gone on to study at workshops, some have taken an MFA. Look what can happen when you give free rein to a bunch of OLLI volunteer “troublemakers” to enjoy themselves. Thanks to the many volunteers, the OLLI staff, and the writers and artists who continue to put their work out there for the enjoyment of us all, we have managed to create and foster a real literary journal.”
— Pat Budd

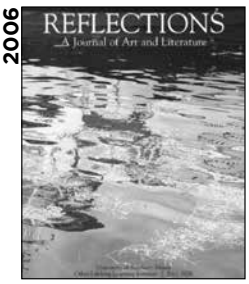
Following Edith Yonan as editor of *Reflections* have been Pat Muzzy, Domenica Cipollone, Pat Budd, and Ruth Story. Over time, we came to realize that *editor* really isn’t the most accurate title. Yes, there have been individuals, every year since 2001, who devoted considerable time and energy and thought in heading up a committee of OLLI members working to consider submissions—without knowing the creators’ identity—for our annual journal of art and literature. But the work submitted for consideration is not edited or reworked beyond perhaps correcting a typo or asking a submitter about a phrase that seems unclear. This issue of *Reflections* has been pulled together by the team listed on page 1, the overall effort headed by co-chairs.

We thought it might be fitting to take a page from the past and suggest a general theme, or prompt, for this anniversary edition. Terry Foster, co-founder with Harry Sky of Senior College, and himself a contributor to *Reflections*, had once shared a Sanskrit poem that suggested the idea of taking as our 2020 theme Capturing the Moment/Celebrating the Now:

Look to this day for it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief span lie all the verities and realities of your existence:
The bliss of growth, the glory of action, the splendor of beauty.
For yesterday is already a dream and tomorrow is only a vision.
But today, well-lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day.

We all hope you enjoy this special look at the past and where we all are now, and that you will consider submitting your work in the future.

reflections
ART and Literature

2006


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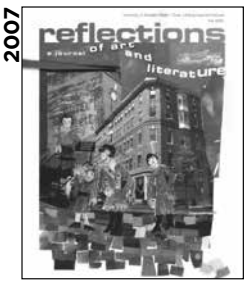

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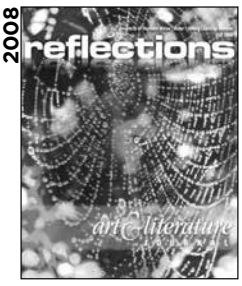

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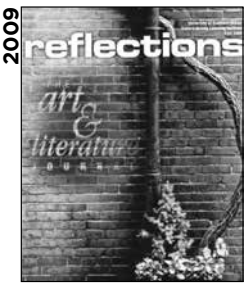

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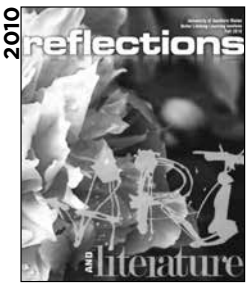

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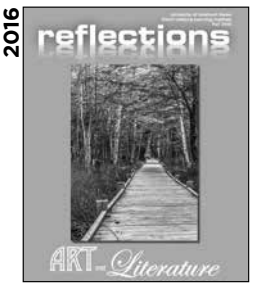

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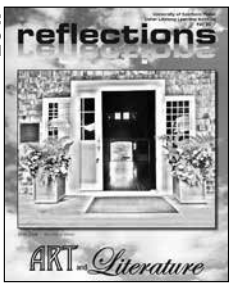

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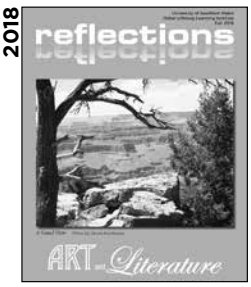

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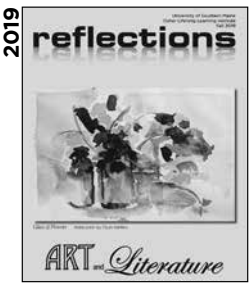

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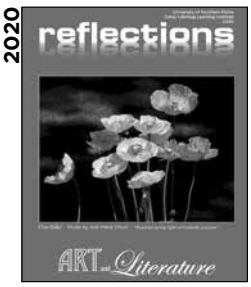


The Perfect Gift

Nancy Arey Cohen

"Aw, you never let me have any fun," she complained loudly as she was told once again to go to her room. As she reluctantly shuffled off, she muttered, "Just wait. One day I am going to get out of here and see the world."

Alice dreamed of faraway places. More than anything she wanted to sail down the Nile 'neath the African sky and spend springtime in Paris, letting her spirits soar high. She wanted to climb Mount Kilimanjaro and cruise the Mediterranean. One day…one day.

Going into her room, Alice slammed her door in defiance, grumbling, "It's just not fair." She crossed the room, took her favorite book off the shelf, and settled into her escape chair, getting ready for an adventure. As she sat, she actually patted the book's curled cover as though it was her pet. She'd never forget when she got this book.

Everyone who knew Alice knew that she dreamed of traveling around the world. On her birthday, with all of her friends and family gathered round, little Jack had excitedly walked over to her with a toothy grin and presented his gift to her. She could tell that he had wrapped it himself. The paper didn't quite meet in the back and the Dollar Store ribbon was taped onto the package. But he was excited to give this present to her. As she took the gift from him, he didn't move away, but stood expectantly, shifting his weight from one little foot to the other, waiting for her to open it.

"My goodness, Jack," she exclaimed. "Is this a toothbrush?" She always joked about obvious gifts like that. There was no question that she held a book in her hands. The joke always made people laugh, though, and it did so again as Jack erupted, giggling as he went along with the gag.

"Aw," he said. "You guessed it."

Alice made quite a ceremony of opening gifts, had since she was very young. She enjoyed the pleasure it gave others when she made a fuss over their gifts.

"The only remaining question is, 'What kind of toothbrush is it?'"

When she saw the title, she actually cried with joy: "*1000 Places to See in the World*! Jack, it's the most perfect gift!" she exclaimed. "Now I can read about all of the exciting places I want to go."

Jack smiled even more broadly and blushed when Alice gave him a great big thank you kiss on his cheek in front of everyone.

The pages of the book soon developed a lifetime of wear. Alice had read and re-read them, turning down the corners of pages as she came across places she just had to see. As time passed, she developed a system. She would turn the corner down just a little for places that she would like to see, a lot for places she would love to see, and even more for those places she just HAD to visit. Recently, she had even started a journal, making a list of the world's most intriguing locations, prioritizing the list, arranging and re-arranging it.

Tonight, as she settled into her comfy chair, the book propped on her knees and the list on a table next to her, she let herself drift off into the vivid descriptions. Soon, she was floating in country manor luxury aboard the *Hebridian Princess*, gliding through the 500-island archipelago off the western coast of Scotland. From there, a simple turn of the page and she was drifting silently in a hot-air balloon, soaring over the centuries-old network of rivers and canals, stately castles, and vineyards of Burgundy. Sighing, she closed her eyes and could almost feel the wind in her hair, as the balloon ascended and descended, imagining the lives of the powerful dukes who reigned supreme beneath her in the Middle Ages.

"Someday," she thought with a sigh, a smile teasing her mouth. "Someday."

Her mental trip was interrupted by a knock on her door.

"Alice," the familiar voice of her exiler called. "Your friends are here and want to know if you would like to play a game with them."

"No," Alice stubbornly replied. "Tell them to go away. I'm busy."

"Alice," the voice continued to annoy her, "come on. You don't need to stay in there all night."

"Well, you're the one who sent me here," Alice retorted. "So just leave me alone."

With that, she shut the voice out of her head and checked in to The Grand Hotel in Stockholm. The Nobel Prize winners were not there because it was summertime, and as she sat in the glassed-in Grand Veranda overlooking Stockholm Harbor, she could almost taste the homemade pastries set out before her.

Suddenly, a door shutting somewhere outside her bedroom startled her out of her reverie. Alice looked around the room that seemed less familiar to her than the world in her mind. For a reason she couldn't explain, she sat in the darkening room and began to cry softly.

"What is wrong with me," she sobbed to the twilight. "Why am I happiest when reading my book?"

As she sat, dabbing her eyes with her monogrammed, crisply pressed lace handkerchief, she heard outside her door,

"So, how is Mom doing today?"

"Well, Jack," replied the nurse, "she was upset earlier, but now she's traveling down Memory Lane again, visiting her favorite places. That book of hers really helps her to salvage some of her past."

And the grown son she didn't recognize walked into the room.

WORKS LIKE A CHARM

Ariela Zucker

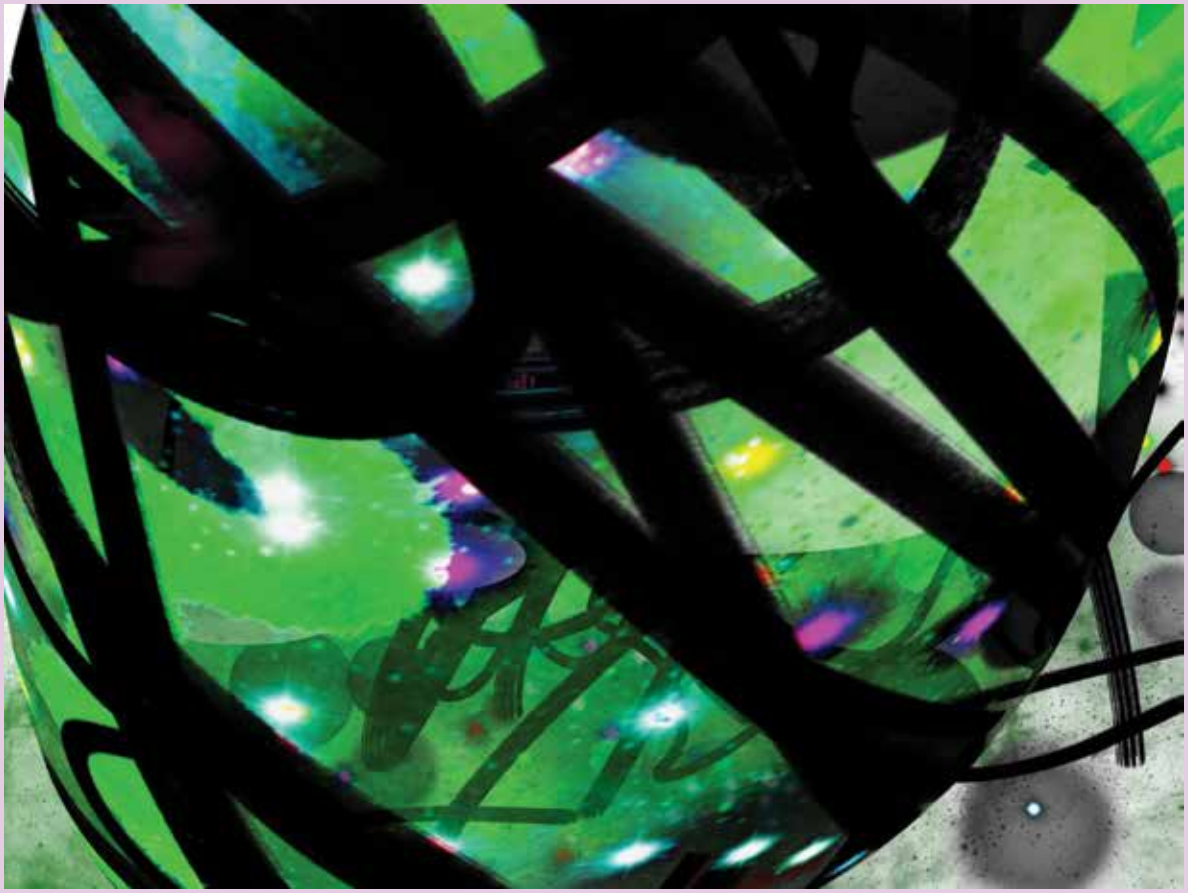
I almost miss it, diverted
by the kaleidoscope of smells,
and sights, unceasing movement,
and blare. Cubbyhole I look for,
one door wide, small dust-covered
display of amulets and rings,
jammed in between gemstones
that lost their shine.

I memorize it now in my head,
on the right corner a restaurant,
plastic and chrome bar stools, with
scents spill over the sidewalk.
Across the street, an open stand staging
assorted merchandise; bright scarves
fly in the breeze, women's bags,
and shiny plastic souvenirs.

Buses snarl at pedestrians,
crisscrossing, tired of waiting
for the sea to part. I inhale
the familiar concoction of smoke,
burnt oil, and sweat, baked to ripeness in
the Tel-Aviv sun. Then I walk in.

I see it in an instant, delicate
Hebrew letters. Shema Israel,
the most sacred Jewish prayer,
carved in gold to an intricate
round layout fixed in a thin bracelet.
The perfect charm to keep me safe,
I explain to an uncaring seller.

He adjusts the bracelet to my left
wrist. A relief of gold against my skin.
And I move my fingers to feel the letters
warm against my skin, several times
each day. Close to my heart,
my mobile mezuzah, with me where I go.
Two dollars, the price I paid for
eternal safety and peace of mind.



Art in the Time of Coronavirus Digital image by Molly Morell

"Unable to access the studio where I paint realistic images, I explored a digital app to express my COVID-19 angst through abstraction."

Positivity

Janet Stebbins

If you were really positive,
no one could hug you
before you were driven off.
Just wave at taillights.

At first we could phone
affection to you,
then, as you faded, only
text, guess, bless.

You, alone in hospital tents
packed loud with space-walkers,
ranks of horizontal humanity
breathing hard.

Comfort and Mercy were at sea.
Gloved hands briefly
holding yours were only
feeling for a failing pulse.

Then you were gone.
Gone viral.
Back in
good company.

An English Garden Fabric Art by Patricia Jones

"A good friend's mother from Wales had English gardens that I loved. I used antique linen, cotton, and silk to recreate her gardens."

Remembering You

Eileen Griffin

Walking alone
on an abandoned
Louisiana railroad track
early morning heat
rising encircling
all silent except
persistent droning
of fat dragonflies
helicoptering.

Before me
flat openness
stretching endlessly
beckoning
like the flash
of your yellow windbreaker
your black curls
so long ago
inviting me
further on.

Blueberries with Dew Photo by Cheryl Brogan

"Beautiful summer day...three shades of perfectly-plump blueberries sprinkled with tiny droplets of dew, begging to have their picture taken."

Frozen Photo by Pat Garrett

"I went to Camp Ellis to capture a full moon. Instead, a tangle of rope and lobster traps became a snowy winter story."

Cape Porpoise, Maine Photo by Steve Bloom

"I'm drawn to discarded objects that find new grace in their disposal."

Learning from the Young

Mike Brady

I turned 70 last summer. To surprise me—and they were eminently successful in doing so—my children gave me a cello.

I never studied music as a child. In my early adult years, I had fleeting experiences with classical guitar and recorder, neither of which lasted more than a year. I had more success with folk guitar back in the early Joan Baez and Bob Dylan days but taught myself. Through much of my adult life I have enjoyed listening to a wide range of music, including classical, and must have told somebody in my family that in recent years my favorite musician is Yo-Yo Ma. They took that as enough of a hint to purchase my special gift on this milestone birthday.

So, what is one going to do? I couldn't just put the instrument aside and hope nobody in the family would ask me how my new hobby was going. I didn't trust myself enough to be able to learn to play cello through *You Tube* videos or self-help manuals. So, I set out to find a teacher.

At first, I called around to several local music stores to learn if they offered private cello lessons. While there are plenty of opportunities available to learn guitar, ukulele, drums, and other popular instruments, the best these vendors could do for me was to write down the name of one or two cellists in the area who gave lessons. But none of those musicians were located near my home so I didn't call them.

As I continued my search for a teacher, I had a stroke of luck. One morning when I was taking the USM-Metro bus to a meeting in Portland, I sat across the aisle from a young woman who had a red cello case on the seat beside her. I introduced myself and we began to talk. I learned that Catherine was a third-year music performance major at USM specializing in cello. Although not a music education major, the students who are the usual candidates for such a role, Catherine agreed to be my teacher.

We began lessons in early September with the start of the new school year. I had heard about the well-known Suzuki method from people who have studied violin and other instruments but thought this was a program designed for children. Catherine assured me that Suzuki was also an excellent curriculum for adults. So, after the first lesson, in which we dealt with such fundamentals as sitting posture, having a "puppy paw" right hand to hold the bow, and how to tune the instrument, I ordered the *Suzuki Cello School Volume 1* online with expedited shipping so I could get to work.

Through my entire career I have been an adult educator and gerontologist. I know from the research literature about the challenges older people sometimes face when they undertake a formidable learning project, especially one that involves physical dexterity. My hands and fingers are not as supple as they were when I was young. I also have mild peripheral neuropathy so my left fingertips will sometimes grow numb after playing for only 15 or 20 minutes. My long-deceased grandfather, who was the only musician on either side of my family, used to tell me when I was a small boy how his biggest challenge playing piano in his elder years were his eyes. Sometimes he couldn't clearly read the sheet music. Yes grandpa, now I see what you were talking about!

Memory is also a challenge. Back in my youthful folk music days I could remember the lyrics and chord progressions of long ballads after playing the pieces just a few times. Now I need to play a simple musical phrase for hours to get it down pat.

My goals are modest. During that initial encounter on the bus I explained to Catherine that what I desired from this new adventure was to be able to play folk and popular songs that I like and perhaps a few not-overly-complex classical pieces. I am looking for a way to express myself artistically and spiritually. And I still recall saying these words: "I am content with an audience of two—me and God. And oh yes—also you Catherine on the days we have lessons."

I am now six months into my new hobby. Catherine and I meet in the USM School of Music building once a week and I try to practice a minimum of one hour a day, although in 15- or 20-minute segments because of my peripheral neuropathy and less-than-stellar stamina. She has been patient, gentle, and encouraging as I plow my way through *Suzuki Cello School Volume 1*. Three of Catherine's regular expressions of encouragement have become mantras for me: "Be patient—don't try to go too quickly," "Be gentle" (as in gentle lifts of fingers onto and off the strings and gentle bow hold), and at the end of each lesson, as I'm packing my cello back into its case, "Happy practicing."

A year ago I never would have imagined that I would receive a cello for my 70th birthday or find, by pure happenstance, a 22-year-old teacher. It's wonderful when the young can educate the old. Outside of families where, in many cases, children or grandchildren may inspire and instruct by their sheer energy and enthusiasm, our society offers precious few opportunities for young people to teach older ones. As I continue to grow as a cellist, I'm trying to heed Catherine's counsel to be patient, go gently, and have fun. There is deep wisdom in this guidance for learning to play cello and for life itself. At my age I feel blessed and grateful to be learning from the young.

New Year's Day

Anne Cyr

My tote road—at least I've considered it mine
these past twenty-five years.
One December day a sign appeared
at the end of that road:
American Forest Management it proclaimed.
With trepidation I walked, and the farther I walked,
more swaths of orange tape were revealed.

A week ago it began.
I talked to the man blocking the road with his huge truck.
Hello, I said, curious neighbor, here. Just wondering…
He was kind, reassuring, said only forty percent would be logged,
they'll bring in a chipper, tidy it all up. Nice and neat, he said.
Then they started. Titanic Tonka toys,
mammoth circular blades, robotic arms,
the men encased within glass all day,
pushing and pulling levers, saws screaming.

All is calm on New Year's.
A foot of snow fell yesterday,
but the work churned on and the road was cleared.
I make my way down to the field
where stacks and stacks of limbed trees await removal.
The air is pungent with resin,
bark and branches litter the torn-up road.
I totter among the massive muddy ruts.

They've created new roads.
I follow one up a slight incline, another branches off,
and then another. It's true they haven't clear-cut,
but still I feel like keening. The light dims yet I persist,
tripping now and then over a stump, looking toward the river,
at the sunset unfurling across the sky,
crimson and coral, matching the colors
of the raw wood.

I still myself. The air is mild, moist.
All I hear is the rustle of dry beech leaves.
I seek the moon and there it is, a hazy crescent
floating in the mauve-stroked horizon.
I touch a giant white pine
that—for some reason—was left on its own,
give it a pat, and head for home.

Seeking Fallow

Eileen Griffin

All around
the fields lay quiet.
Only stubble and lonely vines
decorate stern November ground.

I've been told,
before the winds of winter blow,
good gardeners clear their gardens.
A fallow garden is a work of art.

Waking up, I scan
the menacing sky. It is time—
snow any day now—
time to be a good gardener.

The brown earth chunky and hard,
I peer into the cracks and crevices.
What needs pulling up?
What needs raking?

I work intently—
warming up as I go—
creating mounds of old vegetation
for the burn pile.

Soon I stretch and survey my plot.
The garden lies fallow before me,
waiting for winter's benedictions:
rest and solitude.

I think of my grandfather.
Debris is not particular;
it accumulates in fall gardens
as well as in our lives.

Up above
somber gray clouds
scurry across the pale sky—
eager to be on their way.

Time for me to be on my way.
There is still one more garden
to clear and clean—
the one that dwells inside.

Fossil Beach

Richard Welsh

The layered cliffs emit a smell of time
that rise up westward of this landlocked bay—
that under unbound ocean once as seabed lay,
and now the sneakered fossil-seekers climb,
    to seek Atlantic ghosts of the millennial deep
    on Chesapeake wavelets washed from sedimentary sleep.

Some hunters on the beach desire most
the black and glistening teeth of restless sharks,
that gouged in occasional dolphin bone their marks,
and drifted to the silting Miocene coast—
    Perhaps, with luck, *Carcharadon*, monster Great White!
    Bigger than Hollywood! built of soft cartilage, and large bite.

    And skimming above that ancient Chesapeake,
    to give us pause, yet stranger thing:
    A great sea-plundering pelican, heraldic-winged,
    clasping its trophy catch in well-toothed beak.

Combing the relics of madcap eddying life,
I seek a smaller bigness—clams, whose theme
and variations of geometric scheme
a testimonial order plays below the strife:
    This shape I know, and why—to slide through the concealing sand;
    That one—an alien taunt I can't yet understand.

Were these clams sweet, to sate an appetite?—
Bicorbula, Glossus, Marvacrassatelle?—
And Venus, like the salty boardwalk half-shell—
but fortress-walled: what hungry suitor's siege to unrequite?—
    Snuffling, bottom-plucking, through the murk a rippling skate?
    Or engineer crab, reducing castle wall to carbonate?

    The bivalve curves remain. Of skates—a tooth or two;
    of rapid-crumbling crab, some empty fingers.
    The dancing play of idea well-wrought: that lingers.
    I gaze on that emergent, that old thought—or is it new?

Within my filling pail the buried songs upreach
that riddled through the ancient sands and clay,
reverberant echoes loosed from the chronicle shore
to capture our short stay upon this shelly beach,
And so to waiting camp I laden bend my way,
and with swinging bucket climb the cliff once more.

Pottington's Son

Lynn Ross

Mr. Richard Pottington
had a loud, obnoxious son,
who fancied himself to be
top man in the cavalry.
Upon a steed with sword in hand,
he galloped 'cross the greening land
and with a shrill and high-pitched scream
dashed to bits what was serene.
In voice like a clanging gong,
he told the birds to sing their song.
He ordered squirrels to climb up trees
and agitated busy bees.
He made a fawn, some distance from mother,
kick up his heels and run for cover.
Yet still the son did not refrain—
forging ahead like a runaway train.
With sweat on brow and fiery eyes
he took command of sod and skies.
The animals made a deafening din—
cursed the intruder who ventured in.
A big, black bear joined the fray;
he's the one that saved the day.
Awakened from a peaceful sleep,
he growled in voice loud and deep.
With a mighty paw he grabbed the boy—
shook him like some rag doll toy.
And after this surprise attack,
carried him off for an after-nap snack.

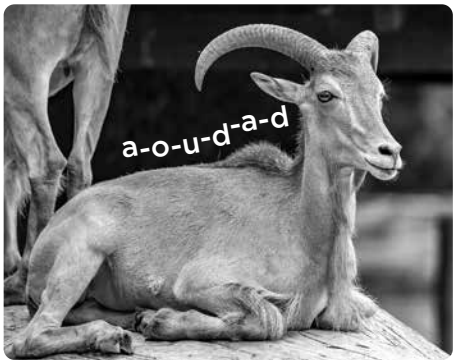
Naming the Aoudad

Richard Welsh

There's the aoudad, he says. The cage is one of the first we encounter, on the outer perimeter of the Central Park Zoo. This is one of those curious early childhood memories, where you wonder why they stuck. They're not like the traumas some children have suffered, or the indelibly wondrous moments, or the everyday routines that merge into undifferentiated but permanent images.

Daddy is introducing me to this tawny wild cousin of sheep and goats, native to the dry rocky mountains of North Africa. Or maybe introducing ourselves to the inquisitive beast.

He says it slowly, highlighting the separated pronunciation of the adjoining Berber vowels, so alien to diphthonging English: "Ah-oo-dad." Maybe it sticks to my memory, in part, because of that careful enunciation. It was a way he had, in some circumstances, of speaking very slowly and with exaggerated clarity of each vowel and consonant, as if speaking to a foreigner with weak comprehension of spoken English. He spoke that way, for example, when giving our destination address to cab drivers, though they were native New Yorkers in those days (or at least Brooklynites), who hardly needed such careful diction. At some point, when I reached an age to find the mannerism slightly embarrassing, I concluded that he did this because absolute clarity would make any further interchange unnecessary, thus warding off the specter of social anxiety.



Aoudad is different. It's fun. It's like the way he ostentatiously mangled the pronunciation of Hungarian words, to get a pained and long-suffering rise out of his immigrant wife (and, I suspect, a suppressed smirk from his son). It's like the way he played with words and phrases that amused him, or might be ever so slightly off-color, or inappropriate (and therefore ironically appropriate) to some situation. Or purposefully archaic or stilted-cliché or otherwise odd, to be deployed for emphasis or other special effect, the way people will often lapse into a dialect other than their usual, or employ a known but foreign word, either to convey a nuance unavailable in English, or to detach one's own regulation identity from the message at hand.

Ammotragus lervia, the Barbary Sheep or Aoudad, is about three feet tall at the shoulder, a comfortable size for greeting a child. It has long, robust, curving horns, and tawny hair that lies smoothly on its body other than the darker shaggy fringe that hangs like a ragged bib from its throat and upper chest. The familiar and friendly animal, with those alien horizontal pupils of the sheep-goat-antelope clan, is our greeter upon entering the zoo, as it strolls up to the front of its enclosure.

At one time it was a new thing for me; now I remember it only as familiar, as repeated. When was it new for the older man? Had he encountered *Ammotragus* in the wild in 1943 and '44, while in uniform in Morocco and Algeria, or at least heard of them there? That would have made Central Park a reunion of sorts, bringing back a few memories, until those faded and merged into the more recent experiences of bringing first one, then two children to the zoo. Or maybe he'd been visiting them here in Central Park from the beginning of his New York days, back in the Roaring Twenties and Depression Thirties, old friends from his long bachelor years. Maybe he associated them with goats he had known back at the boarding school farm, where many of the boys kept pets, they say. There's a photo in the school's commemorative history book, showing a boy in patched overalls, looking down with a small tender smile at a young kid he's holding in his lap. I tried to imagine that boy was Dad, but he isn't.

Or maybe—last possibility—the aoudad was as new to him as it was to the child he first brought here (more likely my older sister than me). Many things have been new for me when discovering them for the first time with my own son. But even when new to both, for father and child, the novelties are of a different kind. The animal or other wonder is a wholly new thing for the child; for the more world-experienced parent it is another item to add to the bucket of pre-existing similar things. It occupies proportionately less space in the conceptual universe, though perhaps making up for that smallness with a greater webwork of distant cousins.

There's the aoudad—maybe this is just the ritual of ticking off and acknowledging the familiar landmarks as we make our zoo rounds. *Aoudad…ocelot…coatimundi…mandrill.* Like announcing the Wabanaki and Old-World English names of the coastal Maine towns, as the comfortable old train clacks down the tracks to Wiscasset, or the cramped Greyhound bus that succeeded it trundles up Route 1: *Ogunquit, Kennebunk and Kennebunkport, Saco and Biddeford, Old Orchard Beach, Falmouth.* He is comfortable in the familiarity, but it seems he gets more enjoyment than just that. The sounds of the words themselves are enjoyable, savory. Words conjuring worlds.

Stuff

Steve Bloom

How untroubled childhood Christmas was:
with trees taller and more ornamented than could ever really be,
with snow deeper than ever really was;
with stories more miraculous and candles more numerous;
with siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, and food: friendlier and funnier, and tastier than possible;
with Handel with a hundred voices,
and Gruber with his guitar,
and Mendelssohn with trumpets and descants.
Idealizing piety in starchy collars and surplices,
Then caroling old and sick and important folks, in scratchy band uniforms, for the promise of opening-day tickets.
The stuff of memory.

How difficult and rewarding Christmas with children:
keeping family and traditions alive
as chores and obligations continue,
as shopping cripples thoughtfulness,
as siblings skirmish,
as new friends, and fears, and loves, and real dangers intrude;
having too little experience to comfort,
too little strength to protect,
too little wisdom to impart wisdom.
Still longing for Lo, How a Rose in Deep Midwinter. Still believing in Santa, alone.
The stuff of stories.

How troubled and wistful Christmas now:
with age creeping
and obligations keeping
families apart
with guilt or longing.
Now quiet loneliness and lonely hope
replace the wonder of childhood,
the gratification of parenthood.
Now what lifts the soul:
the words and boundless beauty
of grandchildren.
The stuff of poems.

Dancing on the Edge Photo by Cheryl Brogan

"Beautiful summer day...itsy-bitsy gossamer-winged bee.... I quickly maneuvered an aqua-colored watering can as a backdrop to bring subject into sharper relief."

Reminiscence—Spring II Ink Painting by David Little
"A New York Times article (March) on "ink painting" stopped complacency, inspired a "reset"—to revisit a past experimental painting style."

Blueberry Fields in the Fall Photo by Ariela Zucker
"Behind the sparkling blue water and deep greens of Down East hide miles of blueberry barrens that turn blazing red in late August."

DINER DIVINE

Anne Cyr

I was dropping my grandson off at his dishwashing job at the new diner on Route One when I decided to go in for a bite to eat—I was starving and still had a slew of errands to do. The outside of the building is streamlined in polished steel and glass, and the inside is even shinier. It was designed to look like a diner from the good ol' days. The stools and booths are upholstered in red leatherette; the red boomerang Formica tabletops are edged in curving chrome. The ceiling consists of shimmering faux tin tiles, the floor is checkered in black and white, and the walls are accented with glass block and mirrors, old product ads, and a big picture of Elvis. A glowing jukebox is angled into a corner. Songs from the sixties were playing: "We all live in a yellow submarine," and "Up, up and away." This was disconcerting to me—wasn't the heyday for diners in the 40s?

Hunger soon overrode these musings, and I settled into a booth, ordered some fries and a coffee milkshake. It seemed quiet for a Saturday noontime. An older couple sat in the booth next to mine. I could only see the back of the man's head. His wife, who was sitting across from him, was reflected clearly in the mirror that was on the wall between our two booths. It was hard to tell her age; if I had to guess I would say she was in her mid-eighties. She was on the short and plump side and yet stylish. She wore a bright red leather cap, a red shirt with small white polka dots, and lots of turquoise and silver bracelets and rings. Even her dangly earrings were red and turquoise.

They had reached the end of their meal and were ordering dessert when I arrived. There was no conversation between the two of them, at least nothing discernible—I thought I detected slight murmurings from time to time. When their desserts came, I watched her methodically eat her cheesecake, one generous forkful at a time. Again, no conversation, but there was certainly no sign of tension. I sensed quite the opposite between them—a level of absolute comfort.

Then came the bill, and the husband pulled out his wallet. Now there was some conversation, as she leaned toward him to look over the figures, and he pulled out some more dollars under her watchful eye. Probably deciding on the tip, I thought. When the bill was settled she got up slowly and made her way to the restroom. I saw that her feet were clad in raspberry socks and soft pink clogs; she held a small red leather clutch that matched her cap perfectly.

Her husband's turn was next, and she sat with her hands softly folded on the edge of the table while she waited. It was obvious she had reached that time in her life when she could be unapologetically at ease with herself. How different this is from most people today, who when left on their own for more than ten seconds start clicking away on a small screen instead of sitting serenely.

Keeping true to my newly assumed role as a middle-aged Nancy Drew, I tried to be discreet in my observation of her, making sure to shift my gaze from the mirror to the window to my pad of paper on which I scribbled as I was eating. So I was relieved—after the husband had returned and they were making their measured way past my booth to the door—when she looked right at me and gave me a big smile. I grinned back. Did she know I had been admiring her, studying her, hoping that my husband and I will last as long as they have, that we will be as content with each other as they appear to be, with no need for conversation?

When she walked past I noticed that she had a large bruise on the outside of her hand, which immediately brought my mother to mind—of how easily she bruised and how often she fell in her last few years—and this made me feel even more tender toward this woman whom I did not know.

It wasn't until they left and I was glancing over my notes when I realized how closely her outfit harmonized with the diner décor: all silver and white and red from head to toe. Did she plan it that way? Did they come here routinely and so she dressed accordingly, or was it just a happy coincidence? I didn't know, will never know, but appreciated it nonetheless.

HAIL, MURPHY

Eric Jensen

As patron saint of engineers
We honor Murphy's name
And after just a couple beers
We're sure to toast his fame.

His simple law is echoed still
By all his acolytes:
"If something can go wrong, it will."
We say equipment bites.

But Murphy was an optimist
As we can all attest.
"This cannot fail" we all insist?
It breaks like all the rest.

Each masterpiece that we invent
And each machine we make
Will fail in ways we can't prevent
Or find a way to break.

As members of the human race
We praise all those who try
To leave the world a better place.
We hope they multiply.

Murphy was a lucky man.
He lived to find mistakes.
Somehow it seems, since time began
Some folks get all the breaks.

ROADRUNNER

Toby Hollander

"You need a hook," Naomi told me in her thick southern accent, after reading the first twenty pages I had proudly presented after setting out to write my memoir. She had herself written a memoir, Red Clay and Vinegar, *about growing up poor and neglected in Alabama to become a social worker and then a nationally sought-after lecturer and conference speaker. I had met her through my wife, Lucky, during a time they both worked as social workers at a national level. She had readily offered to read about my life and give me advice as I sat down to write.*

"A hook?" I responded. "I need a hook?"

"People need a reason to read beyond your first page. 'I was born on January 17th, 1945' really doesn't cut it," she counseled. "You need to start over, baby." So I did.

ROADRUNNER

"I'm sick of hearing you whine about running away," he snarled, as the car, a '42 Plymouth beater, skidded to a halt on the gravel road. "Get on out, run." My mother, in the front seat, silently stared straight ahead. I squeezed out of the back seat through the driver's-side front door he had flung open, no hugs, no kisses goodbye. No nothing. He pulled the door shut with a slam. The car turned around and sped off, spewing gravel in its wake.

The night was cool and clear. The desert was silent but for the faraway moan of a diesel truck, shifting down. The stars shone brightly in the dark New Mexico sky. There was still a fresh earthy smell left from the afternoon thunderstorms that cross the desert Southwest on hot summer afternoons.

I started down the dirt road with a feeling of relief, even freedom. I looked overhead and saw my friend, the Milky Way, streaking, protectively it seemed, directly above me. I continued walking down the dirt road in the desert silence with no particular destination in mind, just away. Where would an eight-year-old even imagine going?

In time, fake-sounding coyote calls echoed in the darkness, and I knew then they had not actually gone, but were bent on trying to frighten me. I ignored them and kept walking, the gravel crunching under my feet. Eventually, my mother prevailed (which didn't happen often), the car returned, and the angry voice ordered me back in. There was no conversation on the ride back to our dirt farm in Las Cruces. I knew this wasn't over.

Suddenly, I saw a flash of legs and feathers as a roadrunner darted through our headlights. A nocturnal bird of the Southwest, the roadrunner kills and eats rattlesnakes, though not exclusively, and sometimes hunts in pairs. One tough bird. I felt a quick moment of kinship, a fleeting shadow if you will: a kinship with its independence and resilience in the formidable environment of the New Mexico desert. I was in a different type of desert: an emotional combat zone, a no man's land. A free-fire zone.

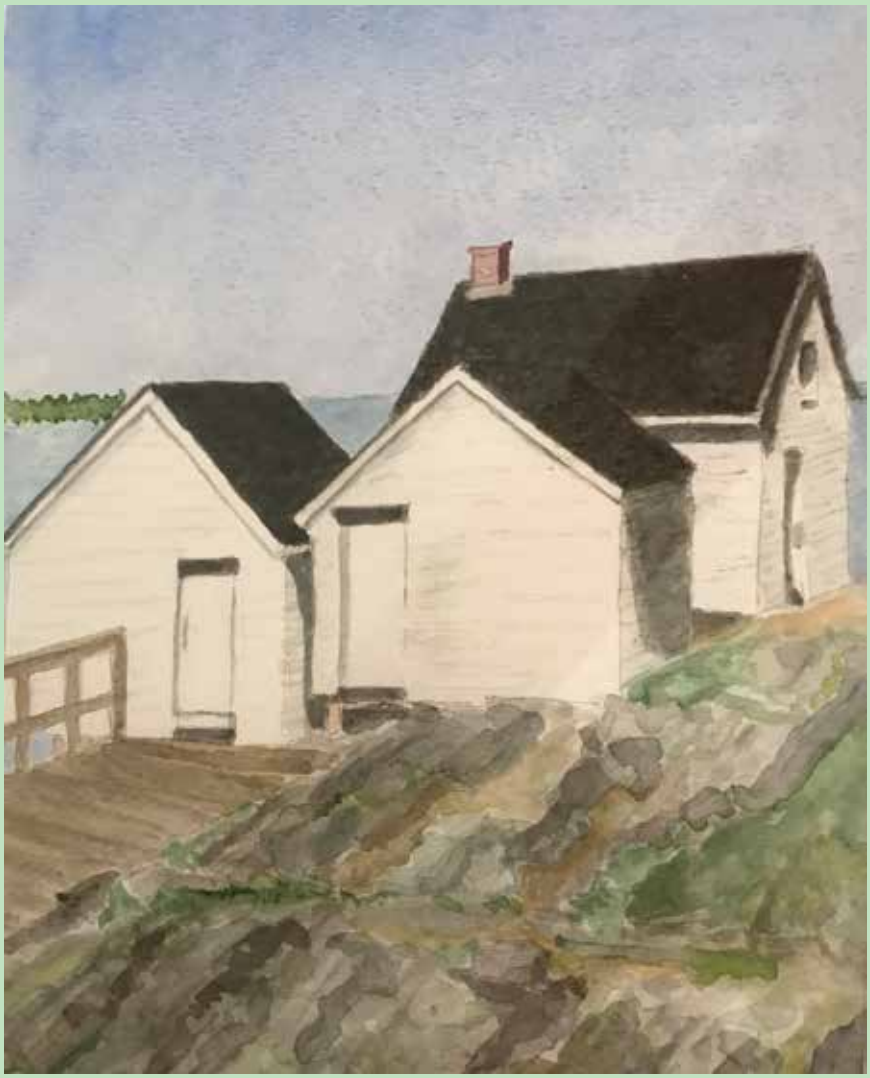
Moose Pond Redux Photo by K. Alton Spencer, Jr.
"Sun blinking through fog over a mirror-surface pond. A photographer anticipates, sees, captures, creates. Photography slows life's pace. "

Matching Colors Photo by Michael Colton
"This is among many pictures taken in Venice. I like it because it isn't a shot of the usual tourist spots."

Bon Appétit!

Robert Petrillo

Remember when pistachios were a thing?
I said across the cozy booth's oak table,
and you replied, *Oh yeah, it was a stinking*
joke how such a simple nut, almost a staple,
became a trendy treat like avocado
toast or sautéed cauliflower burgers,
and then we clinked our glasses of prosecco
to show how far above such common urges
we had risen in our quest to be unique,
here in this foodie town where a gourmet meal
achieves a status starred and oh so chic
when served with baby kale and truffle veal.
Yes, we were out of place there in that venue
but still, we asked to hear their special menu.



Willard Beach Watercolor by Mary Barthelman
"The contrast of light and dark made this view an appealing study and fun to paint.."

Summer Service

Tom Foley

Reverend Christopher Sinclair stood tall in his pulpit overlooking his congregation. It was a hot summer Sunday, and the first droplets of perspiration were beginning to form under his stylish black robe. His sparkling white ecclesiastical collar was tight around his neck, concealing the first signs of wattle that irked him as he shaved. The mirror wouldn't lie. Despite strict adherence to diet, and exercise, age was catching up with him. Adoring gazes were becoming more and more concentrated in the blue-haired section of the choir and the Women's Auxiliary. There were fewer batches of cookies delivered to the rectory and no fresh-baked pies at all. Such was the fate of the aging clergyman in that nether land before the deaths of husbands his age produced a plethora of predatory widows whose culinary delights would fatten him up for what they hoped would be a matrimonial kill. In the interim he would wait for the eventual attention that would tempt his resolve to never again dip his quill in congregational ink. He had learned this lesson the hard way in his previous parish, where he had counseled a few select wives in bad marriages and widows in grief from a horizontal position on the long leather couch in his office. He had written these adventures off as sins of middle-age indiscretion and was much relieved to have been promoted to a larger parish in another state where he could begin again with a clean conscience and a spotless reputation. Thus far he had resisted temptation and remained true to his come-lately vow of local chastity. Vacation trips and other out-of-town visits were outside of his personally imposed restrictions. He wished he traveled more.

He had prepared this week's sermon with care, thinking that it had been a long time since he delivered an old-fashioned fire-and-brimstone lamentation about the evils of sin and how Satan lurked around us at all times seeking to find us in a moment of weakness. These kinds of sermons were always best received by the women of his flock, and he devised a plan to ensure that the most attentive segment of his audience would be front and center, assuring a maximum of "Amen's" and a minimum of distracted glances from those who would really rather be on the golf course than subjected to another weekly sermon.

He began. "Brothers and Sisters, before I commence, I ask that you all rise, and I ask the ladies to step forward and take seats in the front pews. Gentlemen, step back and be seated in the rear of the church. That's it. Make way for the women to come forward."

Curious looks were exchanged as the congregation stood and began to shuffle around each other, acquiescing to Reverend Sinclair's request. Amidst all the movement Reverend Sinclair noticed one woman in particular. Adele Rogers had chosen this Sunday to make one of her infrequent visits to his church. Adele was taller and younger than most of the women. She was difficult to miss in any setting, but here she stood out immediately, dressed in a brightly patterned summer frock and a stylish wide-brimmed straw hat. She walked forward in high-heeled sandals, clutching a small straw handbag that matched her hat. She was well tanned. The off-the-shoulder sundress showed no signs of skin deprived of sunlight by straps of any kind. It was rumored that she frequented Drake Beach. It being clothing optional, the rumors were unsubstantiated by anyone likely to be in this congregation. She wore no jewelry other than a tiny gold cross that rested on the end of its chain in a location envied by every man in town, let alone in this church.

"God have mercy," thought Reverend Sinclair. "Don't let her sit in the front pew." God had none. Adele Rogers chose a seat in the front pew directly below the pulpit behind which Reverend Sinclair suddenly realized he gripped tightly with both hands. Did God have a sense of humor, or had he momentarily given way to allow Satan to lurk amidst the parishioners of Saint Cecile's, seeking the weakness Reverend Sinclair was about to warn against? It mattered not. Reverend Sinclair was well prepared. He had studied his text and was ready to preach as soon as the flock settled into the new seating arrangement. As he studied page one of his sermon, he was not prepared for his attention being diverted as Adele Rogers uncrossed her legs and bent forward to retrieve her purse which had fallen to the floor. The front of her dress ballooned open and any speculation as to her method of sun tanning was forever removed from his mind as he read the title of his sermon.

"Does Sin Still Exist in Our Breasts"

He silently hoped so.

Hindsight is 20/20

Linda Shiminski

Hindsight is 20/20, I think, and suddenly the year 2020 takes on new meaning. What are we going to think when we look back on all of this—the year of the Coronavirus? That we could have done things differently? I am wondering what imprint this event will leave on our lives when my son, Craig, calls.

"What are you doing?" he asks.

"Eating yogurt." I do not tell him I am thinking about the pandemic.

"We just got an e-mail from the superintendent. School is canceled until April 27th."

It is March 20th. That is a whole month away, and I realize that is what my son is thinking too.

A whiny voice emerges from the background, my youngest granddaughter, Molly.

"What's wrong?" my son asks her. Silence. "Aw, you came to give me a hug." I picture her clinging to him, a larger version of her teddy bear.

"Eleanor is being mean to me," she says. Molly is in the first grade and is being homeschooled since the school closing earlier this week.

"Mom, we are coming over this afternoon to give you something, and Molly is going to perform an Irish dance on your driveway. Right, Molly?"

That little voice in the background again, "I don't want to."

"Well, maybe you will change your mind," he says, trying to bring her around. "What is your favorite music—the Riverdance?"

Her voice is muffled, but I think that she says that it is. Molly was to perform with the Irish dancers in Portland's St. Patrick's Day Parade and is heartbroken when she learns that it is canceled, thanks to the virus.

It has been over a week since I have seen my son and his family because I have been self-isolating, a new term for me. We live in the same town but on opposite ends, the way we like it, private yet close. On Mondays my husband, Jim, and I take care of our two granddaughters after school. Jim waits for the bus, and when the girls get off they wave to the driver, drop their backpacks, and run to climb the tree. This is the routine.

I am missing this routine when I hear two little voices arguing.

"What's going on?" my son asks the two little voices.

"She's being mean to me," I hear simultaneously.

"Why don't you be nice to each other instead?"

"But this is my half!" Molly claims.

"No, this is my half!" Eleanor, the big sister and third grader pipes in. The little voices are not so little anymore.

Craig sighs. "They are arguing over who gets what side of the Lego table."

I can picture the Lego table because Jim made it in our cellar one Christmas.

"It is large enough to share," he tells them.

My thoughts exactly. "Our parents let us fight it out, solving our own differences."

"I think that's what they're doing," he says.

I laugh. "Good point."

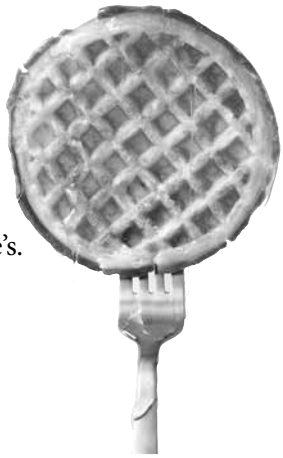
The arguing escalates, and Craig decides to go and referee. Besides, he needs to get back to his at-home work. We say our usual "I love you's," only this time the words take on a deeper affection.

It is then that I decide to make my own hand sanitizer. This is because there is none left in the stores; that, along with toilet paper. My thoughts go back to the day I rounded the corner of the paper product aisle in the grocery store. What the heck, I thought, why would all of the toilet paper be gone? I laughed not realizing that this was the new norm, hoarding toilet paper. Too absurd to think about. I turn my attention back to my project. Projects are now more essential than ever if we want to keep our sanity. I get out the aloe vera gel that I ordered and the isopropyl alcohol. The recipe I found says to mix the alcohol into the gel with a whisk. I am mixing this concoction and it is more liquid than gel. I am not feeling good about the results when the doorbell rings. Jim runs downstairs and we open the door to find Eleanor standing there with an armful of tulips wrapped in paper and tied with a green satin bow. Her Mom, Kate, is standing in the background. I know that she has put this moment together, but she lets Eleanor take in all the praise. We share smiles, and I take the flowers and look around the corner to see if Molly is hiding. She did not come, so there will be no Irish dancing on the driveway. At least not today. They did bring Bella, their yellow lab, so I get to enjoy three of my girls after all. We chat for what seems like a long time, us in the doorway, the girls on the drive...the recommended six feet of social distancing. This is also a new term for me. I do not care for these new terms. The air is cold, and the door is open for as long as we need it to be. We do not care. We can heat the world if we want to. Besides, the world is one big room. We know that now more than ever. When we finally close the door, I tip the bouquet forward and something slips out onto the floor. It is a small, bright container that says, "Mango Mai Tai Sanitizer." I spray it on my hands and rub for the recommended 20 seconds. I clear the sink of my experimental sanitizer mess and get a glass vase. As I trim each stem I think of how lucky we are to have a family that thinks of us, that cares. Nothing can take that away, especially a Coronavirus. It may even help us to pause and appreciate each other all the more.

Waffles

Richard Buhr

Waffles, Karo syrup.
It was the early 50s, he was in his 60s.
He let me add the Bisquick and crack the egg.
In my memory that was lunch every day.
Later, the old man would get out
the rusted red Radio Flyer
and pull me three blocks,
cross over Minneapolis's Memorial Drive to Swede's.
The old lady would only leave him
enough for one cold Hamm's,
and he would drink it slowly
while I watched and listened
from the stool next to him.



Twenty years later
in the Arizona sun,
I would stop by.
"Could sure
use a cold one."
Orders to the contrary,
I would grab two
out of the cooler in the trunk,
sit and talk—
waffles,
Karo syrup,
the subtle distinctions
between a Hamm's
and a Bud.

Axiomatic

Robert Petrillo

In life there are axioms: boys will be boys; there's good and bad in everyone; what goes around comes around. In the workforce there are axioms as well, as any seasoned professional will tell you. In teaching, generally, fifth grade is considered the sweet spot. Conversely, seventh is the nadir of humanity's moral development. Hence, the challenge.

When I spent two years in that particular dark part of my career, there were "children" I struggled to like. One boy, an abrasive, noxious, large, and distinctly unattractive kid whom all the other kids called "Fat Albert," was serving a detention for me (the umpteenth time) and standing near a large vent-style window that looked out into the open courtyard where after-school kids were running with abandon while waiting for their buses. As one of these younger boys ran alongside the building being chased, coming toward the spot where Albert stood inside, he quickly twisted the hand crank and opened the window like a wing, so that the running child abruptly met with a sudden wall of glass.

Thank god there was no blood, children being reflexive and resilient. Albert was only lightly disciplined by an administration that always sought to find the best in kids.

A girl, in the same class, thirteen going on hooker, was constantly seeking ways to torment her more timid bookish classmates whose only major physical developments were in their craniums. Nasty pictures drawn in crimped lines and labeled with poorly spelled epithets circulated among her crowd and now and then were duplicated on bathroom walls. Some wounds bleed from the inside.

The learning curve was steep, but somehow I got through it. Just as I'd gotten through my own rough patch when I was of that age, a wayward scamp whose hard-shelled friends were likewise damaged seeds. I don't recall our many misdeeds (the fog of guilt from long ago so thick and hard to discern). But there was a time at a local roller-skating rink when such boys as us thought it clever to drop a score of BBs onto the smooth wooden floor. The fallout was predictable, and crude, and though there was no blood nor broken bones, a damage had been done.

I am reminded of this hazy past, of theirs and mine, and countless others like us, of all the thoughtless, cruel, and stupid things that people do, especially when they hurt so much they think of pain as something rich that they must share. I am reminded because today, as I raked the withered fallen leaves from yet another year of redemptive living, I very nearly broke my neck as I slipped hard on marbled acorns strewn across the hardened autumn lawn, lurking deceptively underfoot, like little pellets on a polished floor.

I'm not about to say I was one of those bad boys from my youth, but I can't say I wasn't. What I suppose I'm left with now as the only certainty I can live with is that if life is actually made up of sturdy little axioms, tiny particles of truth spinning around this material world like atoms, then I will, as a consequence of natural law, stumble across my share, and the best I can hope for at this point is that if I end up shaken and a little bloodied, I will at least remain unbroken.

Rip, Burn, Toss

Sidney Cowles Lincoln

Sometimes we think, to uncomplicate life, it might well be advantageous to stop…reflect…refurbish…renew…and… DELETE. Just delete all that unnecessary and uninvited stuff that pops up into your awareness and makes you a little crazy.

Cleaning the computer is easy. Delete, delete…delete…lightly graze the button and empty the trash bin.

There! Gone, to never be revisited.

Oh, the satisfaction…that job is done. Meetings scheduled maybe you attended…maybe not, starts and stops of recorded thoughts…bits of brilliant possible stories favored for a moment, then not so much….

Would that we could do the same for our heads.

Would that we could simply delete.

Suggestions over the years have been to write *it* down, dig a hole, and bury the annoyances.

I rather like the suggestion to write it, rip it, burn it, and toss the ashes to the wind.

Unfortunately, for me, I have been unsuccessful with my solo method, so I am asking you, my friends, to read, rip, burn, and transmit all here to the great breath of the universe.

There is, I'm told, strength in numbers.

Following are selected "head tapes" I want to delete.

There is father saying, *"Spend the interest, NEVER the principle."*

Sure, Dad. I hear you. Thanks for the good advice, but, did you, from your vaporous being, check the prices at Hannaford?

You don't really need to remind me anymore.

And there is Mother: *"What will the neighbors say?"*

What *do* the neighbors say? "What's for dinner? Where are the kids? Isn't it time for supper?" Do we really need to give that a whole lot of consideration?

I especially resent the constant eruption of her saying: *"You may play when the work is done."*

With that bit of tape running riot in your head comes the awareness gained over many, many years…the work is NEVER done.

And Dad, I hear you telling me, *"Robins never marry blue jays."*

I'm far from blind, but the robins, and the blue jays presented to me over the years, have had devious disguises. Would that people had orange breasts or brilliant blue trappings so that we might know who the hell they are. (Words need to be forceful here. It is a real problem.)

And there is…always…Dad with his *"Waste not, want not."*

Dad, I cannot keep your hunting jacket, your Stetson hat, and waders. If you would look, you would see the gnawing of winter residents. I have of yours, which *will* remain in the boat house, at least ten hammers, ten or twelve screwdrivers, and saws numerous and varied enough to attack anything a tree may choose to produce. Forgive me, I want this closet. Don't tell me again!

On a dreary winter day I hear Mother say, *"You cannot turn the heat on until October."*

Back then, we were shivering in the old (1714) farmhouse in Lynnfield, breaking traveling records running from a frigid bedroom to a somewhat warm bathroom to dress in multiple sweaters and wool socks. Now it's more like…What!?—It's thirty-two degrees and the wind is blowing hard enough to sway the drapes! I don't want to hear that again! It's really okay to turn up the Rinnai. Just pay the darned bill.

And there was the minister…cutting a new tape in a young receptive head. I remember Dr. Sheldon as looking much as I had visualized Ichabod Crane—tall, thin, and bony—but, I thought, really smart—difficult in his rigidity, but worthy of a listen. Try to sit up there in the church loft with the junior choir and not pay attention to the mighty and forceful delivery of those sermons issuing from the raised pulpit in that austere old Congregational Church. This one message totally stuck—*"You have a brain, USE IT!"*

Guess for that I should say, thank you Dr. Sheldon. It is a burden, though.

That ties to another frequent—way too frequent—*"So, you have a problem. What are you going to do about it?"*

That's Mother. She was from the West. The farming, wide-open treeless, hardworking West. The West where her dad memorized poetry, assuaging tedium while spending endless days on the tractor nurturing and producing wheat. (He really wanted to be a gold miner.) And she milked cows and fed chickens.

Hardworking West agrees with Yankee self-sufficiency.

I would like to give all that a bit of a rest.

How about *"No television! You must exercise the theater of your mind."*

That one itches and annoys (it has to do with a bit of a guilty conscience), when I settle down to watch another Netflix series…36 episodes…of life in the fifteenth century. Isn't it okay to see the massive stone castles, the outrageous clothes, enough blood to serve Red Cross for a year or two…and *hear* the voices…?

The worst…from Mother, *"JUST ONE MORE THING…"*

I am wearing clean shorts and shirt. I have my tennis racquet, fresh balls in an unopened can (heaven), and enough babysitting quarters to buy a whoopie pie and Coke at Roundies. The tires on my Raleigh are tight and firm. I loved that bicycle—the touchable, rideable symbol of freedom! I am soooo ready to find my friends at the field behind school. And *she* says…"One more thing." She **ALWAYS** had one more thing. Maybe bring in the laundry…did you remember to feed the chickens…did you bring the roast in from the freezer…????

If anyone were to say that to me today, I fear I would implode!

Then, so sweetly, when I give myself a restoring walk on a moonlit night, a child's song seeps into consciousness.

Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb tonight.
Through the darkness, be Thou near me.
Keep me safe till morning light.

I will keep that.

Oh, and just one more thing.

Don't forget to rip, burn, and toss!

And thank you.

Winter Woods Walk
Watercolor by Mary Barthelman
"I was challenged by the starkness of the setting and wanted to see if I could paint the cold temperature."

Blue Vase with Flowers
Acrylic on canvas board by David Murray
"I like to paint flowers."

A Handy Guide to Comfort

(learned from JSR and TTC)

Janet Stebbins

Just show up.
Don't try to fix it.
It's not your job.
Or say it will all work out, or

–you went through
something just like it,
–others have it worse,
–just breathe,

–it's a learning experience,
–it will be better when they're older,
–they look tired/sad/depressed,
–change the subject.

Instead, just hug, hold,
and don't say anything at all.
Gift your allied silence
and thought, your deep

secure confidence in them
to navigate whatever's next.
Show you see it really bites.
Make tea and confection.

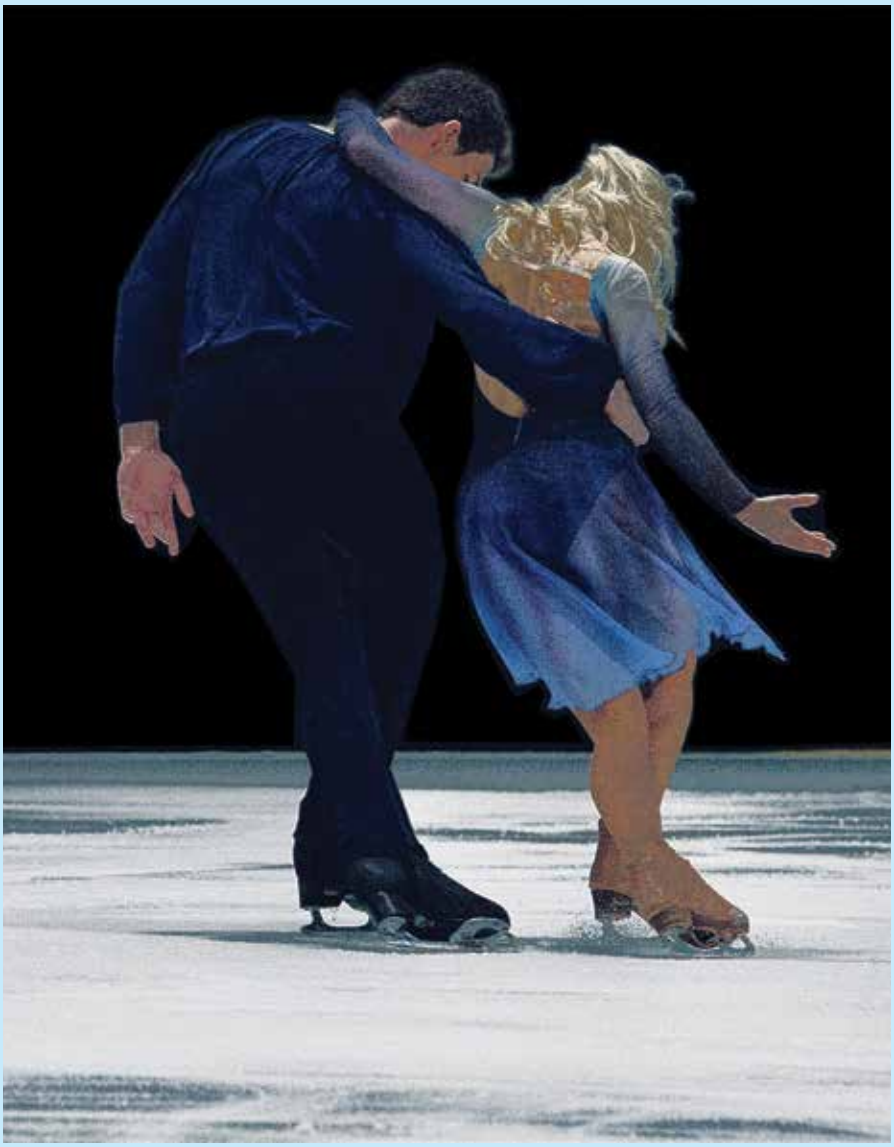
Hold with. Share the carry.
Give place, space, and
welcome to talk,
or not.

Listen well, so when they
really need another's help,
they will know they can trust you,
and that you really can and will.

*The Mean*time

Lynn Ross

Don't you dare say:
"This too shall pass."
when I've fallen into
a deep crevasse.
When the bridge from here
that goes to there
is weighted down
with dark despair
and stretches out
like the universe…
infinite angst,
infinite curse.
When the only light
I conceivably see
is the one when
heaven welcomes me.
So what to do in the
meantime,
the in-between time—
before you grasp
the trapeze bar,
when a walk to get mail is
a trip too far?
What to do in the
meantime,
the lean time,
the holding in a scream time?
Well, it's not set an intention
or some other New Age
intervention.
Don't say I shouldn't
think this way,
that tomorrow will be
a brighter day.
Could you maybe just
read what I've written,
rub my feet…
and bring me a kitten?



Lean on Me Photo by Eric Edmonds

" 'Lean on Me' captures the poise, drama, and unity of ice dancing; mildly posterized for emphasis."

Doubleheader

David Agan

I shiver twice in the crowded parking lot this cool morning. I'm excited and scared about this special August day with Dad.

We join a lot of men and a few older boys moving toward the arch opening into Union Station in Portland. I'm eight. I don't see any other young kids besides me here. I look up at the massive pointed clock tower and as far as I can see to our left along this gray, granite-block building. Inside, the station looks and sounds gigantic with an impossibly high ceiling and voices echoing round and hollow. We stay in the flow of strangers through one of the doors onto a dark, covered platform. I focus on the freight cars bright in the sun a few tracks away. I love their variety. Red, white, and blue; green and yellow; black and white; brown and white; rusted and shiny.

On this cement platform, men are gathering in small groups, talking, laughing, smoking. I cough and rub my eyes to try to clear out the dust and smoke. I hear a lot of different voices.

"We won both games on State of Maine Day last year," I hear.

"…Fenway Park…"

"…MTA from North Station."

"Did you see what Williams did last week?"

"That's Ted, all right."

We don't know anybody. I've never been in a crowd this size and this loud before. I feel small. I wonder why we have to wait so long. "The train left Bangor an hour late. They're on the way from Augusta now," someone says.

I listen and absorb all I can. Dad speaks briefly to one or two men but I don't think he knows anyone here, either. I look at the names on the boxcars and imagine where they came from. I know BAR stands for Bangor and Aroostook. Potatoes, I think. Then there's Maine Central. Our neighbor Horace works for them. And of course, a few Boston and Maine cars.

I'm afraid of everything I don't know that's coming today but say to myself, "This is the most important day of my life."

Finally, here comes the "State of Maine Day" train. Dad and I find seats on the crowded coach, me by the window. With a bump, we start to move. Looking out at the oil tanks as we cross the bridge, I try to tune out the sounds of men's revelry. I like the uneven jolts of the "State of Maine Day" train rocking along the old rails.

Dad sits on the aisle. Up ahead of him, we hear a commotion. Three men move down the aisle toward us, talking loud, laughing, greeting everyone. I shrink down in my seat and look more intently out the window at trees and buildings, expecting not to be noticed. A tall man with a wave in his hair is the first to reach my Dad. He has an accent and I don't know what he and my dad say to each other. Then Dad turns to me.

"David, say hello to Governor Muskie."

"Hello." They laugh.

"David, shake hands with Governor Muskie."

Governor Muskie leans in and reaches out his hand. I raise mine up and look at him. We shake hands. I know who he is because I saw a big poster of his face and name on the wall in Hank Mack's barbershop. Mr. Mack is the only outspoken Democrat in town, maybe the only Democrat.

"I hope you'll have fun at the game today," Governor Muskie says. He smiles warmly and I know he means it. I like him. I'm not frightened by the commotion any more.

When we finally get to Fenway Park, I'm stunned by the sunny green of the field and the tall wall as we emerge from the dark stairway. The Red Sox players warming up in their bright, white uniforms whip the ball around the horn almost quicker than I can follow. After the "Star-Spangled Banner," a lot of men yell "Play ball." Then we sit down. I smell beer and popcorn, and I crack peanuts. There's loud clapping and shouting when there's a Red Sox hit. A guy runs from second and is safe sliding into home.

The first game feels endless, and the Red Sox lose. But then, Governor Muskie gives Tommy Brewer a crate of lobsters for pitching the first game. And he gives Norm Zauchin a black bear cub for hitting a home run. People laugh when they see the bear in a cage. Norm's going to give it to a zoo, they say. These presentations are my favorite part of State of Maine Day. Dad and I are proud to be from Maine even though both of us are born Vermonters.

After the second game, Dad and I find our way through the crowd back to North Station and get on the special train to Maine. Riding home, I think about what we've seen and done and about how the day has been exciting, boring, crowded, loud, scary, satisfying, and tiring. It's getting dark. I sleep deeply as the coach rocks along.

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We're near the end of the century. My dad's old now but he can remember when the Red Sox were in the World Series the year before I was born. The rest of the family is away at a wedding this weekend, and he needs someone to stay with him. So, I'm here overnight for a couple of nights. It's August again, and baseball's in full flower. The Red Sox are on TV.

"Dad, do you remember the day we rode the train to Fenway for State of Maine Day?"

"Yes, I do, son. We shook hands with Governor Muskie."

"Remember when they gave away a black bear cub between games?"

"I think so. And some lobsters. That was a long day. You slept all the way back."

"Thanks for taking me, Dad."

"You're welcome, son."

Once again, today is the most important day of my life.
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Proust at OLLI

Kathie Harper

It all seems to start with the cookie, the buttery delectable treat in the shape of a scallop shell, the madeleine. In *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust, the narrator, Marcel, supposedly no relation, has an epiphany when he dips the cookie into a cup of tea served to him by his mother. Only approximately fifty pages into the longest novel ever written, the scene triggers his memory about his childhood and for the next seven volumes a retelling of his life: a detailed reflection of its meaning interspersed with evocative scenes of places, art, love, and a plethora of characters too numerous to mention. It is often the point where many readers stop, thwarted by the unwieldy and esoteric descriptions, "I can't continue no matter how much the book is touted or revered." I know this is the point where I quit on my first attempt while sheepishly returning it to the library shelf.

It wasn't until I signed up for an OLLI class more than five years ago that I ventured beyond the tea-infused treat and commenced a life-altering journey that traversed the elegant art-filled and often decadent, love-challenged world that Proust created more than a century ago. Under the able and inspiring leadership of our teacher, Janet Gunn, an intrepid group of travelers explored from the interiors of Plato's Cave to Proust's cork-lined room and various places in between.

As with most OLLI classes I've taken, the members were accomplished professionals, inveterate readers, and curious risk-takers, and more than willing to share their opinions and insights. There was a core group of fifteen of us who finished all seven volumes over a two-and-a-half-year period. A few were fluent in French and one member even read the whole book in it. You can imagine that it made for some interesting discussions when it came to the various translations. Some brave members were willing to lead the class discussions, sharing their specialties, like the worlds of art, the flâneurs, the Belle Epoque and the Dreyfus Affair among other topics. These lectures provided a richness and an interesting diversion to the classes. There were even some adventuresome souls among us who traveled to Paris, the coast of Normandy where his beloved "Balbec" was located and to the Mauritshuis Museum in The Hague to see Proust's favorite painting, Vermeer's *View of Delft*. Some would even return with regional specialties like Calvados that we would enjoy at our occasional out-of-class salons at various members' homes.

In addition to the exposure to the rich world that surrounded Proust, I enjoyed the times when we read aloud from passages in the book. His stunning descriptions, often a page long, would entrance me as if he were describing a magical world made up of the mundane; the hawthorns in bloom, the efficient housekeeper Françoise relaying the town gossip to Marcel's bedridden aunt in Combray, the train ride to Balbec with his grandmother and the view of the ocean from the grand hotel room after a hot day on the beach. And these were just from *Swann's Way*, the first volume. So many memories, too numerous to mention. For me, the most memorable scene was the poignant death of Bergotte, the novelist in the book, as he gazed at his favorite painting, the V*iew of Delft*, for the last time. It brings tears to my eyes just thinking about it.

As with Marcel and the madeleine, this scene triggered a memory of one of our members, Sandy, who was brave enough to share one of the first comments in our class, "Reading Proust is like watching paint dry." She was definitely forthright and unafraid to share her opinion. Halfway through our time together she died suddenly of a heart attack while running to make a connection back to Maine at O'Hare Airport in Chicago. We were all stunned and devastated when we heard the news. Unlike Bergotte, who was in ill health, it was totally unexpected and we felt a fissure rupture in our hearts. We spent that class reminiscing about our time together and how she was coming around to appreciate the poetic and lyrical prowess of Proust, whose skill forced us to stop and ponder the passage of time and how transient life can be. Some of us attended her memorial service and were designated "the Proust group" by her sister. We had forged an identity after all. We all gathered at a local restaurant afterwards to celebrate her life and to toast her time with us. We kept her seat vacant for the remaining classes—something Proust would have appreciated. The memory remained.

A local bakery in town sells madeleines on a certain day of the week. If I happen to stop in for a baguette on that particular day, my gaze is drawn to the buttery delectable cookie, and I'm transported back to the time at OLLI when an adventurous group of us read all seven volumes of Proust. I know it was a watershed time for me. I won't be as presumptuous as Alain de Botton in his book, *How Proust Can Change Your Life,* to essentially be saved by it, but it has certainly made my life richer, just like the cookie.

Piece of Shit FIAT

Tim Baehr

The car bucked, gave a few polite sighs, breathed a death rattle, and rolled to a desultory stop. Henri pounded the steering wheel and swore. First in English and then more eloquently in French. Piece of shit FIAT. Merde.

The vintage Italian car, nicknamed Topolino—Italian for little mouse and also the name they had given Mickey Mouse—was meant for sunnier climes and had no place in northern Maine. For that matter, Henri had no place there either. His people, a family of dark-haired, warm-blooded Mediterraneans, had come three centuries ago to New Brunswick from around Marseilles. For three centuries they had complained about the cold, and for three centuries they had stayed put: twenty families, more or less, in a round robin of intermarriages and offspring. Maine was as far south as most of his clan had ever moved.

Henri got his flashlight, got out, raised the hood of its rear engine, and stared at where a pool of yellow light landed. Not that he expected to find anything useful. His cousin Robert, the one who ran a garage, had kept the thing running amid dire warnings about failed rings, holed pistons, and nonexistent spare parts.

He left the hood up and sat down behind the wheel. *Merde*, he thought. *No more heat.* It would be about half an hour before the inside became as cold as the outside.

Some of his ancestors had frozen to death—in ice fishing mishaps, on disabled boats, on the trapline in a blizzard. The collected lore, told around kerosene heaters and fireplaces, was graphic and bleak. Now he was about to add to the collection.

Jenny—Genevieve—had been after him for years to give up the college, pull up stakes, and head south. Anywhere warmer. He was never going to get tenure anyway, so starting over would be no major loss. But Jenny was an only child, her parents were dead, and her stakes weren't driven deep into the Maine soil. Henri had parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews. Just thinking about being away from them made him feel dizzy and disoriented.

But she was turning more and more insistent. If he hated winter, she hated it more. She had even struck up an Internet friendship with a man in Florida. She made no secret that she was Skyping with him, and more than once she had threatened to go down and see him. And maybe not come back.

It wasn't just the weather. She felt out of place in his extended and extensive family. And her sense of isolation got worse, she complained, when Henri became increasingly morose as winter dragged on and he buried himself, like a hibernating bear, in his work and the solitude of his den. If his den was a refuge from winter, it was also a refuge from Jenny's incessant demands.

Henri's breath had steamed up, and then frosted over, the insides of the windows. He was shivering, and trying not to. *This would be a perfect time for an alien abduction,* he thought. *As long as the spaceship is heated.* He began to slide in and out of reveries about aliens, Jenny, Florida, his French students, the officious little prick of a department head at the college.

Lights. Bright lights making the frosted windows glow. *Holy shit, they're coming to get me!* Henri roused himself, noticing that he could feel neither his feet nor his hands. *They've already started the paralyzing ray. I hope they don't have probes.* He felt his eyelids sagging. The lights glowed red through his eyelids. Then the lights faded to black. His last thought was to wonder what stories his relatives would tell about him. "Disappeared in the middle of nowhere…bright lights…yeah, some farmer saw it all…."

"Henri. Henri. *Henri.* ***Henri!***"

An eyebrow bent toward his hairline, followed by an eyelid. A white, glowing creature stood over him. He struggled to move his arms.

"Don't try to move, Henri. You're wrapped up in a warming blanket." The creature stuck a probe in his ear. It turned to address another creature. "Core temp's not rising."

He struggled again, and this time a warm appendage pressed down on his forehead. It began to stroke him.

"Henri, it's Jenny." *Damn if it doesn't sound just like Jenny. Clever, these aliens. Must've read my brain waves. Explains how they all speak English.*

She put her face close to his. "Henri, it's Jenny!" she almost shouted. *Damn. They've even replicated her.*

It took several more hours before Henri warmed enough to see that the spaceship was just a hospital and that Jenny was not a hologram. It helped that half his family seemed to be there, including his nephew Michel—the cop who had found him.

Henri's sister drove him and Jenny home, promising to look in on him later.

"You scared the crap out of me," Jenny said when they'd settled at the kitchen table.

"You were really scared?"

"Yes," she said. Her face contorted into anticipated grief, then relief, then anger.

He saw it coming.

"Now can we move south?"

It wasn't really a question. It was hard, cold, and sharp, like the icicles hanging from the eaves.

Henri thought about how close he'd come to joining his frozen ancestors. And then he thought about the dozen relatives who'd showed up at the hospital. He was silent, with that second thought, for a long time.

"Well?"

Henri looked up at a face on the ragged edge of rage. That face had become familiar to him. He looked down at his hands, still red and prickling from their renewed blood supply.

"Have a good time in Florida."

"By-the-Pound"

Dan Fontugne

In the idle hours afforded by retirement, I sometimes reminisce about episodes of my more than forty years in the engineering profession. The main activity of my former employers consisted in the design of oil refineries. As a junior engineer, I used to love the work for its direct application of the laws of chemical engineering learned in college, and for the variety of its projects.

In the early 70s, we believed that maximum worldwide oil production would be reached before the end of the 20th century and then be followed by inexorable decline. Here we are, half a century later, with oil still plentiful. Deep sea drilling and processing of heavier crudes kept production growing. More recently, fracking added even further to the supply of oil.

This increased production did not occur without serious problems or disasters. In 2010, the BP oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico dealt a major blow to my faith in the safety culture of the industry. This underwater spill lasted three full months before it was plugged. Five million barrels of oil were released, fouling hundreds of miles of the Gulf coast.

Aside from production disasters, I was always convinced of the reality of climate change and its direct connection to human industry, especially the use of fossil fuels such as oil. However, the seriousness of the problem revealed itself in small incremental steps. Then, in the last 15 years, what used to be isolated precursory signs turned into full-blown manifestations of climate change.

I try to convince myself that the oil industry should not shoulder all the blame. After all, the public demands heating oil and transportation fuel. Somebody must produce it. Indeed, there is plenty of blame to spread around. Still, I now realize with dismay that my colleagues and I were only the humble servants of the Exxons, the Mobils, and the BPs of this world: huge and powerful companies that knew well the long-term climate impact of fossil fuel, yet did nothing to encourage the development of alternate sources of energy.

This is all in the past for me now. Much younger women and men will have to clean up our mess. Remembering the enthusiasm of the early years, I find myself leafing with nostalgia through some of my fifty or so science and engineering books. The *Chemical Engineers' Handbook*, with its 1,900 large-size, bible-paper pages, remains a favorite reference book. Then comes *Petroleum Refining Engineering*, by W. L. Nelson, originally published around 1940 and still revered to this day by industry people as "The Nelson."

Another of my reference books, *Thermodynamic Properties of Steam*, is all worn out from use. I was in my forties when I found it at a book sale. The dear lady at the cash register looked at the book, then looked at me and said in a quavering voice: "I guess you want to be an engineer, young man." My hair had already turned gray at the time, but I still looked young to her.

Can it be that all these useful guides are no longer needed? Surely there must be students somewhere that could use them, I thought. A teacher friend I knew informed me that the University of Maine at Orono has the largest engineering department, and their library would surely welcome this treasure trove of books. This information gave me a shot of adrenaline. I immediately prepared a two-page tabulation of all the books, with title, author, and publisher. Off went my list attached to a brief e-mail explaining my desire to donate these books and my willingness to deliver them to Orono. "Please advise me what would be the best day and time for the delivery," I concluded. The response was not long in coming.

"Thanks so much for thinking of UMaine and Fogler Library as a possible place for your books," it read. "We already have some of your books available in our system," it continued. "The others would have lower demand and we would borrow them from another library in the U.S., should one of our students or faculty need them."

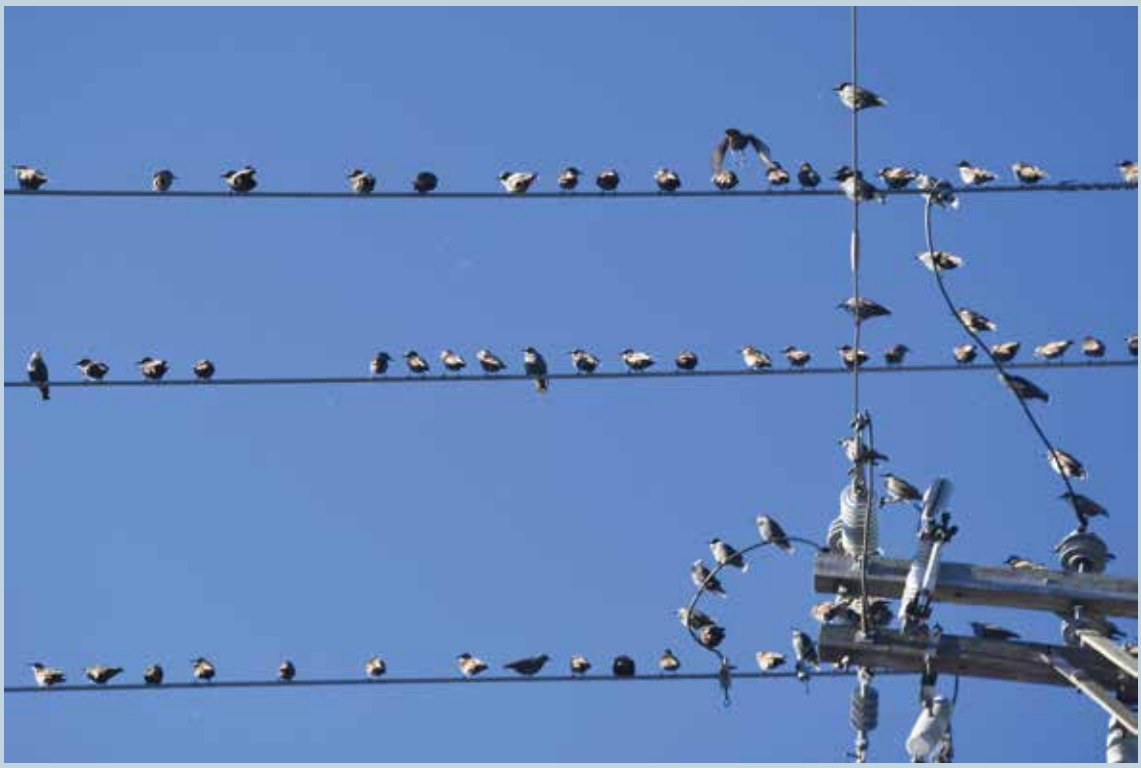
As I read, I felt as though I had received a blow. Then came the *coup de grâce* with each of the words in the last sentence sharp as daggers.

"… you might want to donate them to Goodwill at their by-the-pound wholesale store in Gorham."

I closed my eyes in pain. "By-the-pound"! My dear books to be sold off "by-the-pound"! I felt dizzy. The image that came to my mind was that of "The Dying Gladiator" statue in the Louvre Museum: the marble figure of a fallen disarmed man supporting himself on one arm awaiting the emperor's verdict.

Suddenly feeling faint, I imagined myself stunned and motionless on the blood-stained soil of the arena, holding myself up on one arm, as my ears resounded with the powerful clamor of many voices chanting: "By-the-pound! By-the-pound!" I thought I saw the emperor point his thumb down.

Storm Passing Offshore Photo by Richard Welsh
"Pemaquid's summer crowds blocked the best surf shots, but the view to the west proved equally interesting, and less ordinary."



Birds on the Wires Photo by Sarah Lathrop
"Last November, I saw this flock of migrating birds swoop over and land on the wires. I parked and was able to get this photo."

Life's Loves

Bruce Sherwin

Vision a blur
Lights Walls Coats Caps
Everything bright
Everything shiny and white
Hearing is fuzzy
"Clamp please"
"Suction please"
"Need vitals readings now"
All words a murmur
Mind slowly churning
Muscles no response
Memory slowly out of mist
Coming back now
The walk and talk
Of life and plans
Suddenly
Where did Sara go
Think back, think slowly
Through the rain drops
Crossing the street
Yes, crossing the busy street
Screech of brakes
Smell of rubber
Flash of light
Explosion of motions, shadows
Shoes, bags, hats, glasses fly
Arms and legs in the air
Flashing lights, sirens
Screeching to a halt
"Load her up, she is gone"
Echoes from the dark
Suddenly silence
"Where am I?"
Can't get up
Mind races
Has Sara passed
Sara has passed
With no good-bye
"Help me up"
Must find her
Fear the truth
The love of my life is gone
    Is
My love of life to follow

Genomic Sea
Kiln-formed glass by Joel Kallich
"The intersection between fused glass, genomic bioinformatics, and biological discovery is my inspiration. See maine.glass for more."

Socks

Tana Leonhart

I think about socks a lot.

There is something comforting about socks. They protect bare feet from the chill of the wooden floor. They slip into rain boots and pull up to the knee to keep legs warm. Socks are a virtual hug.

And such a range of purposes, these socks. Black and sheer for a business look; fuzzy purple for early morning warmth inside slippers; knee-highs in loafers for the school day; thick wool in Birkenstocks, and several pairs layered in pass-me-down ski boots.

My mother sat in the sun on summer days, knitting socks. Her specialty: a spiral design that didn't need heel-shaping. They hugged the foot perfectly, and my sock drawer was never without spiral socks in various conditions. Some new from last Christmas, others worn and darned, saved favorites, until my feet outgrew them.

And now I knit socks.

I love the feel of the yarn through my fingers. And the weight and balance of a perfect pair of needles is unsurpassed. It is a challenge to keep the tension just so, as the yarn is wound and pulled through. With time and practice it becomes second nature. The rhythm of the motion becomes part of the knitter's being.

And, oh the colors!

So many possibilities from blues and reds, to pinks with orange, or greens with purple. Combinations of any sort. After all, they're just socks! Fun stripes, intricate designs, cables, lace, all repeated knits and purls. How wonderful that the twist and loop of yarn can create such a useful item of clothing, such a piece of art: a sock.

Each pair means two.

At first it seemed important, actually *required*, that the second sock of a pair match the first, color for color, stripe for stripe, and of course in size. I made knitting notes and measurements: the length of the cuff, the length of the body, when to start the heel-shaping, how long the foot before shaping the toe. It was a triumph when the second sock actually matched the first! Eventually, the conditions for a finished pair relaxed. Stripes didn't need to match, and colors became more random. The result: a collection of socks of many sizes and designs. A riot of colors and styles.

Socks require planning.

First, the choice of yarn. How many skeins will be needed, and how does the yarn feel? Is it hundred-percent wool? Is the yarn machine-washable? Style is a determining factor, too. Is the pair destined for a particular person? A fingering yarn would be needed for thinner socks, a DK or sport-weight for winter socks. And finally, it comes down to time. Am I willing to dedicate more time to the project, knitting with tiny needles and a fine yarn, or do I need to use heavier yarn and larger needles to finish more quickly? Am I trying a new design that will require careful counting of stitches, or just making a basic sock? So many choices before even starting.

Socks: A Riot of Color
Photo by Tana Leonhart
"Socks: Handmade pieces of art double as a useful item of clothing, and become a riot of colors, textures, and styles."

And now, I knit.

I think of women through the centuries, their knitting baskets ever present, waiting for them throughout the day. In every spare moment they knitted, just barely keeping up with the next needed pair. A book about the history of socks shows an aproned woman knitting as she walks along the path on her way to the town market, carrying skeins of wool in her basket-pack. And the book tells of times even further in the past. The very first mention of socks is a record of foot and leg wear, around 50 BC! And socks are mentioned in a letter of a Roman soldier living in Northern Britain in the first century AD.

I am in awe.

Now, two thousand years later, I am part of a long line of sock-knitters. I examine the skeins in my basket. I touch the yarn and revel in the colors, already planning the next pair.

It is a gift, this knitting of socks.

Quietly

Eric Jensen

In the yellow morning
Before the breeze awoke
I'd canoe along the shoreline
With a quiet Indian stroke
Never lift the paddle
Never spill a drop
Silently I'd glide along
Silently I'd stop
Aimed myself with careful strokes
One course of very few
That showed no sign of human life
Within my easy view

Looking down I'd see a bass
Patrolling near his nest
And on a log along the shore
A turtle lay at rest
Small animals would let me pass
Without a sign of fear
As long as I moved quietly
And didn't get too near
Now though my days are sometimes gray
And my canoe is gone
A smile will light my face when I
Remember yellow dawn

Woodland Stream Photo by Tim Baehr
"I loved the light and the sound in this short foray during the shelter-in-place."

Retouching Memories

Ariela Zucker

This past spring, I stood one gray, rainy day in the old Jewish cemetery in *Stupava*, Slovakia. I saw for the first time the graves of these family members who until then were only names in old documents. I moved my fingers along their names engraved in the stones covered with moss and overgrown ivy and thought about those who did not have graves.

We had located the old Jewish cemetery in the center of a regular-looking neighborhood of small houses surrounded by neat gardens. It took some time to find the cemetery keeper, who, it turned out, was living in the house next door to the cemetery, sharing the same stone fence. Then some words in Slovakian were exchanged over the phone between him and our guide. Finally, he came grudgingly, holding a big metal key, and opened the massive iron gates. By that time, the rain had gathered strength, and the sharp cold drops drummed on our light raincoats and seeped in.

We stood at the entrance, the six of us. My three daughters, ten-year-old granddaughter, and the guide. The gravestones were spread in what seemed like a haphazard arrangement on a slightly sloping hill. Some looked as if time had not touched them, while others were broken, all strangled by vines or eaten by moss to the point that the engraved names couldn't be identified.

The place was tranquil, with no noise except for the raindrops' monotonous sound when they hit the ground. The dense vegetation was wet and vivid green. We walked slowly, attempting to follow the unseen lines between the graves. Every once in a while, we stopped to give a closer look to a grave if we thought the name on it resembled one of the people we were looking for.

Slowly some of them emerged. My great-great-grandparents, lying next to each other. My great aunt, who died when she was only seventeen. A few unknown relatives, identified only by their surnames. After an hour or so, wet to the bones and shaking, we had to give up and leave. I wished that we could spend more time there but felt at peace. Even though we found only a handful of the graves, I now knew where they were, and they knew that they were not forgotten.

On our way out of the town, we searched for the home of my great-grandparents. I had the address, but the house we found standing there was new and built after the war. Passing through Bratislava, the capital, we drove over a brand-new highway. Down below, our guide pointed out, was once another Jewish cemetery, and the road was built over it.

Everywhere we went on this trip, it was clear that the signs of the Second World War were being erased. New buildings and new highways were erected. Life did not stop just because so many people were uprooted and murdered. While some memories are still safely contained behind iron grates, others did not leave physical markings, and only those that remained in people's hearts remained.

On the street in Budapest a few days later, we stood in front of a monument dedicated to all the victims of Hungary's German occupation. This monument raised a lot of controversies, as people thought that it absolved Hungary, and Hungarians, of their active role in sending some 450,000 Jews to their death during the occupation.

It was installed at the dark of night, we were told, but almost overnight a different monument grew across the street. Barbed wire stretched along the sidewalk. Attached to it were pieces of paper of all sizes, with stories people wrote about lost loved ones. Below the wire, lined all along it, we saw an assortment of items, from old suitcases to children's toys.

People stopped to look and read; people, stooped over to look at the objects; people laid more objects in the long line of old, once-loved artifacts and walked away. On the other side of the street, the massive stone monument loomed. The sidewalks were filled with tourists walking, talking, laughing, standing in a long line to buy ice cream from a famous ice cream hangout in the corner. The setting sun lighted the old palaces towering over the Danube.

The views of the city, so familiar, brought back an old memory. Me as a child sitting on the floor in the living room of our apartment in Jerusalem. Fascinated by the black-and-white pictures of these same buildings in my parents' old picture albums. Photographs of people I did not know, but never got a real explanation of who they were, would drop like dead leaves every time I opened the albums. The drying paper corners failed to hold them in their places. Both my parents are dead. The albums are long gone. Lost, though I have no idea when. If I could find them, perhaps I could lay them under the barbed wire.

A Sighting

Nancy Freund Bills

"I love you." I say without hesitation. The words just tumble out of my mouth. And he receives my sentiments with grace, with dignity. He doesn't seem surprised that I am standing here on a gravel road admiring him. I say, "You're so much more than I expected."

I am hiking on a rarely used back road at Baxter State Park in Maine, and there he is, the one I've been searching for all my life. He is so imposing that I just stand with my mouth hanging open. Although he is towering over me, I worry that I may frighten him away so I stand still and struggle to speak in a casual tone. "You're a fine looking fellow," I say. "You are so grand." He watches me intently and shows no sign of moving. "It is a privilege to be in your presence," I add and make a small bow.

After that, I take a few steps backward as quietly as I can. He is more than I imagined; I love him, but he is a beast, and I want to be able to escape. He takes notice of my movements and turns in place. And as he rotates, every aspect of him is glorious. I can't believe how lucky I am.

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My husband and two preadolescent sons are climbing Doubletop Mountain, and my sister and brother-in-law are fishing in a canoe. And I am having—I'm having a peak experience—one part sensory and one part mystical.

I want to remember this. I try practicing how my story will begin. What have I been doing? First, I dropped Jake and the boys off at the trailhead. Then I hung out with Marshall and Sarah until I left them at Daicey Pond caught up in an acrimonious argument about steering a canoe. On my own, I sighted multiple wildflowers—white and purple trillium, pink lady slippers, and lots of white bunchberry with its four petal flowers and deeply veined leaves. (Actually, bunchberry, *Cornus canadensis*, is my favorite, although it's ubiquitous rather than rare.)

After leaping across the last of several streambeds, I thought all my sightings were behind me; I'd closed down my senses and was on automatic. I was walking up the slightest of hillsides on a trail back to Kidney Pond Campground. Loose gravel and pine needles were crunching under the soles of my new L.L.Bean hiking boots. Then suddenly, something made me look up and see the big brown eyes watching me.

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The grand fellow is so comfortable inside his own skin. I laugh. He carries his unadorned body with such flair; he does it better than any male I know. And he is memorable. Did I say that? "You're a great beauty," I tell him. He smiles.

Well, I imagine that he does. At least, he indulges me without complaint. "I know you're probably eager to go, but just wait a couple more moments." I think, *I'm going to feel so sad and lonely when you're gone, and there'll never, ever be another like you.*

He seems to listen. He stands still and checks that I am honoring my implicit promise to stay the proper distance away from a forest prince. But then, he alerts me of his departure with a tremor of his weighty rack. His leave-taking is classy and unhurried, and he looks up at the last moment to see that I am watching him as he plunges into the seclusion of the forest.

"Thank you," I say to the moose. "Thank you for revealing yourself to me. I know this forest is yours."

In seconds, my view of his body is replaced with branches of spruce trees trembling as his flanks brush against them. He is such a great bull moose that I feel like I have had an encounter with woodland royalty.

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"I saw a forest god today," I tell my husband and sons. "And he was more beautiful than anything I've ever seen."

"Oh, Mom," says Simon.

"Geez, Mom," says Teddy.

"Really, he was a giant."

"We climbed Doubletop Mountain," Simon and Teddy report.

"I talked to a moose."

"And what did he say?" Jake asks, his hazel eyes twinkling.

"Well." I pause. "Oh, I know. He said, 'Be respectful of my creatures.'"

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I recall the moose pointing with his rack at a young female deer. How, I wondered, had I missed the beautiful young doe in the late afternoon dappled light, but there she was, off to the right—delicate, lovely, and nearer to me than the moose.

After he disappeared into the woods, I felt oddly abandoned. I walked up the road and paused at the spot where I had last seen him.

In a clear, impassioned voice, I made a vow to the universe. "Oh, Great Moose of Baxter, this is my solemn promise: I will remember you forever, and I will always love you."

And I do.

A Secretive Bird

Anne Cyr

It stopped us in our tracks.

"What on earth…?" I started.

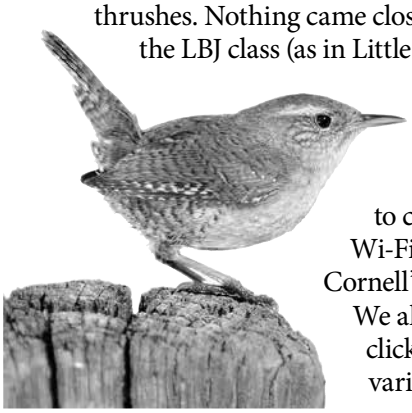
Our group continued to freeze in position, as the exuberant song went on and on.

It was early July, and I was at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens with my husband Conrad and our good friends Karen and Brad, who were visiting from Vermont. We had ambled around the complete circuit of the gardens and were walking up the Birch Allee toward the Visitor's Center when we heard it. Everyone looked at me expectantly. I can always be relied on for bird I.D. But I had to admit I hadn't a clue. The song wasn't the ethereal flute of a thrush, nor the strident call of a song sparrow. It was long and complex, a series of tinkling high notes, trills, and buzzes. And it was *loud*.

I fancy myself a birder. I had memorized *Peterson's Backyard Birds* tapes while commuting from Buxton to South Portland all those years; had attended weeklong birding camps at Star Island off of Portsmouth and at Audubon's Hog Island in Muscongus Bay. But I could not place this bird. We tried to get a glimpse of him—passed around Brad's superior binoculars—but all we could make out was a tiny brown puffball flitting around the tops of the trees that edged the woods we had just emerged from.

Karen happened to have a recording device in her car; she and Brad ran to get it and luckily were able to make a clear recording. In the meantime, Conrad and I revisited the Children's Garden, where spouting granite whales cooled us with their mist; and weeping Dr. Seuss-like cedars nodded as we walked past. We all met back at the Visitor Center, reluctant to leave this elegant bouquet of gardens, sculptures, and wildlife behind.

Back at the cottage, out came the one bird field guide that I kept there. It was a niggling feeling not being able to identify a neighborhood bird. I sat out on the deck and went through the warbler section, the sparrows, the thrushes. Nothing came close. This guy was in the LBJ class (as in Little Brown Job), and he was confounding me for sure.



Karen fired up her laptop and was able to catch our neighbor's Wi-Fi, and soon we were at Cornell's *All About Birds* site. We all took turns click-clicking away, listening to various recordings, but still no luck. Eventually, the clicking of the mess of lobsters sitting in the fridge was the greater allure, and we put aside our query for the evening.

Talking to Karen a few weeks later, she described playing her recording of the bird over the phone to an ornithologist from Cornell, who quickly identified it as a winter wren. She sent me the link to Cornell's online recording of a winter wren, and we agreed that was the correct I.D., but that "our bird" must have been in the top of his class, so remarkable and melodious was his song.

I'm not sure why I wasn't attuned to winter wrens before. In the research I've done since, I've learned that their population is healthy; in fact, it is on the increase. They are largely a winter visitor in much of the U.S. (hence the name) breeding in a few northern states and across Canada. Insects comprise the main part of their diet, so I wouldn't know them from coming to my feeders. And they are *tiny* birds, smaller than chickadees, with a wing span only an inch longer than ruby-throated hummingbirds'. Inhabiting moist, dark coniferous forests, they are described as reclusive and hard to find as they scuttle mouselike along the forest floor, in and out of hollow logs and dense brush, looking for arthropods.

Winter wrens are round, dark brown, and speckled. Their very short tail is almost always flipped up. They have a short, thin bill and a pale eyebrow. I love some of the descriptors from the field guides: "hard to see, easy to hear," "more often heard than seen." And my favorite of all: "The winter wren is a tiny woodland bird whose song is as elaborate as its plumage is drab."

Last spring I went to visit Karen and Brad in the hills of Vermont. Almost a year had passed since our first encounter with the wren. One morning we went for a walk in a nearby preserve. It was cool and sunny; the trees hadn't leafed out yet but had taken on the pale pastel shimmer that hinted at the burst of life to come. Scant wildlife was apparent, and it was disappointingly quiet. Towards the end of our walk, Brad spotted some bird action at the top of a tree. He handed me the binoculars, but it was hard to focus as its movements were quick and abrupt with flicking of wings. It was tiny and brown, almost impossible to identify. And then it all fell into place.

"It's our bird, it's the winter wren!" I exclaimed with a theatrical whisper.

It chose that moment to perch atop the tree and start to sing, stringing together one long, trilling passage after another. We grinned at each other foolishly. Such is the joy of spring.

contributors

David Agan lives and writes near the woods in Perkinstown in beautiful inland York County. He is grateful to be a husband, a dad, a grandpa, a brother, and an uncle.

Tim Baehr was a professional writer and is an amateur photographer. He is grateful for the encouragement of OLLI courses and instructors.

Mary Barthelman finds beauty all around her and likes when she can capture and share it in a photo or painting.

Stephanie Betzold loves to write and paint in oil and watercolor.

Nancy Bills enjoys co-facilitating the Fiction Writing Workshop at OLLI. Many of the chapters in her award-winning book, *The Red Ribbon, A Memoir of Lightning and Rebuilding After Loss*, were written for OLLI writing classes and workshops.

Steve Bloom took to writing fiction and poetry after retiring from a career as a librarian. His background includes degrees in history and efforts in music and photography.

E. Michael Brady is in his 36th year on the faculty of the University of Southern Maine. He teaches in the graduate program in adult and higher education.

Cheryl Brogan, with three Massachusetts careers (HS English teacher, general contractor, and technical writer/instructional designer at Hewlett-Packard Co.) behind her, is gratefully enjoying a less hectic life in Falmouth, close to her children and grandchildren.

Richard Buhr's poetry has appeared in *The New York Quarterly, The New Renaissance*, and *The Ekphrastic Review.* He lives in Maine, where he has worked over the years as a journalist and public relations professional.

Nancy Arey Cohen's writing interests run from short stories to novels, romance to mystery. She has published gifted-education articles in journals, short stories in magazines, and is currently seeking publication of her first novel.

Michael Colton is retired from a large engineering firm and likes to unwind by taking photographs in Maine and while traveling.

Anne Cyr is a writer who truly has to wait for inspiration to strike ("there's a poem in that!"). So she doesn't generate reams of writing but thoroughly enjoys herself when in the writing process.

Eric Edmonds is a longstanding OLLI member, with a persistent interest in photography. He enjoys being eclectic and often pushing the limits. He will display on the OLLI art wall when OLLI reconvenes in person after the pandemic.

Tom Foley is a retired sales and marketing manager who returned to Maine because he could not put up with any more good weather. He lives in Cumberland and is glad to be home.

Dan Fontugne was tossed from one part of the world to another on work assignments and, upon retirement, washed up on the Maine shore. He has been a member of OLLI for five years.

Pat Garrett is a serious photo enthusiast with varied photographic interests. She continually challenges herself in all things photographic. Pat strives to capture "visual" stories intended to be "written" by the viewer's imagination.

Eileen Griffin has been reading and writing poetry since her early years with nursery rhymes and Robert Louis Stevenson. Today, as a retired teacher-educator/consultant, she is writing and learning the craft of poetry.

Kathie Harper is a former teacher, children's librarian, and literacy specialist who has always had a penchant for words, books, and libraries. Now she has added her love of OLLI courses to her list.

Toby Hollander is working on a memoir about his childhood, which included seven years in foster care, a short Navy career including Annapolis, a year in Vietnam, a career as a lawyer, and as a guardian ad litem for children.

Eric Jensen is a retired computer programmer who has been known to attack his garden with a chainsaw.

Patricia Jones is a textile artist who is retired and living in Scarborough, Maine. She works in a number of textile mediums and studies with textile artists in developing countries. She is inspired by what she sees in nature.

Joel Kallich has been working with glass for almost 20 years, from stained glass to kiln-formed art glass. This medium resonates with his creative expression.

Sarah Lathrop retired from her career as a technical writer in 2019. She loves the Maine coast and finds it a wonderful place to pursue photography as hobby. When not outside taking photos, she can be found with her nose in a book.

Tana Leonhart's journey included college, parenting, and a wonderful teaching career. Now, having traded skiing the Colorado mountains for Maine's beautiful coast, she enjoys birding, painting, writing, and many enlightening OLLI classes.

Sidney Cowles Lincoln is a retired educator and now longtime Maine resident who occasionally writes something she likes.

David Little began his art career in New York City, inspired by lyrical surrealism, before turning to landscape painting and co-authoring Maine art books. With free time, the artist has discovered a reset of his earlier work!

Molly Morell has been painting with acrylics for about 20 years. During the COVID-19 pandemic and unable to access her studio, she downloaded a digital art program for the first time and expanded her boundaries.

David Murray has been a member of OLLI since 2003. He served on the Advisory Board from 2004 to 2010 and was the Board Chair from 2006 to 2009. He enjoys painting, woodworking, and gardening.

Ann Marie Olson looks to find wonderment in different slices of life.

Rob Petrillo has been OLLIing for several years now and feels like a kid discovering the joys of learning (and socializing) once again, but this time with enough sense (he thinks) to appreciate it more.

Lynn Ross was born in Texas, lived most of her life in Kansas, and is delighted to now live in Maine. She writes in an effort to make sense of life...and stay sane(ish).

Bruce Sherwin has been quietly learning since escape from the womb, with no end in sight. He gratefully stumbled onto OLLI in the summer of 2016. Thank you, folks of OLLI, for your unique contributions!

Linda Shiminski holds an MA in reading. She finds writing a way to respond to life by sharing her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. She thanks OLLI for bringing her writing back onto the blank page.

Alton Spencer keeps his eyes open and camera ready in western Maine.

Janet Stebbins, left-handed retired school educator, has noticed that poetry is frequently summoned for moments of significance (presidential swearing in, commemoration of people, buildings, etc.) and often is the repository of our best selves.

Kathleen Howard Sutherland was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. She retired from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. She has been painting since 1999 and teaching at OLLI since 2005.

Richard Welsh, after almost launching an academic career, veered into political advocacy while maintaining an active interest in former pursuits. Retired, he indulges in writing, photography, historical research, and both teaching and studenting at OLLI.

Ariela Zucker was born in Jerusalem. She and her husband left Israel in September 2001. After moving to Maine, they were followed by three of their daughters, so they decided to stay in Maine. Ariela and her husband live in Ellsworth, in the motel they own and operate.

about the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Reflections is an annual publication of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Southern Maine. OLLI offers learners 50 and older a wide range of courses, workshops, events, trips, lectures, and special interest groups, all intended to capture the joy of learning and enhance creative pursuits. Sessions run throughout the year. To learn more about OLLI, to become a member, or to explore its courses and programs, please visit our website at usm.maine.edu/olli or call 207-780-4406.

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

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Window Box Watercolor by Stephanie Betzold

"I attended my first workshop on Monhegan. I loved the window box on the side of an old island cottage."