

THE AGORA

Volume 7, 2021



PLATO is a community of intellectually curious adults, typically 50 and over, which explores subjects of interest through member-led discussion groups, lectures, travel, and cultural activities.

PLATO
6209 Mineral Point Road #203
Madison, WI 53705

PLATO Mission

PLATO, the **P**articipatory **L**earning and **T**eaching **O**rganization, is a learning-in-retirement organization that relies on active member involvement to develop and provide participatory learning, teaching, and social opportunities for members. PLATO also financially supports educational opportunities for learners of all ages in greater Madison. PLATO provides these services in association with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

PLATO Core Value

Be an inclusive and welcoming organization to all members of the greater Madison community who wish to continue learning and/or teaching in retirement.

***The Agora* Mission**

The Agora is a literary journal of arts and ideas created to share the artistic and scholarly talents of PLATO members in a periodic volume of original works of fiction, nonfiction (including scholarly articles), poetry, and visual arts. Of particular interest is material that has a distinct point of view and is inspired by broadly humanistic values and the liberal arts tradition. *The Agora* is a juried publication created in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Continuing Studies.

***The Agora* Editorial Board**

The Agora is PLATO's literary and arts journal, created in the spirit of PLATO's mission to promote intellectual and cultural enrichment opportunities for the senior community. *The Agora* is a venue for sharing the creative literary and artistic talents of PLATO members in a periodic volume of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and pictorial and photographic art. The first volume was printed in 2011. It is currently a biennial publication.

Acknowledgments

The Agora Board wishes to thank the PLATO Board of Directors for their generous financial support of this arts and literary journal.

Dedication

Volume 7 is dedicated to the entire PLATO Community. The PLATO Board of Directors and President have given us the encouragement and financial support to move forward. The members of The Agora Board have dedicated long hours jurying and editing to ensure the quality of this volume of *The Agora*. The contributors to this volume have given us their best literary and artistic work. Finally, members of PLATO continue to recognize *The Agora* as the resource for celebrating the creativity and talent of the PLATO Community. We thank all of you.

The Agora

Volume 7, 2021

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What Time Is It Anyway?

by Mary De Wolf

Like all the small towns up north we had a volunteer fire department. The volunteers were called into service by the fire whistle. The whistle was also used for civil disasters and tornados; and as such, blew every day at noon to make sure it was ready and able to do its duty when called upon. Basically, all it did was to get the dogs to stop scratching and licking and start to howling, all except Thom's dog who was deaf as a stone. There was a timer in the fire hall that set all this into motion at the stroke of twelve noon. However, there was a fly in the ointment; the timer was electric.

Now anyone who has visited the north country knows that electric power is a fickle thing. A little wind, a little snow, a little beaver and there go the lights. So, most days the noon whistle was more of a suggestion than a certainty.

Harry, from the gas station, was the fire chief and as such was in charge of keeping the whistle on time. Harry had been the fire chief for as long as most folks could remember. He was elected every year by the other volunteer firemen mostly because Harry never showed up for the meetings; you know how that goes. Now some folks swore they saw Harry smile once, you couldn't prove it by me. But, then we had only been in town for 10 years. Harry didn't have much of a sense of timing, the proof of which were the twelve children he and his wife had, so it didn't bother him that the whistle never blew at noon.

When the whistle was so off kilter that it was sounding at eleven or even ten in the morning, someone within earshot of the whistle would draw up their courage and finally call Harry to complain. Soon enough we would see Harry marching up Main Street following the yellow line, looking none too happy, and at noon that day all would be right with the world again.

Come this past spring, Bill and his wife Edna moved to town from Sheboygan. Bill had been the CEO of a large plumbing fixture company, and had chosen to leave the hustle and bustle of the corporate world and retire 'Up North'. Bill and Edna had bought a house on a lake just outside of town. It was a nice house with a lovely view of the lake and the usual problems of homes in our town. Among other things, the well was dug smack dab in the middle of the septic field. The well wasn't so much dug as a point was driven into the ground. But that didn't matter too much, as like most houses in town, the septic system was one in name only.

The well pump had a tendency to over pump when you were using the shower and say the kitchen sink at the same time, and when that happened, you had to go outside and prime the pump with the five-gallons of water from the bucket under the deck. Otherwise you had to wait until the pump refilled naturally,

which might take 20 minutes or so; a real inconvenience if you were in the shower with shampoo on your head. But the view of the lake was nice as I said before.

Soon after they moved to town Bill, wanting to 'get the feel of the place', would make a daily pilgrimage to the café, normally just after the morning rush, when Cook and he could sit and visit for a while. Cook would fill him in on who's who in the township, as no one knew more about the gossip than Cook. Well, maybe Ginny down at the tavern did, but most of what she knew couldn't be repeated.

One morning Bill was visibly excited, and filled with good news when he stopped by the cafe. He brought in a catalog to show us pictures of a very ornate sun dial. The sundial sat on an impressive cement base shaped like three large fish holding a platform and the actual dial was made of brass with raised roman numerals and a floral design. It was a bit over the top for me, but I guess if you come from Sheboygan...

Bill asked us if he could have it delivered to the café as the truck would have trouble navigating his driveway. Most large deliveries came to town via UPdS. Not UPS but the Upper Peninsula delivery System - UPdS. After assuring him we would call him as soon as his precious cargo arrived, Bill, noticeably excited, left his coffee and went home to begin preparations. He determined he would need a level concrete foundation for the large base and, because the frost line hereabout goes down fairly deep, the foundation needed to have a footing at least five feet down and that would require lots of digging. Luckily there were a plethora of young men in town who would do that kind work for beer money. You just couldn't pay them till the work was done or you wouldn't see them again until they were over their hangover.

About two weeks after Bill's visit the UPdS truck stopped at the café with two large crates. We phoned Bill and he came directly with his neighbor in tow. Cook looked at the two of them and said he would call down to Ginny's place and rustle up a couple more guys, preferably younger--much younger--to get the crates onto Bill's pickup. Tailgate delivery, dontcha you know. Cook wasn't too crazy about a hernia at his age.

When we didn't see Bill for a few days, we assumed he was busy setting up his brand-new toy. Finally, almost a week later, Bill showed up at his usual time, just beaming from ear to ear. He was full of news about his project, which of course was much more involved than once thought.

The foundation had had time to set up and after Bill opened the crate and exposed the base, he knew he had to rustle up a few men with strong backs and weak minds to set the base on the foundation. Where to go? Ginny's of course. But you don't get out of Ginny's without buying a round, that took a while. Three rounds later and it was too dark to begin work, but four of the town's finest had promised to be there first thing in the morning.

The next day, the four boys did show up and made quick work of setting the base and leveling it. It was about ten o'clock in the morning and the base was resplendent in glorious sunlight, but by two o'clock a shadow began crossing the marble base. So, Bill was back at Ginny's for help. He needed to have three trees cut down because they shaded the dial in the afternoon. The trick was they were kinda close to the house. But Cheri's husband Jim said for a hundred apiece he could do it, though he was a little too drunk to do it right then. Jim and Bill shook on it, and Bill bought a round for the house. The next morning, well closer to afternoon, Jim showed up with his chainsaw and by 'happy hour' the three trees were down and stacked. Bill told Jim he would give the \$300 to Cheri at the Café the next day. Jim wasn't too happy, but in his heart, he knew Bill was right. Bill gave Jim enough for a couple of rounds and figured he made the best of the deal.

Now day five of the project dawned bright and sunny, not a cloud in the sky, a perfect day for setting a sundial. Bill had read up for days on how to get the gnomon right, this was a one-shot deal. The plate was to be anchored using a special waterproof, quick drying cement that he'd ordered from the same catalog. He had Edna come out and the two of them set the brass plate down as level and smooth as humanly possible. All was finally finished! Bill fairly danced across the street to give us the news and to ask us to "come see my handiwork," after we close up for the day.

Cook had listened to the tale intently, nodding at every stage of the operation.

"How did you set the right time of day?" Cook asked finally.

Bill grinned from ear to ear, "I set it with the noon whistle, of course."



Fishing in an Alpine Lake by Jim Albright

Bach and Bare Trees

by Norman Leer

Without leaves, the trees
are like a Bach partita

for solo violin, all the decoration
in the shape itself. You need

to listen to the sound shifting
in the quietness that does not move.

(April 27, October 24, 2010)

Metaphors Are Mind Candy

by Joanne Lee Storlie

I credit my live-life-large-son for inspiring the title of this essay with the following anecdote: One day while in the privacy of his bathroom he was using a suppository when his four-year-old son walked into the room unexpectedly. “What’s that, Daddy?” the youngster asked with age-appropriate curiosity. “Butt candy,” came the age-appropriate reply.

It’s entirely possible for a person to appreciate all kinds of literature—prose, drama, lyrics, and poetry—and never fully comprehend the reasons why they evoke such strongly-felt reactions. And unless one is exposed to mentors who help her analyze the structure and lure of the words, she may *never* understand why the words please, persuade, and prompt such rich remembrances and pleasing personal responses. I was such a person.

Happily, I found teachers in PLATO who, trained in the fine art of literature, enthusiastically shared their love for the written word and patiently exposed me to the wonders of style and technique. They taught me that *metaphors* stand out among all other writing techniques as the finest and most powerful conveyor of potent meaning and lasting pleasure. Under their guidance, I came to realize that metaphors were always there in glorious profusion *but unseen* because training had never inspired or provoked notice of them.

This essay will demonstrate their abundance and reasons for their attraction.

First, a definition of metaphor: It is a figure of speech which makes an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things or objects that are poles apart from each other, but have some characteristics common between them.

The delight taken in metaphors, though unrecognized as such, starts in early childhood with the hearing of whimsical, lyrical nursery rhymes, simple rhythmic songs, and stories. Who doesn’t effortlessly memorize and frequently recall phrases that compare the lives of animals and other objects to those of humans, such as, “I’ll do it myself!” (*The Little Red Hen*) or “I think I can” (*The Little Engine That Could*)? Who cannot recall their delight in the metaphorical antics of the animals in *Aesop Fables*? And, who can forget the chants that accompanied rope jumping and childhood taunts like, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me”?

While one might think that it is rhyme, rhythm, and repetition alone which prompts memorization and delight, extensive research regarding brain function

tells us there is much more involved. James Geary, author of *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World* puts it this way: “Metaphorical thinking is the way we make sense of the world and are not rhetorical frills at the edge of how we think. They are at the very heart of it...Neurological research shows that humans experience pleasure when performing the ‘cognitive gymnastics’ of deciphering metaphors to connect two dissimilar things. The metaphor is the meat of language and not a sauce.”

Eugie Foster, in “When the Guidelines say ‘7-12’: The Ages and States of Children’s Literature,” tells us, “Children as young as three have displayed a grasp of metaphor, both applying and understanding it. They use it to bridge the gap between words they know and ones they don’t (e.g. ‘fire engine in my tummy’ to describe a stomachache). Nevertheless, if writers use metaphors for pre-readers, they must be tangible and salient, referring to sensory objects (e.g. clouds are pillows, leaves are dancers).”

Researcher and author Dr. Silvia Hartmann supports these claims and adds further insights. “Metaphor unlocks the potential of the human mind; it is the language of the angels, to use a metaphor for metaphor.” She informs us that metaphor stories are *only* about human experience. They contain elements that we feel in our body, making them memorable. Engaging the entire neurology, they act on the energy body, producing emotions that people literally feel within. They are absorbed by the human mind in such a way that storage is successful and can be recalled easily at a much later date. “We might make endless metaphor stories about cartoon cats and dogs, cars that go to war, horses that talk, vegetables jumping around, wooden puppets hitting each other over the head, about fairies and elves, even about aliens from other worlds, but at the end of the day, this is all just *human experience*—learning and change in fancy dress—the only thing we are or even could be interested in.”

Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, in their now-classic *Metaphors We Live By*, write this: “Metaphor is a fundamental mechanism of mind, one that allows us to use what we know about our physical and social experience to provide understanding of countless other subjects. Because such metaphors structure our most basic understandings of our experience, they are ‘metaphors we live by’—metaphors that can shape our perceptions and actions without our ever noticing them.”

In a November 14, 2010 article titled “This Is Your Brain On Metaphors,” which appeared on the Opinion Page of *The New York Times*, Robert Sapolsky explains that although there are vast similarities between the human brain and that of other animals, there are vast domains that are unique to humans. He asks his reader to consider some words, written by J. Ruth Gendler in her wonderful “The Book of Qualities,” a collection of some “character sketches” of different qualities, emotions and attributes:

Anxiety is secretive. He does not trust anyone, not even his friends, *Worry*, *Terror*, *Doubt* and *Panic*...He likes to visit me late at night when I am alone and exhausted. I have never slept with him, but he kissed me on the forehead once, and I had a headache for two years.

Compassion speaks with a slight accent. She was a vulnerable child, miserable in school, cold, shy...In ninth grade she was befriended by *Courage*. *Courage* lent *Compassion* bright sweaters, explained the slang, showed her how to play volleyball.

Despair has stopped listening to music. *Anger* sharpens kitchen knives at the local supermarket. *Beauty* wears a gold shawl and sells seven kinds of honey at the flea market. *Longing* studies archeology.

Sapolsky asks, "What is Gendler going on about?" and tells us, "We know and feel pleasure triggered by her unlikely juxtapositions. Symbols, metaphors, analogies, parables, synecdoche, figures of speech: we understand them. We understand that a captain wants more than just hands when he orders all of them on deck. We understand that Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' isn't really about a cockroach. If we are of a certain theological ilk, we see bread and wine intertwined with body and blood. We grasp that the right piece of cloth can represent a nation and its values, and that setting fire to such a flag is a highly charged act. We can learn that a certain combination of sounds put together by Tchaikovsky represents Napoleon getting his butt kicked just outside Moscow. And that the name 'Napoleon,' in this case, represents thousands and thousands of soldiers dying cold and hungry, far from home. We even understand that June isn't literally busting out all over. So where did this facility with symbolism come from? It strikes me that the human brain has evolved a necessary shortcut for doing so, and with some major implications."

So it appears that humankind has always loved metaphors, even if it didn't know that it did or why. Scientists studying this phenomenon conclude that the brain *thinks* in metaphors. Literally. It cannot not help itself. It constantly connects the *literal* with the *metaphorical*. The brain appears to process literal and metaphorical versions of a concept in the same brain region. In other words, our neural circuitry doesn't cleanly differentiate between the real and the symbolic, and this neural confusion about the literal versus the metaphorical gives symbols enormous power, producing good memories and enhancing chances of survival. For instance, any animal, including man, who has eaten some disgusting food will experience a physical reaction. The memory of that reaction is stored in the brain, and future like-experiences will trigger the reaction even in the absence of repeating the act. This connection between literal and metaphoric served to further evolution—survival and advancement.

Now when *music* is added to *metaphor*, you have a union made in heaven!

Studies show that metaphoric word pictures, when tied to music, make doubly powerful and lasting impressions. One Broadway lyricist said to have mastered the art is Stephen Sondheim. Without equal, he consistently and powerfully uses metaphors to portray the deep inner life and psyches of the characters portrayed on stage. Sondheim is quoted as saying every show, concept musical or not, should contain “a secret metaphor that nobody knows except the authors.”

And now the fun part—a walk down memory lane to discover/uncover, *for the first time*, how much of what is stored in my memory is metaphoric! Allow me an unordered, undisciplined, ten-minute “stream of consciousness” journey.

SONGS: “Life is just a bowl of cherries,” “If a face could launch a thousand ships/then how am I to know,” “Old Man River/must know somethin’/but don’t say nothin’,” “Wash that man right out of my hair,” “When a lovely flame dies/smoke gets in your eyes,” “One of these mornings/you’re gonna rise up singing/and you’ll spread your wings/and you’ll take to the sky,” “And I was born the next of kin to the wayward wind,” “I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows,” “Raindrops keep falling on my head/It won’t be long before happiness steps up to greet me,” “Don’t fence me in,” “She’s the sweetest little rosebud/that Texas ever knew,” “You are the breathless hush of evening/You are the angel glow that lights the stars,” “You are the Sun, I am the moon/You are the words, I am the tune/Play Me,” “Bali Hai will call you,” and “Birth of the Blues”?

I must confess that all of the songs that come readily to my mind are, in my children’s vernacular, “ancient.” But, let me tell you *theirs* are no less adorned with metaphors than mine. Did not “You ain’t nothin but a hound dog/cryin all the time,” “I am a rock/I am an island,” “Hello darkness, my old friend/I’ve come to talk with you again,” “We all live in a yellow submarine,” and “Strawberry Hills” repetitively spew vivid metaphors from our record player?

SAYINGS, QUOTES, POETRY: “It’s a breeze,” “If the shoe fits,” “Seize the day,” “Death be not proud” (John Donne), “In the fell clutch of circumstance/Under the bludgeoning of chance” (“Invictus” by William Earnest Hensley), “Tis the set of the sails and not the gales/That determines the way we go” (“The Set of the Soul” by Ella Wheeler Wilcox), “Or to take arms against a sea of troubles” (*Hamlet*), “Dying is a wild night and a new road,” “Hope is the thing with feathers/That perches in the soul,” and “I can wade grief” (Dickinson), “There must be better songs to sing” (from the movie *Educating Rita*), and this exquisite example from “Love’s Philosophy” by Percy Bysshe Shelly:

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine

In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?—

See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;

And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?

PROSE. Who doesn't realize that the white whale in Melville's *Moby-Dick* symbolizes something more than a "large fish" and the sea, a power greater than one's own?

Time's up! But the list is endless, particularly when metaphoric depictions in art and cartoons are added. Think *Peanuts*, *Calvin and Hobbes* and the *Far Side!*

A final comment about illness and "accidents" as they relate to metaphors. Since the brain does not distinguish between reality and imagination/fantasy/illusion, one must *always* guard his thoughts and speech. Giving thought and/or voice to phrases like, "It kills me," "Don't bellyache," "He's a pain in the ass," "That gets on my nerves," "I'd rather be caught dead," "It gives me a headache," "It's back-breaking work," "My feet are killing me," "I'm helpless in this situation," "I turned a deaf ear," "I feel it in my bones," "She rubs me the wrong way," "Over my dead body!" "It breaks my heart," "A thorn in my side," "That makes my blood boil," "Cough it up," "I bust my balls," "That's hard to digest," "I'm fed up," "I've bitten off more than I can chew (swallow)," and "It takes my breath away," can produce unwanted physical results. I know a woman who, weary from the day-and-night task of caring for a sick, elderly loved one, once uttered aloud what she had been thinking for weeks, "I need a break." While she *meant* only that she wanted some time away from those things that were weighing her down, I cannot help but suspect that her *mind* took her literally and obliged because within two weeks she fell and broke her hip. Of course, metaphoric thinking works in positive ways, too. A lifetime spent seeing the glass half full and repeating Émile Coué's mantrum "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better," is bound to create beneficial effects.

Now that my eyes are open to metaphors and their selfless gift to the human psyche and spirit, I see them, hear them, speak them, sing them and treasure them every single day.

And I agree with Forrest Gump when he tells me "life is like a box of chocolates"—largely because Metaphors are Mind Candy.



Jeju Island by Lori Guderyon

Six Haiku

by David Berger

Running on the lake
Ducklings flap their downy wings
Expecting feathers

Baby porcupine
Hides his eyes to disappear
Frightful giant me

Sounds in the night sky
People talking dogs barking
It's geese flying north

Snake's in no hurry
But frog gripped by needle teeth
Has run out of time

Body down eyes bright
Step on silent step the cat
Can't not hunt the bird

Escaped parakeet
A blue flash among sparrows
Flies into winter



Morning Call by Susan Young Hoffman

Dr. Ackerman's Memory Training Seminar

by Andy Millman

Dr. Ackerman must have forgotten that I hadn't planned on attending his Memory Training Seminar. We were in his office playing checkers when he asked if I was looking forward to it. He was eating a roast beef sandwich and talking with his mouth full. I decided right then and there to take the class because a) Dr. Ackerman is a good teacher, and b) I wanted him to close his mouth.

I've taken many of Dr. Ackerman's classes, such as "Barbecuing like a Pro" and "How to Become a Celebrity Impersonator." In only four weeks I learned how to make a Louisiana Smoke Rub that gave my father third-degree heartburn and a Jerry Lewis imitation that aggravated his tinnitus. My mother said it was a combination of the ribs and my after-dinner performance, where I smoked cigarettes and squealed "Hey lady!" over and over into his right ear (the good one).

The seminar was scheduled for last Tuesday evening at 6 PM. I arrived forty-five minutes early in order to get a good seat. Dr. Ackerman was pleased to see me because he wanted help straightening up the classroom.

"There were a few accidents during obedience class," he said. Dr. Ackerman is also a dog trainer. "I might be expelling that Bichon if he doesn't get his act together."

Dr. Ackerman knew that I wouldn't want to go near any of the Bichon's accidents. I'm a charter member of his OCD (Overly Cautious Disposition) Group. He did ask me to sweep up the dog treats and fur, saying it would be good for my treatment. He picked up what the Bichon had left behind, using only a napkin to do so. Then he threw it out in the classroom wastebasket, which bothered me. I thought he should have flushed the whole package down the toilet, or at least taken it to an outside dumpster. I also didn't like the thud sound it made when it hit the bottom of the can.

Dr. Ackerman looked over the attendance roster (without washing his hands) and told me that two people on the list had actually shown up the night before. I asked if that was because they have memory problems and Dr. Ackerman said it was probably just because they're stupid.

Other students arrived and took their seats. There were three men and four women. If you counted me, that made four men and four women. I wondered if this was intentional, as Dr. Ackerman is also a matchmaker. He once set me up with his niece Frieda, who'd recently been released from prison. "It was minimum security," he explained. "And she was voted queen of her cell block." I was voted "Pauper of the Prom" my junior year of high school and he thought we'd make a good match.

A man and a woman came in but didn't sit. They told Dr. Ackerman that they'd changed their minds about the class and wanted a refund. Maybe these were the two from the night before. There was some arguing. The man called Dr. Ackerman "Quackerman" and said something about the Better Business Bureau. Dr. Ackerman told them to leave or he'd "call the cops." By the time they left Dr. Ackerman was flushed in the face and told the class he needed a few minutes "to get his head together." When he returned, his tie was off and he was drinking from a bottle of tomato juice.

"Okay," he said. "Let's start. Lesson one is name memorization." He pointed to the man sitting next to me. "What's your name?"

"Cyrus Aimsley," the man said.

"First names only, please," Dr. Ackerman said. "This is an entry-level class."

"Cyrus."

"Cyrus," Dr. Ackerman repeated.

"Yes, Cyrus," the man said.

"Cyrus," Dr. Ackerman said again.

The conversation ping-ponged back and forth like this for a while.

"I've now committed Cyrus's name to memory, but I will add a visual cue for reinforcement. Cyrus, please step up to the front of the class."

Dr. Ackerman requested a round of applause for Cyrus and we gave him one, though it didn't sound like much with only seven of us in the audience. "I now ask the other students to approach, one by one, and examine Cyrus. Look for some distinguishing feature."

The students gave Cyrus a good looking over. Everyone took this exercise very seriously. No one talked or made jokes. One woman put on her reading glasses. Cyrus squirmed around some and Dr. Ackerman told him to keep still.

"Okay, class," he said when the students had finished, "Tell me some of Cyrus's features that really stand out."

"His bald head," a woman said.

Dr. Ackerman used the tomato juice bottle to point at Cyrus's head. "Good," he said. "What else?"

"His red, splotchy cheeks," the woman with the reading glasses said.

"Excellent." He pointed at each of Cyrus's cheeks and the splotches on them.

“His head is sweaty and he has hair growing out of his ears,” I said.

“Very good,” Dr. Ackerman said.

“He has some crust in his eyes,” a man said.

Cyrus wiped his forehead with his sleeve and his eyes with his fingers.

“Yes,” Dr. Ackerman said. “Now let me think. I need complete silence.” He put the bottle down. He paced back and forth in front of the blackboard. He hummed and scratched at his chin. He then stopped and snapped his fingers. “I’ve got it!”

This was getting very exciting. It’s no wonder Dr. Ackerman is known as an excellent teacher.

“You,” he gestured to a man in the class. “What did you say was Cyrus’s distinguishing feature?”

“I think I said he had some crust in his eyes.”

“Yes, yes, I believe that’s exactly what you said. Cyrus, you may sit down.”

Sweat was now soaking through Cyrus’s shirt. There were big stains under his arms. I wondered if I should raise my hand and add that to his list of distinguishing features.

“Cyrus had some crust in his eyes. Eyes and crust, eyes and crust.” Dr. Ackerman walked up and down the rows. “Repeat after me, *eye crust, eye crust, eye crust.*”

Everyone (except for Cyrus) repeated along with Dr. Ackerman.

Dr. Ackerman returned to the front of the class.

“Tell me, what does *eye crust* sound like?”

“Pie crust?” suggested a plump woman named Judy whom I remembered from Dr. Ackerman’s Cake Decorating class.

“Yes,” Dr. Ackerman admitted, “It does sound like ‘pie crust,’ but I don’t think you’d want to eat pie from that eye. *Eye crust* also sounds like *Cyrus.*”

“Not really,” Cyrus murmured. He was talking into his sleeve.

“Remember,” Dr. Ackerman said, “*eye crust* equals *Cy-rus*, and *Cy-rus* equals *eye crust*. They will be bonded together in your mind. When you see him, you’ll picture eye crust. When you see eye crust, you’ll picture Cyrus. You will never forget his name now.”

“Or that he had crust in his eyes,” I added.

Dr. Ackerman nodded. He sat down on the edge of his desk and sighed. We were all impressed that he came up with such a clever technique. Dr. Ackerman can do most anything when he puts his mind to it. He has amazing powers of concentration. I’m thinking of enrolling in his “Concentration Camp” this summer, but I wish he’d change the name.

“What if you don’t remember?” Judy asked. “Lots of times I have something on the tip of my tongue but I just can’t remember it.”

Dr. Ackerman took a pair of glasses from his inside of his sports jacket. “Anyone want to guess why I carry these?”

“To see better,” I said. I wanted to answer some questions correctly in case he was going to give grades.

“Nope,” he said.

“To disguise yourself from your ex-wife,” I said. Dr. Ackerman had told me that he and his ex-wife took out mutual restraining orders and he’s not permitted to come within one hundred yards of her.

“No,” he said.

I wasn’t going to take another guess and risk getting a reputation as the class dunce.

“It’s what we in the business call ‘a stall,’” he said. “It gives us time to remember something if we don’t get it right away.” He pulled a red-stained handkerchief from his front pants pocket. He huffed on the glasses and then wiped them with the handkerchief. I was hoping that the stain was tomato juice, but I couldn’t help thinking that it might be blood. That’s what happens when you have Overly Cautious Disposition.

“A stall,” he said, “buys you time.”

“What if you still can’t remember after you’ve stalled?” Cyrus asked. He was no longer talking into his sleeve.

“If you stall long enough, the person you’re speaking with will likely forget whatever it was that you were talking about and you’ll be off the hook.”

“What if they don’t forget?” the woman with the glasses asked. This was getting to be what Dr. Ackerman referred to in Celebrity Impersonator class as “a tough crowd.”

Dr. Ackerman moved his hand and tipped over the bottle of juice.

He hopped off the desk. “Look at that,” he said in his acting voice. “I seemed to have spilled my drink. Why don’t I get something to clean up this mess?” Then he explained that he’d tipped the juice on purpose. He called it “a stopper” and said it’s used to stop a conversation. In addition to physical stoppers, like spilling juice, he gave us examples of verbal stoppers, such as “I have a bathroom emergency and must excuse myself.”

Dr. Ackerman used his handkerchief to wipe the desk and threw the handkerchief in the garbage.

“Let’s try someone else,” he said. “How about you?” He gestured toward a woman with dark hair and skin. She wore a sparkly blue dress and something silky around her head.

“I am Amrusha,” she said.

“Are you from another country, darling?” Dr. Ackerman asked.

“Yes,” she said. “I am from India.”

“That’s very good,” he said. “But I don’t do foreign names. How about I just call you Rush?”

Rush didn’t say anything but she frowned.

Dr. Ackerman paced back and forth in front of the blackboard again. “Rush, Rush, India, India,” he said. “India, India, Rush, Rush.” He turned and smiled. “I’ve now made a connection with Rush’s name and her country of origin.” He paused for dramatic effect (something he teaches in Acting, Level 2).

“The last time I went to an *Indian* buffet,” he said, “I had to *rush* home and use the toilet.”

“A bathroom emergency!” I pointed out.

“Exactly,” he said. “But this was no stall – this was the real deal!”

Dr. Ackerman was pleased with the progress we were making and asked if we would like to end early and get some dinner. He said that all the memorizing had made him “hungry enough to eat a horse.” Then he looked at Rush and said he’d even be willing to “roll the dice and go back to the Indian buffet.”

Rush said, “My name is Amrusha, and we do not eat horses,” and left the classroom.

“One less person’s name to memorize,” Dr. Ackerman said brightly. “And I believe they do eat horses.”

Dr. Ackerman said that as long as Rush was gone, he was going to get a pizza. If we didn't want to join him, we should pair off and try to memorize our partners' names and one interesting fact about them. He left and Judy from Cake Decorating scooted her chair next to mine. Since we already knew each other's names, we skipped ahead to the interesting fact.

Judy said that Dr. Ackerman had tried to set her up with his nephew Alfonse, who'd served time for a couple strong-arm robberies. I told her about being fixed up with Dr. Ackerman's niece Frieda, who'd served time for fraud. I wasn't sure if that was as interesting as strong-arm robberies, so I told her about Frieda's tattoo, which was a snake that wound its way from her cheek down her neck and then to who-knows-where (she'd offered to show me but I declined).

Judy asked what other courses I'd taken with Dr. Ackerman. I told her about the Celebrity Impersonator class and that my final project was on Jerry Lewis. She wanted to know if it was early Jerry Lewis – like the one in the movies with Dean Martin – or older, chubbier Jerry Lewis – like the one on the telethons. I told her it was skinny Jerry from the movies and asked if she'd like to hear me yell "Hey lady!" and she said she would.

I took Dr. Ackerman's glasses, which he'd left on the desk, and wiped them off with a (clean) napkin from the desk drawer. I put them on kind of cock-eyed. Then I walked around as Dr. Ackerman had directed during workshop, "like your bladder is about to burst."

"Hey lady!" I yelled. After I shouted it about a half dozen times, a classmate (I think his name is Jessie) told me to "shut my pie hole." Maybe it was because he mentioned pie or all that talk about "Cyrus" sounding like "pie crust," but Judy told me to sit down and asked if I'd like to go to her apartment for a piece of pie.

"What about Dr. Ackerman?" I said.

"I can bring him a slice tomorrow," she said.
"I'm signed up for his foot massage class."

"Heeling the Sole'?" I asked. "Me too."

Judy and I waited for the other students to leave so I could turn off the lights and lock the door. While walking to her car, we saw Dr. Ackerman eating pizza at Peppy's. He was sitting at a counter by the window. He held a slice in one hand and his other hand was wrapped around a waitress's waist. He had some tomato sauce on his chin.

"Should we tell him that we left?" I asked.

She shook her head. "I think he's got other things on his mind."

The waitress was dabbing Dr. Ackerman's chin with a napkin. As she leaned down, Dr. Ackerman gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"That's love," Judy said.

"That's amore!" I said. Then I went into my Dean Martin imitation and sang a few bars of "That's Amore." I pretended I was drunk because Dr. Ackerman said Dean Martin was usually drunk and that drunk people are funny.

When we got in Judy's car she looked at me for a moment. She said I wasn't going to be sorry for coming back to her place.

"You must have some tasty pie," I said.

She laughed and I wasn't sure why.

The Cow

by Claire Lazimy

“Papi, tell me the story of the sick cow,” I asked my dad for the millionth time. On summer evenings, when we sat on canvas rocking chairs on the flat tiled roof of our house, my father’s stories took me on magical journeys to a time and place I would never know. The story of the cow was one of my favorites, so he settled himself comfortably, took a sip of cold mint water, and began:

My twin sister Milke and I came home from school, and as usual went straight to get the cows from the pasture and bring them in for the night. One of the animals just lay there, seemingly asleep.

“Shh,” said Milke. “Don’t bother her.”

“She looks sick,” I replied. “The two other cows that died last week looked just like this one. I’m going to take a closer look.”

“What if she gets mad?” Milke asked.

“Nah, she’s too sick to even get up. Don’t be chicken, follow me.”

The self confidence in my voice, and her own curiosity broke down Milke’s reserves, and she followed slowly in my footsteps. I, a little hesitant despite my initial swagger; she, gathering courage as we came closer to the animal.

Milke and I were the youngest of eight children in the family of Brane and Duvid Shmil Morgensteren. Wherever there was mischief in the farm, you could almost bet you’d see us: tall, slim eight year olds, with that twinkle in our blue-green eyes. We were inseparable.

We had two cows left on our small farm. It wasn’t much, but as most of the other Jewish settlers in the Argentinean wilderness in the early 1900’s, we didn’t have much of anything. If a cow got sick and died, the shokhet (ritual slaughterer) would declare the meat non-kosher, and it couldn’t be sold. It was a great loss for the farmers, who were barely subsisting on a meager corn crop.

We drew nearer, now we could hear the sick animal’s labored breathing. Our bare feet hardly made any noise on the dew-moist grass, but the cow must have smelled us. I was but an arm’s length away when, suddenly, it raised its head, got to its feet with surprising agility, and charged us with an angry growl. Milke was a little farther behind; she jumped quickly out of the way of the crazed animal, and kept running in the general direction of the house. I wasn’t as lucky, and was thrown to the ground. I wanted to get up and out of there as fast as I could, but the cow had a different idea of how things were to be. I saw the big,

horned head come closer and closer; felt the thumps on my chest and belly as the cow head-butted me repeatedly, trying to gore me with its horns. I could still hear Milke's voice yelling for help, but it was growing fainter by the second.

Thoughts chased each other rapidly: Mama would be upset that my shirt tore. Would it hurt terribly when the horns sunk into my belly? Would the cow chew up my nose? Father would be so angry if he had to shoot the cow! I could move my hands and feet, but was afraid to anger the animal further. I kept very still, trying not to breath too loudly, or too often, which was a tremendous effort, since my heart pounded wildly in my chest, and the tears ran down my face and got in my ears.

Suddenly there came the sound of horses galloping across the field. The sick cow turned from me, frightened, and was roped by a man I didn't know, while a second stranger dismounted and walked over to where I was, still lying on the ground.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"I don't think so," I answered in a whisper.

"Good, we'll take you home."

My legs shook so hard that I could hardly stand, let alone walk. The man scooped me up in his arms and carried me on his horse all the way to our small house. My relief was soon marred by the embarrassment of what had happened, of the wetness on my face and down my legs; I was feeling very small and scared. My father would be angry. He was a stern man, easy to anger, and I had disobeyed the strict rule that no one was to approach a sick animal in the field. Mother would surely intercede on my behalf, but she'd be upset, too.

When the small party arrived at the house, Mother and Father were already waiting for us outside. Milke had sent the two men she met on the way to help me, and she'd ran on, to alert the family.

To my surprise, they looked anxious, not mad. Father took me from the stranger and brought me gently into the house. When he put me on my cot he brushed the hair from my forehead and kissed me softly. I fell asleep, exhausted.

My dad sighed; I saw the glimmer of tears in his eyes. Fifty years had passed, but he still treasured the memory of that kiss, the only one his father ever gave him.



Bridge by Bill Eisinger

Brother Older Than Myself

by Barbara Carson

Brother older than myself,
Do you remember when you were Chief Mighty Cloud and I
Was Little Wing?

Ah ah

I will tell you what is in my heart.

Even before recorded history
The legends tell of how you took me by the hand
And guided me across the fields to the place
Where the earth no longer lives.
Through all the days of all the wintercounts of my childhood
You guided me.

You showed to me the beauty of the land.

Early, when the sun was waking up,
You took me through the sinew grass
To the little water place.

And I became friend to:

the little striped back
the tall ears
the swims-carrying-stick-in-mouth creature
the shell that walks
the double-wing with red shoulders
and
the bird who knocks on wood.

You taught to me the secrets of the little-people-of-the-air.

I learned to read the music of their wings.
And find their homes among the sticks that point toward sky.
I learned to blow the smoke so they would not stab
And raise a lump.
But always, you taught, leave to them their winter food.

When the winter voice sang strong across our land,
You placed your deerskin robe across my shoulder
And stoked the fire in our lodge to drive away the bitter cold.
When the fever burned within my brow.

Kitchen Match

by Tom Schlict

At the University, my friend Francis Piercy Green and I were opposites. I'd be off in a corner of the library with my face in a book on mythology. He'd be gadding about the Student Union holding forth about this or that, usually ending up trying to take someone's money at the pool table. I was an introverted loner, but he was gregarious, outspoken and provocative. People either liked him, as I did, or loathed him.

During Spring Break he'd often stop by our old-fashioned farmhouse around dinnertime and be invited to join us. As an only child, he enjoyed being treated like one of the family. My five younger siblings and I would be attacking with gusto my mother's own recipe for spaghetti and meatballs. But Francis, a slender fellow with a finicky stomach, would decline when my dad would say, "Come on, Francis, how about another plateful?" My mother, Gladys, took a dim view of anyone who didn't clamor for more of the cooking she was famous for. So, Francis had gotten off on the wrong foot with her.

Nonetheless, the rest of us enjoyed his outrageous stories, so I told him, "Please feel free to stop by any afternoon. Gladys feels fine in the p.m., and besides she loves to feed people." There was an important caveat though, so I laid it out for him. "She stays up past midnight reading, gets up late in the morning and is rather grouchy for a while. So, a visit to our house before noon is out of the question."

If Francis had a fatal flaw, it was his determined insistence on doing things *his* way, discretion be damned. The ancient Greeks called such stubborn willfulness; *hubris*. This was a failing which always caused the gods to dispatch Nemesis to cut the headstrong offender down to size. But my friend had no interest in stories that seemed to him hopelessly out-of-date. So, it was inevitable, I suppose, that around 11 a.m. one fine April morning a familiar face appeared in the glass of our front porch door. Gladys, just risen from bed, hadn't yet gotten around to putting in her partial plate.

I warned my mother, "oh-oh, here comes Francis Piercy," and the sound of his middle name reminded me of Perseus. This was a fine Greek hero, who like Francis went where angels, or even Greek gods, feared to tread. Perseus had to slay the Gorgon, Medusa, in her den and return with her head, which had snakes for hair. The catch was that anyone she looked at turned to stone.

Only by looking at the monster's reflection in his polished shield was the hero able to decapitate her. Of course, I mentioned none of this to Gladys. She had more important interests than my "silly fairy tales"; her bag was astrology.

Without knocking, the intrepid Francis Piercey Green strode through the front porch and into the kitchen. “Hi, Francis P., have a seat,” I greeted him, motioning to a chair. Gladys ignored him and he remained standing, seeming to sense a challenge in the air.

My mother was in her faded housecoat and slippers, hair uncombed and snarled. Standing before a saucepan on the stove, with her usual cup of strong coffee nearby on the kitchen table, she took a deep drag on a Philip Morris. Since she didn’t like talking much at this hour, I said, “Francis, let’s go sit on the porch.” But he was not to be diverted.

After launching into a stream of small talk that I knew would irritate her, he finally got around to his point. “You know, Mrs. S, you’re boiling that egg all wrong.” Gladys, the legendary cook, turned her proud face, still a little bleary-eyed from sleep, and looked the self-styled expert up and down.

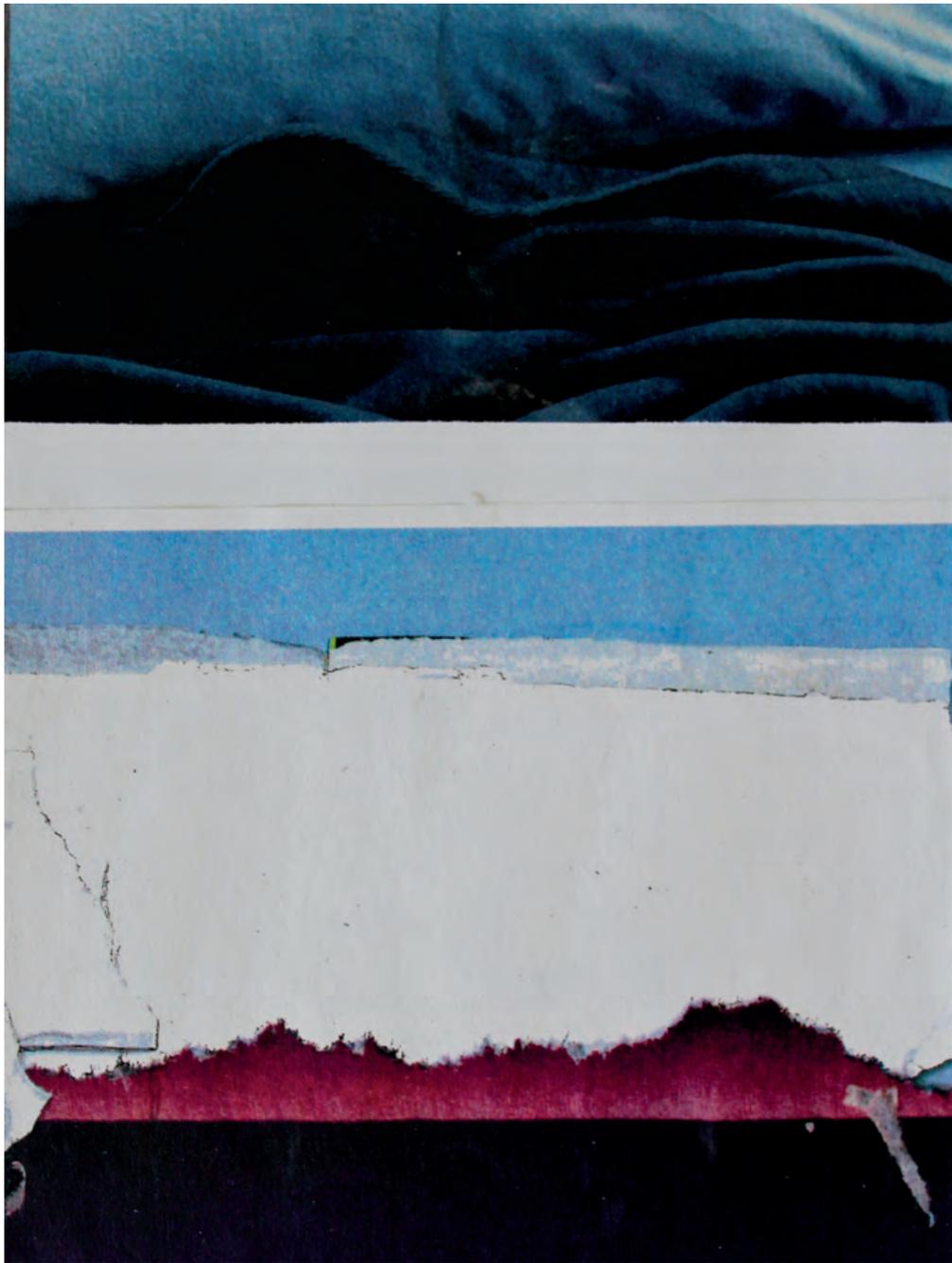
“You see,” he went on, “you’ve got to have a timer so the egg boils for exactly two minutes.” He was warming to his subject now. With furtive gestures I tried to warn him that Aetna was about to erupt, but he was too engrossed in his lecture to notice.

I knew Gladys didn’t suffer fools gladly, but even so, it took me by surprise when she made a sudden move from the stove toward Francis. Holding the egg up to his nose, she fixed him with a baleful glare and hissed, “See this? You can take this egg and shove it!” Time seemed to stop as an eerie silence filled the kitchen. A petrified Francis Piercey for the first time in his life was speechless. The next thing I knew the porch door was swinging on its hinges, and he had made his escape.

Thinking about the event later, I was reminded of my grade school days. I had pilfered a box of wooden Lucifers from the kitchen to secretly play with behind the woodshed.

On summer evenings I’d scratch one of them and watch it explode into flame against the darkening sky – a perfect metaphor for one of Gladys’ flare-ups when an abrasive personality like my friend’s rubbed her the wrong way.

It’s sixty-some years later now. My beloved mother has passed, and so has my old buddy, Francis. Spring is just around the corner again when children will be decorating Easter eggs or hunting for them. And for me, as always, the season evokes memories of that storied egg of yesteryear. It brings back the image of the would-be Perseus who met his match when he entered the Gorgon’s lair.



Still Winter Night by Grethe-J Brix Leer

The Same, But Different

by Janice Golay

The Old Neighborhood. How many times have I revisited it – despite an increasingly fragmented memory, age-related static? Sounds and images fade in, fade out, depending upon mood and time of day, but they're not yet erased, thank God. The memory of my family's bungalow on the Southeast Side of Chicago is clear, including the shared bedroom allotted to my older sister Carole and me. The love-hate scenarios we created in that room, as well as in the living room, attic, basement, back- and front-yards remain intact. Laughter and fistfights.

A modest, multi-ethnic working-class neighborhood is what I remember. Southern Italians and a variety of Slavs shuffled off to one of three work-shifts at the muscular South Works steel mills, sweating and lifting in the red glow of open-hearth furnaces. A small cluster of Nordic immigrants had settled around a Swedish Lutheran church and church-school, not far from its Catholic equivalent. The Swedish contribution was two excellent bakeries. A commercial class – insurance, retail, small businesses – lived in bigger houses. Their names were “Anglo” or Jewish, as I would later learn. When young I had not yet defined ethnic categories. They were just people in my neighborhood, until I became aware of a conscious system of societal categorization that “someone” had devised.

I remember my neighborhood, called “The East Side,” as an urban small town, beautifully close to Lake Michigan breezes, except when they were stifled by a summer clammy calm. When the wind blew from the wrong direction – that is, from the mills – a mysterious fine shower of rust-colored iron filings fell upon us. This was not Manna from Heaven.

Due to his native intelligence and agreeable personality my father secured a position at RR Donnelley & Co., one of the major national printing companies. He began his work history – illegally -- at age 15, using his older brother Tony's birth certificate to skirt child labor laws. When he turned 16 he could officially be called Stephen, his baptismal name. My father travelled north from our neighborhood to “Printer's Row” on 22nd Street. As a Pressman he oversaw the printing of *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, etc.

At first my father worked the 4-12 shift to earn a higher salary. That meant seeing him only on weekends, except for an occasional glimpse of his huge snoring body in my parents' bedroom. My mother always waited up for his 12:45 am return, popcorn and detective stories her company until then. Occasionally I spied morning remnants of jumbo fried shrimp and smoked fish that my father picked up at the Shrimp Shack on the 100th Street Bridge, on his way home from work. All that remained was tasty fried crumbs and greasy butcher's paper – as well as whispered conversation and smothered laughter that reached my nearby bedroom.

My Chicago public elementary school education could have been a lot worse. Most teachers were women who had escaped a life in the convent. They were well trained, especially in math and English. A handful of women mysteriously became "Mrs." How could this happen to someone who was obviously so old? The school's two men taught gym and/or shop.

There were no playgroups in the Old Neighborhood. We had to rely upon individual interests and imagination. Luckily for me, our bungalow was surrounded by vacant lots, undeveloped and available for neighborhood "squatting." Adults planted household gardens. Kids built foxholes to act out a variety of "us *versus* them" scripts. My favorite free-range pastime was a quest for colored glass shards in paved neighborhood alleyways and rubbish middens: emerald green from 7-UP bottles, Mediterranean blue from Brioschi anti-acid jars, sometimes a rare red piece, mysteriously dropped from the sky. I laid out these modest mosaics on our back-porch window ledge, my own little Byzantium.

Ambulance driver – The Jewels

Now leap forward about seventy years. During this time our young Chicago heroine finished college, married, divorced, remarried, and lived for seven years each in France and Switzerland. During these years the steel mills were brutally closed, sold, razed. Neighborhood unemployment reached 33%. Many left to find jobs "wherever."

The bungalows still remain, but their owners now show a slightly deeper skin color. Many speak Spanish. The streets still feature kids growing up, attending school, playing outside where they can. Parents dedicate themselves to a better life for the next generation through the classic formula of hard work, home ownership, neighborhood schools.

A few years ago, my husband JP and I traveled by bus from Madison, WI, for a Christmas gathering in Northwest Indiana, where my sister now lives. Our bus arrived at Chicago's O'Hare Airport where we planned to take a regional bus to Indiana. We arrived on time, tired and excited. O'Hare is always a charged environment but especially so during the holiday season. We arrived at an upper level of the airport, then headed for the Down escalator and our regional bus connection. I went first. JP followed with a small rolling suitcase. I watched in horror and screamed as I saw JP stumble, then fall, the relentless escalator hitting his head with a deadly rhythm. An alert bystander stopped the moving stairs, led a bleeding JP and me to chairs and told us emergency help was on its way.

Sure enough (as promised) a Chicago Fire Department ambulance arrived, lights flashing. JP was rolled into the back of the vehicle. I climbed into the passenger seat as we pulled away, strobe lights and siren clearing the road before us. Chatty by nature, and needing to talk away my stress, I started a conversation with the EMS driver.

"So, where do you live in Chicago?" This is a usual opening question in the Chicago area. If someone says "Chicago" I say "What Neighborhood?"

"Chicago," says the driver. "What neighborhood?" say I. The South Side, says he. "Oh, what neighborhood?" "The East Side." [Thunderstruck, here I am sitting with a homeboy, probably Mexican-American.]

"What street?"

"Avenue E." [This is mere blocks from where I grew up.]

"What schools are there now?"

"Gallistel is the public school. My kids go to St. Francis de Sales." [So my elementary school edifice still exists, as does the Catholic equivalent.]

"What about grocery stores?" [When I lived on the East Side my Aunt Eva preferred to patronize a well-run Jewel Food Store. Innocent of her verbal deformation, she referred to it as "The Jewels." My mother went to Kroger.]

"Grocery stores? My wife and I like to go to *The Jewels*."

There it was! Same, but different. Repeating some unknown pattern, bringing me reassurance and a smile.

JP was treated, bandaged, medicated and released from the ER. We were chauffeured to my sisters' in Munster, Indiana, eager to recount our frightening yet bizarrely comforting modern-day traveler's tale.

Coastline

by Nancy Cross Dunham

ocean's dark ferocity
rushes to encounter
boundless rock

... fractures ...

for a moment
a million drops
of sunlight

and the next breaker arrives



Storm Approaching by Joanna Kutter

Death of a Tree

by Diane Hughes

An early morning storm woke me with the fierce sound of a storm. Large drops of sleet driven by wind hit my window with terrifying force. A lover of storms, I wrapped up in a blanket and moved to a chair in the studio window. There, I could watch trees frantically dancing, bending so far I thought they would break. The winds whistling higher and higher, thunder and lightning now so intense the thought crossed my mind that this might be a time to check weather radar and see if tornados might form in our neighborhood. But, I sat so enthralled by Nature's great show that I couldn't look away. If a tornado came by, I wouldn't want to miss a single second of watching even if it be my last moment of life.

The grove of trees out back, a group of twenty or so, seemed to be dancing. I was reminded of a video I'd recently seen of a village of folks danced wildly to the rhythm of drums. Two large trees in the center--a couple--the elders, I thought, formed the center of the small wooded lot. The one I considered a woman, although I could never explain why, suddenly grew more frantic, hectic and fast, while the others grew quiet, seemingly to watch. Her limbs went straight up, though she tried to resist, a force too compelling drawing her up. The wind held her spirit and she started to bend. Four feet from her base at almost a 45 degree bend, she held for a moment and then seemed to give in. Her root ball was naked and as she fell, her neighbor, her lover, her life partner and friend, caught her in his arms, as if to break her fall. He sacrificed two limbs and possibly more, as she slid down making her last curtain call.

The storm, now satiated by taking the best, moved on towards the east, already spent.

The Waiting

by Joanna Kutter

Forty-eight hours. Two whole days! Richard and me...together. Alone.

Just the thought of it made Lauren jittery. She had re-packed her new plaid duffel bag three times before finally deciding on taking the ribbed blue turtleneck Richard gave her for Christmas. Everything finally fell into place when her roommate's boyfriend offered her a ride to Whitewater on their way to Chicago.

It was going to be a perfect weekend.

When they left Green Bay in the middle of a snowstorm she knew the two-hour ride on icy roads was going to seem like forever but the anticipation of seeing Richard again after being apart for thirty-nine days, six hours and nine minutes made it worthwhile. He wanted her to stay with him for a special weekend to celebrate their one-year anniversary of going together. He promised to cook her a gourmet dinner, complete with candlelight, a bottle of Mateus and a little Marvin Gaye on the stereo. Lauren guessed he'd even have a single red rose for her, just like he did on their first date. He was such a romantic...full of surprises. That's what she loved about him and she loved the way his beach-blond hair fell over his left eye and the way he opened her car door for her and the way he snuck up behind her and kissed her neck. She felt a smile sneak up on herself.

Is this what real L O V E feels like?

When Lauren arrived at his apartment she ran up the stairs and knocked on his door. He didn't answer. She banged again but still, no answer.

Something is amiss. Where the heck is he?

Lauren paced around the lobby, unsure of what to do. It had been a long car ride and she was dying for a hot cup of coffee to warm her. She thought maybe Richard had fallen asleep waiting for her. She knew he had been up late all week studying for exams. She looked at her watch. It was 6:00 p.m. She had now been waiting an hour for him to appear. Just to make sure, she ran up the steps again, jiggled the handle of the flimsy door and waited. It wasn't like him not to be there to meet her.

Lauren zipped open her duffel bag and pulled out the tin of chocolate chip cookies she baked the day before. They were Richard's favorite cookie and she purposely burned a few, just the way he liked them. She grabbed a handful and hid the bag under the stairwell. Brushing icy mud from the second step with her mitten, Lauren sat down and began licking the chocolate pieces hanging off the edges of the cookie.

8:05pm. Richard was now three hours late. The hardness of the step made her butt muscles fall asleep and the cold began to seep through her bell-bottom jeans.

Lauren straightened her legs in front of her and drew circular patterns with her feet. She stood and raised her self up on her toes to look out the frosty window of the lobby door for Richard's car. She remembered his parking spot was the second from the curb. It was still empty except for a few cigarette butts and a crumbled green Double-mint gum wrapper. She wondered why he always emptied the ashtray out the passenger side of the car. Lauren wished she had some smokes right now.

Fidgeting nervously, she moved up to the top step to get a better view of her surroundings. As she peeked around the corner, the dimly lit hallway seemed suddenly eerie. Through the shadows she could see the orange flowered wallpaper peeling away, revealing a lime green under-coat of paint from another era. The red carpet was speckled with black threads, or was it dirt? Lint settled in the crevice between the baseboard and the edge of the carpet. It infuriated her to think that Richard dished out \$500 a month for this dump. She checked her Timex again. Another hour had passed.

The lobby door swung open with a cold wind that blew in two young women, camouflaged behind shopping bags and bouffant hairdos. They almost stepped on her as they giggled up the stairway, pausing for a moment to cast a snide glance her way. Feeling awkward, Lauren smiled and said she was just waiting for her ride and asked if they could give her the correct time. Exactly 9:06. She sighed. She wished she was invisible.

This was not starting out to be a very romantic weekend.

Lauren looked over her shoulder at the door marked 201 hoping it would magically open and Richard would be standing there full of apologies. She began to wonder what she'd do if Richard didn't come home tonight. Where would she go, in a strange town, with no car, on a cold winter night? Although this was student housing, it was off-campus in the middle of nowhere. She didn't even know which direction campus *was*. It wasn't much of a neighborhood. She hadn't seen any lights of businesses or even a gas station when they drove in. Looking around her she spotted a payphone next to the mailboxes along the lobby wall but didn't know anyone to call and had no change...only a twenty-dollar bill in her wallet. She felt desperately alone.

10:20pm. Lauren started to worry about Richard.

Oh my god...his car could've slid off an icy road and he could be trapped and mangled inside.

The morning newspaper headlines would read:
UNIVERSITY STUDENT KILLED IN CRASH ON WAY TO SEE GIRLFRIEND.

She whispered a little prayer and hoped God was listening. She hadn't been to Mass in months.

10:39pm. Her stomach growled from hunger that the cookies didn't satisfy and her pinky finger was bleeding now where she ripped off the fingernail with her teeth. Lauren crawled down to the fifth step where she could more easily see cars as they entered the parking lot. Her heart was weary from jumping every time a car turned in.

She leaned her head against the wall and tried to doze but Janis Joplin's *Piece of My Heart* blared from another apartment down the hall and kept her awake. "I can't believe I waited in line for three hours to buy Janis concert tickets when I don't even like her screaming voice," Lauren grumbled to herself.

Well, it was my birthday gift to Richard and it turned out to be a fun night after all, dancing in the aisles and singing along with the crowd. I remember, too, that concert was my introduction to pot. Damn, if only I had a joint right now.

11:21pm. Lauren pulled her legs up to her chest and hugged them as she rested her head on her knees.

I'm not going to cry. I'm not going to cry. I'm not going to cry.

She told herself wiping her tears on her jeans. She started rocking back and forth when she noticed headlights pouring through the window of the door. Lauren started to shake. Three guys got out of a car and stumbled in the door. No Richard. But she recognized them. She met them at Homecoming. "Hi guys. It's Lauren. Have you seen Richard tonight?" The cute one, she thought his name was Johnny or Tommy or something like that, grinned and garbled, "Yeah, down at the Rathskeller and he's hot tonight!"

Even though they were loud, boorish, bullying drunks, she wished they had invited her to hang out in their apartment till Richard came home but, instead, they tramped up the steps unconcerned about her awkward situation. It was then that Lauren's self pity turned to anger.

So that's where he is! Gambling and drinking and who knows what else. Probably has that busty Robin chic on his lap wishing him luck. Damn! He's forgotten about me. Shithead!

Lauren searched in her duffel bag for a match, lit the half-smoked Winston she picked up off the floor from Johnny/Tommy, took a long drag and let the smoke linger in her lungs. She stood on the first step with her arms crossed and leaned against the wall. Outside, the lights in the windows of the two little houses across the street were dark now but the storm clouds had moved on leaving the new moon to cast blue-white light on the fresh snow below. The beauty of the night could not erase the heartbreak she felt inside. Loneliness, however, had turned to disgust.

She flicked the cigarette and let the ashes fall on the floor. And waited.

1:12 am.

A car pulls into Richard's parking space.

Motherless Children

by Norman Leer

We played together. Last night
Richard Davis and Willie Pickens

remembered, improvised, created
“Sometimes I Feel Like

a Motherless Child.” Bowing his bass,
Davis made it cry, an abandoned

baby. The helpless children
wailed till you could hear their bones

talk. My own, brittle from age
and memory, joined them, glad to sing.

(October 2, 2017)



Peruvian Yarn Dyers by Sherry Ackerman

Teatime

by Janice Golay

Aunt Denise was about 85-years-old when we first met. I was newly married to her nephew JP, the French-Swiss man who had swept me off my feet in Madison, Wisconsin. It was time to make the rounds in Switzerland, meeting a fifty-years' resume of family and friends. Luckily for me, JP's favorite Aunt Denise was among them.

Denise lived alone in the comfortable family house, set in a small village in the Jura Mountains. The village bordered on France, but it was definitely on the Swiss side of the border—culturally, politically, and historically. Denise's father, the patriarch, had been a big fish in the small-pond village of St. Cergue-sur-Nyon. He was schoolmaster, choir director of the village Protestant Church, Justice of the Peace, the father of four well-schooled daughters, and—finally—one son.

Denise left her doors unlocked, open to all who wished to visit and to whom she offered warm greetings, tea, biscuits, and bright conversation. Her heart was large, her mind sharp. Visits promised engaged conversation about important socio-political issues, recent books, classical music, and—if needed—the ways of the heart.

Teatime

Teatime rituals began daily in Switzerland at around 3:30-4:00 pm, perhaps influenced by teatime in England but reinterpreted by the Swiss bourgeoisie. With Aunt Denise, the ritual included a bottomless pot of tea brewed in a vessel of fine pewter, with matching cream and sugar accessories. A silver tea service would have been too ostentatious for a sober Swiss Protestant household, perhaps descendants of French Huguenots who long ago had fled Catholic France. Aunt Denise wore a gold Huguenot cross.

At teatime, Denise rolled a clever tea trolley into the living room from the kitchen. It held the pewter tea service, as well as a thermos of hot water and delectable treats set on china or pewter plates. One started with savory biscuits then moved on to sweet items: multiple varieties and shapes of butter cookies, a freshly-baked cake from the village pastry shop, perhaps a sampling of fine chocolates. This made for a kind of teatime meal.

Was it the sugar or the caffeine that wound up the intensity and scope of our conversations? Perhaps this was the normal trajectory. Opposing views were always welcomed, as were confidences and ideas of all sorts. No gossip, unless you counted village history.

One teatime, perhaps charmed by a winter landscape on the other side of the double-paned windows and by our shared tales, Aunt Denise suddenly fell silent.

Something special was about to be divulged. JP and I pulled back. Denise breathed in, lowered her eyes, and began a confidence of her youth: unfulfilled love.

Her story began when she was 17 or 18 years old. It was a village encounter, a crush, perhaps reciprocated, or not. Denise thought her romantic feelings were mirrored by the young man, but one autumn she learned from his delicate letter that this was not the case. He had just become engaged to marry another young woman. Had Denise been “led-on” or had she simply projected her feelings onto an amiable male villager? Whatever the case, Denise was crushed as only a sensitive young woman in early 20th century Switzerland would be. This would be her lifelong private pain.

Denise “acted out” in the family and in her village. Despite her parents’ firm discipline Denise rebelled against the expected behavior of young women in Switzerland. What to do? Her parents decided to send her to board for a year at a strict “finishing” school in a German-speaking canton—probably Thun. The purpose was to train Denise to conform to accepted standards of the time for young women. Luckily, the experience didn’t “finish” Denise, but trained her in skills that allowed her to teach in her village and in others.

Never having married or born children, Denise held an unfulfilled tenderness for infants. In a small industrial watch-making town, some distance from her village, she had the idea and the energy to create a unique childcare center for infant children whose mothers worked in the factory. This was her fondest lifetime achievement. She provided and cared for the infants as if they were her own. She was happy, fulfilled.

Then her father died, her beloved mother fell ill, and someone had to care for the widowed matriarch. The family designated Denise. She was obliged to abandon her infant profession and return to St. Cergue for family responsibilities. Eventually her mother died. Denise was then called upon to give the same care and sacrifice for her older sister until the sister died, as well. Denise had been chosen as the family caregiver because her oldest sister, my mother-in-law, was married. Another sister died of tuberculosis while a nurse in a Swiss TB sanatorium. Her brother, also married and a Protestant missionary-minister, was clearly absolved of any such family responsibilities.

For Denise’s sacrifices she was rewarded with lifetime shelter in the family home and the company of visitors who could count on lively discussions and kind advice over a fine cup of tea.

Denise died at age 97, cared for in the end by an excellent Swiss system of social services and healthcare. The family home was sold, its contents divided among four nephews and a niece. JP’s share, and what I cherish in my Madison apartment, is the tea trolley, pewter tea service, a few silver spoons, various hand-painted pieces of fine porcelain, and especially the high-backed “Voltaire” chair where Denise always sat—reading, serving tea, or just remembering.



Still Life with Flowers and Glassware by Jim Albright

Melrose

by Allen Youngwood

Jennie had been forewarned of the changes by the time they drove over the Douglas Creek bridge into town. A lot can happen in fifteen years. The massive oak trees that lined the highway were taken down by a widening project. The beloved old movie theatre was now a restaurant. The mill pond was drained, leaving a weedy depression. But, as she gazed out the back-seat window, somehow none of this detracted from her memory of the place. Mostly it looked and felt the same, only smaller. A lot smaller.

Her father, Harold, turned left onto Bristol Street past the town's only park. The Sherman tank was still stationed on its concrete slab in the center of the park, along with a plaque, listing the names of the sons of Melrose, Wisconsin lost in Europe and the Pacific, those killed in Korea and those from Viet Nam. Jennie briefly wondered if there were more names now? Her mother, Millie, turned in the passenger seat to give her a smile as they pulled into Ruby Ginther's driveway.

What was left of the young children of Melrose and their spouses encircled Aunt Ruby's long walnut dining-room table, all talking at once. Only Millie and her three older sisters remain now. Vilas, long gone to cancer, and Merle, Pearl's twin, lost to heart disease almost a year ago. Jennie sat at one end of the table, the only 'child' there. She had fond memories of these family get-togethers while growing up. But it was different today. She was seeing her relatives with adult eyes really, for the first time.

Aunt Ruby spoke from the head of the table opposite Jennie. She was the oldest, and the only one to still live in the old hometown. Ruby had her stories, and she was having a grand time telling them; the old gent across town who accidentally killed himself cleaning a shot gun, the December romance between a 78-year old neighbor and her 93-year old beau and the fist fight at the Legion hall. The mention of old Melrose family names prompted random comments and a flurry of earnest side-bar discussions.

Jennie noticed familiar items from her grandparents' house, prominently displayed around the room: the old cuckoo-clock brought from Germany generations ago, a faded painting of Coon Hollow—the family farm outside of town--and a music box that played 'Greensleeves'. Jennie loved to wind the key and open the lid of that magical box as a kid. It looked tiny to her now, up on that shelf.

Aunt Ruby had the floor again, "Harry and me was coming back from the cities on the old highway; this was years ago and we come up on a long line of cars going real slow. Well, Harry was in a god-awful hurry to get back to town for some damn reason. Got cussin' mad at the delay. He swore if the guy holding

up traffic ever pulled off, he was going to stop and kick the hell out of him. He meant it too. So, some time goes by and finally the cars pick up speed, and I see Pa's old green Chevy along side the road. So, I says to Harry, 'Look! It was Pa going so slow, we should have known.' All he said was 'Shit!' and on we went."

An explosion of laughter filled the room. The old faces became children's faces again, remembering their father and his life-long belief that, to go over 25-miles an hour in an automobile, was an act of lunacy.

The food was placed on the table, looking every bit as bountiful and delicious as a holiday feast from long ago; huge pot roast, fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, peas and corn on the cob. No arugula salad here, thought Jennie. On cue, the food was passed in both directions, she noted. This was serious business. Uncle Marvin picked up a slice of home-made bread, cut a slab of 'real' butter—from the local creamery no doubt—and carefully placed it in a corner, he folded the bread once over, and then over again to a quarter-size with the butter slab in the middle. It was the farm-hand way; the way the men did it when he was a boy. The same way Jennie saw men eat their bread when she was young.

The feasting was nearly done when Aunt Ruby spoke up, "Well is it true that you never get any rain out there in California?"

They all turned to look at Jennie. What the heck? she thought, surveying the smiling faces, the sly looks and the eager eyes. Absent any hint from Mom or Dad, Jennie concluded a silly question deserved a silly response.

"Ah, yes, Aunt Ruby, it never rains, never has and never will."

Ruby was delighted, "Oh, you! Just like your Ma. She was always pulling my leg."

"Now, come on, I'm not that bad," said Mom. "Certainly not as goofy as Stella."

"I do believe I did read something about rain in California," said Aunt Stella. "They passed a law or something. Fred, dear, do you remember that?"

Uncle Fred jumped in, "Yep, Seems they stop you at the state line and warn you not to bring in any fruit, vegetables or rain. Happened to your cousins from St. Paul, didn't it Howard?"

They were off and running. Uncle Howard and all the others taking their turn batting it back and forth across the table. Suddenly, Jennie realized what she was witnessing; something that had escaped her as a child. Some longstanding family game, started who knows when, each taking it one step further; changing the subject sometimes, but always cueing the next. Jennie felt honored and proud. She had been asked to set the game in motion and had unwittingly done so. And quite well at that.

Jennie smiled as she thought back at her Grandmother Lulu, in one of her shapeless flower-print dresses, sitting in her usual spot at the head of the table. A large tumbler

of Mogen David wine glued to her hand, trying to decide which of her children to start with. Jennie, and all her other grandchildren, eating at card tables, set up out on the porch, their feet swinging free. Babies napping in the attic bedroom.

The game continued for some time, with Jennie getting her share of turns, ending when Aunt Ruby rose and went into the kitchen; her sisters followed her lead.

The pie was cut and served on the red-pattern china, and cups of coffee sat steaming in front of each place. Things were beginning to wind down; there were lulls in the conversation and an occasional yawn.

Presently, the table was cleared; the men wandered into the front room to talk sports and politics, the women into the kitchen to put away the food and do the dishes. As for Jennie, she continued to sit alone in the dining room thinking, in a completely new way, about those oh-so-gentle-men in the front room and those forever beautiful women in the kitchen. Before joining the ladies, Jennie stayed put until she had quietly blinked the tears away.

scribbles

by Nancy Cross Dunham

when young
it seemed
she thought

if she was thinking at all

that her life
could be scribbled

as in a school-girl's
spiral notebook

hastily writing
using #2 pencil
over faint blue lines

maybe
imagining

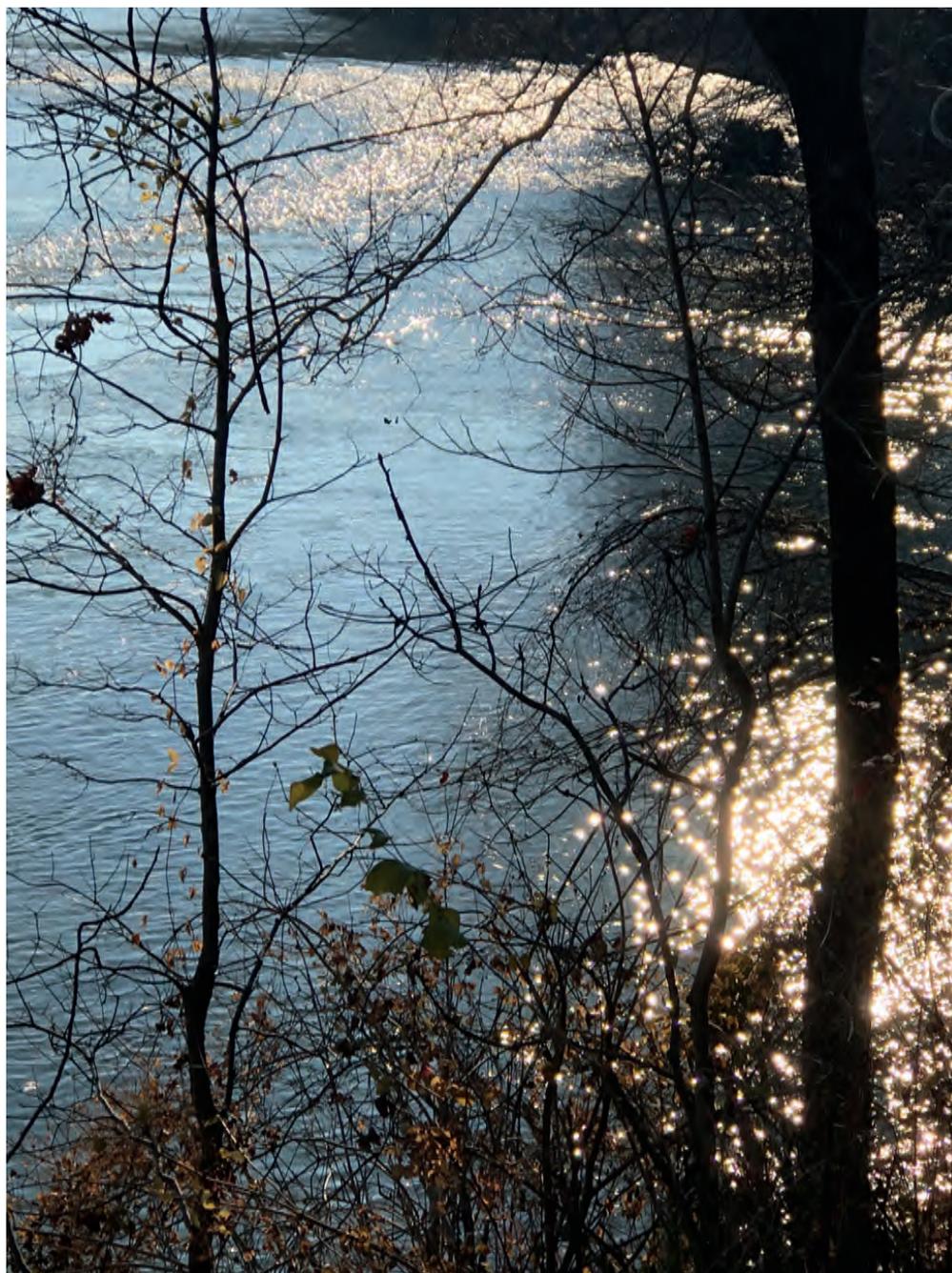
she could turn
the pencil around

and erase
what she'd written
when she made mistakes

and begin
to scribble again

not yet knowing

she might have
smudged
the page



Sparkling River by Bill Eisinger

Woodpecker

by Jane Hall

Impatience

A finger roll galloping across Formica
waiting for the doctor's news

Futility

Spurts of icy rain slapping
the antique windowpane

Perseverance

The sharp edge of a pencil willing
A poem to be written

Persuasion

Hand heel hitting the jar's bottom
To eke out more mustard

Jubilation

A three-octave run for it
On a homemade marimba

Responsibility

Ratcheting of the old-fashioned
Wind-up alarm clock

A single tap, or a series

Making repeated rapid

Contact with

The world.

The Longest Hours

by Barbara Carson

It was a strange coincidence that I was in Ubon Ratchathani that night in 1971. If I had not seen the woman at the Officers Club in Bangkok, sitting alone and crying, I would have been back in Cleveland, Ohio with my two young children. I suspect that my husband would never have told me what happened that day. I'm sure that he would not have mentioned it in any of his letters home.

I remember that the cab driver who picked me up at my hotel asked if the Officers Club was now hiring "round eyes" to work as bar girls. He seemed unfazed by the fact that I was very obviously pregnant. I smiled, thinking of how my husband would enjoy that story when I met him for dinner.

I arrived at 5 PM as planned and expected to see my husband walk through the door momentarily. My husband was an electronic warfare officer on an AC-130A aircraft. His squadron was the 16th SOS, known as Spectre. It was tasked with destroying Viet Cong traffic on the Ho Chi Minh trail. The planes mostly usually flew night missions but in deference to my presence my husband had been scheduled to fly a day mission. I knew that his combat mission was due back at the base at 4 PM and he would have had plenty of time to debrief and shower.

Instead of my husband, two of the men from his squadron entered the room and sat down beside me. They said that his flight was late, which was not uncommon, but that they would keep me company until he returned.

I don't remember if I ate or drank anything. I do remember feeling the baby move. I also remember that more and more men from his squadron joined our table. I remember that the DJ played about 30 minutes at a time, then the live entertainment came on stage; four girls in white go-go boots and hot pants. The only song that they knew, or perhaps the only one that I remembered, was Credence Clearwater's *Proud Mary*. I don't remember how many times I heard those girls sing, "*Rolling, rolling, rolling on the reeeever.*"

As each officer entered, the word was quietly passed around that the flight had not returned and there was no radio transmission from it. I was reassured multiple times that this was not unusual by men who obviously did not believe what they were saying. At some point in the evening, the squadron commander, Lt. Col. "Grouchy Bear" Harris, entered, introduced himself to me and sat at a nearby table with two other officers.

It was unusual for a dependent to be at the base. Most men met their wives in Hawaii or Bangkok for their two weeks of Rest and Relaxation. In fact, we had spent two weeks in Bangkok but on our last day of R & R I saw the

woman sitting alone at breakfast, crying. I sat down beside her to offer some comfort. Through her tears, she explained that she had flown over a week earlier only to find out that her husband had been injured and had been flown back to the states. She had been there one week and had to spend another week alone in Bangkok before she could get her flight home.

At that time, dependents were given a ticket to Bangkok and a return ticket two weeks later. Every flight was full and there was no way to change flights. However, and this was all important, there were no names on the tickets. After several phone calls, the general at the base said that my husband could not extend his R & R, but that I could come up country to Ubon for a week. I gave the young lady my ticket to go home that afternoon and I took the train with my husband to his base at Ubon Ratchathani.

This was the first combat mission that my husband had flown that week. The day before, on his day off, we had hired a driver and driven into the countryside to see a twenty foot tall buddha in a clearing in the jungle. We could hear the artillery from across the Mun river that bordered Laos. The war was getting closer.

I remember wondering if I would go into premature labor if my husband's plane had been shot down. But mostly I remember my husband walking through the door and the loud eruption of yelling and celebration. The girls were singing, "*Rolling on the reeever,*" as he walked through the door. I recall being in the shelter of his arms and our unborn baby celebrating with us by kicking wildly. The squadron commander grabbed my husband by both shoulders and shouted, "Welcome home, son." He then turned to me and introduced me to the two men who had been sitting with him; the base chaplain and the flight surgeon.

My husband's plane had been hit by a rocket that had knocked out two of the engines and all of the radio equipment. With only two engines, it limped back to base at a speed just above stall speed. It was well after 8 PM when he walked through the door.

I was the last dependent that was permitted up country.
Our third son was born in Indiana on my due date, November 7, 1971.



Natural Contrasts by Felicitus Ferington

The Marriage Dance

by Lorna Kniaz

I was twelve, trying to hide my budding.
His eyes twinkled as he danced past me.
I hid until my ride came.

He was an older man and I loved him.

Discarded boyfriends passed
and he called.
I don't remember any words.
So, I kissed him as he left,
knowing he would not call again.

But he did.

I, in lace, and he in white and black,
danced together to wedding music.
I was 17 and he was 20.

For 50 years we waltzed together,
through student housing and camping with children.
When the children flew where we couldn't follow,
we found we could still dance.

I tried to hold him, to keep him safe.
But the rhythms and beeps of his heart
grew flat and silent.

Now I move around the floor
with the unexpected small boy
who bears his grandfather's name;
I find I can still dance.

And I am still 17 and he is still 20.



Summer Sunrise by Grethe-J Brix Leer

Personal Lament

for use PRN on Sleep-Deprived Nights

by Donald A. Tubesing

For the random
seemingly endless list of regrets
that tumble through my mind at night
eroding sleep

And for my self-doubt
that allows this plethora of regrets to erode my sense of worthiness
and causes me to question the healing gifts of love
I have freely shared with others throughout my entire life

And for the arrogance that tempts me
to expect I should have over eight plus decades
lived perfectly enough
to have nothing I need to regret

I NOW FORGIVE MYSELF

In tribute to Charlie Brown, who,
while awake in the middle of night,
wonders aloud, "Where did I go wrong?"
then hears a voice from the dark respond,
"Oh, no, this is going to take more than one night."

Day of Diagnosis

by Diane Hughes

Late light catches the rock outcropping
in a blaze of copper and bronze.
I am annoyed by its audacity,
angered by its arrogance,
on this the Day of Diagnosis.

I choose the northern path,
a muddy meander through ancient boulders
left behind by glacier's slow death.
At the far end of the lake, I climb up on a room-sized stone
and wait for sunset colors to sooth.

A bird cries out in anguish and rage
at the theft of her offspring for some other's meal.
The tears come easily now, safe in this place
where death is known and mourning a sudden crisp pain
felt before going on to live whatever remains.



Sola by Lori Guderyon

Crossroads

by Claire Lazimy

Crossroads
Defining moments
What ifs . . .
Decision points
The bus that hit me, but didn't kill me
A late lunch with a friend when I met the rest of my life
Love, joy, regrets.
What ifs . . .
Who would I be today?
In a different reality
My heart formed by other
Loves and joys and regrets
A different sun bathing my days
Perhaps different constellations
Defining my nights
Another language writing my story
Crossroads
Defining moments
I am so glad that I am me
Made and strengthened by
All my loves, my joys, my what ifs
And no more regrets



October Rose by Grethe-J Brix Leer

Kohlrabi

by Kate Dike

when I was small we grew kohlrabi
cabbage cousin, German turnip
thick-skinned bulbs robed in green and violet
with ruffled leaves on top like crowns
royal names—white Vienna, purple Danube,
grand duke, azure star

with my sister in the garden
squatting among the rows in dusty flip-flops
shirts waving from the clothesline
we grasped the spoke-like leaves and
pulled a few stout orbs from the earth
washed them off with the backyard hose
and took them inside to pare

sitting at the kitchen table, formica and chrome, legs dangling
on the radio Doris Day sang “que sera, sera”
while mom placed a handful of daisies in an aqua vase
we shook a few grains of salt on the creamy vegetable flesh
and took our first bites of crisp pepperiness

ah sweet crunch, take me back
peel away the years
reveal the innocent core
we savor

Awakening

by Felicitus Ferington

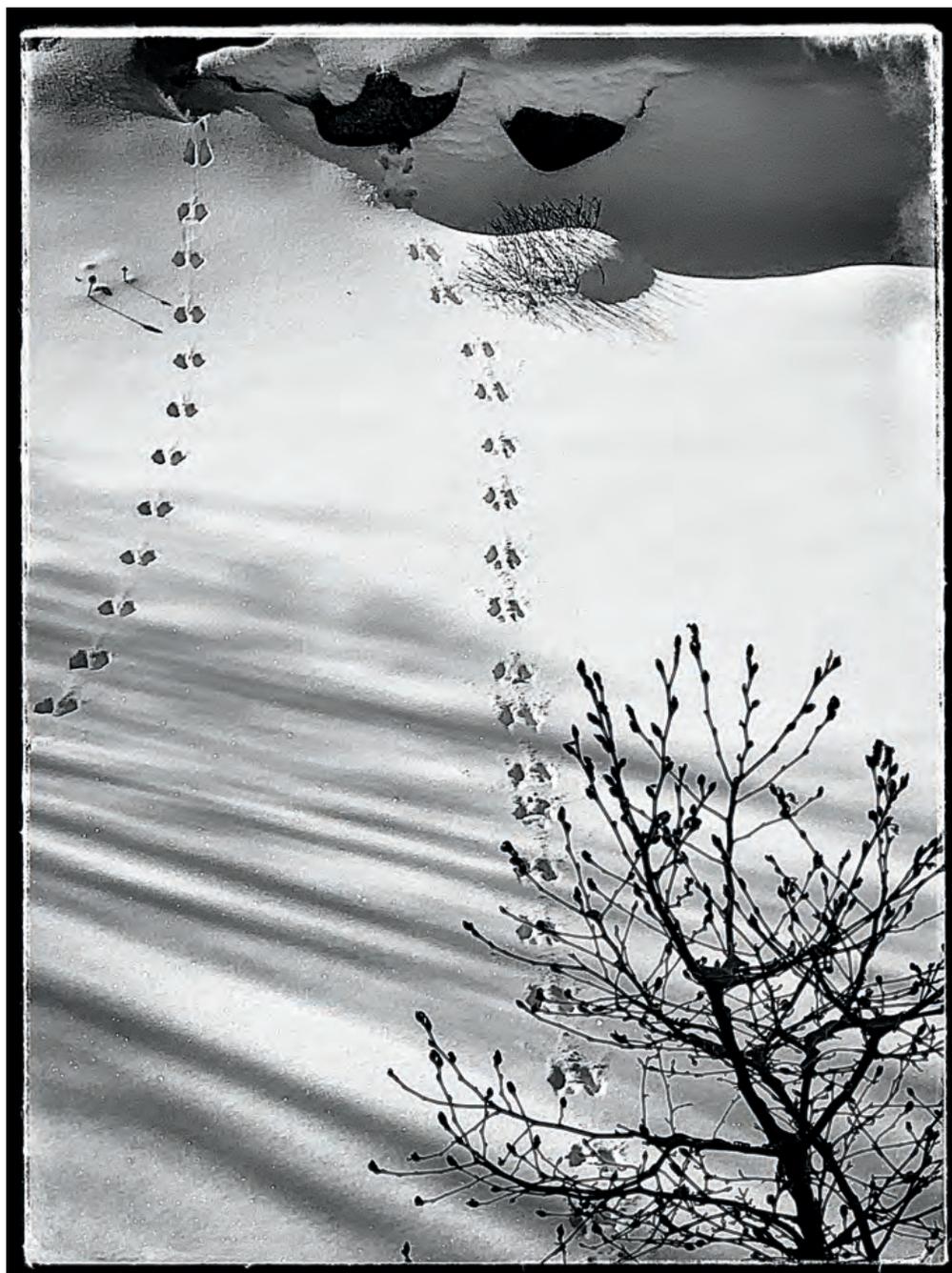
I have stood before all manner
of light and shadow
composing sculpted messages
for my counterparts.

In idleness I have watched
the sunlight path of dying cells
flaking from my skin and wondered
at this process of renewal.

I have sought to know others,
both embracing and betraying them
and exalted in the resultant
increase in my awareness.

I have lingered by a single blossom
and been consumed by it.

Indeed, I have come to realize
the essence of a single day.



After the Storm by Felicitus Ferington

Contributors



Sherry Ackerman is grateful for Mary Ann Inman, a wonderful teacher who inspired her to take painting to another level, which has honored her with many awards for her watercolors and acrylics.

Sherry is the Chairperson for AWA's Tiny Treasures, an avid gardener, walker, pickleball, and table tennis player.

Jim Albright was born and raised in Wisconsin. He and his wife, Jan, returned here after retiring. He is an engineer by degree and spent his working career in industry, all the while pursuing his love of painting. Some of his works can be viewed at his web site: www.jimalbrightart.com.



Dave Berger enjoys writing, and he's grateful to long-time writing-group buddies Frank, Jane, and Kim for criticism. A former ad agency research director in Chicago, Dave and his piano-playing wife,

Barbara, have lived in Madison since 1994. They are parents of four and grandparents of six.

Barbara Carson's career has been nursing and nurse anesthesia. She has written poetry since she was a teenager and published a little of it. After living and/or working in 15 states (she was a traveling anesthetist) she retired in Madison.



Mary De Wolf was born and raised in Chicago and worked for the CTA developing their data bases in the IT department for twenty-plus years. But writing was my first love, I began writing when I was 7 or 8 and haven't stopped. There are so many more stories to tell.

Kate Dike has lived in Madison all her life, including her college years at UW-Madison. She thoroughly enjoys the many local and state parks and natural areas and even discovers a new one now and then. Poetry has always been a part of her life.



Nancy Cross Dunham retired from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health in 2011, and turned her artistic attention to contemplative photography and writing (poetry, memoir). She published book of poetry in 2020, and has recently been awarded a writer's residency at *Write On, Door County* (for December 2021).

As a farm boy I loved to hike and explore nature. In college, biology was a natural fit for me and I was a professor at a West Coast university for nearly 40 years. After retiring, we moved to the Madison area to be near our daughter and family—**Bill Eisinger**.





Felicitus Ferington was born in Buffalo, raised on a farm, studied and taught psych/mental health at several Big Ten Universities and retired from the Army Nurse Corps in 1991. In all, a life in love with photography since 1950, from film & the darkroom

to digital with prints of any color or shade.



When not creating art, **Susan Young Hoffman** spends time promoting literacy through her blog susanyounghoffman.wordpress.com, tutoring, and gardening. She recently published her second children's book *Henry's*

Play on Words. Her work in acrylic and watercolor ranges from abstract art to realistic portraits.

Born, raised, and educated on the southeast side of Chicago, **Janice**

Golay comes from a family of storytellers. She completed the ILS program at UW-Madison, and holds a History B.A.

from Roosevelt University/Chicago. She lived in France and French-speaking Switzerland for fifteen years, and is passionate about art, music, and writing.



For **Diane Hughes**, art has long felt like a necessary counterpoint to my "real life" of accounting and administrative work for non-profit organizations.

Retirement offered more time to focus on art, including offering "Exploring Creativity" as a PLATO class. I began writing after impulsively signing up for a PLATO memoir writing class.



Lori Guderyon is a retired English as a Second Language teacher who is addicted to volunteer-teaching overseas. The photo "Sola" was taken near Cape Sagres, on the southern coast of Portugal (2011). "Jeju Island" was

taken while on a hike around the perimeter of the South Korean island (2010).



Lorna Kniaz grew up in Fort Atkinson. She attended UW-Milwaukee and UW-Madison, graduating with a law degree. Her four kids, four grands, classes, lectures, travel, family, friends, reading,

concerts, volunteering, and laughter almost fill her life. She has a small space left for writing.

Like many migrating species, **Jane Hall** divides her time

between the American Midwest and the mountains of central Mexico. She writes fiction, nonfiction and poetry, inspired by her encounters

with other cultures and the natural world. Jane has degrees from UW-Madison, Columbia University and Hamline University, where she earned an MFA in Creative Writing at age 65.



Born and raised in Wisconsin, **Joanna Kutter** holds a degree in Art from Beloit College. She has been creating art most of her life but only started writing seriously in the past few years. She finds inspiration in unusual places and everyday situations. Joanna likes the experimental mixed media process and therefore her final pieces

tend to be more abstract than representational.





Clara Lazimy was born and raised in Rosario, Argentina. She currently lives in Madison, WI with her husband. After working for years in Human Resources and Education, Clara finds retirement very

rewarding. She likes to travel, read, write, dabble in art, and spend time with her family.

Grethe Brix-J. Leer is a teacher, artist, and writer. She has exhibited and published work in her native Denmark and in America. She taught memoir writing and art to older adults in Chicago for several years and currently coordinates a women's writing and self-discovery class for PLATO.



Norman Leer is Professor Emeritus of English at Roosevelt University, and has coordinated "Life Maps" for PLATO for several years. He has published three books and a chapbook of his poems, one this past

October. as well as a critical study of Ford Madox Ford and articles and poems in several journals.

Andy Millman has been facilitating PLATO's *Writers Workshop* since 2015. His own writing has appeared in numerous places including:

The Big Jewel, Midwest Review, Little Old Lady Comedy, Weekly Humorist, Points in Case, Flash Fiction Magazine, Pif Magazine, Zest Literary Magazine, Helix, and Black Heart Magazine.



Tom Schlicht is one of the longest-serving PLATO coordinators. He has volunteered for this group since the mid-nineties. The oldest of six children, he got started in teaching by helping his sibs

with homework and sports. He now enjoys the Golden Years with his long-suffering, faithful life-partner, whom he lovingly calls "St. Catherine."

Joanne Lee Storlie earned Degrees in Humility, Gratitude and Optimism at the School of Real-World Experiences in Madison, WI, while raising a family and gainfully employed.

She hopes to complete her Doctoral Thesis titled, *The Big Picture: What I've Learned So Far*, prior to entry into the School of the Great Beyond.



Donald Tubesing is the author of 20 books on stress management, co-founder of two award-winning book publishing companies, and past president of the Independent Book Publishing Association.

Passionate about stone carving, he is founder of Michelangelo's Workshop, a not-for-profit initiative teaching underemployed post-release inmates the art and craft of sculpting stone.

Allen Youngwood hails from LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

After a long career in infrastructure planning and environmental studies, he took up creative writing, in particular, screenwriting.

Much like a blunt instrument, the rigors of getting his scripts produced persuaded him to recast them as short stories and flash fiction.

