

Seeds

Love & Laughter!



2017

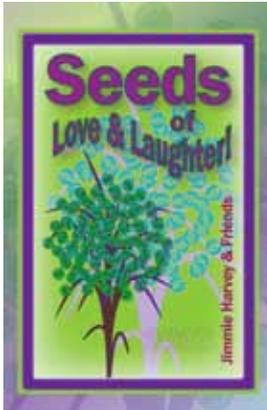
Jimmie Harvey & Friends

*More heartfelt
thoughts and ideas
from
Jimmie Harvey &
Friends*

Published in the beautiful
Willamette Valley
Oregon
USA

December
2017





**Your mind is a garden
Your thoughts are the seeds
You can grow flowers
Or you can grow weeds**

—author unknown

Copyright © 2017 Jimmie S. Harvey

Cover design by Michael A. Faris

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author(s).

First Edition 2017

www.abouttimepublishing.com



Roy & Jimmie Harvey

**Wishing You
A Merry Christmas
2017**

A note from the editor

All in the interest of Love & Laughter, we are proud to present our latest collection of creative works by the friends and family of Jimmie Harvey.

I'm all grins about this issue. Twenty three contributors this year, including fourteen new ones! We have included some interesting artists and photographers this time as well as some fun stories and poems that I think you will enjoy.

It is such a joy to connect with all of the folks that helped to put this project together. Their creative energy is refreshing in a chaotic, bustling world that rarely takes the time or effort to call attention to the artsy and poetic side of everyday life.

Please, if you enjoy this book, pass it on to others and encourage more of your creative friends and family to join us in submitting some of their original works for next year.

Best wishes,

Michael A. Faris
Editor
About Time Publishing
mfaris1950@gmail.com



Michael & Jimmie

Contents

Author Biographies.....	iv	Intentional Gravity Paintings.....	66
Seeds of Love & Laughter	2	Earthly Angel.....	68
My Uncle Sam.....	5	LXVIII	69
The Great Dandelion Mystery.....	6	Stubborn Girl.....	70
Harvey's Florida Orchids	8	Foreward to the Book Freedom House.....	72
Spring Is Knocking at My Door!.....	10	The Good Idea	79
Always Summer	13	The Glow	80
The Photographer's Viewpoint:	14	On Grandfathering.....	88
Paul Comes to Town	16	The Winter Snug	95
Keeping Up with Technology.....	18	Climate Change.....	96
Darkness	21	The Joys of Winter	99
Highway Gardening.....	22	Spring Blooms	105
The Girl Who Loved Flowers	24	A Woodworkers Point of View	106
Rules for My Kids	25	Seesaw Insomniac.....	108
It's Time To Cut the Roses Back.....	26	River Trip.....	110
Ready To Write	28	The Touch	117
Little Birds.....	31	In a Jam	118
Sweet Tea & Shoestrings	32	Reveille and Retreat	119
Little Bruce Drops a Deuce	38	Family Unit: A Tribute to My Father.....	120
What Is Happening to Our World!	40	Roots	123
Full Moon	42	Wings.....	123
A Childhood Seeded with Love.....	45	Everyday Saints	124
Truth	52	Find Yourself a Niche.....	128
The Poet	53	Little people	134
Look at Me.....	54	The Challenge.....	136
My Beautiful World.....	57	Applesauce and Old Crow.....	141
Milton.....	58	Everyone Knows That It Can't Happen Here	146
A Fall for All Seasons.....	62	Rivals.....	152
The Seasons.....	65	The Army Wife.....	156
		God Mouse	158

Contributors

De Layne K. Osterman	2	Kathy Richmond.....	82
Jimmie Harvey.....	4	Kathy Richmond.....	84
Edwina Taylor.....	6	Kathy Richmond.....	86
Harvey Finegold	8	Michael A. Faris.....	88
Jimmie Harvey.....	10	Dudley Clark.....	95
De Layne. K. Osterman.....	12	Charles H. Snellings.....	96
Michael Casey	14	Sandy Larkin.....	99
Judie Bunch	16	Harvey Finegold	106
Jimmie Harvey.....	18	Michael A. Faris.....	108
Charles H. Snellings.....	21	Charles H. Snellings.....	110
Judie Bunch	22	Sandy Larkin.....	112
Remy Wollman	24	Sandy Larkin.....	114
Jordan Wollman.....	25	Sandy Larkin.....	116
Jimmie Harvey.....	26	Dudley Clark.....	117
Dudley Clark.....	28	Gabriel Effiong.....	118
De Layne K. Osterman	31	Sarah Effiong.....	119
G. B. Lawrence	32	Hannah Effiong	119
Casey Faris	38	Muabilai Tshionyi.....	120
Jimmie Harvey.....	40	Carol Tshionyi.....	123
Charles H. Snellings.....	42	Rogene Manas.....	124
Sandy Larkin.....	44	Rogene Manas.....	126
Dudley Clark.....	52	Steve Michaels.....	128
Dudley Clark.....	53	Steve Michaels.....	131
De Layne K. Osterman	54	Steve Michaels.....	132
Jimmie Harvey.....	56	Jordan Wollman.....	134
De Layne K. Osterman	58	David Vaughan	136
Jim Stocker.....	62	Michael A. Faris.....	141
Jimmie Harvey.....	64	Beverly Soasey	142
Kassy Daggett	66	Beverly Soasey	144
Dudley Clark.....	68	Suzi Wollman.....	146
Dudley Clark.....	69	Lauren Dwyer.....	150
Veronica Yates	70	Erin Dwyer.....	151
Kassy Daggett	72	Heidi Sachet	152
Katie Faris.....	79	Annie Effiong.....	156
Susan Schneiderman.....	80	David Vaughan	158

Author Biographies



Michael A. Faris is owner and editor for About Time Publishing. He is interested in woodworking, printmaking, bookbinding and folk art. A retired printer, he writes poems, songs and stories just for fun. He lives with his wife, Judy, and their two dogs just outside Junction City, Oregon.

Jimmie Harvey Retired, living at Rogue Valley Manor in Oregon, after many years managing a temporary payroll processing center in California. She has published one novel and several short stories, along with many poetry books.



Edwina Taylor is retired after 25 years working for the insurance industry. She originally hails from the San Francisco area and has lived in San Diego and Eureka before settling in Springfield, OR, with her late husband in 1992. After almost 10 years as a widow, she met and married Bob Taylor from whom she has now caught the writing bug.

Susan Schneiderman always had professional responsibility for writing as a Continuing Education Program Director. This continues in a volunteer capacity as the Executive Secretary for the Resident Council at Rogue Valley Manor in Medford. She feels that the joy of writing on a more casual basis is making time to reflect on the experience of a gratifying life.



Veronica Yates is a writer by choice, a journalist, columnist and editor by experience, and a poet by inescapability. Her poems have appeared in the Syracuse Cultural Workers annual publication, Women Artists Datebook, Rosebud magazine, Writers' Journal, Lucidity Poetry Journal. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, where she finds joyful satisfaction in turning her attention daily toward the miracles in the everyday of things.

Heidemarie Sachet was born in Prague. Grew up in Germany within spitting distance of Loraine, France. Went to work and studied in Paris at age 19. After receiving her Diploma, she did the same in London. Worked as a translator in Northern Germany. Emigrated to the U.S. in 1965, and has lived in Eugene since December 1969. She is working on her memoirs.



Charles H. Snellings was born in Dallas, Texas, grew up in Irving, Texas, and went to School at North Texas State University (Now the University of North Texas) where he studied philosophy and English literature. He is a blues guitar player and records with his bands: Voodoo Chili and Charley Horse. He is a songwriter with 49 years of experience. He lives in Eugene, Oregon with his new puppy, Buddy..

De Layne K. Osterman lives in Junction City, Oregon. She lives a simple life surrounded by loved ones near and far. She shares her home with her children and grandchildren, one dog, and a cat. Her days are filled with love and laughter, and challenges of various kinds. Although life isn't always easy, the rewards are great, and out of both hard and rewarding times, she writes.



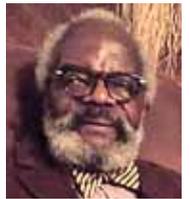
Judie Bunch has been writing most of her life. Many of Judie's stories were written while she was a commentator for Jefferson Public Radio. She and husband Jerry raised four children in Ashland, Oregon and have lived in the Rogue Valley 44 years. They now take care of 5 acres and 10 chickens near Talent, Oregon.

Kassy Daggett is writing a book about her maternal grandmother titled Freedom House. She is a somatic therapist, consultant, and workshop facilitator who coaches individuals, couples, and groups. Her passion is painting. She also owns AnthologyPublishing.com. For more information visit her website: vrkd.com



Annie Effiong is an Army wife, a mother of four and one amazing dog, a registered nurse, and world traveler. Spending most of her younger life in the Dallas, TX area, she currently lives in Germany as her opportunities being a military spouse have led her all over the world. She enjoys hiking, adventuring, hanging out with her kids and friends, and getting lost as often as possible.

Dr. Muabilai Tshionyi, PhD Born in DR Congo. he has been a student, Associate Professor, Assistant Dean of College of Education in DRC, teacher, coach. Now a retiree, Father, Grandfather, Great-grandfather who enjoys flower gardening, His books of African Folktales for children and adults preserve and memorialize those tales he used to hear as he was growing up.



Steve Michaels lives with his wife Christine on a 100-acre alpaca ranch near Thompson Falls, Montana along with their dog, barn cats and a pond full of fish. Entrepreneurial by nature, he has been working on and looking forward to upcoming changes with much anticipation working on his spirituality along with being an active member of his community.

We also wish to thank these contributors:

Dudley Clark

Michael Casey

Gabriel Effiong

Hanna Effiong

Sarah Effiong

Casey Faris

Katie Faris

Harvey Finegold

Sandy Larkin

George Lawrence

Rogene Manas

Kathy Richmond

Susan Schneiderman

Beverly Soasey

Jim Stocker

David Vaughan

Jordan Wollman

Remy Wollman

Suzi Wollman



**Jimmie Harvey
& Friends
2017**

Seeds of Love & Laughter



Photo: wallup.net

She was a lovely little girl whose hair was golden brown
Her smile had a dimple, even two beneath her crown
Her eyes were sure the color of the sea with blue and green
Depending on the sunshine with the color in between
Her laughter bore the jingle of a merry little tune
Her little cheeks were lighted as the fullness of the moon
It didn't seem to matter what the day ahead foretold
Or whether that day's weather brought the warming or the cold
She always had some kindness and some cheerfulness to share
Letting all around her know that she was there to care
She went about her little day with lightness in her step
Always willing grace to all for in her heart she kept
A pocketful of love that never seemed to wane
As she bounced along her merry way along her merry lane
A smile here, a hugging there, a most encouraging word
For some it seemed to quietly be the best they'd ever heard

The people in her little world felt in their turn her touch
Even when the time was short the love she gave, gave much
For sure it seemed that time with her made time itself to still
It mattered not for such was love and love could surely fill
All the places left undone, rattled, shaken, pained
Could be healed and would be healed as love its access gained
She tired not, our little Miss, though days and years did pass
She found the love grew stronger, each day more than the last
Along the way she also learned that laughter from her heart
Aided some, no aided all, and gave a brand new start
To all who heard her merriment, and paired with all her love
They found a certain healing coming straight from God above
As she grew, so did her love, compassion overflowing
Pouring out to all she met, and all the while knowing
That even one small act of love, one small act of kindness
Could overcome the deepest grief, could cure one's own blindness
To see the world of people who, in their darkest hour
Lead them into light of day and fill them with life's power
Then when death the door of dark is slammed shut and forbidden
Slowly add the cheerfulness where joy and glad are hidden
Bring the smile that lights the day, chuckle some together
Let the sunshine filter in and bring the healing weather
Now the years are moving on and our little Miss grows older
Still she fills the darkest days with love and laughter bolder
What a way to spend her life, to head towards happily after
Knowing well she spent her life sowing seeds of love and laughter!

De Layne K. Osterman



Keep Paying!

Love, Uncle Sam

My Uncle Sam

Oh, No! It's not that time again!
It comes around so soon –
that date when Uncle Sam
wants to know how much I earned
and how much I spent.

How did I earn it?

How much did I send him?
What did I do with the rest of it?

Did I spend it all on me,
or did I help someone in need?
Did I spend part of it on doctors or
medicines to keep me well?

He's pretty nosy, that guy!
He wants to know how much I have
in my pocket or in the bank,
or invested in something to earn
a bit for next year.

I must delve into my records.
What did I do with my income?

What's left?

And I have to list it for him
so he can tell me
how much more he wants!

He's a pretty greedy old guy
My Uncle Sam!

But I do love him...

Jimmie Harvey

The Great Dandelion Mystery

Like many gardeners, we have dandelions in our yard. Not just any kind of dandelions, but giant ones with nice six inch long leaves and bright yellow flowers atop ten inch stems. They're perky and seem to grow huge overnight. They're easy to find and dig up, but this year they looked different.

I was amazed to see only long stems and vivid yellow petals wavering in the breeze. But what's this? No leaves at all? That got me to wondering. Did a new variety of dandelion invade our yard? After all, we did dig up all those dandy little weeds last year and that should have done the job. But upon closer look, the leaves seemed to be torn off, right down to the center of each plant. Our backyard is fenced and nothing else was disturbed or torn apart.

That became known as the Great Dandelion Mystery.

Then on one of our sweltering hundred degree days, I found my answer. We had a little helper. Something I would have never dreamed or thought about. Because of the heat, the culprit had slowed down enough for me to catch him red-handed chewing on our dandelion patch. I just happened to have my camera out and got him in my sights. Now we have proof that we have a helper and that we're not really squirrely in the head. If only we could train him now to pull up each dandelion by the root and consume the entire plant, we could have great grass.

Better yet, the photo really added a little laughter to our day. Because I almost think he's smiling. Those dandelion leaves have gotta be greater than nuts.

Edwina Taylor



Photo: by Edwina Taylor

Harvey's Florida Orchids

All Photos: by Harvey Finegold



Harvey Finegold is living the good life in Stuart, Florida where he enjoys growing and collecting orchids. The warm Florida climate produces gorgeous cascades of colors the year 'round. His varieties span from leafy to lacy in a rainbow of colors.



Spring Is Knocking at My Door!

I looked out my window this morning
And guess what!
There she was again.
Beautiful Spring
That fabulous lady I can count on!
Knock! Knock! Knocking at my door!
She never disappoints me
Though she sometimes comes a little later than I hope.
But this year, she's right on time!
And, oh how I welcome her!
The past winter has been cold, stormy
And I'm tired of it.
I'm ready for walks in the sunshine
Without heavy coat and gloves
Without a red shining nose
Without shivers
I'm very ready to welcome one of my best friends!
Wow! We'll sit and talk
We'll laugh and plant flowers.
She brought some with her
Some already planted and beginning to bloom.
See over there, a plum tree bursting with pink blossoms,
And across the street a flock of yellow narcissus.
Leaves are beginning to peek out
On my rose bushes, promising flowers later.
The soft breeze that softly fingers my hair
Is gentle and warm.

She's here! My favorite friend!
I hope she stays a nice, long time.
'Cause when she goes
She gives the keys to
Madam Summertime,
And though she's quite nice,
She can sometimes be
A bit too warm and loving
Want to hold me too close.
Yep! I guess Spring is my favorite friend!

Jimmie Harvey



Always Summer

In the summer sun
My heart begins to soar
For summer rays of sun
Warm me evermore
But wait! My heart doth speak
For I am still in spring
Oh just a little longer
Til my heart begins to sing
Or perhaps I hear me saying
I'll not wait for summer sun
But just begin my singing now
'Fore that season has begun
And so I open up my mouth
And with the birds I sing
For summer sun comes even now
As I welcome in the spring!

De Layne K. Osterman

The Photographer's Viewpoint: Explore Beyond the Curtain



All Photos: by Michael Casey

While visiting the Tsillan Winery at Lake Chelan, Washington, I noticed a bell tower atop the chalet and thought it might be interesting “through the camera lens.” I then went around to the other side, shot the tower itself, noticing how dark it was inside, so perhaps there was not much there for a bell shot.

However, after getting back into the studio and dramatically enlarging the image, the light, texture and architectural detail was definitely to my liking, and it has remained one of my favorite images.



Often times, if we simply look a little further—explore beyond the curtain—we will find another view, another experience. For me, this is a good lesson not only in photography but in life as well.

MICHAEL CASEY

Issaquah, Washington

Paul Comes to Town

Our computer tech son, Paul, is in town from Eugene checking up on us old folks. We walk out to the back of our five acres and his dad Jerry says, "Look at the fir trees, Paul. "We must have planted over a hundred seedlings."

Paul waves his hands around. "How many years have you been doing all this, anyhow?"

Jerry takes a measuring tape from his pocket and kneels down beside a small fir. "Why, I think it's grown at least 10 inches this summer," he says.

"Isn't this digging, planting, watering and mowing getting to be too much work for you?" Paul asks.

There's a commotion on the pond. The mallards flap their wings and scatter as a pair of Canada geese land, settle themselves, and twitch their tails in self-satisfaction. "We've had pintails, mallards, buffleheads, and even some wood ducks out there this fall," I say.

Paul shakes his head. "Why don't you and Dad think about moving back into Ashland. Buy a condo. You should be out having fun."

Sometimes I think Paul is right. Jerry sure has had a lot of aches and pains, lately. Spends more time soaking in the hot tub. Takes more naps. And, I notice I'm not attacking dandelions and star thistle as fervently as I used to. My knees don't like bending anymore.

But, I'm reminded of the time our Ashland friends, Jud and Alice, were prompted by their aches and pains to trade in their home for leisurely condo life. Sometime later they stopped to see us; saw our tiny fir trees, the ducks, and the dandelions; put the Ashland condo up for sale and bought a house in town with a yard for Alice's flowers. They've been sore but happy ever since; trimming trees, painting fences, and digging in the dirt.

At the end of the weekend Paul goes back to his artist life in Eugene, and his dad goes out to dismantle irrigation pipe for the winter. He stacks it against a garden shed, then drains the last of the gas from his riding mower. What with winter coming on, Jerry's energies are turning from yard work to workshop projects. He's building doll cradles for a friend's granddaughters, a wood box for the neighbor's front porch, and he's got a nifty idea for some bird feeders. Tapping away on his hammer he whistles on his side of the shop wall. I find some French horn music on the radio, turn on the computer and begin tapping out a new story on my side of the wall. What was it our son said, "Get out and have some fun?"

"Well Paul," I say. "We're having fun right here."

Judie Bunch

Keeping Up with Technology

Oh, I work hard to try to keep up.
It has changed so often and so much since the days
I learned to type on an old typewriter
that wouldn't let you correct mistakes.
You simply had to tear out the paper, rip it up
and start all over again with a brand new page!
And you did it over and over again
until you got it right – until you were happy with it!
For a clutz like I was, that was a hard task!
I often made mistakes.

Then along came electric typewriters!
Wow! They were so much faster
and if you mistyped, you could backspace and fix it!
You saved so much time and so much paper!
But I was still behind on technology –
Like I am today!

To get a current version of the program I need,
I simply download and put it to work on my computer.
(Of course, I get a big bill for it, which I must pay!)
But, that's okay! It's what I need to make it work!
But wait...

Something's wrong!
What happened to the data I just entered?
Where did it go? I typed it in and closed the file

But somehow I cannot retrieve it!
What did I do wrong?! Where is it saved?
Did I misread the instructions again?
I think I need to be renamed..
Perhaps – “Miss Clutz”!

Jimmie Harvey



Photo by Samuel Zeller on Unsplash



Darkness

Sundown steals what meager daylight my eyes can hold. It is always in that week after Christmas that I feel my spirit sag. Usually the sun stays hidden leaving my soul in a perpetual river of darkness.

I hide it well—nobody can sense it spilling within me like a flood, its current tugging me down and holding me on the bottom as the deep night chills me to the bone in mid-day.

I smile and go through the motions, but I feel it flowing from some spring—rushing through my veins like tiny daggers. While I want to let it just carry me away I am tethered to the tree roots under the surface.

A non-committal me wanders through these days wondering about the choices I've made that led me to the setting sun. I swerve to miss a black cat. It crosses my path unscathed.

Charles H. Snellings

Highway Gardening

This last spring my bachelor son Steve tried his hand at landscaping out here in Talent. Walmart had a sale so he bought twelve pots of photinias. The clerk said photinias are fast growers and would be great for muffling traffic noise. Steve wanted to plant them next to the South Pacific Highway that borders his and our homes.

They were tiny; a total of 24 shiny red and green leaves among the twelve plants. No matter. Steve looked forward to a mass of color that would one day hide the highway. Full of optimism, he hacked through brush, dug holes, and tenderly placed them into the rocky soil. Watering and fertilizing them over the hot summer months, he was undaunted when persistent weeds rapidly outdistanced the little plants: next year the situation would be in reverse.

One September evening, Steve went out to water after he got home from work. From somewhere in his yard I heard an anguished cry. "I can't believe it!" he shouted. "I watered them every night." I ran to where he stood staring at the ground. "Twelve photinias. They're all gone."

Jackson County Highway Department had mown the roadside that day. Unaware that twelve tiny photinias were growing amid star thistle, blackberry vines and poison hemlock, all within the mower's reach had been unmercifully cut down.

As the evening traffic from Ashland whizzed by, Steve and I stood staring at the broken, leafless photinia twigs and bemoaned the loss. Then, our eyes were drawn to something across the street. The highway department had mown everything on that side, too. Well, everything that is, except for one stubby, bright yellow sunflower. Silently, we looked at each other. Was that a glimmer of a smile on Steve's face? I patted his shoulder and a little thought ran through my head: next year, son, how about watching for a good sale on sunflowers?

Judie Bunch

The Girl Who Loved Flowers

Rosie went to go to the park. She saw some flowers and picked them up. She smelled them and they were good! She saw so many, and she wanted to carry them all, but she couldn't.

So, Rosie saw a boy and his name was Mark. The boy saw the girl and thought she looked beautiful. He saw the girl had trouble holding the roses, because there were roses everywhere, and she wanted them all.

There was a cat. The cat was sniffing the roses. Her name was Sally. Sally liked roses, too. The cat took the roses from Rosie. Rosie was sad because she didn't get the roses from the cat. The cat wouldn't let her have the roses back.

Mark knew what to do. He gave Rosie some roses and he gave the cat some roses, too. Then it was happily ever after.

Remy Wollman

Rules for My Kids

Treat all people, no matter what station in life, with dignity and respect. Remember that all people have something to teach. Learn from the old, young, rich, poor, healthy, sick, happy, and sad. Find something admirable about every person you meet, and compliment them on it because you may be the blessing they're desperate for. Do something selfless every day. Define your life's priorities, and keep them straight, don't let circumstance rule you. Deal honestly with people and face problems head-on. Think about what people will say at your funeral and design your life around that. Don't take life too seriously, it's entirely too short to live it miserably. Have fun, but take care of your body. You only get one. The only thing in life you truly control is your response to the things that happen around and to you. Make your response great and gracious. Be grateful, gentle, and kind. But if you have to get in a fight, win. Above all else, make other people laugh.

Jordan Wollman



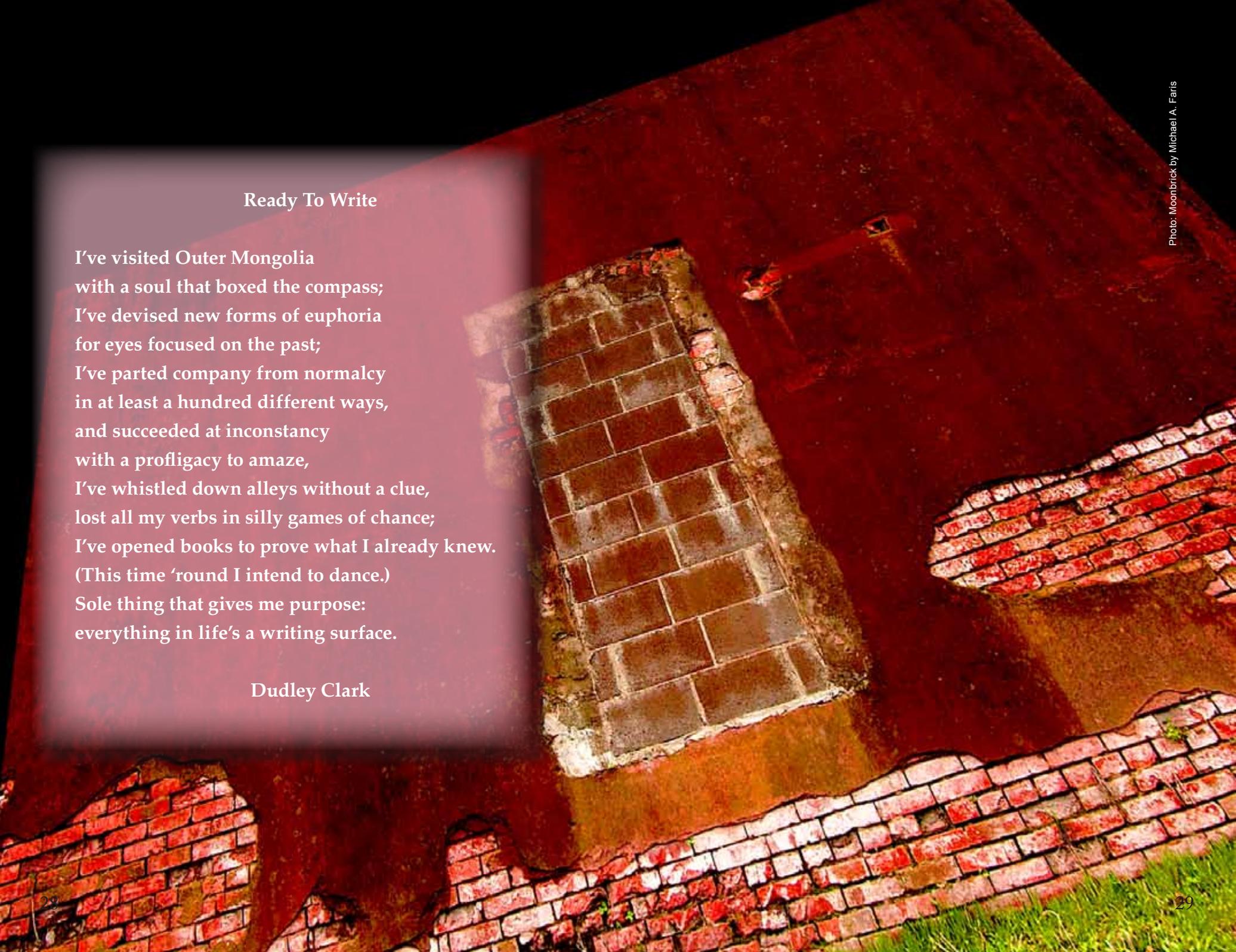
Photo: by Jordan Wollman

It's Time To Cut the Roses Back

It's time to cut the roses back...
See how their petals drop!
The ground is covered with pink and purple
With yellow, red, and amber.
"September's almost gone," they say.
"See you again in April!"
"Okay," I say, get my clippers out,
Cut back their long green stems
And hear their relaxing sighs,
They're tired, I guess.
They've worked so hard,
Presenting me each day
With perfume and with color,
With luxury, with class..
There's nothing like a rose
To bring softness, color and perfume
Into the life of a working lass.
They'll spend fall and winter
Sleeping the days away,
Then April brings them back to life
To brighten my life once more!

Jimmie Harvey





Ready To Write

I've visited Outer Mongolia
with a soul that boxed the compass;
I've devised new forms of euphoria
for eyes focused on the past;
I've parted company from normalcy
in at least a hundred different ways,
and succeeded at inconstancy
with a profligacy to amaze,
I've whistled down alleys without a clue,
lost all my verbs in silly games of chance;
I've opened books to prove what I already knew.
(This time 'round I intend to dance.)
Sole thing that gives me purpose:
everything in life's a writing surface.

Dudley Clark



Red Crowned Woodpecker
by Sandy Larson

Little Birds

Little birds, little birds, make their voices heard
Even when they're quiet, and never say a word
Their beauty speaks the loudest, and the way they move about
Then they add their voices, and their gentle song comes out
They seem to make an effort, to let their presence known
They flit and dust their feathers, each one their very own
We hear them in the treetops, we see them on the branch
We watch them on the little limbs, they do their little dance
The story they are telling, the song we hear them sing
Speaks of cheerful tidings, their little hearts do sing
Of little bits of courage, of bigger bits of joy
We never need to worry, or anxious thoughts employ
I love the little birds, that outside the window perch
Bringing little messages, encouraging us to search
For all the little blessings, their winsome tidings tell
For when we see the little birds, all our soul is well

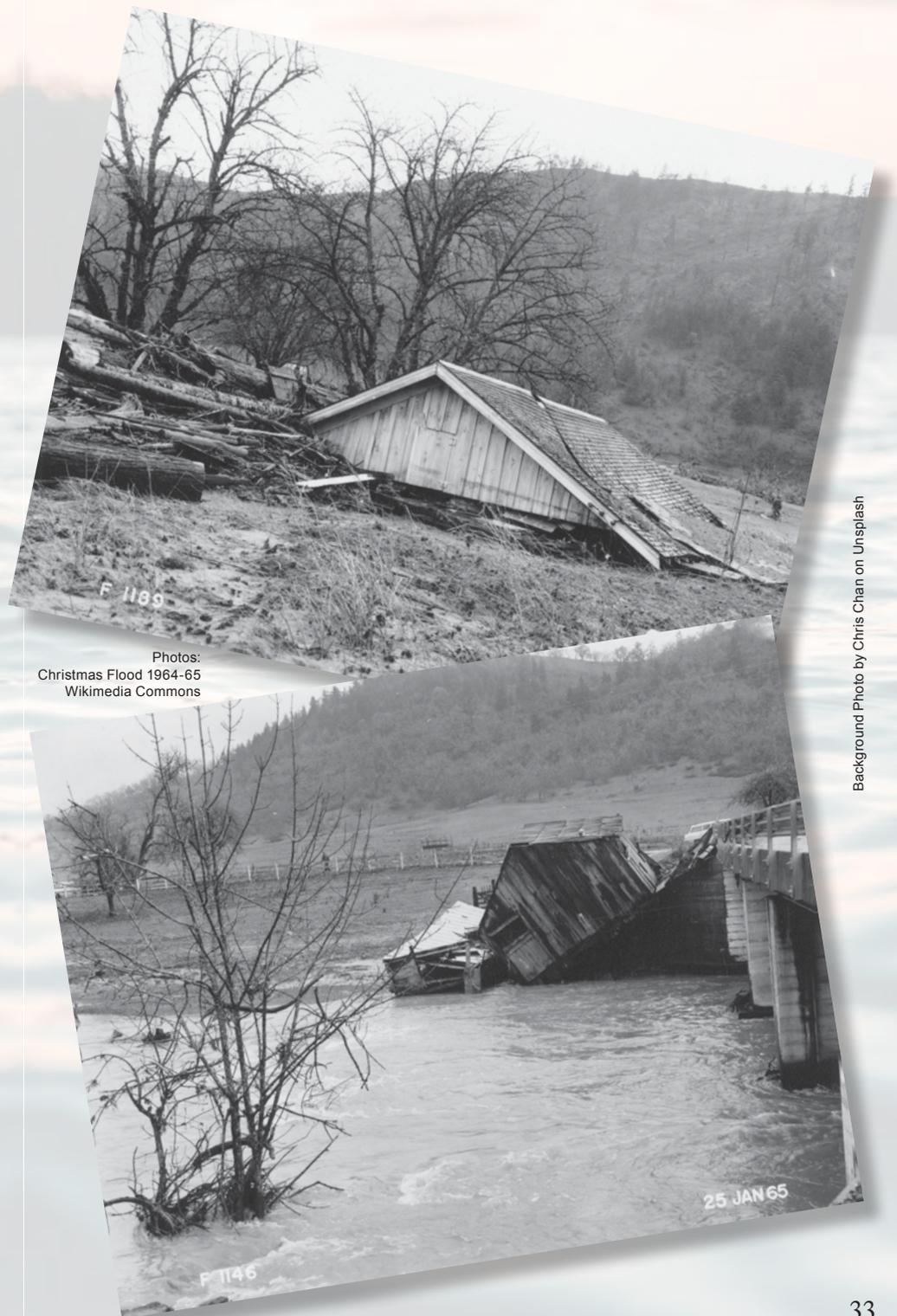
De Layne K. Osterman

Sweet Tea & Shoestrings

Stark Alton was as black and lean as a new clarinet with enormous hands and the capacity for compassion to match. Years ago, he had saved a man's life. Ironically, years from now, he would take another's... but that's a tale best saved for later.

Alton artfully characterized his family as 'Post Depressionist Oregonians', after their move from the Boulder Dam project to the Northwest following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Throughout the Second World War, work for a skilled laborer was easy to come by. Especially in the west coast shipyards under contract to supply the war effort. As ship production slowed near war's end however, colored employees were among the first to be let go. Stark hadn't escaped the purge. Late in forty-five, he had moved his family from Vanport on the Columbia to Eugene, one hundred miles to the south.

Eventually finding part-time work with the railroad, Stark set up housekeeping for his wife Cozie and the couple's son, Louis along the Willamette River at an abandoned mill site. Their home those first few months was a drafty, rent-free lumber-scaling shed. Their nearest neighbor was the decommissioned mill-deck's giant wigwam burner, which stood north, and just east of the Ferry Street bridge. The burner's greying fuel supply was the family's only source of heat that first winter and young Louis suffered constantly to stay



healthy. Warming temperatures however, brought risk of an even greater calamity. During the spring runoff, their fragile home was bulldozed by the flooding Willamette.

Plans for the Corps of Engineers to begin building a system of dams along the Columbia and its tributaries were still on the drafting board. Until they were implemented, lowland flooding was an annual occurrence. Eugeneans planned for it, and most knew the Alton's residence would be in jeopardy. Few offered warning. On the afternoon of March seventeenth -- St. Patrick's Day -- the river surged beyond its banks. By six that evening, while others celebrated over corned-beef and cabbage, the Alton's counted their blessings over making it to high ground before their frail cottage disappeared, taking them with it. For the next two weeks, the Altons lived in the rail yard, sheltering themselves from the incessant rain using a surplus tent Stark mounted on the bed of a three-quarter ton truck they had driven from Nevada years earlier.

The day after the floodwaters subsided, the Altons anxiously returned to the mill site to survey the damage. After donning borrowed boots, Stark and Cozie set out across the muddy, littered sort yard. Suction from the pudding-thick muck pulled the couple's waders tightly against the tops of their feet. "Careful," Stark cautioned his wife. "Feels like Lucifer himself is yankin' on your legs."

"Smells like he doesn't have a problem with constipation," Cozie joked in a slow sweet drawl, like butter and molasses being combed into candy.

Evidence of damage was strewn everywhere. Debris from other homes upstream still clung to the pitted skin of the wigwam, indicating the maelstrom was even more severe than in previous years. Little was left of the tender dwelling they'd occupied since leaving Vanport. Its communion-wafer walls had collapsed, bringing the shingled roof down with them. The whole mishmash had been swept hard against the big burner and was now anchored solidly to the huge hinges of the furnace door. Clambering up the far side of the pile, Stark and Cozie pried apart what was left of the peaked roof, hoping to find a few fragments spared by the flood.

Instead of belongings however, they were startled to find the whitewashed remains of an unfortunate drop-in.

* * *

Fred Wilkens lived upstream at Glenwood on the farm his uncle had left him. The widower made his living growing and selling produce from his stand off Franklin Boulevard. He was a bigoted curmudgeon with no close ties, though old timers remembered a wife he'd taken years before. She was petite and flirtatious and showered more attention on their hired man than her husband. During a particularly long, damp winter, she disappeared. "Ran off with the help," Wilkens explained

through lips crimped tight as a bottle cap. No more details were given. Those who knew Fred and his forge-hot temper suspected otherwise. Amongst themselves, they joked his tomatoes that following season seemed redder and meatier than in years past.

May through November, college students and those traveling to and from Springfield and the McKenzie valley, kept Fred's stand active and prosperous. The Alton's had driven their flatbed the two miles from the sort yard past Wilken's decaying Queen Anne's often. They stopped only once. It was late summer. Wilkens had greeted the three frigidly, taken from them a two dollar bill for a dollar-twenty in sweet corn, squash and turnips, then had refused to give them change. As a final insult, he told them not to return.

The next time the Altons would see the produce farmer, he would be even less hospitable and have even less to say. Fastened securely inside Fred Wilken's bib overalls the day he bobbed by to pay an unexpected visit, was a large black banker's wallet. It contained twelve hundred dollars. "Sometimes the Lord takes a shine to the common man," Stark said, winking to his wife as he wrung river water from Fred's largess.

* * *

Thanks in part to Fred Wilken's unexpected endowment, the Alton's were able to buy a two-bedroom, shingled bungalow at the foot of Skinner's Butte. It featured two fruit trees in a yard Stark claimed

his Cozie, "tidied with a whiskbroom." And in a coop at the rear, he raised what one neighbor called, "a bush load of cackleberries." Wrapping two sides of the house was a porch where Stark held court and offered up sweet iced tea and shoestring potatoes from a can. Any and all were welcome, and as Louis would later attest, many of life's lessons were previewed there. "My people invented the porch," Alton told his audiences in a voice so deep it sounded as if it was churning up from the bottom of an oil drum. "When we were brought to America as slaves, we were told to build our own dwellings. In the south, jus' like home in Africa, the only 'freshment during hot times came from bein' out on the porch. Eat, sleep, sing, love. Porch has been our stage to rehearse all life's stories. You can look it up."

"That man's talkin' has bent more people's ears than Mr. Joe Louis," Cozie would scold with mock annoyance.

G. B. Lawrence



Photo: Wikipedia Commons - Holding Court at the Old Town of Langtry, Texas

Little Bruce Drops a Deuce

Little Bruce is learning to use the potty!
He's learning when to run to the bathroom
And what's going on in his body.
On Sunday Bruce eats a big piece of cake.
In the potty, he leaves a big chocolate snake.
In port-a-potty, at the ol' county fair
Bruce unleashes a big brown bear
In the office where daddy trades stocks and bonds
Bruce downloads a brown-load into the john.
The baby is walking but makes Bruce all frowny
He doesn't use the potty, just bakes Trouser Brownies
Mom's special meatloaf is taking its toll.
So he busts off a grumpy into the bowl.
We're watching a movie about Lincoln at eight
So Bruce builds a log cabin to celebrate!
Dad's doing yard work, it helps him stay limber
Then Bruce finds the toilet and unloads some timber
On the train with mommy, says little Bruce
"I've got to go Unloose the caboose"
Out in the yard, in the old wooden pail.
Bruce is growing a monkey tail
Dad takes him fishing, and while they're out
He goes for a swim and stocks some brown trout
Bruce eats his ice cream and lets his Mom shop
Then in the rest room, he crafts a fudge pop.
Aren't you proud of my little Bruce?
He's ever so good at dropping a deuce!



photo by Michael A. Faris

What Is Happening to Our World!

Have we lost our minds?

A few months ago, we had the opportunity to choose a new leader for our country.

We listened, discussed it, thought about it.

And finally, we made a decision..

It was not a unanimous decision...

Far from it. It was a close decision, but, more than half of us decided to put our fate in the hands of one person

—Donald Trump!



From the beginning, it became obvious that he was far more interested in becoming more wealthy than in reaching out to people who needed assistance.

He filled his staff with people who had the same goals as he did, including his own family, who had always lived well.

But this is America - Land of the Free and the Blessed!
Where every man is challenged to put his talents and hard work into making life good for everyone who is willing to participate and to reach out with love.

The America I honor and love puts no man down because of his heritage,
She reaches out to encourage and assist those who are less fortunate.
It requires sympathy caring and inspiration.

How did we elect this man Who cares only for himself and his family?

Jimmie Harvey

Full Moon

I wait for the change to come—it doesn't. I awake half-wild, a wolf alone in the dark. A cave morphs into an unfamiliar room—one I have slept in for years. I envy those who sleep all night.

Moonlight floods the forest and desert that is in my eyes: rocks that are shoes and shadows that drain the sparse light.

I hear a bark in the distance and I feel the call. The moon is full and the clouds part so I feel its touch in my blood. There is no grace for me in this ancient world. I am on track now—maybe I always was...a track leading me, by choice, to this state.

The pain is unbearable but I haven't really started yet...no the bones haven't begun their metamorphosis. I watch my hand in the moonlight—the time has come again. Oh God—what will I do? I bite into a leather belt and watch my body quake.

I am a werewolf.

Charles H. Snellings



A Childhood Seeded with Love



Market Day

My family's roots are from Irish, German, and English stock. Both my parents were fiercely proud of their heritage. They took great pride in the fact that they were from hard-working old-world stock and often referred to their heritage as a source of their independence. I learned from my mother at an early age that being Irish was very special. I never questioned why, I just felt the great sense of pride that Mom did. And from Dad, he assured me that being of German and English descent provided me with exceptionally strong characteristics that would enable me to do well. These deeply seeded cultural values were the underpinnings of who Mom and Dad were. They brought these values and characteristics to their marriage and thus to their parenting.

I am pretty sure my parents never consciously realized the seeds they were planting in me as they strove to provide me with a safe, fun, and adventuresome childhood. Sewing the seeds started quite early in life. A common saying around our house was, "you are a Taylor," and the implication was, you can do anything you imagine you can do. Both my parents never held me back from trying new things. Actually, they encouraged me to "just give it a try." After all, I was a Taylor.

As role models, they seemed to be able to tackle any project they set their minds to. Present them with an idea, and invariably they saw it as an opportunity which they always seized with great enthusiasm.

Mom was always busy and seemed to have endless energy. Her energy level fueled her ability to tackle several fronts. She not only worked a regular job five days a week, eight hours a day, she was also an accomplished homemaker: sewing, canning, and gardening. But, Mom was not a slave to work, she also knew how to have fun. She was a great sport: she liked fishing, hiking, skiing, and canoeing rough water, and she was a very good bowler.

Homemaking was handled in the evenings, and on weekends when we weren't out exploring during one of Dad's Sunday drives. Mom's evenings were never spent sitting watching TV, she could be found sewing or canning. She made all my childhood clothes, from dresses to pajamas. Every time I pick up my sewing kit, I see images of her creating them.

Mom was a baker, and a canner. She canned everything you can imagine, veggies, fruit, jam and jelly, as well as the venison my dad hunted to supplement our food. We did not have a freezer, so canning was the way we preserved food and stocked our shelves. I never had store-bought jam or jelly because Mom always made it. I have vivid memories of being in the kitchen watching and helping with all the preserving. I loved

watching the juice from crushed fruit drip from a cotton bag hanging over the sink so that we could make crystal clear jelly. One of my early jobs in my kitchen assistant's career was waiting for the 'pop' of the lids on the canned goods. It was important to hear the 'pop', and see the indentation so we were assured the food would be safe for consumption during the year.

On the homemaking front, of course, there was washing to be done which took a lot of time because we had a tub washer. There wasn't a rinse cycle; we had to run the clothes through the wringer, put the clothes aside, and fill the wash tub with rinse water. We always did two rinses. Then came the drying routine. Put the clothes in the wicker basket and take them outside to dry on the line, or in the dead of winter, upstairs to the attic on the third floor.

Mom was also a master gardener, not veggies, just flowers. I am not sure why we didn't grow vegetables. Maybe it was because we had an old man who came through the neighborhood with his cart pulled by his old horse selling fresh veggies weekly. And, it was common to go to the farms and buy great quantities of vegetables for canning.

We had a three-tiered rock garden that was the talk of the neighborhood. Our yard was fenced and along all the fences were beds of various flowers. They started blooming in the spring and lasted until the snow fell.

Then we would prepare the garden for winter, covering everything with the volumes of maple leaves that fell from our old maple tree. It was enormous and the only tree in our yard. I loved to help Mom with the gardening.

Dad was equally as energetic as Mom. He was also an endless goal setter, always thinking of something new to tackle. Even if he had never done the work before, his 'can-do' attitude propelled him to figure out a way to make it happen. Whether it was work on the house, building recreational equipment, or making something for his family, Dad was a master woodworker, and he used that skill in so many areas.

One of my early memories is of his ability to renovate our very old house. New windows, new rooms, banisters and wooden stairs, digging out a laundry room through our cellar wall, I got to help with that. He said, "Dolly (that was his pet name for me), here is a sledge hammer, now just keep hitting the cement wall right in this spot." He knew there was a crawl space under the front porch and that he could turn it into a laundry room. This would get Mom and I out of his shop area when we were doing the wash.

Dad cherished his shop area, and so did I. It was a magical place! Little did we know that with the completion of this new room, we were going to get an automatic washer and dryer. It was such a wonderful surprise when the room was completed and the

newfangled appliances were installed. I dutifully pecked away after school and any chance I had to break through that wall. We carried the dirt out in galvanized buckets. It was so exciting when we finally broke through the wall. Often when I would be pecking away at the wall he would say, "Do you think we will break through to China?"

Dad transferred his skills in working with wood to creating bows and arrows and gun stocks. Again, I got to help. I would go down to his basement workshop and hang around until he found a job for me. One of my favorite jobs was to paint the arrows while they were turning on the lathe. Another was to do the rough sanding on the gun stocks. He did the fine finishing himself. And, they were spectacularly beautiful when completed. He also built coffee tables, end tables, and just about anything my Mom felt we needed.

Whenever Dad worked in his shop, he always cleaned up his bench, putting his tools back where they came from. He would tell me that, 'everything has a place and everything in its place.' By following this simple rule, he always had a clean orderly space to work in. I believe it allowed him to be able to contemplate his project so that he could use his full capabilities in solving problems. This simple rule has helped me throughout my life to create new space for new ideas and new projects.

Of the many things he did, Dad had two big projects that were amazing. He found a travel trailer that was in an awful state for which I am sure he got it for pennies on the dollar. He brought it home and rebuilt it. It became such a little beauty. Mom and Dad took it to northern Canada on a fishing trip. Another rebuilding project was a small cabin cruiser that had been burned inside. It was a mess! That didn't bother Dad, he just saw it as a challenge that he would conquer. And, he did. It, too, was turned into a beautiful family cabin cruiser. It was perfect! We had so many adventures on it, cruising the finger lakes, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and other lakes in upstate New York. We even took it to Tennessee when we moved there. I had the distinct pleasure of helping maneuver the boat through many canal systems. I have such fond memories of that little wooden cabin cruiser.

In my family, we took on responsibility very early in life. I was a latch key kid and I knew my parents worked very hard to give us a good life. I saw it as my job to help. I cleaned house, started meals, and did whatever chores that needed to be done before they both got home from work. I knew what hard work was because I saw my parents never buckling under and always persevering. Mom was a business school graduate and Dad had an eighth grade education. This did not stop them, or even slow them down in the pursuit of a good life for our family.

During my life, whenever I was faced with a task that seemed insurmountable, their voices of encouragement whispered in my head, and reminded me of their belief in my ability to conquer whatever was ahead of me. I could go on and on about my parents and their pervasive 'can do attitude,' boundless energy, and willingness to trust in themselves. These qualities seeded my childhood, and my adulthood with the same expectations for myself. Their love of life, and the desire to live life to its fullest, was the foundation I needed to fill my life with adventure and interesting experiences.

At the close of their adventure, I was able to say to each parent, "Thank you!," you were a terrific parent, and "Thank you!," for providing me a safe and secure home. They were the best role models I could have ever hoped for. I was truly blessed then, and am today. Thanks to the fertile ground they prepared, and the seeds they sewed, that have taken me to places beyond my wildest dreams!

Sandy Larkin

Truth

Like trees can't sneeze
and elbows have hollows
and teachers can't tease
and larvae love potholes
SO
snakes can't incorporate
snails can't rappel
priests can't procreate
fish can't yell;
SO
paramecia propagate
SO
silver's bright
(like a comet's tail)
SO
your eyes indite
me
parenthesize my
existence
(did you know your smile's
the sun's corona
without all that
astronomic distance?)



Photo : IMGUR

Dudley Clark

The Poet



Photo: Public Domain Pictures.net

Ever the same man (though seldom the sane person)
child with pen. Clown with airs, supping on peas
(artistic guerdon), posing with pairs of penniless Eves...
"A poet may," he says (and he's been known to lie),
"speak badly or basely, have a philosophic bent, embrace
what others despise."

He continues:

"A poet is heavenly sent,
thus is never contrite,
whose words speak louder than action.
His insight's what others pretend to.
His life without need of redaction.
His conclusion:
"A poet breaks nothing badly."

Dudley Clark

Look at Me

Though the tears have now been many
And the joy seems less than any
And my thoughts aren't worth a penny
And you look at me and see the sadness, Oh!

What? My broken heart does cry
And what becomes of me I sigh
And when does joy return says I
And you look at me and see the madness, Oh!

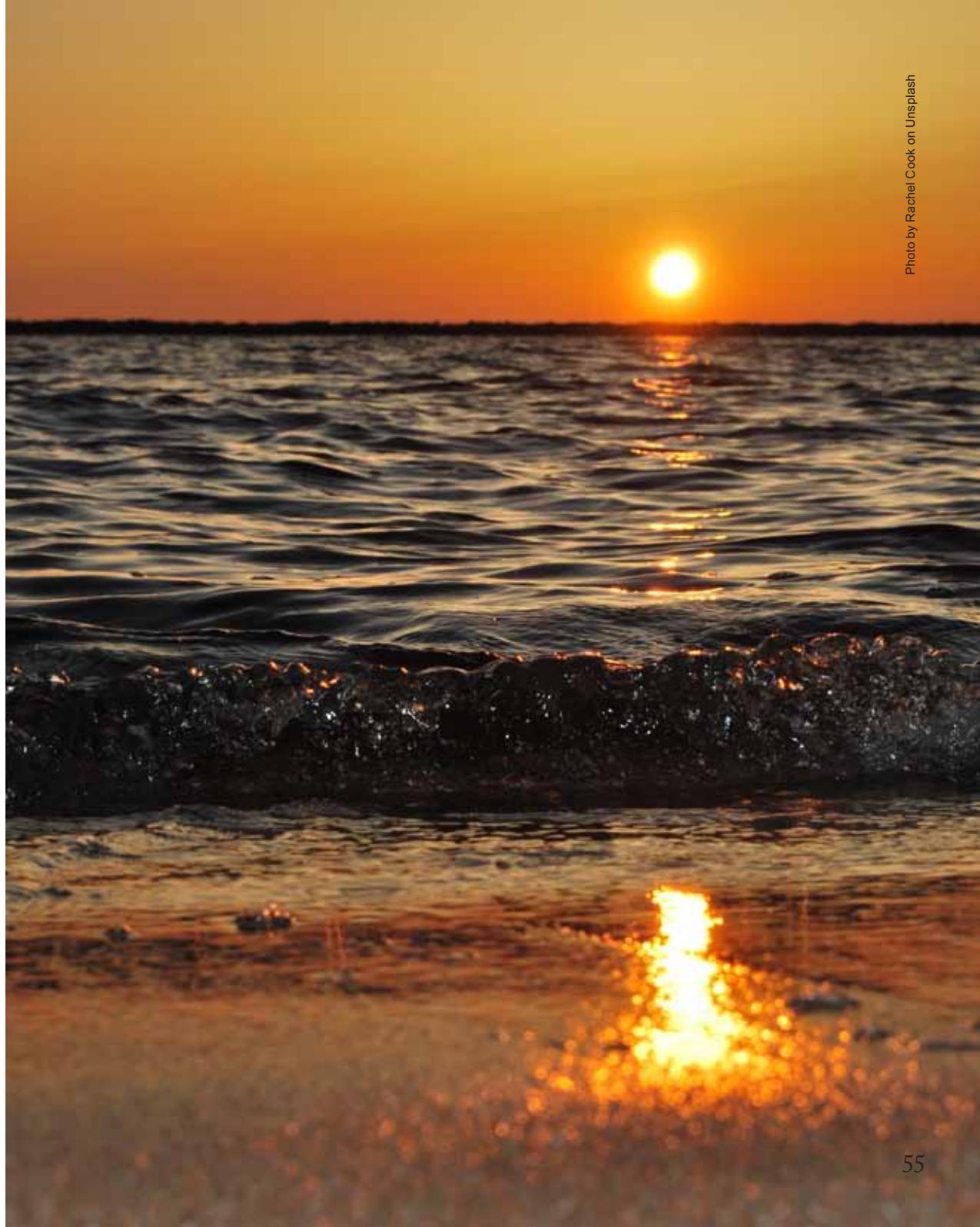
Then as I lay there crying
And I feel as if I'm dying
And my heart is filled with sighing
And you look at me and see the bleakness, Oh!

There comes a voice that calls my name
And lights my way with holy flame
And casts away the darkened shame
And you look at me and see the sweetness, Oh!

Then triumph lights my way once more
And fear is silenced in its roar
And hope regained is in the fore
And you look at me and see the gladness, Oh!

For the darkness cannot have me!
And the life and light won't leave me!
And the sorrow cannot hold me!
And you look at me and see the gladness, Oh!

De Layne K. Osterman



My Beautiful World

Late August. The weather couldn't be nicer.
I think I'll take a walk
along the path through the woods.
The trees are still fully clothed,
their leaves still green and lush.
If I give it a month, a few more weeks,
the leaves will begin to fade, to fall and cover the
ground, leaving the branches bare,
skeletons reaching toward the sky. But now they are
welcoming, warm and green.
I hear birds singing overhead
and a rabbit scurrying through the underbrush.
The day is warm. The breeze is light, a perfect day!
What did I do to deserve this beauty?!
So much of the world is in strife! I am merely a raindrop
dropping into
a safe and beautiful world
What can I do to compensate for
the good fortune, the safety, the beauty!
Tell me, how can I compensate?

Jimmie Harvey

Milton

A story about a dog I once knew



Now sit right down and I'm going to tell you a story about a dog I once knew. His name was Milton, and he, being some kind of terrier, was courageous and brave, and would never have dreamed of backing down from a fight. He was kind of short, but kind of tall; I guess you'd say he was medium size, and his color was black and brown and red. He had a family of men surrounding him, and by all indications, they got along alright. Milton was the kind of dog you petted, but not too much, a nice little pat on his head would do. He lived on a ranch in the country, with plenty of open space to explore, and lots of wild animals to take interest in as they passed by. His days were filled with many adventures, including chasing cats.

Wild cats, stray cats, maybe even some lost cats, Milton loved to chase them all. Not that he ever hurt one. No, he was too dignified for that. But chase them he did, especially at night, if he happened to be out when they came around. You have to understand that Milton was the king of his domain, or so he thought, as dogs often do, and no one and no thing was going to bring harm to his domain. Sometimes, when I showed up to

visit his men folk, Milton would come walking slowly over, bearing in his body some kind of battle scar. He was one scrappy fellow, that boy, and he'd take on anything and everything that threatened his people or property, even if it meant harm to himself. I personally never witnessed his fights, but I have no doubt that Milton won every single time.

One of Milton's men folk, Al, had built a beautiful house on the ranch, and attached to that house was a wide front porch. There was a corner to this porch that Milton particularly loved, and so he chose to decorate it accordingly. His décor of choice was rocks. Oh, yes, as big of rocks as he could fit in his mouth, and then some. Milton would go exploring the land to find just the right rocks for his corner, gingerly picking them up in his mouth between his teeth, and then carrying them however far to his treasured place. Then he would pick his spot and deposit his new rock there. He would do this daily, until he had a nice big mound of those favored rocks in his corner. Now Al, his master, was pretty patient for a while with Milton and his corner, but alas, the day would come, when the rocks had to go. It was no small chore for his man to haul those rocks back out to the land, all to Milton's chagrin, I'm sure, and I don't wonder but that while Al was doing the heavy work, Milton engaged in a few choice words of his own which thankfully only he could understand.

Another funny thing that Milton did was inside the house in winter time. There was in that house a wood stove for heating, and his man, Al, kept a good, hot fire going in the stove all through those bitter months

of cold. Now Milton would go lay down in front of the stove, and he would lay there for quite some time. He was warming himself to be sure. He had a nice thick coat of fur, as dogs usually do in winter, but still he liked to indulge himself in the luxury of getting really warm by the stove. Well, Milton would fall asleep and dream dog dreams while enjoying this pleasure, and then wake up panting and breathing hard from overheating by the fire. He was hot! So he would slowly, with sluggish effort, lift himself from his place of rest, and walk across the living room floor. There he would join his other favorite spot, a cold place on the bare wood floor under the couch, and cool himself for quite a length of time. All through the evening and night, Milton warmed and cooled himself, never guessing a place in between might better serve him well.

I should share in my story how I came to meet and be friends with this dog. You see, I fell in love with one of those in his family of men, and so I was brought time and again to the homestead ranch that Milton called home. It just so happened, that upon my first introduction to him, I happened to have in my possession a bag of Kentucky Mints. Now if any of you reading my tale ever had the good fortune to partake of those mints, you know how uniquely delicious they were. Well, as I said, I had some with me that day, and upon opening the car door, Milton came over to greet me. Not having met him before, I had no idea what to expect. Might I say at this point, that all dog lovers know a good first impression is imperative in the world of dogs; Milton was no exception. So once I had put my hand out to let him have a good sniff of me, and he

determined I passed the test, I reached into my purse, into the bag of Kentucky Mints, and proceeded to offer him one. And that was it; Milton was mine, wholly and truly and forever mine. From the moment he smelled that mint and took it into his mouth, he was mine. He was happy, he was licking his lips, and he wanted more. I dipped back into my bag and gave him another, and then another. Milton had five mints that day, and in subsequent visits, the number was always the same. That dog never bit me, never growled at me, and never showed disfavor to me. He even greeted me on many occasions with one of his rocks in his mouth for show and tell before we moved on to the partaking of the mints.

Milton lived a good life for many years on the ranch, swimming in Little Butte Creek, chasing those cats, watching over a family of geese, or was it they watched over him, collecting his rocks, and living amongst his beloved family of men. I miss that dog when I think of him. There's something about dogs that we all know; they work their way into our hearts and stay there, each one being his own kind, having his own ways, and possessing his own presence of mind. Yep, that's the way it is with dogs. It seems that every family should have one. I know for me, my life is far richer for having met this one dog, the dog named Milton, a dog I once knew.

De Layne K. Osterman

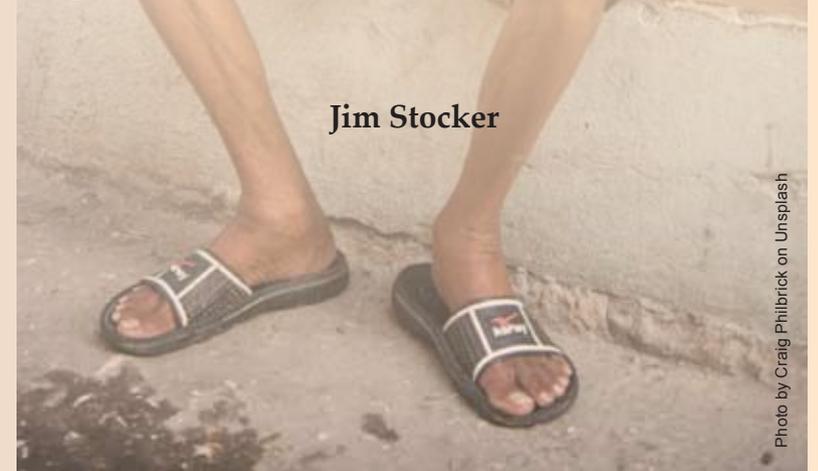
A Fall for All Seasons
or
A Trip in Place

The birds were chirping gayly, and I could have been in Paris.
But I didn't see it coming as I walked across the terrace
One second I was upright, breathing life and air.
The next one I was airborne, heading off I knew not where.
The flight was brief, I landed with my body sprawled and low,
On a micro-second journey: then I landed with a blow.
Thud ! Splat ! A shock wave ! Hey, thank God, I'm still alive.
But what a stupid thing to do, for ME to take a dive!
I took my body inventory, checked out every part.
All joints and muscles, bones and skin, plus even brain and heart.
My mind tuned in from out in space, to monitor this check,
Could I maintain my normal life, not as a blathering wreck?
My host asked, "Jim, are you all right? You really took a spill!"
I gasped "I feel okay. Embarrassed, but not ill."
My wife, Pat, scurried forth, all anxious and concerned.
"Can you get up you silly goose? Is our long trip adjourned?"
I slowly rose to my full height, body fixtures all intact.
Save brush burns on elbows and knee, it's normal me, in fact."
"Except for minor bumps and tweaks, our journey may continue,
Your deep concerns for all my creaks, displays the goodness in you."
Our trip continued all-in-all, with friends, and all recalling
Of falls they'd had before in life, with details of each falling.
But back at home, I tried to think "What lesson have I learned?"
Could such an episode repeat? And might I be twice burned ?

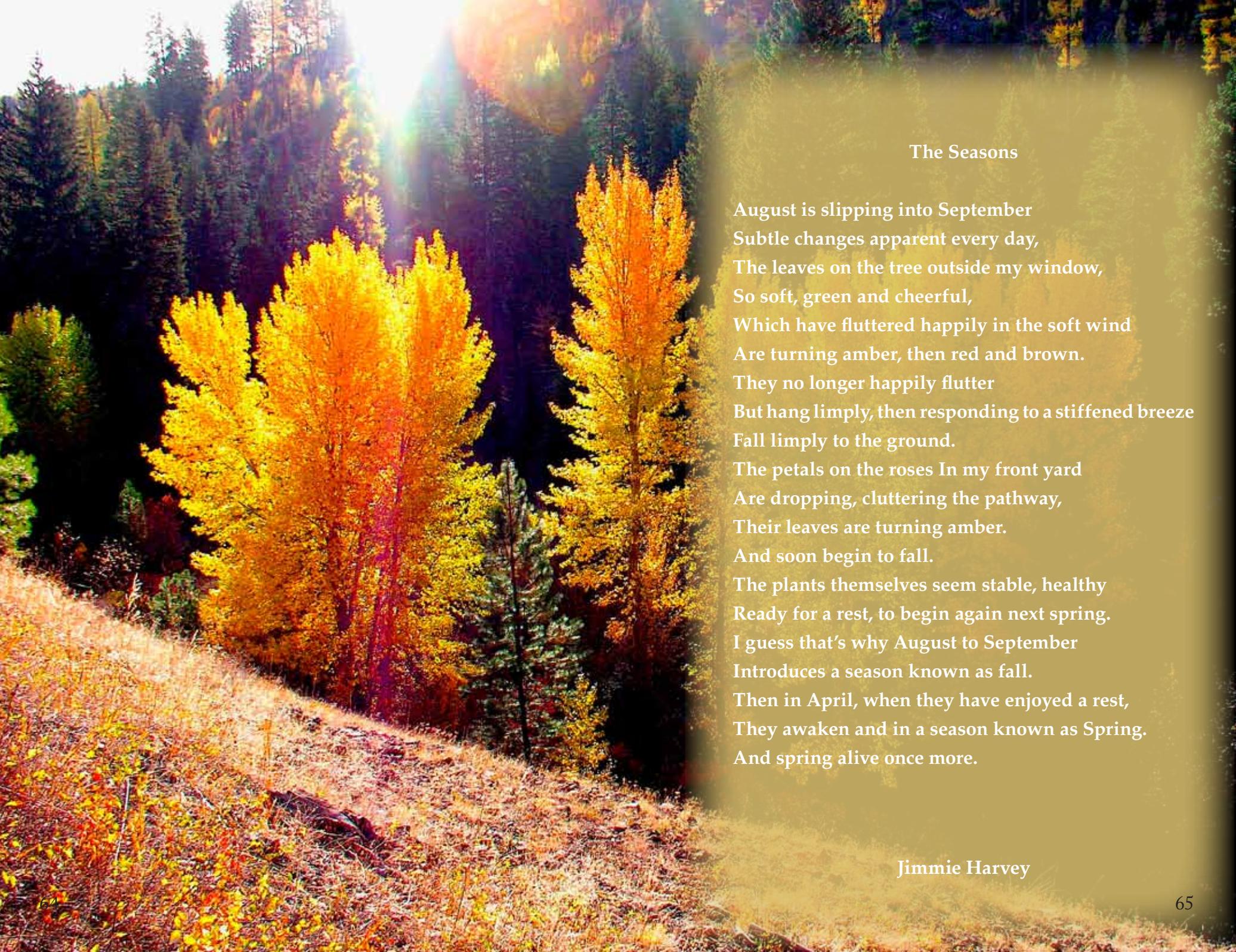
With FALLS a leading senior scare, oft a painful crippling blow.
Could I somehow prescribe a cure, and bid those tumbles "Go?"
Well, maybe yes, and maybe no, my harmless spill as sample.
Still, I surely would not lose a lot by sharing my example.

Prescription

Avoiding falls is simple and plain, and could become a habit.
Remembering daily that you're not a gymnast, teen or rabbit.
While not obsessed with fear of falls, thus make yourself a bore.
Take balance, pace, and bearings, every time you op'n a door.
When doorbells ring or phones sing out take time to plot your path
Whoever's waiting through four rings will not burst forth with wrath.
On cobblestones or knobby flagstones, pick each step with care.
On slippery ice, or stairs aloft, the watchword is "BEWARE!"
And making I-Phone links while ambling? Just as bad as driving.
While walking after popping pills or booze may prevent your arriving.
In summary, I know there is no single fall-safe link.
Except to follow these commands: If fall-prone: STOP and THINK !



Jim Stocker



The Seasons

August is slipping into September
Subtle changes apparent every day,
The leaves on the tree outside my window,
So soft, green and cheerful,
Which have fluttered happily in the soft wind
Are turning amber, then red and brown.
They no longer happily flutter
But hang limply, then responding to a stiffened breeze
Fall limply to the ground.
The petals on the roses In my front yard
Are dropping, cluttering the pathway,
Their leaves are turning amber.
And soon begin to fall.
The plants themselves seem stable, healthy
Ready for a rest, to begin again next spring.
I guess that's why August to September
Introduces a season known as fall.
Then in April, when they have enjoyed a rest,
They awaken and in a season known as Spring.
And spring alive once more.

Jimmie Harvey

Kassy Daggett



Pele's Plumeria

Intentional Gravity Paintings

Just like standing above a steep hillside surveying the terrain before launching myself onto the fall line, I hold an intention for each painting and wait for a silent nudge to follow the momentum of gravity. My painting process is aerobic and immediate. It's a relationship between my inner landscape and the expression that's possible while paint is skiing down a canvas. I never know in advance what the finished piece will look like. I simply hold an intention—whether it's gratitude, love, a person, place or thing, etc.—and like traversing a variety of runs down a mountain, each exploration is full of surprises.



Sometimes, you know what you are meant to do long before you actually begin doing it. At the age of six I was asked to draw a series of pictures depicting myself, my family, my home, my pets, my teacher, something I liked, something I disliked, and "This is what I would like to be." Recently, when I came across those drawings, I found a simply-drawn girl standing in front of a canvas, arms outstretched in a big gesture of "TaDa!"



Kassy Daggett



Amour Fou

Earthly Angel



Photo by Alex Iby on Unsplash

I want a woman wise and clean,
with teeth that flash like filaments
ajangle, eyes like electric beams;
who can easily cover rent.

A peachy-keen concubine
whose voice children adore,
whose face is chocked with secrets' shine,
whose purse gets left behind my door;
whose fingers speak an Oriental tongue,
whose vestments are few and far between,
whose skin's so smooth I slide off often;
with big, fat dreams.

I want a woman with bony knees and a nose
that can't be spoken of in prose.

Dudley Clark

LXVIII



Photo by Milada Vigerova on Unsplash

After all, we're just dust motes, nothing more-energy
expended on us is lost since Nature conserves what
Nature adores; our greatest acts are solitary thoughts.
Sorrow invades me as I write these lines, aware of the
sweet brevity of lives, or the fact of our limited designs;
I'm aggrieved when I hear a baby's cries. Hold me, and
momentary peace descends; kiss me, and I possess
concentration to that kiss's end; what my brain contends
with goes daily on vacation.

If we seek meaning in events, it's there; but larger
messages are everywhere.

Dudley Clark

Stubborn Girl

Inspired by EMILY PIKUL

From her Poem: *I Am*

(circa 2012)

Smart girl they said, you agreed
so agile on the soccer field
Passing to a woman now
still holding on to childhood dreams

(Refrain:)

I'm still that smart girl
filled to the brim with stubbornness
So filled with hope and love for you

Kids on base, we worried lots
Cold-blooded wars, one errant shot
We'd cry when someone close got hurt
Please say your heart's still on high alert

I'm still that smart girl
filled to the brim with stubbornness
So filled with hope and love for you

While people made their deadly bets
we wondered then how hard this world would get
Will our world stay smart, stay safe?
Not too late for God and grace?



(Bridge:)

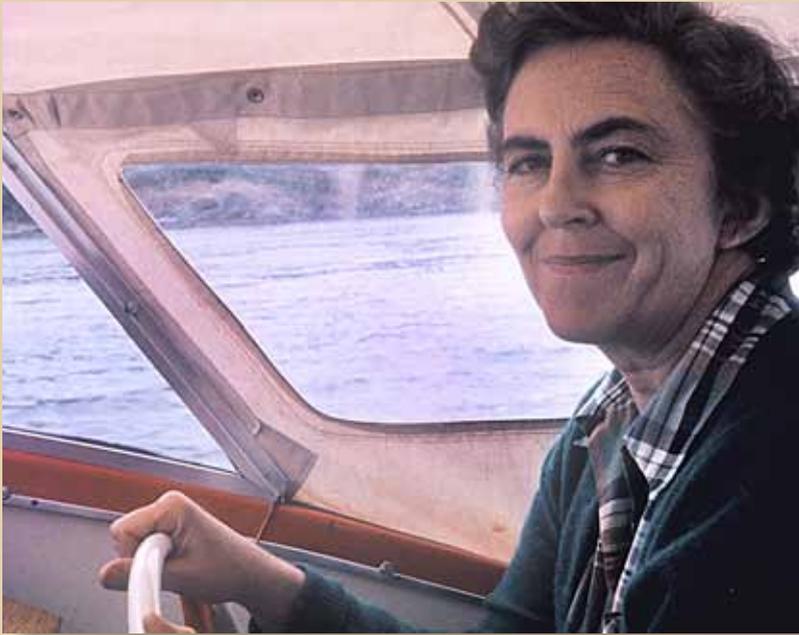
Maybe back then we were just fitting in
showing strong when sudden gusts blew in
Our bucket-loads of strength then tipped
spilling drops of precious hope with it

I'm still that smart girl
filled to the brim with stubbornness
So filled with hope and love for you

Now sunny shoulders so well-taught
I know life's not so warm as we once thought
But I'm still yours and you're still mine
Our new-found choices finally shine

I'm still that smart girl
filled to the brim with stubbornness
So filled with hope and love for you

Veronica Yates



Foreward to the Book Freedom House

Two years before my maternal grandmother died at the age of 93, I was talking with her about her dear and lifelong college friend, Alison Thorne. She showed me a little booklet that was printed and distributed during the memorial to Alison's life.

With a wistful expression she said, "I think Alison would have enjoyed knowing what was said about her."

I lowered my head, thought about what she was saying underneath the words and said, "Well then, let's write your memoirs while you're still alive so you can enjoy them."

She replied, "That's a good idea. Let's do it before I kick the bucket."

While discussing how to proceed I suggested videotaping our sessions; she was firmly against it. I suggested audio-taping; she said, "Absolutely not!" So I consented to type while she talked, and this project was conceived.

As you sit with these pages, I invite you into the precious two year pilgrimage I took with my beloved grandmother. The vast majority of these stories were told to me between June 15, 2005 and July 10, 2007 while she relaxed in her living room recliner.

Each visit required a drive of two and a half hours one way—often up and back in the same day—and she would always insist on hearing something about my life before beginning the journey into hers.

She listened with a proud and embarrassed giggle while I recounted how her legacy of Freedom House influences the Self Care workshops my husband and I offer for health care providers. I informed her of the couples who are rebuilding their marriages after coming to us for relationship coaching and how the love she shared with Grandpa is the inspiration for so much of that work. I showed her photos of our home; the fresh new buds of spring, the pair of frolicking spotted fawns and the wild turkey mating displays of summer, the mushrooms announcing a darkening autumn, and the cloak of winter snow wrapped around the fir trees lining our property.

I watched her reminiscing as I related tales of branch trimming, brush clearing, and maintaining our property and the way it always reminds me of the work she and Grandpa did together at their 80-acre retirement

homestead, Green Gulch. I made sure to tell her each time my trunk held another 25-pound bag of black hull sunflower seeds, transporting it from the quaint old feed store near her home to the songbird feeders at mine. I watched her light-up when I mentioned the trips I'd taken, the books I'd read, the things I'd done, and how they paled in comparison to my time with her.

The gift of her listening was tangible, as though long tendrils of love reached out to caress me as I talked. No matter how insignificant the news, how trivial the issue, how mundane the information, she was ready with a probing question, referencing information from previous conversations, displaying a genuine interest.

Everyone who knew her experienced the same thing. It was delicious to be listened to that deeply. Each time, when her thirst to know about my life was finally quenched, I picked up my laptop and transitioned with the question, "Where shall we start today, Grandma?"

In the beginning, I assembled the content chronologically. While the stories unfolded, I scrolled through a single document placing new treasures in an orderly sequence. Unfortunately, this began taking too much time as the length of her memoirs grew. While pausing for me to scroll, she would often forget what she was saying by the time I found the correct place. Who knows what gems might have been lost in those moments of file management.

Finding a single document unworkable, I created

a series of chapters so I could quickly open a file when she related a story from that phase of her life. It became apparent that this wasn't a viable solution either because a story about her childhood could easily transition into talking about her own children, and the orderly chapters soon became a mishmash of content.

Eventually I started cataloging each visit by date so I could simply type uninterrupted while she talked, thinking I would transfer the new information into the correct chapters when I returned home. But once I returned home, life intervened, and I rarely accomplished that task. At the time of her death we had documented over 50,000 words—and most of the stories were in no particular order. Many of her favorites were told more than once which required a blending of the renditions into one cohesive version.

There was also a sidebar task to recording her story which included numerous requests to "Google that!" or "Look that up in Wikipedia!" She would be talking about something from her past, some reference to a social or political event, and she would want to know more about it. Being the self-proclaimed "Poster Girl for the Life Long Learner" she would ask me to help her look into the subject. My ability to provide instant Internet answers was a source of continual delight for her. As we diverted from autobiography to explorations of history, trivia, definitions, and all things "cool and wonderful" on the Internet (yes, she really did use those words to describe it), she suggested

we include little vignettes from “our research” alongside her memoirs. As you read them, I invite you to join us in the discovery of how each life is inextricably woven into the current events of the time.

The content is written in her voice—just the way she said it—as though she is still alive. As I work in the supportive privacy of an expansive ocean view on the Oregon coast or from my home office surrounded by tall trees, I feel her presence in each word. The bulk of this book is a transcription of exactly what she said during our two-year project. But the nature of our visits left gaps that have been filled in—to the best of my ability—while honoring the intention of preserving her voice. During those two years her working title was, “It’s Been Interesting.” My working title was, “In the Year of the Zipper.” We regularly discussed what it would actually be called. Honoring her supportive spirit, I’ve titled the book after my first vivid memory of her, “Freedom House.”

My childhood summers included a long drive in the family station wagon, across three states for the annual visit to grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. One of the highlights of those trips were the days spent visiting Grandma and Grandpa Smith. They were living in Everett, Washington at the time and their big old two-story house, with the full basement, and the oval window upstairs was a magical place to visit. Their home was always perfumed with the nutty aroma of coffee, the furniture was worn and comfortable, the front lawn

had a steep slope for jumping great distances, and they called it “Freedom House.” We could do what we wanted, when we wanted, and they would help make it happen.

One morning when I was 12, I slept in longer than the rest of my family. Everyone was gone somewhere but I found Grandma and Grandpa in the kitchen drinking coffee and reading the paper. I’m not sure what came over me that morning. Maybe I woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Maybe I felt angry at being left there while the rest of the family went off somewhere. Maybe I was inspired by the rarity of being alone with my grandparents. I don’t remember why, but in that moment I had the idea to test their commitment to the concept of Freedom House by saying, “Good morning Grandma and Grandpa, I’m in the mood to smash something.”

They responded to me by staring at each other over lowered newspapers. I almost repeated myself to make sure they heard what I had said, then Grandpa took a deep breath, pressed his lips together, and nodded towards the door with a wry grin. Without any hesitation—or admonition to eat breakfast first, or any spoken words between them—Grandma took my hand and led me downstairs to Grandpa’s workshop. I was nervous and confused when she placed a pair of safety glasses over my face. In the musty silence she handed me a hammer and started laying smashable objects of every sort in front of me. As the pieces shattered with loud pops, crunched into compacted

squishes, and dented with deep resonant thuds, the notion of Freedom House turned from theory to practice—it changed from an abstract mental concept to a body-centered memory that sustains me to this day.

Much of the information in Freedom House is well known by others in the family. Some of it was told to me for the first time ever. Occasionally Grandma would command me to stop typing and say, “This is for your ears only until after I’m gone!” Those priceless moments are etched in my soul as indelible gifts from my beloved grandmother. Now that she’s gone, it’s my honor and my privilege to share her legacy with you. In this way, Pauline Rena Gillespie Smith lives on in our hearts and minds.

I invite you

into a gentle life of grace,
wisdom, courage, and kindness,
into deep listening with others,
into Freedom House.

Kassy Daggett

anthologypublishing.com

*Written October 21, 2013
(What would have been her 100th Birthday)*

The Good Idea

One day, I let the animals in
Then I headed for the mall
The pigs were in the kitchen
And the ducks were down the hall
The horses were in the bedroom
and the sheep were playing ball
The cows and all the chickens
Were in the bathroom stall
I thought it was a good idea
Until my mother called



Katie Faris

The Glow

Every time we smile,
The cheerfulness we express
Gives someone a blessing,
Spreading happiness.

Everywhere we go,
Whether far or near,
Enthusiasm and laughter
Brings good cheer to many

Everyone we greet
Can feel our spirit sing,
Everyone we meet hopefully
Glow with the joy we bring

So let's radiate our smiles
And sound our spirit's song
Let's bring harmony and peace
And help the world along!

Susan Schneiderman



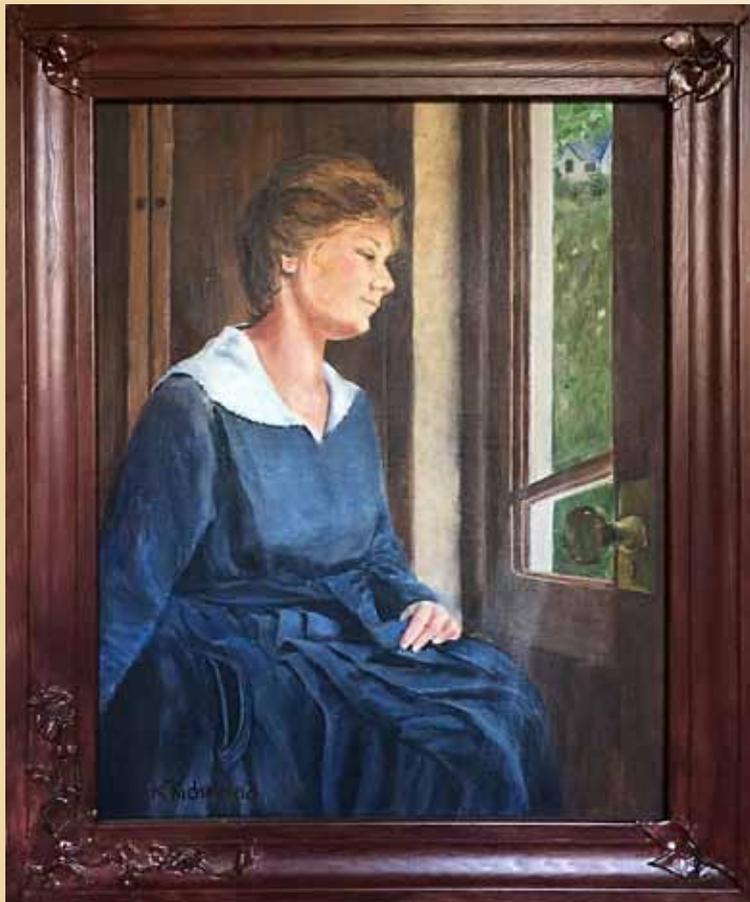


Kathy Richmond

Kathy Richmond is a retired graphic artist residing in her cozy little home in Eugene, Oregon.



She works in Acrylics and Water-based Oils, and has made some of her own frames, adding floral embellishments fashioned with Sculpey clay.

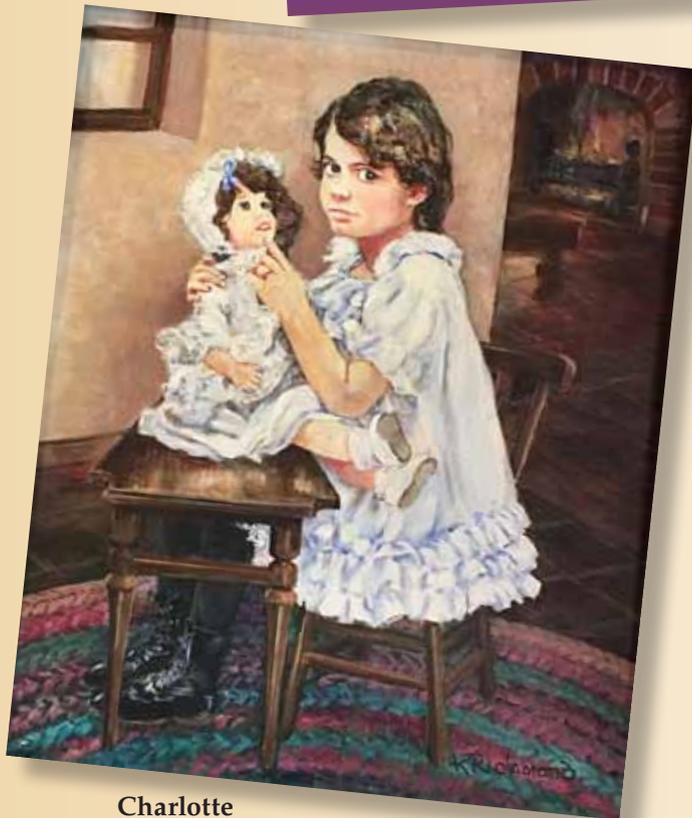


Lorette

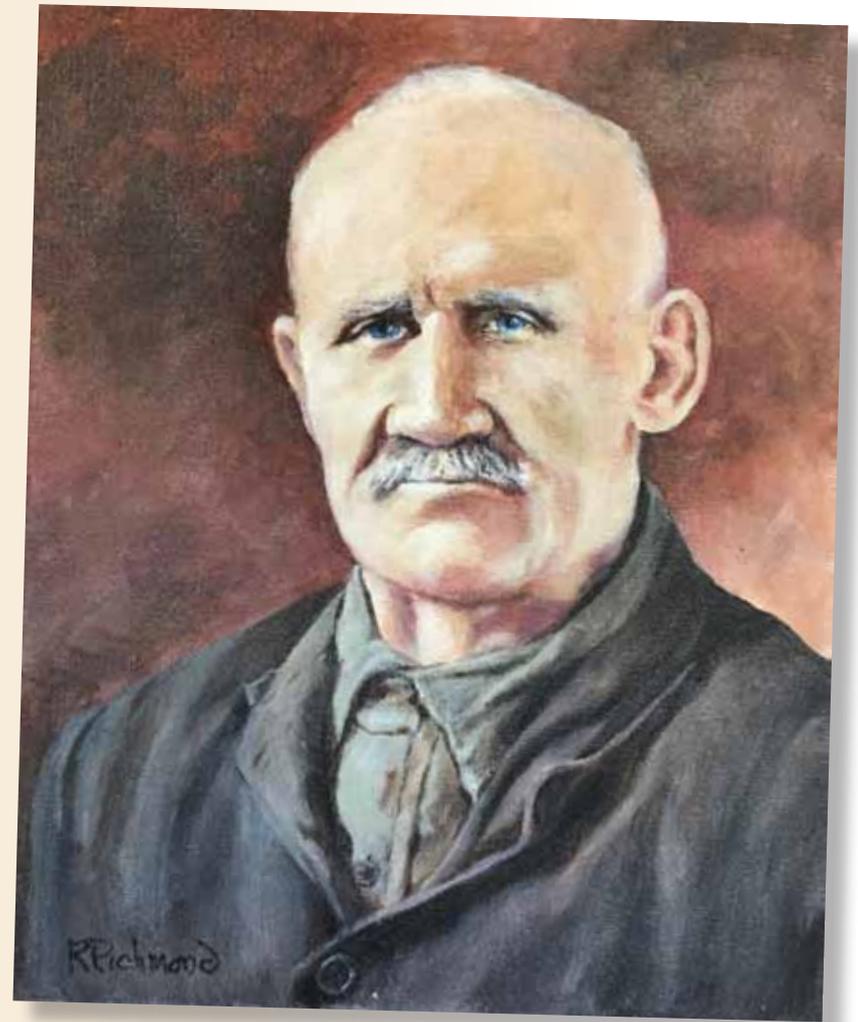


Helen Neff Burkett 1908-1965

Kathy's sculpted floral arrangements are made from paper suspended on thin wires which resemble the veins in the leaves. She adds vibrant colors accented with subtle tones to give depth and texture.

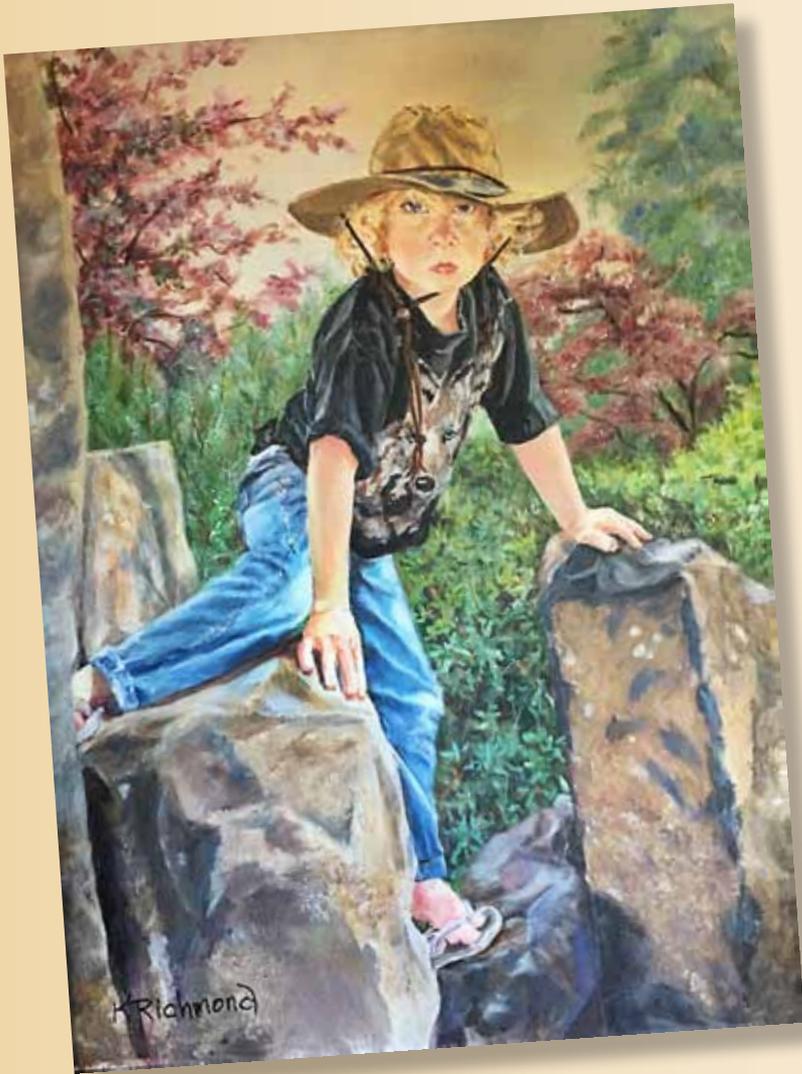


Charlotte



Benjamin F. Burkett 1854-1927

Her portraits seem to capture and project her subject's mood, as displayed in the stern eyes and determined countenance of her great grandfather.



G.V. on the Rocks



Casey on Percussion

On Grandfathering



I reached the ripe old rank of Grandfather in my mid-sixties. Actually, I'm guessing all the foundation work needed to achieve this notch was actually performed about thirty years beforehand when my son came into the world. Once that seed was planted, the process was set in motion and I didn't have much say-so beyond that.

But then, what would I say? Should I try to mold him, try to form his character to my expectations? Choose his friends? Dictate his philosophy and stifle his creativity? Should I make him think that my way of

life should be his way in every respect? Fortunately, I had gained some degree of wisdom by the time he was born. Maybe the slant of that wisdom had to do with my own recollections of my youth, which didn't seem so long ago.

I knew both of my grandfathers and I loved them dearly. I clearly remember their stern attitude toward their families. They decided things and set down rules and practices that the family was to follow. These edicts and mandates were to be followed or else! "Else" meant you were on their bad side. Each grandfather would express (in his own way) just how disappointed he was in you, and how he expected a much higher standard from you. Non-conformance was just not an option.

Standards: Measures of behavior set by some authority to be used as comparisons. Tools to be used to encourage conformity. Molds, like cookie cutters meant to produce similar copies.

A child of the fifties and sixties, I had no recollection of World War II. I had no idea what it was like to endure the hardships that so many people in the world suffered on a daily basis. My family was prosperous and we always had plenty. We didn't want for anything. We grew up in a golden age where anything was possible. We were well educated and wore nice clothes and owned nice cars.

But there was still that "standard" thing. My father inherited much of the same attitude as his father had and it carried even more weight, so we still had to measure up in some degree to expectations or we couldn't get along with those who did.

My dad subscribed to the general philosophy that good, vigorous, honest hard work was virtue in its purest form. A machinist by trade, he was a natural born engineer. Always thinking up clever approaches to a problem, he reveled in discovering a better way to do something. Much of that skill rubbed off on me and when it came time to begin teaching my son... well, like father like son, I chose the only models set before me as a basis to begin his education.

However, I didn't choose all of the elements in those examples. I recalled my early efforts to understand and interact with the world around me. Earliest lessons taught to me were to respect and obey my folks, which included parents, grandparents and even aunts and uncles. Later in life, I came to understand that respect and compassion for others was the most important thing I would ever learn.

But as I got a little older, I began to form my own opinions and develop my own concepts. That's the germination of free thought. We all get it at some early point in our lives. It becomes evident that there is an entire world out there quite different than the one we call home! Wow!

But, if you give a child a few tools and some freedom to explore a bit, you have to realize they are still a child, with no previous experience to compare to the new things they may find. They are easily influenced and can come to believe nearly anything. At this point they haven't the resources to reason out and sort good from bad, truth from fiction.

The child goes through stages of belief and then

doubt and then they may either reject something or find reasons to accept it, depending on their experience. All a parent can do is try to make the right information available and try to encourage the child to make up their own mind in light of the proper facts. Try, and keep trying.

I have to say that though I don't regret my upbringing, I was determined that I would modify the process somewhat with respect to what I would teach my son, maybe try to present things a little differently so he would develop a healthy attitude and appreciation early in life. I wanted his experiences to be positive and uplifting.

At this point I never even entertained the thought of being a grandfather. I was too caught up in trying to understand my role as a father.

I still held all the core values about honor, integrity, respect for others and their property, etc. but I wanted my son to be free to explore and experience life and nature without the hardcore regimentation and strict rules. I wanted him to understand that his relationship with his creator is mostly a private issue tailored exclusively to him. That he has inner strengths derived from the spirit within that is connected to all life. That inner strength is love and it is the reason for and the very essence of life. I wanted him to know there is a reason for everything.

No limits. But there are consequences for one's actions. Being responsible ranks high on my list and that virtue will tend to keep oneself out of trouble. If you always do what you say you will do, you can

be depended on. That in itself serves as a lesson in keeping one's mouth shut. Never volunteer something you can't deliver.

But back to Grandfathering. My son grew to be a fine man in every respect. I couldn't have designed a better person to send out into the world. His young family is a wonderful example of the love and respect that we taught him, and it shows in my two grandsons.

Those little guys are as inquisitive as their daddy was. They want to see everything, push all the buttons, pick the flowers, run in the rain, bang the drums, toot the horns and scream in delight. They are a refreshing journey back into childhood, recalling the wonderment and carefree existence of a new world, awaiting young minds and ideas that will forge their futures.

Nothing can compare to a little person with outstretched arms rushing to give their grandfather a hug! Sitting in my lap while reading books or watching Roadrunner cartoons, they may drift off for a short nap as I cuddle their warm little sleeping bodies and study their shallow breathing. I want the feeling to last and I lay my head back, slipping into a half dream myself until I feel the stirring in my arms.

Now, as they wake, their little engines all rested and restored, the room comes to life again. After necessary hygenics and feedings, they are ready to take on the world around them. So many new things to see and touch and feel!

Their new puppy follows along as they move like little tornadoes across the living room. He bounces along beside them, barking in sheer joy. The boys

giggle as the little dog licks their hands. All three roll on the floor in a tumble of toys and laughter.

These are the good times. As grandparents, we get to hold them and play as if we were ourselves kids again. We reflect back to the times when we first held our babies. We relive those cherished times when life's journey for our children was just beginning, and now it has come full circle. We stare in wonderment at their tiny little hands and perfect features. We imagine what those hands may hold in the future and what ideas may come from their little heads. We hope and pray their lives will be filled with the love and kindness that brought them into the world.

Michael A. Faris



Photo by Elijah Henderson on Unsplash



Photo: Public Domain by Daniel Alvarado

Some people feel the rain.
Others just get wet.
—*Bob Marley*

The Winter Snug

Winter snugs tightly down
Concerns itself with inner things,
Rubs our cheeks, anoints our brows,
Rewards impatience with its stings.

Inside things, fingers crouched,
Unlimned thoughts abound;
Turnip skies encompass us when
Winter snugs tightly down.

Tulips pierce their colors up
By roadsides in the sun;
Roundels by brittle birds are sung
When winter snugs tightly down.

Coruscating windowpanes,
Unwound clocks and muffled sounds;
Candlelight and fireside underthings
When winter's snugged tightly down

Dudley Clark

Days like today come every 20 years or so. The temperature itself becomes a character in my life story. I will not complain when the first frost casts a spell over my window.

This day just keeps galloping towards a place where movement will stop. Even in the shade, my dog pants and looks as if he would ignore my call.

The air hovers as I feel its affect: I think my blood will whistle like a tea kettle if it gets much worse. I listen and I think I can hear it: an almost audible hum as every molecule for hundreds of miles vibrates faster and faster as they heat up. Reality weakens as the wax fabric of the universe begins to melt.

When night falls we expect it to cool down—a bridge between the tolerable and the fear that it may never change. Whatever climate nurtured us for so long might finally break, and splinter into an uninhabitable world.

I feel my sweat like froth on a horse, but it no longer cools me...how will I sleep? Perhaps a pallet in front of an open window with a fan on high? It only moves the stagnant air around like wind from an oven. Maybe tomorrow its hold will break—but the weatherman says no...more of the same.

I hope the world will forgive us—forgive me and let me feel a cool breeze again. Maybe if I pray. Maybe, but my faith is evaporating like slow steam from a doubtful and shameful kettle. I think I'll try a sleeping pill.

Charles H. Snellings

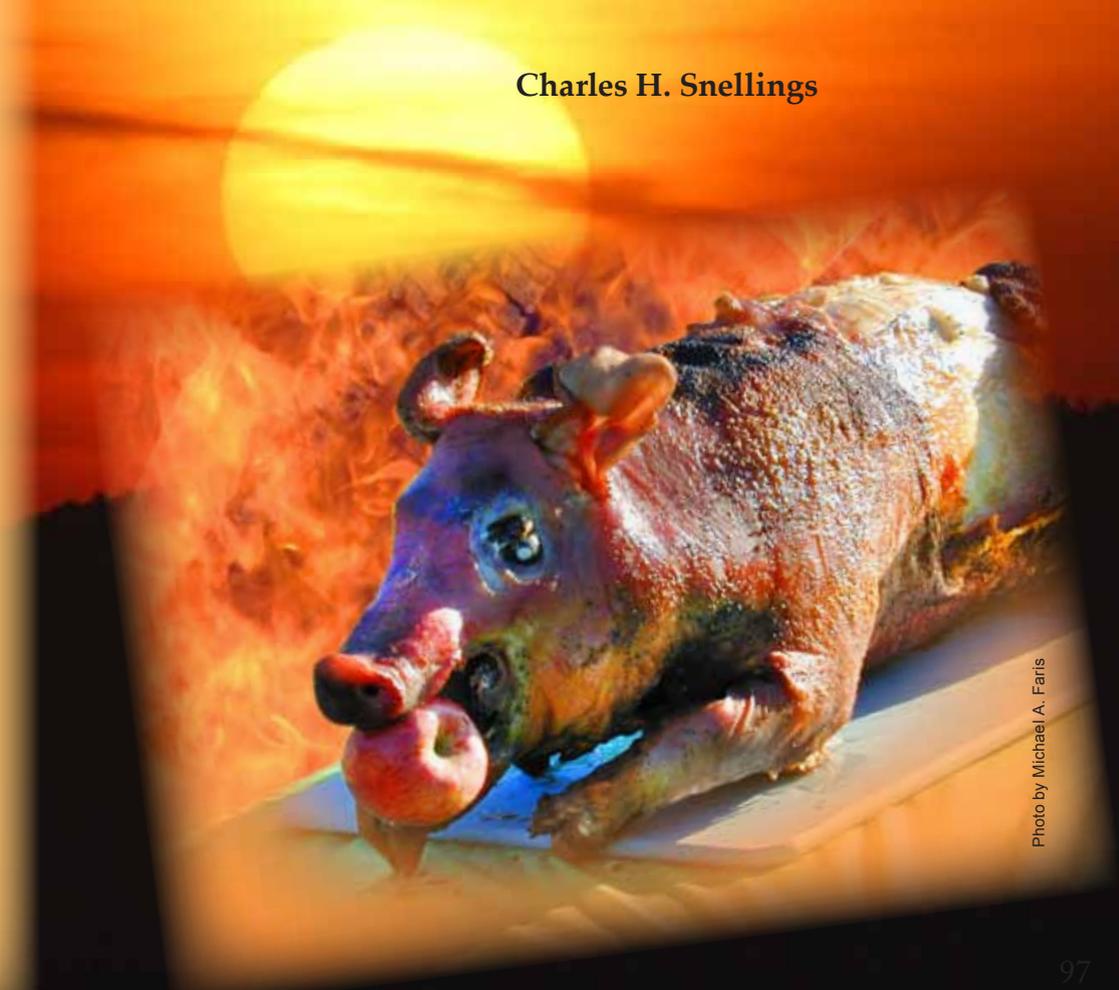


Photo by Michael A. Farris



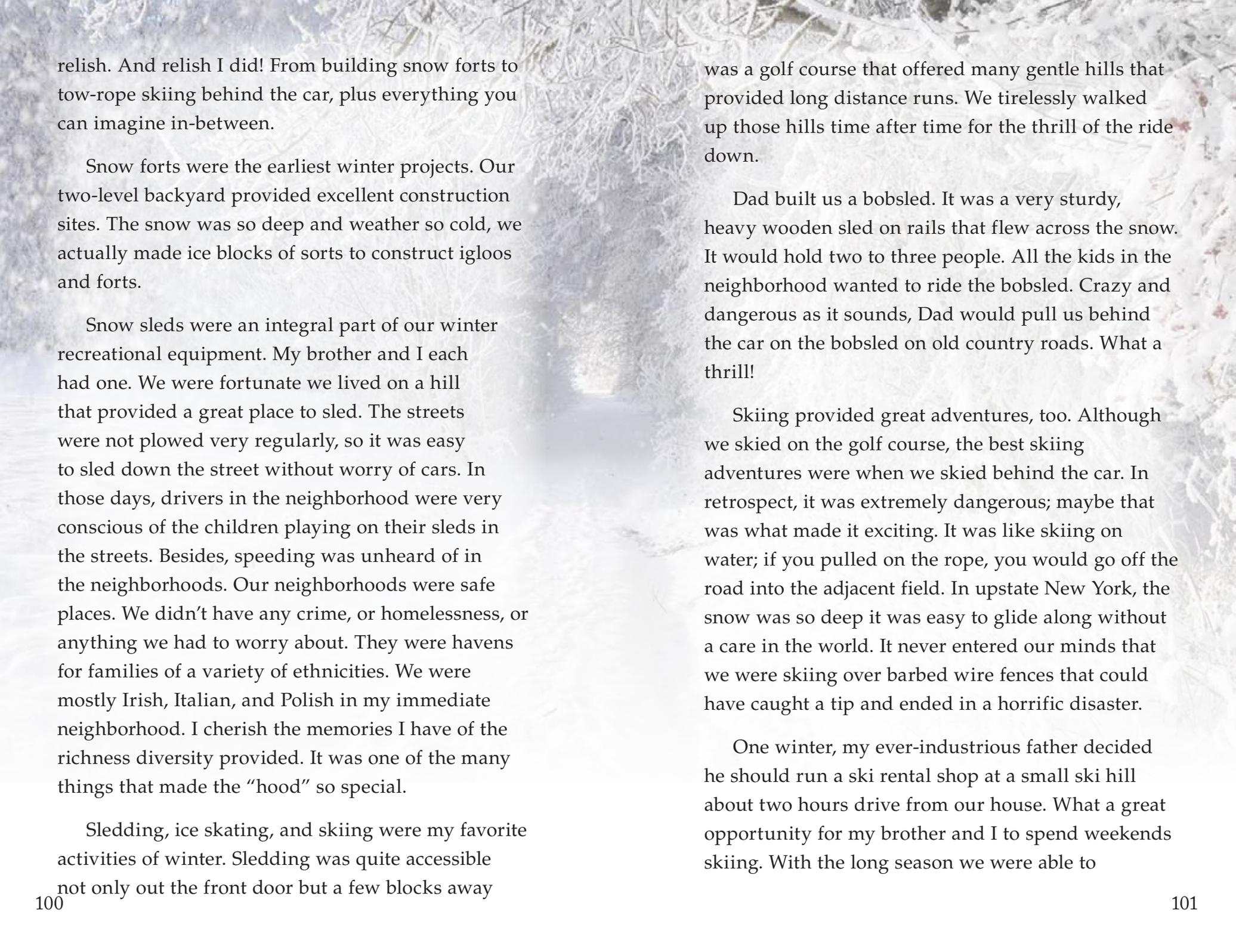
The Joys of Winter

Upstate New York has the most amazing winters. As a child growing up in Syracuse, I had the pleasure of experiencing the most joyful winters. Winter started early in upstate New York and lasted a long time. Sixty-five years ago, the ground was covered with snow for almost six months. We often commented on our one month of summer in July as being quite enjoyable.

The first snow of the year usually fell on Halloween. Underneath our costumes we were bundled to 'the hilt' in warm clothing. With my mouth open wide, I would catch those first snow flakes on my tongue. It was so exciting because I knew what lay ahead. Fun! And lots of it!

The cold never seemed to bother us. We bundled up in our snowsuits, warm hats, heavy mittens, and warm boots. The many layers of clothes didn't slow us down. Our eagerness to get outside warmed our spirits and we were eager to attack the various activities the snow provided. It never entered our minds to stay inside. The snow covered everything and made it a magical place to be.

My life as a snow-lover started very early. Snow was never something to dread, but on the contrary, to

A photograph of a snowy landscape. A path of snow leads from the foreground into a field of tall, dry grasses. The sky is overcast and grey. The overall scene is quiet and wintry.

relish. And relish I did! From building snow forts to tow-rope skiing behind the car, plus everything you can imagine in-between.

Snow forts were the earliest winter projects. Our two-level backyard provided excellent construction sites. The snow was so deep and weather so cold, we actually made ice blocks of sorts to construct igloos and forts.

Snow sleds were an integral part of our winter recreational equipment. My brother and I each had one. We were fortunate we lived on a hill that provided a great place to sled. The streets were not plowed very regularly, so it was easy to sled down the street without worry of cars. In those days, drivers in the neighborhood were very conscious of the children playing on their sleds in the streets. Besides, speeding was unheard of in the neighborhoods. Our neighborhoods were safe places. We didn't have any crime, or homelessness, or anything we had to worry about. They were havens for families of a variety of ethnicities. We were mostly Irish, Italian, and Polish in my immediate neighborhood. I cherish the memories I have of the richness diversity provided. It was one of the many things that made the "hood" so special.

Sledding, ice skating, and skiing were my favorite activities of winter. Sledding was quite accessible not only out the front door but a few blocks away

was a golf course that offered many gentle hills that provided long distance runs. We tirelessly walked up those hills time after time for the thrill of the ride down.

Dad built us a bobsled. It was a very sturdy, heavy wooden sled on rails that flew across the snow. It would hold two to three people. All the kids in the neighborhood wanted to ride the bobsled. Crazy and dangerous as it sounds, Dad would pull us behind the car on the bobsled on old country roads. What a thrill!

Skiing provided great adventures, too. Although we skied on the golf course, the best skiing adventures were when we skied behind the car. In retrospect, it was extremely dangerous; maybe that was what made it exciting. It was like skiing on water; if you pulled on the rope, you would go off the road into the adjacent field. In upstate New York, the snow was so deep it was easy to glide along without a care in the world. It never entered our minds that we were skiing over barbed wire fences that could have caught a tip and ended in a horrific disaster.

One winter, my ever-industrious father decided he should run a ski rental shop at a small ski hill about two hours drive from our house. What a great opportunity for my brother and I to spend weekends skiing. With the long season we were able to

experience all kinds of skiing conditions. One of my favorites was April skiing in my "Bermuda" shorts. Not so favorite was ice skiing. My skis were longer than I was tall. The bindings were leather straps and the ice was always building up under my ski boots which made for challenging control issues.

Another winter adventure was going to Uncle Ike and Aunt Kay's farm. The farm holds so many wonderful memories. One of my favorite winters was gathering sap to make maple syrup. The sap buckets were placed on a hook on each of the maple trees which was tapped with a spike so that sap could run into the bucket. The sap was gathered by horse and sled. The sled had a very large tub on its flatbed. Riding in the sleigh to gather the sap from all those buckets was great fun.

Once the tub was filled, we headed to the sugar house where the sap would be boiled to just the right consistency. My Uncle Ike was a master at knowing exactly when it was ready to be canned in containers of various sizes. While we eagerly waited for the boiling process to be completed, we gathered eggs from the chicken coop and placed them in the boiling sap. It made for a rather interesting flavored boiled egg. The other treat we enjoyed while the sap boiled was having Uncle Ike take a ladle full of syrup to the snow bank where he would pour it over the snow and, like magic,

we had something like maple candy. Aunt Kay made 'real' maple sugar candy. Our family was the benefactor of having as much maple syrup and maple sugar candy as our hearts desired. I never knew what Aunt Jemima's syrup was. To this day, I will pay the high price in order to have real maple syrup.

Ice skating was another joyful experience. In our city it was common practice to flood areas for a skating rink in the city parks so that we could ice skate throughout the winter. We had lots of city parks that were easy walks from the house. It was great fun to meet my friends at the various parks for hours of skating.

Being fairly good at skating, I decided to audition for the Ice Capades that took place in our War Memorial building downtown. I was accepted for a very minor part in the extravagant event. I was a fairy in a chorus line of young girls. It didn't matter that it was such a minor part, I felt quite special in my lovely costume. And, I could say, "I skated in the famous Ice Capades."

Another wonderful skating memory was going with my best friend to her family's cottage on a nearby lake. While her dad was ice fishing, we were skating. Sometimes we would watch the line in hopes of catching a fish which I don't recall ever happening. We often enjoyed a hot chocolate

in the fisherman's shelter to try to keep the chill off. Ice fishing was quite a cold sport.

The abundance of snow was one of the glorious parts of upstate New York winters. Even on our most blustery days, which today would close schools and businesses and keep people inside, we went outside. Adults put on their tire chains or snow tires, and off to work they went. Closing school was unheard of in my childhood. We just donned our snowsuits, boots, hats, and mittens and braved all kinds of inclement weather to attend school.

Once winter settled in and the land was covered with snow, it was just a matter of organizing the various activities. No wonder winter was so joyful, it was filled with events that created laughter, togetherness, and solidified family values. Much the same as a warm fire, these memories of the 'joys of winter' warm my heart as I reminisce on my wonderful childhood. I am grateful for the life I had as a child.

Sandy Larkin



Spring Blooms

A Woodworkers Point of View

In describing American Black Walnut, from where a woodworker stands reminds me of a beautiful woman. Beautiful in every way. Not just in the way she looks. Deeply beautiful in every possible way. Even beyond her beautiful looks, her presence and her thoughts are comforting. And you enjoyed being around her. And she would rarely say no. Working with the walnut would allow most anything and still look beautiful, even going against the grain.

Then there is Cherry. She also is so beautiful. But she is a bitch. She is only skin deep but undeniably beautiful. She will fight you every step and she is not tame. But with experience and good preparations you can beat this bitch. She might draw blood but you can win. And if you do win the bitch will be locked in the beauty forever. And then worth the battle. But she will never be walnut.

Harvey Finegold

Seesaw Insomniac

I've become an old man, so I sleep when I can
I doze off at the oddest of times
Though I can't sleep at night, in the daytime I might
Take a snooze while my company dines

In the summer or spring, I forget everything
To take a nap after dinner at two
But I have no regrets, never doubted it yet
I go to sleep because that's what I do

Though some may think it's rude, my perverse attitude
Comes with age and infinite wisdom
Please don't think me unkind
In a word, I've a mind
To slip off to a personal rhythm

To a place in a shake, where my body won't ache
With an atmosphere soft and inviting
With flowers and bees and beautiful trees
With fragrances warm and exciting

Ah, to slumber at ease in a soft summer breeze
Heals the soul, makes it all seem just right
But dang if I might, could I just sleep at night
Just a few little winks if you please!

Michael A. Faris



Wooden Men by Michael A. Faris

River Trip

Usually in June or July, I dream of the river. It flows through my consciousness, lazily reminding me that it's time to go exploring again. The stream of blood that is me is in touch with the ebb and flow of the Earth.

The deep becomes shallow and I wade into the cold clear water and push off.

I've rowed this section so many times I feel like my raft is on tracks—zig zagging the rocks and eddies, racing past the islands where saplings bend to shade rock beaches Groves of willows, arches over a path to a place I have never gone.

I feel protected by the breeze that wrapped itself around me...the blue above me curves from one end of the river to the other.

An osprey screams down at me—an intruder to its territory. I smell the pungent tang of fish and I know that I hover over her dinner. I want the river to last forever, embracing me like a prisoner who has discovered that he has always had the keys to his jail cell—I think I'll open the door and float into the sun leaving Dorothy to discover it on her own.

Charles H. Snellings



Sandy Larkin

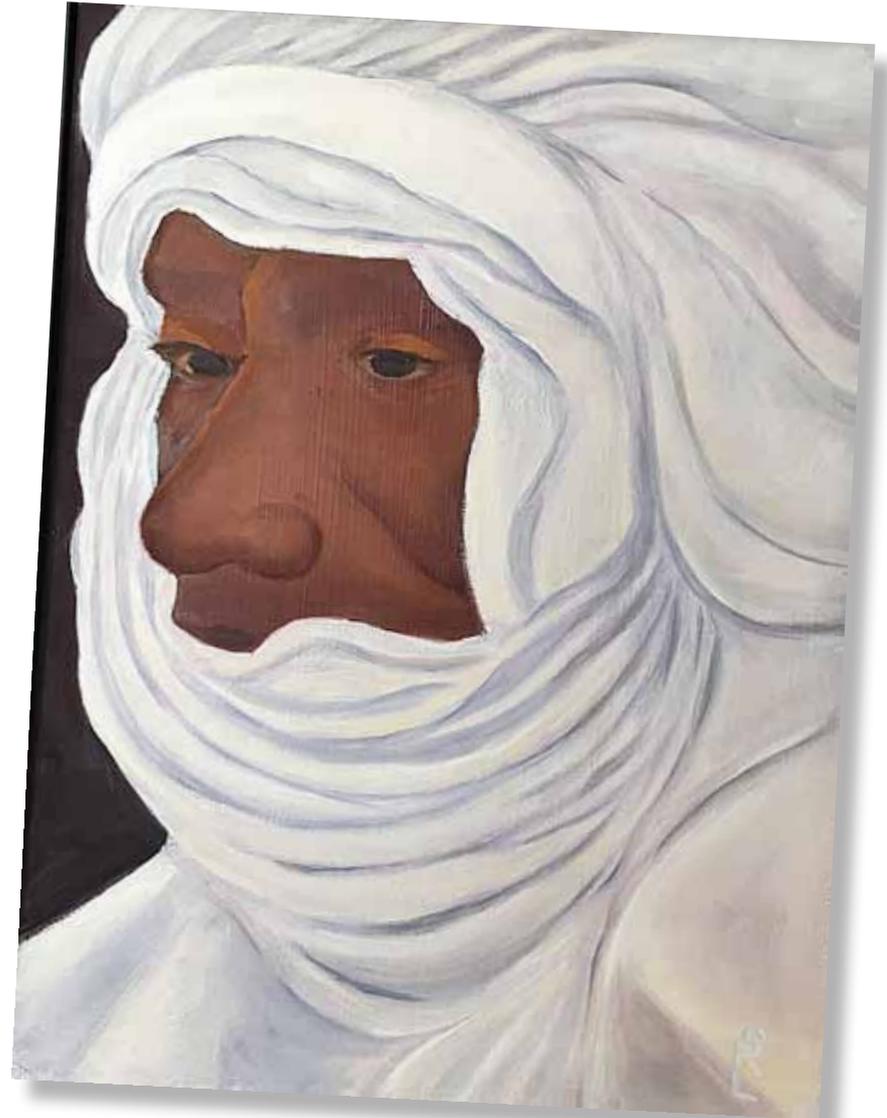


A visit to Sandy's studio apartment is a special treat. Her artist perspective is evident in her work. Everything is a potential journey into a world of color and texture. Her recent projects are examples of her varied style. She works with oils, acrylics, pastels and clay which may become a canvas

painting, or it could morph into a three dimensional sculpture such as her imaginative Garden Post composition on the following page.



Oregon Coast



Man in White



Guarding his Treasures





Primary



Secondary



Tertiary



Freedom

I felt all restrictions of the previous 3 images were lifted and I felt a terrific sense of freedom in not having to work within the constraints of the first 3 guidelines of primary colors, secondary and tertiary colors.

The Touch

I've met a woman
soft and sweet
whose steps are a taunting grace
whose hands, like simples mitigate
whose smile insists her face
whose eyes can monumentalize
whose speech exposes thoughts perdue
who alters taught consistencies.

A dance, a dancer,
swaying symmetries,
exhausting ancient tides.
two questioners
listening intently
to answers
time provides.

Dudley Clark

In a Jam

There once was a clever young man
Who came up with quite a good plan
 To get rid of his mother
 Her dress he should smother
A sticky and thick orange jam
 The idea he conspired
 He soon would retire
For the fact he was all out of jam

Gabriel Effiong

Reveille and Retreat

Every morning the Reveille plays,
The great cannons, trumpets, and the flag it does sway.
 Don't forget the retreat,
 when we stand on our feet,
And reflect on a soldier's long day.

Hannah Effiong

Background Art by Sarah Effiong

Family Unit: A Tribute to My Father



More than two decades ago when my father passed away, I wrote this eulogy to remember him and the wisdom he imparted to us. —M.T.

Father, I remember how pivotal was your decision to pack up and leave your village against all your tribal forbiddance and just go. You had heard countless stories about the marvel of the Christian mission in your region. These stories had haunted you like incessant recurring dreams. You used to say, "I felt like a snoopy child peeping through a forbidden door to see what was on the other side, so I had to go to the mission."

Father, you left your relatives and ventured into unknown territories. Blind-faithed, you followed the enchanting dreams, seeds of your optimistic brain. Such as a lioness hides her cubs from menace, you moved away from your village to raise your family far from the village's stifling mores. In the course of your journey, you climbed the mountains and descended into the valleys of life.

Thirstier than a desert wanderer searching for oases, you sought knowledge that would free you from your cultural bondage to better yourself; thus your family's lot became your goal. Through grit, diligence and tenacity, you reached your aim.

You encountered Jove, the God of the White Man, yet the stringent yoke of your Ancestors' ways on you waged a fierce internal war. How could you adore God and worship your Forbears! You saw no contradiction in embracing both; thus resolving your ambiguity.

Blessed be you by the Almighty, and Protected be you by your Ancestors. During your moments of distress as well as times of jubilation, they kept a watchful eye on you, like parents their newborn. Pathfinder, you trailblazed a way for your progenies.

In your children you inculcated the true meaning of the family as you understood it. You taught us, your children, that a family played a crucial role in society. From you we learned that the family is the alpha cell

that conceives, gestates, engenders and propagates human life. Like a shady tree providing shelter to travelers against the scorching sun, the family offers peace and tranquility to its offspring.

Through your wise counsel, we learned a family is a boundless, archeological site for digging and finding out about our roots. As silkworms feed on mulberry leaves to grow and produce stronger silk, children utilize the family as a fertile soil for their holistic health. The family starts as a small stream, and through generations, it expands into an ocean.

You used to tell us, "A child without heritage is like a tree without roots; that it would be difficult to separate an oak tree from an acorn whence it originated; that roots are to one's family what an acorn is to an oak tree."

Like an oak tree, you set down roots. These grew and developed a strong base, allowing burgeons to expand into even bigger trees. Had you stayed in your hometown, similar to an acorn in a grange, we would be not here, but under different skies and different suns. Determined, you braved the odds. You broke away from your old ways thanks to your inner strengths. As a spaceship into the cosmos, you went adventuring. Up to this day, your spirit goes on through your sons, and of course, your daughters.

Dr. Muabilai Tshionyi, PhD

Roots

As one, we form a might oak
With roots steadfast and strong,
An anchor deep in fertile soil,
Secure despite life's storms.
On firm foundations where we stand,
We're poised, our fate to own,
With branches stretching to the sun,
Connected, yet alone.

Wings

By instinct we protect our young,
Nurture, defend, keep warm,
Envelop 'neath protective wings
As their new wings take form.
And, by God's plan, they stronger grow
'Til they need us no more;
Abated ties, they leave the nest,
And to new heights they soar.

Carol Tshionyi

*Written as a poetic homage
for Dr. T's eulogy to his father:*



Our Lady of Wishful Thinking

9x12 Mixed media on canvas

This fine lady is helping me remain optimistic in hard times. She brings me hope and comfort. She may be young and naive, but that is when we are most optimistic. She helps me not become jaded.

Our Lady of Waiting Patiently

9x12 Mixed media on canvas

I am married to the slowest man in the world. Everyday is an exercise in patience. This lady reminds me to BE where I am. Like it or not.



Our Lady of Fighting the Good Fight

9x12 Mixed media on canvas

Resist and persist! Yes!
Wake up and join the fight.
It's time to speak up, get involved, lead by example, and be relentless in protecting our democracy, ethics and morals. We are in it to win it!



Our Lady of Being Kind to Yourself

9x12 Mixed media on canvas

I need constant reminders to nurture myself. Which means eating right, exercising, keeping my spirit fed and honoring myself when I am tired!

Our Lady of Careful Consideration

9x12 Mixed media on canvas

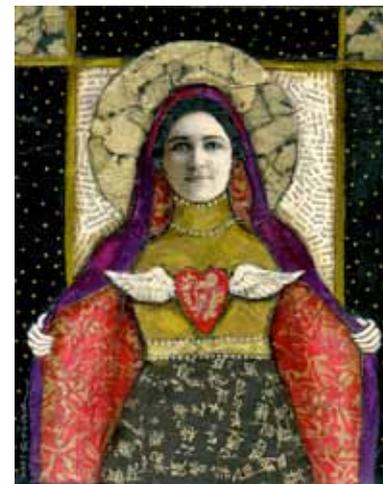
It is so easy to make the wrong decision. Especially when your heart gets in the way. If you put your wellbeing in the forefront, the answer becomes clear. I say, "think it over and then think again."



Our Lady of Setting Your Soul Free

9 x 12 Mixed media on canvas

Just go for it.
Worrying is a waste of creative thinking.



Find Yourself a Niche

Early this fall, while I was out feeding my fish, I came across something that was unique, and at the same time inspiring. It was an incident that brought to light how nature reflects back to us our experience in the business world.



Illustration by Lana McFadden

I have a two-acre trout pond with nearly 300 large trout. I used to stock it with 5 to 6-inch rainbow, brook and cutthroat trout, but between the bald eagles, blue herons and osprey eating them, I was losing them as fast as I was putting them in. So, I bought the larger five pounders. They can still be eaten, but it takes a very large eagle to carry them off.

There I was, sitting on my deck throwing out trout chow to all of these swarming fish, which kind of looks like a school of piranha. They would keep jumping and eating until all of the food was gone. I sat there for awhile, enjoying the evening, when I heard some splashing over by my raft. I wondered what was making such a racket and thought it might be a muskrat, otter or beaver. As I watched, I spotted a small brook trout that was doing all the splashing. What the heck is he trying to do, was my first thought. Then I noticed that some of the trout food had washed up and was caught on the rim of the raft. This little trout had seen the food and figured out that if he splashed his tail toward the raft, the food would wash off and he would get a meal.

While all the other “welfare” trout were still swimming around in a circle waiting for me to throw in more food, this ingenious, scrappy, little guy had figured out a way to beat the crowd and feed himself. I just sat there, in wonder, watching him methodically go around the raft picking up choice morsels, thinking to myself that this example mirrored life and the ingenious entrepreneur.

How many of us are like the fat trout going about our daily routine waiting for our weekly paycheck by doing the same thing over and over again. Are we like the business owner who just follows the crowd with the same ideas lacking any vision or creativity?

This little trout was hungry. He knew he didn't have a chance out there with all of the big guys biting and thrashing around for food. Like the small business owner who is hungry, he found himself another way—a niche.

I think that we all go through times when we're hungry, when the way we are doing things just isn't working anymore. And this is good. It hones our skills and instincts; it makes us survivors. When a problem arises, whether it is trying to compete with a larger fish or finding a new job, remember that little fish. Get hungry and create yourself a niche.

Steve Michaels



Michaels Residence - Winning photo for the yearly Rural Light Calendar



Hobbit House NY Times photo ny Janie Osborne



Steve and Chris

Steve and Chris Michaels manage an "Enchanted Private Lodging" cottage called The Shire in Trout Creek Montana. Their Hobbit-like cottage won #2 in Hotel Theme stays & attracts people from all over the world.

Early Morning Fog



All Photos by Steve Michaels



Squiggly Lines



Footprint



Ghost Bridge

Little people

To my kids:

Right now, as I write this, you're both still very young. When you're young, it's impossible to imagine what the world looks like from my eyes, six feet in the air. Why do we leave you every day to go to work? Why do you have to eat your veggies? Why can't we just have fun all the time?

You're so trapped in your lack of experience. And even as wide as you are in your imagination, you just can't grasp many of the realities of life.

Things like: learning is fun, naps are to be relished, and broccoli tastes good. There's great satisfaction to be had in doing hard work, and doing it well. Baths aren't just for getting clean and kisses don't just heal your wounds.

Even though you're not equipped with experience to see between the lines of truth and opinion, you have an incredible ability to empathize, hugging me at just the right time, laying a gentle hand on my arm, or "massaging" my sore muscles.

Your innocence and willingness to believe are beautiful. Monsters aren't real because I said so. Santa Claus is because he ate the cookies. The tooth fairy slips into your room at night, and that towel around your neck can make you fly.

But right now, the most heart wrenching part of that amazing naïveté is that you don't understand what an amazing gift you are. Because from this limited frame of reference, you can't. But you will. One day you will be lucky enough to see those first incredible breaths from a screaming, blue, terrified, tiny person, not ready to open their eyes, yet already the most magical and important gift you'll ever receive.

If you read this before that day, none of this will make sense. But at the right time, you'll get it. And you will be compelled too, to put words on paper in an attempt to convey to your own children what's to come. That they have so much more to look forward to. That one day, they'll too be baffled, overjoyed, frightened, awed by, and in love with their very own little people.

Jordan Wollman

The Challenge

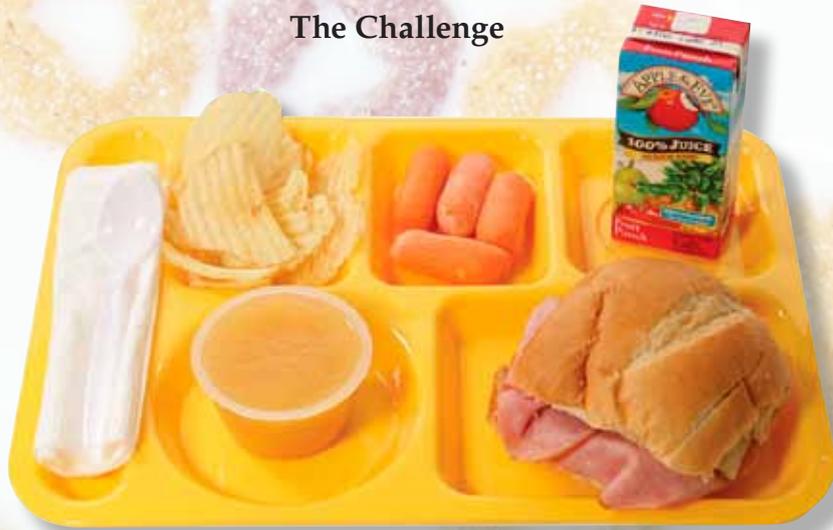


Photo: campingworld.com

This is a story about an incident that happened at our Boy Scout Camp. It involved a situation that I participated in that caused an accident. But, it's one of those things that you don't even know happened until you turn around... and there's the crisis before you. What are you going to do?

During the summer at Camp Baker, seven miles south of Florence, Oregon, all meals were served in the dining hall. The situation was very unique. After hiking from their campsites to the dining hall, all hungry campers stood in line, positioned first come, first served, waiting for the doors to open and the melee to start.

Once the doors opened, everyone filed in, in a single line, to pick up a tray and move through the serving line where they picked up a banana or other piece of fruit before moving downline. They also picked up a bowl of dry cereal, poured milk over it, and perhaps

snagged a piece of bread and smeared it with peanut butter and jelly. Then, they moved to the dining area to find their table and went to sit down and wait for their family style service for the rest of breakfast. Family style service meant one platter of pancakes or french toast, one platter of sausage or bacon, or maybe a platter of scrambled eggs brought to the table by two pre-appointed servers.

Being at the first of the line was the best because you could move through with very little entanglement, find your table, and be seated before your servers brought the rest of breakfast.

If you were in the middle or near the last of the line, it became very chaotic as people were wandering around trying to find their tables and get seated so breakfast could be served.

Imagine the dining room full of people with silver military trays, bowls full of milk and cereal, potentially bread with peanut butter and jelly, and maybe pieces of fruit, walking around trying to avoid each other while trying to find the way to their own table. At times, there were so many people it was almost elbow-to-elbow in the main passageways between the tables.

There were people shuffling all around. I was with my group and headed to our place to sit just after passing through the "continental breakfast bar." I had a bowl of Froot-Loops with milk, a couple of cantaloupe

slices, a slice of bread spread pretty heavily with peanut butter and grape jelly on my tray and was walking through the dining room. I was talking with someone behind me, probably giving him instructions on how to best navigate to our table while trying to skirt around some other people. I accidentally, not even knowing, bumped into this young man, tray to tray. I heard the “plink” of the two trays and felt the impact on the tray in my hand. I turned around to notice a young man standing in front of me. He was almost in tears.

Looking down I saw my tray in perfect order. Directly opposite mine was the young man’s tray with his cereal bowl turned upside down, the milk and cereal sloshed all over his tray, his bread and fruit were soaked by the spilled milk.

His tray looked like a disaster area as his eyes swelled up with tears and he began the low wailing sound of a child about to cry.

As the father of two daughters, I knew what sound was coming next from the young man and it would be even worse, so, I looked at the child intently and said, “Wait a minute. Take mine. Here you go...take this one. It’s alright. Everything is fine.”

By then, I had already shoved my tray into his hand and took his away.

He looked at his new tray, looked at his old tray and

sniffled a little. His bluster was deflated and he pulled back on the wail he was about to unleash. He lowered his head and said “Thank you.” before turning away to go find his seat.

Undeterred by Noah’s flood on my breakfast tray, I went to my place, sat down and ate my breakfast. I had a good old time.

I did not know that my little incident was more than just a simple situation that made the best out of something bad.

Later, I heard from five different people who were in the dining hall who had watched the incident with great interest.

Each one expressed a sense of incredulity at the outcome of the encounter. They thought there was going to be a screaming, crying, break down of the young man whose breakfast was so abruptly violated.

Lord knows I am not a ballerina body form and I move with the solidity of a moose in a meadow, or a bull in a China closet more than anything else.

I’m just glad it all worked out for the best.

What you gonna do when it comes to you?

David Vaughan

Applesauce and Old Crow

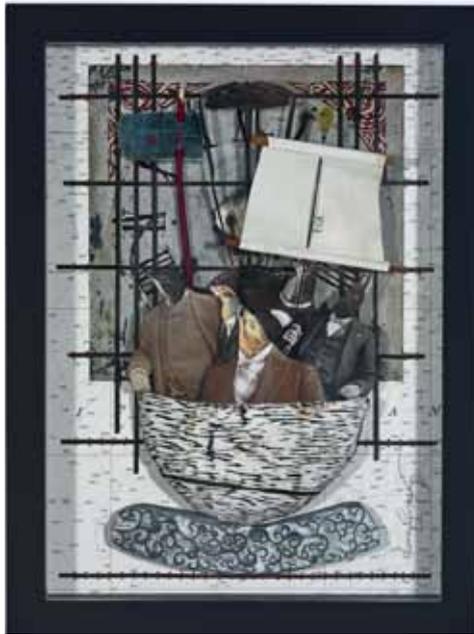
Photo by Michael A. Faris



Photo: Public Domain

A tasty concoction that I've come to know
Involves Granny Smith apples and Old Doctor Crow
An easy-made recipe – only two things
Granny's own applesauce, and to give it the zing
A generous measure of Old Doctor Crow
A two to one ratio, mixed rather slow
It's ready to please right away, once its mixed
No need for aging or special brew tricks
Straight by the spoonful, not too thin or too thick
The stuff is quite mellow, and packs a good kick
Now it's strictly medicinal, not just for fun
It eases "what ails ya", and helps you move on
To a better night's slumber, but don't take too much
It'll come back to bite you, in your head, just a touch.
But once of a mornin', if feelin' a bit low
To take the sharp edge off, a bit of Old Crow
With a dabble of applesauce mixed in a cup
Will lighten the day and brighten things up
And then later on, maybe mid-morning break
When your muscles are sore and you're starting to ache
There's Old Doctor Crow and his applesauce cure
Just two spoonfuls later, you're better for sure
It alters one's attitude, gives a whole different slant
Bolsters your confidence to do things you can't
So take the advice of a geezer in the know
Try Granny Smith applesauce mixed with Old Crow!

This process begins with the search and ends in a story. My passion is going to that unknown place and surprising myself with the result. There's always that moment when I know a piece is finished, but until that moment, I have no clue when it will happen. My studio is overgrown with stuff: hundreds of objects, photos, books, bird wings, scraps of metal and ideas saved in various forms.



Into the Wind



Along the Boardwalk

There are boxes full of secrets and boxes waiting to be filled. Assemblage requires having inspiration and ideas around all of the time, always invading my thoughts. These thoughts and ideas come together in a single statement. Like my obsession for collecting, traveling and exploring, my art becomes a part of that process.



Barn Owl



Forrest Walk

Everyone Knows That It Can't Happen Here

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
(As Big Brother now looks over your shoulder)
But nothing you've worked for to you now belongs,
And the only music is government songs,
And you thank God that you're getting older.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
History rewritten not only just once,
But over and over to fit today's need,
So change what you know into what you must heed,
Or suffer the untimely death of a dunce.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
Those who once thought the sun circled the earth
Now listen to lies and believe the absurd;
For a past that won't alter or become simply blurred
Has little value and even less worth.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
Soon now, the Party will tell you the fact
That two and two more now must come to be five
And you will believe it so you can survive
For reality is just a part of the pact.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
A heresy spoken that what's real is true
Will cost you your freedom (when in fact you have none)
So left is now right and up is now down,
And you must embrace what they tell you to.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
You not only have to obey all their rules
Regardless of how they might rankle your mind
You also must think what they say, and be blind
To the things that they taught when you were in school.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
"Now, this is, my comrades, the way you must see,"
As they show you a thing that is really quite mad,
For when something is good they'll demand that it's bad
And they hold up two fingers insisting there's three.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
All must be equal to one and another,
And no one can rise by the power of his bent,
Why should it matter it was your vigor spent
For you only rose on the back of your brother!

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
The unit of family is broken asunder
As children are better raised by the State,
All are accepted (unless you are straight)
And the "wisdom" of infants chooses their gender!

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
The Party determines what's true and what's real,
And can change it whenever a new idea arises,
For you always must do what the Party "advises,"
And you must accept it without an appeal.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
We all, in the Party's mind, suffer such fear,
And are spineless, totally unable to know
So think for us, act for us, treat us like fools,
Because we let them! And they simply sneer.

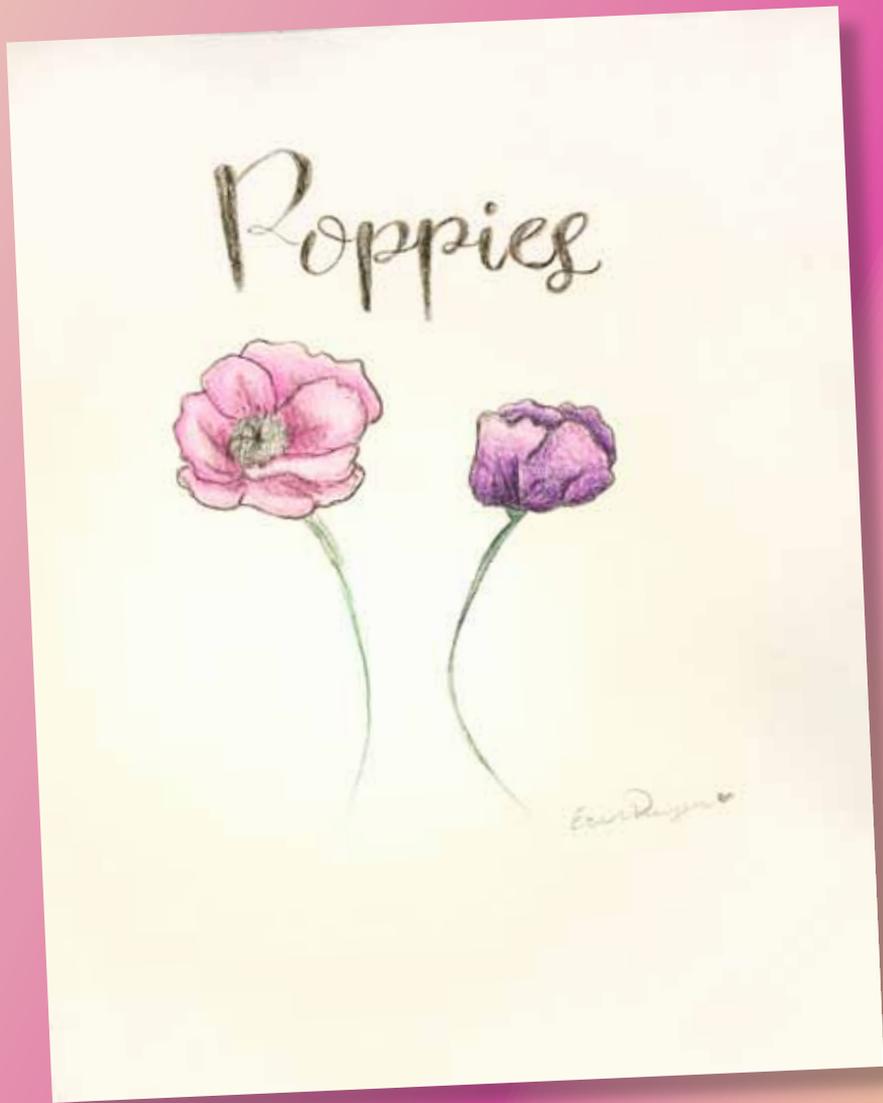
Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
We once fought for freedom and justice for all,
And each did as well as his nature allowed,
But now no one can move ahead of the crowd
For our words have all changed into meaningless scrawl

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
We made a choice between being free
And living rightly with honor and truth,
We'd rather live like immature youth
Because we chose only "happy" to be.

Everyone knows that it can't happen here—
What happened to us? Why can't we see
That the thing that we feared is now quite alive?
Alas! We ne'er thought today would arrive
And all is now lost, and we can't be free.
But everyone knows that it can't happen here!



Suzi Wollman



Erin Dwyer



Monica Dwyer



Rivals

Today is one of those rare days when the calendar page is blank. No obligation. A day to myself - what luxury! The weather is grey and drizzly, a perfect day to spoil myself with a visit to the sauna in the afternoon, and treat myself to a body scrub, and massage my legs and arms with lavender scented oil afterwards. I inhale deeply. I can smell the lavender already and images of Provence float by. When I exhale I can feel my shoulders drop. I look forward to doing my favourite things without pressure or interruption.

But first things first. I must check the fridge to make sure that I have all the ingredients for tonight's dinner. Sure enough, there is hardly any lettuce left, no green onions or radishes. Since Paul is going out I jot down a shopping list and hand it to him.

Good! Smooth sailing tonight. Onward!

Before getting started, though, I need to take a quick look to see if I have received any emails that should be answered right away. No, there aren't but there is a publication from the Mayo Clinic with an article on cholesterol and high blood pressure. Since I am afflicted with both and I am sitting at the computer anyway, I will quickly read that article. And while I am at it I might just as well check out their heart healthy recipe. It looks good, so I save it to my internet cookbook.

Ah, now onto the fun stuff. Where should I start?

The great German writer Goethe sighed: "Oh, so many souls live in my breast."

Boy, do I empathize! I can already feel the tug-of-war starting.

"Me first! Me first!" my harp calls out.

"She is right", says the Musician earnestly, wagging her finger at me. "You have been neglecting her lately. She feels lonely and useless and longs to be stroked."

I admit to the neglect. I really should...

"Wait a minute!" growls the Writer. "Why should

that harp come first? I have been around much longer than she and so should be first in line. Besides, that paper for the memoir group is due very soon and you have done zilch so far!"

I cringe. "My problem is that I haven't had a good idea to write about yet."

"Well! Pushing it aside certainly isn't going to help. Just sit down and get started."

I sigh. She is so right! Maybe I should ...

"Talk about being around for a long time!" The Musician raises her voice and looks at the Writer. .

"She has been playing one instrument or another since she was a young kid. And her singing goes even farther back than that. I've been with her much longer than you and therefore should come first."

True, true! So maybe I should...

"Hold on, hold on!" calls out the Reader and frowns at me.

"The books are piling up next to your bed. You have started to read four and not finished a single one. The little effort you make late at night when you are tired and can hardly concentrate any more is pitiful. Just sit down now and read!"

I feel lousy when I think of all those unread books, so maybe I should...

But now the Artist pipes up.

"Don't listen to them. You love to draw. You have been doing it ever since you could hold a pencil. You know you should spend some time drawing every day. So get out your pad and your pens and pencils. It takes practice, practice, practice, to make progress."

"Well!" the others shout in unison." That is true for our craft as well."

What am I to do? All their arguments are valid. All these souls in me feel passionate about their craft. They look at me with intense anticipation but I feel exhausted from the onslaught.

I become aware of the clock on the wall ticking away the seconds. Then it clears its throat and calls out the hour. What? Noon already? That leaves me exactly three hours before I head for the sauna. Better get started with something right now.

I hesitate.

Then I pull out one of my cookbooks and open it up to a well-worn page. I've been craving almond biscuits for quite a while now. I have all the ingredients in the house. It would hardly take any time to whip out those cookies, and wouldn't it be nice to just sit back and relax with a tasty treat?

Heidi Sachet

The Army Wife

There is a young wife
Walks alone in this life
When the Army makes its demands
Though she's not sent to war
They can't ask for much more
And she's left with her heart in her hands.

Though her husband's deployed
And she can't fill the void
She refuses to mope and get down
For she knows that his head
Isn't on a soft bed
And he sleeps on the bitter cold ground.

She learns how to juggle
The demands and the struggles
With a grace that is lovely to see
And she opens her house
To every lone spouse
Who becomes an esteemed adoptee

True, sometimes it's tough
As they pack all her stuff
And her home is moved time and again
But nothing compares
To the mood in the air
When brand-new adventures begin

It can be hard to leave
And her precious friends grieve
No one can say that it's fine
But they're never quite gone
In her heart they'll live on
And their bond grows stronger through time

As she watches her kids
Tackle the life that they live
With enthusiasm- determined and proud!
She quietly prays
The sacrifices they've made
Builds character that speaks clear and loud.

Every morning at dawn
For the cards she has drawn
She is grateful-eternally humble
Plants a smile on her face
'Till she feels his embrace
And can finally let herself crumble

Annie Effiong

God Mouse

Curiosity killed the cat but it certainly saved that mouse!

I have been to hundreds of camping events in my life and on those camping trips I have seen many forms of wildlife. This particular incident features a mouse at a Boy Scout camp called Camp Baker just seven miles south, outside of Florence, Oregon.

Our Troop was staying in Conestoga campsite which was three-quarters of the way down a mile long Peninsula. We had three separate camping areas where the youth and the adults dispersed throughout the campsite. The farthest fire ring and tent platforms were away from where the trail entered camp and this site was closest to the lake, of course, one patrol of four boys claimed that site almost immediately. I chose a lone platform just up from the furthest camp site because of the incessant snoring I am accused of.

In visiting with the happy campers in the most prized place to stay for six days, I noticed a small mouse would climb out of his hole in the brush and come to explore the fire pit.

Like most campfire pits at camp, this fire ring had its share of strange crinkled aluminum, maybe some orange peels, and stuff you can't identify. On one of my early visits to the far campsite, I heard a rustling scratching sound from the pit and looked down to see

the small mouse foraging in the ashes. He was probably looking for food left by previous campers.

Immediately, my thoughts went to wondering how this mix between seven youth from the ages of 11 to 18 spending a week-long space-sharing adventure with this little mouse would work. The young mouse would not survive, in my humble opinion, so I had to think of something that would be effective and permanent for at least a week.

What to do, what to do?

Wracking my brain for something, I finally hit on the approach that just might work.

I have been working with Norse mythology studying the shape shift deities and decided to make my ploy.

I called all of the youth together and had them sit around the campfire pit. We waited for the mouse to come out and sure enough, after a couple of quiet minutes, the little mouse came out and started rummaging around through the coals.

I began a story thinking of the shape-shifting stories that are part of the Scandinavian mythos and I told them how certain creatures called shapeshifters can take different shapes—even human, depending upon who these legendary gods were and what their abilities were. You never knew what creature they could be, so you just never know.

I told them that I thought this mouse deserved to live and not be harmed by anybody either in play or on purpose. I said “You know, God can take many forms and I’m going to call this mouse “God Mouse” because it may be God’s way of seeing just what kind of people we are by placing himself in Harm’s Way. Maybe he is here to see who’s going to, just in play, without thinking, just to have fun, throw a stick at the mouse, or throw a rock at it, or crush it. Then the mouse would be injured or would die. So you know, this could be God in the form of a mouse just here in the campsite to see what kind of people we are!”

I told them I expected the mouse would live a long time if we respected it as a God Mouse. I left them to decide for themselves what their actions would be and left them for their own discussion and evaluation.

I’m so amazed by the suggestibility of the human mind. I felt a little guilty using some pretty heavy psychology on the brains of these youth in my charge. I also felt very responsible for the single life of a small mouse sharing a campsite with us for six days and not able to do more than try to survive on a daily basis in a wild, creature filled environment.

I was very anxious to go look for the remains of the mouse. Everyday, with great trepidation and anxiety, when all the others were out of camp, I would go down to the campsite. I sat by the fire pit and waited. Sure

enough, that little mouse was still there, whole, well and hale.

I’m so thankful for the suggestibility of the human condition. I’m also amazed that the mouse lasted the entire week long camp.

The last thing I did before we left was to go down to the campsite and say a little prayer of thanks that the God Mouse was still alive. As I stood there, I felt a special warmth because that little mouse came out one last time as if to say “Thank you, my friend.”

David Vaughan



Photo: Wikipedia



This and other books
can be ordered online
www.judeco.net
541-954-6724