

2022

Reflections



LeadingAge Oregon

# Reflections

*A Collection of Short Stories & Poems  
By Seniors of Oregon  
2022*

*Reflections contains original writings submitted to LeadingAge Oregon by residents of member communities. These authors have vastly varying backgrounds and experiences. All are published here in their entirety, as originally submitted by the author. All authors hold their copyright.*

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LeadingAge Oregon is the statewide association for not-for-profit and other mission-directed organizations that are dedicated to providing quality housing, health care, and related services to the elderly and disabled.

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## Fading Out

By Susan Shumway \* Mennonite Village



Fading out he calls it  
breath fading  
heart fading  
day after seeping day

Fading out he tells me  
his children do not hear  
being in the thick  
of their lives and busyness

Fading out he says  
leaving soon  
leaving my bed, my life  
our lives long bound together

Fading out like denim jeans  
washed too many times  
fraying at the edges  
thinning in essence

A slow leaving  
vapors left behind  
worn leather shoes by the door  
ready for a stroll somewhere

Not here.

# My Childhood's Turning Point

By Ed Zack \* Rose Villa

Once upon a time there was an odd boy, one of five children, all born within the space of five Catholic years. As would his daughter twenty-five years later and his grand-daughter fifty years later, the boy somehow learned to read by the age of four, not just the alphabet, not just "Dick and Jane and Spot", but polysyllables, complexities, and abstractions. But those are tales for another time



So, what to do with a four-and-a-half -year-old child in a house and in a family where there was never enough time, money, or energy for anything beyond barebones. In desperation, he was prematurely enrolled in first grade in the neighborhood parochial school, and so he entered a new world of large, cold rooms filled with big, noisy kids and towering, silent, black-robed nuns.

However, his teacher (Sister Bogoslava of blessed memory), also struggled with too many children, not enough resources, and never enough time. The thirty-five others had much more rudimentary needs than the one odd boy, who breezed through the work. Predictably the boy grew bored, and with boredom came mischief. Pity the tearful Mary Frances of the waist-long golden tresses, whose crowning glory was shorn to remove a contraband toy meticulously knotted therein by the restless boy seated behind. Understand the teacher's frustration with the endless peppering of questions. Have compassion for an aged lunch cook who was surprised on the toilet by the inquisitive boy randomly opening doors during recess.

What to do with this polite imp, indeed? He was easily doing all the work with which his larger and older classmates struggled. A parent-teacher summit proposed the solution of independent reading. As soon as he completed the day's classwork, the boy could go to shelf of books inside the supplies closet and pick one to read. This solution was a god-send to all concerned, but it did have one limitation: the meager shelf of books was soon exhausted. When the idled boy relapsed into mischief, he was exiled to the principal's office which fortuitously doubled as a storeroom for surplus books. This new solution proved similarly short-lived as the boy quickly exhausted that trove of broken-spined miscellany, and soon he lapsed yet again into boredom and deviltry.

And so, it came to pass one particularly troublesome Monday that he was taken in hand after school by Sister Bogoslava, not to the detention room, but outside into the snow, through the playground filled with loitering children, and to the corner, and then across the forbidden street and then up the street several blocks. The little boy was now farther on foot from his home than he could ever remember being. Up an enormous gray stone stairway they trudged, then up an oaken stairway, to a pair of prodigious wooden doors, which opened, revealing... paradise.

Books! Books! Books! and yet more books. Shelves of books. No, not merely shelves of books, but stacks of shelves of books reaching to the heavens. Row after row of stacks of books. He had never seen so many books. He had never imagined so many books existed. Fabled Sinbad at the treasure cave, speechless Carter in the burial chamber of Tutankhamen, silenced Galileo peering at the rings of Saturn, and that small, stunned boy were now brothers.

Given a small square piece of cream-colored cardboard emblazoned with his name, the boy was now able to go every Monday after early dismissal to borrow as many as six books to read in school or at home. No fevered bridegroom ever awaited his wedding night more impatiently than did the little boy anticipate those delicious Monday afternoons of discovery and pleasure.

# A Basket of Words

By Judy Francis \* Rose Villa



I had a basket of words.

“Grandma”, my granddaughter asked,  
“What will you do with the words?”

I’ll use them to *remember*, I told her.

The people who take care of the people who are sick,  
The people who reach out to the people who are lonely.  
The eyes that keep speaking when the mouths are masked,  
The windows that are opened when the doors are closed.

I’ll use them to *reflect*, I said.

On the art of balancing  
Painful memories and isolation with introspection and compassion,  
The things we have lost with the things we have found,  
The presence of fear with the reasons to hope.

I’ll use them to *hug* you, I added.

With words that are soft and warm and quietly strong.

I’ll use them to *kiss* you,

With words that are smiling and joyful, full of courage and hope.

And I’ll use them to *love* you,

With words about family and being *allright*.

That’s what I’ll do with the words.

# A Life's Transition: The Last 30 Minutes

By Mary Malinski \* Friendsview

I was working on a Wednesday, my usual day off, and had decided to be done by 3pm. I received an urgent email at 9:30am from the coordinator of our Vigil Volunteer program. I realized I could help at 3:30pm and immediately answered. My shift was to be 3:30-6:30pm. A second email stated her caregiver had suggested that reading from the Bible would be meaningful to the patient.

My patient, "Millie", was a 74 year old woman, estimated to die within the next 24-48 hours without family or friends by her side. She had a son but he refused to go into the room and her caregiver couldn't leave the care facility to visit.

I took the volunteer training a couple of months ago, based on the "No One Dies Alone" program, out of Eugene, Oregon. I hadn't yet been called. I always carry my check sheet, "On what to do if you should get called", in my Daytimer. I pulled it out and read through it, this time really thinking about it. The words I remembered from Beth, our trainer, were very supportive and comforting. "Care for this person as you would a good friend or relative. Just be with them for company".

I can do that. I can sit by her side and hold her hand. I can read some scripture and surprisingly I noticed no anxiety or fear within myself. The only other death I had ever witnessed was my mother's, eight years earlier. I called Floor 9 East and they were expecting me. At 3:15pm I headed for the Volunteer office for the first time, checked in on the computer, walked into the Volunteer "closet" and pulled the vigil bag off the shelf, looking for my name tag. I headed to Floor 9 East not knowing what to expect. This was a new experience for me but I felt supported in some bigger way and was surprised once again by a feeling of peace surrounding me as I walked through the hospital hallways.

Upon arrival her nurse filled me in and the floor staff felt she was close to death. Her son had come yesterday but for unknown reasons couldn't go in the room. Her nurse shared how grateful she was that I came because there wasn't enough staff available for someone to be with her continually at this important time. I entered the room quietly with her nurse in the background. "Millie" lay peacefully in a perfectly groomed bed covered by a pink patchwork quilt provided by the volunteer staff. The room was shaded and soft sacred music played in the background. I washed my hands in preparation.

With eyes wide open, Millie was staring straight ahead into distant space, breathing in a moderately loud, raspy dry breath, and coarsely breathing out with a slight gurgle upon expiration, seemingly unaware of my presence. I introduced myself quietly and sat down at her left side. Having no idea of the nearness of death, and seeing no known clues I decided to read from the bedside Gideon Bible as suggested. Having grown up Christian I scanned my memory for appropriate verses. How could I go wrong with the 23rd Psalm and began to read very softly in her ear.

I noticed her breathing begin to quiet and lengthen between breaths. Being advised in our training to be observant I watched and listened carefully. After I finished the Psalm she was quieter, ten minutes had gone by. I thumbed through the Bible trying to find some appropriate New Testament readings. I settled for a verse here and there but then I stopped as she became quieter and quieter. I just wanted to touch her with support. I placed my right hand softly on her quilt covered left shoulder and reached under the covers with my left hand to gently hold her left hand. Then from "nowhere", but "somewhere", came this loud idea to sing to her. What? What would I sing? Well, I thought, no one is here and I can sing softly in her ear. I sang in church choirs for years but I



sure hadn't expected this request. With my permission "Amazing Grace" came from within me, loud enough only to recognize the tune next to her left ear. With the singing her breaths quieted more and more, she closed her eyes; her respirations were spread further and further apart and became very shallow and whispery. Then they stopped...or did they? I felt her cheek, I listened, I watched. Yes they stopped. She still had a regular pulse, and her skin was warm. Did she die? I called the nurse to come in and check and she confirmed that she probably did, just die. But it didn't seem right to leave quite yet so I volunteered to stay until her pulse stopped, this taking another 15 minutes. It was like a little candle burning out slowly and peacefully, her skin temperature gradually cooling as her pulse wound down. The nurse came back to check "necessary vital signs" as required. I noticed the color in her face losing the creamy pink glow and changing to a graygreen hue. It was apparent to me that her life force had left her body.

I sat back in my chair and pulled out my volunteer bag looking for the note card to write a message to the family. I wanted to share what happened in the last 30 minutes of "Millie's" life and how she died so peacefully. For me this ending was a perfect transition for "Millie" and a gift I will never forget.

### **The Last 30 Minutes**

A little candle burning down

Breath in, breath out

The space between breaths is expanding

So soft, so quiet, so hard to hear

Please listen, listen, come closer to me

Please reach out and touch me, sing to me

Can you hear me any more?

Listen.... I'm leaving now; I'm ready

My breath is gone; my candle has flickered out

Where did I go so peacefully?

## An Aging Rhymester Abjures Art *(From a bench at Sunset Bay, Oregon)*

By John Van Peenen \* Cascade Manor

When I realized that everything  
I had to say was already said  
and others had said it better  
I began to leave new books unread  
and confine my scribbling to  
family letters.

The tinct and taint of poetry  
was becoming so faint  
I turned my hand instead to paint  
and gave the pitiable daubs away  
till no one would take them.  
That couldn't last so now I stay  
as long as I can outside and sit on  
a bench like this one.

I should have done it fifty  
years ago. It's lovely to be  
ambitionless as a pixy  
though my loving wife fears I'm out of it  
and the doctor listens shaking his head.

'Nobody wants to be old', they say.  
It's often said where I can hear it.  
But I'm not yet dead and nowhere near it.  
Though life's cut me out as rover or lover  
a bench suits me well  
now art's long gone.  
Waiting content for what's to come  
I retrench on a bench by a bay as a bum.

# Along the Way

By Jeana Embers \* Ya-Po-Ah Terrace

Along the Way....and day to day, we deserve the love that comes our way.

This is just a time moment, to indulge in the sweetness of color.

All life is sacred and nobody will ever know the truth of life's beginning.

I allow myself to enjoy this day, to smile and laugh and be humble at play.

My body is changing, and so is my mind, as I move along toward the end of my time.

It takes only a second to be born and to die, but for sixty- five years I've been walking my life, encouraged by others and also within, by ancestors and ancient ones who have already been, by all life in its glory, no matter how sound, from the Earth and Sky that always turn 'round.

It's all a Great Mystery, of that we can be sure, to see very clearly, but sometimes in blur.

We all have a heart brain that keeps us alive, sometimes we seek answers to help us thrive.

But words have no meaning, when we see each other's eyes, we know we have spirit, we know  
we are wise.

With all these words written, I'll leave you with this...a colorful rainbow and the love of a hug  
and kiss.

# An Evening at Home

By Ray McGovern \* Mary's Woods

My wife and I moved into a retirement community some years back. My wife had since passed away some time ago and I was still feeling a bit lost and lonely. Fortunately the women here at the Home outnumber the men about three to one so one can have female companionship without leaving the building. But I'm getting ahead of myself here so I'll just tell you what happened.



I had just met this new lady who had moved into an apartment on my floor. Being a gentleman I felt I should help her get acquainted so I invited her to dinner which she readily accepted. I took a nice bottle of wine, as we tend to do here at the Home, and we met at her door and walked down to dinner. I should have asked or at least let her know about the wine in that the inviter brings the wine and she also brought a bottle not being aware our custom.

Anyway we had a nice dinner and we seemed to hit it off quite well. So when I walked her back to her unit we still had her bottle of wine. She asked if I would like to come in for a glass of wine before I retired for the evening. Well seeing how we were getting along quite well I more or less jumped at the chance, but managed to control myself and just said quietly "Oh yes, thank you, that would be nice."

Well we sat together on her couch chatting and watching her cat roll around on the floor and drinking a glass wine, the second bottle you know, and I was feeling very relaxed and a bit light headed. Wanting to get to know her better I reached out and took her hand which she didn't seem to mind. So being a little brazen, the wine you know, I leaned over and gave her a little kiss on her cheek. Again she seemed to enjoy it so on the next glass of wine I got a bit more brazen and took her in my arms and gave her a squeeze and a more romantic kiss. That is when things began to go wrong and fast.

It seemed that my embrace activated her Lifeline Pendant. It must have been hers as her phone started to ring. Not sure of what happened, but we knew something had happened, she asked me to grab the phone as I was sitting closer. I got up and reached for the phone and tripped over her damn cat and in falling I knocked the phone off the table. I could hear someone saying something so I yelled that I had a problem and to hold on until I could reach the phone. My voice may have slurred a bit, you know the wine; that second bottle, and I don't think they understood what I was trying to say and hung up.

My new lady friend came over and tried to help me up, but in trying to do so fell on top of me. You realize how two people who have finished a bottle and a half or more of wine tend to lose their coordination. Well there we were trying to help each other up and not doing well when her door burst open and the nurse, security, 3 Firemen and a neighbor or two dashed in to see what had happened.

Since the two of us were lying on the floor kind of entwined with our clothes askew, so to speak, we were at a loss for words. When asked "were we alright" I looked up and said "I think so". That also came out a bit slurred and my lady friend started to giggle which caused our audience to giggle which irritated the firemen since we had

interrupted their dinner. One of them told us in no uncertain terms that we old folk should start acting our age and not act like a bunch of teenagers.

Well once we got untangled, with much help, I decided it was time to go home. Will I ask my new lady friend to go out again sometime? You're darn right I will, but I'll make sure our Lifeline Pendants stay at home.

## A Poem of Joy

By Maryann Scheler \* Willamette Lutheran

“What is the color of joy?” This is the question I asked the group of women who gathered in my home once a week. I asked myself that question, too. The answer came to me, and I wrote a little poem.

You are the Color of Joy

A rainbow of friends

All colored in love

Iridescent in Grace

And Hope from above.

Divinely designed for each other to give

The color of Joy

To each day that we live.

# At the End of the Road

By Cleve Boehi \* Mary's Woods

I know every twist and turn of the narrow, winding road to the lake house where once upon a time we lived a wonderful dream. I know the viewpoints, the boat launches, the steep, clay wall along the road covered with lush, Maidenhair ferns, the marsh filled with western skunk cabbage (so beautiful, yet so undesirable), and, of course, the osprey nest. I take in the old, dilapidated cabins and neglected, weathering docks, the turnoffs to new developments, community docks, and the county wayside park. They're all still there, even though quite changed after 18 years.

Finally, about 3 miles in, here is the turnout where straight ahead, across the Osprey Cove, sits our former home overlooking the lake. I've come searching for you, my love . . . or, at least, a feeling of your presence, however momentary. It's been a year since I lost you. Although I've stayed strong and have tried to remember only the happy times, I find some things are fading from my memory. And, so, I search. . . .

I drive past the private driveway to what used to be our house and continue down the hill to the adjacent, public property called Enchanted Valley. From here it is a rugged walk to the lake shore, but I am determined to do it.

Crawling over fallen trees, I keep to the creekside, singing in a loud voice as I go because it is bear season. Blackberries and huckleberries abound at the lake. They are so tedious and difficult to gather, but the sweet blackberry cobbles and delicious huckleberry pancakes are so worth it. The bears think so, too.

It rained last night, and, as I walk along the forest edge, I breathe in that unique, forest fragrance . . . the musty, pungent, spicy scent of fir trees, dense brush, and rotting timber. Here and there, I spot a "nurse log" rotting into bark dust, yet revealing new life in little pocket gardens of the trunk, often the coiled fiddle necks of baby ferns. Moss is everywhere, soft and spongy under my feet.

Soon, through the trees I catch a glimpse of our dream house. I hear the chee-chee-chee of an Osprey so I know I'm close to the lake. I climb over logs and push my way through the tall grasses and bullrushes, startling a large frog who harrumphs at me in scorn. I recall with a smile how the frogs of the lake strike up a deafening chorus at night that can stop and start at a moment's notice as though a conductor is orchestrating them with his wand. It is beautiful music for lulling you to sleep. How I miss it!

A little further, I come upon a mother deer and her spotted, twin fawns. Stopping to silently observe them, they keep a wary eye on me as well. After nonchalantly taking a few more bites of green foliage, they move into the brush and out of my sight. Now I spy the gleam of the water to the side of our house . . . our very own cove with a small peninsula of land extending into the water carrying the shallow creek along to merge with the lake itself. Before moving to the shoreline of the lake, I pluck two pink, wild Rhododendron blossoms. Along the water's edge is a growing, jungled mat of water lilies . . . some pink, some yellow . . . all strikingly beautiful. I pause to enjoy their glory.

Last summer . . . out there . . . beyond the lilies, I placed your ashes into the dark, mysterious water along with two Rhododendron blossoms. I watched your very essence, along with the flowers, slowly waltz in a swirling motion, then drift into a wispy trail. It took a long while for you to finally disappear . . . a free spirit at last, yet somehow grounding yourself to this place . . . at that moment in time. But today I came not to say "Goodbye" again but to say "Hello, my heart." I toss the two blossoms I picked as far out into the water as possible. They dance and

swirl in the waters of the cove attempting to mark the spot for me. I stay for awhile observing a pair of Mallard ducks, partners for life, swimming contentedly together. I fill up my senses in every way so that I can take some of you away with me—the coolness of the water, the fragrance of the forest, the sights and sounds of the beauty and wildlife all around us . . . for both of us to treasure.

As I reluctantly leave, I take a last look at the flora in the cove, growing rich and exuberant and wild. Like life . . . always changing, yet, in ways, unchanging . . . like our love.



# Aunt Sue Makes Due

By Roy Irwin Gift \* Ya-Po-Ah Terrace

## Fighting through

My father had an important job with the Highway Department, giving him a bit of pull with County and City officials and he got me a driver's license, telling me that, "My sister needs your help coping with her dairy farm. She can't cope even with being alive right now. She's giving you her son's motorcycle and I can get you a gas ration card. Just, don't say anything about the motorcycle to my sister."

"Are you kidding me? Not thank her for the best gift I ever had?"

"Danny, her son and her husband were both killed a few days ago. There's no way to tell how she would react this soon."

"You're nuts, Dad."

The next day, I got a lift out to the farm and found the motorcycle leaning against the fence. The boy who had been taking care of the cows showed me what he did. It wasn't all that complicated. For a few days, I came and went without seeing my Aunt Sue. But then, I got to worrying about how she was getting on and, when I finished my work, I knocked on the front door. Aunt Sue opened it.

"What do you want, Thief?" she asked.

"Whoa, whoa, what's that mean?" I said.

"I told your father you could have it someday. But you went into the barn and took it."

"It was propped up against the gate when I got here."

"Liar!" she yelled. "Liar!"

With that, she rushed toward me with the quickness of a mountain goat and socked me right in the mouth,

That night at dinner, I told my father about the incident.

"I make my living doing statistics and here is one for you: the violence of an event to which someone reacts may determine the violence of the reaction. My sister is reacting to the explosive destruction of a ship that killed both her husband and beloved son. If she had a gun, she'd shoot you, drag you to the back yard and burn your body on a bonfire."

"But, why, for God's sake?" I asked my father.

"Her son's prize possession, the motorcycle he can never ride again, you stole from him. And, don't bother to tell me that she knows you didn't steal it. Because it isn't about what she knows or believes. It's about her being able to release enough violent emotion to come through that anger, that blockade of anger—to be able to come back to life."

So it went for an entire year. My aunt beat me in the chest with her fists, kicked me in the backsides with her foot, cracked a whip aimed at the back of my head. Then, I began to notice a difference. I turned to see her behind me, but just walking away. No attack.

Finally, one day she came up behind me so quietly I was completely unaware and she kissed me on the back of the neck.

I turned around to face her.

She said, "I believe you will always be the only of my many nephews I truly love."

My Aunt Sue gave me a hug.

"Thank you for saving my life," she said.

## Fighting for

**Aunt Sue woke up** the morning after she had finally punched a hole through her anger and realized that her anger had displaced her grief. She awoke without grief but a heart swollen to bursting with love for her husband and son, and she felt she had to do something to treasure others as she treasured them. She drove her truck to her brother's home on Tucker Street. His truck was up on blocks in the side yard. Aunt Sue went down the steps to the front door, where she paused just long enough to open the door and charged in. This was not a day for ritual etiquette. This was a day to move mountains with wishes.

Aunt Sue found the family having lunch at the kitchen table and didn't stop to weigh her words but jumped to the core of what she had to say.

"Get Danny on his way to take care of your cows. Yeah, I'm selling you the farm for a dollar. That'll .get your truck back on the road, give Danny a little money, give you an income while you still keep your job downtown with its salary.

**"My husband and I** were frugal and saved a fortune from that income and I am now moving to Fayetteville where I'm going to open a restaurant with two entrances. One will be public and open to anyone. The other will be private to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and other soldiers. They can ask their Mothers to call in a recipe and we'll fix it as often as they want. Or, if their mother has any experience, she can come wait tables for us as long as we have a place available. No salary but we will provide a barracks-like place to stay within a short walk of the restaurant.

"I'm going to look for a lot for sale within easy walk of Fort Bragg and I'll work with architects until we have every square foot designed and every needed function provided for.

"That's the plan. What do you think?"

"Wow," said her brother Dan. "I'm too overwhelmed at the moment to know what to think. Beware the grifters and grafters after all the money coming out of Bragg. There is also a lot of local corruption. Architects, for example, I'd sign a national firm with a local office and a law firm to help with all your permits. Finally, I think I'd start right away getting feedback and assistance, where possible, from the Fort Bragg commander. Having said all that, I guess I'm saying that I think it's a great idea."

"I like it, too" said Danny, Dan's son.

"Great, I'll have the papers sent down from Fayetteville. Too-a-loo!"

Off she went, slamming *the front door*.

**About a year after Aunt Sue** went off to Fayetteville, she came barging into our lives once again, and once again as we had all just sat down for Sunday lunch. There was Dan, his son Danny with his wife of six months, Belinda.

***"I came down to give*** you a heads-up. You know the state prison is on the outskirts of Fayetteville, near my restaurant—that's where Alfie has been for the past twenty years. He just walked into my restaurant yesterday—the public one. That's not even a coincidence since it's the only restaurant near the prison. The thing I came to tell you is that Alfie is out of prison, which means that he is going to come after you, as he swore he would.

"Who is Alfie?" Belinda asked.

"My eldest son, who was tried for his mother's murder twenty years ago." Dan answered. "He was sentenced to life in prison without parole, so what has happened to get him out?"

"Why does this mean trouble for Dan?" Belinda asked, looking at Aunt Sue.

***"Because he told the reporters*** that he'd get the one who did and he knew who that was." Dan answered. "Everyone at the trial thought he meant me."

The doorbell rang.

Everyone looked from one to another. Was this Alfie, already here?

"Let me go," said Aunt Sue. "He never said anything against me. Wait in the pantry with the door cracked open."

A minute later, they were all hiding in the pantry and Alfie was sitting at the table across from Aunt Sue.

"What happened?" Aunt Sue asked Alfie.

***"I was invited to appear*** for a parole hearing, ordered by the Governor, who is making a big effort to reduce the prison population, statewide. I was told I could be released if I confessed to what really happened to my mother and I could prove my sanity."

In a very gentle voice, Aunt Sue asked, "What did you confess, Alfie?"

"I had bats flying around inside my head. I thought I was married to my mother and I thought my father had stolen her from me. When I told her all this, she rushed toward me to comfort me, I think. I lashed out at her, not realizing I had a knife in my hand. So, yes, I killed her. Was it an accident? No. It was madness. I knew the person who did it, but I didn't know that person was the same one as me until after ten years of therapy at the prison. They let me go and I came here to tell Pop that I am going to California and he'll never have to see me again."

Dan came out of the pantry and only said two words, "My son!"

He grabbed Alfie in a bear hug and they both began to sob.

Aunt Sue put her arms around them both. Danny came out of the pantry and he did, too.

# Covid-19 Fatigue

By Kay Apte \* Cascade Manor

I like to read, I like to write, and I like to think,  
But with this Covid-19 going around,

“It occurred to me lately, that nothing has occurred to me lately”

# Consent

By Mary Zelinka \* Mennonite Village

You know that iconic photograph taken the day WWII was over?

The one of the sailor kissing the nurse?

Well, it turns out she had been forcibly grabbed.

During the Pandemic only a few people have touched me:

nurses who vaccinated me

the dentist

my hairdresser

friends who have received all three COVID vaccines.

No one shakes my hand

taps my shoulder

gives me a one-armed sideways squeeze.

Clerks drop change into my hand.

I am starved for touch.

When the Pandemic is finally over

I am going to hug everyone

whether I know them or not.

“Pardon me,” I’ll say. “May I hug you?”

# Down for the Count

By Richard Gessford \* Mary's Woods

Life on the farm was a challenge, a lot of hard work. My Daddy and I had just finished broadcast seeding of a 10 acre field with alfalfa seeds, a lot of walking, and cranking the broadcast seed spreader. Later .... I was coming back to the farm driving our herd of cows on my horse Ginger, the cows had been grazing on the open range... As I approached the farm yard I spotted my Dad, crumpled over in the field. He was bent over with his head on the ground, his hat laid near him. .... It was a frightening sight, I feared a heat stroke, or a heart attack, he wasn't moving, it didn't look good .I quickly dismounted from my horse and ran to his side. I knelled down beside him and put my arm on his back. I asked Dad. Dad are you alright???? He rose up on his elbow and said, I'm okay, I was just counting seeds .He had scratched a circle in the dirt around the rim of his hat, and was counting the seeds that lay in the inscribed circle under his hat. He took out a little note pad from his pocket and with a short stubby pencil he recorded the count,===The second count....(3 months later). I had just finished milking the cows and stepped out of the barn for a breath of fresh air, I was shocked, there was Daddy crumpled over again in the field, I dashed to his side and called out to him. Dad are you alright??? What are you doing??? He rose up his head and said I am counting sprouts, in the area marked under his hat. He said it looked good, the sprout count was strong ..... Six months later, THE HARVEST COUNT.....IT HAD BEEN A LONG HOT SUMMER. The grain had grown tall, and now golden brown and ripe with seeds..... My Daddy threw his hat to a random spot and picked six heads of wheat. He crushed the fat rounded seeds in his hands and blew out the chaff. He then counted the fat rounded seeds and noted the count in his little record book, It wasn't all science but it worked.....The harvest was good and the silo was full, Dad had know that, from his early seed counting, I could always count on Daddy for a good analysis of the future harvest.

# Family History

By Jean Rouslin \* Capital Manor

Something I have never been able to do in my adult life is to throw away family letters. I often wonder if being that sentimental isn't a handicap. Then I reason that those letters I've been saving all these years are a really good source of family history.

In 2004 my husband and I moved from our home of many years in Rhode Island to Oregon—to an unfamiliar community of people in very new surroundings. The enormity of such a transition makes one want to hold onto what they can of their memories. This was a good reason for us to bring with us to Oregon the bundles of letters I had stashed away for so many years.

We were extraordinarily fortunate in that the people with whom we came in contact early in our new life were superb, and we made many new and wonderful friends. Yet there was still plenty of adapting to do, and leaving a lifetime of virtually everything that was familiar to us created a sense of loss and sadness. However, the warmth of our reception gave us comfort and helped us to come to terms with our new life.

Thus, on a recent afternoon of so-called putting things in order, I took out a bundle of letters dating back to the 1960's. I found one of my own letters to my eldest son, Dan, who was twenty-two years old at the time. Dan had gone back to college in Ohio where he majored in music at the Oberlin College Conservatory. He had come east to attend my father's funeral, and in my letter, I was sharing some of my memories of his grandfather with him. Both our sons had been wonderful about writing when they were away from home, and I still have quite a number of letters to go through. Someday I hope to put them in chronological order.

It is amazing how many things one forgets in a lifetime and how useful letters are in helping to recall who you were at one time, what your interests were, and how meaningful it is to have your children share so much of their lives with you.

One letter I came upon, which was very exciting, was not from Dan, but rather *about* him. It was written in 1989 by United States Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon. It was a letter congratulating our son for having been selected by the State Department to go to the Middle East. Dan was to travel to five countries—Iraq, Egypt, Qatar, Oman, and Morocco, where he would perform concerts as a United States Artistic Ambassador for the purpose of increasing international understanding. The senator wrote that Dan would be the first solo violinist to participate in the program. What none of us knew at the time was that he would be in the region just three months before the 1990 Gulf War. I recall that, while my husband and I indeed felt very proud, we were also very nervous remembering the hostages that had been taken in neighboring Iran just ten years earlier. While Dan was in Iraq, we were quite worried.

As it turned out, Dan's letters told of a fabulous experience. The countries in which he performed received him warmly, and the people were wonderful, inviting him into their homes. In addition, he was able to partner with some terrific local pianists.

How grateful I was and am, to have found that letter along with many others---all a part of our family's history.

# Final Installment on Sophie Rose Uppinghouse

By Jenny Taylor \* Capital Manor

I've been so excited thinking about getting my forever puppy, taking her on walks, and having interaction with other ladies walking their dogs, buying stuff for her. My mind's eye had it all together – everything loving and peaceful. I was beyond ready. She would greet me at the door when I came in.

Everything was all set up for when I brought her home, exercise pen, rearranged bedroom with her crate next to my bed, crates – one for the car, one for the house and the crates must have pads, so we have those too. Lots and lots of stuff is required, well not really required, but needed for a new puppy in order to make them comfortable, so I thought. Stain and odor eraser, food, toys, leash, and about \$500 of other “stuff”. Grass carpeting for the exercise pen, with plastic sheeting under that, boots so I can walk her in the rain – well, you get the picture. We got it all; the best part was – I had the perfect puppy, Sophie Rose Uppinghouse.

Kurt, my son, took me to pick up Sophie at a house in Keizer where she was being trained in basics for two weeks. I will say that the training was well worth the \$600.00 it cost. Sophie never pooped in the house – well, once when the door was closed – she didn't know yet how to open the sliding door, and only peed in the house when I forgot to remind her about going outside at least every hour at first. Sophie was the smartest dog I've ever been around. Truly. She listened and she learned. Unbelievable. I'd say she learned faster than some people I know, but my kids would take it personally. It's not that way, kids.

I contacted Martha Russell, a resident where I live and a volunteer at pet rescue places here in Salem, this woman can communicate with dogs like no one I've ever seen. She came over three times to show me how to train me to train Sophie. The pup paid perfect attention to her – to me – not so much.

After a few days, I began to feel overwhelmed, I would lie awake listening for sounds she might make, sounds to get out, to go out – or whatever other discomfort. She would let me know when she needed to get outside for business, and when she went outside, she didn't loiter. If she didn't need to go outside after waking me up, she just wanted to make sure I was listening, she'd sit down and not go outside. Unlike other dogs that can lead one on for 15 minutes. She was just checking, I think.

Listening for those sounds meant not good sleep – ask any new mom. My sleep pattern was going down the drain. I'm not a reasonable person without sleep – not even close. I wasn't going to ceramics, which I really enjoy, no exercise, no reading – PUPPY was the day and night.

After one week of not enough sleep, not being able to leave her alone over 1.5 hours – in my head this is a baby, gotta take care of it, was my thinking. I began to doubt the decision I'd made about getting a puppy. I was truly bothered for two days – I wanted this puppy, but I needed sleep and an outside life and I'm not young – you know what I mean.

Once the doubt of need or want sets in, and one can begin to feel what life would be without the doubt, for me it's fairly easy to say -my life was peaceful before I got a puppy and it wasn't that long ago. After I got her, nothing was peaceful. As I said, perfect puppy – old lady owner. I tried, but I couldn't sacrifice that much of me, now, in order to have a companion pup in later years. Hope that makes sense.



Kurt and I picked up the pup on 7 August – I took her back to the breeder 17 August.

During that time, I realized I have never lived alone for an extended period of time – my entire life. Maybe that's why I needed Sophie – a responsibility – whatever it was, I thought I needed it. I decided on Sunday, after one week and two days to find another home for her, and I loved her up for the next period of time – she's a sweet puppy, so soft and silky. I asked the only person I'd let her go to, if they could care for Sophie; it wasn't the right time, and we knew it.

I, then called the breeder to ask about taking her back, and of course, she said, that's in the contract – that I didn't read. I only knew I'd made the right decision for myself and the pup. I didn't keep her long enough to do damage – I didn't yell at her – even once and you all (mostly) know my volume.

When I think about David and I parenting puppies, I forgot these parts. We always had a fenced area that Dave would build especially for puppies, and a couple acres, Invisible Fence, and each other to do puppy stuff. Not so now.

I have a concrete and stone back patio, short grassy front yard, I knew all that going in with this puppy, but I remembered it being a short time from puppy hood to dog hood. Actually, I can't even recall my thought process that would lead me to think I could care for a puppy until adult dog. Not even sure I can do that for myself, not to adult dog – just.....

On Tuesday morning, after early contact with the breeder, Lisa, I drove to Great Day Labradoodles with a heavy heart, and Sophie in a crate, which she did not like. I can totally understand that – I have claustrophobia, enough so that I cannot imagine being locked in a crate. When I took her out of the crate and gave her to Lisa, she snuggled, she almost instantly recognized Lisa, and the love fest began. I'm so happy she's happy.

I had to go to CM to tell Lyndsey, the lady that oversees getting pets and such in the community, and probably a zillion other things I don't know about – to let her know about taking Sophie back. The charge for problems pets can cause is \$500.00, a fair amount, and the earlier that charge was reversed the better. I didn't need any more expenses. When I told her I'd taken Sophie to the breeder, that was the first spoken words of what I'd done. Man, I cried out loud. Lyndsey came around her desk and gave me a warm hug. I believe that hug and Lyndsey's compassion brought me back to the reality of thought, not solely emotional response. That hug helped me a lot.

My sister, Rita, wrote to say, just be glad it was a puppy and not another husband, there's no place to take them back to. So, now I'm on alert.

Sophie, which will be her "fairy" name to me, will be felt for a while. I will resume my formerly pleasant life, and she will resume her life as a puppy with lots of other mates. She's wonderful, you can handle her toes, ears – I remember doing that with lots of puppies over the years, I'll just hang on to the memories, they all bring smiles and a warm heart, and I won't be walking memories in the rain.

# Fishing for Spring Chinook: A New Life Under Sellwood Bridge

By Rie Luft \* Mary's Woods

The low mutter of our outboard was the only sound in the early predawn hour. We maneuvered down our inside channel, the bow barely breaking the surface waters but enough to cause the slap of a beaver tail and its dive; pond turtles slid from their log; an early morning Mallard zig-zagged its feathered bustle over to the shore. Roosting on top of a Wood Duck house, our Great Blue Heron stood with angular legs and fresh breeding plumage, his feet splayed in purchase. Later in the morning he would uncrook his neck, unfold his pterodactyl wings and drop down to the water's edge, placing one stealth foot after the other, his eyes focused forward and down to the slightest movement in the shallows. Detection meant a sword thrust and a quick flip, the fish secured in his bill. Fog fingered its way above the still waters with drops of liquid silver illuminating the tips of the leaves along the bank.



It was mid February — the beginning of the Chinook salmon run. As we entered Holgate Channel, our breaths were jagged, punctuating the frosty air. Taking turns piloting, each of us baited up, fingers stiff with cold. Nearing the Sellwood Bridge just around the corner from our moorage, we turned off our navigation lights, the gray sky's horizon now edged with streaks of pink, rose and violet.

A few boats were already in place above the bridge — ghost shadows, silent hand-waves in greeting. As we changed over to the trolling motor, more swept into position from up and down stream. No hoglines here but a steady progression along an established south/north run. A depth finder would indicate the underwater river wall that created a tide shadow in which fish could rest, the currant's strength at ebb here. There was a hot spot as well along this run — the southern most point of the river wall met another drop off at a 90 degree angle. Referred to as The Point, it was here that jockeying for position took place, with some of the old timers laying greater claim to the area, but for the most part camaraderie prevailed.

Glenn had begun fishing here as soon as we moved into our floating home on Holgate Channel in 2003 — with retirement, a new home, a new state, a new life. We lived and fished from here every spring for 14 years. He had grown up near Lake Erie and, in makeshift crafts, brought in walleye as soon as he could hold a rod. Here in these early days all Glenn had was a salvaged, bunged up 9' metal dingy to which he attached an electric motor, soon becoming known among the regulars as "Electric Glenn." The first time he brought home a salmon you would have thought he had found the key to Fort Knox. My first taste of that Chinook rocked me to my core. I now understood why, when

Gorbachov visited the White House, he was served Maine lobster and Oregon's Spring Chinook.

With seed money from our son for a decent fishing boat, a 19' Duckworth was the result, complete with a live well. With Glenn's encouragement I began coming with him "just for the ride" and was soon piloting the boat with the trolling motor when he had a fish on line. With 13 years of sailing experience with a tiller, navigating with the trolling motor was ingrained. In watching Glenn there was an unexpected grace and elegance between man, rod and fish — a ballet of tension and beauty. His was a match between equals with a respect for and understanding of his opponent. It wasn't long before I became seriously intrigued and all I had to do was hold the pole, with Glenn doing the set-ups and untangling my messes. Still, could I catch a fish? Not on your life. Day after day, week after week and not even a nibble.

As I was the only female out there I became seriously perturbed; I was letting my side of this male/female equation down. I also felt challenged. The first step was taking responsibility for my own baiting, which consisted of a two-hook process with a wrap-around line. When pulled snug, the line distorted the prawn's natural curve. If baited correctly, the prawn would spin slowly in an awkward manner as it was drawn through the water, looking "injured" to a salmon's eye and therefore irresistible. Chinook salmon coming upstream to spawning grounds have a singular focus — to spawn — and are not hungry while on their run, ignoring most baits. Snapping at an injured prawn is simply a reflex action.

I baited prawn after prawn from our tender deck, trolling the line by hand until I began to get the feel and recognize the look of the spin. After that I refused to fish until I felt sure I was baited correctly, tossing away multiple prawns, much to Glenn's chagrin. Catching my first fish didn't come immediately, however. Watching the roll of the prawn and learning to feel the river's depth with the sinker — the weighted ball that kept the bait about 8 inches or so above the river's deepest points — I graduated to whispering touches against the bottom, with minute adjustments of the reel. Senses, I found, became tuned in a profoundly new way and at a new level. Fingertips felt the current in the line, sensed the infinitesimal change of the bait's roll — an indication that it needed adjustment. The very muscles in my arms learned to recognize the correct tension on the line and I willed myself to move with stealth, teasing the bait. All sense of time and place unraveled except for the undulating flow of the river, its pewter surface mesmerizing. My mind slid beneath the surface waters, drifting downwards and unspooling with the current, sensing the fish gliding through — at one with these watery depths.

It was then that I sensed that first tentative tug. I ceased to breathe, felt an adrenalin rush and held steady, just a few slow turns of the reel and, by God, he was on! "I've got something," I whispered as I stood up, afraid to even name it. From a long distance away I heard Glenn shouting, "Keep your tip up!

Keep your tip up, if you do nothing else!" Then, from behind me, "You want me to bring him in for you?"

I began reeling in with every slack second. "No way! This is *my* fish. Just get me outta here!" Glenn turned against the tide and out of the mainstream of boats, forcing the fish to work harder. I let him run. There was a flash of metallic silver, thrashing the surface water, then diving, heading for the bow. Glenn kept turning the boat, keeping the fish alongside as I reeled him in, the rod end jammed against my rib cage, every muscle in my arms and shoulders shuddering with life.

It was about 20 minutes later just south of the Sellwood Bridge that the salmon surfaced for the last time, tiring. Glenn reached over with the net, brought it in.

"Is it a keeper?" I asked, not daring to breathe. A fish with its top fin clipped was a keeper; an untouched fin was considered wild and had to be released. Our boat was drifting under the bridge. I watched as Glenn looked at the spine, running his long blunt-tipped fingers gently along the glistening, heaving body. "Yes," his voice hoarse, "A keeper!" Glenn bent doubled over the fish and drove a single blow to its head with a long-handled ball-peen hammer — a coup de grace — and I whispered my prayer of thanks to the salmon for its life. It lay there still, a sleek magnificent creature with a metallic silver belly and a top half of spotted gun-metal grey overlaying its silver. We stood up and high-fived.

It was then that the unexpected happened, something that I find difficult to credit even today. All along the channel erupted cries of "Hurrah!", "Way to go!" "You did it, Girl!" The guys were all standing up, whooping and calling, arm-waving and thumping the sides of their metal boats. One drew alongside later and I asked, "Why all the fanfare?" His reply, "We've all watched you out here, day after day, week after week, in sleet, pouring rain, wind. We're just glad you finally got a fish. You've earned it!"

Glenn's grin was as wide as the river.

# From Our Window

By Joan Graves \* Capital Manor

It came silently, and at first no one noticed. You couldn't see it, you couldn't hear it, but you could feel it if it came to you. We gave it a name. We called it "the pandemic" – scary words but words we would live with for over two years. We had to learn a different way to walk through our daily life; leaning on our books, or knitting, or doing crossword puzzles, reaching out to one another "are you o.k.?" "I'm o.k.," – always being mindful of our need for separateness, and always fearful that it would come to us.

As time passed, we came to realize that our world was much larger than that tiny speck called Capital Manor. The planet we inhabit became our world – and we were caught up in a time and place infinitely greater than we could put our arms around.

Two years have passed and we look back and wonder how the unthinkable became the normal. Ant this is what we have learned – human nature is amazing – we can rethink who we are and how we fit in the puzzle of life. There was the pandemic and all the pain that came with it – but there was something stronger that was peeking through our thoughts and our hearts. We were all together and we were indomitable.

And now we are coming to the end of the tunnel and gradually returning to everyday life as we remember it. What a ride!

# Glorietta N.M.

By Evey Cole \* Rose Villa

If you take I-25 out of Santa Fe, NM, going east, the highway goes through hills and valleys, and to the north the hills rise to become mountains that are part of the Sangre de Cristo range. About 10 miles from Santa Fe you turn off I-25 towards Glorietta, a small village in a shallow valley. From here you drive on another road that leads up to the Sangre de Cristo mountains, winding along a stream, passing some little houses and ranches. Then about 5 miles up this road is a driveway rising up on the right, all rutted from past rains but passable. After few hundred feet, passing a house or two, the road ends at a little wooden house crouching among the fir trees. This is where Cindy lived, with wood stove for heat, a tiny kitchen and a room for her books, art works and most everything else she needed. Cindy slept in an alcove near the fireplace, by herself and one dog.

I came to know Cindy because she was a close friend of my sister Peggy for many years. Cindy did various kinds of work, from teaching school in a little town south a ways, to writing for The New Mexican newspaper, and often Peg had to help her out with "loans". She was several years younger than Peg, had not been married but had many interesting relationships with men, and no children. Cindy drove to Santa Fe several times a week, and often stopped at Peg's to chat or eat, and bemoan tales of some aspect of her life. She had a big laugh, usually wore a skirt and her hair down and blowing. At times Peg and I drove out to Cindy's house to visit, which I loved to do. Cindy had created a path through the woods by her house, we would walk it and often help her make it a little longer. The closest house was a few hundred feet away, it seemed very remote.

And on the road that winds along the shallow valley there is a Frosty-Freeze and hamburger place, set in a gulch with trees rising back of it, and no stores around. Every time we drove by I thought of a Frosty Freeze, in the dry hot of New Mexico, it was irresistible. So sometimes Peg and I stopped and indulged, parking near-by and letting our dogs have a lick. We could have vanilla or chocolate, I always choose the chocolate. The cool creamy and sweet cream was so perfect! The dogs, one my dachshunds and Peg's a mix of unknown parts, she was a really wonderful dog, leaned over from the back seat, tongues hanging out with drool slowly sliding down which we wiped up with our napkins. I usually felt a little guilty because we would either be having eats with Cindy or at Peg's house, and I cleaned all evidence of chocolate from my chin.

Those were fun days for us, we 3 women could talk and laugh as we sipped our tea or maybe wine, Cindy doing the most of the talking since she was involved with a wider range of life, with her man and women friends and her jobs. Peggy could talk of her painting, I mostly listened.

Then, Peg's emphysema grew worse and she and Dodge moved to Ashland, OR, a lower altitude and nearer their children in California. A few years later Peg died of pneumonia, leaving Dodge alone in the big house on the hillside.

Cindy developed cancer shortly after Peg died and it took her the next year.

That leaves me to keep Peg's and Cindy's memories alive, and to miss the both of them, a picture of the 3 of us sits on my bedroom table, and I seem to go on, still, wondering why?

# Honor Self

By Cathy Blum \* Willamette Lutheran

Looking inward how can I be  
I see faults misery dislike three

Honor self ringing in my ears  
Emotions follow my fears

Not knowing how I stumble  
Only seeing negative I fumble

Words bash in my head trying  
Defeating myself crying

Words appear strength courage  
Positive purpose gives me leverage

Integrity distinction honor me  
Go easy be gentle it will be

New visions of me I see at last  
Help me Lord get rid of the past

Light the way for now it is clear  
By honoring me I honor You

Whole person standing near  
Friendly loving caring cheer

Stepping back seeing a way  
Honoring me everyday

# Househusband

By Elliot McIntire \* Rose Villa

Fatherhood suited Sam. He really enjoyed spending time with his son. It had all been so unplanned. This was not at all what he and Arlene had expected when they got married. But then he hurt his back at work, and it looked like he would be on disability for a while, so when Arlene, who was now the breadwinner, got pregnant, it made sense for him to stay home with the baby. When their son arrived he became the baby's caregiver. Sam, whose full name was William Samuel Campbell, Junior, had always hated being Junior, so went by his middle name. So the baby, christened William Samuel Campbell III (family pressures can be powerful), was immediately nick-named Trey.

It turned out that Sam didn't really mind rinsing out the messy diapers. His sister had given them two months of diaper service as a present. So the soggy used diapers went into a bag, and the service picked them up twice a week, returning them cleaned and dried the next time. After the two months were up there were the regular visits to the Laundromat a couple of blocks away. He was usually the only male in the place, which always made him feel a little awkward. That finally ended when they decided they could afford a washing machine

When Trey got older Sam was the one who took him to day care and picked him up. Again, the only father in the bunch. And when they enrolled Trey in a Suzuki music class the teacher inevitably started each day with " Now Moms, uh, and Dad. . . ". Once again he was the the only male in the group. If the mothers gathered for lunch after the class he was occasionally invited to join them, but it was obvious they were just being polite. They really hoped he wouldn't, and so he didn't.

Trey liked to go to the nearby regional park and ride on the paddle boats in the lake, or just swing and climb at the playground, while Sam, the only man there, watched.

As he grew older it was clear that Trey had a talent for music, and they enrolled him in a music school, where he developed into an accomplished violinist, and played in the community youth orchestra. And once more, Sam was usually the only man taking a child to rehearsals, or being chaperone on trips to other communities.

When Trey was small afternoons often found Sam sitting on their front porch, watching him play with kids from the neighborhood. Their house was on a quiet cul-de-sac with little traffic, so the street became the kids playground, while Sam watched the neighbors come and go.

It was rare in the 1970s to be a man at home during the day, caring for a child. The term "househusband" hadn't even been coined yet. But it gave Sam a nearly unique opportunity to observe the workings of his suburban neighbors: the cliques that formed (and dissolved), the quiet drinking problem of some, the growing depression and isolation of many.

He was part of the local culture, but at the same time, stood apart from it. He had gotten a bachelor's degree in sociology before they married, and now that Trey was in school Sam began to pick up a class or two from their nearby university. Over time he received a master's degree in psychology. His master's thesis, "Gender in Suburbia," took its theme from his observations of his neighbors. He decided to expand his research and turn it into a book. He began with his own observations, but increasingly draw on collaboration with scholars around the country.

By the time Trey was a teenager the book was finished, and published to considerable acclaim. Suddenly Sam was no longer an oddity in society, but recognized as an acute observer of American life. *The Secret Life of the*

*Suburban Housewife* never made the New York Times best seller list, but it became a common text book for sociology classes around the country. And Sam began work on his next book, *A Father at Home: the Male Caregiver*.



# Ice Cream with Chocolate

By Lynn Thomas \* Rose Villa

Their friendship went back many years. In fact, it may have been seventy years or more. And the strange thing about it was that Nancy seemed to remember everything they did, while Judy could barely recall even one memory. So whenever the two of them visited with each other, usually only once a year, Nancy was always trying to pull memories from Judy, always beginning with, “don’t you remember?”, which infuriated Nancy. That is until it came to mentioning ice cream, especially ice cream with chocolate.

It was then the two of them would burst into laughter, like Sunday mornings hiking down to the Good Humor man and getting their favorite ice-cream bar, mint ice cream with a chocolate coating. Judy didn’t remember how they got the money for this, after all they were only ten years old at the time. And sadly for Nancy, she didn’t remember the chore of making lemonade to sell, the glasses, the table and cloth they lugged down to a busy street to sell a glass for \$.10 hoping to have enough to buy ice-cream afterwards. And what was so upsetting to Nancy was Judy didn’t remember how she washed the glasses behind bushes with a towel to look sparkling clean. And it was even her idea!

So in time, Nancy gave up to a degree. The two friends through the ages did all kinds of fun things together, and past experiences shared really didn’t seem to matter. Until one day when celebrating Judy’s fiftieth birthday together in San Francisco something out of the ordinary happened. Walking along on Market Street, a busy street in downtown San Francisco, they passed by a Baskin Robbins ice-cream store and to Nancy’s surprise, Judy suddenly exclaimed, “Nancy, let’s go inside and have a chocolate mint ice cream with hot fudge sauce! Just like we used to.” Breathless, Nancy refrained from commenting other than saying “of course; what a good idea”, and the two friends went right inside, both of them ordering mint chocolate chip ice-cream with chocolate sauce.

*This isn’t the same mint with chocolate I remember. Why is Judy all of a sudden remembering my favorite Sundae, the one I used to make when working at Basin Robbins years ago. I don’t remember Judy ever visiting the shop while I worked there.*

As the two sat eating their sundaes, Judy began regaling stories about ME when so many years ago I worked at Baskin Robbins. All of a sudden it was quite obvious. Was her memory coming back? So with eyes clearly looking into hers, I calmly asked another question, staying of course on the subject of ‘ice-cream’.

“Judy, do you remember going to Dairy Queen on those days we walked to the beach?”

“I sure do! The soft swirls of that yummy ice-cream dipped in chocolate was so much better than all those times we walked to the Good Humor man and had ‘bars’ which weren’t anything like the cone coming to a twirling point that was so delicious to eat, right down to the waffle cone. I hate to tell you, but I never did like ice-cream until I was introduced to Dairy Queen. You always thought I did, but I only ate the bars because I felt so bad about not washing the glasses properly, the ones I only wiped out to look clean behind the bushes.”

*Oh, brother. Could this mean that all those years feeling guilty for not washing the glasses kept her from remembering the good times? I wondered.*

“Judy, do you remember the time we drove to San Francisco? What were we, eighteen years old? I never thought my parents would say yes, but they did. I don’t think we had ice-cream then, but I do remember it was kind of our coming of age trip trip. We managed quite well for a week together.”

“Nancy, how could I ever forget that trip? What I remember most is how you had to telephone your Father every night to check in with him so he could be sure you were all right. I remember how bad you felt because I didn’t have to succumb to my parent’s wishes, and if I remember correctly, you felt guilty that you were, under the gun so to speak, with a duty you hated.”

“Well, I wonder, Judy, if growing up in the 40’s and 50’s didn’t include feelings of guilt for many things. After all, I think both of us spent more time rebelling than trying to be ‘nice girls’. I guess we were always at odds with the culture. To tell you the truth, Judy, I still am. How about you?”

“Not in this culture am I conforming. I’ll take my independence any day!”

# It All Started with a Chicken Dinner

By Betty Hosokawa \* Rose Villa

As the memorial service ended, I looked down the row of chairs at the man sitting three empty seats down from me. He looked so exhausted. Both of us independently had decided to attend this memorial service for a woman who had recently joined our church; this new family needed support during its hour of loss. I guessed at the source of his fatigue. For the past year, as a retired contractor, he had been leading a nonstop push to turn a former men's club into a nondenominational church, all done by aging, volunteer labor. I knew he had been working there until 9pm each night, hitting whatever fast-food diner that was still open on his way home. Impulsively, I lean over and ask, "Would you like to come to dinner some night this week? Bring a book, I have a hammock in the back yard. It won't be a big social gathering. I just will feed you and send you on your way."

And so it began. Now, ten and a half years later, two new knees and one new hip on my part, four years of nonstop treatments for metastatic prostate cancer on his, shared road trips, lots of card games and watching grandkids grow, the love story continues. Some nights when both of us are in pain, we lay there holding hands until we fall asleep. I am eighty-three, he is seventy- four. Love and miracles still happen.

# It Seemed So Unreal

By Bob Robinson \* Mary's Woods

An eerie silence greeted me as I stepped onto a deck of our beach house in Lincoln City on the Oregon Coast. Darkness was setting in \_ and it was only shortly after 10 a.m. The stillness was difficult to believe. There was no chirping of birds, no sign of activity, not even the barking of the many dogs residing in the area. Then a nearby street lamp, set on automatic mode to light up at dusk, went on.

It was August 21, 2017, a crazy Monday morning on which most citizens of the United States observed in awe a coast-to-coast total eclipse, the first in the U.S. since 1918. Woodrow Wilson was president back then.

Lincoln City was a superb place to watch this cosmic spectacle because, from there, it could be seen in totality as the moon temporarily blocked out the sun. There was apprehension, though, that overcast skies and coastal fog might interfere with the observation.

Not to worry. By 8:30 a.m., the sun was shining brightly. Hooray! The coast was clear, or so it seemed. There were 13 of us at the beach house, all equipped with the special glasses to protect our eyes. My wife, Donna, and I decided to watch from the living room which provided a clear view of the sun. The others \_ including two daughters, a son-in-law, grandchildren and girl and boy friends of the grandchildren \_ headed to the beach about one-quarter of a mile away.

Then, with the eclipse at about mid-point, a haziness began to partially obscure the view. That's when I went onto the deck and became enthralled by what was happening around me.

It became darker and darker and, suddenly, the temperature dropped about 15 degrees. There was nothing gradual about the drop. With the colder air, fog came rolling in. I had a strange feeling that I was a very small and insignificant part of the world around me.

I felt the need for a sweater or coat but I wasn't about to go inside until the captivating experience had run its course.

It didn't take long for that to happen. Steadily, daylight returned after the eclipse reached totality. Birds began chirping and I heard the bark of a dog. Within 30 minutes, the temperature had climbed back to what it had been an hour earlier. With the warming, the fog vanished as quickly as it had arrived and a bright sun bore down. It was going to be a superb day at the beach.

So, what did I think of the eclipse experience? I know that thousands of people had described it as "awesome." I would go along with that because I can't think of a better word to describe what I saw and felt.

My most vivid memory always will be my time alone on the deck. That eerie silence. The enveloping darkness. The sudden drop in temperature. All in a matter of minutes. It was so cool \_ literally and figuratively \_ and so unforgettable.

# LIFE IS TOUGH

By Ruth LaFreniere \* Willamette Lutheran

LIFE IS TOUGH - IT'S NOT THE WAY THAT I IMAGINED  
IT TO BE.

LIFE'S BEEN ROUGH; I'VE STRUGGLED THROUGH THE  
YEARS AND I'M NOT WHERE I THOUGHT I'D BE.

BUT I'VE BEEN GROWING, I AM STRETCHING, I AM  
LEARNING TO SEE WITH DIFFERENT EYES.

AND I LIKE WHAT I SEE, I LIKE WHAT I SEE.

I SEE HANDS, OUTSTRETCHED HANDS OF THOSE  
WHO CARE AND WANT TO SHARE.

THEY ARE SAYING I CAN FIND A PLACE TO SHINE  
EVERYWHERE.

I'LL TAKE MY STAND WITH YOU. WE'LL REACH OUR  
HANDS TO THOSE WHO STRUGGLE IN THE DARK.

AND HELP THEM FIND A PLACE TO SHINE; WE'LL  
HELP THEM FIND A PLACE TO SHINE. YES, FIND A  
PLACE TO SHINE FOR ALL TO SEE!

# Mailboxes On A Country Road

By Carl Peterson \* Rose Villa

My life changed forever during the summer of 1948. From a tidy Seattle city lot we moved to three-acres of overgrown blackberries and unkept forest along a rough gravel road outside of Portland. Our mailbox was now in a row with others on that road, not by our front door. My parents built a mid-century ranch house that year, although we didn't know that term at the time. Developers were beginning to build houses outside of Portland but one could still raise a cow, or chickens, or pigs without any objection by the neighbors. Adapting to country life, so new to me, took years.

That first Spring Dad went to the feed store and returned with a two-dozen fluffy yellow chicks. They lived for the first few weeks in a stinky box in our kitchen with a light bulb to keep them warm. We four children played with them and mourned when one was found dead in the morning. When their little wings started showing pin feathers Dad put them outside in a temporary chicken house he built.

During that first summer, while he finished a bigger chicken house, the chickens ran wild while searching for bugs and other chicken goodies to supplement their poultry mash and water. Later, when the chickens were older Mom showed how me to dunk chickens in boiling water before plucking out the feathers but I was unable chop a chicken's head off. We had roast chicken often, more than I liked.

Our flock of chickens thrived until a passing fox discovered our flock of chickens and decided to stay. It liked chicken dinners and had several before we fought back. Meals for the fox ended when my armed male relatives set up a successful ambush one summer evening. My efforts to tan a summer-time fox pelt failed but I used its cleaned-up skull on the pull chain for my closet light for years. My sisters were terrified of it.

I was the big enough to help Mom and Dad finish the new house. I learned how to prime and paint the new shake siding and to paint the wooden gutters with a tar-like preservative. I learned how hard it is to fill all the little grooves on cedar shakes and wished we had shingles but my youthful experiences were expanding.

Dad opened a retail ice cream store after we moved to Portland. He made the ice cream in 5-gallon batches and the freezer had to be cleaned and sterilized in between. He realized these washings had enough calories to raise a pig or two. A pig pen and house were built next to the chicken house to hold the two weaner pigs he brought home that first year. My little sisters found names for them, but, because the pigs didn't respond to them, like a cat or dog would, they ignored the pigs after that.

Later, when I could drive, I helped by driving the pigs in a trailer to the Hillsboro slaughter house. Dad built a fenced ramp to lead the pigs up into the fenced trailer. If the pig escaped during the loading it was hard to catch them but, as you can guess, we learned. At the slaughter house our pigs were each identified with a number. Each number digit had many small hollow pins and purple ink flowed through them, like a tattoo. The pigs squealed a little as the device hit their flanks but they would soon have a worse fate. The purple numbers allowed the dressed and cleaned pig to be identified when we came back later for them. These activities gave our family lots of eggs, chicken, bacon and pork to eat.

I never lived in the country again after I left home for college. Country living gave me experiences much different and more interesting than what I would have known in the city. I never thought much about plucking chickens or hoeing the garden until years later when I realized few others had those experiences. Our weathered mailbox on that gravel road still remains my best mental image of how I grew up.

## March, April, May, June

By Estelle Bergstrom, Friendsview

### March, April, May, June

(2020)

A season turns  
    from dark to light  
changing the dreams  
    that come at night.

Four walls close by  
    at stay-in time  
the human touch  
    is lost in mime.

Then learn to breathe  
    wearing a mask  
keep your distance  
    but fear the task.

Screens can't replace  
    the real and true  
the people who  
    start each day anew.

A missive says  
    "Stay well, stay sane"  
as weeks run long  
    it seems in vain.

A season turns  
    we persevere  
will light turn dark  
    or hope appear?

### December, January, February

(2021/2022)

A season turns  
    a hopeful end?  
masked and distanced  
    still missing friends.

Thoughts weigh heavy  
    what, where, when, how?  
“who?” a question  
    to ask right now.

Graphs and numbers  
    meet highs and lows  
looking for trends  
    in what they show.

Move the body  
    engage the mind  
try mightily  
    ways to unwind.

Many will leave  
    their tasks undone  
seeking safety  
    while finding none.

A season turns  
    and we're still here  
will dark turn light  
    and hope appear?



# Marian's Sestina

By Lindsey Daniel \* Holiday Park Plaza

This is going to be a short visit. I'm just fine.

But you didn't call me back when I called you

this morning, or maybe it was yesterday.

I don't know what day it is any more.

Anyway, do you have Rob's phone number? I can't find it

and I don't want to ask the ladies to help me.

I think Josie is tired of me.

I asked her if she could be here more often, but this arrangement suits her just

fine.

These ladies don't seem to know what to do with me any more.

I'm sure they're talking about me when they change shifts each day.

But how are you?

No, I don't want to talk about it.

It's just not comfortable having strangers in my own home. I don't like it.

But Lindsey, I can't get up without help any more, and I guess that's fine,

but Josie has to write all my checks for me.

I don't know what day it is until I look at the paper, and I never know if I'm

looking at the one from yesterday or today

But the last thing I want is for you

to worry about me any more

And I don't want to change caregivers or talk about it any more.

I've had other ladies, substitutes, and I didn't like it. The ones I have are fine.

and staying here in my own house is the important thing to me.

I don't want to talk about it any more.

Have you heard from Rob? I tried to call him the other day  
but I must have dialed something wrong, so I called you.

He's talking again about moving. Did he say anything to you?

I wish he'd get on with it

Now that he's retired, there isn't any reason why he needs to stay here any  
more.

I hope he isn't staying because of me.

The ladies and I can manage just fine.

Did I tell you Rob found me a new gardener, who seemed to do a good job when  
he came, I think Friday.

Well, this is about all the talking I'm good for today.

When did you say that you are coming back to visit me?

I think you said February, but I can't seem to remember anything anymore

But I don't want you worrying about it.

Everything is fine

I just keep trying, but there's so much that I can't do any more.

I'm tired all the time, and I hate it!

But this is just a phase, and I'll be fine.

# Meanderings

By Daniel Dunham \* Mennonite Village

Life has consequences

Serendipity abounds

Unexpected Events

Happen as the result

Of seven billion people

Jostling each other

Within the span of a

Single Planet

What is solace

Should we not

Have as much

As we need

Why not

Too many people

On this small

Planet

It's our own

Fault isn't it

We each want

Need our space

We seem to  
Constantly move  
Just look at  
California

Now look at  
Oregon where  
An awful lot of  
Californians are now

Life in Oregon is  
Less expensive  
And cooler  
And Greener

Fewer  
Consequences here

# Memories

By Ann Ingermanson \* The Village

When you have ceased living  
And life on earth is through,  
What do you think others  
Will say about you?

Will they remark how honest  
You have always been,  
Or say how you somehow managed  
Every race to win.

Will they think you played fair  
Or did they somehow feel  
You always got the best  
Of every single deal.

Can people remember the polite  
Way you always spoke,  
Or do they best recall  
Your latest off-color joke.

Can they say you were courteous  
To everyone you met,  
Or do they say you were by far  
The rudest person yet.  
Do they recall the kind things  
That they often saw.  
Or is their memory better for

The way you broke the law.

Did you treat your parents,  
Spouse and children too,  
In such a way that others  
Could tell your love was true.

Was your home life so happy  
That everyone could tell,  
Or did you grumble, fight and nag  
And make life a living hell.

Were you easy to live with  
So your home was filled with joy,  
Or did you make life miserable  
And other folks annoy.

Yes, when your life is over  
It's nice if folks could recall,  
Of all the people they ever knew  
They liked you the best of all.

# Missing You

By Bonnie Brew \* Rose Schnitzer Manor

You hadn't bothered  
To come in, why now?  
Is it because the  
Door is open?

We missed you so  
Oh how we  
Missed you.

# Molly

By Ron Sadler \* Mennonite Village

Sleek, black Labrador pup, galloping through the shallow water, splashing and raising hell, leaping and grinning at the sky.

Molly, you made my heart young.

Dancing through the cover of autumn, nose to the ground, snuffing and snorting the hot pheasant scent, tail a-blur behind you.

Molly, you made my heart thrill.

Returning to the duck blind after a long, difficult retrieve, head high and back to balance the welcome burden, legs prancing just a little bit.

Molly, you made my heart proud.

I will miss your warm presence and constant companionship, the re-assurance of your sleep-sounds in the dark stillness of night.

Molly, you made my heart content.

You fought the demon in your belly with never a whimper or groan, until your knowing, gentle eyes told me it was time to go.

Molly, you taught my heart dignity and courage.

Fly, fly on, big dog, we'll meet again where the breezes blow fresh and cool, the birds are many and the golden sun of October always shines.

Molly, you make my heart remember - forever.



# More than Beans

By Larry Eby \* Mennonite Village

I was looking forward to a visit from my daughter and grand-daughter from Seattle and planning for interesting Christmas time activities. I thought we might go to Corvallis in the evening to see the Christmas related scenes and lights at the Benton County Fairgrounds. There is no monetary admission fee but donations of non-perishable food placed in boxes at the entry place are encouraged. I had nothing suitable at home so a few days before Christmas, I stopped at the grocery store to get a few cans of food. I decided on three medium-sized cans of pork and beans and went to the busy self-checkout counter. A young man that had a larger cart full of things let me go ahead because I had only a few items.

So I was already in a good mood when I heard a voice from behind me say, "Here take this." The voice came from a middle-aged man who was accompanied by an adolescent girl, perhaps his daughter or grand-daughter. I looked at his outstretched hand, which to my surprise was inviting me to take a nice-looking fifty dollar bill. When I hesitated, he continued, "Here, take it." I did and said, "And whom do I thank for this?" "The Lord", he replied and walked away as his companion skipped happily with him.

I have known of people that randomly pass out five dollar bills to people. But fifty dollars is a significant amount. Were there others that received fifty dollars from that generous pair that day? And why me?

Perhaps they noticed this old man in line with only 3 cans of beans at the checkout among all these people with full shopping carts and said, "He needs some help". Or perhaps a more exalted reason; I'll never know. Now I could choose another place or person to hand on the \$50. Which I really did not need. Non-the-less, it was a bright spot in my day.

# My First Four Years Of My Life In Verse

By Dan Stahlnecker \* Friendsview

Not any too soon

Erma birthed me

In hospital room

A reticent he

First at Silverton

Three days of hell

A police escort

To Emanuel

Whose car Orin drove?

I'll never know

As a flatbed truck

The vehicle owned

Home to small mill shack

Valley Butte Creek

With a clothes line rope

Strung to yonder peak

At local Friends Church

In old Scotts Mills

Very next Sunday

Half pew family fills

World War II was on

Dad answered call

Summer '44

Camp Roberts AWOL

Only a few miles

Our trailer be

So under the fence

Back by reveille

A newborn daughter

He came to see

Born Paso Robles

Where he could not be

We moved to Rex Hill

The three of us

Mom's sister joined in

We could catch the bus

Saturday night bath

Kitchen floor tub

Heard Grand Ole Opry

While rub a dub dub

Just up the steep slope

From kitchen glass

I would stand in tub

To watch freight train pass

99W

One summer night

Naked as jay bird

I somehow took flight

Ditch water running

By the road near

Crossed by me crawling

To walk planks caused fear

Dad's letters were slow

From Philippines

Censored and cut up

Figure out what means

Aunt Orba and I

Often catch bus

To Middleton Friends

And back with no fuss

To be discharged soon

Dad's now state side

But no telephone

Anxiously time bide

Physical, eye check,

Teeth cleaned and guess

Alphabetically

Scheduled and Dad's S

Three to six weeks time

To get work done

Can't be home too soon

No more toting gun

Dad arrived Portland

On a dark night

Greyhound bus depot

None knew of his plight

A kind driver spoke

"Headed home Sir?

Need help finding ride?

What is the address?"

I've never been there

My family's home

Somewhere near Rex Hill

They don't have a phone

Climb aboard soldier

I know the lot

Mom, sis, son, daughter

Ride bus from that spot

A knock on front door

Woke us in bed

Mom turned on porch light

Don't recall what said

A voice not heard for

Near half my life

I was out of bed

Fast joining Dad's wife

Mom screen to unlock  
The hook up raised  
As Dad yanked the screen  
The door was unfazed

Soon we're together  
Mom, Dad, sis, me  
Our lives whole again  
Dad with us to be

God had kept Dad safe  
On sea, on land  
Then brought home to us  
Just as He had planned

# My Ordinary Day

By Shirley A. Hilts \* Mennonite Village

Like a blackbird perched on a wire  
Here I sit in nighttime attire  
Scanning the sunny scene out of doors  
In no hurry to tackle my chores.  
Mind adrift...no reason to rush  
Long retired...I soak up the hush.  
Soon enough I'll feel a small tug  
Toward some action...rinse out my mug  
Make the bed...consult so-called "Brains"  
Must-do tasks while daylight remains.

Lucky me! I have a dear spouse  
Makes our breakfast...then leaves the house  
Volunteers a lot for a song  
Helps where needed...warm-hearted, strong  
Leaves me free to do as I may  
Write or paint or drift day away  
Scheming...dreaming...BUT if I try  
Works of worth may still hatch and fly.  
So...I'd best get up...leave my nest  
Use this gift with which I've been blessed!

# My Happy Place

By Darolen Sorum \* Friendsview

Like being in a wonderful dream, my Happy Place surrounds me when I am gliding smoothly around a big room to the one, two, three beat of waltz music. I do not consciously think “one, two, three” but just feel it as my dear husband leads me with the gentle but just-firm-enough movements of his body. During these times with Glenn on the dance floor I’m in my Happy Place.

Both of us had studied music as kids and loved it. While in high school, Glenn had learned the Jitterbug and won a trophy for being “Jitterbug Champion of Southern Oregon.” He was slim and limber and could just not stand still when the music was right! These also were perfect qualifications for his being a cheer leader for his school in Medford.

Mutual love of dancing resulted in our memorable first meeting. Every fall term in college, the women’s living groups organized a get-acquainted activity on a Saturday night when the houses opened up for “Nickel Hops.” The guys walked around from one house to another, paying five cents to dance with the gals of their choice. That fall term of 1956, I was blessed to dance for the first time with my dear husband-to-be.

About three years after we met at that Nickel Hop, we were married and have enjoyed 60-plus years of moving together to music whenever we can. Our first lessons together were square dancing and later came line-dancing. Through the years we enjoyed social ballroom dancing groups which included lessons in swing and waltz, cha-cha, western, polka, and others. The waltz and the swing with their many variations are our favorites.

On Friday or Saturday evenings with friends from those dancing groups we looked for places that offered especially good music and a large, smooth dance floor. We found the Elks Clubs offered dinner and live music at very reasonable prices. So, we all became members, and nearly every weekend would select which club had our favorite bands playing. Then, we met at that place, enjoyed a lovely dinner and danced until 11:00 or 12:00.

Those were very happy times with close friends. The price was right, also, and what better exercise could a couple enjoy together? Glenn and I have not gotten out to dance much these past two years, but often around our tiny apartment here at Friendsview, when the music is right, we both just drop everything and dance in our tiny hard-floor kitchen! Some of the old variations to the dances are a bit harder to remember now but we can always slip back into our first swing and waltz.

For 63 years now, we have been dancing as one. On a dance floor with beautiful music playing, me in my long swishy black skirt, and in my honey’s arms—this is my forever Happy Place.



# My Life Would Be Different

By Jo Noble \* Rose Villa



If tears were allowed

And feelings explored

And space a given

And privacy sacred.

My life would be different

If passion was shameless

And bodies a thing of wonder

And hidden parts touched and tasted.

My life would be different

If choices were limitless

And intelligence recognized

Where cooking was science

And sewing was architecture.

My life would be different

If strength was not masculine

And power was not bitchiness.

My life would be different

If my mother's voice had been born

And her strength embraced

And her world not gated.

# October Rain

By Kathy Marx \* Ya-Po-Ah Terrace

I slowly leaned back into a bathtub of warm silky water as the scent of cherry blossom bubble bath wafted through the air. I mindfully inhaled and exhaled the soothing steam in total relaxation. My bamboo bathtub tray held a champagne flute filled with Prosecco, a vase with three orange poppies, and a small bowl of deep purple blueberries. I experienced a moment where I felt all was right with the world. This feeling rarely happens in today's climate of rough politics, blatant racism, a pandemic with no end in sight, anxiety ridden children, and the uncertainty of where this is all going. But at this moment in my own little universe I was perfectly content. Finally removing myself from the fragrant bubbles, I dried myself with languish in Cleopatra style. I reached for my clothing and realized I had left them in the bedroom. I was happy I lived alone and didn't have to worry about anyone seeing me in my birthday suit. As I began to walk to the bedroom I saw a stranger in my room. Quickly stepping back into the bathroom I thought, "Who is that?" It seemed that this unknown person had called gravity in to play and gravity was winning because everything was sagging down, down, down. Who is she? I then mustered up some courage and walked up to the full length mirror to get a closer look. She had large brown eyes that held remnants of dreams to be dreamed, hope for a better world, and an impossible Hallmark romance. Okay, nevermind, disappointments aside, I had no complaints and felt quite grateful to live in a pleasant retirement community.

Being a resident in a retirement community during a pandemic comes with challenges. I stepped into the elevator and four people were there including one lady who had forgotten her mask. A grumpy man standing in the elevator told her to either put a mask on or get off the elevator. The lady apologized, pulled her mask from her pocket, and placed it on her face. The grumpy man started muttering that people are irresponsible and are spreading germs with no regard for others. The lady said that she had already apologized and normally always wore her mask. The grumpy man said, "I wasn't talking to you." She said that he was talking to her because she was the only person not wearing a mask. Then I smelled an odor. It was an odor inside an elevator that you wanted to avoid. Suddenly everyone in the elevator had a deer in headlights expression. It was like rotten eggs meet skunks in the church choir pews. The smell permeated the air and like a choir, everyone in unison put their hands up to their noses. Then the choir sang in perfect harmony, "Ewww!" The lady said, "Oh my God. What is that smell?" The grumpy one asked why the lady was looking at him. Another person said, "It wasn't me." I was happy to get off the elevator because the conversation was becoming dementia-ish, mixed with adult onset ADHD. I was even happier to wear a mask because that stuff is contagious.

I am an African American female, a retired social worker, and feel entitled to a simple life without needing to take a deep dive on any subject. I thought I could be a shallow, non concerned senior citizen who loves her freedom and is happy to do nothing everyday. I hadn't considered retiring in Oregon but my daughter convinced me. She explained that Oregon is a beautiful place with scenic forests, pristine river waters, and soft rains that seemed to refresh and clear the air. As an African American I was also concerned about the demographics. I did not want to retire in a place where there is hostility toward people of color. But then my daughter said the magic words. There is not much diversity, but the people are warm hearted and open minded.

Because there are not many people of color in this retirement community, I became the "go-to" person for questions about race relations. It was an uncomfortable feeling. I discussed the issue with my daughter and she said that she was impressed by the people who are courageous enough and genuinely interested in open

discussion about racism. So I began addressing questions like why are people angry and demonstrating about race? Why is it acceptable for African Americans to use the N-word and others can't? Why does law enforcement seemingly kill and brutalize unarmed African Americans? I was irritated mainly because it took meticulous thought to find the right words to explain my viewpoint on racism and my retired brain wanted to go on strike. I knew that my circle of friends were not mean spirited and held no malice toward me. These are people that I have grown to love and respect because of the fine individuals they are. I now understand that some in this retirement community never had the opportunity to interact with African Americans or have an open discussion about racism. So I spoke to them based on my personal experience, education, and knowledge even if it was uncomfortable.

I don't consider myself an expert on racism, nor do I speak for the entire African American population. Some will understand the complexities of racism and some won't. I could speak on the subject of racism for hours, but usage of the N-word was the question that people wanted to understand most. My answer is that it started from slavery. Cruel slave masters used the N- word, among other things, to try to control slaves. They wanted slaves to define themselves as the N-word, which slaves fully understood meant they were sub human to justify murder and brutalization, separating families, buying and selling them as property, subjecting the women to deep psychological and physical violence, deep oppression, hatred, and that they were trapped as slaves and could never be free. This set in motion a mindset of people who knew those were lies, had the perseverance to strive to be free despite extreme hardship, and the rejection of any derogatory definition of who they are. Black Americans, especially the younger generations can use the N-word among themselves and understand exactly what it means. But when others use that word, it takes on an entirely different meaning which can provoke violent anger and disgust in African Americans because slave days are long gone. My family and friends do not use the N-word at all. I do not like to be in the presence of people who use that word regardless of skin color.

While progress has been made in America in some aspects, truthfully the recent rise in open racism against people of color and other marginalized groups highlights the need for conscious effort in fighting racism. Many were relieved to learn that most African Americans do not hold them responsible for the atrocities against black slaves perpetuated by their ancestors. I find that open, honest communication with a willingness to listen is needed for people to begin to understand the differences in human experiences. Now that I've had the opportunity to speak on this subject my brain is on fire. So much for retirement.

One afternoon I stepped outside the building and a soft October rain was falling. It was the type of rain that seemed to cleanse the world of anything dark and dirty. In front of the entrance there were several people standing around conversing. We exchanged niceties and then a handsome young man walked through. The women standing nearby couldn't take their eyes off him. Don't judge because yes, we are old, but not dead. I then turned to walk away and unexpectedly my right foot slipped upward on the wet sidewalk. I swear I felt myself falling in slow motion. I actually had time to say to myself, "Ohhh nooo! This is really gonna hurt!" I was in denial but quickly realized that the fall was actually happening, I tried to let myself flop instead of tensing up and just let it happen. Normal people would have closed their eyes but not me. I kept my big eyes wide open to see who actually saw me fall and I didn't care if my tailbone was aching. As I looked around, to my dismay that handsome young man offered his hand to pull me up. I was so embarrassed that I entertained the idea of playing dead. When he asked me if I was okay, I said, "Oh yes, I'm fine" and in a display of fitness I sashayed away trying to hide the excruciating pain in my tush. I immediately went and called my doctor.

# Ode To My Reclining Chair

By Lynn Negus \* Cascade Manor

When my crotchety back begins to creak,  
my knees repeat complaints, as do my feet.  
It's not the couch or sofa bed I seek,  
but look about for my reclining chair.

When seated, leaning back just slightly there,  
my weary feet, released from shoes now dare  
breathe in deeply the cool refreshing air  
that drifts around the comfort of this chair.

My gaping mouth moans to my groaning back:  
"listen to those annoying noisome cracks."  
It's time to take these moments to relax,  
stretch out, lie back in the reclining chair."

My neck and spine curve into quiet bliss,  
my heavy eyelids struggle to resist.  
A strong desire to fall asleep persists,  
a weary wonderous feature of this chair.

In promised future pleasure of repose,  
my head speaks softly to my feet and toes:  
"Step far away from all these garden woes,  
sit down, be still, rest in this peaceful chair."

To slumbering at last I now succumb,  
slip into dreams as sweet as garden plum.

a dream of all the garden chores now done,  
the finest gift of my reclining chair.

# Of Cats And Dogs

By Mo Weathers \* Rose Villa

“Without a cat a home is just a house,” or so said Anonymous, whoever he was. The same could be said for dogs. When you come home pets add a spark of life—and love—to an otherwise silent and lifeless house. Those of you who’ve had pets, you know what I mean. In my grownup life my wife, Lois, and I have had several cats. But when I was a kid my family had dogs. Let me tell you about two of them.

Ted never had much use for cats. He liked to chase them because they always ran. Ted was our family’s first dog, a black Cocker Spaniel. He was a good dog, patient and fun loving. One day a small, homeless kitten wandered into our yard and my brother and I immediately adopted her. Typically, Ted didn’t like her very much. He slept on the step that connected our garage to our enclosed back porch, and on our new kitten’s first night she tried to encroach on Ted’s sleeping territory. Ted raised a horrible ruckus, growling and scuffling. But the next morning the kitten was still around, apparently reasoning that the growling and scuffling was the price she had to pay for being fed. This went on for several more nights, then all was quiet. Apparently Ted and the kitten had arranged some sort of truce. One morning I was up early and went out into the garage, and there was Ted, asleep on his step, with the kitten securely curled up in a ball, sleeping on top of Ted. This continued for about a month, until . . . until one day the kitten was run over by a car. That night, and the next couple of nights, I could hear Ted from my bedroom, howling himself to sleep, grieving for his little friend. I grieved, too—for both of them. Don’t ever tell me that animals have no feelings.

When he was a puppy, Mutt—our second dog—was a tiny, black, wire-haired bundle of boundless energy. But years of gleefully expending that energy had taken their toll, and by the time we moved to Gates, Oregon in 1947, Mutt was an old, over-the-hill mongrel, a mere shadow of his former self. He walked at a glacial pace, head down, as if going to a funeral. During the summer, for some unknown reason, Mutt would occasionally plod out to the middle of the highway in front of the house and flop down on the center stripe. We didn’t always catch him at it but when we did we’d drag him home. Fortunately there wasn’t much traffic on the road, and the occasional car obediently gave Mutt a wide berth, leaving the center stripe—and Mutt—alone. Until the motorcycle. Mutt was laying on the center stripe one day and a motorcycle came roaring down the road, about twenty miles an hour above the speed limit. Unfortunately, about the time the bike was almost upon him, ol’ Mutt decided to get up and meander back to the house. Startled by the totally unexpected sight of a black dog emerging from the equally black asphalt background and standing right in front of him, the rider panicked, hit the brakes and swerved. There was a clattering, scraping, spinning, full-throttle roar as the bike—with the rider hanging on for dear life—skidded sideways off the road and into a very large tangle of blackberry bushes. For a few seconds there was silence, then a rustling of blackberry bushes, followed by a loud stream of cursing and yelling. The rider, not seriously injured but not completely unscathed either, boiled up out of the blackberries, still cursing and yelling, picking up anything in sight to hurl at a meandering Mutt. Ol’ Mutt didn’t change his pace a bit; as rocks skipped all around him he just kept on moping up the driveway to the back porch as if nothing had happened. The motorcycle rider, after a lot of effort, cursing, and floundering around in the blackberry bushes, finally hauled his bike back up onto the road, cranked it up and roared off, part of a blackberry vine still clinging to the back of his leather jacket. Next day ol’ Mutt was back out snoozing on the centerline again—waiting for his next motorcycle. I guess old age tends to encourage an “I can’t be bothered” attitude in animals as well as in people.

Then there was the time Mutt lay down on the train tracks across the road and the little five-car local freight train had to stop while the engineer ran ol’ Mutt off the tracks. But that’s another story . . .

And now, a couple of “cat tales.”

*Cat Tales* is a rescue center for large cats east of Spokane, WA. When we visited one summer our favorite cat was *Simba*, an adult lion that had been brought in when he was about three months old. Cat Tales staff wanted to provide companionship for him and they had a three-year-old Chow dog that was about the same size so they were put together in the same cage. They became fast friends, wrestling and playing and having a great time with each other. The dog, since he was older, became the alpha member of the pair. As the lion grew to full size (about 400 pounds) this relationship never changed. One rainy day a staff member passed their enclosure and saw Simba lying on top of the shelter. Curious as to why the lion wasn't inside the shelter out of the rain, the staff member investigated and found that the dog was lying in the door of the shelter and wouldn't let Simba in. Alas, it was time to separate the two. They put the dog into an empty enclosure next to the lion, with his own gate into the park so he could come and go as he pleased. After a year or more of separation the fence between the two developed a big saggy lion-shaped bulge in it, covered in lion hair, where the lion had been leaning into it to get as close as possible to his friend. Apparently he'd forgiven the dog for not letting him in out of the rain. There's a lesson here for all of us—even though we're different we can still be friends.

One year we took a trip to San Diego. On the way down, in Alturas, CA, we saw an antique store and stopped to look around. As we were entering the store we noticed a prominently displayed hand-lettered sign on the door: **“Don't bring your dog in here. Our cat will attack it.”** Well, that was intriguing, so we went in to meet the cat. He looked like an old alley cat, a grey tabby with a notch out of one ear and somewhat the worse for wear. He was friendly enough and purred when we petted him. The owner told us a dog had savaged him when he was a kitten and he was out to get revenge on every dog he saw, no matter the size of the dog. She said that, on two separate occasions, a dog had been brought in by people who apparently couldn't read. With a mixture of concern and amusement, she told us that her cat savagely attacked them and chased them—and their owners—out of her store. One of the dogs was in a baby carriage and the cat jumped into the carriage and had it out with the dog. Animals, like people, have long memories and they don't easily forget their abusers.

If we hadn't already had a cat I would have offered to buy him.

# Oh Brother, Where Are You?

By Barbara Furr, Willamette Lutheran

In 1945, with WWII still going on, nearly every resident of our town of Weldon, North Carolina, had a relative or friend serving in some branch of the military. My brother John had completed six months of training at Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma, qualifying him to be a radio operator in the U.S. Army Air Corps, and he was soon shipped out of the country. Not known for his perfect penmanship, he wrote his letters to us in his slap-dash style, ink splashes and blots all over the place.

With John in service and my younger brother soon to go, the knowledge that my country was at war obviously hovered over my teen-aged shoulders. Nevertheless, I was a bookish girl, capable of blocking out a world at war when I could curl up in my favorite chair and read.

I loved fictional mysteries, but real-life mysteries beset my family. In their letters home, service members--particularly those sent overseas--were not allowed to reveal their whereabouts. If they tried to, censors deleted the information. My family, along with countless others, were left to wonder where our loved ones were and how they were faring.

~

The war continued. My younger brother was drafted. My older sister left for nurse's training. My remaining family and I listened to the radio for war news. We went to church and prayed for my brothers and wrote to them frequently.

Wartime rationing included gas, but, happily, we were able to drive to the town library. I read my mysteries--Nancy Drew, Charlie Chan, Ellery Queen and evil Dr. Fu Manchu. In addition, I listened to "I Love a Mystery," "Dick Tracy" and "The Shadow" on the radio, and learned how the good guys outwitted their foes with secret codes or secret messages in invisible ink.

One day, reading the latest mail from my brother John, I saw something I had not noticed before--marks underlining letters here and there. I read the entire message twice. Was the underlining intentional? With my brother's writing, ink splashes falling wherever they might, who could tell?

Still, mystery lover that I was, I went to our den sat at my father's desk and began a close reading. The first letter that seemed definitely underlined was "A". I wrote it down. Then came a lower-case "s" and a "c" with a splash of ink under each. I thought "d" was next, but decided, no, that was only John's messy writing. I found an "e" with a mark under it, an "n", and an "s". Then another throw-away. I wrote down each suspect letter.

After a while, I stopped and looked at my hasty writing. "A-s-c-e-n-s", which was no word I had ever seen. Even though I might be wasting time, I continued, and copied the additional letters "i-o-n" in rapid succession. I had spelled "Ascension."

Ascension? It was a real word, but one I usually associated with Jesus. What could it have to do with a young American man in the United States Army Air Force?

I still believed the underlining was accidental, but I made my dogged way through the rest of the message. Finally, in addition to Ascension, the underlined letters spelled "Island".



Ascension Island? This looked real, but I sat with my hand over my mouth and stared at the two words. Ascension Island? Was there such a place?

Surely two honest-to-goodness words could not have come from just random ink marks! Quaking with excitement, I turned to my father's dictionary. Went to the "A" section. My fingers flipped through pages until I came to "Asc" and there it was! Ascension Island! "A British island in the South Atlantic Ocean: constituent part of St. Helena, a British Colony: 34 sq. mi. (88 sq. km)."

I sat with my mouth agape. Could it be true? Had I, a book-loving teen-aged girl

in a small North Carolina town, solved an actual mystery? I rechecked John's underlined letters, my copied words and re-read the dictionary entry. It was true. I had solved a mystery. I had found my brother.

Clutching the letter and the dictionary, I raced to my parents. Almost levitating, I sang out: "I know where John is!"

At first, they were too taken aback by my wide eyes and excited voice to absorb my announcement. I showed them the underlined letters, my copied words, "Ascension Island," and, last, the entry in the dictionary. After a careful examination of all that evidence and looking again at John's letter, my parents finally were convinced that I had found him.

After my brother was discharged, he told us about Ascension Island. Early in the War, American engineers had built a landing strip there so Allied planes flying from South America to South Africa and beyond could stop for re-fueling. He also told us that Ascension was referred to as "Wide-Awake Island" for its colony of birds known as Sooty Terns. These terns disturbed residents at all hours with their loud, raucous calls.

Stationed on what amounted to a volcanic rock in the middle of the South Atlantic, far from home, John had often found his days filled with tedium. My brother and his buddies, including Zane Bourseau, another radio operator, did their laundry in buckets and gave each other haircuts while off duty. For recreation, they played cards, baseball and wrote to pen pals and family, or read.

Then an unexpected break in the tedium came for my brother.

On night duty, he signed off from work one morning, and headed for his cot. The stretch of duty had been unusually tiring, and he fell into a deep sleep.

Suddenly, he was brought wide awake, not by the call of terns, but by a loud bang and excruciating pain in one leg. He struggled upright and put an experimental hand on the site of the pain. He felt a hole. Disoriented, confused, hurting, he drew his hand away and saw blood.

An inebriated soldier on a cot nearby had been playing with his gun and fired it accidentally. My brother was transported to the base hospital, where he had several days of enforced rest and relaxation. The shooter had thirty days enforced rest and relaxation in the brig.

John's buddy, Zane, found time to visit and say good-bye before my brother was sent to Recife, Brazil to recover. They promised to stay in touch. John remained in Brazil until the War was over. He was discharged from the Army Air Corps on December 18, 1945.

~~

Back home, John found employment and married Janey, a girl from our home town. He exchanged Christmas cards with Zane for years. John spoke so often of his friend that Janey felt she knew him almost as well as John did. Although the two men frequently talked about visiting each other again, it did not happen. Then one of John's

Christmas cards to Zane was returned, marked "Deceased." John and Janey were saddened at the loss, but, grateful for his own good health, John continued to work at his job and stayed active in his church.

A year later, while John was at work, Janey answered their ringing home telephone.

"Is this the Riddle residence?" a male voice asked.

"Yes," Janey said.

"Is John there? This is an old Army buddy, Zane Bourseau."

Janey gave a startled cry. "Zane Bourseau? You are dead!"

"I'm not, and I'm here in Weldon, trying to find out where you folks live."

"Where are you?"

"Roe's funeral home."

"Roe's Funeral home?" Janey shrieked.

Roe's was the first business at the north edge of Weldon, and Janey realized Zane, for that reason, had stopped there to call. Still, she began laughing so hard at the coincidence of a "dead man" stopping at a funeral home to telephone, it took a few minutes for her to calm down and give directions to their house.

Janey immediately called John at work and told him to come home. She had a surprise for him. John entered the house half an hour later and stared at his visitor in disbelief. "Zane Bourseau! You're supposed to be dead!"

After John recovered from his shock, the two old Army buddies hugged each other and pounded each other on the back, laughing and talking all at once. They had a great re-union, including reminiscing about their days on Ascension Island.

My brother was a few months short of ninety-seven years of age when he died in July, 2017. While he was still with us, though, he and I chatted sometimes about his days on Ascension Island. We talked about how the secret messages he had sent some seventy years earlier helped a mystery-loving teenager find him on a far-away volcanic rock in the South Atlantic Ocean.

# Old Days

By Joe Shacter \* Rose Villa

Mauve, taupe, ecru and puce.  
I'm learning new colors  
But what's the use?

Named after places and every such thing ...  
Veggies, flowers, and birds on the wing.

Give me the old days  
When colors were few.  
And easy to choose  
Red, green, yellow, or blue.

# Oh, Oregon!

By Karla Klinger \* Holladay Park Plaza

Eons ago,  
when the giant asteroid  
struck earth,  
the sun  
and the dinosaurs  
disappeared.  
In this city of roses,  
a sun's gone missing.  
Flowers struggle to breathe.

Under our last blue sky,  
bits of ash fell  
like tiny leaves.  
Smoke from wildfires  
devour our western slopes,  
form a black wall  
in the southern sky.  
Fires surge and multiply  
beyond the county line.

On the news,  
brilliant flames of red and gold rage  
beneath a blood-red sky.  
Fireballs of burning ash—  
hell's rain.  
Ancient forests ravaged.  
Lives lost.

Small towns, bright cities in cinders.

Thousands of people seek shelter.

In this safe city,

eerie grey skies,

oppression.

Smoke smells permeate

our halls, seep through

apartment walls.

Tiny particles invade our lungs.

When the air clears,

a patch of blue sky follows rain.

Yet, around us,

the West is burning;

the bells of an apocalypse

still ring.

## Party Lines

By Brian Williams \* Capital Manor

Deep in the flatness of wheat country  
a whole town is gone.

Now only the Farmers Co-Op grain elevator  
and the United Methodist Church  
remain to provide shade.

Commerce stands taller than religion  
and both buildings are empty, abandoned  
first by the Great Northern Railway  
and then by parishioners.

Farmers used to meet in both places  
talking to God  
and comparing crop yields.

Over time families moved away  
finding a closer connection to the land  
than to each other.

County roads connect scattered farms.  
Black creosoted telephone poles  
line them, their arms carrying  
drooping conversations  
of the offered price for Spring Northern wheat  
and the Farm Credit Bank's new loan terms.



Black Magpies circle overhead,  
then settle on copper wires,  
notes on a musical staff.

A grain truck passes  
and changes the tune.

# Pinto

By Jo Heck \* Homewoods on the Willamette

My “boyfriend” Steve (age 83) and I (a mere 80) often dog-sit an adorable dog, Pinto, for a mutual friend. Pinto is a black and white “Schnoodle”(Schnauzer/Poodle) and seems to love us as much as we love him. Here are the non-X-rated adventures the THREE of us have had in bed on three separate occasions:

The first time we were going to sleep over for a few days we ALL got in the king-sized bed; Pinto made sure he got in the middle between the two of us. Before we fell asleep, Steve reached over to hold my hand. Obviously, Pinto wanted to be included and he put his paw on top of our two hands – for the rest of the night!

A few months later, we were again asked to take care of Pinto for a few days. Eventually, the three of us were in bed with Pinto between Steve and me, just like our first experience. This time Steve leaned over to kiss me good night. Pinto wasn’t going to have any of that without being included; the next thing we knew he was licking BOTH of our faces energetically. It was both hilarious and sweet. However, I remarked (somewhat sarcastically), “There WILL NOT be a third threesome shared bed event!”

Well, a couple of weeks ago there WAS, and we’re still giggling about it. All three of us behaved the whole time. Steve had to leave early the morning Pinto’s owner was coming back; before he left, I remarked that he hadn’t got his usual back-scratch that he loves in the morning. He sat on the side of the bed with me beside him. He took off his pajama top and lifted his t-shirt up above his shoulders around his neck, and I started doing what we call “scritchies” below his shoulders and around the middle and side of his back. Pinto was definitely not going to be left out. He laid down horizontally right behind Steve and started scratching along Steve’s waistline with both his front and back paw. Steve was in seventh heaven; two paws and two hands covering his whole back; we were both in hysterics. Pinto figured out a NUMBER THREE!



## Poetry

By Michael Rose \* Ya-Po-Ah Terrace

The poet arrives at the podium.

He opens a slim, manila folder and finds his place.

He leans to the microphone, then,

like a curtain rising, his eyebrows arch sharply.

“My first poem,” he begins, his tone warm and confidential,

“is called,

‘Raising the Grain’.

Raising the grain is a condition, occurring when water  
causes wood fibers to rise, so that some stand above the  
surface of their board.”

He shuffles a paper. The small audience applauds politely,  
acknowledging the poet’s gift.

“No no,” he says quickly, “that was the *definition* of raising  
the grain,

I’ll read the poem now.”

And he does.

# Poor Trump is Dead

By Bernard Warmflash \* Rose Schnitzer Manor

*TO THE TUNE OF "POOR JUDD IS DEAD" FROM THE SHOW 'OKLAHOMA '*

Poor Trump is dead, poor Donald Trump is dead  
All gather round his golf course now and cry,  
His heart was very cold, and his manner very bold,  
We can see, but cannot hear his final lie.

Poor Trump is dead, A candle lights his head,  
His orange hair it never looked so bright,  
He had to be the boss, and his manner very coarse,  
His bark was just as bad as was his bite  
Poor Trump, Poor Trump,

Poor Trump is dead, poor Donald Trump is dead,  
His buddy Putin now has lost a friend,  
The tower he had in mind,  
In Moscow you won't find,  
His building plans in Russia will all end.  
Poor Trump, Poor Trump, Poor Trump.

Poor Trump is dead, His accountants all have fled,  
The news has made the ex-pres look morose,  
His problem now today,  
A small child may look and say..  
That Emperor Donald lacks financial clothes.

## Remember a Single Wave

By Mary Kay August \* Holladay Park Plaza

The wave promises form, gains strength,

It rises to Majesty

Before it curls into itself

And returns to the Communion of the Sea.

Another wave forms,

With Beauty and Intent,

But quickly finds Repose

With the Whole of the Sea.

The Wave, each one,

Exists for a Moment....

Almost an illusion...

but realizes genuine freedom

Simply by letting go, and surrendering its Separate Shape.

## Seasons (a dogrel )

By James Stevens, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace

“The Spring has sprung,  
the bells have rung,  
the sun begins to glow!”

“The flowers show their smiling face,  
And begins to flow!”

“The Summer sun beings his race,  
as life begins anew!  
(But watch for burn, and take it real slow!)”

“For Fall is next, don’t be surprised if you all you planned is lost!  
So take you time, to sublime, and let those plans go slow!”

“Then Winter comes with stately tred along with his christal snow!”

“We can’t ignore this simple fact, or we will pay the price!  
Of aching bones and splinted plans, all because of Ice!”

“Am I perhaps a triffel drole, to carry on as if!  
Good sense in fact I lack?

Me thinks – perchance-  
May hap!

# Seashells

By Louise Putman \* Capital Manor

Seashells

Transported by powerful waves,  
Lying temptingly on shimmering sand,  
Colors reflected in sunsets,  
Treasures hidden in greying driftwood.

Seashells – memories from my life as a child:

My father swimming, I thought, to visit his mother  
    in Alsace, France,  
My mother with her beautiful shell collection,  
My sister at our beach “photo-op”,  
A polished agate from my grandpa,  
Family vacations at Neskowin.

Seashells – memories from my life as an adult:

My husband walking patiently with me as I search  
    for a shell I have yet to find,  
Our older daughter swimming, dancing, and reveling  
    in the waves,  
An elderly gentleman commenting on our young son’s  
    bucket of shells and he, in his serious, little boy voice  
    saying, “They’re brachiopods.”  
Our younger daughter racing joyously to pick up the  
    perfect sand dollar.

Beauty and life in each glorious moment!

Seashells

# Smiles

By Robert Granger \* Cascade Manor

Waiting for my wife one day,  
I began to think about those with whom I had shared a smile,  
earlier that day.

There was the smile of an elderly woman,  
a quiet and gentle smile.

There was the smile of the businessman,  
in a hurry, but still time for a quick smile

There was the embarrassed smile of the mother,  
as she bumped the carriage into the doorway.

There was smile of that little girl,  
just pleased to have someone smile at her.

How amazing.  
An unexpected sharing of smiles,  
and for just a moment,  
total strangers become new found friends.

In the midst of thinking these thoughts,  
I suddenly realized where I was.  
I was sitting in a dentists office,  
a dentists office with the unlikely name of

*"Smile Alive."*

Smile Alive.  
Indeed, it seems as though smiles really are alive.  
They are alive, and they speak.  
They speak so very clearly,

and in doing so,

they reveal so very much about our **humanity**.

I am a human being, my smile says,

I have **feelings**, I have **thoughts**,

I have a **history**, I have **dreams**. I am a **story**!

Would you like to hear my story?, asks my smile,

knowing full well that this isn't the time.

But the message is so clear, and when I am receptive to **others**,

I can clearly hear the message of **their** smiles.

**That's** a human being who is smiling at me,

a person who has **feelings**, just like me,

a person who has **thoughts**, just like me,

a person who has a **history**, just like me,

a person who has **dreams**, just like me,

That's a person who is a **story**, just like me.

I wonder what that story is.

Unfortunately, a quick smile isn't a good time to ask,

and so I usually don't.

I just move on, thinking to myself,

it felt so good to be smiled at by another human being.

**Smiles**, it's the way we not only **connect** with each other,

it's the way we **interact** with each other,

even with strangers.

In fact, **smiles** are the universal language.

a language we all speak fluently.

It's probably because it is a universal language,

that we experience being smiled at,

as an invitation to smile back.



And in responding with a smile,  
we feel genuinely connected, even if only for a moment.

Just think about your own recent smiling interactions:

Didn't matter if the **other** was **friend** or **stranger**,  
**rich** or **poor**, **young** or **old**, **male** or **female**,  
Didn't matter their **language** or their **religion**,  
their **color** or their **politics**.

A smile brought the two of you into the same space,  
and by it you were both blessed,  
(and you never know where it might lead after that!)

How awesome it is, then, that the one who made us,  
made us each with the ability to smile,  
and to do so **anytime** and **anywhere**.  
Blessed us with the ability to connect and interact with each other  
in the good times, and in the stressful times,  
to do so when we agree with each other,  
and even when we disagree.

Sometimes I don't even agree with myself.  
It's then that I smile to myself,  
and it's a blessing of grace to be able to do so.

Yes, by the blessing of smiles,  
our days on earth are made lighter,  
our path is made easier

And best of all, our smiles are a way of **public service**,  
a way of making the world a more inviting place!

# Smuggler in Mexico

By Stephanie Sarnoff \* Cascade Manor

I never intended to be a smuggler. I'm a law abiding citizen. But that year, I was in school, at UCLA, rooming in Beverly Glen Canyon, in another student's home, along with his mother. I remember, she gave us a meal of freshly steamed swiss chard, rice, and lamb, which was unforgettable. (A little soy sauce makes a world of difference!)

Nathan was an anthropology major. It was Easter break and he was planning to drive down from Los Angeles, to Baja California, to visit "his indians" for a term paper project. Would I like to come along? You bet I would !

Preparing to go, I thought I would bring some food stuffs with us, for the "indians". What to bring? No refrigeration? No matter, I managed to purchase and pack what I could, like rice, tortillas, soda pop, and whatever else I could find and afford. I even brought clothes. Everything was stuffed into the trunk and the back seat of his little old Plymouth sedan, and off we went !

And what an adventure it was ! It was my first experience out of the United States, and I was off to see "real live indians"! It didn't matter then, that I spoke no Spanish, much less whatever indian dialect they spoke, or even that I had no passport. I was off to have a Real Adventure ! And when you're young and naive, the world is your oyster, no worries !

What I didn't know, however, was that Nathan had quietly tucked an entire crate of yellow baby chickens beneath the clothes in the back seat ! A good thing for our hosts? Of course. Nevermind that it was entirely illegal.

Fortunately, the chickens were never discovered, or we may well have spent the rest of our lives being held for ransom in some rusty old border jail. We sailed through customs, while the chicks remained thankfully silent beneath the piles of clothes.

For miles, we headed down through the desert, looking for a cutoff marked by a cow's skull on a wooden post. There was no road, not even a path...just scrub, cactus and lots of sand.

At last, we found them, right in the middle of nowhere . There was an old weathered shack, a tiny stream, a scraggy old tree, and a cow. And a family of indians. My friend spoke their dialect, (not Spanish!), and I, of course, smiled a lot.

We lived with them for several days, hanging around, dining on cheese curdled in a wooden press that hung in the tree to cure. The chicks were well received and happily ran around, picking up bugs in the sand.

Life was simple. They did what they could to keep themselves together, living mostly on cheese, milk, tortillas, and soon, what we hoped would become a fine batch of egg producing chickens.

The men were itinerant laborers, intermittently away to hire themselves out , then spending most of their pay on drinks and who knows what else before returning home.

There was a little girl, maybe about ten or so. She had dark braids, copper skin and black eyes, and a sweet, shy smile. What would become of her, growing up in this wilderness, with no education, no other life awaiting her other than an early marriage and kids of her own to raise?

I thought: I could take her back with me. Adopt her and give her an education. I could "save her!" But, I was only a college student, myself, and I never did act on the impulse, which would have changed both our lives, totally. By now, she must be a grandmother, if she is still living at all.

On the way back, past the cow's skull, and back to the border, we stopped once again at customs. My skin was bronzed from the sun, and I sported long dark braids, so that it wasn't entirely clear from how I looked, at least, that I was American..., until I spoke up in English!

Once the border agent was satisfied that I was indeed an American, and only looked like an indian, he inspected our car, including the trunk, where we had stowed two gifts we received: a round of their wonderful, tart and unpasteurized cheese, and some beautiful pale green yucca blossoms, which, when steamed, tasted much like artichokes.

He scowled, scolded us, confiscated the contraband and , thankfully, sent us on our way back to our comfortable student lives in the good old U.S.A. Once again, jail was avoided !

I never heard what happened after that, to the indians, or especially, that sweet little girl. Somewhere, there is a scholarly paper written by my friend, documenting the world of "his indians", below the border in Baja, just off the beaten track where a cow's skull is hung on a wooden post.

## Summertime and the Fishing is Easy

By Louise Kasper \* Holladay Park Plaza

My Great Grandma Bertha Brandt wore dark jersey print dresses, black stockings and low-heeled black-tie shoes, the uniform of matrons in the 40s. So, it was easy to recognize her diminutive figure as she headed toward the Jim River wearing a straw hat, carrying her fishing rod in one hand and a pail in the other. My dad always called it the Jim River, but it was really the James River that runs through Jamestown, N.Dak. Grandma Bertha was a successful fisherwoman and daily brought home several bullheads in her bucket.

A bullhead was the first fish that I caught. Actually, I didn't really catch it. When my dad and I fished on the banks of the Jim River, he could catch the first fish and wire it to my hook. I caught the same fish all day as he really fished. In my four-year old mind, I was a successful angler.

Grandma Bertha didn't start fishing until she was in her 80s. I never fished with her but suffered her hospitality when I was in the first grade. My mother went to my grandparents' farm to help with cooking chores during threshing season. So, I stayed at great grandma's and great grandpa's house which was across the street from my school.

When I returned from school each day, Grandma Bertha felt it was necessary for me, five-year-old me, to take a nap. I was outraged but endured. Later when my mother quizzed me about my stay, she asked, "What did you do when you took a nap?" I answered, "I swore to myself." She may have snickered but did hide her smile when I told her about great grandma's after school snack, a hearty slice of bread slathered with thick cream and topped with brown sugar.

Next summer arrived and off we went to Minnesota to see more greats, Uncle Jim, Aunt Emma and Cousin Loren. They lived on a farm near Lake Bemidji, and Aunt Emma thankfully believed cookies were the best snack. The Minnesota Dennis branch were fisher people. Every morning at dawn, they and my dad bundled up, checked the minnow supply and headed off boat in tow for the lake. The fish were biting every day. Uncle Jim said the fishing was so good because he chewed snuff and spit out a stream to the sides of boat as the fish swam by. I finally wangled or begged an invitation to go fishing with them. However, the wall-eyed pike were much larger than bullheads and couldn't be wired to my hook.

Years went by. I hung up fishing pole and forgot my angling skills. When Gary and I began dating in California, he did mention that he liked fishing. He showed me snapshots of him holding big salmon and strings of trout. "How nice." I should have suspected something when there was a framed picture of his grandfather holding a long string of fish on the wall in his parents' home in Portland.

Gary went for a fishing and hunting trip with his family in Oregon. While in Portland he had dinner with my parents. I'm sure the stories of the big ones rang from the rafters that night.

We became engaged and traveled back to Portland for the wedding. Two days before the wedding, the senior Kaspers took us fishing at Detroit Lake. Was this a test? Detroit Lake is a beautiful setting, and as the sun warmed up, I did my best thing --took a nap. After we pulled into dock, I found some wild daisies, my catch of the day.

Our first home was in Mountain View, Calif., and my groom's eyes lit up when he read that trout season would open in a few days. To prepare, he said I needed to practice casting the line. We went to the field next door where I caught lots of weeds and a couple of small boards embedded with nails. Got casting down. I also needed a fishing

license and some boots because we would hike to the lake. I liked the boots, they were a pretty color, and broke them in wearing big socks. Opening day dawned, and we rose early to beat the crowds.

We drove to the area near the lake. There were cars parked for miles on both sides of the road, and hundreds of people carrying fishing poles and lunches headed toward the water. It was a California migration. Lakeside, we wormed our way to a small standing space. Any fish from the right school would have left the area the night before.

We moved back to Oregon where Gary thankfully had fishing partners. My pole was safe in the basement. When we camped with our two young children, they fished from the lake shore with poles equipped with safety pins and red and white bobbers. They liked "fishing." Their days as anglers wound down.

In the next few years, fishing meant acquiring a boat, then a rubber raft and then a canoe. We had our own armada in the garage which was good because we lived on a high bank and were assured of a safe exit should the Great Missoula flood should reoccur in northeast Portland. We were safe, and I was safe from fishing trips until a trip to East Lake with the canoe strapped to the top of the car.

Oh, I had visions of resting back on cushions in the canoe, trailing my hand in the water and reading while Gary fished. These were alternative facts. His vision included me rowing while he fished and then netting the fish.

Time changes fishing partners. The fishing gene passed by our son and daughter and landed with Granddaughter Collins. Collins was excited to try fishing. Gary and her dad took her to Henry Hagg Lake where there is a wooden dock that allows a fisherman using an electric scooter to fish. After a short lesson, seven-year-old Collins nailed the art of casting. She was hooked. Grandma Bertha would be proud.

# Sunrise

By Paul Wathen \* Rose Villa

Struggling armies on a darkling plain collide  
as dawn dissolves the stars  
and warriors wail:

The enemy is ourselves!

Pitiless Purpose

reverberating in the void!

Yet a whisper splashes like a rain drop:

Each of us is all of us

# The Last Chapter

By Bette-B Bauer, Mennonite Village

This is it ~ the last chapter:

At 50, I returned to school to become a teacher.

Teaching was learning to be true to the person I'd become  
as I searched for a way to be in the world.

I was walking to my first meeting with a class of my own,  
down a long, dark hallway  
toward a lighted window in a classroom door at the end.

I wondered how this last experiment at living would unfold,  
from being a student, a traveler/wanderer, a writer, an artist,  
a bookkeeper, a cook.

I stand here now at 80  
in the space I've crafted  
out of my desire  
to live my own dreams.  
My books surround me;  
They're my friends.

No CV needed now to explain the patchwork of my life so far,  
no need to travel anymore,  
no yearning to be someone else  
or somewhere else.

I've lived the life I wanted to live, negotiating with conditions as I chose my path, avoiding the suburban housewife off-ramp.

This is how it is  
at the near-end of the road.  
I moved to another new place to retire.  
Isolated by the pandemic, few know who I am.  
Resting, gardening  
appreciating friends and family afar.  
Co-habiting with Willie, a small, white, one-eyed poodle rescue, calm and loving, who dances with joy for people we meet on the pathway; everyone here knows him, because two friends walked him around campus everyday while I was in hospital. But the people here don't know me yet.

Recovering from a broken shoulder; I am always on the verge of a fall; I hit the ground hard when I fall, like a tree, straight down.

On Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands, I helped run a small hotel, and swam in the warm ocean every morning. One day a huge school of small bait fish swam into our harbor. They swirled around me, refracting the light. I floated in a wave of their silver bodies, till suddenly they were gone, and I was facing a giant sea turtle. We both hung in the water eyeing each other, a foot apart, then at the same time, we back-peddled away from each other, and the turtle turned and swam swiftly into the distance of ocean.

I've been honed to carry this journey to another plane of experience.

That's why I've been here.



# The Lord's Last Mountain

By Steven Pierce \* The Village

Regarding the question, why me, Lord?

That I once asked of you

Placed before me another small hill.

It turned into a real mountain.

Never needed all this sorrow,

Just a touch of the Master's hand.

May I bathe in your pure waters,

Shall I stand there near your fountain?

Once again a hill to climb

Before me another tall mountain.

Felt a pain deep in my heart

So many things I have lost.

Thought it's just another hill

Reflecting all the terrible cost.

I hope it's the last mountain.

# The Pill

By Fran Gardner \* Rose Schnitzer Manor

Suzanne knew all about pills. All the years she had been sick, she had taken many kinds: round ones, oval ones, big ones, tiny ones, ones that could choke a horse; pills that were chalky, smooth, crumbly, gel-like, sometimes even chewy, but mostly bitter. She'd swallowed red ones, green ones, yellow ones, pills that were white, tan, rust, maroon, cream-colored—but not purple. She had no idea why there were no purple pills. She never thought of it and if she had, she wouldn't care.

Even though she was sick—that is, she had symptoms, signs that her body wasn't working the way it was supposed to—she had little use for pills. Maybe they made things better. She didn't really trust that they did. She didn't trust that they didn't. She took a lot of pills because the doctors told her to and because she was sick, tired, and in pain. Maybe without them she would be sicker, or more tired, or in more pain. But how would she know? The doctors said to take them, so she took them. Until the day when she stopped.

One day, a large and very special pill came into her life. The doctor who prescribed it told her it was the one pill that would cure her. After taking this pill, the doctor said, her symptoms would disappear. She would never have to take another pill, ever.

The effect would be immediate and permanent. After Suzanne took the pill, she would be whole and strong once again. Since there was no doubt of that outcome, and because she was certain Suzanne would take the pill immediately, the doctor handed her the miraculous pill and then never saw her again. She knew the pill would cure Suzanne, so she went back to treating people who were not cured and forgot about Suzanne, who had, in the doctor's mind, once been sick but now was whole and well.

Yet Suzanne didn't take this pill. She wasn't ready. She was used to being sick; for most of her years, being sick had defined her. She had no idea how not to be sick. She had no idea how she would live her life if the pill really worked, if it cured her.

So, for the time being, she laid the pill on a large plate in the center of her small dining table. She ate every meal at the small dining table. And meal after meal, the pill sitting on the plate in the center of the table reminded her of what the doctor had told her. She would be cured. "Take me," it whispered. But she did not.

Every once in a while she dusted the pill; then she covered it with a doily to keep the dust away.

It was just a pill, a very large and very special pill. All she had to do was take it. But she knew that, when she did swallow that pill, everything would be different. And she was used to things the way they were.

Suzanne never doubted that the pill would cure her, and she was ready for a cure. She had put up with the pain, the inconvenience, the stares of strangers long enough. She was sure she was ready.

Yet the miraculous pill sat there, on its regal plate, covered by the pretty doily, waiting. She wondered if its effect would diminish with time, as it sat there week after week and month after month, but she did not want to call the doctor and ask. The doctor had seemed so pleased to offer her this miracle that Suzanne didn't want to disappoint the woman. And, more to the point, she didn't want to have to explain what she couldn't explain to herself: why the pill sat on her dining room table and she did not take it.

She told no one about the pill. Her friends, concerned about her as always, brought over food and ate it with her at the small table. Suzanne put the plate with the pill in the cupboard on those days, so people wouldn't ask

questions she didn't know how to answer. After they left, she put the plate with the pill, covered with the doily, back on the small table, to share all her solitary meals.

Why couldn't she take it? It wasn't because she was afraid. She was fearless. She knew this because she went everywhere by herself, all over town, even to places where people stared at her. To where children asked questions of their mothers and were immediately shushed. To where healthy young men with little imagination jeered her, gently or overtly. No, she wasn't afraid.

When Suzanne rode the bus, she saw other people who she thought were suffering, perhaps suffering as she did. She wanted to tell them about her miraculous pill—but she couldn't because she didn't yet know how it worked. She hadn't experienced the miracle herself. The miracle sat on its plate under its doily, solitary and powerful, whispering, "Take me."

She wasn't ready. That was it. She hadn't spun out the thread of the illness. The symptoms weren't done with her. But how could that matter? And how would she know when the time was right? She trusted that the Universe would tell her. But in her experience, the Universe was a trickster, promising wondrous things but delivering other things in unexpected or even unwelcome ways.

She thought if she took the pill, the Universe might simply forget to let her symptoms know it was time for them to disappear. But even so, wouldn't they go away on their own? Such thoughts made her head spin, so she sat and meditated until the Universe, trickster that it was, took away her concerns and she forgot about the pill.

Forgot about it, that is, until she set a plate of eggs and bacon down a little too hard on her little table and the doily blew off the large plate and there was the pill.

Now. Now was the time she would take it.

Suzanne reached for the pill.

But there was nothing with which to swallow it. She went into the kitchen for a glass of orange juice, and when she came back, she had forgotten why she had brought the orange juice.

Later, she absentmindedly replaced the doily. Then, the next time she cleaned house, she took the doily off and saw the pill, but she couldn't remember why it was sitting on a large plate on her small table.

That pill must be important, she thought, so she decided to store it more carefully. She found a little jar that had once held some very nice mustard. She put the pill inside the jar and screwed on the lid, and put it in the china cabinet.

Over time, as she got into the cabinet to fetch plates and bowls, she found the jar in the way. What was that pill in there, anyway? She didn't know what it was for, although a thought nagging at her consciousness told her it was important. She pushed the jar farther back into the cupboard so that she could reach the espresso cups.

She had her espresso and her cake, eating at her small table, and then left to ride the bus where young men sure of their bodies jeered covertly at her uncooperative one. She was used to that now. She was unafraid. This was her life, and the Universe rejoiced with her in it.

She forgot about the pill entirely. Then one day, as she was once again reaching for the espresso cups, she came upon the mustard jar, shoved way to the back of the cupboard. She picked it up with an exasperated "Thcha!" Why was she always keeping things like little empty bottles? She was never going to use them all.

Suzanne was tired of clutter, and this bottle was just one more thing she didn't need to keep on hand. She unscrewed the metal top and put it in the recycling. There was some white powder in the bottom of the jar. Who

knew what that had been? Suzanne was careful about her recycling, so she washed the junk out of the bottle before setting it aside with the glass recycling.

Then she poured some coffee into the espresso cup and had her coffee and cake at her little table and left to ride the bus to the library. She sat at the front, where the old folks and the disabled, blind, and misshapen people sat amid mothers' strollers and the occasional service animal in its tidy coat. Maybe the hearty, healthy young men jeered silently at her. Maybe the young people on the bus were glad they didn't have to move stooped over as she did. Maybe they could sense her pain. Or maybe they were just kids on the bus.

Suzanne didn't think about that anymore. She rode the bus, silently enduring her pain, and shuffled off the bus when the driver lowered the ramp for her. She went inside the library and after looking at many books, checked out one about dragons. She loved dragons. They were powerful and unafraid and they could move sinuously even when crippled by the pain of fire inside them. Even without miraculous pills to keep them alive, dragons could live forever.

# The Selkie

By Sarah Linden \* Rose Villa

I am now 1000 years old. It has been at least 100 years since I've seen another of my kind, even though I've ranged far across the northern seas in search of them.

As for humans, we parted badly, but I admit I miss them too, especially my children and their descendants. I always recognized them, even if I was setting eyes on them for the first time. Many of them had webbing between their fingers and toes. Mostly I recognized them by their gaze turned toward the sea. I would find them on beaches and headlands, searching the sea with a question in their eyes. Sometimes I took them with me to teach them the ways of the sea, but almost all of them returned to the land and their human families. The descendants of my children who had seal mothers stayed with me longer, but none of them had the longevity of selkies.

Once I was sure of a warm welcome by humans at any of the northern islands. I swam to the far northern islands of Scotland, the Faroe Islands, and even sometimes as far south as the Irish islands. I was sometimes mistakenly called a merman or even a mermaid! Most of the time, humans just thought I was an exceptionally friendly and playful seal.

I loved the islanders as if they were my children. Some were my children. If I saw a woman I fancied, I would shed my sealskin and stay for awhile. Sometimes I only stayed for a night. Sometimes I would wed her, and I would let her keep my sealskin for a time. I always returned to the sea, though. I could not stay away for too long. Sometimes I took my children with me and let them grow up as seals. They were happy enough, although I think they missed human speech and their human families. Some wept for their mothers and were consoled by the rocking of the waves.

The trouble began when a human killed a seal near one of the islands. Those who had lived long generations on their cold, windy island knew it was a crime. Unfortunately, it was a stranger, a trophy hunter seeking the heads of wild animals, who caused the death. The islanders were overcome with sorrow and fear. They threw gifts into the sea and begged for mercy. But the law is the law. I am not without compassion, though, and took only one sheep instead of the customary seven for each seal killed.

Little by little, the people changed, especially in the Scottish islands. Harsh religious men and stern, cruel teachers came to the islands. Music, toys, and even laughter were banned. They neglected the care of the island and of each other. The people were required to spend many hours praying, and on endless tasks for the church. It was forbidden to speak the language of their ancestors, and those who refused to speak English were punished. They were taught that the sea was meant for their use, to take what they wanted from it. They forgot the old laws of mutual respect, of living in harmony.

An old man was the only one who tried to stop them when they began to hunt seals. He tried to remind them of the old law of seven sheep for each seal. No one listened, even when I began to exact my retribution. What did they think when their sheep ran off the cliffs into the sea? Who did they think was calling them to their deaths? The sea gives, but the sea can also take away.

When there were no more sheep left, the people became desperate. Food was hard to grow or find, and with no sheep, there was no way to make warm clothing for the harsh winters. The young ones left the island,

first to go to war, then to find work in factories. Some emigrated to Canada or Australia. Soon there were only a few aging families left on the island.

I called my relatives from the sea. We came ashore and tried to communicate with the people. They were past listening, too deep in sorrow. No babies had been born for 10 years. With no children or young people, they saw themselves dying out. Finally, the last of them left, even those who were kin to me. They forgot that the sea was their home as much as the island was.

I grieved for the people of the island, and for the bond between seals and humans. I was sure that those times were over. Sometimes, though, when I am swimming to far distant shores, I see a human who looks familiar to me, one who is strongly drawn to the sea, who has no fear of any water, and who feels more at home in deep waters than on land. It is then that I feel some glimmerings of hope. The sea will have what she will have.

# The Squirrel

By Jack Wetherson \* Willamette Lutheran

There goes the squirrel  
With her question-mark tail.  
Is she searching for food or a mate?  
Under God's sky-blue dome.  
Does she look for a home?  
In some lofty leaf-filled estate?  
Are her children asleep?  
In a forested keep.  
While she goes on her foraging quest.  
They have nothing to fear  
From the rabbit and deer,  
But look out for the rapturous pest.  
The hawk flying high  
With a ravenous eye  
Can dive down for its midmorning fest.  
But her kits they can hide  
In an oak--deep inside  
Away from their unwelcome guest.  
The squirrel knows quite well  
That she never can tell  
What is terrible cause for alarm.  
How long can she go  
Until some deadly foe  
Brings her family to horrible harm?  
Still, she goes on her way  
As she's done every day.  
To go search for the fruit of the earth.

And like moms everywhere  
She comes home late to care  
For the ones to whom she gave birth.  
A moral is here.  
For ones with an ear  
For what the poet supposes.  
Be you squirrel or a human  
If you are a woman  
Say, "yes," if he ever proposes.



# The Star of Oregon

By George Genevro \* Capital Manor

Let your imagination flow back---far back--- into Oregon's history. Your spouse and you had recovered from the long, stressful wagon train journey that took you from from the flat expanses of the Midwest to the "*Oregon Country*". You had heard of the magnificent Pacific Ocean and now, in September of 1842 you have come to the coast to see it. As you stand on a bluff marveling at this beautiful expanse of water and try to visualize the mysterious lands beyond it, a small sailing ship comes into view from the north, carrying six men and a young lad. You and your mate are seeing the first ocean-going ship built in Oregon as it sets forth on its first voyage. There is a story behind it.

Water, lots of good timber and free land were among the magnets that drew adventurous people to the *Oregon Country* in the early and mid 1800s. Some sought opportunities no longer available in older eastern communities and wanderlust drew others to the west. They were hardy people, pioneers all, willing to face hardships and danger just to "see what was on the other side of the mountain". Some were imbued with a missionary spirit and brought their families into primitive areas where the natives could be hostile. Many came to create farms and small businesses, The entrepreneurs who had established the Hudson's Bay Company outposts in the Oregon Territory had other aims. They were seeking economic—and possibly political---dominance as they dealt with trappers, farmers, sawmill operators and others. The company could provide certain goods and services not otherwise available and thus dominate some forms of local commerce, thus enjoying distinct economic advantages. Some of the homesteaders and small business owners resented this and devised some interesting counter actions.

Before 1840, for example, the Hudson's Bay Company owned a sizable portion of the livestock in the Oregon Country and generally refused to sell any breeding animals to homesteaders. In response to this irritating and economically damaging situation an early Willamette Valley settler, rancher Ewing Young, traveled to California's inland valley and acquired a herd of so-called "Spanish" cattle that he managed to drive north. He grazed them to improve their condition and then tried to sell them but they were so wild that few settlers wanted them. Cattle of other breeds that were more domesticated were available---for a price—from other parts of California. With such a purchase in mind, a group of farmers in dire need of livestock devised a truly unique solution. They hired Joseph Gale, a trapper who had been a deep water sailor on the east coast and who was also an experienced shipbuilder. Felix Hathaway, a ship's carpenter, was also hired to help design and build a schooner based on the widely used Baltimore Clipper with which Gale was familiar. Their plan was to build the ship on the Willamette River near Portland and sail it to San Francisco where, they hoped, it could be sold, traded, or somehow disposed of with the proceeds used to buy a herd of suitable cattle that would then be driven north and sold to eager settlers.

The oak keel of the *Star of Oregon* was laid in the fall of 1840 on the eastern shore of Swan Island on the Willamette River. Gale, Hathaway, and ten workers toiled through a rainy winter. In early 1841 building came to a standstill when Hathaway quit because of non-payment of wages. The other partners convinced Joseph Gale to stay with the project, help to complete the schooner and to be its captain. He sold his farm and farm equipment and worked on the ship through the spring. The *Star* was launched in incomplete form in late May of 1841 and was moved upriver to Oregon City. A major problem was encountered at this point---the need for cordage, sailcloth, hardware and many other items available only from the Hudson's Bay Company. Chief Factor John McLoughlin was, according to one account, "...ill-disposed to provide these items." in view of why the *Star* had been conceived and was being built.. The problem was solved when Lt. Charles Wilkes, Commander of the United

States Exploring Expedition based at Fort Vancouver, prevailed on Dr. McLoughlin to provide the necessary items as well as navigation instruments, all paid for with wheat and furs. Lt. Wilkes, who served as a valuable intermediary, gave Gale an American flag for the *Star*. Final fitting out of the ship was done on Oak (now Ross) Island on the Willamette.

The *Star* was fifty three and one half feet long with a beam of almost eleven feet and drew four and one half feet of water with no cargo but with stone ballast. The clinker-built hull, made of locally available woods, had white oak framing with internal timbers of red fir and was planked with one and one-quarter inch thick cedar. The planks were secured to the ribs by one-half inch square wrought iron spikes forged on site by a blacksmith who was a member of the building crew. The spikes were driven through three-eighths inch holes that had been bored with a brace and bit through the planks and ribs and were clinched, producing a strong joint. This type of construction, while very labor-intensive, resulted in a long-lasting and sea-worthy hull. The availability of tools and equipment was a constant problem, and fortunately Gale could borrow many needed items from the Jason Lee Mission, a Methodist group.

On Aug. 27, 1842, the *Star* was launched and Gale, her newly minted captain, sailed down the Willamette and onto the Columbia River, dropping anchor at Fort Vancouver. Hoisting her colors on the Columbia was a political act as she proudly declared that now America and England both had vessels flying their flags in Oregon waters, a matter of considerable political importance in that era. A few days later, while sailing down the Columbia, Captain Gale dipped her colors in salute when passing Fort George. The *Star* remained in the lower Columbia for several weeks while Captain Gale, the only one in the crew who knew anything about seamanship or navigation, gave his crew of five men and a ten year old Indian boy an accelerated course in the basics of being sailors before they all ventured across the dangerous bar where the Columbia meets the Pacific Ocean. (One can only speculate about the thoughts of the crew members. Most of them had probably never seen the ocean, let alone been out on it.) Finally, on Sept. 12 the *Star*, very likely taking advantage of a high tide, sailed across the bar and turned left for the long voyage to San Francisco. Though Captain Gale's crew members were reportedly seasick for almost the entire trip, the hazardous voyage was completed safely and they sailed through the Golden Gate and on to Yerba Buena Island on Sept. 17, 1842.

Having transported its captain and crew safely, if not comfortably, to a location where a deal might be made for cattle, the *Star of Oregon* was offered for sale. In what was vaguely described as an "...advantageous deal" Captain Gale sold or traded the vessel, now proven seaworthy, to a French sea captain stranded in San Francisco. After a series of transactions, the details of which are obscured in the mists of history, Mr. Gale ended up with about 350 head of suitable cattle. He and his crew went through another occupational metamorphosis and became herdsman for the winter while their cattle grazed and fattened, preparing for the long drive north in the spring. Adding the skills of the cowboy to their repertoire, they drove their herd northward over the mountains to the Willamette Valley. While the economic effect that this venture had on Willamette Valley farmers is unclear, it was noted that the Hudson's Bay Company changed its policies and did sell cattle to settlers after 1843. It is also very likely that this adventure provided some great story material in the later lives of the participants.

(Sources—Oregon Historical Society and *Willamette Landings*.)

#### ABOUT THE BALTIMORE CLIPPER...

While its origins are obscure, the Baltimore Clipper was probably an evolutionary development of the small, fast sailing ships popular in England in the early 1600s. The Bermuda variation of the Clipper that was introduced in the Chesapeake Bay area before the American Revolution and later became known as the Baltimore Clipper. This

version attracted attention in Europe, especially in France, in the Revolutionary War era because of its speed and suitability as a privateer. By the early 1800s, Baltimore Clippers had been well developed as fast, nimble, and seaworthy ships quite suitable for some types of naval service, having performed very well in the Napoleonic Wars and in the War of 1812 as blockade runners. Some were also used for transporting slaves and for a variety of less-than-legal activities. The *Star of Oregon* had “interesting” ancestors

# The Whistler

By Bill Sarnoff \* Cascade Manor

*Those who dream in the darkness of night  
are hopeful of many things, because it is a  
wish their heart makes. - Anon*

Dugan's Bar & Grill was a tired place. What kept it alive was the steady flow of passengers arriving through our city's Greyhound Bus Station. Hardly an okay place for us temp park maintenance workers to slug down a Pabst beer or two after quitting time, but little else to recommend it. Dugan's restrooms were no better than the one's reeking of creosote at the bus station across the street. Both were for the intrepid, and only when dire attention to the matter was required.

It was early summer and our assigned area was furiously freckled with dandelions that required our spraying. The grass mowing crew had long left and working quietly now, we hardly noticed that overhead, a jet plane was silently unzipping the blue sky.

As my friend Eddie and I entered, we observed a mild mannered man and a rotund blonde woman, somewhere in her 50's, slouched in a rear booth. She had a house of a voice that came out in broad planes and steep angles and was nursing a brandy, obviously one of a series. She was staring at her drink as if she had just heard a foul obscenity or been asked to comment on Scientology. Her male friend, probably her husband, stared ahead, looking like the flaps had long gone out of his wings. He kept his mouth closed, apparently not wishing to jostle his liquor.

In a central booth, a couple in their early thirties were in deep discussion. As we passed, I heard the husband saying, "You're not being spiritual, Jennifer, you're just high. The last time you did anything spiritual you were praying you weren't pregnant." Eddie and I selected a table in the middle of the place that faced the door, the setting sun and the bus station across the street. We ordered beers from the waitress, a disinterested redhead sporting an ample bosom freighted with cheap jewelry and a voice like a single thin strand of hard caramelized sugar.

Halfway into our brews, a blind man entered, tapping his way along a wall of hooks holding work jackets like headless bodies. Realizing the bar was on the opposite side, felt his way along the stools, located a vacant one and sat down. When greeted by the bartender, he ordered a Coke. He was clean shaven, hair neatly combed, an open shirt collar under a light blue plaid jacket and dark slacks completed his outfit. He seemed to be having a spirited conversation with the bartender.

The man was cheery, had obviously arrived from another city and like others milling about, was between bus stops. He drank slowly and between sips, whistled a lilting tune. Observing him, Eddie and I were impressed at how easily he reached out and retrieved his drink, without spilling its contents.

"How much do I owe for the Coke?" the blind man sang out.

"That'll be a dollar and ten cents sir," replied the bartender. Like him, we were impressed when the blind man reached into his pocket, withdrew a small clip of dollars and a handful of coins, fingered a paper bill and a quarter and snapped them briskly onto the bar. Gathering his red tipped cane, he turned toward the front door

and tapped out into the street. Like many blind persons, he walked as though he was balancing a ball on his nose. We watched him tapping his way to the corner stoplight, where he waited patiently. Pedestrian traffic was light, two stop and go sessions had passed and he remained there, shifting from foot to foot.

“Wait a minute, Ed. I'll be right back”, I said, and sauntered out to the stop light where the blind man stood whistling.

“Hi, can I help you?” I asked.

“Yes” responded the blind man, with a spirit that surprised me. “If you would please guide me to the other side, and perhaps point me to the entry of the bus station, I'd be most appreciative, young man.”

“How did you know I'm a young guy?” I chuckled, impressed at his ability to connect voices with age, but more so to make idle conversation.

He smiled and said, “When you're without sight since birth, sounds tell you a great deal, my friend.” I sensed midwest in that voice – the crisp, clean vocal approach that cuts like a scalpel. And then he laughed, with a thick nasality that gave it substance and richness. As we waited for the traffic light to change, he bore a smile that could clear the weather. I took a liking to this person and it encouraged me to comment, “Sir, you sure sound happy. Where you headed for today?”

“Glad you asked me, my friend, because this is a most propitious day for me. Yessiree, it's surely the happiest day of my life. I'm going to the big house in Joliet to meet the best friend one could ever hope to find.”

Anyone from Chicago will promptly tell you that a reference to the Big House in Joliet meant the federal penitentiary. Taking a gentle grip on his elbow, we crossed the intersection, and he continued whistling.

“Who's your friend at the big house?” I asked, timidly.

“Actually, I'm going to see a murderer,” he replied enthusiastically. “We've never really met and this will certainly be our only meeting because, he is being electrocuted at midnight tonight – and he willed me his corneas.”

“What took you so long?” asked Eddie, when I returned.

“I just helped the blind guy cross the street, walked him to the bus station, and got him in the right line,” I replied.

“Heck of a neat thing to do” said Eddie.”

“A pity, he'll never know what a beautiful sunset is out there.

# Three of My Dad's Favorite Stories

By Virginia Eggert \* Willamette Lutheran

If you were to meet my dad, Tony Tredon, somewhere along in your conversation he would say, "I saw my first Green Bay Packer game in 1934." Then he would get a far-away look in his eye and his voice would slip into story-telling mode.

Dad was born in 1913 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a mid-sized city on the shores of Lake Michigan about half-way between Milwaukee and Chicago. He and his brother Ed and some high school friends organized a Club, called The Phantoms AC (Athletic Club), that was loosely affiliated with the YMCA. They had handball, table tennis, and basketball tournaments with other clubs at the Y and they also organized dances and put on plays and the like. One of the Phantoms even later worked on Broadway. One of Dad's friends owned a radio and one of them had access to a car. What more did young fellows need? Life was very sweet, in spite of it being hard times economically. My dad sent 10 cents away to the State government and they sent him a driver's license, even though he'd never been behind the wheel of a car. They were all set to take on the world! The father of one of the guys had a garage he wasn't using and let the Phantoms meet there; they would hang out and listen to the radio. The town of Green Bay was 150 miles due north of Kenosha, so of course that meant they listened to Green Bay Packer games in their garage clubhouse. Dad was eight years old when Green Bay joined the NFL, so he and the Packers sort of grew up together.

Once he graduated from Kenosha High School (the "first free high school west of the Allegheny Mountains") in 1931, the Great Depression meant there were no jobs and college wasn't an option; young people in Kenosha in the 1930's needed to contribute to the family finances, not be a drain on them. Just getting by was the best most people could hope for. In those days Y membership was something like twenty-five cents a year. A local businessman "sponsored" the Phantoms and some other clubs by paying the Y membership fees for the young men because even that was something a lot of them couldn't afford. But the Y wasn't just a place to hang out. They also brought in speakers, sometimes even professors from the University in Madison, and functioned as a sort of early "community college." Dad especially enjoyed the psychology lectures. He liked to understand how other people saw the world.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was begun in 1933 for "unemployed, unmarried young men from 18-25 years old". Because of their connection with the YMCA, a group of Kenosha boys joined the CCC early on, including my dad. That meant they had a place to live, meaningful work to do, three square meals a day, a small stipend, and a paycheck that was sent home to their parents each month. They also got medical and dental check-ups. He loved it! His mother bought a washing machine with the money he earned in the CCCs. Before that she had used a scrub board. At first he was sent to a Camp in Nekoosa, Wisconsin and then to Fish Creek in Door County. They did physical, outdoor labor, building trails and picnic sites in county and state parks and planting trees, thousands of trees. It was an investment in the country's future as well as the futures of these young men and it was run on the model of the US Army, with barracks, officers, and some old WWI equipment -- tents, trucks and the like. Fish Creek is some 60 miles up beyond Green Bay on a peninsula that sticks out into Lake Michigan called The Thumb. Now days it is a 75 minute drive from Fish Creek down to Green Bay.

My dad was a good organizer, detail oriented, and soon ended up working in the office for the Camp Commander. Now, the Green Bay football team was called the Packers because it grew out of the meat packing industry centered in Green Bay, an industry hurting during the Depression when so many could not afford to eat meat very often. But an encampment of a hundred or so hard working young men run by the Federal Government, all needing to be fed, was a boon to the local economy as well as the boys and their families. One

day when he'd made a meat delivery to the CCC Camp in Fish Creek, "Smitty the Meat Man" asked my dad if some of the boys wanted to go to a Packer game. My dad said, "I'll requisition a truck." Smitty said, "Go to the back gate and tell 'em Smitty sent you. They'll let you in. They might charge you fifty cents." Well, they didn't charge them anything. Sometimes it's not what you know, but who you know, and Smitty the Meat Man was an important person in the Green Bay of the 1930's!

Not too long after that my dad got a telegram from a factory in Kenosha that they had a job for him and he should report the next day. He hitched a ride down to Green Bay and took the very next train south! Unfortunately, a blizzard hit and there was so much snow on the tracks the train was stuck for three days. When he finally got to the factory they said, "You're three days late! We filled that job!" He knew that factory jobs were as scarce as hen's teeth. Here he'd left the CCC's behind for a job and now he had neither the CCC's nor the job. Then the manager said, "Are you good with figures? There is a job here in the office..." Then again, sometimes it's not who you know but what you know.

When the Depression first hit and Prohibition had not yet been repealed, my dad, who was still in high school, and his buddy Don Fessenden, the one with the car, would load up a bunch of guys on the weekend and they would head down to Illinois and hang around one of the golf courses in Cicero, a suburb west of Chicago. Cicero was notorious as home to the elite of Chicago's Gangland "movers and shakers," and the Kenosha guys would wait around, hoping to be hired on as caddies. Who else played golf but people with money, and who else had money during the depression but gangsters? The boys could pay for their gas coming and going and each clear a couple of bucks for a weekend's work this way. Besides, there wasn't much else to do and it was a nice outing. Once Dad even caddied for Chicago's Mayor A J Cermak who was gunned down in April 1933, so this obviously would have predated his demise, but perhaps not by much. As Cermak headed into the clubhouse after his round of golf, he gave my dad his signed scorecard and said, "Son, go to the tavern across the street and they'll give you a sandwich. Tell 'em Mayor Cermak sent you." I always wondered if that was in lieu of a tip or in addition. My dad kept that scorecard signed by Mayor Cermak in his wallet for as long as I can remember. He did go and get the sandwich, but I'm not sure if he ever caddied in Cicero after that. Once again it was a case of not what you know, but who you know. In my dad's experience, that held true two out of three times.

## Tie Gunyin Cha (Iron Buddha Tea)

By Joan Yu \* The Village

Saturday is the only day of the week Xintao and I have off at the same time. We've decided to make it our "Carrefour" day (I could begin to love the French) when we can shop for all those western goodies we both know and love! We got to Carrefour, the French/Chinese venture store, early, quickly choosing the things we needed for the week.

Outside the grocery area, there are several small shops. The tea shop is our favorite place to stop after buying our groceries. They often bring a carved burl table out into the store area beyond the checkout stands of the grocery section. We've been given many gifts of Green Tea, which is Xintao's favorite, from students, friends and relatives and he knew that I was out of the Jasmine and Oolong teas that I like, so he asked me to sit down at the huge carved burl tea-serving table with a carved Buddha, pedestals for saucers and teacups, a flat, tea-serving area with a drain for spilled tea or pouring off extra water, and burl stools all around the table. There was a long table off to the side covered with rows of large green apothecary jars with ground-glass lids and filled with a large variety of fresh teas. A pretty, young Chinese girl in her early 20's was ready to serve up the teas of our choice. We sat down and were served many of the small Chinese tea cups filled with different teas. I hadn't tried the third tea served, called Tie Guanyin, but it was delicious. The tea-serving was a special treat. The whole process took an hour. She put our tea leaves into a handle-less cup, with a lid and a saucer that looked like a pagoda and poured boiling water from a small tea kettle over the leaves. After a few minutes, she cocked the "pagoda" lid sideways and poured the tea water through a special sieve that fits into the top of one of the small brown-clay tea pots. She poured the first "pot" down the table-drain, filled the "pagoda" again with freshly-boiled water, poured the "finished" tea through the sieve again, and into the brown-clay tea pot. Then she placed a small, thimble-shaped drinking cup (like the ones used for serving bai jiu – the Chinese equivalent of white lightning) upside down in the just-filled tea cup. She had us smell the "bouquet" from the thimble-cup – OK the brew and drink to our hearts' content! I was delighted!! At the same time, many Chinese came by, stopped to chat with us, watched, sat on other stools with us, waiting for turns and very happy to get the chance to talk with this waiguoren (foreigner) while also enjoying on of their favorite pastimes.

Now that I've been introduced to Tie Guanyin, we've been back three or four times to buy more. Each time, we are delighted with the same service from the same pretty girl!



## Together

By Jan Taylor \* Capital Manor

On this still warm, clear September day  
Sitting in dappled sunlight  
Under alders, rooted in the stream bank,  
I ponder my birth and your death.

How is it that today I celebrate another year  
And you are just laid to rest.  
Bereavement and birthday cards co-mingle on the mantle,  
Both honor three-quarters of a century.

The river is my companion in thought,  
Vibrant, boisterous in its gurgles  
Myriad twinkling lights accentuating each ripple.  
A reminder that life mysteriously flows  
While we are alive ...  
And after.

I ponder your beautiful creativity,  
Your art hanging on my walls  
The zest for life you passed to your sons  
Now young men, bursting forth in their own lives  
Even while gaining texture through sorrow.

I grieve your illness  
The stress of it for you, your family  
Being slowed to a necessary letting go of your physical being  
Moving on like the river.  
May it gently bear your way.

And in the midst, I am grateful for my own coming year.  
Your passing a reminder to jump in  
Let the river carry me in wonder  
Toward what is mine to encounter  
Until I join you.



# Vignettes: Couples

By Linda VanPeenen \* Cascade Manor

People watching has been a pastime for many years. The following vignettes are among the most memorable results of that pastime.

## #1

We sat near the couple at breakfast our last morning in Washington. When we first sat down, I paid them little mind, but as my first cup of coffee kicked in, my curiosity blossomed. Her back was to me. Collar-length brown hair was neatly combed, and her red plaid shirt fell below the waist of her blue jeans. Her feet, in blue Adidas, poked under the rung of her chair. Otherwise, she wasn't particularly memorable. Her companion, on the other hand, was. His face looked as if he had just gotten out of bed—smooth, slightly flushed, and gentle. His hair stood in cowlicks. The smile he gave the girl suggested it had been a good night and that she was someone very special.

His dress suggested more. His shirt, with narrow pleats, had a high, winged collar and his black slacks a narrow stripe down the side seams. He wore no tie or coat. I suspected he was on his way to work as a waiter in one of the ritzy restaurants that clot that area of Washington. I was sure he was a very good waiter. Then I noticed his shoes. Have you ever seen a waiter in black patent-leather pumps? I remembered that the National Symphony had played at Kennedy Center the night before. That was it! He probably played the oboe.

Over my last cup of coffee, I noticed the girl get up and walk to the back of the shop, trailing her hand lovingly along his shoulder as she passed. He smiled again. Taking advantage of her absence, he pulled change from his pocket for a tip then passed by our table to pay his bill. He obviously frequented the shop often as he greeted the cashier by name:

“Good morning, Beth. It was lovely as usual.”

“I'm glad you enjoyed it, Mr. Ambassador, come again soon!”

What? That child, an ambassador?

## #2

A week after the annual Rose Festival, I took advantage of an overnight stop in Portland, Oregon, to visit the city's superb rose garden. From its hillside entry, the garden falls away in tiers of blooms that overlook the modern sprawl of downtown Portland and the meandering Willamette River far below. As I strolled down through rows of Red Fragrance, Mtonga, Whisky Bob, Peace, Brandy, and some 300 other rose varieties, I saw what appeared to be a picnic being held between the last two aisles of roses. Drawing closer, I could hear strains of a Mozart symphony. Finally, rounding the last corner, I found not a picnic but something much more intriguing. A formally attired couple was sitting at a small table obviously brought by the young man to this perfect spot. The table was covered with an immaculate white starched cloth on which sat a bud vase holding three red hot-house roses amid a spray of fern. Two red candles in crystal holders bracketed the roses. A bottle of wine rested next to the candles. The couple seemed oblivious to my presence; their discussion was intense. My curiosity was soon appeased. Having

passed as unobtrusively as possible, I turned to sniff a fragrant Adolph Horstman and saw the man kneel and kiss the young woman's hand.

"Now will you marry me?" he asked, with just the faintest hint of exasperation.

### #3

At the entry to a road leading to Colorado National Monument is a sign that says, in very large letters: "**Large Campers and All Trailers Prohibited.**" The reason for the warning became very apparent as I slowly wound my way around hairpin curves and held my breath as I inched by cars making the decent out of the park. I didn't dare take my eyes off the road to appreciate, as my husband was, the marvelous vistas below. The drive was worth it, though. At its end was a visitors' center manned by an enthusiastic Park Ranger and a very knowledgeable Ranger Naturalist who took us on a two-hour tour to see ancient junipers molded by wind and winter snows into gnarled bonsai of every imaginable shape.

Another lovely feature of the Monument was a small campground with only a dozen campsites tucked neatly between large boulders. We were surprised, but not disappointed, to find that we were the only campers that day—one of the advantages of traveling "off-season." We pitched our tent, started the charcoal burning for our usual evening hamburger, and settled down with glasses of wine to enjoy the absolute peace of that place.

Peace was short-lived. Startled by the teeth-jarring sound of metal against rock, I looked up to see a huge "fifth-wheeler" rig inching its way into the campground. We had a front row seat for the show as the driver chose to park his rig directly across from our campsite. First, he pulled the truck and trailer past the campsite, as there were no pull-through sites. Then he started to back the trailer into the site. The rig jack-knifed to the left. He pulled forward and backed again. The rig jack-knifed to the right. He pulled forward and tried again. This went on for some time. As the driver became more frustrated, his language became more colorful. His companion, most likely his wife, glanced our way on several occasions, with obvious embarrassment. She seemed to shrink with each new expletive. After one final attempt to park the trailer, which narrowly missed trashing the picnic table, the man gave up. He stormed out of the cab, the air blue with cigar smoke and foul language, and stalked toward the back of the trailer. The woman, who had taken the brunt of most of the cursing, calmly moved into the driver's seat. She again pulled the rig forward and, with grace that would have put the driver of an 18-wheeler to shame, backed the gargantuan rig into the narrow slot, neatly pinning the still cursing man to a Cholla cactus.

The subject of buying a camper, which we had been considering before this experience, has never come up again. We are still enjoying our small tent, charcoal grill and lawn chairs.

## Waiting for a Train

By Dave Wilson \* Mennonite Village

We had arrived at Birnham-Dunkeld by train. Trains aren't all that hard to figure out. They ride on fixed rails and, once mounted thus, their choice of directions is limited to two: this way or that, forward or back, north or south, either/or. We're pretty confident train travelers. I've even managed to get from Montpelier to Paris without benefit of language. For this reason, we use trains instead of rental cars when traveling abroad, particularly in Great Britain, where we aren't sure our persons or our marriage could survive co-navigation on the wrong side of unfamiliar roads.



Completing our tour of Dunkeld, we walked back through Birnham to the train station. "Station" is a term loosely applied to the arrangement at Birnham. Two tracks lie between platforms on either side with an overarching pedestrian bridge connecting them. A long, green and white Victorian-era building adjoins the platform on the town side of the tracks but serves no apparent function for the convenience of passengers. Many small-town rail station buildings such as this have been closed in Scotland as cost-savings measures. Many are let to businesses or even—as in Blair Atholl—as private residences.

We arrived that morning on the town-side platform and returned in mid-afternoon to meet the four o'clock train back north to Blair Atholl. The Birnham station building was shuttered and silent. There are no ticket windows, no toilets, no station master, no inhabitants, no information. Not that it matters. You can pay the conductor on the train if you don't have a rail pass, and the trains only go one or the other of two ways. Common sense prevails: note the platform on which you arrive and go to the other side for a return trip. Arrive on the town side, depart from the other side. That's what the pedestrian bridge is for.

We crossed the pedestrian bridge 20 minutes before the departure time published in our timetable and sat on a bench. We were alone. No other passengers appeared. The sound of small birds in nearby bushes tickled the silence of a waning day. It's eerie waiting for a train in solitude. You feel you misunderstood the time or place, so you check the timetable in your pocket and reassure each other that you did, indeed, arrive at the other platform. The information vacuum envelops you, and you begin to worry.

Then God speaks. God's rich Scot baritone flows in a cascade of rolling Rs.

"Good evening," His voice suddenly filled the silent space.

"If you'rre just lookin' to enjoy the sunshine," He said, "Well, then, that's rreally quite alrright." The Rs were rolling over to the empty station building and back again. Our desperate eyes could find no source.

"But if you'rre awaitin' for the northbound ttrain, you'rre on the wrrong side."

We were then left with only the twitter in the bushes.

We looked at each other and looked around the empty, now silent platforms. Then we quietly picked up our packages and climbed the stairs to the pedestrian bridge. Midway across, we looked north up the empty tracks, then south to where our train should come from, where the tracks slipped past a distant switch house raised on stilts. As our eyes began to pass on, a hand and forearm appeared from the switch house window, and waved.

We waved in return and descended to the town-side platform, where a northbound train slipped up five minutes later and took us home.

So, in addition to having a wonderful day, we learned two important things that might help us later in life: Don't count on trains in Scotland necessarily to follow common sense, and God really is Presbyterian.

## Where Did the Horses Go?

By Jerrold Isom \* Homewoods on the Willamette

Before 1946 Dad farmed with horses.

Big strong animals. Plowing. Mowing. Pulling the combine.

Mostly, I remember their colors and names. They came in pairs.

Coal black and iron gray; mottled brown and bay; chestnuts and sorrels.

Snip and Snap; Babe and Mack; Nip and Tuck; Shorty and Joe.

Abe and Dan; Ginger and Spice; Tex and Mex.

With bright eyes and velvet hides, they were always the same.

Flopping fetlocks fringed their bucket-like hooves

as they threw their sweating weight into the traces.

Cruppers and collars lathered to foam as they plodded on.

But no longer needed when the postwar tractors chugged in.

Cherry red Farmalls, mint green John Deeres, rose red International Harvesters.

Fuel-guzzlers with lug tires and power take-offs. Mower, buckrake, baler and drill.

At our ranch bright red was the choice, like the new Chevy pickup

with unpainted wooden racks soon cracked and manure stained.

Soon that shiny new paint was scratched, worn and crusted with rust.

Black scabs grew where oil leaked, grease oozed and dirt collected.

Those reds faded to dusty flower pink; couldn't hold their color like horses.

But the machines didn't have to be fed and watered twice a day,

just pump in the gas and jerk the throttle wide.

Ride farmer, ride.

Efficiency and more profit for sure. But more than horses was lost when those

loyal servants were sent away to make dogfood and glue.

Dad said, "We can't afford to feed anything we don't ride."

# Where Time Goes When You Get Old

By Kate Belt \* Holladay Park Plaza

You didn't ask, but in case you wanted to know, it's like this:

When your pen falls on the floor, absolutely not dropped, by its own accord and comes apart, now you have to find the grabber.

That doesn't take long; you used it just moments ago, indeed!

And when you pick up one-by-one pen's bits and pieces (ink cartridge, spring, top, bottom) and put it back together, it's not the pen it used to be, but you call it good enough because you empathize, but it immediately falls to the floor and again disassembles, and you need the grabber again.

And you throw it (the pen's now bits and pieces, not the grabber) away, but discover that nearly all the 30 pens laying around don't write well, or at all, and it's September 1, and the back to school sales are done, when you could have restocked on pens for cheap. Oh well!

When you go to pick something up, but discover you already have an item in each hand when you were so sure you had one available hand, but no luck.

So you pick up a 3rd item with the not so leftover hand, and find a jam that sends another item to the ground. You find and employ the grabber again, so the time you tried to save with 2 items in hand is gone, lost forever.

## Who in the World is Cecil

By John Hubbard \* Mary's Woods

When the bus pulled into the Salt Lake City bus station, I felt like I was wearing it. The ride from McMinnville, Oregon to Salt Lake City, Utah is scheduled to take 21 hours. Whomever set up this schedule must have computed it in the summer. We were delayed in the Blue Mountains. The driver had to put on tire chains because of snow. Then the chains broke near La Grande and the driver needed to call the great Greyhound help line in the sky to come to our rescue. This trip took 36 hours.

I had the unhappy experience of having Kyle for a seatmate. A loquacious fellow college student who did not need to sleep. When he was not talking, he was cracking and sucking on sunflower seeds. Every time I tried to doze off, he would either start talking or crack more sunflower seeds. Me? I was shot. It was Christmas break. The bus pulled into SLC the day before Christmas Eve. Time to ski and not study.

On Christmas Eve Mom worked most of the day preparing the meal for the evening. This was tradition. It was usually just the four of us Mom, Dad, my younger brother Garland, and me. My parents were midwestern refugees who had moved to SLC because my father was transferred there by his employer. They had moved there when I was 4 years old, and my younger brother Garland had been born in Utah.

We were about to settle down for our Christmas Eve dinner when the phone rang. Dad answered the phone and shortly after saying hello he said, "We will leave right now."

My parents were always a bit excitable and sometimes did not think things through.

Dad came to the table and again said, "We gotta leave right now. There has been an accident between St. Louis and Kansas City. Alice wants us there right now. Cecil was killed in an accident."

Mom said, "Oh no. We must leave. What should we do about dinner?"

Dad said, "Throw it in the car. We will take it with us. Let's move. We gotta go right now."

Garland looked at me and said, "Who the hell is Alice?"

"Aunt Alice," I said.

"Aunt Alice, who?" Garland said.

"Dad's older sister," I said.

"Oh, ya, right," Garland said.

We must give Garland a break. My folks left the Midwest when I was four and Garland was born in Utah. Our contact with the relatives in Kansas City was limited. This was in the era before cheap air travel.

We hurriedly packed our clothes and put the Christmas dinner in the back of Dad's pride and joy: a 1956 Ford Country Station wagon.

It was winter, so we left for Kansas City in the Christmas Eve darkness. The traffic was light, and we seemed to be making good time until we left Grand Junction, Colorado. When we started up the mountains we ran into trouble.



It was about one o'clock Christmas morning. It was a clear calm night. Dad pulled the car over to the right and it was a steep incline. We needed to put on the tire chains. Garland and I opened the back door of the station wagon. The roasting pan fell out of the back, the lid fell off and the turkey went sliding down the icy road. Garland and I chased it down the road. We eventually retrieved the roaster and turkey and trudged back up the road with it and placed it in a secure place in the car.

The tire chains did not fit. My father was so angry that we thought he was going to have a heart attack. Garland and I walked through snow that was at least six inches deep to the nearest farmhouse. It was dark. There was no dog, thank God.

We walked onto the porch of the house and the door flew open and there stood a man in a bath robe, pajamas, a wild look in his eye with a 30-06 Springfield rifle with his finger on the trigger. "What in the hell are you two doing here this time of night? You better talk fast. I've called the sheriff."

About the time we had told him the situation the sheriff car came into view, and he shined his spotlight on us before the sheriff's deputy got out of the car. "And, just what are you fellas doing?" said the sheriff's deputy.

The man holding the 30-06 put up his hand and said, "Tom, I think it's all right. They claim their parents are up the road and are having tire chain trouble."

The deputy motioned us to get in the car and said, "Let's go find your folks and I'll see what I can do to help. The deputy got some chains that would work for us, and we were on our way to Kansas City. We arrived in Kansas City about 3 PM on Christmas day.

When we stopped for gas, my brother motioned for me to come and talk to him and he said, "Who the hell is Cecil?"

I said, "He is, was, Alice's son. So that would make him our cousin."

"I was wondering. Dad is angry because I am not upset. He said we are both hard hearted. Geeze. I never met the guy. Have you?" said Garland.

"I'm not really sure. I think I might have the last time we were in KC, but that was a good four years ago," I said.

"Was he a good guy?" said Garland.

"Dammed if I know," I said.

When we arrived, we found that Cecil was blind drunk when he ran off the road between St. Louis and Kansas City. At least it was a single car accident.

When we found the cause of death and Cecil's history Garland said, "Who the hell is Cecil?"

I said, "I will tell you who he is. He ruined our Christmas Eve dinner. He made us chase a turkey down the mountain. Almost gets us killed by a crazy farmer with a 30-06."

"The worst part is that we missed two days of skiing," I said.

But all was not lost. Every Christmas Eve since then, and it has now been fifty-nine of them, we raise our glass and toast to "Cecil, the cousin we never knew" but we did attend his funeral.

# Why Life

By Daniel Roberts, Mary's Woods

Abundant creation stories in diverse cultures suggest the question of beginnings bedeviled humans before written language was available to record it. Even now, the mere question, "How did life begin?" nearly stalls our brains, like a computer with too many windows open. Thinking about how it all began can leave us short of breath, like our feet have slipped off the edge of the earth and we're floating weightless in space.

That awe can be triggered by innocent things, like an orchid blossom, or the heft of a new grandchild in our arms, or the little baaa a ewe makes when she first talks to her newborn lamb.

The Judeo-Christian heritage has combined two ancient creation stories into the biblical creation narratives in Genesis. For some, the creation stories suffice, even if interpreted metaphorically, and the earth feels solid again.

That has not kept curious humans from trying to understand how life came about or how the universe functions, or where and how it all started. That search has spawned the sprawling and occasionally unruly discipline of science.

Scientific explanations of natural phenomena have often clashed with the religious orthodoxy of the time and culture, causing fireworks that seem silly in retrospect, Galileo's famous example for instance. His assertion that the earth revolved around the sun so incensed the Roman Catholic Church that the Roman Inquisition in 1633 found him "vehemently suspect of heresy." He recanted under threat of torture and remained under house arrest the last nine years of his life.

For scientists, using the supernatural to explain natural phenomena does not work. To function in the world of science and preserve objectivity, good scientists stuff their religious baggage, those creation stories or faith in a supreme being, into a locker outside of the lab and slip the key into a secure pocket.

Some scientists never again open that locker. Others, reexamine their religious beliefs to see how they fit with science. Some toss out the parts that don't fit and go on with their science. Others try to merge the two, and make them fit together, like trying to put two jigsaw puzzles together on the same table, modifying or discarding pieces that don't find a home. One science professor spent much of his career collecting pieces of evidence to bolster his belief that the earth and all that's in it were created in just seven days as recently as a few thousand years ago.

I grew up in a conservative protestant household that interpreted the Bible literally. In any controversy of fact, the Bible was the ultimate arbiter. It was, after all, the Word of God. There could be no error. Mention evolution, and we'd scurry to find a Bible passage to refute it.

Beginning in high school, my interests tended toward science and math. I remember comparative anatomy early in my college experience. The remarkable similarity of various anatomic features across species was interesting and fit right in with the evolutionary thesis.

Yet creationists had a different view. This was God's blueprint. Why wouldn't the successful basics be used in a variety of creations, like a Ford truck that uses the same engine as a Lincoln Continental.

Sometime during college, I worked through the worry that I might find a fatal conflict between science and faith. I came to realize the Bible is not a science textbook and treating it as one, does a disservice to both science

and the Bible. And, I reasoned, if there is a God, and if he/she/they created life, they won't be terribly annoyed if we try to understand how.

By the time I entered medical school, I had jumped wholeheartedly into science, relishing the beauty of living creatures and their elegant physiology. I saw the truth of evolution and congratulated myself and winked at the heavens, because this really wasn't so hard, was it? Maybe we could explain all this without invoking help from an all-powerful being. Granted, some of the evolutionary steps were a bit of a stretch, but we will fill in the blanks. It will just take time.

There were lurking questions, though. How did this all start? How did a strand of DNA or RNA form? And maybe a more profound question, *why* did this all start? I was willing to wait for the answers, because much of what we once thought of as mystery—and maybe a stamp of the supernatural—has become much less mysterious when broken down into small steps. I'm reminded of a talented neurosurgeon I was assisting one day. As we both peered through the eyepieces of an operating microscope at a spot deep within someone's brain, he said, "The impossible just takes a little longer."

I've incubated my questions about origins and faith for well over six decades. That includes my twenties when I consciously disconnected my faith from science, my agnostic thirties, exploring the paranormal, people's near-death experiences, Jane Roberts (no relation) and her Seth books, and a variety of other literature, finally settling into the more humanistic approach of the Unity movement. And it included that period late in my forties, when I converted to Catholicism, drawn not by Catholic theology, but despite it. Drawn instead by my wife's faith and an Augustinian priest named James Patrick Clifford, and his wise and compassionate interpretation of his role as God's vicar. His honest and enduring friendship for three decades has taught me much about friendship and commitment and changed my life for the better.

None of that spiritual journey has provided answers about beginnings. What lingers is the memory of a pivotal day in medical school. I was confident I was getting this sorted out, reassured by the clear thinking of a brilliant Biochemistry Professor named Howard Mason as he finished a series of lectures on thermodynamics and entropy. Doctor Mason had a logical and extraordinarily analytical mind, and you could take anything he said to the bank. It all made sense. Elegant, I'm thinking, sleepy from stuffing my brain with new concepts. But suddenly I'm jolted awake by his concluding statement about thermodynamics and life. What did Doctor Mason say?

"From a thermodynamic perspective, life is extremely improbable."

The room spins a little. The seat in the lecture hall no longer feels steady. Did I misunderstand? Wait. We have most of this figured out. Life is what?

"From a thermodynamic perspective, life is extremely improbable."

I have a queasy sensation in the middle of my gut. I feel exposed and a little dizzy. When I stand, my legs are unsteady. It's as though I've just glimpsed God's hem and find the experience disorienting.

I don't expect to see God in the lab. I've left my religion at the door. Yet here is a professor, whose analysis I trust more than anyone else, saying life is extremely improbable. That statement by Doctor Mason puts life roughly in the same category as the moon being crafted from sharp cheddar.

Doctor Mason's profound observation continues to fuel a sense of awe when I consider beginnings. Nothing in our scientific probing answers one simple question. What kind of wrinkle in the universe sparked the origin of life?

How did that happen? Did lightning strike a primordial pond and create some amazing self-replicating molecules? And where did the pond and the lightening come from?

The corollary and more consequential question is why? Why would life evolve? What bias, what force in the universe, nurtures such an improbable sequence of events, a sequence that seems to violate the second law of thermodynamics? Even if lightning strikes a pond and produces a self-replicating molecule, why would it progress to something more complex, through trillions of iterations until one day that life stands in an operating room staring through a microscope at another human's brain, in for repair?

These are imponderables. They are above the paygrade of us mere humans.

I have not found God in the lab or under a microscope or in an operating room. The idea that we could accurately understand that force, or that some elegant experiment will define life's origin seems unreasonable. I have no answers, only questions and recurring awe.

I am still goaded by an honest medical-school professor's observation that life is an outlier in the observable order of the universe. That surprising hole in the fabric of science niggles at me and leads me to puzzle over natural phenomena that defy explanation, like the marvelous complexity of a human eye and the miracle of sexual reproduction. Just the odor of clean straw can ignite that awe and transport me to a lambing pen on a cold January night, and I again smell steamy amniotic fluid and hear the soft guttural baaa of a ewe we called Baby urging her newborn to stand and nurse for the first time.

## World War II and Me

By Wendell Wagler \* The Village

I remember what it was like to live in Los Angeles as a child during the war that followed soon after December 7, 1941, [Notice that most seniors refer to World War II as *the war*.] I was too young to remember the actual attack on Pearl Harbor.

My childhood memories, ages five, six and seven, are of being in a world entirely devoted to the European and Pacific conflicts. I didn't know enough to experience fear. Just lots of upheaval. My parents never talked about the war in front of us kids.

I went to kindergarten in Hawthorne, California. Our class met in a separate building, just for us kindergartners, so we could take naps unbothered by "the big kids".

We planted a Victory Garden right outside our door. At harvest time we all ate the fruits [or rather vegetables] of our labor. This somehow was to help with the war effort. I discovered I didn't like vegetables, especially carrots. The teacher finally found something I would eat – a raw turnip. With salt. For the first and last time in my life.

When we played, we played war. We were pilots shooting down the Japanese.

Our main war cry was "Bombs away over Tokyo." I'm sure we didn't know what or where Tokyo was. My favorite toy was a little airplane with retractable wheels. Out of earshot of our parents we would sing-song "Red, red, wet the bed, wipe it up with Hitler's head." We loved to make fun of the Germans. We were fascinated by the name of one of Germany's generals – Stoupnagle. We would say it over and over again, probably because to us it sounded like "stupid". More than once, as the day turned into afternoon, hundreds of barrage balloons began to dot the sky from horizon to horizon. They were gray and ominous, about the size of a car, with cables dangling down. What I didn't know until I was older was barrage balloons were a sign that someone in charge thought the Japanese might attack that night and hoped to entangle them in the hanging cables. We often had blackouts designed to have no lights in our houses, cars or businesses, designed to not alert Japanese pilots that they were over our city. I remember one time my grandparents were at our house during a black out. We were listening to our radio, which was a large, impressive piece of furniture. My grandparents got into a terrific row about whether the light from the radio dial could be seen by Japanese flying overhead.

I heard the word "ration" and I knew my mom had a ration book that she took with us when we went grocery shopping. Certain things were just not ever available. Like ice cream. I heard my dad talk about butcher shops in Los Angeles that sold horse meat. But I'm pretty sure we never had horse meat in our diet. Some things at the grocery store didn't require rations stamps [torn out of the ration book], but there were restrictions never the less. Like butter. We were limited to only one pound. But we cheated. First my mom went in and bought a pound. Then my older sister went in and bought a pound. I was looking forward to my turn, but was told I was "too little". I think I cried.

My dad worked at North American Aircraft factory. Thus he had a draft rating of 2-B. That meant he was an essential worker that wouldn't be drafted. But my dad was obsessed with moving to Oregon. The truth was, being from rural Iowa, he hated the big city. And he didn't like black people that he worked with, and in Oregon at that time, black people weren't allowed to settle. But back to *the war*. Dad thought in 1944 the war was about to be

won and it was time to move. Somewhere he found and bought a big truck. We loaded it full of furniture and everything else we owned. We began the trek north up the two lanes of Highway 99. My sister and I rode with our grandparents, in their Willys, following the truck. Somewhere in the Sacramento Valley, right in front of our eyes, a back tire on the truck exploded. My grandmother immediately began wailing and crying. She knew that because of the war there were no tires to be had. Anywhere. Somehow we got to a hot and dusty motel, where we stayed for a couple of days. My dad and my grandfather scoured Sacramento looking for a single tire. They found one! And soon we were on the road to “racially” pure Oregon.

It would be nice if I could say we lived happily ever after, but the effects of *the war* reached into Oregon. We bought an abandoned prune farm, twenty-three acres and a house for \$2500. But then the mail came. With a letter from Uncle Sam. Because my dad had left his war-essential job, his draft status was changed to 1-A, draft-able. My mother at once became hysterical, convinced that my dad would be on the front lines in no time. But Dad went back to Los Angeles and his job. He got his 2-B status back. One weekend he came back to Oregon, picked up his family, and we moved back to Los Angeles, leaving my grandparents to watch over the house and farm.

Back in Los Angeles there was no housing available because of *the war*. We stayed with my aunt and uncle and cousin for a little while. I went to school where my cousin went. At this point this was the third school I had attended in the first grade. First was at Hawthorne where I had gone to kindergarten. When we were in Oregon I went to Dillard Grade School. I don't even know the name of the third school where my cousin went. Next we moved to a tiny travel trailer, closer to Dad's work in Inglewood. My sister and I both had chicken pox in that confined space. School number four was Inglewood Grade School. Finally I went to my last and fifth first grade school in Manhattan Beach where my folks had finally found an apartment to rent.

Somehow, eventually, Dad's draft status was made secure and in just a few months, we were back in Oregon. Now it was 1945 and the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Japan. We never went to movies, but this time we did, because the news reels that were played before the main feature were all about the atomic bombs. I can remember that news reel. There were no photographs of the damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Just animated drawings of what someone thought it was like. Scary.

A few days later I was hoeing weeds in our huge garden in the hot August sun. [I was only seven, for crying out loud]. My Dad came out of the house and gave my sister and me the news, “The war is over.” I was excited and said, “Does this mean we won't have to listen to news on the radio anymore?”