



Reflections

A Collection of Writing and Poetry

by Oregon's Elders

2017

published by:

LeadingAge Oregon

7340 SW Hunziker, Suite 104, Tigard, Oregon 97223

503.684.3788

2017

LeadingAge Oregon serves the not-for-profit nursing homes, housing, residential care, home care, assisted living facilities and continuing care retirement communities in Oregon.

On the cover: Mt. Hood at Sunset

*Reflections contains original writings submitted to LeadingAge Oregon
by residents of member communities.*

These authors have vastly varying backgrounds and experiences.

*Some have advanced college degrees, while others have limited
formal education. Some have had works published in national
publications. For others, this represents a “first time” experience.*

*All are published here in their entirety, as originally
submitted by the author.*

*“A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and
more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself.*

Henry David Thoreau

Contents

Judges' Choice

The Cancer Bus, <i>Cleve Boehi, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst</i>	1
Cousin Vern, <i>Shirley Hilts, Mennonite Village</i>	5
The Treasure Chest of Life, <i>Mary Reeves, Capital Manor</i>	7



Around the Corner, <i>Irene Ebel Ertell, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst</i>	9
Autumn Song, <i>John Eells, Capitol Manor</i>	13
A Baby from Russia, <i>Arlene Peterson, Hope Village</i>	14
Beyond Human Ken, <i>Velma Jean Reeb, ElderPlace at Irvington Village</i>	17
Breathe, <i>Gerald Marr, Corvallis Caring Place</i>	19
Bunnies Galore, <i>Judith Reynolds, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	21
The Call of the Train Whistle, <i>Art Emlen, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	22
The Christmas Coyote, <i>Judie Hansen, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	24
Dogs, <i>Mary Bothwell, Willamette View</i>	26
Doreen, <i>Joyce Munson-Davis, Homewoods on the Willamette</i>	28
Driving Lessons, <i>Carla Harris, Willamette View</i>	31
Fruition, <i>Karla Klinger, Holladay Park Plaza</i>	33
Grandpa's Pond, <i>C Crockett, Kingsley Court</i>	34
I'm Still Here, <i>Elizabeth Burke, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst</i>	37
In the Attic, <i>Barbara Westmoreland, Friendsview Retirement Community</i>	37
Just Another Day, <i>Joan Graves, Capital Manor</i>	39
Kirby, <i>Carole A Seeley, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace</i>	40
Laughing in Your Sleep, <i>Alice Lee, ElderPlace at Irvington Village</i>	41
Lessons from a Life Well Lived, <i>Justine Heavilon, Kingsley Court</i>	43
London Fog, <i>Lindsey Daniel, Holladay Park Plaza</i>	47
A Love Story, <i>Ernie ZumBrunnen, Willamette View</i>	48
Millenium Perspective, <i>Nancy J Emery, Corvallis Caring Place</i>	50
More Than He Dreamed, <i>Marcia Pelser, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst</i>	51
A Most Unusual Mother's Day, <i>Donna Krasnow, Willamette View</i>	53

My Grandfather's Gift, <i>Robin Gault, Holladay Park Plaza</i>	56
October, <i>Trish Mitchell, Columbia Terrace Retirement Community</i>	57
Ode to Barium, <i>Larry Eby, Mennonite Village</i>	58
The Older I Get, <i>Harriet Ebel, Kingsley Court</i>	59
On the Athabasca, <i>Ron Sadler, Mennonite Village</i>	62
Reflections of a Caregiver, <i>Donald Eckler, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	66
So You Think You Want To Go Kayaking, <i>Patsy Fitzwater Wiemken, Willamette View</i>	68
Some Things Are Just for Boys, <i>Sandra Shaw-McDow, Capital Manor</i>	70
Spirit Journey, <i>Carol Bosworth, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	74
Sukhavati, <i>Patrick Mizelle, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	76
Thanks For The Memories, Doris & Bob!, <i>Marsha Green, Willamette View</i>	78
To David, <i>Priscilla Jeffrey, Friendsview Retirement Community</i>	80
The Tune My Bones Play, <i>Esther Elizabeth, Holladay Park Plaza</i>	82
Two Women, <i>Betsy Cameron, Holladay Park Plaza</i>	83
The Untold Story about Japan, <i>Duane L Weeks, Hope Village</i>	85
Where the Sand Lilies Grow, <i>Rufus S Day, III, Holladay Park Plaza</i>	89
Why?, <i>Sandra Felkenes, Willamette View</i>	91
Why I Write, <i>Allan F Wilson, Village Retirement Center</i>	92
With Liberty and Justice- For All?, <i>Bob Lustberg, Rose Schnitzer Manor</i>	93
The Woman with The Walker, <i>Marilyn Gottschall, Rose Villa Senior Living</i>	96

Judges' Choice

The Cancer Bus

Cleve Boehi, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



Under ordinary circumstances, we might never have done more than nod and give a passing smile. But these were not ordinary circumstances. We were both passengers on a small bus that transported cancer patients from the small community of Florence sixty miles away into the larger city of Eugene to receive daily radiation treatment.

For the first eight days on the Cancer Bus, I locked myself behind a wall of fear and distrust, uncertain of the radiation treatment I was undertaking and how it would affect me. Unhappy because I had to travel three hours for a five-minute treatment every day of the week . . . 33 times . . . and never one to waste a moment, I brought along old Martha Stewart Living magazines, leafing through and tearing out tons of recipes and project ideas that I will never try. From the beginning, I felt separated from the other riders . . . like an observer along for the ride. Most of the passengers were elderly, battling for a few bonus months or years. They seemed locked behind walls of silence embracing their personal pain and private thoughts. Though conversation was sparse, “cancer” was the number one topic. I brought along a portable CD player with earphones to shut out all the disagreeable sounds.

On my ninth day, forty-five minutes into our journey, the Cancer Bus stopped to pick up a new passenger at the small community of Walton. She emerged from a red pickup and, with the help of her husband, laboriously made her way to the bus. With a great effort and a deep sigh, she would collapse into a seat and lay her head on a pillow. At first, Deborah sat at the front of the bus while I preferred the back, locked in my cocoon of surround-sound music and Martha Stewart Living magazines. Slyly, I studied her.

She was young, in her forties. There was a pallor to her skin that indicated the extent of her illness yet she wore no makeup. She wore glasses and a cloche-style hat that covered her bald head, a result of chemotherapy. The hat was adorned with baubles and pretty applique. She wore large crystal earrings. The hat and the earrings contradicted her general

appearance and called attention to her baldness in a way that said, “It’s okay. Stare at me. I can handle this.” As soon as I began to converse with her, I no longer saw the baldness nor her illness.

After two days, she moved to the seat across from me. I don’t remember the initial small talk, perhaps because there was so little of it. When someone talks about the imminence of their death, small talk is inappropriate. Instead of “How many grandchildren do you have?,” it was “Tell me about your relationship with your grandchildren.” We were able to speak immediately of our faith in God and His hand in comforting us in our distress. From the moment she moved into the seat across from me, we never stopped talking. Deborah never again laid her head on the pillow. I never put on my headphones nor read my stack of magazines while she was on the bus. It was an immediate bonding and, because of our circumstances, we could not waste a moment. Time was too precious.

We spoke of life and death and our acceptance of each. We shared intimate things about ourselves. “I don’t know why I’m spilling my guts to you,” she said. We spoke of our failings and of our successes. Both perfectionists, we recognized that we were too hard on ourselves and much too serious. We both wanted to smile and laugh more. To our delight, we discovered that we both loved to write. Deborah wrote poetry, and I wrote short stories. We brought samples of our writing to share---intimate things we were too embarrassed to show to anyone else. We were suddenly the most brilliant writers in the world. We revealed to one another our artistic side, shyly handing over our artwork, hers in the form of a beautiful journal artistically decorated with flowers surrounding the lovely handwritten script. I told her she was leaving a priceless treasure to her family. My artwork was assorted drawings of large, colorful flowers. She praised them and encouraged me to turn them into greeting cards for my friends.

The hour and a half together on the bus flew by at a dizzying pace. Each day I could hardly wait to see her again. The forty-five minute ride to Walton until we picked her up was slow and plodding. I began to resent any day I needed to travel in my own car because it was time away from my friend.

Towards the end of the third week, she told me of her increased pain and how she was praying for the energy to have a tea party for her six-year-old granddaughter’s birthday on Saturday. The following Monday she was ecstatic. The tea party had been a big success and

very heart warming for her. God had given her the energy to make it through the afternoon as well as the energy to go to church the next day to see the program on “faith” that she had helped to write.

After that, things began to decline for Deborah. She experience bad nights, more and more pain. An increasing amount of morphine was required. We never dwelled on the subject of pain, or cancer, or dying. Instead we crammed as much happiness as we could into the little time allotted to our friendship. Her period of radiation was coming to an end when we decided we must exchange phone numbers so we could keep in touch.

On her last day of radiation therapy, the bus drove right past Walton! There was no red pickup waiting! Panicked, I enquired of the driver and learned that Deborah had been crossed off the list. Sadly, I realized I didn’t know how to reach her. I didn’t even know her last name. When I reached the clinic, the receptionist called me to the phone. It was Deborah. She decided it was pointless to continue treatment, but she wanted me to know how special it was to have developed a friendship with me. We muttered a few platitudes and promised to keep in touch. We spoke again on the phone two days later reaffirming our affection for one another. I promised to write her a long letter right after Christmas (3 days away). When I hung up the phone, I thought about how I would maintain my long-distance friendship with Deborah. Certainly I would call her often, maybe even visit her in Walton. I searched for inspirational scripture and other writings to share with her, and I looked forward with hopefulness to our next conversation. That night I dreamed I was in the boxcar of a fast-moving train. I was leaning out the door holding on to another woman, begging her to hang on . . . don’t let go

When I returned to the clinic after the holiday, the nurse called me into a private room. Deborah had told her of the special bond that had formed between us. And, then, ever so gently, the nurse told me that Deborah passed away the day after Christmas. The tears welled up inside my eyes like a rising tide. A pressure in my chest crushed down a feeling of nausea. A lump in my throat made it difficult to breathe. I held back the tears until I could reach the privacy of my home. No one on this Cancer Bus would understand how I could have found a soul sister in such a brief time. None of them would understand my attachment to Deborah. Each time I said her name, the tidal wave of tears rose higher. The next day on the bus, I closed my eyes and listened to gentle music on my headphones. Another day I’ll finish the rest of my magazines.

When I learned of the loss of my friend, Deborah, I was highly emotional and need to write about my feelings. Deborah was like an angel that came into my life at a time when I badly needed a friend. As I was writing, the phone rang, and it was Deborah's husband. He got my name from the Willamette Valley Cancer Center. Before we concluded our conversation, he said, "You know, you were like an angel that came into Deborah's life and helped her get through her final days. She talked about you all the time. You were a friend to her." Angels unaware.

Judges' Choice

Cousin Vern

Shirley Hilts, Mennonite Village



Thin and pale, with slow-blinking
brown eyes, a hovering hound-dog look,
he shuffled and shook from childhood
through young manhood, shivering out words
in dry sounds like withered leaves
whispering in a fretful night wind.
Sickness bound him to live his short life
slowly . . . on a scrap of farm
tethered to aging parents, yet
Cousin Vern ventured after dreams.
He labored over assignments from the
Famous Artists Correspondence School,
was not slow when Uncle invariably said,
“Son, show us them drawings you did,”
careful copies of professional works.
To earn his very own pocket money, Vern
raised rainbow-wonderful parakeets,
but could only part with a few.
It amazed me that he loved socials!
Off the three would go to Grange potlucks,
or they’d have folks over to play canasta.
He would crow over cards, eyes merry.
I always saw him grinning shyly,
content on their tiny screened porch

with birds on his shoulders, in pockets,
roosting on that thin crop of hair.
For the watchful child I was,
his glittery eyes reflected plenty
even in such poverty of circumstance.

Judges' Choice
The Treasure Chest of Life

Mary Reeves, Capital Manor



What is Life? Some see it as a flow of consciousness, some as a series of events. I see it as discrete moments to remember.

Once I was a little girl four years old, sitting in a sand box on Stewart Field in Minneapolis, making castles and paths in the sand.

Once I was an eleven year old girl standing at a window looking out at the beautiful campus of a girl's boarding school, excited and awed and anticipating wonderful new experiences.

Once I was a sister, horrified to see her sensitive and scholarly brother drafted into the army in the pre-war conscription of 1941

Once I was a college student, walking with a silent and somber group of friends into the college auditorium to hear the President of the United States declare that our country was at war.

Once I was a bride, walking down the aisle of the church to dedicate her life to the young man who had promised to love her forever. He did.

Once I was a mother who held in her arms her tiny baby and experienced the overwhelming love known only to motherhood.

Once I was a wife who watched her husband leave for sea duty in a war far away.

Once I was a den mother who watched eight small boys line up with eager solemnity to pledge themselves to do their duty to God, Country and family.

Once I was a mother-in-law attempting to navigate the most difficult personal relationship of her life.

Once I was a grandmother who marveled at the wondrous continuity of generations.

Once I was a daughter who cared for an aging mother who did not always recognize her.

Once I was a widow grieving for a beloved husband who would never again hold her hand to keep her from stumbling over life's road blocks.

A long life is a treasure chest filled with gems of great brilliance and stones of darker hue.
But the light overcomes the shadows and I am grateful.

Around the Corner

Irene Ebel Ertell, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



They came from opposite directions and reached the café entrance at the same moment. A slender young man reached to open the door for a well-dressed young woman. She brushed past him without a glance or word of thanks. Irritation flushed the man's pallid cheeks and he whispered to himself, "Witch."

Noisy evening diners occupied all the booths and tables. Two places were left at the far end of the counter. He watched the auburn-haired woman stride to the furthestmost of the stools, high heels clicking, hips swaying. The man slowly walked to the remaining stool and sat down. As many times as he'd eaten here, he'd never seen her before.

They studied the menu chalked on a blackboard above the pass-through to the kitchen. The man brushed a strand of lank, brown hair from his forehead and pushed wire-rimmed glasses back on the bridge of his hawk-like nose.

When the woman turned toward him, he turned as well, thinking she meant to speak. Peering around the room, she looked straight through him.

"What'll it be?" demanded a frowsy, middle-aged waitress. She spoke to the man, but the woman answered. He had intended deferring to her as a courtesy when she cut him off.

"Chef's salad," she said.

"And you?" The waitress smirked.

"I'll have" He noticed her hand poised below the woman's order. "We are not together." He emphasized "not together" and ordered the meatloaf special and coffee. The waitress gave him her "what a loser" look as she moved toward the kitchen.

Again the woman looked toward the man and inadvertently he turned toward her. She looked past him to the front door that had opened. The next time the door opened, he managed to look straight ahead. He realized she must be waiting for someone.

“Darn,” she muttered, glancing at a jeweled wristwatch.

The waitress brought their coffee. The woman picked up the sugar shaker and poured a good amount into her cup. When she shoved the shaker toward him, it began to tip. He reached to keep it upright and his hand touched hers. The young man tingled from head to foot.

“Sorry,” she said in a low whispery voice. He would have liked some sugar in his coffee, but feared his hand would tremble.

As they waited for their food, the young man tried to look at her without turning his head. Just as he reached the limits of his peripheral vision, he was startled to see her watching him. She was smiling. He quickly ducked his head and focused on his cup of coffee. He knew she was still looking at him, but before he could think of something to say, the waitress brought their orders.

“Anything else?” She dared them.

“More coffee,” the woman demanded, though her cup was half full.

The waitress filled the cup and turned to leave.

“You forgot the gentleman’s,” the woman snapped.

The waitress splashed coffee into his cup.

“Just a minute,” the woman called, pointing a long red fingernail at a small spill on the counter. The waitress wiped it with the corner of her apron.

“High class joint.” The woman chuckled.

“The meat loaf is good,” was all he could think to say. He felt the hot blush creeping up his neck.

The woman went at her salad with knife and fork. Her elbow brushed his jacket sleeve repeatedly, producing a remarkable sensation throughout his inner man. Meatloaf was one of his favorites, but he barely tasted it. The woman crossed her legs, setting off a rustle of hosiery against hosiery, surprising his deepest senses. He became aware of her perfume and inhaled deeply to prolong the pleasure. Daring to turn his head slightly, he saw how

the neckline of her dress revealed a deep cleavage, round and creamy. Perspiration formed across his forehead.

Suddenly the woman grabbed his arm as she reached for the napkin that was slipping off her lap. When she began to slide from the stool, he stood to block her fall and encircled her with his arms. The softness of her body insinuated itself onto his chest where she lingered for a long moment. Reluctantly, he helped her back onto the stool.

“Oh, thank you ever so much.” She smiled and fluttered long eyelashes. He was tongue-tied. Now that he could look straight at her, he saw large green eyes, full red lips, and a patrician nose all set in a face of flawless skin. He didn’t see the heavy make-up. Struggling to say something witty or urbane, he was relieved when the waitress arrived with the checks, slapping them down before the two plates.

“Anything else?” Without waiting for an answer, she moved along to another customer.

The woman rummaged in her handbag for a minute or so. “I think I must have left my wallet in another purse.”

“Oh, uh, let me, uh, get your, uh, check.” He was blushing. “Please.?”

“How sweet.” She smiled at him.

She searched again, retrieving a pen and small white card on which she wrote something. As she got down from the stool, she placed the card in his lap, pressing it firmly below his belt buckle. The movement was practiced and unnoticeable to anyone else. All his senses came alive and he had to grab the counter. She hurried to the front of the diner, high heels clicking.

Carefully he reached for the card. Printed in fine raised script he read: Darlene Tolman, No. 3 Lotus Lane. Scrawled below was: Around the corner. Give me 10 minutes. The young man sat there, his heart pounding.

“Waitress,” he called. “I’ll have more coffee.

He kept checking his watch as he sipped. Finally, he got up and paid the two checks at the cashier’s podium.

Night had fallen. City lights blazed and a cool breeze moved stray bits of paper and leaves

along the sidewalk. Coming up the street was the bus he rode home every evening. He turned the other way and saw a street sign: Lotus Lane. The young man stood still for a moment, felt the small card in his pocket and then walked to the bus stop.

Autumn Song

John Eells, Capitol Manor



The rain makes holes in autumn woods

Behind bright camouflage

the depths are dark

You too are a mystery to me a question and a why

Hiding in doorways, slipping the noose

You carve your sign in water, fire and earth

placing fingers in air

You step over the horizon like a flame

You stand at the top of high places

Stone circles contain you

You sell cheap jewelry on street corners

You flash in the clouds

Your name unwritten

My own Self

A Baby from Russia

Arlene Peterson, Hope Village



My daughter who is a single mom with a five year old boy wanted to have another child and her son wanted a brother. As the United States prefers to choose couples for adoption she attended an adoption agency meeting about adoption. Single parents, at that time could only adopt from Russia and Guatemala. Guatemala could change their minds at any time about the adoption so Russia seemed best. All the adoption agency had to say was “Russia has children just waiting for Mother’s.” So she arranged with the agency to adopt a baby and the paperwork began. My daughter chose a baby boy who she named Nikolas in April of 1996. It took 9 months from the starting time until our baby was home.

You never know when the Russian government would give the word to go so when they said go it meant immediately. In this case it meant the day after Christmas. I had arranged to go with her to help with everything, so I flew to her home in Pennsylvania from Portland on Christmas Day. The next morning we were on our way to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

While we were waiting at the airport the announcer was having trouble getting the Russian passengers to get in a line. They kept getting in bunches. We soon learned before our trip was over that this is their way of doing things. They never seemed to have any trouble getting on and off but we always wanted to line up so our escort at one point told us we just needed to join the bunch or we would not get on the plane.

When we arrived in Moscow I couldn’t believe how fast the Russian people disembarked from the airplane. They were off before we could gather up our things. Of course, we had all our belongings, including cameras and food and clothes for the baby. When we got off of the plane everyone had disappeared so we didn’t know where to go to get our money exchanged. There was only one American couple on the plane so we followed them and found where to go.

Then we met our driver who took us to our hotel, where we slept for the day to adjust to the time change. That night we boarded a plane to Irkutsk, a town in Siberia. Our driver had our suitcases and held his ground to keep a place in the crowded room. No lining up there.

We were met at the airport in Irkutsk by the adoption agency translator, Ludmilla who took us to the baby home in Angarsk to see our baby. We had to wait until the next day to go the court to get the approval for us to get our baby. Then off we went to pick him up. We got to feed him milk soup which was just milk with noodles in it. We asked what else he was given to eat and they said “bread and tea”.

We then took Nikolas “home” to our hotel and he stayed with us the rest of time we were in Irkutsk. Our room in Irkutsk was heated by pipes with hot water running through them all the time. It was very warm but excellent for drying baby clothes that we washed by hand. It was so warm that we had to open the window a little, so the window sill became our refrigerator. We had been warned to not drink the water so we had a crock pot to boil water. You would be surprised at all the things you can cook in a crock pot.

Russian people are very kind and often offered us food or something for the baby. The women who sat at the desk in the hotel always greeted us, even though we did not know any Russian. My daughter was told to bring chocolate with her as it is hard to get in Russia and we could give it as gifts. It came in handy.

The people also really know how to celebrate the coming New Year. The firework displays seemed to last all night. We stayed close to a park so we could walk to see the ponies all decked out with red. There was an ice castle there that was at least twenty feet tall that the children could slide down and or crawl through since the bottom part was very wide. We could also buy ice cream but we decided to pass as it was 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Grandfather Frost also made an appearance on several occasions.

On Sunday we went shopping outdoors. This seemed to be common in Russia. There were rows and rows of clothing for sale but we didn’t buy any. It was quite a sight to see in 20 degree weather. You could also buy books and other Russian items outside as well.

In Siberia very few people spoke English so we had trouble finding places to eat when we were on our own. As we were there for Russian Christmas which is on the 7th of January, Ludmilla wanted to spend the day with her family. My daughter and I told her that if she would write down in Karen’s journal book what to order, we could walk to the restaurant that wasn’t far from our hotel. She wrote, “Please give them chicken legs, bread and apple juice.” Chicken legs were the size of the largest part of a chicken wing with ground chicken in it wrapped in chicken skin.

Ludmilla always took us to breakfast but they didn't always have eggs which was alright with me. We don't realize how fortunate we are to have such an abundance of food here.

One day Ludmilla told us that we were going to a bakery. I was feeling deprived of sweet food so I envisioned a bakery with wonderful pastry. When we went into the bakery there was a large round tub with a large paddle in it and a lady standing by it. Then we saw the shelves of white

and brown bread which we think is sold to stores. We bought a loaf of round brown bread which was good if you are hungry. Nikolas liked to chew on the bread.

We then left Irkutsk and after an overnight stay in Moscow we were on our way home.

We did do a little sight-seeing and had lunch at a two story MacDonald's.

Nikolas is a very sweet boy. One day when I had three of my grandchildren at a restaurant when he was about six or seven, the children were talking about where they were born. I told Nikolas that I had picked him up in the baby home and rubbed his little back and talked to him. He leaned over on my shoulder and said "I love you grandma".

He will be 21 on December 9, 2017. He is a fine young man and I feel so blessed to have him in our family.

It is a shame that the Russian government will not let the orphans out of Russia any longer because they were angry at the United States and unfortunately not all Americans who adopted the children treated them well.

As Ludmilla said "the government doesn't care about the children". What a shame.

Beyond Human Ken

Velma Jean Reeb, ElderPlace at Irvington Village



Having traveled inter-
planetary space since 1977,
Voyager I is now known
to have gone beyond Pluto's orbit,
and to have left our solar system.
The craft has entered deep interstellar space

It carries into the cold darkness,
far beyond the sun's heliosphere,.
the Golden Records, treasures
of civilization that include recordings
of the first strains of Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony"
and of Louis Armstrong's trumpeted blues,
as well as the ultra-modern, atonal,
jagged-edged passion of certain chords
expressing the inconceivableness* of being.

It bears also a diagram of the brain waves
of a woman falling in love; and a recording
of a mother's first words to her newborn;
the sounds of Akkadian,
spoken in Sumer 6,000 years ago,
and syllables of Wu, a modern Chinese dialect.

Humanity's time capsule to the cosmos—
a bridge thrown out to an unknown shore

somewhere between planet earth
and some intergalactic locus
within one thousand million or more
light years away—

Will there be Earthlings
to wonder at the Golden Records,
should they pass by,
returning home through the arc of space,
some distant day in Forever?

Breathe

Gerald Marr, Corvallis Caring Place



Long before earth's breast took its first breath
The ancient trailing of air caressed
The shores of the extraordinary
In a tidal movement older than birth.

Each morning as I awake,
Something undeniably good
Washes over me like a thin sheet of ocean
crossing the sand.

As my dreams unthread
And softly shred into nothing
I breathe. Drawing in great drafts
Who I really am.

[Breathe in]

[Breathe out]

With no call to hope,
I am yet inspired.
With no wish to die, am yet expiring.
Let us conspire in harmony.
Breathe in hope, breathe out longing.
Breathe in courage, breathe out despair.

Breathe in a question, breathe out the answer,
Even if the answer leaves you breathless.

Do not catch your breath, but let it go,
Infusing yourself into this vast commons,
The element we share with all creatures that respire,
From the soaring condor to the humble grub.
The atmosphere contains every ocean and every continent.
Every life takes part in its exchange
It is the climax which our ancestors resolved
When they clambered out of the dark waters
Onto the fertile ground.

Listen to your breath.
Of the four sacred elements
It is the first to enter the temple and the last
To depart. The grasping flame follows,
Then the fecund humus and the dark waters.

Listen. Can you hear the breath of another?
A chorus of lives whispering, each respiring
According to its own rhythm,
The design of accidental things,
Sequoia and hippopotamus,
Tigers and hydras and human beings.
Some are taking their first breath,
Some their last.

Listen!
On the air you inspire
Linger traces of another's cry
And another's laugh.

Bunnies Galore

Judith Reynolds, Rose Villa Senior Living



Little bunnies in cages are wheeled into the Annual Christmas Open House at our community of retired people. We are being given an opportunity to hold a bunny on our own laps almost as long as we wanted. As a child afraid that any animal might bite me, I never reached my hand out to pet a dog.

An open-faced, smiling woman delivered bunnies to beaming residents. ‘Who wouldn’t want to hold a bunny?’ Unquestioning, she makes her way toward me. For just a second I steel myself and hold my breath and watch the bunny land in my lap. Patting her furry bottom opens my heart. “Her name is “Beverly” says the owner. The world around me disappears. I am suddenly with my beloved playmate, “Beverly” from long ago. We had lost contact and my attempts to find her were useless. Feeling the coziness of her furry body made it easy to know my Beverly, even as a bunny. I hold her, pet her, and sit in a trance with her close to me. Scenes of us playing together on the beach come to the present moment. I recall our life busy with playing. We make sand castles and carefully dig moats around them. I see us standing on a sandbar watching the ships on the horizon sailing to countries far away.

The bunny feels herself slipping and claws me slightly on my chest to keep from falling. The caretaker shifts Beverly’s position to that of a baby with its head on my shoulder and she is peaceful again.

The rumble of the cart in the corridor lets us know that the visit of the bunnies is over. As Beverly shifts into the arms of the caregiver I pet her foot and follow her with my eyes until she is back in her cage. “bye Beverly.”

Even so, I still have the little claw scratches on my chest.

The Call of the Train Whistle

Art Emlen, Rose Villa Senior Living



Those who live close to railroad tracks
can't tell you when the trains go by.
They've learned to ignore a noise too loud.

I live farther away,
and I know when to expect them.
I hear the deep-throated call of the freight train.
The whistle is resonant and sonorous, asking to be heard—
first the warning and then the low rumble down the tracks.
It's now three in the morning, and all's well.
I feel nostalgia and security,
and curiosity.

Where does it go?
Where would the train track take us?
Sweeping through town, it turns north and then east again,
across the Willamette River
on a high three-truss/two-trestle-span bridge built in 1907,
and then north again on the other side,
completing a smooth S-shaped curve,
sounding its horn as it goes.

I'd long had an urge to walk over that bridge.
And I'd done my homework.
There's a path on the bridge, and it's four feet wide.
On standing freight cars, I measured how far they reach beyond the track.
If I took up only one foot of space, just like the girders,
Then the train would miss me by 22 inches.

Walking over the bridge was a thrill.

On the other side, I looked for a sign shown by Google Map—
“No Trespassing” spelled with four “S”es.

The Portland & Western Railroad is not a good speller.

But the sign was gone.

In the words of Woody Guthrie,

“This bridge is your bridge. This bridge is my bridge.

From Lake Oswego to old Milwaukie.

This bridge was made for you and Me.”

Just east of the bridge, where the track turns north,

There’s a community garden and a sea of cottages.

They belong to Rose Villa, a residential haven that is non-profit.

My wife and I are going to move there—

to watch the sunset.

And as the trains cross our bridge, we will hear them call—
from just the right distance.

The Christmas Coyote

Judie Hansen, Rose Villa Senior Living



The day after Christmas, driving into town from my home in rural Indiana, my husband and I noticed a large dead animal beside the road in a drainage ditch. At 50 miles per hour, we couldn't tell if it was a deer, dog, or coyote. An hour later, on the drive home, we slowed to check and identified it as a coyote. We put it in a plastic garbage bag, hefted it into my trunk and brought it home.

What a beautiful specimen --- a male the color of rich custard pie weighing about 45 pounds. His thick fur tipped with black was in prime condition for protection from the harsh Indiana winter. Coyotes are great mousers. He was working along the fence row adjacent to the highway and didn't sense danger from passing cars on this Christmas night. The only apparent injury was a trickle of frozen blood on his muzzle.

You may ask why two retirees were collecting dead animals from along the road. We are both career fish and wildlife administrators and were involved with a citizen group creating a nature center at our first county park. We felt many people might never see a coyote up close. Being able to see and touch one is an excellent way to spark an interest in the value of predatory animals.

The week between Christmas and the New Year is a difficult time to find small businesses open. I called around and finally located a taxidermist in a town twenty miles from home willing to take a coyote. Two days had passed since we picked him up. Thank goodness the outside temperature stayed below twenty degrees, so our animal remained frozen solid as a brick.

We drove around the small neighboring town with unfamiliar street names, and finally found a small gray building with big letters on the side: THE BUCK STOPS HERE. The entrance was not well marked, but my husband found the office. He was back in a flash. He said: "you are going to love seeing this place."

We were told to drive to the back of the building and haul our prize into the preparation room. From around the corner a middle-aged man dressed in flannel shirt and jeans

appeared followed by a dusty, misshapen, arthritic beagle dog. The dog's fat little body begged the question: Does he sometimes get to feast on the remains of dead critters?

Without uttering a word, the owner disappeared into the other room. We were left with a dog and a dead coyote. We began checking our surroundings. Along one wall, hooks held hacksaws, cleavers, and rubber aprons. Shelves displayed numerous glass jars of fake eyeballs in all sizes and colors. Cans and bottles of solvent, shellac and paint, along with assorted molding and casting supplies were scattered around the room. The smell is best described as a nauseating combination of chemicals, wet fur, and animal parts waiting to go to a rendering plant.

We stood waiting, waiting and waiting. The dog casually sniffed the plastic bag but showed no interest in tearing it open. He had decided coyotes weren't tasty or this one was still too frozen to develop a rank odor.

After standing around for ten minutes, we decided to go around the corner to the office. The fluorescent lighting offered a surreal atmosphere. As our eyes adjusted to the new light, we noted the assorted aging mounts on display: a stuffed bobcat, various ducks, deer heads and owls. The owner sat at a cluttered desk writing in a ledger to record information on each animal brought in. We had to fill out and sign a form stating where ours was collected. He had been in business forty years. It would be interesting to know how many critters he had logged in.

After looking at options for coyote mounts, we chose a standing natural pose and paid a deposit. We asked when it would be ready. "Well", he said, "we are getting all our deer heads in now so we should be done with all the bucks by the end of July. I suppose it will be about the end of August."

The entire experience was memorable. It didn't seem that I could get the smell of the place off my clothes, hair or skin for several days.

One item caught our attention as we walked back through the preparation room to the truck. On the counter was a tiny ceramic nativity scene in the process of being decoratively painted. It seemed incongruous with the rest of the scene. Our coyote was in good hands.

Dogs

Mary Bothwell, Willamette View



“Dog,” I said. My first word. Not “Mama,” but “Dog.” The old grey photo shows me with my hand on the back of a large Irish Setter. I later learned his name was Mike, the first dog I was introduced to, the first of a long line of dogs in my life, none of which was my own.

Mike was my father’s hunting dog, but he also thought he was a lap dog and when my little sister Joan and I would climb on our father’s lap, Mike would try to shove us off and climb on. He also thought he was our guardian, and, much to our dismay when we were in the yard, he would shove us away from the gate in case we tried to get out. We didn’t like Mike.

Mike was later poisoned by a farmer, and another Mike from his lineage came into our family. He behaved much like the original, lording it over us girls. He and my mother, who had no love of dogs, had an unstated agreement. He could get on my father’s arm chair, but he was not allowed in the kitchen. He could reach his water dish and food bowl on the back porch, but he was not allowed in the kitchen. He would slink on his belly to the dining room door, barely push his nose over the edge, wait until my mother’s back was turned, and shove just a little farther, until she would yell at him. “Mike!” He would turn around and go back to his own territory, which was the rest of the house.

The years went on. I went my way with no dog until I was married, had a little girl, and was living in the Samoan Islands. Someone in the market gave little Elizabeth a puppy. She named him Irwin and he briefly became her playmate. He vanished one day and a little piglet was left on our doorstep in his stead. Dog was more of a delicacy in Samoa than pig. We didn’t name the piglet but quickly took him to the government farm.

Our next dog arrived when we were living in a small college town in Illinois, and again someone gave Elizabeth a small brown dog, which in those days was politically correct to call a mutt. Elizabeth named him Wolf. There were no leash laws; in those days most dogs had the run of the neighborhood but were pretty good about staying home and guarding the territory. Wolf became fairly well known because he didn’t seem to know the rules of the road and was often seen several blocks away. One day we were invited to a wedding. We

decided it was a good idea to put Wolf in the house while we were gone, and off we three went for the occasion. I was a beautiful traditional wedding ceremony followed by a short ride to the reception. As we all got out of our cars and went toward the hall, the big door opened and there to greet the community was Wolf grinning his goofy grin. Who could help but laugh? I have a sweet photograph of Elizabeth and the little boy who was the ring bearer dancing together, with Wolf looking on fondly.

As our lives took its twists and turns, we ended up in Portland, Oregon, and by now our family included Anne, six years younger than Elizabeth. We had no dog, as Wolf had decided to live on a local farm. Anne at about age eleven began campaigning for a dog. We said “No.” Both parents had demanding jobs, life was considerably more hectic, and we had learned our lesson. She pleaded and pleaded, and one day we came home to the fact that Elizabeth, who could now drive, had taken her to the city “pound” and they had picked out a little border collie mix and brought it home. What could we say? So Donny was here to stay. And stay he did, as both girls took off on their own academic careers and I was left with a granddog. I have to admit he was a sweet comfort when I became a young widow alone. He lived to be a ripe old age, and I really missed him. But not enough to get a dog of my own.

But wait! There’s more! Life went on; Anne married and had two sons, at this time nine and seven. They lived in Arizona, and BJ at age 9 began to agitate for a dog. I stood back and let fate take its course. Which of course meant that they gave in. We all went out to a ranch one day and BJ picked out a beautiful little beagle puppy, which he named Shaya D. for dog. This was a huge compliment to me, because my “grandma name” is Shaya. I succumbed to the flattery and fell in love with Shaya D. also.

True to family custom she was not the best trained animal, and she had the innate desire of beagles to run, run, run whenever she had the opportunity. One summer she stayed with me alone, and I lost five pounds running after her when she would get loose. The neighbors all knew her well. No fence could keep her in. My most exciting time was putting her on a plane to return home.

So that is my dog story. From my father to my grandsons I have been the beneficiary of an interesting relationship with dogs. I wonder what I would have done if I had had one of my own.

Doreen

Joyce Munson-Davis, Homewoods on the Willamette



She looked at me with deep-brown eyes, her face surrounded by burnt-orange curls. Her head flopped to the side, and her arms dangled and moved without any detectable purpose. Her mother straightened the girl's head against her own shoulder and looked at me with fear in her eyes, but showed a mother's fierce pride and determination in her firm brow and jutting chin.

Doreen Nyberg had recently passed the three-year-old mark and was being seen in the Child and Young Adult Clinic at the University of Iowa Hospital School Division of developmental Disabilities for the first time. Earlier evaluations had been with the Infant and Young Child Team, which saw children from birth to three years of age. That team had reported no observed growth in development in Doreen during the past two years. Skills in mobility, hand function and communication were all ranked below the six month level. Her evaluations occurred primarily via parent interview, since Doreen was severely physically impaired. The speech-language pathologist had observed no discernible pattern to her vocalizations.

Mrs. Nyberg had recently telephoned our clinic coordinator, requesting one more evaluation, in an attempt to prevent Doreen's placement in the state hospital for mentally retarded. Such a placement had been recommended by therapists and educational staff in the local and regional educational agencies who had done home visits on several occasions. Contrary to the professionals' opinions of Doreen's abilities, Mrs. Nyberg was convinced that there was purpose behind the grotesque movements and guttural vocal expressions her child made. She gave anecdotal evidence, which the professionals recorded in their notebooks while inwardly shaking their heads and feeling a real sense of pity for this delusional mother.

Now Doreen sat in my evaluation room, seated on her mother's lap, facing forward, with her body supported by her mother's. Mrs. Nyberg obviously had adopted this method of holding her daughter so she might have the best possible body stability and opportunity to view the world around her.

As I talked with her mother, I noted that Doreen easily isolated her eye movement from what were usually uncontrollable head gyrations, in looking about the room. She looked upward more and more, apparently at the enclosed cupboard above my head, which contained numerous toys. As I caught her eye, she held my gaze, and then looked back up to the cupboard. I had an idea.

“Is there something up there you’d like to play with?” I asked her. Big smile. I stood and opened the cupboard. Her eyes widened. I purposefully picked up a bag of blocks. “Did you want these?” I asked, holding them out toward her. No expression. I moved on to a stacking toy. “Is it this?” I asked. Again, no expression. I reached for the yellow-haired doll. Doreen watched closely as I brought it out of the cupboard. “Is it the doll?” I asked. Huge grin as she struggled to reach for it.

The rest of the evaluation proceeded in this manner with Doreen choosing toys with eye gaze, moving on to photographs, and concluding with colored drawings. I estimated at the end of the hour that Doreen had roughly the receptive vocabulary of a three-year-old. She was 3 years and 3 months old. This child, I was certain, was not intellectually impaired.

At three o’clock, the team members met to share our findings, and to make recommendations regarding Doreen. The physician, nurse, occupational and physical therapists, audiologist, psychologist, learning specialist and I eyed one another eagerly.

“Well, Joyce,” Dr. Healy, the division director, asked me before any of us had reported our impressions, “What do you think?”

I stuck my neck out in a sure manner, as I was prone to do. “This little girl presents as a child with severe athetoid cerebral palsy and severe speech and expressive language limitations related to her physical impairment,” I replied. “I think her receptive abilities are close to age level, and with proper body positioning, a way can be found for her to use alternative communication. I’d like to see her admitted to the preschool for two to three weeks for an extensive workup to see what she’s capable of doing.”

The team concurred, and Doreen was admitted to the Inpatient Unit for therapy and education. Once the physical and occupational therapists had determined the appropriate wheelchair, body position, and supports she needed for maximum use of her arms and hands, she blossomed in the preschool and was able to begin communicating with a picture-word language board. After establishing her initial positioning and communication needs, Doreen returned to her home community to live and go to school. Through the years, she

came back to the Hospital School periodically for modifications to her positioning and language systems.

The last time I saw Doreen, she was close to graduating from high school and was considering colleges to attend. She used a wand attached to her head to drive her motorized wheelchair and to activate her speech synthesizer with a young woman's voice she had selected.

I watched Doreen laughing with her teacher and friends and thought of her as she had been 15 years earlier. Same burnt-orange curls, deep-brown eyes and dimples. Same eagerness to learn and to interact. Just no longer any doubt about where she belonged and what her future held.

The names of the child and mother have been changed to protect their privacy.

Driving Lessons

Carla Harris, Willamette View



My mother had not driven a car since she had one while in college. However, after I got my license at age 16, she decided to take driving lessons. She passed the written test, took a driving course for adults and was ready to begin her behind-the-wheel practice.

Wanting to preserve marital harmony, my father chose not to be her licensed driver. Mother was not one to take kindly to suggestions from others. Instead, at age 17, I was appointed to take her out on Saturdays to Camp White, a former Army base north of Medford, Oregon, where we lived. All the buildings had been removed, but a network of paved roads remained – a great place for novice drivers. Each Saturday we ventured out for another go at smooth driving.

My mother was one of the most able women I ever knew: bright, articulate and well organized. If she had been born two generations later, she might have been able to run a large company. However, when it came to things mechanical, she was in over her head. She and cars had no rapport. Nevertheless, it was the task of her driving instructor – and me – to prepare her for her driving test.

One fateful Saturday, for reasons long lost in my memory, she and I were accompanied by my then-boyfriend and my much loved pet Rusty, a cocker-cairn terrier mix. Rusty's life was made difficult by our cat who enjoyed harassing her. Rusty innocently lay on the back seat next to my back-seat passenger as Mom took the wheel after I drove us out to Camp White. As had happened each preceding week, our manual transmission Mercury went lurching down the empty street. Mother simply could not coordinate the clutch with the accelerator. Sometimes she killed the engine; other times we just went jerkily down the street. Finally, after one particularly jarring lurch, Rusty was propelled off the back seat to the floor where she tossed her kibbles.

This would seem funny to most people, but to mother it was not. My boyfriend knew better than to laugh out loud at this situation, but found it very difficult to remain poker-faced.

Mother stopped the car and I quickly cleaned up the back seat floor before we headed off for further torture.

It was not until several years later and four additional series of professional drivers' lessons that my mother finally got her license. While she seldom lurched, problems remained. One day when I was home from college she was speeding down a boulevard about 50 miles per hour and became very annoyed with the roaring engine. Then a passenger pointed out that she was still in second gear. She shifted into third.

She never did become compatible with a car. Many years later, when she was in her mid-eighties and widowed, my husband, brother, sister-in-law and I were helping her with the final details of moving her into a retirement apartment. Her bridge partner had persuaded her to sell her home and move to this facility, in part, I think to keep her off the streets. He had called me occasionally to suggest I encourage mother to stop driving. However, I knew that would have been a useless – not to mention dangerous – endeavor.

My sister-in-law and I joined Mom and her bridge partner for dinner in the dining room of the retirement center while my brother and husband dispatched a final load of odds and ends to Goodwill. While we were eating, the manager of the facility stopped by our table.

“Mrs. McKeen, there is a policeman here to see you,” he said quietly. As she got up, I asked if she would like me to accompany her. “No,” she said, “I’ll be fine.” When she returned, I asked what that was all about. “Oh,” she said, “It was a case of mistaken identity.”

Later, out of ear-shot of her friend, she told me that someone had reported her driving erratically earlier in the day, and the officer was checking to see if she was all right. She assured him that she was fine. The next day, to the relief of all who knew her, she gave her car to one of her granddaughters.

Everyone won.

Fruition

Karla Klinger, Holladay Park Plaza



Early autumn sun
has lit the lilac leaves,
shimmering
golden on each stem,
like lovers,
trembling.

In winter's first light
black triangles of leaves
hang frozen on bare twigs,
like monarch butterflies,
wings closed
waiting to fly.

In spring's clear light,
green hearts frame
bountiful purple clusters.
May's glory
exhales
a sweet perfume.

Grandpa's Pond

C Crockett, Kingsley Court



My Grandfather's birthday is coming up soon. As I watch several geese fly past my front room window, it reminds me of a summer day at his ranch in South West Oregon when I was a child.....

There is music all around me today and I can't keep my feelings inside. I feel like singing out loud, but I'll scare away the real music makers. So I'll be very quiet, then I can listen and watch all the little wild creatures as I float on my back here on Grandpa's pond.

Grandpa made this pond, as he built his ranch, with a lot of love. Every spring he puts boards into the dammed-off area of the creek and it fills up the pond where he dug out the space. He takes out the boards in the fall so the winter rains won't make the pond build up silt and flood his house on the bank. He also wants the fish to be able to swim back up the creek to lay their eggs in the fall.

The wind is blowing through the tops of the pines on the north side of the pond by the house. They are so tall that all I can see is a bit of blue sky and blowing white clouds. When the wind blows as it is now, it makes a simple song as the branches are blown against each other and the house; "We are tall, we are strong, do not fear, we are here." The pines are my special friends.

The sun is making me feel warm and soft, like I am part of the water as I float. I'm glad the wind is way up in the tree tops this morning or I would get cold. The creek is gurgling like a friend as it enters the pond and the little water skippers leave trails of tiny circles as they skitter back and forth. The skippers make bubbles where their feet meet the water that pop ever so faintly and I listen carefully to hear the pops.

Oh darn, my hair is floating around my arm again like spider webs! I should have braided it before I got wet. Oh well. I untangled my long hair and went back to floating and watching.

The birds didn't get frightened by my movements and seem so at home around this pond. In the weeping willow to my left is a small green bird with a bright yellow throat and a

small patch of red on top of his head. He seems to be running up and down the bigger branches in the middles of the tree. Must be looking for bugs. I can hear the Meadow Lark calling, but I have never seen one. It's my good luck charm; when I hear one, nice things always happen. There by the twin cedar trees in the lawn are several of the biggest blue dragonflies I've ever seen! They make a humming sound as they fly around and I know to not get too close or they will dive bomb me. Now they look more purple than blue as they dance in the air and the sunshine.

Oh, here comes Charlie! He is the cutest little squirrel I've ever known. He always darts through those wild blackberry bushes lining the mouth of the pond like he owns them, hardly making the leaves jiggle as he runs along the branches. He chatters softly to himself as he zig zags along his path, almost like he is talking to a friend running beside him. Charlie comes down to the pond to collect little tidbits of food to take back to the giant pines on the far side of the pond, along the creek. His family lives there and he won't let me get too close without chattering loudly. I won't hurt his family but he doesn't know that. Before Charlie had a family, he used to let me feed him little pieces of lettuce from my hand. Charlie would put his two front feet on the palm of my hand while he reached for the lettuce with his mouth. Those feet were so tiny all I could feel would be a small spot of coolness from the pads of his feet on my palm. Then holding the lettuce in his two front feet he would sit back on his hind legs and take little bites, filling up his cheeks with the lettuce. I carefully touched him once. His fur is so soft and thick I would love to pet him but he might bite. I'm so quiet here on the pond that Charlie hasn't seen me. I just wiggle my fingers a little to keep myself straight in the water while I watch.

The frogs have seen Charlie and are jumping into the pond! They like to sun themselves on the lily pads that Grandma planted in the big round wooden barrels under the water. When the frogs are on the lily pads, Charlie won't chase them. He doesn't like water.

What is that loud screeching?! There it is, those peacocks Grandpa brought here last week. How can anything with such bright colors and a beautifully designed tail sound so loud and grating.....

I'm beginning to get a little cold. The wind has changed and is blowing on me now. I've got goose bumps all over and my teeth are beginning to chatter, but I don't want to get out quite yet. This pond is cold in the spots where the creek flows through, which is why Grandpa named it Frozen Creek. I think I will go over to the sand bar on the far side where

I can stand in the warm currents. Grandma planted all the rose bushes on that side of the pond; they look like a rainbow with all the reds, pinks and yellows. The roses have a sweet smell I love and can smell from over here.

Ahh, this feels much better. The water is way warmer here. Standing up, I feel the bottom, slippery and slimy on the sand bar. Yuk—I'll have to wash this sticky green stuff from between my toes. I just hope that those wiggly things that live in this muck aren't here right now. I've never figured out if they are eels or garter snakes. Rats! They're here—and I'm leaving.

I'm Still Here

Elizabeth Burke, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



It's morning and I'm still here.
I look around and everything's here.
Except my neighbor—
who would be on the other side of my southern wall
where I would not see him even if he were there.
He is not there; he is gone.
He is not there beyond the wall behind the sofa where I sit this morning.
A coral haze on the horizon announces the near rising of the sun—
that steady arbiter of man's days on earth.
Now the coral glows brightly through my eastern window.
I cannot bear to see it.
My earthly eyes are not equal to the brilliant truth of God's universe.
The sun moves further to the south
toward my neighbor's windows.
I open my eyes.
Blackbirds in flight flash across the space of my eastern window
to a destination known only to them—one agreed upon by all.
I close my eyes.
The image of my neighbor's face presses against closed lids.
I lean my head toward his wall.
He is not there.
He is now everywhere.

In the Attic

Barbara Westmoreland, Friendsview Retirement Community



Wrapping the package, she heard herself say, “I want to live forever!”
The brown paper mitered just as it should.
The thumb held the string tight for the bow.
The pen made a C with a beautiful curve.
The rain on the roof had all the patience in the world.

Just Another Day

Joan Graves, Capital Manor



It was a Sunday morning at Capital Manor. We sat in the dining room at a table for two by the window.

Looking out we could see the wind whipping the flag on the tall flagpole that sits near the front entrance. A cold and rainy day, not a day to go out we mused. We'll have an omelet and some coffee and just stay in for the day, read the paper and watch the Oscar's this evening; see if the movie Brooklyn comes away with any awards.

We watched an ambulance drive up to the front entrance, closely followed by the fire truck carrying the emergency medical technicians. I felt a shiver, was it just the wind?

The coffee was hot and the omelet was great. Ten or fifteen minutes passed and the ambulance and fire engine drove out.

We lingered, enjoying the warmth and contemplated having dessert, then decided to just take an orange to enjoy in the afternoon.

We watched again as a second ambulance drove in, followed by the fire engine carrying the EMT's. We looked at each other, our thoughts unspoken, then picked up our oranges and held hands as we walked out of the dining room.

Sunday morning, omelets and coffee at eleven o'clock, and the day lying ahead to read the paper, take a nap, catch up on emails from kids and far away friends. Another day, another dollar, we used to say, back in the days when life was full of work and travel, decisions to be made about any number of things that now seem inconsequential.

Now we say, not just another day, but another good day. Another day of no aches or pains, another day of feeling good, not just early in the morning, but also in the late afternoon.

As for the ambulances, what is there to say, the count was not particularly high, and it didn't include either of us, not that day.

Kirby

Carole A Seeley, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace



Kirby had been a solid, reliable presence in my life since 1966, appearing shortly after my husband and I moved to Seattle and remaining with me during the intervening years as I raised three children, established and dismantled 18 households in five states, divorced my husband, and danced through a revolving door in a second relationship.

Through it all, with remarkable dependability, Kirby was there to clean up my messes, helping me maintain some semblance of control when all around me my life was falling apart. Low-maintenance in a high-maintenance lifestyle, Kirby required nothing more than an occasional new belt – illogical how that can help keep one’s head on straight – and a bag to hold the accumulated debris of life. I valued the steadfast support. Though heavy and somewhat awkward, Kirby rescued me from last-minute disasters and more crises than I care to remember, even pitching in to help my adult children transition from the nest of their youth to their own homes while I coped with the empty nest they left behind.

It was the strain of advanced years and trying to filter the excessive rubble of three young adults that led to eventual breakdown. Unhappily, I arranged for Kirby to find a new home and began, ultimately, to consider a successor. It was difficult; I didn’t think I’d ever find a replacement that would be as discreet and invaluable as my beloved Kirby.

To my great delight, as I made the difficult shift from employed to retired and my reduced income dictated yet another move, Junior synchronistically came into my life with the same strong work ethic that had characterized Kirby’s dedicated service.

I suppose it’s for the best that my dear friend didn’t remain with me long enough to be subjected to the indignity that circumstances have imposed on Junior; my much-abbreviated living space has necessitated that poor Junior live in my shower, along with my other household helpers – Mop, Broom, and the Shark, aka Steam Mop Extraordinaire.

Sadly, my trusty vacuum cleaner has suffered the same fate as I... squeezed into relinquishing the right to take up space in a world that no longer values durability and old-fashioned hard work.

Laughing in Your Sleep

Alice Lee, ElderPlace at Irvington Village



Hey there, you,
it's been years since you've
laughed out loud
in your sleep.
Why is that?

What strange grey cloud
has settled over you,
that you no longer
chuckle or chortle and yes,
even snort
in your dreams?

You used to wake me
that way,
and I'd say
what's so funny
and you'd tell me
some snippet
of a poppet dream,
some nonesuch nonsense.

And now you sit across from me
on this veranda
in Mexico,
reading the book I gave you

for the trip,
about an Irish guy named McCarthy,
and you laugh out loud,
sniggle-dee-de
and sure, I am glad
for your laughter.

Lessons from a Life Well Lived

Justine Heavilon, Kingsley Court



When I was young Mother always said: “Keep those bright eyes open, and observe what is going on around you, that’s the best way to learn.” Over my 76 years: this is what I’ve seen, and what I’ve learned.

1. Take what you have and make what you want. At first, my world was the sheep ranch my grandfather carved out of the barren South Dakota prairie. In 1912 Grampa had started his family in a dugout on the side of a hill on property, and 100 head of sheep, he had earned with 10 years of working for another rancher. He dug a well for water, and a hole for the outhouse. In time, he built a two story ranch house, and two barns with the help of the neighboring ranchers. He set up a windmill to generate electricity for a couple of lights, and the Philco radio. He dug a cavern deep into the North side of the hill, cut ice from the creek in the winter, and stored the ice for Grandma to use all summer. Another deep cave next to the kitchen, was where the meat and eggs were stored. He created an earthen dam supported by old car parts to provide water for the sheep. As a love gift, he hauled big rocks by horse and wagon to build a beautiful stone wall around the yard so my grandmother could have undisturbed flower and vegetable gardens. Later, he and the other ranchers, strung 10 miles of phone line out from the town so the women along the road could talk to each other. He taught me to have a dream, make a plan, and create my world out of the materials at hand. Like Grampa, I learned to weave my dreams, hard work and passion into the life I wanted to have. The lessons, and the magic of what my grandfather created have stayed with me for a lifetime.

2. Set goals, write them down. Create a path of manageable steps to accomplish them. See problems as only challenges to be overcome. I realized by age 5 that I had to have a plan for the day. I remember sitting on the end of my bed, tucked into the rafters of the ranch house. “Now class,” I would start, “today we will explore the barn, and the upper junk yard of old cars.” Then I would start my adventure with my imaginary class searching out “discoveries” in every corner of the ranch. This daily planning and goal setting, propelled me through years of raising five children as a single mother, remodeling eight houses and

gardens, and pursuing my education through a Ph.D. Goals, belief that I could accomplish anything with enough focus and persistence helped me create the life that I had dreamed of.

3. Life is all about teamwork and cooperation. We do not live our lives alone. We are part of a family, a community, a global village. When I was ten, Mother was pregnant with my sister and suffered an appendicitis. Papa was working out of town, and it was up to me to take care of my mother while he was gone. Every day, when I came home from school there was a casserole waiting at the front door of our duplex. Mother's PEO sisters provided unseen support throughout her long recovery and final trimester of pregnancy. I realized that life is much better lived as a cooperative member of the community, whether it is a casserole for a friend who is sick, or being generous while driving—where we cooperate to keep all of us safe. Like the ranchers helping Grandpa build the ranch house and barns: cooperation is how we get things done, and how we build trust and love.

4. In the end, it is family and friendships that endure. Throughout a lifetime of striving, struggling, triumph and disappointment it is the bonds we create with family and friends that remain when all the rest has fallen away. I spent Thanksgiving with another family when I was 14. It was big: the women in the kitchen creating a meal for the multitudes while catching up on family events and laughing. The men sat around the dining table playing cards—through a constant stream of humorous comments. The kids played outside, the older ones went to a movie. I realized that THIS was the kind of family I wanted to have. I got pregnant with my first child that year, and had five all-told: twelve grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild. We have created family traditions, and enfolded others into our clan. We have woven a web of love and support, manifesting anew with each succeeding generation.

5. Follow your passion with joy and focus. I've always loved making things more beautiful. I started sewing at nine, decorating my room with a colorful bedspread, dust ruffles and curtains. However simple my surroundings I have done my best to make them beautiful inside, and outside in the garden area. I've potted, and sculpted and grown prize winning dahlias. I've used the beauty I see all around me to create quilts and wall-hangings for friends and family.

6. Realize you are a role model to those around you, so demonstrate the very best that you can be. Guide by example. We do not live our lives unnoticed—we leave a legacy of all we have done and all those we have touched. Know that others are inspired by your strength, courage, persistence, love and gentle support.

7. Always consider that your personal actions lead to impacting the larger world. Be clear about your values, and adjust your life choices accordingly. Be pro-active and get involved in those things you believe in: volunteer at your local hospital or homeless shelter; be a reader to children who need to improve their reading skills and feel supported and loved. The Means you use lead to the Ends you have to live with. Your daily actions must reflect the values and goals you are striving for. Poor quality, angry or violent means lead to poor quality, angry, violent ends. Daily, we are creating the world we want our children and grandchildren to live in. Cherish, and live in harmony with, the earth that we inhabit with all living things.

8. Think globally, act locally. A good solid catch phrase. We need to always ask ourselves: What kind of world do I want to live in; how can I help make it that way? We all live on one planet and need to be mindful that it starts with each of us: Reduce, re-use, re-cycle, re-purpose. Live lower on the food chain. Use public transportation, reduce the miles you travel by car. Support the use of alternative energy. Buy locally and in-season, support your local farmers and industries.

9. Simplify! When “it” no longer fits who you are—let it go. Letting go of things: people, employment and homes which have been dear to us is always difficult. But, it clears our path to continue our journey to an ever more productive, and genuine self. “Shedding skins” is part of every life; especially as we grow older. You have been “good” at something for 50 years, you can let go of it now. We can pass the torch to a new generation, whether it is how to make a favorite family recipe, hosting holiday meals, hanging the wallpaper, doing the driving, or paying for dinner. At our age, we no longer have to worry about earning money or buying and maintaining a home. We can settle into, and enjoy, the simplicity of our daily lives. We are free to explore our passions, and pass on our wisdom. We are the elders of our tribe. We can let go of the control, we no longer need to prove ourselves, or be the strongest. We can let others help us when needed, and let Them enjoy the benefits of having a generous heart.

10. You can always change your attitude. It is not the situation you find yourself in, but what you tell yourself about it. While looking at a picture of your life—change the frame—and, the whole situation looks differently. Rejoice in the simple things: a smile, nature, music.

11. Be grateful, and appreciate the abundance all around you. A book title caught my eye one day: “How to be Rich”. I read the first page—in general it said: first realize you are already rich!. You live in the richest country on earth. Even if you have no money, you enjoy the benefit of clean air, abundant clean water, paved and lit streets, first rate medical care, free education, and the largest amount of public land and parks in the world. You enjoy freedom of speech, and protection under the law. This is the world in which you create your unique life. Feel grateful and supported by this abundance of riches all around you.

London Fog

Lindsey Daniel, Holladay Park Plaza



She stood at the bus stop
In sensible shoes
That were stylish enough.
A good buy.

Her London Fog raincoat
Had still been unsold
When the annual sale began.
It had a removable lining.
A real investment piece.

In a tote bag she carried
The Safeway ad pages,
A library book to return,
And her compact umbrella, just in case.
She frightened me.

By the time the coat started
To show its age
I'd be standing in her place
In my sensible shoes.
I wanted more than that.

A Love Story

Ernie ZumBrunnen, Willamette View



Most kids think summer is magic, but I had an extra reason for thinking so. I got to go from my hometown in Southern Wisconsin to a small farm in Northern Wisconsin to stay with my stepmother's family. I loved farm life and every chore they allowed me to do, from feeding the chickens when I was six to gradually taking over most of the work in my teens.

One of those summers changed my life. It took awhile, as you will see, but change my life it did.

I was seventeen that summer when a friend came to find me and pleaded with me to go to a dance with him that evening. "No," I said. "I did the chores at 4 AM, worked all day in the creamery, and just finished my chores now. I am beat." No excuses worked with him, however, so I agreed, reluctantly, if we could leave early.

We separated just after we got there: me to talk to some friends, he to find a dance partner. Probably two minutes passed before he came rushing up to me. "I just met a beautiful girl, but she won't dance with me unless I find someone to dance with her friend. Come on, Zum. Be a pal. Dance with the friend." I moaned. Oh sure, he gets the beauty, I get the ugly duckling.

So, dragging my feet, I followed him, and to my surprise, the other girl was not only pretty, but a good dancer, too. I fell for her right then and there – hook, line, and sinker. And it wasn't only her looks, because as we got to know one another better, I found out she was the only girl I ever met who knew who she was and who was utterly comfortable with herself. We dated that summer, but I was shy and never told her how I felt about her. Summer ended, I went back to my hometown, and we went our separate ways.

A couple years later, I saw her again when she was a student at the University of Wisconsin. I happened to be going through Madison on leave and looked her up. Wearing my dress uniform, I thought I'd be irresistible, but no sparks flew.

Now, fast forward, forty-six years. I'm alone. My first wife had died and I was divorced from my second wife. I'm once again in Northern Wisconsin on vacation, when I decide to go to the town Grace was from and see if I could find out what had happened to her. I looked for a telephone booth, (remember them?), but when I couldn't find one, decided to try the bank to borrow their phone book to look up her name and the name of the boy I thought she might have married. Not finding either, I must have looked frustrated because a bank employee approached me and asked if she could help. I said I was looking for the phone number of a girl I once knew. "And what was the girl's name?" she said. When I told her, she got all excited, grinned from ear to ear, and said, "Don't move." She disappeared into one of the offices and came back with Grace's nephew, the bank's Vice President.

We liked each other on first sight and chatted amiably about fishing and hunting in Northern Wisconsin, until I decided to bring him back to my main question, "But what about your Aunt Grace?"

"Well, she's a widow and lives in California." I stepped back a bit and asked where in California. "Palo Alto," he said. I could NOT believe my ears. I lived in Los Altos, the town that is next to Palo Alto. In fact, you cannot tell where one begins and the other ends.

I phoned her that evening, hoping she'd remember me. She did. And we agreed to meet when I came back from vacation. We kept in touch over the next three months, getting re-acquainted by phone calls and letters. I returned to California in December, and found we lived just two miles from one another. In a state where there are almost 40 million people, we were neighbors.

Surprisingly, we learned later we had also lived even closer to one another in a different California city, and before then in Virginia.

Six months after we re-met, we were married. The summer that would change my life finally did.

I believe in miracles. Don't you?

Millenium Perspective

Nancy J Emery, Corvallis Caring Place



Swinging from one idea to another
Monkey mind maneuvers,
From branch to branch
In the forest of rationality and irrationality.

As individualized automatons
Life itself becomes so serious
That the outer world appears to run
On myopic judgment, competition, conflict
and war mania.

Where ego reigns supreme,
A continuous cycled loop,
Causes violence to beget violence,
In the age-old war to end wars,
Which now endangers life on Earth.

Perhaps an alternative lies with personal
transformation,
Born of balance between a quiet mind and
an open heart,
While riding the learning curve,
of memory which flows home,
Beyond separation to unity.

More Than He Dreamed

Marcia Pelser, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



My dear Andrea, it is time for me to give you my Noritake China and tell you the story that goes with it. Your grandfather and I told the short version of the story many times along with laughter and loving glances because it's the story of how we met. I will tell you the long version.

Like many things about your grandfather, or Opa as you liked to call him, it started in the country of Korea. He had just been released at the end of the Korean War in a prisoner exchange and was experiencing American luxuries for the first time in two years. It took place at an Army Base before the men were shipped home.

First luxury was the showers, he said. He stayed under the warm running water until a GI dispatched to find him said repeatedly, "Sir, you can come out now." And finally, "Sir" if you don't come out you will be late for the special dinner prepared for you guys."

That did it. He dried with an American towel, dressed in a clean, lice free, U.S. Air Force uniform and went to a dinner of soft boiled chicken and creamy mashed potatoes with ice cream for dessert, a dinner fit for a king or at least for starving stomachs.

After three days at the base, the ex POWS were issued a little of their back pay and invited to shop at a BX which opened just for them. The clerks were Red Cross volunteer's eager to be a part of this historic event.

Some of Opa Fred's friends concentrated on TVs that had been introduced while they were in their mountain prisons. Some focused on cameras, but Fred went right to the China section. He had a plan you see, and carefully chose gold rimmed Noritake, a service for 12 with all the extra pieces.

The clerk told him he had good taste. She said, "It's Japan's finest. Your wife will love it." Fred replied, "I hope so, I haven't met her yet. I have only dreamed of her.

Following his tumultuous homecoming in Rhode Island and 3 months' hospitalization in Massachusetts, he visited an elderly friend in the area. She asked him what she could for him, this much celebrated war hero now in her living room.

“Glad you asked,” Fred said. Then he outlined his plan. He was tired of his once prized bachelor status and decided to marry. Surely, her married daughter, Phyllis, who worked in a bank, knew some eligible young women. Every day he would take a different one to lunch along with Phyllis and her mother, thereby acquiring a pool from which to choose

Your Grandmother to be, I was Wednesday.

The explanation to me had been that a friend of Phyllis’s Mother was in town and wanted to take us to lunch at an elegant restaurant, a nice change from our usual brown bagging. I arrived with Phyllis to learn the out of towners was a 33-year-old man in uniform, much younger than Phyllis mother, older than my 22 years.

He was exceptionally handsome, noticeably a gentleman and very quiet,

After polite pleasantries we two started to talk. And talk. And talk. I was late back to work. He called me for lunch the next day and again I was late for work, telling a friend I was in love. She told me I was crazy.

I don’t remember all the places we went after that nor what we talked about so intensely. Fred never talked about his plane being shot down in Korea, nor did I talk about the tragic events that had engulfed me. I remember us being amazed at silly things like both of us having long arms or the sun always coming out when we were together. I remember packing an overnight bag for the two-hour trip from my home in Massachusetts to his home in Rhode Island to meet his family.

His brother, Dr. Walt said, “Great match Fred.” Did you date a long time before Korea?” We doubled up in laughter, and didn’t answer.

On our tenth date Fred parked by the Connecticut River and asked me to marry him. I said, “of course I will, I thought you would never ask.” Back home when telling my mother, the big news she asked to see my ring. I told her he planned for us to choose it together, but in the front hall was his gift to me, an enormous box of Noritake China, service for 12, with all the extra pieces.

Big weddings were easier to put together in those days, Andrea, and we were married 3 months later, October 2, 1954. We loved each other for 55 years, 2 sons, 7 grandchildren, 3 of our 14 great grandchildren, a world-wide variety of homes and countless dress-up dinners on our Noritake China service for 12, with some of the extra pieces.

Love always, Oma Marcia

A Most Unusual Mother's Day

Donna Krasnow, Willamette View



My Mom died four weeks after Mother's Day. The memories associated with that particular Mother's Day helped lessen the pain of her death – I just couldn't stop grinning whenever I remembered that day.

It was a joyous Mother's Day in many ways. Mom was 84, she had moved to a retirement community much like Willamette View when she was 80, and it was located in the same small town where I lived. She seemed quite happy in those last years of her life.

To celebrate Mother's Day, Gina and Jay, good family friends, flew in from Alabama to spend the weekend with Mom. My mother had played a very important role in Gina's life and she wanted Mom to know how much she appreciated her. Mom was delighted that they were there. They stayed at my home and helped me prepare an early dinner for Mom on Saturday. We talked and laughed but after two hours Mom asked me to drive her home. She was tired. In the car, she talked about the day and how wonderful it was to see Gina and Jay.

The next morning, Mother's Day itself, I picked Mom up and brought her back to my house for brunch. Again Gina and Jay helped me prepare it and we had another delightful meal. Mom looked lovely in a soft blue knit dress with a beautiful necklace. Once again, after 2 hours, she asked to go home. I could see that she was exhausted. As much as she had loved the visit with Gina and Jay, she needed a nap. She kissed them fondly goodbye while I gathered up all the flowers my siblings had sent her. I remember her sitting in my car, surrounded by those flowers.

I took Mom up to her apartment and, as I put the flowers in vases, she slipped off her shoes and tucked herself into bed – still in the lovely blue knit dress with the beautiful necklace. I asked if she wanted me to, at least, unhook the necklace and put it away, but she said, "No, I'm just too tired; I want to drift off remembering this wonderful weekend." I hugged her and drove home pleased that she had had such an enjoyable time.

Two hours later I was most surprised to get a phone call from Mom. I was surprised for two reasons. First, she had trouble using her phone. Although I had put the names of her 5 children on 5 speed dial buttons, she kept forgetting she had to dial 9 first. Second, and of far greater surprise, was the news she conveyed. She said she had been filmed at her apartment and was going to be on the news that night. It was a local station, she said, and then rattled off both the news station's name and its channel number. This really surprised me. Her memory had become so sketchy that it was amazing she had retained both the station's name and number.

At 5 pm I turned on the local news. I suspected it would be the fluff piece at the end of the half-hour and I was correct. The teaser, just before the last ad, told viewers to stay tuned for a heartwarming Mother's Day story they wouldn't soon forget. "Hmmm," I thought, "I wonder what she said?"

As best as I can recall, this is how the story was introduced. "Today, all over the Peninsula, mothers have been celebrated by family and friends. Well, most mothers. For some, this has been a difficult day because they had no one to celebrate with, no one who cared." "Oh, dear God," I thought, "What did my mother tell them?"

The report went on, "Some of these mothers received a welcome surprise this afternoon by a local charity, The Forgotten Mothers of the Peninsula, who delivered plants to these forgotten women." At this point, I stood, shell-shocked, staring at my screen, thinking this cannot be a story about my mother.

And then, my worst fears came true. The camera followed the volunteers to my mother's apartment. They knocked; she opened it and smiled sweetly. When they told her they had brought her a plant so that she would not be forgotten on Mother's Day, my mother started to weep. She whimpered that this was the loveliest thing anyone had ever done for her. I was incredulous, watching the story unfold. I actually talked to the TV. "Wait," I say, "Zoom in behind her. Look at all the flowers her children sent. Look at how she's dressed. Look at the necklace. This is not a forgotten mother. This is a woman completely exhausted from celebrating."

Mother's lower lip continued to wobble as she thanked them profusely for their little plant and I sank into the chair, shaking my head, at what has just transpired. At least they didn't add, "Her name is Elaine Collins and her unappreciative daughter, Donna, lives less than a

mile away!” I turned off the TV with the sure knowledge that she would be the star of the 11:00 segment later that evening. She was so brilliant in her pathos, there was no way any other “forgotten mother” could beat her out for the TV spot. After I had recovered, I called Mom. She was so excited about her TV appearance. I listened, took a deep breath, took another, and then told her how simply beautiful she looked. There was no point in saying anything else.

However, to satisfy myself, I taped the 11:00 segment and sent it to my 4 siblings. I knew they needed to see the disaster first hand; my description would never be enough. And of course, they all thought it was simply hysterical. But they didn’t live in my town. The next morning, when I walked into the office at the school where I taught, the secretary greeted me, in a questioning tone, with, ‘Donna, was that your mother I saw on the news last night?’ I sighed, shook my head, wondering how many other people at school had seen it, and said, “Let me tell you the whole story.”

When I look back on it, it really was funny. And, when I recall the entire event I find myself hoping that someday my daughter will be as gracious with me as I was with my Mom when I inevitably do something similar. Ah, aging.

My Grandfather's Gift

Robin Gault, Holladay Park Plaza



The child in the photo is laughing,
Grandfather. She is three years old
and so delighted to be sitting next to you.
She doesn't want you to stop reading
the book open in your lap.
The nursery rhymes are singing
in her mind, rhyming and chiming
like bells calling her to a wonderful
new universe of words.

You read to me so patiently,
Grandfather. My mother reminisced
that you would read until your voice was hoarse.
You opened the door to written words
and the books and poems that would shape
my whole life, that would inspire,
intrigue me and comfort me
through all the years to come.

And yet I must confess
I have no memory of this at all,
no memory of you.
You died when I was only four.
I have a photograph,
and the words my mother used to say,
and all the poems still singing in my mind.

October

Trish Mitchell, Columbia Terrace Retirement Community



Not just for Halloween
This month exists
Prelude to winter
Summer days missed

Scattered leaves, chilly nights
Apple cider, geese in flight
Trick-or Treater's secret thrills
Dew-draped pumpkins on the hill
Leaves turned colors of the flame
Marching bands, football games

Days of merriment
Too soon over
Autumn's present
The gift of October

Ode to Barium

Larry Eby, Mennonite Village



Berry flavored, milk-shake-like cocktail
An expensive health drink
Radio opaque goo snaking through my intestine
In order to make it difficult for
Unsuspected adenopathy to be
Missed by sleepy, bored diagnostic radiologists

The Older I Get

Harriet Ebel, Kingsley Court



The older I get, the more pleasant memories I have of my youth. There are so many events and people that come to mind than I've ever thought about. That's a pretty good way to grow older.

One of my early memories is of my dad. He was only around for seven years of my life, but all my remembrances of him are wonderful. I can almost feel the exhilaration I felt when he would pick me up and swing me over his head! It was a sensation of being scared one minute and totally trusting my dad at the same time. It was so wonderful to have his attention.

When he had moved our family, minus our mother, to Sioux Falls, SD, we lived separately. My brother, sister and I lived in what you today would call a foster home. Dad came to see us at least once a week. We'd sit out on the stone wall behind the sidewalk and wait for him. We weren't allowed to cross the street, so it was intense waiting. And then there he'd be! Hugging all of us together, being unable to walk for the tangle of legs and kisses.

But then he got sick. He died. I was only seven years old by then. I used to daydream about him.

That I would see him coming down the street....that we'd been lied to for some reason and he wasn't really dead.

We lived in Minneapolis then for three years. My fondest memory is when our uncle Roy came home from the Navy after the war ended. He bought a snow sled! Minneapolis has many hills and valleys, so he found a hill near our home and took us tobogganing (sp). What wild fun! Traipsing back to the top of the hill was nothing because we had the reward of another slide down the snowy hill!

This same uncle also took us to the circus! We rode the trolley to get there. It was another first in our lives. Oh, so big a place. So much to see. Funny clowns. Elephants....you'd

never see those in South Dakota, where we spent our summers. Music. Ladies riding on the back of ponies. And so very, very many people; it was truly an adventure to remember and be thankful for.

Three years in Minneapolis and then back to South Dakota. We were back with Grandpa and Grandma Walter. It turned out, from my later perspective, that South Dakota was a truly great place in which to grow up. We lived in a small town of about 10,000 people situated right next to the Missouri River and we never locked a door during those years.

Life was so good with our grandparents. We weren't rich at all in things of the world, but we had such a happy life together. I remember some of our "high" points, like when we got a telephone! It was such a triumph because Grandma didn't think we needed it. Gramps pretty much went along with anything in those days. Our phone was attached to the wall. We shared our line with several people and what a temptation it was NOT to listen in on their conversations. Of course, there were times when someone on the other line would interrupt us and ask us to please get off the phone. And so began the era of teenage domination of the telephone wires!

One day my brother, sister and I talked Granddad into buying a refrigerator for Grandma. Up until then we had a wooden box cooler. There was a big chunk of ice placed in the top portion of the unit, and the refrigerated" goods were stored below. The "date used" by people of today would have had a fit.

There was another good thing about that ice box; the ice man. Once a week he showed up to deliver our big chunk of ice. In the summer, we knew when he was coming and how he got closer and closer to our house. Once he was inside the house with his chunk of ice, we were at the tail end of his truck grabbing little chunks of ice and popping them in our mouth. On the many very hot days in South Dakota, his ice truck was very popular.

Speaking of ice reminds me of the ice cream parlor. Our town was so small that we were allowed pretty much "free range" as children and the ice cream parlor downtown was an especially desired "destination." Ice cream cones were only .05cents. What better way to spend our "allowance." Of course, we got to be pretty well known there. Small towns being what they are, we were all pretty much family. So one day I sashayed down to the ice cream store with my lips heavily coated with very red lipstick. I had hardly crossed into the store when the lady behind the counter yelled that I would go right home and wash

all that stuff off my mouth. And not until then would she sell me an ice cream cone. The shame of it all. Wait until “I tell your grandmother!”

Every Sunday Grandma sent us to Sunday School and church. The church was on “the hill” and across the railroad tracks. Grandpa walked us as far as the local bar and we trotted in after him to collect our nickels and dimes from the customers who thought we were so cute! When it came time to give up or to contribute to the offering at church, we divided up the ill-gotten gains so that we would have enough money to spend at the soda counter at the local drug store.

But the Sunday treats weren’t over yet. About mid-afternoon, Grandpa would come home from the bar in a merry mood. He brought ice cream with him. Grandma did not participate in such goings on! We sat around our round kitchen table and ate ice cream and sang songs with Grandpa. Could life get any better?

Across the street kitty corner was an empty lot with a big ol tree in one corner. You absolutely could not ignore it. So, we (there were about eight to ten of us kids on our block) nailed the boards to the tree for “stairs” and up we went! We girls were somewhat reluctant to crawl up that tree on our “steps” but with enough encouragement from the boys, up we went. The “fort” ended up being just a stray piece of old lumber we found somewhere. The “fort” also ended up being for the boys. Only about two or at the most three kids could fit with any safety at all on that one piece of wood.

So beside all those fun attractions, we also went to school. After all, Granma had been a school teacher herself and strict as she was, I only skipped school twice that I can remember. I guess one of the most amazing memories I took away from school was the town library. I didn’t know anything about it and when our class took a trip (some ten blocks of walking, one way) to the library, I was astonished and amazed and overwhelmed and had no idea that so many books would be in one place! I have been particularly fond of libraries ever since. Matter of fact, I had a small part in the new library here in Eugene.

Thank God for memories. Whenever I take on a “bad attitude,” I put it in reverse and think of “the good ol days.”

On the Athabasca

Ron Sadler, Mennonite Village



The old man worked his way downhill through the timber towards the river. He reminded himself to stay alert - this was grizzly country.

He had never been to this spot before, yet it seemed familiar. The brush, wet with morning dew that slid across and chilled his thighs; the sight and smell of the spruce and fir trees that surrounded him, their tops seemingly festooned with wisps of fog not yet burned away by the morning sun.

As often happened at moments such as these, he could not help being aware of the changes that seven decades had produced in his body.

There was a time when the journey he was on would have been accomplished with no more conscious effort than a Sunday afternoon stroll in the park. He would have slipped easily through the brush instinctively following the line of least resistance. His body would have instantly and automatically made the myriad small adjustments in balance and position in order to accommodate the uneven and unstable footing.

But now he found that, while the mental processes - the instincts and reflexes that once guided him so effortlessly and unerringly – were still intact and functioning, it was his physical being that was unable to respond. Muscles that were once taut and ready were now slack and unresponsive. Joints and ligaments that were once strong and supple now had limited ranges of motion and cried out in arthritic agony when called upon for extra effort or quick response. The correct synapses still fired, but the physical capabilities to respond were diminished. As a result, the old man's progress down the hill was somewhat labored and cumbersome.

Finally, he stepped out of the vegetation onto a naked cobble bar marking the near edge of a broad river bottom. He stood silent, still, and alone.

On the far westward side rose another timbered slope like the one he had just climbed down. It was dark and brooding, not yet catching the sun's rays.

Beyond and above the far ridge was a sight that caused his breath to catch in his throat.

The backbone of the Canadian Rockies thrust upwards into a cloudless, crystalline blue sky, the overlay of snowfields and glaciers shimmered and sparkled in the morning sun with an intensity that almost hurt. The contrast between the brooding, dark timbered ridge below and the soaring white intensity of the sunlit mountains above presented a picture almost too startling and impressive to be real.

The old man enjoyed the panorama in front of him for a few moments, and then shifted his gaze to what had brought him to this spot in the first place.

There it was, in the middle of the gravel and cobble-covered river bottom, driving relentlessly northward - the Athabasca River! Its waters were a light, slightly opaque emerald green that spoke of origins at the foot of numberless glaciers in the uplands. The river immediately in front of him formed a long, straight riffle several hundred feet in length. No whitewater, no rocks, no eddies, just a surging, rolling, powerful flow.

The old man thrilled at the sight of the riffle. He knew a fully loaded canoe on those waters would be a happy living thing, responsive to every shift in balance and to each subtle prod of the paddle, all the while putting miles effortlessly behind.

Three months, with a good pard, in a canoe pointed as relentlessly northward as the needle of a compass - the dream of a lifetime! North on the Athabasca to where it emptied into Lake Athabasca, then down the Slave River to Great Slave Lake and into the Mackenzie River towards the Arctic Ocean.

He knew the details of the journey he had never taken.

There would be warm and gentle days when thirty miles slipped beneath the keel seemingly without effort. There would be misty and dark days with adverse winds and currents, days when back and shoulder muscles rebelled at the long hours with the paddle just to maintain headway.

There would be bright mornings when the first rays of the sun shining through the wall of the tent would be enough to bring him out of sleep refreshed and anxious to begin the day. There would be dark mornings with the raindrops beating a slow, steady dirge on the canvas above his head, and the thought of leaving the warmth of the sleeping bag to

struggle to build a breakfast fire with wet wood while water ran down the back of his neck would cause him to linger.

There would be easy portages, open and breezy, across low divides paved with granite slabs worn smooth over the past 300 years by the feet of the voyageurs who came before. There would be low, swampy portages, knee deep in black clinging mud, with sweat stinging the eyes, surrounded continually by hungry hordes of mosquitoes, black flies, and no-see-ums.

There would be long, boring days wind-bound on some small island, waiting for the whitecaps to subside, anxious to move on.

At mealtimes, there would be the quick reversion to what the old man called “eating like an Eskimo”. Food would not be lingered over in order to fully appreciate its taste, texture, or seasoning. Rather, it would be ingested as rapidly as possible, with the early acquisition of a full feeling in the stomach the only goal.

The old man was like someone who knew every note and nuance of every movement of a great musical symphony yet had never heard it performed in its entirety from start to finish. He knew all the movements and arias from his experiences in many different places, but had never put it all together in one grand undertaking.

He had been influenced greatly in his youth by time spent in the Laurentian Uplands. The original dream was a trip down the Missinaibi River from the north shore of Lake Superior northward to Hudson Bay. Ambition and big timber had brought him westward, and the Athabasca River was the latest incarnation of the dream. Alaska had beckoned at one time, but a visit there had convinced the old man that the scale was all wrong. Alaska was just too big and vast, at least for someone who had come of age with the limited horizons and intimate settings of the Laurentian lake country.

The old man knew, or rather, he let himself finally admit that he knew.

He was on the Athabasca, but he was thirty years too late.

For most of his life, the big canoe trip was always in reach; it was something he could do if he really wanted to. All that was needed was the proper conjunction of time off from his job, money, and a respite from family responsibilities. The trip down the Athabasca was always inherently doable.

But now, at age 70, at this moment, a door closed. His mind knew, and his body confirmed, that the big canoe trip down the Athabasca was no longer a possibility.

As he pondered this truth in this idyllic setting, reality intruded. He knew that the Athabasca River north of Edmonton was the receptor for dioxin-bearing waste from paper mills. He knew that the boreal forest and the top soil that supported it was in the process of being removed from a Florida-sized area near Ft McMurray to gain access to the oil-bearing tar sands beneath. As was increasingly becoming his habit recently, he quickly turned away from these thoughts. He had found that reality in too-large doses was becoming detrimental to his view of the world and his place in it.

The old man looked out across the broad river valley now, at last, bathed in the full illumination of the morning sun. The direct sunlight made the waters of the Athabasca an even more iridescent emerald green.

He silently bid farewell to the river. Even though he would never commit fully to the Athabasca and know it on its own terms, he was surprised to find that he held no sense of remorse or regret. Better, he realized, to fill the last chapters of one's book of life with dreams of things undone and trails not taken, rather than regret, or worse yet, blank pages.

The old man turned and began climbing back up the hill through the timber.

The old woman and the dog would be waiting.

Reflections of a Caregiver

Donald Eckler, Rose Villa Senior Living



There are heroes in this world
I am not a hero, just a caregiver
My sweetie is the hero as she faces
Disappearing into a void where
The only way out is to die.

And so I ask the higher power
Not to worry about me, but
Look kindly on my sweetie and
Let her passing be gentle
As she makes her final exit.

And so let us enjoy
This, our final honeymoon
That we have come to be sharing
As darkness overtakes her love
And she slowly drifts away.

And so since she must go, please
Let her go gradually, gently
Into that dark night that awaits her
And discover a new beginning
Somewhere beautiful.

And so let me go too, to find peace
In remembering a beautiful love
Carrying her in my inner heart
While life moves slowly onward
And I go on towards my final exit.

So You Think You Want To Go Kayaking

Patsy Fitzwater Wiemken, Willamette View



GROUPON- 1/25/2011: 55% OFF KAYAK LESSON. \$29 FOR Basic Skills Kayak class at Alder Creek Kayak and Canoe (\$65 value)

Mind gymnastics: Wow! That would be a lot of fun. No, you probably shouldn't do that. Why not? If you bought two Groupons you could get one of the grandsons to go with you. I would have to wait until they are out of school. Probably not such a good idea. But, it looks like so much fun. OK buy two. It says you can wait until June 26th.

So, the Groupons pop up on the computer and you are stuck, even though you have given it a little more thought. But, what the heck. Call, make a reservation for June 18th, (its sure to be warm by then) then forget about it for 5 months.

Memorial Dayspent with grandkids. Who would like to go kayaking with your Grandmother? No Response. Daughter-In- Law says she would like to go if the boys don't. OK.

June 13th. Hi, I have decided that I better not go kayaking. Question? Does anyone else want to go? Answer. NO!

June 18th. Get out the map for directions. Then figure out what you can wear that will keep you warm, because it is raining& cold, and you cannot wear cotton.

1 p.m. arrive at Kayak shop. A little early, but I didn't want to get lost. Hello, I'm here for the kayak lesson. OK, you are a little early, but we can sign you in. First, please read this waiver and sign it. *Waiver reads, I will not sue anyone if I die or injure myself, even if it's not my fault.* Doesn't inspire lots of confidence.

2 p.m. Greetings from the instructor, and instructions about wet and dry suits. Because it is raining they decide on dry suits. Teacher picks out the suit I should wear, "small" is way big. Struggle into suit, and put on booties. Looks like a moon suit. Other, much younger class members act like they have been doing this forever. Now, Instructor points out that you should go to the bathroom before we leave, because we will be on the water 4 hours. Whoops!

Now, go out to your cars and drive to the dock down the road (remember the suit); 4 others decide they should car pool in my car. Get to dock, walk down long ramp and there are the kayaks. Those things are big and heavy. Pick out your kayak while standing on the dock. Climb in, get a feel, and see if you fit. Like climbing into a very small sports car. (Remember the suit.)

Now, get out and put your kayak into the water. OK, sit on the dock and feet first get into the kayak. Woops! OK, now push off and get into the channel. Paddle up and back without running into anyone or any body. Whoops!

Now, we will cross the channel, but the current is swift so we will go one at a time. Younger ones go first and do OK. I go last. Panic! I think I am going into the Columbia and will wind up in Astoria. Pull hard, pull hard, pull hard. Whew.

Now, we will go about half a mile down the channel. One gentleman stays behind to protect me from myself. Once again we get to a channel into the river and this time I do OK. We practice turning, etc. and played a game or two. Now, its time to learn how to save yourself when you fall in the water. Instructor helper buddies up with me. Instruction! Roll out of the boat into the river and then get back into kayak. They lied about the dry suit because now my suit is full of cold water. OK, I'm out, now to get back in. Got one leg in, but need a boost to get the back side in. I must have looked exhausted for instructor helper brings out a small cup of something hot. I am hoping brandy. Wrong, hot water and hot sauce. Oh, well. Played a little more and then back the way we came. My get up and go, got up and went, but I made it back.

Now, get out of the kayak onto the dock, pull kayak out of water, pick it up and put it up on a rack. Back to the car, back to the shop, out of the suit (water everywhere). Staff decides my suit has a leak. Woops? Was it fun? Yes! Will I do it again? Maybe. Next time I think I will try an inflatable.

Some Things Are Just for Boys

Sandra Shaw-McDow, Capital Manor



The tree sparkled with tinsel, red and green glass balls and fat colored lights; the Philco beside the couch blared NBC's 1943 Christmas Eve broadcast from Hollywood. Amos 'n' Andy was preempted in favor of the special program. Bob Hope told jokes. "It's so cold in the Middle West," he said, "that even Republicans are waiting for the fireside chats ..." Lionel Barrymore talked about "our boys fighting ..." Amy puzzled over their words. "Mom," she complained, "how come they had to cancel Pleasure Time for this? I'd rather listen to music."

From the kitchen, Mom kept an eye on the kids as she chopped onions and celery for the turkey dressing. Dad snoozed, drank beer, and waited for FDR's Christmas address later in the evening. Bundled in her pajamas, Amy sat cross-legged on the rag rug by the tree. Enveloped by the aromas of onion, sage, and fresh fir balsam, she and her brother passed gifts to one another, fingering each, guessing their contents. The neat stuff wasn't there yet. Santa hadn't come.

Their old house, heated by a single wood stove in the living room, stood on the shabby side of town. The heat didn't extend into the bedrooms, so there was no getting out of bed in the middle of the night, even to pee. "Hold it, "Amy's brain told her bladder." You can wait."

She lay in her small, dark bedroom and listened. The house creaked; the stove popped as it cooled. No sleigh bells yet.

How will Santa get in? We don't have a chimney... I hope he likes the cookies ... Maybe he'll just eat one ... Should I go check the cookies? No, it's too cold ... Does Santa fly over Japan? ... Does he wear a parachute?

Later, she listened for morning sounds—Mom crumbling newspaper, rattling the wood carrier as she collected kindling, the soft scrttchh of the wooden match as she lit the fire in the living room heater.

Nothing.

Amy crept out of bed and into the kitchen. The plate of cookies still sat on the kitchen table. Santa had bitten one leg off the gingerbread man and drunk half the glass of milk. She picked up the cookie and ran her finger along the tooth-marked edge. Does Santa have germs?

Amy nibbled on its other leg as she tiptoed into the living room.

Yes!

Two new packages peeked out from behind the tree. The bathroom door squeaked and clicked shut.

Oops. Mom's up.

Amy was burrowed deep under her blankets before her mother made it to the kitchen.

When Mom lifted the lid on the cast-iron cook stove in the kitchen to start the fire for breakfast, she hit the floor running. Amy ducked into Ron's room, a former side porch, sealed with plastic sheeting and even colder than hers, and squealed, "Ronnie. C'mon. Get up. It's Christmas."

Ron shushed her. "You'll wake up Dad."

Amy put her hand over her mouth and whispered from behind her fingers. "Okay. But hurry up. Mom's making breakfast."

Stifling their giggles and hugging the wall, they moved like shadows past the kitchen and ran to the tree.

Ronnie pawed through the gifts, scattering bows, looking for Santa's. He stopped when he found an oblong package wrapped with plain red paper, tied with a white ribbon, topped with a candy-cane. "To Ron from Santa. Hah." He stuck the candy cane in his mouth the way Grandpa held his pipe, and tore off the paper.

"Ronnie, stop. You're not supposed to rip the paper—we won't be able to use it again—where's mine?" She pushed past Ron and foraged through the remaining packages, looking for the special one from Santa with her name on it. At six years old, she didn't have a huge reading vocabulary, but she recognized her name, even when written in that peculiar script used by adults.

By the time she found it, a box wrapped identically to Ron's, he had opened his gift.

“An Erector set.” He shouted. “I got an Erector set.” He stroked the smooth red steel box, and opened it. “It’s got wheels ... and a motor ... I can build a lot of stuff ...”

Amy stopped unwrapping her gift and stared at Ron’s. The screwdriver with its simple bent handle, the open-end wrench, and the spring-loaded tool for holding nuts when fingers couldn’t, nestled just under the cover of the red metal box. “Can I look?” she asked, reaching toward it.

“No. It’s mine.” Ron slapped at her hands. “You got your own present.”

Amy looked at the partially unwrapped gift beside her on the worn oval rug while the smiling boy on the cover of the Erector set manual flaunted a Ferris wheel in her face. Her box, not quite the same shape as the one containing Ronnie’s Erector set, waited. Could it be an Erector set made for girls?

She tore into the package, forgetting to save the paper. Its white ribbon snagged on a tree branch beside a shiny blue ball. The candy cane, tossed onto the floor beside her, disappeared as their dog, Butch, snagged it, and crept away on his belly. Amy could barely wait. She removed the lid of the cardboard gift box and set it aside.

“Oh.”

From a bed of tissue a large doll stared blankly at the ceiling—and not just any doll. This one had tin sleep eyes with real lashes and a touch of eye shadow to emphasize their bright blue blindness, along with a hint of blush on its cheeks. Its tiny, red-lipped, open mouth displayed perfect white teeth, and strawberry blonde curls of real hair peeked out from a sweet pink bonnet that matched its windowpane pink cotton dress. Pink oilcloth shoes and socks completed its pink, girlie perfection.

“Oh.” Amy swallowed. “It’s a doll.” She’d never had a doll—never wanted one—was too busy following Ronnie around, climbing trees when he said she couldn’t, and beating him to the mailbox and back. What am I supposed to do with this?

After Christmas dinner, Amy saw her chance. The adults were sitting around in the living room, snuggled close to the wood stove, chatting and dozing, somnolent with food and warmth; Ronnie was outside playing dogfight with the Smith boys from down the street. He, being the smallest, always had to be the Japanese Zero and get shot down while they, the allied pilots, flew away in victory. He would be busy for a long time.

Amy snuck down the hall.

The Erector set lay on Ronnie's bed, lid open, contents beckoning. She removed the instruction booklet and set it aside, the words mostly too big for her. However, she knew how nuts and bolts worked, and could put things together. There were two little round boxes made of cardboard with metal bottoms and tops labeled parts. The first one she opened contained screws and nuts. The other held small brackets for connecting girders and other pieces together. She

thumbed through the manual looking at the illustrations. I can prolly make a plane ... or a tank ...

She was chewing her lower lip and following the illustrations in the manual, putting the wheels on her creation, when the bedroom door banged open.

"Leave it alone. That's mine." Ron screamed at her from the doorway. "You got your own toy. Just keep your hands off mine." He pushed her off the bed, scattering the contents of the boxes onto the bedspread and floor. "And you better pick up every piece," he threatened, "or I'll tell Dad."

"What's going on," Mom stood at the bedroom door, rubbing one eye with a knuckle. "You kids are going to raise the dead ... Amy, what are you doing in here?"

"She's ruining my Erector set," Ron whined. He picked up Amy's tank and waved it toward Mom. "Look. Prolly won't even be able to use these pieces again. She prolly ruined them." He threw it at Amy, missing her by a hair.

"Didn't. Didn't ruin nothin'," Amy sobbed. "I wanted to see how it worked." She went from scientist to six in a blink, hiding her face in her mom's apron and sobbing. "Didn't mean to hurt nuthin'. Only wanted to see it."

"Amy, you know you're not to play with Ronnie's toys," her mother chided her. "You're supposed to play with your own—remember, some things are just for boys."

Amy nodded and ducked her head. Keep backing up our boys. Lionel Barrymore's words echoed in her mind.

Maybe boys get the good stuff because they have to fight in wars.

Spirit Journey

Carol Bosworth, Rose Villa Senior Living



Pilgrim

discarding baggage
while following well-worn paths:
I seek the rumored turnoff
and, mapless, confound myself,
mistaking old comforts
for desired destinations.

Exile

knowing I am not home here
though the landscape is familiar:
I wander blindly
and, dropping off all belongings,
become more and more
the Unbelonging.

Refugee

fleeing my mind's delusions
of certainties that now fail me:
I plunge away from my known life
and, lost in a cloud of new experiences,
become an empty vessel
where Nothing resides.

Full
of Not-knowing,
of useless thinking:
I step into the Nothing Space
where I am accepted,
taught that 1 plus 1 equals One,
washed in a river of spiraling time,
and loved beyond measure.

Sukhavati

Patrick Mizelle, Rose Villa Senior Living



after we die maybe maybe
it all goes black except that
you'll flit here and there
in the minds of your lovers
in scraps perhaps of DNA
in ever descending figures
your facebook page forever
a sphinx on a cyber cloud

light years from now curious
beings from alpha centauri
may watch as you garden or jog
while decades and decades of rain
will have eaten the words
from your tombstone assuming
some road crew didn't pave you
or the long-threatened asteroid
hasn't crash landed nearby

of course you'll come back
a worm's meal or a tree
a museum exhibition King Tut
just a name and brown lips
pulled back in a rictus

a comfort to daydream wings
crown and a harp gold slippers
horn gates and pearl gates
pools of luminous lotus
whereon you'll awaken
turning your eyes eyes of love
to a night sky a night sky
of stardust gone traveling

Thanks For The Memories, Doris & Bob!

Marsha Green, Willamette View



In college scrapbook I found
a yellowed paper taped there January '49.

Torn from band leaders book,
it sparked memories when I took a look.
A portion of our band played hasty greeting
at the Knoxville airport meeting
with Bob Hope, Doris Day, and Les Brown.

Our band leader, of local repute,
received request for us to play
the very next day, miles away.

Hastily he wrote out parts for each section
to "Thanks for the Memories," and passed them out
at quickly arranged practice, under his direction.

Day dawned cloudy but our moods were sunny,
excused from classes, got on bus, musicians extra funny.

Exciting adventure underway!
Prospect of playing for famous people made our day!

At airport, eagerly we waited for their arrival,
but plane delayed, over an hour, ever watchful.
Finally the plane, small, private, taxied near,
we were told the celebrities were here!

We hastened to the tarmac, stood playing near their door,
but alas, clouds, now rain, drops blurred our score!
Ink not permanent then, notes hard to read.

Our musical welcome was altered indeed.
Bob Hope, ever the comedian, quipped as we finished,
“Well, I’m glad to see you all ended at the save time!”
Rain made our performance less than sublime.

Doris descended the stairs first, came by us so close
we saw her heavy makeup up close.
Then, “pancake” was all the rage,
her face was encased in it, ready for the stage.
Bob followed, his smirky grin showing.
Then came Les, minus his band, slightly frowning.

Wet, weary, we scurried to our bus
downhearted, the music didn’t sound like us.
It was so brief, but it WAS A MEMORY!
The band grew closer in comradery.

For decades to follow, we were fans
of Doris’ vocal talent and clever shows,
laughed heartily at Bob’s jokes
wherever he took his bows
and listened attentively to Les Brown’s sound
with his Band of Renown.

Thanks for the memories! Soggy though they be!!

Happened at Maryville College, Tennessee, January 1949

To David

Priscilla Jeffrey, Friendsview Retirement Community



Profligate picking!
Arms full of white,
Here they came,
Faces alight!

Flushed and noisy
They showed off their blooms.
They'd fill all the vases!
Fill all the rooms!

And David behind them,
Pleased with his flock!
He'd ventured to woods
In a real nature walk!

Shocked and red-faced,
We old birds
Met you with strident,
Angry words.

Self-righteously shrilling
“Don't you know?!”
“How could you do this?”
“Oh! Oh! Oh!”

All gen'rously then, we mustered grace
For pitiable city-bred ignorance;
But only after solemn vows
You'd never again p-i-c-k a t-r-i-l-l-i-u-m!

“And now it's done, you might as well
Enjoy their beauty, if in your power,
Knowing some will never again
Muster strength enough to flower.”

And for what? Where are they now,
Fragile bulbs that sent such blooms?
Houses, roads, trimmed lawns and play sets
Hold them fast in their dark tombs.

Forgive us, David, and thanks to you
For helping the babes bring the blooms that day.
None of us knew. How could we guess
‘Twas the once in our lives;
And our lives are still blessed,
By that lavish trillium loveliness.

The Tune My Bones Play

Esther Elizabeth, Holladay Park Plaza



What matters in the end
will be the answer to this question:
Did I love you enough dear partner,
or you dear world, or you dear self?

When the sun goes down
and I review my day,
I see the moments when love
did, or did not, shine.

How I respond to such times
when things get hard or messy,
when the moments go differently than I planned,
tells me how much I know about how to love.

In the end of this day, this moment,
I want to hear in my bones
that I know how to love
you,
the world,
me.

Two Women

Betsy Cameron, Holladay Park Plaza



As we talk on the phone, your voice is back,
and you tell me about your recent three strokes.
The first one I saw, that day at your birthday party
on your farm in Eliot, Maine.
You had trouble talking.

I had driven up to visit you, after flying
from Oregon, just to reconnect to my college friend
after all these years.
My vivacious brunette pal, who
loved hard, married early and lived in a trailer
instead of our dormitory.

And after two babies, and a painful divorce,
fell in lusty love again, with Silas, in Maine,
and became a farmer's wife with chickens and
goats and acres of zucchini and peonies
to sell in town at bistros and beauty shops.

At the local meeting house,
your outgoing self collected
a covey of Quakers,
and worked with them for peace and justice.
You held them close when Silas died.
They were there for that birthday party,
with pot luck casseroles and
herbal tea, and
they are there for you now.

And now you tell me you had to be hospitalized
a week ago for an infection that affected your brain.
You say that you became a nuisance to the whole ward,
by ranting really crazy talk while others tried to sleep.
The nurses began to hate you, and you forgot who you were.

I start to giggle unexpectedly, remembering
my head injury, and delusions several years ago,
when I gave birth to Jesus, and the nurse wanted to kidnap him
from me.

And once again as many times before, as we laugh and talk,
our friendship softens and deepens.

The Untold Story about Japan

Duane L Weeks, Hope Village



Previously, untold hostile actions of japan in puget sound during december 1941 and january 1942

The northwest part of the State of Washington was abuzz with stories or tales of activities taking place, mainly north and west of Seattle. There was building of aircraft fields for the army and the navy.

There was ship building in Seattle, Bremerton, full complement of troops at the three Coastal Artillary Batteries in the Port Townsend area, etc.

Lopez Island is the southern most of the larger islands that make up the San Juan Islands. The south west side of Lopez fronts on the Straits of Juan de Fuca that look out over the straits. (It is a 30 mile waterway, to the Pacific Ocean via the straits with Victoria (on Vancouver Island, a part of Canada) on the north side of the straits and Neah Bay or Cape Flattery (Calallam County, USA) on the south side.

As a young lad growing up on Lopez Island we heard the three Coastal Batteries in the Port Townsend area have regular cannon practice. My mother and our neighbors were blaming the cannon practice for a poor hatching of eggs under the setting hens.

Lopez Island had a population of about 600 people in 1940 on a number of small farms and many privately owned fishing gears and boats. It had four, one or two room schools until 1941 when a new consolidated school for all students -1through 11 grades was built. If a student wanted to complete high school or go to college they had to go to Friday Harbor on San Juan Island or a school on the mainland - Seattle, Bellingham, Mt. Vernon, Anacortes or Sedro Woolley, etc.

In the summer of 1941, the Department of Defense came to Lopez and enrolled the local people to be a of part of a surveillance program for reporting any movement of aircraft and water craft. The observance of any such movement was phoned into the Aircraft Warning Service (AWS) headquarters at Payne Field near Everett. There were two Observation

Post, one on a high hill behind Richardson Community Store and Boat Dock; the other was on the north end of the Island near Port Stanley at the intersection of Cross Road and Center Road.

Each Observation Post was manned by two people, usually, in 4 hour shifts, 24 hours a day. Each post had local people who picked up the observers to go on duty and took the retiring observers home. Most observers worked the OP once a week. My father took the midnight to 5 AM shift once a week. My sister and her school friend did a 4 hour shift from 4 PM to 8PM once a week. My school friend and I stood the 5 AM to 8AM watch every fourth day. The OP's were manned and active until the middle of 1943, when the Japanese presence had ceased and less likely to try and do any hostile action.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Oahu Island in the Hawaiian Islands on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941 killing several thousand servicemen and sinking most of our battleship fleet.

My mother's twin brother was maritime captain and had just resigned his position as chief of the mine fields on both the Atlantic and Pacific sides of the Panama Canal. He saw the possibility of war and did not wish to get locked into the job so he resigned as of November 30, 1941. He brought his family back up to their previous home in Bellingham, Washington.

They were staying at our farm with us until they could relocate. We were eating breakfast on December 7, 1941 when we heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and war was declared.

While we were at the breakfast table, the phone rang and my mother answered it. The person on the phone asked if Captain Davis was there. She handed the phone to uncle Leonard who talked with the caller. Upon completion, uncle Leonard turned to his wife and said "I am now a Captain and to report to Bremerton Navy Base at 0800 hours tomorrow morning and take command of a Naval salvage tug." That was December 8, 1941.

Uncle Leonard had Captain's papers for most bodies of water and for unlimited size of vessels.

On Thursday evening, Dec 11, 1941, our family attended the monthly meeting of the Lopez Island Grange. After the meeting, we went back to our farm house, arriving about 11:15 to 11:30 P.M. As we were walking up on the back porch of our home which looks over

the Straits of Juan de Fuca, a battle erupted a couple of miles off our beaches. There were cannons, airplanes, ships, flares and numerous rounds of ammo fired. After about twenty to thirty minutes all went silent. My father left to go the AWS Observation Post about 11:45 for his weekly turn as an observer. Nothing more happened that would be called a hostile skirmish that night.

Eight or ten years later my uncle came by for a visit and we had a chance to ask Uncle Leonard if he knew what happened that December 11·1941• He said there had been a skirmish with two Japanese 18 men submarines and that one was sunk and one ran aground. He had salvaged the one that ran aground and took it into Bremerton. We have searched all the sources of information, but never could find any written information about it. His expressing what he had seen and participated in, verified that it had happened.

There were other conflicts and probing battles that took place near the meeting of the Straits of Juan de Fuca and the Pacific Ocean. On or about December 23 rd or 24th, 1941 a coastal vessel hauling newsprint paper from Bellingham to San Francisco was sunk or torpedoed just off Cape Flattery. The crew drifted in lifeboats on Christmas eve and was rescued on Christmas day. A class mate of mine on Lopez Island had quit school and was on his first trip as a deckhand on the paper carrier ship.

On or about January 20”1942I was walking from our milking barn to our house for supper when about twenty or so rounds of cannon fire could be heard coming from the straits. A couple of days later we had the radio on in the barn and heard the Victoria , Canada radio station telling about a Japanese submarine shelling Esquimalt, B.C. with about 20 rounds of cannon fire. Esquimalt is about 2 miles west of Victoria. It was the location of oil docks to unload oil bound for Vancouver Island It is located about 11 miles from our farmhouse.

The Japanese used two man submarines with a range of about 100 miles for spying and gathering information. The Whidbey Naval Air Station is situated on the north end of Whidbey Island. We heard of several attempts by the Japanese to land on Whidbey.

Many times we would see the Navy air planes training. At the culmination of training an aircraft carrier would come into the Straits and move around while the pilots would practice landings and take offs. Then they would have one day of mass formations of landing all the plane on the flattop. Then the carrier would sail out the Strait to the Ocean and points west, north or south.

In 1974 our family visited Fort Stevens on the Oregon Coast. Fort Stevens is located south of Warrenton near Astoria and north of Seaside. While visiting the Fort we stopped at the visitor center. We found a book entitled "SILENT SIEGE --- III" telling about Japanese attacks on North America in World War II --- ships sunk, air raids, bombs dropped. Civilian killed. It is a documentary by Bert Webber of Webb Research Group.

Where the Sand Lilies Grow

Rufus S Day, III, Holladay Park Plaza



We like to go where the sand lilies grow,
And the rabbitbrush, the bitterbrush, and sage -
Where chickadees feed on our sunflower seed,
And chipmunks are chased by wrens enraged!

So for a week each month we follow the sun
To our high desert home near Sisters!
It's built of blue-buggy pine, and around it we find
Deer, jack rabbits, quail, and other wonderful critters!

We like to keep the seed feeders filled,
And the watering trays full to the brim!
To see a towhee we're sometimes thrilled!
And once a chipmunk went for a swim!

We're out on the deck, field glasses 'round our neck,
And gaze out o'er the sandy high desert shrubs,
Westward through the junipers to the mountains we call ours,
And bluebirds dart in and out nabbing flies and grubs!

We like to recline with a glass of wine
In the evenings as the sun's going down
And enjoy the day's end with our avian friends,
And lizards, or rabbits, or deer come around.

And when night comes nigh we look at the sky
Through our telescope! And what do we see?
Saturn and Mars, and groupings of stars
Like Andromeda, or the cluster M3!

The next day we go home 'cross that 26 road
To the Plaza where we're cared for as we age!
But sometimes we go where the sand lilies grow,
And the rabbitbrush, the bitterbrush, and sage!

Why?

Sandra Felkenes, Willamette View



Why is there something rather than nothing –
atoms and sunrays
and life later on?

Because Love needs a raindrop,
birdsong, or stars
in which to infuse herself,
something to cherish and nurture –
a child or a bud.

Each soul and seed may die but not before
its passage into another
where it lives on
as memory, new energy,
a bridge to other beyonds –

all a part of infinite design
to carry on the duet
between Love and her progeny.

Why I Write

Allan F Wilson, Village Retirement Center



There seemed to be a funk encasing my being that week,
'Twas physical, emotional, and spiritual,
Each does affect the others.
My spirits rose quickly
As my grandson grabbed my laptop and plunked it onto my lap.
He simultaneously plopped himself next to me with instructions to "Read!"

I read a story about a child and an old man,
But the reading of the story was of little consequence
As my grandson snuggled his head into my shoulder, then my chest.
I could feel his whole being relax and finally give in to sleep.
(It's hard to read with tears in your eyes.)

I continued to the end, as my spirit too was relaxing with his.

He awoke with a start, as my voice no longer vibrated into his being.
"My turn," he blurted, as he began typing,
All kinds of x's, o's, and other non-sequential letters showed themselves.
He was letting out all the emotions and joy possible.
(The alphabet he knows, but he is just learning to spell.)
Turning to me, he commands, "This is my story—keep it!"

It would be a masterpiece
If I could write what he was expressing.
You bet I will keep his story,
Because the memories of that moment
Lift my very being to places I don't often visit.
That's when Papa God whispered, "Well done!"

With Liberty and Justice- For All?

Bob Lustberg, Rose Schnitzer Manor



When I began my army service in October 1942, the U.S. Army was a racially segregated organization. Nothing unusual about that, I figured. Merely a slightly more rigid extension of the Negro's existence in my enlightened, liberal surroundings of New York City.

After six months of the army routine I was frustrated at being shuffled from camp to camp. I applied and was accepted and shipped out to Officer Training School. It was at this major army installation that I saw and first came in contact with Negro soldiers. This base was obviously big enough to support all the separate facilities necessary to house, feed, and train the Negro troops.

Candidates for officer training were approved applicants assembled from form all over the country plus enlisted men from overseas. When I arrived at the school, I found out that I was set back to the next class because a group of applicants from overseas had arrived ahead of schedule and were given priority to begin the ninety day course. The two week layover aided immeasurably in my request for the gold bars. I spent my free time preparing myself for the shocking start of the routine, practicing the commanding voice cadence necessary to drill a platoon, and learning the do's and don'ts from my buddies who did make the originally scheduled class.

"Never volunteer!" Of course this was the First Commandment in the standard operating procedure of army survival. "Keep out of sight of the Platoon Commander." "How?" I asked. "At the first lineup, get into the line farthest from the commander and make sure you're behind a guy that's taller than you."

This advice proved to be a lifesaver for it was five weeks before I was called out to drill the platoon, and by that time our platoon commander had himself a long list of "fuckups", men who failed in their first attempt at drilling the platoon. Since the survival rate at OCS was less than fifty percent, it was extremely important to survive the cuts that began after the fourth week.

In our class of 250 men there were three Negroes, a miniscule percentage but there was no place for them to hide. To their credit, all three made it through. Needless to say, they had to be exceptionally talented to prevail in a completely hostile climate. In fact one southern boy said to me through clenched teeth, “This is the worst three months of my life, sleeping next to a nigger. If I knew it would be like this, I never would have applied.”

The three Negro men were completely different from one another. Tom Sullivan, called Sully, was from the Midwest. He was tall, solidly built, and good-looking in his uniform. Stripped to his shorts his build was even more impressive, reminding me today of Walter Payton, star running back of the Chicago Bears. Another reason I associate him with Payton is that Payton’s nickname is “Sweetness”, a perfect description of Sully’s disposition.

Frank Robinson, Robby, was the one of the three I got to know best, since we were both from New York City and had lots in common. After all, I had been to Harlem twice. Robby cut a very trim figure and always wore his headgear at a slightly jauntier angle than anyone else. He was the only man in the class that I can recall who never gave an outward sign of a fear of failing.

Abe Morrison was the third member of the Negro trio and the only one with no nickname. He was probably the oldest man in the class and had reached the rank of Master Sergeant in the Regular Army. He was thin, wiry, and tough as nails but had a gentle wit when he told stories with his southern drawl. He had a presence that commanded respect. When spoken to, not by fellow southerners of course, he was addressed as Mr. Morrison.

This brief fling at racial integration ended with graduation from OCS. Six months after graduation I was assigned to the Surgeon General’s Office in Washington, D.C. Our nation’s capital at that time was a reflection of the army, a segregated city. Housing and eating facilities were totally separate. Transportation and movie houses were shared but in separate compartments. One bright, sunny day I was on my way out of our building to enjoy a short walk and then lunch. I stopped at the corner of 18th and H streets as a traffic light had just turned against me. I glanced to my left to observe the stream of pedestrians crossing the light. A familiar black face stood out in the crowd, a summer tan uniform contrasting starkly with his skin. Then I saw the jaunty angle of the cap with the gleaming gold bar. “No, it can’t be”, I thought. But it was.

“Robby”, I shouted as he approached, and he fairly jumped the last three yards to the curb where I was standing. “Son of a gun, Bob!” He exclaimed. We stood at the crowded corner shaking hands and practically hugging. We were catching up on the past six months and were almost completely oblivious to the people around us. It probably didn’t bother Robby, but I soon became acutely aware of the astonished looks of the passerby, their conversations pausing, the exchange of hushed remarks, and cold, hostile glances.

I wanted to ask Robby to join me at lunch but it was impossible to even consider this. There wasn’t a restaurant in a fifty mile radius that would accept the multicolored pairing. We talked for a short while, then said our goodbyes, realizing this was as far as our reunion would go. As he turned his back and sauntered west on H Street, I smiled bitterly and shook my head wondering what in hell this war was all about anyway.

The Woman with The Walker

Marilyn Gottschall, Rose Villa Senior Living



Should I walk in sack cloth because I have grown old,
Or fade from view in polite pastels and polyester pants?
It is better, after all, not to call attention to the disease of age,
Better to be unobtrusive, invisible, so that
my sallow skin does not offend you,
my flaccid breasts do not haunt you.

But I am not a decent woman,
And I have no time to heed your fear of death;
I have time only to savor my days.

So, resplendent I shall go,
robing myself in inappropriate beauty,
Reminding myself of the woman I have always been.