

The background of the cover is a photograph of the Oregon State Capitol building, a neoclassical structure with a prominent dome, situated on a high, forested cliff. The cliff face is rugged and shows signs of weathering. Below the cliff, a dense forest of evergreen trees covers the slope. In the distance, a large body of water, likely a reservoir or lake, stretches across the middle ground. Beyond the water, rolling hills and mountains are visible under a clear sky. The lighting suggests a bright day, with some shadows on the cliff face.

# *Reflections*

*A Collection of Writing and Poetry*

*by Oregon's Elders*

2016

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

On the cover: Vista House, Columbia River Gorge

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

*These authors have vastly varying backgrounds and experiences.*

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

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

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

*Henry David Thoreau*

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# *Judges' Choice*

## *Education on the Farm*

Bob Robinson, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



When you are from a city, even a small one, visiting relatives on a farm can be a time of educational adventures. There is no chance I will forget just such an adventure that I had in 1944 when I was 10 and spent time on a farm in Tule Lake, California. Nightmare is an appropriate word I would use to describe it.

But that's getting ahead of the story. I was in Tule Lake on a summer vacation trip from my home in Independence, Oregon, to visit cousin Herb Kirby and his parents, Pat and Mae Kirby. They lived on one of the largest spreads in the farm-dominated community, located not far south of the Oregon border. The Kirbys had wheat fields and they grew potatoes, corn and other vegetables. They also had chickens and pigs among their livestock. It was a whole new world to me at the time, a delightful one.

I rode on a combine as wheat was harvested. I helped feed the animals, learning quickly to avoid charging pigs on their way to the feed troughs. Herb, a high school student at the time, even took me pheasant hunting with him where I became fascinated with the way that Mac, the family's Labrador hunting dog, could sense where to go to scare the pheasants out of hiding.

Then one day, Herb had an unusual assignment. The Kirbys had a sow they called Matilda that was due to deliver a litter of piglets. Matilda had been taken into a nearby potato cellar where she was lying on her side and looking very uncomfortable. I was told that it was important that someone be close by when the pig delivered because, sometimes, piglets would end up underneath the mother and be smothered. Herb's job that day was to make sure that any piglets in danger were moved to safety as they were born.

Herb took me along for the possible all-day vigil to keep him company. It had all the makings of a lark, or so I thought, since all I had to do was observe. So, a few feet from

Matilda, we set up a card table and chairs and began playing gin rummy and other card games. Meanwhile, Matilda seemed to be paying no attention at all to us. During a break from our games, Herb showed me a broom handle that he would use if it became necessary to move piglets away from their mother.

About an hour after we began our card play, Herb said it was time for another break and that he was going into the house to do a couple of things. “Don’t worry, I’ll be right back,” he said. “Nothing is going to happen while I’m gone but, just in case, here is how you use the broom handle.” Then he gave me a brief demonstration.

“How long will you be gone,” I asked warily. “About five minutes at the most,” he replied.

Herb was barely out of sight when my worst fear was realized. Matilda gave a loud “grunt” and rolled more onto her side. I sensed an imminent delivery. I shouted at my cousin but he was out of hearing range. I was going to run after him but Matilda gave another “grunt” and I knew there wasn’t time.

I broke into a sweat despite the coolness of the cellar. My throat suddenly was dry. My hands were shaking. “Grunt,” said Matilda and out came a pinkish-colored piglet. Another “grunt” and out came another and then a third. The first two were clear of their mother’s body but the third was perilously close to slipping underneath her. I grabbed the broom handle and guided No. 3 into the clear.

I had been told that a litter of seven or eight piglets was expected. But Matilda didn’t follow the script. In fact, she made a mockery of expectations. The piglets just kept coming and I kept doing the best I could to keep them out of harm’s way. There were a couple of close calls but I managed successful rescues in both cases.

Finally, after 13 piglets had been delivered, Matilda gave a “grunt” that sounded a little different and less desperate. I took it to be her way of saying that she was finished. I took time to guide the wiggling piglets, seemingly in perfect health, into a group. Then I leaned on a post, took a deep breath and was only partially successful in trying to relax.

Finally, Herb returned, considerably more than five minutes after his departure. “Everything okay?” he said, noticing that I was holding the broom handle at my side. Then he saw the piglets. “Holy cow,” he said. “Are you all right?”

I told him I was fine, which was a lie. I still was shaking. He began to count the piglets and I told him not to bother, that there were 13. “I counted them as they were born,” I said. “I had to use the broom handle a few times.”

“That’s amazing,” Herb said. “We’ve never had a sow deliver that many piglets.” Then he put a hand on my shoulder, grinned and added, “You have to be Matilda’s hero.”

As if on cue, Matilda looked in the direction of her litter and gave one more “grunt.” I liked to think that she was thanking me for my help.

# *Judges' Choice*

## *Heart Music*

Julia Brown, Holladay Park Plaza



The heart is a harp. It sings to the soul  
It caresses and cradles, makes you feel whole  
It comforts and calms, your breathing goes deep  
Tenderly, softly, it strums you to sleep.

The heart is a drum. Jump to its call  
Whatever your duty, give it your all  
Hard labor endure, hunt down your prey  
And called to battle, the enemy slay.

The heart is a flute. It invites you to play  
Bond with your friends, make merry all day  
Dance with the wind, bask in the sun  
Delight in the world, laugh and have fun.

Now from the harp no longer the strum  
Now fades away the roll of the drum  
The trill of the flute has left with the sun  
The long night has come. The concert is done.

## *Judges' Choice*

### *Scrounge, the Saga of a Remarkable Dog*

Nancy Hersey, Homewoods on the Willamette



Our black Labrador Scrounge became a celebrity every fall when duck season arrived. Tales of Scrounge's prowess as a retriever, not only of her master's ducks, but also those shot down by other hunters, grew annually. Surprisingly most of the exploits were true!

Our family was building a house on Blue Lake and temporarily living across Interlachen Road on Fairview Lake where Scrounge practiced her craft as a retriever.

His father had taken our eighteen-month-old son Kirk across the street to see what progress was being made on the new house and also to check out the fishing on Blue Lake. I was catching up on the household tasks that pile up quickly when you have a new baby and a toddler. Suddenly, bursting through the front door was Kirk, his curly hair, jeans and red flannel shirt soaking wet. His good humor was still intact as he announced proudly, "I fell in the lake, Mama; Scrounge pulled me out." Before I was through bathing him and changing his clothes, his father and a very wet Scrounge came through the front door.

Ken patted Scrounge's head proudly. "Nance, you'd never believe it. We were on the dock talking to the next-door neighbor and we heard two splashes, one was Kirk and almost immediately Scrounge jumped in after him. She grabbed the back of his shirt and swam to shore, (a distance about twenty feet.) Ken and Kirk patted Scrounge lovingly. "Best dog I ever had," Ken said reflectively. Kirk regarded the whole episode as a great adventure.

It took a little getting used to for me, having a large dog as a constant companion. Before our children had arrived, we occasionally ate dinner over-town and took in a movie. One night we arrived home late and ready to jump into bed, only to discover Scrounge, wishing to remind us that such behavior was not acceptable to her, had taken a large sack of garbage and proceeded to spread it all over the sheets and bedding. Before we could retire, I had to change the sheets, find clean blankets and clean up the egg shells and coffee grounds that

were strewn all over. I regarded Scrounge very darkly, and Ken explained it wasn't really her fault. We shouldn't have left her alone so long.

Scrounge was Ken's dog, and I made no effort to train her other than calling her, and to this she responded promptly. All the houses were close together on our dead-end road. Scrounge disliked the idea of bicyclists riding past our house. She would leap at their legs menacingly. She didn't actually bite them, but the youthful bicyclists got into the habit of walking their bicycles past our house. Scrounge lay back down approvingly as order was restored to the neighborhood.

The children didn't always appreciate Scrounge's constant attention. One day four-year-old Julie was headed down the basement stairs holding a peanut butter and jelly sandwich high over her head. Scrounge, following one step behind her, carefully snatched the sandwich from her hand. "Mama, Mama," Julie protested angrily, "Scrounge ate my whole sandwich!" Scrounge regarded an occasional snack as a fringe benefit of her regular duties as the children's babysitter.

Another memorable exploit was the night we were over-town on some errand. Ken left Scrounge in the car and as usual didn't bother to lock it because we knew she would conscientiously defend her domain. This particular evening we had parked on the Broadway Ramp, and the attendant went up to get our car. After a few minutes the Green Hornet arrived around the curve of the ramp, piloted by a white-faced attendant. "My God," he said accusingly. "I didn't know there was a dog in the car. Just as I was rounding a curve, I heard a horrible, deep growl by my ear, and I saw this big black head! It's a wonder I didn't drive your car off the ramp!" His voice shook with agitation.

Ken apologized to the attendant, but as soon as we were out of his sight, he scratched Scrounge's ears approvingly. "Good girl, you guard the car for us, don't you?" I rolled my eyes. I was living in a very different world than the one I grew up in.

. . . . .

Because Scrounge had such a prestigious reputation, other bird hunters envied Ken for having such a retriever.

One morning a young neighbor down the road came to the door and asked if he and his

brother might borrow Scrounge to go duck hunting over on Government Island. This man had recently suffered a tragic familial loss, so I knew Ken would have granted the request had he been home.

Late that afternoon George arrived at the door looking distraught, “Nancy, I hope you don’t think I mistreated her, but Scrounge is gone!” He explained he and his brother had parked their car next to the Columbia River, taken Scrounge and gotten into their twelve-foot rowboat and rowed their way over to Government Island in the middle of the Columbia River. As the boat pulled up in the sand, Scrounge leaped from it and headed at full speed into the wooded area that blanketed the island. Instead of hunting for ducks, George and his brother had spent the six hours searching for Scrounge, calling her, combing the area, but never catching sight of her.

It was fall and the days were getting shorter. George and I decided I would accompany them back to the island. Surely if Scrounge heard a familiar voice she would come out of hiding. It was worth a try. We parked the car on Marine Drive and prepared to return to the island. My descent down the bank and into the boat was slow and cumbersome because I was five months pregnant with our third child.

George and his brother steadied the boat and helped me into one of the boat’s seats. The two of them began to row vigorously. I hung on with both hands. The wind had come up and the force of the waves was carrying our little craft down river several hundred yards from where we had put in. I felt no sense of fear as the boat rocked from side to side, only a fervent hope that we might find Scrounge and bring her home.

The men pushed the little craft as far as possible into the sand and we spread out, frantically calling “Here Scrounge, here, girl, Come on baby.” All I could think of was Ken’s dismay if something were to have happened to his beloved retriever. After fifteen minutes, we shook our heads. The only course of action now was to row the boat back to shore, and I could plan how I was going to tell Ken about Scrounge’s drowning in the Columbia.

The trip back to shore was even worse than the trip out to the island. Waves slapped up the sides of the boat and only the determined rowing of George and his brother kept it on course as we slowly made our way back to shore. We scrambled up the bank to where the car was parked. Our group was silent during the car ride back home. What could we say? The drive seemed to take forever, although in reality it was more like half an hour. We

pulled up to the house, our hearts heavy with grief and foreboding. Ken was too kind a person to get dangerously angry, but the thought of hurting him by telling him his beloved Scrounge was gone would be like twisting a knife in his heart!

Our mouths dropped open as we drove up. There, sopping wet, sitting on the brick stoop going into the yard... was our missing retriever! We will never know how she swam across the Columbia River in a stiff current and found her way back to our house, which had to be a distance of several miles.

Tiredly she thumped her tail as we greeted her with cries of relief. She and I walked slowly up to the house. She ate a big dinner that night and did a lot of sleeping in the next few days. No one ever asked to borrow her to go hunting again. As I told Ken of her unbelievable exploit, she wagged her tail ant him as if to say, "I guess I showed them, Dad. I'm your hunting dog!"

## *Breaches of Joy!*

Marsha B. Green, Willamette View

Aboard the “Navatek” Honolulu, Hawaii, February 1998



The high tech ship sped to sea  
on its mission to locate whales.  
All eyes scanned the watery scene  
for signs of their “blows” or tails.

Most passengers gathered out on deck  
eager to be the first  
to shout out news of a back or a speck  
or a leap or a giant’s burst.

Suddenly the Navatek slowed,  
the engines quietly idled;  
our expectations were extremely high  
but never a whale did we ever spy. The  
Captain concluded they were not “nigh.”

We stood behind the Captain,  
watched him handling the wheel  
then talking to another ship,  
listening to what they revealed.

“Some have been sighted further out  
in the direction from where you came.”  
So again he revved up the engines  
repositioned the bow,  
and continued the exciting game.

We cruised through miles of ocean  
seeking the giants who beguile.  
But nothing appeared on the horizon  
until he slowed and idled awhile.

The surface was calm, the ocean deep.  
When suddenly like a rocket  
launched from below,  
a humpback whale appeared in a leap  
straight up,  
with two-thirds of his massive body now on show.

As he turned and plopped down  
with a thundering splash,  
bubbles spread out and hid him from view.  
The crowd was stunned, thrilled to the core,  
applauded loudly for the sight so rare, so new.

Then a second whale thrust upward  
as if in a contest of skill  
and its multi-ton body descended  
like it was engaged in a playful thrill.

When a third whale rose parting the sea  
we could scarcely believe our eyes!  
For they repeated their breaches several times  
as they leapt toward the sun-filled sky.

They took turns as if prodded on cue  
and seemed to be having giant fun!  
In spite of their weight they expressed  
such grace and put on a performance  
the Captain rated a # 10.

It's hard to forget such a startling show.

How do they do it?  
Those creatures from below,  
massive in length,  
forty-some tons in weight.  
How can they rise to such a height?

It's one of life's mysteries, marvelous to see,  
and I'm grateful it all happened  
before you and before me!

# *Chamber Music Northwest*

Betsy Marsh Cameron, Holladay Park Plaza

A Pantoum



My tall friend Peter played the flute,  
slender and silver, it softly climbed the high notes.  
We came to the old hall before this hall was built  
and sat cross legged on foam floor pillows.

Slender and silver they climbed high notes,  
as the cellos smoothed the ground.  
Warm foam floor pillow held us there  
because we were young.

As the cellos smoothed the ground around us,  
they warmed our hearts like honey.  
Because we were young back then,  
our backs were straight, our knees could fold.

Tonight this music warms my heart,  
our thoughts slip out to wind and soar,  
my back is bent, my knees don't fold  
and all of us are graying.

My thoughts think back to my friend Peter,  
his death so early in our years,  
now all the rest of us are graying.  
His shirt read "put your Brahms around me".

His death so early in our years  
and always music held us.  
The years of laughter, later tears  
and always Brahms around us.

Tonight's sonata holds us rapt.  
The flautist checks the cellist's eyes,  
her quick nod, his smile, in partnered years.  
My tall friend Peter played the flute.

# *Communication 101*

R. C. Easton, Mennonite Village



In viewing “communication” as it is today, I would like to share an historical perspective on the subject.

Many years ago...., people.. (Herein after referred to as “man”) communicated with smoke signals, drums and couriers, running across all sorts of land with written and spoken messages.

As time went on, man felt it was too slow to communicate in this fashion so a man named Alexander Graham Bell invented a device called the “telephone”.

This device had many parts. One (called the receiver) which provided the listener with the sound of a voice and another (called the mouthpiece) which allowed one to speak into the device so it could be heard by a person on the other end of a wire. What a marvelous invention. People all over the nation and world were selling off their drums and smoke signal devices in favor of a “telephone”. The US Mail, Pony Express and Telegraph systems were soon classified as unnecessary. This change required man to install a telephone in his or her home. However, this created another element called the “operator” who attended a device called the “switchboard”. In order to place a call to someone you would go to your “phone” and turn a crank which sent an electrical signal across a wire to the operator, who replied with the familiar “Number Please”. Then you would say ..

“Hi, Mabel. Connect me with Myrtle”, or “ring 111 please.”

(That was the Dr.’s office). Mabel would pick up a wire like cable and plug it into a spot on the switchboard and with the movement of a switch (called a key), would ring Myrtle. As time went on, man felt it was too costly to keep Mabel and the Switchboard.

So the “Dial phone” was created.

This was a leap forward in ease of communications.

But, Man found it impossible to carry a telephone and a long wire with him as he traveled from place to place, so the phone booth was invented. All this had its costs, and the “pay

phone” was invented. Long distance calling was very expensive so man was careful about how much time he spent on the phone. Wow!

Man now gets real inventive and decides that he must have instant access to the world of communication from anywhere to anywhere at any time without interruption, thus bringing about the device called the “Cell Phone”, which later would be advanced to the “Smart Phone” which would talk to you, and answer any questions you might have about anything. What a wonderful invention. Man can be seen anywhere with this device in hand, pressing buttons that send words over the air (texting) to someone with a similar device. These changes have brought about the need for man to communicate with man at all times and places without interruption!

Now comes the prediction of future inventions.

Man will no longer wish to carry a device, so it will be implanted on man’s brain and activated by thoughts!!

I hope no one will be able to read my thoughts unless that person is on my “favorites list”.

PS:

I forgot about the infamous CB radio:

10-4 over and out!

## *The Current State of Affairs*

Trish Gardner, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



If things get hairy-scary and you're feeling a frown,  
Look up, not down.  
Send any dangerous thoughts and feelings out of town.  
Which has more power, fear or love?  
We can fly, or give in to black despair,  
Or dare to trust what's higher,  
Rather than lured by the liar  
With its lovely iridescent bubble.  
(Which guarantees trouble.)  
Might as well look up.  
(The reverse is worse.)  
Which has more power, love or fear?  
The one we feed most every hour.

# *The Dance of the Leaves*

Eunice Scott, The Village Retirement Center



Autumn is the time for the leaves to fall down  
They fall off the trees and onto the ground  
Then along comes the wind and blows them everywhere  
They swirl and they twirl way up in the air  
Dancing and spinning, putting on a show  
To the rhythm of the wind as on and on they go.

If you listen carefully you will hear them singing their song  
They're very happy, they're where they belong  
So proudly they swirl and twirl in the air  
Their beautiful colors are everywhere  
All the green, brown, orange, yellow and gold  
Make a wonderful scene, a picture to behold  
One worth the time to pay attention to what you see  
And for you to put it away in your memory.

When the wind lets go the leaves return to the ground  
Lying there waiting, not making a sound  
Waiting for the wind to come back to play  
And dance with the leaves throughout the day.  
I allow myself to join their company  
And to listen to the music that is all around me.

And then I run and get a rake from the shed  
Rake up the leaves and make a leaf bed  
Then I let my body fall on top of it all  
Oh! What a pleasure it is to be  
A part of this dance, this harmony

Just open your eyes and let yourself feel  
The music within you, this music is real  
This is a wonderful time of the year  
This is a gift, a gift very dear  
This Fall

# *Dancing with David*

Mary Bothwell, Willamette View



David came into my life the summer I had just finished my first year of college. World War II was in its second year and the United States was deeply involved in the Pacific. No eligible males remained on the campus, except a hard working V-12 Officer corps, men who were not interested in 18 – 19 year old girls.

David had returned to the city after graduating from an eastern university. He was not eligible for the military because he had been born with cerebral palsy, which gave him an ungainly gait and probably a lot of other physical problems.

I suppose David's mother wanted him to have as normal a life as possible. I have no idea what his college experience had been, but his mother was a friend of my mother, and she suggested that I might be interested in going out with him. Since male companionship was few and far between, I agreed. This began a strange interlude in my young life.

David was over 21, wealthy, well educated, but there was that strange stagger when he couldn't control his limbs. He could drive a car, and he seemed to be all right when he had a specific task to do; otherwise he would flail around at the most inappropriate times.

I had always had lots of opportunity to go out with boys my own age, mostly to school dances, as no one had any money. Now when the pickings were slim, however, I shamefacedly agreed to go out with David, excusing myself that I was helping out a lonely, handicapped young man.

Situations for glamorous evenings were nonexistent. Sometimes my sorority would gather up the girls for an evening at a USO club where we were forced to dance with the service men. Being short, I always was chosen by the shortest men and, it seemed, the dullest of the lot.

The first evening when David called for me, he brought a pink camellia corsage. I had only read about camellias in romantic literature, and I was stunned. We went to a rooftop

restaurant for dinner, on the top of the highest hotel, looking down on the lights of the city. I had never been there before, and couldn't believe how beautiful the city looked at night. An orchestra was playing softly, modern music but at a subdued tempo, not to interfere with the diners. Everyone seemed very old to me, business men on expense accounts or couples celebrating anniversaries.

The menu held items I had only read about, and rare in this landlocked desert town. Oysters Rockefeller! I decided to let David order for me and to follow his lead in almost everything. I don't remember what we ate that night, but I do remember how grownup and sophisticated I felt.

After dinner, the orchestra began to play a more upbeat danceable rhythm. David held out his hand to invite me to dance. Oh, Lord, I thought, here we are going to stumble out in front of everyone. He did stagger a bit getting to the floor, but then he gave in to the rhythm of the music, and was completely at ease, guiding me with his hand at the back of my waist. We danced the evening away and didn't need to carry on a conversation.

We had many such evenings. I was majoring in English Literature, but he encouraged me to learn about modern American literature and music. He never failed to bring me as a gift a book by a modern American author, such as Thomas Wolfe's, *You Can't Go Home Again*, or a hard to find jazz record. He was never forward, never demanding, but he did love to dance. I suppose when he felt in control, he felt more like a normal guy, and I began to actually enjoy dancing with him.

The summer went on, and in August my regular boyfriend came home on leave. We picked up where we left off, and I never went out with David again. At an outdoor concert one night I saw him across the lawn, and he smiled. Life for me went on. I married and left for graduate school in Chicago. My mother wrote that David had married a lawyer, a woman older than he, and that they had a son. A couple of years later I learned he had died suddenly of a stroke. I am glad I did go dancing with him.

## *Darwin Was Right!*

Linda Marschall, Willamette View



It had been a perfect summer evening. The concert with our ninety voice choir had performed Mozart's Requiem. We thought the audience would never stop clapping. It was a warm night and a full moon lit the forest as we returned home. At the top of our ski run driveway, we paused to look at the moonlit yard and saw a red fox dancing on his hind legs. It was a magical moment before he dashed away.

Living among cedars, pines and Douglas Fir in the bottom of a bowl allowed us to see many wild animals. The forest was dense enough to keep the animals hidden when they wished to be hidden. We were quiet and they soon accepted us. As we lived there we began to observe what we thought were different emotions. We knew that for a long time most humans had thought that animals were more machine like. However, Darwin had written about animals thinking, feeling and expressing emotions. For the last forty years, scientists have tried to scientifically study what they observed in more than an anecdotal way.

The bob cat would look at us as he passed the big window in the front of the house. For a moment, our eyes would be locked in recognition. He would then continue on his way, possibly to catch another chicken that our neighbor would let out each day so his chickens could eat grass and have more nutritious eggs. The neighbor complained about losing at least one chicken each week. We knew he had attracted not only the bob cat but coyotes and a hawk or two. We would watch them as they passed us and headed west to his property.

We had a resident Sharp Shinned Hawk. The tree she nested in was a tall pine and the ground below her next was littered with skin and bones of jack rabbits and grey squirrels. She often hunted song birds in our front yard. They would dive into the rosemary bushes as she flew close to them. We never saw her catch a bird there but we did see her catch a young squirrel. She carried it to a large limb on the pine in our front yard and for a half hour we watched her eat it as she tore it apart. She must have been hungry because she did not take it to her nest. What was more amazing and disturbing was seeing a young squirrel run up the tree and out on to the limb after she flew away. He or she must have been

watching. The young one stretched out on the limb where there was blood and appeared to be grieving.

We have a pet white dove that lived in a cage near the window of our sunroom. One day the hawk sailed across the meadow from the edge of the meadow straight at our dove. Blanco, our dove, had been raised by friends in a large aviary and had never been exposed to outdoor living. He saw the hawk and dropped to the bottom of his cage. At the last second, the hawk feathered away from the window and flew above the roof. Blanco stayed on the bottom of the cage for four hours. We kept checking on him and were amazed at how long he stayed there.

Our dove was always singing. He obviously listened to my piano practicing because he would sing along when I practiced classical music. However, he did not like dissonance because he would scold when I practiced more modern music. Over the years he has always critiqued my music practicing. When my friend who plays the flute with my accompaniment comes over, he gets excited and sings continuously.

One day my son put a You Tube video on our computer that showed the different kinds of doves from all around the world. Each had a slightly different song. After we got to about the twentieth song, he began to sing along. It was the Ring Neck Rock Dove from South Africa. It was his song and he recognized it.

There are many stories of different animals that have paired up in strange friendships. Our dove and our Maine Coon Cat were buddies. When we let Blanco out to fly, he often would end up on the floor and would walk over and peck on the cat's tail. The cat would turn and give him a look like "Oh, really?" That would be the end of the encounter for that day but another day would come and he would try the same trick.

In the ten foot wide canals around two sides of our property, we often saw trout and frogs and occasionally salamanders. Every spring, the Great Blue Heron would appear and spend a couple of days feasting. He was such an impressive bird! However, our flock of blue jays thought he was in their territory and decided to send him away. They swooped and scolded and when he did not move, swooped right into a few feet of him. Although he was a beautiful bird, his raucous voice was not! After a few blood curdling screeches, he turned and flew away not to return again that spring.

Stellar Jays showed up each spring and some built nests. We had a newlywed couple who chose a bend in the drain pipe from the roof and brought sticks to it to build. Of course, the sticks would fall to the ground. They took turns picking up the dropped sticks and brought other sticks all day and in the end had not produced a nest. The next day they tried a forked place in a tree and were able to build a nest. We were amused that they spent a whole day trying to use the water pipe. Later we watched them bury nuts in our yard. It was amazing they could dig them up months later when there was snow on the ground. Scientists have noted that they do remember where they have hidden nuts.

Another species of birds are not beautiful but certainly useful. They are our garbage men. If you haven't guessed, they are called Vultures or Turkey Vultures. Everyday they would sail over our woods looking for or sniffing out dead animals. Several times we had a deer in the canal that had been killed by a mountain lion or had been hit by a car and couldn't cross the water in its injured state. Vultures always found the deer and would clean the carcass. We had to walk by them on our walking trail and they were not pleased. They had gotten wet when they went to the carcass and after eating a bit, they flew up on the trees and held their wings out so the water could drip off. They made an ugly sound though they did not move toward us, so we scurried away. We counted more than thirty in the trees and we wished we had taken pictures but I believe we were a bit intimidated. Yes, we were scared!

If you haven't heard a screech owl, you are missing out. Although a small owl, they have a surprisingly big voice. We had one discovered by the jays in our yard and he let us know he didn't want to be awakened. He stood his ground for quite a time but finally flew away.

Although some of the animal kingdom are noisy, the scariest are the quiet ones like the Black Bears. I saw a small one and was pleased with it traveled away from me up the driveway. A few minutes later, I got a call from a neighbor that there was a humongous bear in his yard. I would grow to hate and fear the bears because one broke in to my goat pen and tore the door off the barn. My favorite kid, was never found and my other goats were so terrified that they shook for three weeks. We installed a gate alarm and when it went off early in the morning hours, I would turn on all the lights in the yard and run out on the deck screaming. It chased the bear away before he could get in the pen, but it also scared my husband out of a sound sleep. He isn't the light sleeper that I am. After a few months of the bear terrorizing my goats, we had to give the goats away. The bear had learned that small goats in a pen or barn were easy to kill and had become a nuisance bear.

Bears are known to travel in a 200 miles circuit. Later, one killed goat kids down the road and since the goat shed was attached to a house next to a bedroom where small children slept, the county sent a hunter out to trace it and kill it.

# *Death Poems of My Parents*

Mariette Wickes, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace



My parents left a priceless legacy as each of them came to terms with dying: their last words, Death Poems, are ever in my mind as I approach my own end.

Germaine, maman, was hospitalized on May 7, 1974, with a minor stroke and Francis, papa, was hospitalized two days later with a heart attack. They were both 84 years old. When I arrived the morning after his hospitalization, my father, Francis, told me that he had been awake all night, reviewing his life. “It has been good, I have no regrets; I am ready to die.” He repeated this message to each of us, his four children and to the nurses as well.

We spoke with him in French as we always had, the language of our home: for him, the language of love. He greeted each of us tenderly, in a loving tone I’d never heard before, grateful, even surprised that we had come: a melody like his mother’s.

He spoke of the happiness he’d had in life and especially in his love for Germaine. From their first meeting he said, “c’etait le coup de foudre,” the lightening bolt and it had never ceased to charge their hearts.

He had only one dying request. He knew we’d care for maman unasked. But he loved his garden too. He hadn’t been well enough to prune the pear tree in espalier that spring; would we do it for him?

For the few days that Germaine and Francis were both in the hospital, one of us brought her in a wheelchair as often as possible to be with him in intensive care. As soon as he saw her approach, he repeated his old refrain: Je t’aime, je t’aime. I love you, I love you. The nurses on duty watched with tears in their eyes.

At their last visit, Francis talked again about his approaching death, constantly in his thoughts. But Germaine was full of plans to keep him alive. She could not imagine life without him. So Francis turned his head away. Germaine protested. “You’re turning your

back to me.”

Responding, he faced her again, calming her gently, teasingly with a joke they'd shared when they'd first met in Belgium 60 years before.

“Young lovers have a date under a lamppost just before the gas streetlights are to be lit. Because the guy is late in showing up, the girl complains and scolds. He soothes her with these words, the last words of Francis to his beloved spoken in the accent and slang of her home town's working class people. Viens donc, donne moi encore une bise avant qu'on allume. Come, give me one more kiss before the lights go on.” An old joke, the Death Poem of my father.

Francis died on May 13, 1974. The sermon at his funeral was given by a nun, a parochial assistant, who'd known him as a child, growing up in our neighborhood. Her theme was repeated over and over, I can hear it still: Francis was a man of great love. Some of us wept.

After his funeral, Germaine was well enough to be discharged from the hospital. For several years, her grief was overwhelming. She didn't want to stay in the family home in Rochester where she'd lived for decades with Francis. The house was sold and the furniture distributed. In her diary, Germaine records: “I sobbed when I saw them take away our bed, where after the loving passion of the first years, we had known so much tenderness, so many loving caresses and endless kisses.”

Germaine outlived Francis by 17 years. She had a much longer time to prepare for death and a farther way to travel. His nature was one of inward reflection; hers of reaching out to others, to life with enthusiasm and gaiety.

Her focus gradually turned to her children and grandchildren. Though not yet resigned to leaving us, she was now thinking about her last end and she began to question the Catholic teaching of an eternal afterlife in heaven or hell. The fear of hell seemed resolved. She never mentioned it again.

While visiting my brother George in Eugene, Oregon she fell, broke her hip and was in a nursing home for several months.. I was once with her for a noon meal at a table with three other women patients. “The food is tasteless,” they all agreed. But her table companions were unprepared for Germaine's fiery outburst: “Let's start a revolution.” The nursing

home staff wasn't ready for her either and called her to task unskillfully. Masterful in expressing what she felt, she told me: "I was like Joan of Arc before the Inquisition."

How could I not rescue her from that Inquisition? Francine, my sister, who'd cared for her for seven years, now needed freedom to take up her own life and work. So, Germaine lived with me for the next seven years. "It takes a village" the saying goes and we created a little village of caregivers: my brother and sister-in-law, both sisters from out of town who came when they could, the priest, her doctor, masseuses, visiting grandchildren and other friends who relieved me part time to pursue my interests and work. All of us loved Germaine's renewed zest for life, her enjoyment of good food and drink, her humor, her old songs as she recovered from grieving.

Germaine's doctor also liked her spunk and supported her wishes. She didn't want life prolonging measures, no pace maker to speed up a very slow heart beat; she didn't need any prescription meds. She broke both hips during that time and needed constant care, but was lucky to be almost entirely pain free.

In her last three years, to give me more freedom, Germaine agreed to live in a family's small nursing home with its kind and wise caretaker. Now it was Pat with a big heart and sense of humor who became the primary caregiver and bore the brunt of her frustrations, as Francine and I had done before. To Germaine I now became the faithful daughter. She shared with me her courageous struggle. I visited her every day and understood her love as never before.

She spoke of death repeatedly. On two occasions she spoke words that seemed to come from mysterious depths of her being, "Here is the union of a creature with its god." And close to the end: "I want a big temple." I asked what she would do in that big temple. "Trembler et rassembler. » Tremble and reassemble.

About 5 years before Germaine's death, the Dalai Lama was giving a teaching at the Oregon coast. As I was leaving for this event maman, steeped as she was in Catholic tradition, surprised me by saying, "Bring me back a blessing from the Dalai Lama."

I had the unexpected privilege of a brief personal talk with the Dalai Lama and told him of my mother's request. For those moments, he focused his complete attention on me, holding one of my fingers gently and firmly. He gave me a small packet of seeds, wrapped in

paper inscribed with Tibetan script. “These have been prayed over hundreds of thousands of times,” he said. “Tell your mother to drink them in a cup of tea.” My mother followed his instructions. The Dalai Lama’s blessing sustained her as she moved towards death.

Germaine lived to celebrate her hundredth birthday on March 22, 1990. She delighted in the big party with her four children and most of her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her local friends and caretakers were there too, and a nephew who came from Paris. She insisted on playing the part of the gracious hostess till the guests left.

By her 101st birthday, Germaine no longer wanted to celebrate. In the last few weeks of her life, she turned inward, becoming almost completely silent; she was no longer interested in food.

A week before she died, she made one last request of me in her typical clear and direct way: “Laisse moi mourir, Manè.” Let me die, Mane. It was time for both of us to let go. Two days before her death, over and over throughout the day she spoke her last words, “ainsi-soit-il, ainsi-soit-il,” words of profound acceptance: so be it, so be it, amen. This was her Death Poem. She never spoke again.

Germaine was overjoyed, like a little child, when her dear friend, Father Joe, came to give her the last anointing. The following day, May 7th, 1991, I felt her to be fully present as I prayed the rosary aloud. When I said the last ainsi soit-il, the final amen, she turned away her head and breathed her last. She seemed to have chosen the moment of her death as she had chosen so much throughout her life, and so well.

## *December Romance*

Velma Stewart, Homewoods on the Willamette



My home shared a fence line with my minister, Chester, and his wife. We not only had a minister/member relationship but we were also good neighbors and friends.

When Chester lost his wife to cancer, I made sure he never ate Sunday dinner alone. Each time I noticed no one else had invited him, I asked him to share dinner with my two adopted children and me. I didn't want him to be alone.

At Christmas time, Chester traveled by train to California to visit his daughter. I found I really missed him even though he was gone for only a couple of weeks. During that time, he wrote to me twice. I read those letters over and over and was disappointed to find not even a hint of anything personal. I decided he just expected me to inform the rest of the church members that he was fine and enjoying the warmer weather.

The last letter said his daughter was driving him home. He told me the approximate time they would arrive in Richland. Even though Eastern Oregon was having a mild winter that year, I knew the parsonage would be cold because his oil stove had been off the entire time he was gone. So I walked next door to start a fire.

When he got home, Chester called to thank me for the warm house and to ask me to come over to say hello to his daughter. Chester and I exchanged a lingering welcome-home hug and I really enjoyed that hug! But I told myself to not get confused—he was just glad to be home.

Things were soon back to normal, and I decided the hug had meant nothing more than “glad to be home.” Even so, I felt an inkling of hope. I was fifty years old and had never been married. I had been all right with that until these feelings for Chester began.

Midweek Bible study met at my house, and Chester began staying after everyone else had left. I assumed he just didn't like going home to an empty house.

One late evening in early February, I received a phone call from Chester. He said he was very sick and wondered if I would call the local nurse to come to his house. He also wanted me to stay with him until the nurse arrived. Without thinking what I was saying, I said, “I'll be right over, Sweetheart.” Oh, my, what did I say? (I thought). Oh, I hope he didn't hear

that last word. What will he think of me? Maybe he won't think anything about it; maybe he's too sick to notice.

I immediately called Beth, the nurse, and rushed to Chester's bedside. I comforted him the best I could, gently massaging his forehead. As soon as Beth arrived, I scooted out of there, still embarrassed by my slip of tongue.

I lay awake a long time that night with many thoughts. How sick is he? (I wondered). Is he going to be all right? Have I embarrassed him by calling him Sweetheart? Will he avoid me now? Does he feel the same way about me that I do about him? He has been very friendly. He did write to me when he was in California. Am I just being silly? He is too old for me anyway. Does that really matter? And on and on.

Chester got well, and life went on much the same as it had before his illness. He continued to visit after midweek Bible study at my house, but they were just friendly visits. I thought again about the hug when he came back from his daughter's home after Christmas. The hug apparently hadn't meant anything special to him, and later he probably had been too sick to notice that I had called him Sweetheart.

However, one night after Bible study, he said he wanted me to come sit by him on the davenport. He had some questions for me.

He told me he was tired of being alone and was thinking of finding someone with whom to spend the rest of his life. Could I suggest some places to take a date? I swallowed hard. There's my cue. He has no interest in me. He's probably thinking of Beth. She's really been giving him a lot of attention lately.

I got control of myself and honored his request. I said his date might enjoy a trip down the canyon to Oxbow Café, which would be a nice drive with a good dinner included. I mentioned a drive around the valley to enjoy the new spring growth on the hillsides and on the trees. A dinner date in Baker City could be fun with lots of time for conversation on the drive. Perhaps they would see some antelope along the way where some had been spotted recently.

Chester began to laugh and grabbed my hands as he turned toward me. "Oh, Velma," he said. "It's you I want to spend time with. I'm seventy years old, and maybe that's too much difference in age. Lately I have been searching for someone, but my thoughts always returned to you. Is there a chance for me? Could you ever love an old man like me? I'm still young at heart and feel I have many good years ahead of me. I think I can safely promise you twenty-five years.

“Chester!” I exclaimed. “When you hugged me when you got home from California, I was so excited. I relaxed in those few extra moments of the extended hug and thought ‘maybe?...’ But then nothing more happened and I gave up on you.”

“Really?” Chester said. “When you hugged me, my thought was ‘Wow, this feels good! Could she really like me, or is she just showing me she’s glad I’m home safe?’ By the way, when I was sick, you called me Sweetheart; I was too sick to give it much thought at the time. But, believe me, I’ve thought of it many times since. Was it a slip of the tongue, or?...”

“Oh, Chester, I was so embarrassed about calling you Sweetheart. I was afraid I’d made a fool of myself.”

“Never,” he answered and kissed me. We sat together sharing more hugs and kisses and laughed about our mutual feelings for one another that we both had kept hidden.

After a few dates (to places I had suggested!), I accepted his proposal on March 13, 1982 and we were married that same year on June 20. We had both had a birthday since our first date, so were married at ages fifty-one and seventy-two.

A few years later, when Chester was having some heart palpitations, he started telling me about items he wanted certain ones to have when he was gone. I said, “Just hush up, Chester. You are not dying; you promised me twenty-five years.”

We both laughed and he said, “Yes, and I intend to keep that promise.” We had a wonderful, happy life together, missing the promised twenty-five years by only eight months.

## *Favorite Things*

Florence Blicht, Rose Schnitzer Manor



Breakfast fragrances, curling up the  
stairs: coffee, strong and hot, toast and  
bacon lightly browned.

Hugs from my husband!

Letters, phone calls from the children

Bursting with news, with laughter,

Full of love.

Books, my fables, old and full

of wisdom

The quiet of a Sunday afternoon,

Sun caressing purple iris.

Trains shushing through the night

Leavings small dots of whistle

On the darkness.

## *Four Pams and a Penny*

Pamela A. Still, Mary's Woods at Marylhurst



One airy alpine afternoon Penny Mattechek invited me to my first-ever golf lesson. It was the summer of my sixteenth year, the decade of the 1960s. The world generally had an overtone of the bizarre thanks to Tiny Tim, Timothy Leary, Flower Power, the Vietnam War, an unending music invasion by the Brits—and of course, adolescence. That particular summer I was hired for several weeks as a live-in babysitter by family friends who had a large, lovely vacation home up in Welches, OR, nestled near the base of Mt. Hood. As they were returning to Portland in July, I had managed to find further employment in Welches at Bowman's, a golf resort and lodge. Thus I could spend the remainder of my summer break in the cool alpine environs of Mt. Hood—and away from too much parental oversight as well as from four younger sisters and brothers. (I loved my family; yet with ten of us, a little away-time was a welcome novelty.) Excited by the extension of my newfound independence I moved into a cabin a short walk from work to room with four other young women already employed at the lodge. They were college students, most of whom would return to the University of Portland at the end of summer. Unbelievably, three of those four shared my first name. Of course so many of us in one place endlessly amused our fellow employees who immediately dubbed us the “Four Pams and a Penny.”

Hailing from the St. John's area in North Portland, Penny Mattechek was a favorite of everyone in our cabin. Maybe that was because she was good-humored and easygoing. Maybe that was because she was a slender, attractive girl with long black hair and a sweet-as-honey voice that sounded almost too high and too soft for the 5'11" Penny. Most likely her popularity at the cabin stemmed from our gratitude at not having a full house of Pams and Pamelas. With our workday over by mid-afternoon, Penny was going back to the lodge to play a few holes of golf and invited me to join her (as employees could use the course and equipment without charge). I was pleasantly excited with the amiable company and with the chance to be active and outdoors.

At the first tee I eagerly trotted over with my equipment and my mentor. A few tips from Penny, a few practice swings, and we were ready to golf. Penny was a fun teacher as she

grounded me in the sport, never wavering from her easygoing nature and high soft voice. She opted to tee off first. She gave a slight head-to-toe shrug before stepping up to the tee. Her feet were well-planted, neck and shoulders were firm but flexible, her eyes on the ball. She made a couple of measured approaches to the ball with her club and on the third one—wung her long arms and hit the ball. Penney’s form looked great, and to me her swing looked textbook. For one magic moment on that first hole amid forested sidelines and blue skies, golf club and golf ball met.

The singular odd sound in all of this was at first unrecognizable. But as I looked to see how far her shot had soared, I identified the sound, almost as in a slow-motion sequence. Because for a split second I thought a mosquito had buzzed my ear. In the next split second I thought Penny had tried stifling a sneeze simultaneously with her swing. But in the final fraction of that moment—reality struck. Her magnificent form and powerhouse swing did not loft her ball hundreds of yards down the fairway. It sat instead barely two feet from the tee, as if taunting her to hit it again. And the strange high-pitched sound that I could not identify right away? It was sweet Penny Mattechek who, at a pitch almost restricted to the auditory range of canines and a few other species, had squealed out, “she—eet!” For she knew at once exactly where her ball had landed.

So it was, while standing amid the treed splendor of that place and time, that I was abruptly lost in the hilarity of the tableau that we made, the tall, squealing girl and the golfing greenhorn. In that moment Penny garnered near-hero status with me simply because until that day I had never heard anyone so irked sound so hilarious in expressing their passing aggravation. Penny and I went on to play our nine holes that day; I even turned out to have a strange and certain knack for golf ... one that I always credited to being introduced to the game in such a quirky, relaxed and amusing manner.

For the rest of the summer I spent most of my free time on horseback in the nearby hills or with friends at a favorite swimming hole. Penny and I got together a couple more times on the links. It was a great summer. And while more of it would have been fun, with Fall looming nearer I was ready to return to school and to the third-year status now of upper classman at school.

As for golf, I did not play a great deal more over the years. But I evidently retained something of the Mattechek magic. And over the short run of what might kindly be called my golfing ‘career’ I was probably the luckiest person to swing a club. The first time that

my Father—an average and very serious golfer—invited me to play nine holes, I hit a hole-in-one off the first tee and shot par on seven of the other eight holes—a rarity for most golfers and nearly unheard of for any novice! Though at the time I was the only one of us two to appreciate either the humour or the irony of it.

Ultimately the game and I drifted apart and I supposed that I would not likely see again so enjoyable a game of golf as my very first one. Truth be told, I doubted any round of golf could measure up to that very first one—enjoyed by one Pam and a Penny.

# *Grandma's Gallon Jar*

Millie Gackle, Homewoods on the Willamette



A few years after the turn of the 21st century, I was busy in my kitchen canning grape juice. It was late October and some of our later, more flavorful grapes were ready for eating and preserving. I felt an urgency to get this done before the rains cracked the grapes, causing them to spoil, and before the migrating birds came through and stripped the vines.

I was using my mother's method of making a grape drink by placing grapes and sugar in the jar and then filling the jar with boiling water and sealing it. Mom never processed the jars in a hot water bath, and the juice rarely spoiled because she used only freshly picked grapes and sorted them carefully.

Before I finished, I was running out of two-quart jars; so I went out to the garage to look for more. Finding few empty two-quart jars, I looked at my grandmother's gallon jugs with screw-top mason lids. Those jars had been used for delivering milk in the early 1900s when Grandpa operated a small dairy farm in what is now the Woodstock area of Portland, Oregon.

Wondering if I should use one of those jars for my grape juice, I noticed a gallon jar on the bottom shelf that I had filled with apple juice several years earlier. Seeing that canning in Grandma's gallon jars had worked in the past, I decided to can my last jar of grape juice for the season in one of Grandma's gallon jars.

I washed the jar, heated it with hot water, set it in a shallow pan of hot water, added the grapes and sugar and started to fill it with boiling water. But when the jar was about half full, one whole side dropped out, spilling syrup on my glass stove-top and on the kitchen floor. Resting on the counter-top was a roughly rectangular piece of glass. A crack extended up into the neck of the jar, but the wire that held the bail in place kept the rest of the jar together.

Millie, I thought, you shouldn't have tried to can in Grandma's jar. You have broken a one-hundred-year-old antique jar.

I walked into the family room and sat down to ponder what I had done and to grieve the loss of an antique. An insignificant and inexpensive antique, but an antique nevertheless. Before long, I was thinking of the sticky mess in the kitchen. The longer I waited to clean it up, the longer the job would take. So I got up and began scrubbing.

Every time I looked at the jar, I imagined using the piece that had fallen out as a “door” and creating a little woodland scene inside the jar – maybe with a deer or two. I would have to cover the sharp edges somehow so no one would get cut.

Several days later I went to a craft store and bought “foliage” for each season, miniature animals – both domestic and wild, doll house furniture and assorted props to make a “woodland scene” in my broken jar.

I asked a clerk what I should use to cover the sharp edges, and she suggested sanding them. It worked beautifully.

I enjoyed making a “country retreat” complete with a bench and small table in the jar, and I proudly displayed it on top of the bookcase in our entryway. Reactions were varied. One of my husband’s friends, when he first saw the jar, looked at me pityingly as if to say, “Anybody else would have thrown that away, but you have decorated it!”

A pastor’s wife who was a craft person herself squealed approvingly, “Oh, somebody made that!”

But the most precious reaction of all was when my granddaughter, Kaiah, who was about seven at the time, said to me, “Grandma, the next time you change the jar, can I help you?” Of course she could!

I had different foliage and props for each season, and it was fun to change the scene every three or four months to make it correspond to our current environment and activities.

So the next time the scene in the jar needed to be changed from spring to summer, I set Kaiah up at the dining room table with the jar and the box marked “Decorations for Grandma’s jar.” She worked for about an hour and made a nice summer scene inside the jar. She included a couple of packages meant for the Christmas scene, “Because,” she said, “some people have birthdays in the summer.”

Probably the most amazing thing about that hour was the reaction of Kaiah’s little brother,

Mason, 5. Mason had two speeds – fast and fast with noise. While Kaiah was changing the scene, Mason sat quietly playing with the props from the box and watching what Kaiah was doing.

After Kaiah finished, I set the jar back on the bookcase and put away the leftover props. Then Mason came to me and asked, “Grandma, can I have a turn to do the jar next time?” Of course he could!

Over the years the scene grew. Eventually the display covered the entire bookcase top. In the back left hand corner sat a small tractor and trailer. They seemed small because they were in the back forty, you understand. On the left front corner a jackrabbit sat, looking askance at the encroachment of civilization, and on the right front corner a yearling deer stood poised and ready to run in case of danger. Sometimes an eagle sat on top of the jar, or sometimes an owl perched there.

For several years the children took turns creating the scene. They always remembered whose turn it was and never fought over it. The only thing I ever insisted on was that they use the right foliage for the season. Never mind if a cat was guarding the baby chicks! We never lost a chick in all those years.

My heart was filled with joy to share this project with them, to see their imaginations at work and to know that they were learning and creating memories at the same time.

Grandma’s jar remains Grandma’s jar. But the Grandmas are different; one lived in the early 20th century and used the jar to deliver fresh, raw milk to her customers. The other lives now in the early 21st century and uses the jar to picture a restful country retreat and to remind her of her grandchildren.

The jar is still useful and still has a purpose. Kaiah and Mason have a little brother, Jacob, who needs a few turns helping Grandma change her jar.

When my husband and I moved to a retirement home, the jar went with us. We were downsizing big time, but that broken jar held so many memories. I could not throw it away.

Now I am alone in our apartment. I am surrounded by many precious family pictures, but nothing warms my heart more than the country scene in Grandma’s jar. That jar holds memories of the project, lovingly shared by two widely separated generations, and it is visible evidence of the bonding experienced by two small children and their Grandma.

# *Grasshoppers*

Ruth Gallagher, Willamette View



The only homeless shelter in Corvallis that doesn't turn away drunks is an abandoned fraternity house, available for a few months. This December night is the nastiest of the year, rainy, blustery, and cold. Guests huddle outside waiting for it to open. At 7 p.m. they enter shivering, soaked through. One of them, at six and a half feet, looks about to topple over. I roll a chair for him to lean on, but he needs more than that. A male volunteer rushes to his side to hold him and lead him to his bed. Most men are heavily bearded, from their twenties to worn and grizzled, their age hard to guess.

Thirty cots squeeze into two big rooms. Once the men settle in, some of them bustle about the kitchen, pulling snacks from the small refrigerator to warm in the microwave. They don't show any sign of annoyance at the wait for their turn at the two-stall bathroom. In a windowless recreation room, a handful watch a game on a faltering old television. To the back is a former game room where a sleeping bag awaits any trouble-maker who needs to be isolated.

I had not looked forward to this volunteer duty, but it's surprisingly interesting. With these men, it takes little to be warmly appreciated. Maybe that's why some lonely women hang out in bars. One conversation leads to tears (he'd just called his mom in Alabama--or maybe not). Another man shows me his rain-soaked 4x6-inch photo album that we lay out to dry. A long-bearded gent in an effort to be nice tells me, "I bet you were a beauty when you were young." I wryly assure him I was a knockout.

A beardless young man speaks in a deep mellow voice. He claims, believably, that he used to be an announcer at an Albany radio station.

The shelter rule is that lights are out at ten, and the men must leave by 7 the next day, not to return until 7 that night. These men are weary. By nine p.m., the two big cot-crowded rooms are dark. We volunteers have another two hours at the front desk. I chat with Doug, the shelter's live-in resource person. Doug is himself homeless, but here he has his own room. You look at this man and wonder, why is he homeless? He's a pleasant man in his middle years, with a brushy mustache, soft-spoken and intelligent. What happened that

he's come to this? I don't probe, though tempted.

I ask him what life is like between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. for these people. Where do they stay in harsh weather? The library. A big laundromat usually tolerates them. A couch in the hall outside Starbuck's. Burger King for a hamburger and coffee. But that takes money. Earlier, a young man had told me that he once made \$90 on aluminum in one day.

I ask Doug, "Is that possible?"

"Yes, from dumpsters."

"How can that be?"

"Beer cans. College boys drink a lot of beer. That was an awfully good day, but, yah, it's possible."

Such a project involves considerable labor, minus a car, typically with a "borrowed" grocery cart for trips to the recycling bins.

As we speak, Doug is polishing two pairs of shoes. He's swiping his dabber around a can of Kiwi shoe wax. One pair is his, the other belongs to Jim, who will be applying for "some kind of a sales job."

It's not smart to let prospective employers know you are homeless. Doug once lived in a Texas town with no street addresses where everyone used a post office box. "Works anywhere, \$20 a year."

What would this place be without Doug? He knows most of these men, each with his own emotional and physical problems. He's resourceful. Earlier that evening, a man who'd arrived wearing shoes with flapping soles was trying on a donated work boot, stiffened with age. As he tugged, I loosened the leather laces. Still he couldn't pull it on. Doug appeared with a bottle of neat's-foot oil. He told the guest to cup his hands for a bit of oil to rub onto each shoe, adding "They'll be fine by tomorrow." But only an hour later, here's the guest strutting around in his new boots, chuckling like he'd won the lottery--"They fit just perfect!" A fist salute comes at us across the desk, along with a gap-toothed grin.

After nine, a few men aren't ready for sleep, chatting in the kitchen. One brings us some fudge, cut up and stacked on a crockery plate. His recipe-- dark chocolate chips, condensed milk, and nuts, microwaved. Another gentleman asks me to open a folded towel. When I reach its innards, I find my gift, a scatter of Tootsie Rolls and Baskin Robbins candies.

What's happening here? Along with the misery I'd so dreaded, I'm finding small pleasures and a few laughs. And there's Doug, seasoned instructor in survival skills. He sees these men with neither pity nor contempt. Though he could easily "pass" in polite society, he does not feel or act like he is any better than they are. He is one of them, a friend.

A young man had lugged in a small piano keyboard. Another plays jazz guitar softly before lights-out, unseen. He is very good. When he can't sleep, he sometimes goes into a back room and plays all night.

"A lot of the men here are musicians," says Doug.

He muses--surveying his own life?--

"In this world are the ants and the grasshoppers. Guess which these guys are."

## *Iris*

Anne Gemmell, Holladay Park Plaza



Iris, messenger of the Gods  
Personification of the rainbow,  
Purple one,  
Robed in the color of Kings and Queens.  
Mysterious and sensual,  
Clothed with an exuberance of color  
Your beauty is unsurpassed.  
Your garb ruffled by the wind, rinsed by the rain,  
What is it you hide in your voluptuous garment?  
Is it temptation, is it joy,  
Is it a reminder of things to come,  
Or is it just my imagination?  
I hear your whisper  
Life is short,  
Life is good,  
A gift from the Gods,  
Enjoy! Enjoy!

## *Just a Pound*

Jean Marie Purcell, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace



At thirty I was pretty and slim;  
a success at my job, for a girl  
Shamelessly on a hunt for Him;  
many a Him and I shared a whirl.

Didn't notice if I gained a pound.  
How can that generate much fear?  
With munching, on my gay social round,  
in time I gained a bit, there and here.

\*\*\*\*\*

At sixty—with my face gone pale—  
staring back at me from the floor,  
the dial on the scales I assail  
shows I now weigh thirty pounds more.

# *Keepsakes*

Pam Glenn, Holladay Park Plaza



When my maternal grandmother died she left me her mahogany sewing table. It sits by my bed, with a reading lamp on top and a stack of to-read books underneath. The drawers are full of scissors, thimbles and spools of thread even though I can no longer thread a needle or hem a skirt. (The essential tremor I inherited from Dad.)

Strengths I attribute to the women in my mother's family include good health, humor and optimism. While their men tended to favor jokes with punchlines, my mom, aunt and grandmother were engaged in preserving (and embroidering) the rambling narrative that is our family's history. Their additional descriptions of honorary aunts and uncles, shirttail relatives, and local characters also brought people I never met to vivid life. I listened in. I asked questions.

Over the years these women accumulated possessions they eventually left to me. I knew the tradition behind Mom's and Aunt Kate's engagement teacups; the story of the Ray Strong landscape hanging over the fireplace in the family home in Mill Valley, California; the provenance of Willa Cather's collected fiction in worn buckram bindings.

When Kate died, her sons gave me the Ray Strong painting, her blue Mexican plates, the Cather books, and several other reminders of their life in the old wooden house on the steep hill.

During my mid-teens, Mom's cousin Dorathea designed and built a pretty bungalow on a creekside lot in San Anselmo. When I met with her for lunches, she described in detail the way she'd planned the house, worked with contractors, selected materials, and financed the project so that it was completely paid for by the day she moved in.

Dorathea travelled to Europe and to Asia several times. After each trip, treasures arrived from the places she'd been—fabrics and furnishings, porcelain and paintings. She told me where she'd found them, and each carefully chosen item suited her nest perfectly: What

appeared to be a dove grey summer cottage looked, inside, like a small, beautiful urban apartment.

When Dorathea received a diagnosis of terminal cancer in the late 1980s, she put her affairs in final order. We talked about her plans. She asked me to be her executor, confident that I'd work with the lawyer and accountant and her will and trust documents to be sure things got properly distributed. She left her considerable portfolio to her three nephews, and a list of possessions to be given to favorite friends and family members. She left me her house. In January 1991, when I moved in, her furniture, dishes, clothes and potted plants occupied their accustomed places. The black and white Camaro was parked in the garage. Her wedding dress—originally worn by her grandmother—lay carefully wrapped and boxed on a closet shelf.

It was an enormous blessing, Dorathea's gift of what she called "my own roof over my head," and I treasure it still. But knowing the woman, her house and its contents as well as I did, I never quite hung up my curator's smock and relaxed into a full sense of ownership of the place.

In October 2001 the research institute team I'd worked on for a decade was dismantled. I searched for another job for three years unsuccessfully. At 60, without a source of income, I couldn't afford to keep my home. It was cold comfort, at that time, to remember Dorathea's instruction that I should live in it if I wanted to, or sell it if I wanted or needed to do so.

Preparation and sale of the house in January 2004 was my first major exercise in age-related downsizing. I gave quantities of clothing and furniture to the local hospice thrift shop; sent the dining room furniture to the auctioneers; consigned more furniture and dishes. I contributed books to the public library and gave the wedding dress to the Marin County Historical Society Museum, and the Japanese stone lantern from the garden to a friend to light his path. What was left went into a warehouse container.

After four years unmoored, traveling in British Columbia and Europe, I settled in Portland and sent for the things I'd left in storage. My new apartment is about half the size of my little house. In the process of moving in, I downsized yet again, offloading more books, clothes, dishes, linens, furniture and rugs. Like many people in circumstances like mine, I continue to pare, giving away clothes I no longer wear and books I know I won't read again.

My material bare minimum still includes Aunt Kate's blue Mexican plates; Ray Strong's painting of the golden hills at Nicasio; five Limoges teacups with their tiny chips and hairline fractures; assorted fiction by Willa Cather, and Baba's sewing table. Someday someone I never knew will decide, with the objectivity born of ignorance, what to do with them. For now, they connect me directly and specifically to the summer world of longterm memory.

# *The Mirror*

Sandra W. Felkenes, Willamette View



Everything must be just so -  
the picture frames,  
the laundry fold;  
and shelves must hide their dust from me  
so I can say  
that all is well.

I move throughout my perfect home,  
room to room  
I look about.  
Nothing must be out of place  
so I can say  
that all is well  
and just the way it ought to be.

In the hallway I can see  
the stylish mirror  
for my guests.  
Furtively I strike a pose  
and wonder if  
a wrinkle shows -  
cheap glass, poor light, the mirror's old!

Finally the middle room  
I'm at a loss  
to make just right.

I can never figure out  
why items seem  
just tossed about.  
The sadness that I feel is near;  
I must keep trying to tidy here.

# *The Brutal Irony of Downsizing: My Father's Bust*

Rufus Day, Holladay Park Plaza



There it is and it will not rust,  
For it's made of bronze: my father's bust.

In her love for him and without a whim  
My mother had the bust made.  
It took a while but with a smile  
She hired the noted sculptor Bill McVey

For my Dad, understand, was a man truly grand -  
Or so my Mom and I did believe.  
As a skillful attorney he took quite a journey,  
And in law and in statecraft much achieved.

To fit into HPP, eleven hundred square feet  
Was going to be tough, Oh brother!  
We had to downsize and to no one's surprise  
We had to keep one thing, not the other.

So there it was, my father's bust.  
Made of bronze so it would not rust.  
But now there were choices to be made.

The mass of the piece was way out of bounds.  
Half granite half bronze it weighed fifty pounds.  
To support it would take quite a table.  
So we decided to see if there might not be  
Someone who'd take it if they were able.

Our first attempt to preserve was to call Western Reserve,  
Where my Dad was an esteemed alumnus.  
But after much banter,"no" was their answer -  
They'd left us feeling quite chumless!

And then we got smart: the Museum of Art  
Was next on the list of donees.  
But that Cleveland museum replied, "We don't need him."  
Though we felt we'd got down on our knees!

Then wouldn't it be nice if that college called Rice,  
Where McVey had obtained his degree,  
Would accept his great opus, consider it a bonus,  
But Rice did not accede to our plea!

So what was left? We were bereft!  
But of an idea we had a germ!  
There might be, or so thought we,  
A chance with Dad's old law firm!

Squire, Sanders, and Dempsey! He'd given them plenty!  
But should we even ask?  
Or should we just send it? If they say no, our choices were ended.  
So we began our new task.

We talked with a noted attorney who was well on her journey,  
Who offered to soften the blow with SS and D's head honcho,  
And who agreed and suggested, and heartily recommended  
That we just send it. And so the problem was ended!

So send it we did, with relief we got rid  
Of the alloyed likeness of my Dad

We paid the postage, sent it on its voyage -  
We were both happy and sad.

So now we imagine my father's bust,  
Made of bronze so it will not rust,  
May be sitting on a table in the library  
Of that esteemed law firm of SS and D!

But sometimes at night I dream SS and D might  
Decide they ought to return it!  
Then what would we do? It's sad but it's true -  
It's bronze so we can't even burn it!

The brutal irony of downsizing  
Is at the same time loving and despising

## *My First Poem -- Ever*

Esther Elizabeth, Holladay Park Plaza



Thank you for writing poems about me, says Billy,  
a homeless friend I meet up with most Thursdays  
on the corner of 10th and Salmon.

Now I'd like to write a poem about you but I don't know how.

Poems are just a series of short lines, I say.  
You write a poem one line at a time. I'll help you.

I take out my pen and notebook, and he begins.

My First Poem – Ever  
That's the title, laughs Billy -- clearly enjoying himself.

I have a friend. I met her a long time ago.  
She is white. I am black.  
She is some kind of spiritual, I am Muslim.  
She writes poems about our times together.  
Now I'm writing about her.

Billy stops, sips his coffee, tosses his head upwards  
and stares at the broken street light.

Are you finished, I inquire.  
Keep writing, Billy says.

On those days we meet up,  
I take a break from selling Street Roots Newspaper.  
We sit, drink coffee, talk, eat the scones she brings.  
She's a really good friend.

Billy stops. His eyes begin to water. There is a long pause.

All my life I've wanted to be seen and heard.  
That's what happens when we're together.  
Now --- I'm writing a poem, my first poem – ever.

We sit for a long time in silence,  
taking in the magnitude of his comment.

I'm going to put this poem in my new book, I say.  
Aware that I don't even know his last name,  
I ask how I should sign it.

Just Billy. That's who I am. Just Billy.

# *Observations from My Deck*

Joyce Munson-Davis, Homewoods on the Willamette



## *Place of Worship*

Konji steps lead to  
Japanese lantern standing  
Stately and serene.

## *Wee Bird*

Flitting through my tree,  
He chirps twice, then darts backward.  
Hummingbirds can sing?

## *The Mating Game*

Two squirrels play tag.  
She runs ahead many times,  
Then lets him catch her.

## *Two Robins*

Pecking through the bark,  
They dash for cover when their  
Lookout screeches, "Cat!"

## *The Cat*

Stalking tiger-like,  
He comes into view; swaying  
Gut belies his threat.

## *July 4th Crows*

The peace is broken  
By their bleak, black, raucous cries.  
Fireworks can't compete.

*Wind*

Breezes, gusts. One cools  
While the other grounds leaves, twigs.  
Portent of Autumn?

*Hail*

Tomatoes and beans  
Smashed and broken - so painful;  
Ice bucket – unreal.

*The Rocks*

I knew it would come.  
Someone tripped walking downslope.  
Rocks jut out too far!

*Dog Days of August*

It may hit ninety-nine  
Today, they say. Makes me glad  
I watered at five.

*Harbinger*

Leaves yellow and fall,  
Autumn closer with each day.  
What next, Lord? Winter!

*Old Married Folks*

Holding hands, they walk  
Down the trail each day, laughing.  
Sixty years in love.

*No Pesto This Year*

Lee cleared the bush beans  
And tomatoes, unaware  
He'd pulled the basil.

***Big Bird***

Massive black being  
Swooped into my yard today,  
Blue-tinged wings: awesome.

***His Mate?***

Today, a blue bird,  
Smaller, and with black markings,  
Dainty and regal.

***The Siding Workmen OR***

Symphony for a Migraine  
Each pounding outside  
My bedroom window sends spasms  
Throughout my head.

***The Painters***

Telling ribald jokes,  
They don't sense my presence at  
First, then, red-faced, leave.

***Granddaughter's Future***

Violin, ballet,  
Jazz vocals. Which will Aya  
Choose ten years from now?

***Income Tax Prep***

Files lie everywhere,  
Tabletops and floor. My mind  
Cluttered as the room.

***Punishment***

Sunny breeze beckons,  
But I am a prisoner  
Of my own making.

***Diversion***

Relaxation comes  
In preparing comfort food  
For Sunday's potluck.

***Sleepless at Midnight***

All is still. Silence  
Broken only by crickets,  
Then a few fireworks.

***Two A.M.***

Light rain falls, cooling  
The air. An occasional  
Wind chime sounds in peace.

***Four A.M.***

The rain turns softer,  
And thirsty flowers raise their  
Heads to drink their fill.

***Winter Bloom***

As I tread carefully,  
O'er drifts of snow, a perfect  
Rose appears, blood red.

***Ferocious Wind***

Beautiful plants fly  
In all directions; pots, leaves  
And blossoms destroyed.

***Red Squirrels***

Don't they ever sleep?  
I watch them scamper morning  
And night. What energy!

***Short Night***

Exhausted, I fall  
Asleep at 1:00, then waken  
Again at 4:00. Noooo!

***Sharing Grief Across the Miles***

“Jiji is dying,”  
Aya cried on the phone, and  
We wept together.

# *Out of Print*

Jean Rouslin, Capital Manor



Alas my artistry lies in the cooking pot

My adjectives are culinary  
Figures of speech  
Are way out of reach  
Of an avant garde potpourri

Mythological reference  
Has no time for deference  
In a luscious Coeur a la crème  
But the numbers of takers  
From apple pie makers  
Would fill any publisher's dream

## *Perils of Being Called by Your Middle Name*

L. Arlene Peterson, Hope Village



Oh my! They are calling me Lola again.

My parents named me Lola Arlene Lay, but always called me Arlene. I asked my mother one time why they did that and she told me that it had a better ring to it than Arlene Lola. I guess it is what it is.

I ignored the Lola all through grade school and high school and never put it down on any thing. When I entered college and the form asked for my full name I decided to put Lola for my first name. That was a big mistake. I was in English class one day and the teacher called on a girl named Lola to answer a question and it took me by surprise. I finally realized it must be me so I answered the question, correctly I hope.

It was then that I decided never to put the name Lola on any thing again so I started filling out forms as L. Arlene which has some problems also. Some times people don't know what to call me and say Larlene. It gets complicated to say the least.

My driver's license and my passport have always had my full name on them. Prior to the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, I had always used Arlene and it was never a problem. After the bombing, I couldn't just put my airline tickets as just Arlene because your ticket, passport and drivers license all have to match. I certainly didn't want to get into trouble because they might accuse me of being a terrorist. So now I was back to Lola, at least in the air.

Another problem arose when I went to the hospital and I needed to register as Lola Arlene again because they now needed my full name as well. I had always been L. Arlene. I had received a notice in the mail in April that it was time for my yearly mammography.

Then in August, I got a phone call from the hospital telling me that I was over due for my mammogram. It didn't seem to me that it should be time for one. I should have looked back in my calendar. I keep the calendars that my daughter sends me because they have family pictures on them then I would have seen that I had one in April.

I went to the hospital and had the mammogram. They always look at the previous one to compare it to the new one and she realized I had one in April. She was perplexed, to

say the least. She couldn't understand why they had called me because they usually sent notices in the mail. She had to do a lot of checking and discovered that Lola had one in April or, was it L. Arlene that had one in April. And which girl had one in August was it Lola or L. Arlene. Regardless of which one of us had it when, both of them were negative. That is good since I have had breast cancer twice.

When I went to my oncologist for my next visit she asked if I had had my mammography and I told her of my having two in the same year and about the mix up with my name. She was very angry as I had too much unnecessary radiation. She said "you get the hospital to be sure that doesn't happen again and don't have another mammogram until September. When I go in September I will be sure to explain to them so they can get the records straight. I guess I will have to be Lola Arlene.

Now Lola is getting address labels in the mail from different organizations when they request money. Lola had never received address labels before two thousand thirteen so she wonders from what legal source they got her name.

Now I wonder does, Lola gets what Lola wants as the song goes, or not?

If you think that you have heard it all, the final straw came when I got a call from a telemarketer asking if "L" was there. I guess they never got the memo.

## *Piecing it Together*

Patsy Steimer, Willamette View



After eleven days in rehab, I was more than ready to go home. My husband planned to pick me up in the afternoon after the hospital bed had been delivered and set up in our dining room. I would test my newly acquired skills and climb the stairs from the garage to the main floor with a four pronged cane. My broken ankle had mended enough that I could bear half of my weight, so with the help of the boot cast and the walker, I could manage at home. The whole day lay ahead of me because the home health care company couldn't deliver the bed and the wheelchair until four o'clock.

I had spent as much time as I could over breakfast chatting with Evelyn who was ninety and felt a little sorry for herself that she celebrated her birthday in rehab with no friends and very little family. She excused herself and wheeled away to her room, leaving me alone in the dining room. The nursing assistants busied themselves wiping the tables and setting them for lunch. None of them seemed interested in talking with me. After drinking several cups of dreadful, weak coffee, I pushed my wheelchair down the hall wondering how I could make the time go faster.

I didn't want to sit in my room. No one had ever been able to find a remote for the TV that hung on the wall, and I couldn't face another chapter of *The Goldfinch*. After-breakfast time usually flew by because I would have physical and occupational therapy, but today, because it was my last day, Medicare wouldn't pay for any therapy. I guess they figured if you were going home, you must be cured.

I stopped, instead, at the round, gaming table in the hall with the mostly-completed jigsaw puzzle spread across it. I began putting the finishing touches on the picture of what looked like a country house somewhere in Europe with a lovely garden full of tulips, water lilies and blurry flowers. I worked on the mass of blue sky and the swampy looking part at the bottom of the picture.

As I mused, I eavesdropped on a physical therapy session taking place across the hall in a patient's room. I had no difficulty hearing the therapist because she shouted words of

encouragement to the patient, Marilyn, who was practicing the transfer from the bed to toilet using a walker. I had learned the same skill a week ago and had delighted in the newfound freedom of being able to go to the bathroom without an escort. Apparently Marilyn managed pretty well because the therapist heaped praise upon her for every move. At the end of the session, the therapist cried, “WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO NOW, MARILYN?” I couldn’t hear what Marilyn said because she wasn’t shouting the way the therapist was, but apparently she wanted to go out into the hallway and talk to someone. The therapist poked her head out the door, identified me as the only person in the hall, and said brightly, ”THERE’S A NICE WOMAN OVER THERE WORKING ON A JIGSAW PUZZLE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO TALK TO HER?” Again Marilyn replied softly and peered out the door next to the therapist squinting at me. I looked up at her and said loudly, “Hi, Marilyn, come on over and help me with the puzzle.”

The therapist pushed her over to the table in her wheelchair. I introduced myself to them both and the therapist said goodbye. Marilyn said, “How nice to see you again. How’ve you been doing?” I figured she didn’t really recognize me, but she had decided to fake it till she figured out who I was. Her voice was soft, and I had to lean toward her to hear what she said.

I asked Marilyn if she felt tired after her therapy, and she said yes. I asked her why she was in rehab, and she said she broke her hip. After this cursory, awkward start, she began to open up a little bit and tell me her story. She clearly wasn’t going to undertake any work on the puzzle. I wasn’t sure how well she could see, and her voice never rose above much of a whisper.

Marilyn had married young and raised four children, two girls and two boys. When they all made it to high school, she decided to go to college. She got her degree and then did graduate study in physical therapy. She worked as a PT for many years and talked about how much she had enjoyed helping people. She quickly added that her husband had not objected to her working. “He loved it,” she said, “he was so proud of me.” She went on to say that his name was Ivan. “Oh,” I joked, “did you call him Ivan the Terrible?”

She chuckled, “Yes, sometimes, but most of the time he is Ivan the wonderful. He takes such good care of me. I am so lucky to have him with me.” It crossed my mind for an instant that she might be drifting back to a time long ago when Ivan was alive, and

perhaps she was really talking about her deceased husband. I said nothing. She went on, “Every year Ivan makes a wonderful garden with all the vegetables we need for the next winter: tomatoes, potatoes, beans, peas, peppers, carrots...AND he always plants flowers all around the edge of the garden so I can cut them and arrange them. Sometimes I even take the arrangements to church.”

I nodded, “That’s so nice.” I was pretty sure we weren’t in the present anymore, but I waited for her to continue. I was imagining Ivan, standing proudly in his garden, his muscles gleaming in the sun as he surveyed his work. A lock of his wavy hair hung down on his forehead, and he reached up and combed it back with his fingers. His smile shone. A younger, blonder Marilyn approached him holding an armload of gladiolas she had just cut. He put his arm around her and kissed the top of her head.

“Ivan brings me little presents for no reason at all. He’s so romantic and thoughtful. I am so blessed,” Marilyn murmured, “and he always says that he really lucked out when he persuaded me to marry him. We were so young back then, I expect some people thought it wouldn’t last. We have never had a lot of money, but Ivan makes sure I have everything I need.”

We sat quietly for a minute or so, and I felt more than a little proud that I had given her a chance to remember him in all his husbandly perfection. I had four more puzzle pieces to fit in, and then I’d be done. A man with a walker inched slowly toward us. He wore a faded t-shirt with a stretched out neck; his body bent over the walker, and he looked at the floor as he moved. His maroon and white hat—one of those too-big baseball hats with a bill that won’t bend—said, “Retired” on it. I hadn’t seen him before, and I thought he looked a little sinister. He veered toward the table, and I felt protective of Marilyn because I didn’t want him to interrupt her reverie.

Marilyn looked up at him and a smile spread across her face. “Ivan!” she said, “How are you?”

He bent over gingerly and kissed her on top of her head. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a mangled rhododendron blossom and placed it on the table in front of her. She picked it up and lifted it to her nose. Sitting down next to her, he asked, “When do you want to have lunch?”

She said quietly, “I’ve only just had breakfast.”

I smiled as gracious a smile as I could muster at Ivan as I readjusted my interpretation of the situation and said, “Marilyn has been telling me so much about you.”

“Don’t try to talk to him,” she murmured quietly, “He’s deaf as a post.”

I stayed a few minutes more as he asked her questions, and she answered, knowing he couldn’t hear a word she said. I slipped in the last four puzzle pieces only to find that one was missing. I shrugged and wondered if Marilyn had snuck a piece and put it in her pocket so she could put in the last one. My mother used to do that.

I excused myself and wheeled back to my room wondering how I would spend the rest of the day. Maybe I would call my husband and tell him how much I loved him.

# *The Proposal*

Barbara Euler, Holladay Park Plaza



When I was a toddler in Portland, my father, a newspaperman from Kansas, befriended a boat captain named Hjalmar. Over the years, “the Captain” became a guest at our extended family’s gatherings on occasions when his coastwise lumber freighter was in St. Helens, Longview, or Camas. Only slightly younger than Dad, the Captain had gone to sea at age nineteen. A burly, hearty, ruddy seagoing Finn, he was quite a novelty for us all.

One of my early memories—I must have been five or six—was of an overnight trip to Astoria with Dad and the Captain on his ship. We rendezvoused with the pilot boat to exchange the river pilot for the bar pilot. The Captain hoisted me over his shoulder and climbed down the narrow rope ladder over the side to deliver me to Dad who had gone first. He and I rode the pilot boat back into Astoria and caught a bus back to Portland.

Fast forward to July 4, 1937, at a backyard family picnic in Irvington. I was twenty years old and recently home from college. At the party, I sat knitting socks for my best beau while weeping and sneezing with hay fever. We’d just gotten results from the allergist’s test and learned how sensitive I was to my folks’ new Siamese kitten. My old childhood pet, recently deceased, had never affected me.

The Captain commiserated and suggested I might find relief in “Science and Health,” the philosophy propounded by Mary Baker Eddy. If I were interested, he’d send me some literature. I was non-committal, being both uninterested in faith healing and engrossed in counting stitches and “turning the heel.” He let the matter drop and crossed the yard to visit with my uncles.

But on July 6, the mail brought me a small book by Eddy, leather-bound, and some pamphlets. The following day, the Captain phoned from St. Helens, saying he was renting a car, coming into Portland, and would I go for a drive. We didn’t have a car, so this would have been a treat. But as I already had plans, I politely declined.

That evening, when Dad came in the door after work, he called to my mother and me, “Come and sit down. I have something to tell you.” He looked stricken as he continued.

“Captain Hjalmar came to my office today, saying he wanted a few minutes. He said he sought my permission to court my daughter Barbara in marriage. He had asked his wife in San Francisco for a divorce, and she’d agreed. You can imagine I was bowled over and knocked for a loop! I managed to tell him to go and never to contact any of us again.”

Mom and I were speechless and horrified. To our minds, it was a bizarre proposition from a family friend who was married and old enough to be my father.

I assume that Dad later told the story to the entire family. No one ever spoke of it to me, but I wondered if anyone thought that I’d encouraged the Captain in some way. We never heard from him again, but I still have a wicker sewing basket, child sized, that the Captain had brought me from San Francisco’s Chinatown once when he came for dinner.

# *The Recorder*

Molly Gillcrist, Willamette View



Marcia plops down on her desk chair at the retirement center, weary and emotionally flooded after a morning at the house removing scores of photographs from the long wall of her study. She's spent the day sorting years of snapshots, of reliving the past. Not much remains at the house now. Not much yard work to finish before the FOR SALE sign is hammered into the ground where most people dear to her already are.

She feels anger at Harry again. Why did he have to die so soon after moving into this place his doctors recommended? Why couldn't he have hung on longer so they could adjust together or die before they sold the house?

She realizes she probably couldn't have lived alone there -- four bedrooms all upstairs where black spiders insisted on building their webs along the stair rail, a large yard requiring much care because of shading by Douglas firs, her daughter, Julia, nearly a thousand miles away. But maybe she could have given some college student a room rent free in exchange for help indoors and out. She was stupid not to have thought about that until now.

For nearly two months she's been stuck in an expensive ghetto of gray heads five to ten years older than she who take part in a programmed mirage, in a multitude of activities designed to make them forget where they are, forget time's passing.

And she's stuck in the assisted care unit where some inmates nearly fall if an aide isn't present to help them transfer from their walkers to a dining room chair.

She feels her neck tingle again at the sound of keening from the other side of the wall behind her back. She's never seen the woman who does it. In fact, she's seen only a few of the people living behind the closed doors of the silent halls.

Her observation of residents takes place during dinner at tables for four. From a distance the gray heads at those tables look like puffballs. She knows from reading a brochure, however, that everyone earned at least a B. A., many a Ph. D, and they still must retain a

fair bit. But as she nods and smiles toward these strangers, she finds it difficult to listen to the experiences they describe, although she does remember to ask questions to keep the conversation moving.

As usual, the keening today is to the melody of “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean,” and at the ending “bring back my Bonnie to me,” the me tone is drawn out for at least three measures.

Marcia finds herself joining in but silently. She doesn’t yet want to bring herself to the attention of that woman or anyone else until she can get somewhere beyond mourning Harry and her anger at him.

She sighs, shakes her head, causing her horn rims to slip off her ears, but catches them before they reach the floor. As she does, she remembers an imposing older woman she met in the dining room several days ago -- quite tall and broad shouldered with short white-streaked curls and a reserved expression unlike most residents she meets on the way to dinner who smile widely and call out “Hello!” This woman mentioned repatriating Poles trapped in Germany at the end of World War II. Marcia wishes she could remember her name, and wants to know if she carried a gun during the repatriation.

But the nameless woman is no longer to be seen -- not in the reception lounge or the halls or the dining room. After a few days, Marcia asks the receptionist about her, learns her name is Kristen and that she’s now in the nursing care unit to better monitor her blood pressure.

Marcia finds her way over to that unit and sees Kristen lying in bed with a pale blue blanket pulled up to her throat.

The late morning sun is shining intensely on her face.

“How are you?” Marcia asks.

“Hot on my face. Cold on the rest of me.”

“Would you like that shade pulled to block the sun?”

“Lord, yes -- and please shut the window.” She smiles as Marcia does that and then asks, “How many fell today?”

Marcia laughs, "Saw just one so far."

"No doubt you'll see more. Too many of us have outlived our usefulness -- including me. Do you ever wish you could just snap your finger, say, 'I'm done' and it would all be over?"

"Once, maybe."

"It's constant with me."

"You certainly gave a lot of people the chance to remake their lives. How did you get into the repatriation mission?"

"I was a WAC lieutenant and ordered to do it."

"Did you have anyone to help you?"

"Five reluctant G Is. Some times wonder how we managed. Got them inside the border all right, but there was almost nothing there to build on. Had to go farther."

"Did you carry a gun?"

"Of course -- Colt 45 -- one of Patton's aides handed it to me. Had to use it twice. Shot in the air both times when some men tried to steal our food. Didn't have enough as it was -- and most of it was only K-rations the army gave us. -- Wait! -- Come to think of it, also shot three rabbits and cooked them over a fire."

"Where'd you start?"

"From a labor camp about twenty miles from the Polish border on the day after the war ended in May. Almost three hundred people. Walked less than a mile the first day -- and that was excruciating for most of them. So emaciated. Had to stop often. Lost nearly fifty in the first five or six miles."

"Did they just fall down and die?"

"Or died before they fell. And we had only an axe and two pails. Didn't have a shovel to bury them. Had to dig with our hands in the dirt beside the road to at least cover them."

"Were there any children in the group?"

“Oh, sure. They held up better than the adults. Kept chanting to them, ‘That’s one less step. One less step.’”

“Did you have enough water?”

“That wasn’t a problem. Followed the Elbe at first and then the Oder -- the land was flatter along it. Stopped only for a day’s rest now and then until we were at least thirty miles into Poland -- Poznan, I think -- to where people had enough food to share some with us. Still grateful to them.”

“What did you do then?”

“Got in a jeep with a sergeant and a couple lieutenants and rode back to Germany. Then was sent to Fort Ord in New Jersey. Not much to do there except drill and inspect.”

“Kristen, would it be okay if I write down your story?”

“I’d be glad.”

“What if I come two afternoons a week -- say Wednesdays and Fridays? I’ll bring what I type, and you can look it over.”

That’s what they did for the next seven weeks, Kristen reading and correcting what Marcia had typed and then adding details she’d remembered since Marcia’s last visit.

After those seven weeks, Marcia arrived on a Friday afternoon to see that Kristen’s bed was empty. She had died that morning shortly after dawn.

Marcia searched for relatives she had mentioned and sent bound copies of her story to them. She then approached a man in the care unit and asked if he’d like to tell his story. He said he would. She discovered one after another who wanted to share their stories as well and relayed them to family members.

On Saturday afternoons now, Marcia sometimes sits in her apartment imagining Kristen across from her and asking questions about her own story. She then makes a list of what she has said. She plans to expand that list into a narrative she will give to Julia. She wants her to know where she’s been.

## *Role Changes*

Pearl Steinberg, Willamette View



Getting from Alpha to Omega happens with time.

I used to be the goto family member  
in times of crisis.

People would bring me problems:  
Emotional, physical, or financial woes.  
I was expected to find solutions.  
And I often did.

When did the younger generation take over  
that role?

Now I am in my Omega persona:  
the historian.

Often I am called upon to  
tell family stories of bygone days.  
My grandchildren and great grandchildren  
are amazed that we existed without  
TV's, iPhones, Ipads, texts, and tweets.

I sometimes miss the personal involvement  
of my Alpha days.

The hustle and bustle of everyday life.  
From Alphawoman to Omega elder.  
Oh, where did those years go?

But wait! There is much to be said for the  
peace and quiet of contemplative days.  
Days when I do not answer anyone but me!

And so it goes.

# *Round and Round*

Gilbert Helvie, Mennonite Village



Round and around, never leaving town  
Like ants on the rim of a glass  
Going nowhere, nor seeming to care  
No need to ever pass

Refusing to be, intellectually set free  
“Just tell us what to do”  
“To renew our minds, takes far too much time”  
“Do our thinking for us in lieu”

Follow the leaders; diminish the readers  
Of books that would make us think.  
No need to care, we’re going nowhere  
“We like this skating rink”

“We all think alike: Go take a hike!”  
“We enjoy the way we are”  
“We’re one in the spirit, sin, we don’t fear it”  
“Come join us on the rim of this jar”

But one by one; it’s no longer fun  
They drop from off the rim  
Void of direction. Prone to defection  
Due to a wrong understanding of Him.

There’s no substitute for being astute  
When it comes to our mortal souls

We have no excuse, nor can we reduce  
Responsibility that each one holds.

We go to extremes, fall prey to men's schemes  
As they twist what the scripture intends  
We need godly leaders, more Johns, Pauls & Peters  
And less blindly following trends.

Be wary of trends, justified by their ends  
And being forced into the latest mold  
A sense of discernment, applied and determinate  
will guide us within the fold.

## *Sarah Updates*

Lila Muno, Klamath View Retirement



Sarah, two years a widow, and only sixty-four, was trying to decide whether or not to remain in her home with a live-in caregiver. She did have other choices. She could move into a senior housing apartment, or invite her eldest son and his family to share her home. They had asked her to consider moving in with them, so that was also an option. She might decide to take in a boarder, too. She must decide soon.

A smile quirked her lips as she considered what her children would think if she told them she might possibly decide to find a handsome widower or bachelor to marry. She had not yet told them about Sydney, the very nice man who had spoken for her hand. He planned to move to be near his youngest son and family. He would not make that move if she didn't want to go there.

There was Syd's daughter, Brenda, who would be entering college. She would either live at home or live in campus housing. Brenda had only two weeks to make up her mind. By living at home, she could save enough money to get a car. But if Sarah was not comfortable with Brenda being there, she had a friend on campus who would share a room. And Brenda offered another option, too.

The older wing of the house that had been store rooms for six years could be cleared out and cleaned up, and made into a two-bedroom apartment. Brenda's campus friend would pay what half the campus housing rent would be. Then if the older folks wanted to take a trip somewhere, the girls would look after the place while they were gone. Brenda had grinned when she named a small stipend they should receive for their efforts.

Life looked good. Not everyone had so many great choices. But one thing Sarah had to consider was Social Security, and how a marriage would affect that. When Ralph had died, Sarah had applied for Social Security widow's benefits. She had also applied for a Senior Housing apartment, but was told it might take as long as two years before one came available. Well, two years had passed, so maybe there would be a vacancy soon. There

was also the military paperwork to tend to and the insurance policies needed to be closely read to be sure everything was secured. Sometimes errors were made and people had to pay back, but other times, a benefit was overlooked.

Sarah had avoided as much legal paperwork as possible at the time of Ralph's accidental death, but after a few months she had started reading everything. Checking details and verifying her findings with what had, or had not, been done, she had found a few discrepancies, and she was determined to get them set right.

A sigh slipped out as Sarah realized that all three of her children had moved away from the area, and one son and family was currently stationed overseas for two years. Sarah's home place had a fence that needed repair after vandalism. But her flowers were a joy to her. She had planted them forty years ago, as a new bride. Ralph's father had paid the down payment on the small acreage place as a wedding gift. The house was fairly new at that time, but the yard had been months without professional care. Now, it was like a park with trees and shrubs and a winding path with grass and flowers in abundance. It had become too big a job for her, and it was time to give it up for something more practical. Whatever that meant.

If she rented her home, or had a boarder, she would have to be very careful she chose the right kind of people. Some of her friends had already had some ugly experiences. She would learn from that. She would need a long term agreement, but with an emergency clause, in case something unexpected happened. And life seemed to hold a lot of unexpected things, these days.

Changes. People seemed to tend toward either an increased work load or else be out all hours or try to take charge. Sarah's mind skipped around a variety of memories and items to consider. Her former husband was buried here, her own plot waiting. Friends, bank, doctors, familiar things were all here. A part of her was loath to leave. With Sydney in the wings, so to speak, Sarah was not at all sure about anything. She wanted to think things through thoroughly. Syd said she could come back for a visit any time.

But Sarah had reminded him that his promotion, work changes, his retirement career might send him off again. She did not intend to make a major move just to be alone again. He expected to really retire to live in his parent's home, a fourth generation dwelling. Maybe it would be better just to stay where she was. Send him off to get settled, while she sorted

things out. He stressed that each of their combined family of grown children should come at their own convenience and collect any items Syd and Sarah would not need. Or they could come and help sort and pack, he had joked. A new world could open up for her.

Sarah knew the time had come when she must give up her home and independence, either move in with children or into a Senior apartment complex or into a Retirement Center.

As an active member of The Volunteer RSVP Group, Sarah could keep busy. Without the responsibility of maintaining her home place, she would have more hours to be involved in other interesting activities. Syd was important, but he wanted her to be sure of her choice. It would so nice to have someone to share her life, someone with a different perspective about life's events.

Randy, Sarah's son was currently pressing her to make some major changes as he did not like for her to be alone. Because he was most likely to be the one who would want to eventually live in the family home, he thought she should arrange for a local Property Management company to find a long term lease with the option clause of a six month length of notice, and let the company maintain the property for her.

Before Sarah had sorted these issues out, she received a telegram from Syd saying he would be settled for the remaining five years of his contract. The job was located close enough to his parents' home place that he could commute. Brenda and her college friend were already busy getting their separate apartments set up in the wing of the main house. If Sarah got tired of him, or unhappy with their marriage, there was a Senior Retirement Center not far away which had an excellent reputation. How soon could she be ready to join him?

A second message followed a few minutes later. There was a Garden Club, a Senior Activity Center, A Friend of the Library Club that was recruiting volunteers, a church of her faith and preference, and an amateur theater seeking a script editor-writer, and a variety of other things that might interest her. She laughed through her tears.

A month later Sarah set new African violets on the stand Syd had made especially for her. And again tears slipped down over her smile as she breathed a thank you to God for his care of her. She very well knew that not every lady had such a wonderful solution to changes life forced one to face. The turmoil of uncertainty had calmed the moment her choice was made.

One day at a time was all anyone ever had, and she hoped and prayed for each day, that she lived it to its fullest, gave as much as she could give of what she had to offer, and receive the love and kindness from Syd and others as they came into her life.

Sarah had no illusions of a life without sadness or troubles. She just knew that the One who had brought her this far would not fail her now, and not ever. In the difficult times she would do as she had always done, lean on the strength God gave and the faith she had learned to trust.

# *Take What You Have and Make What You Want*

Justine Heavilon, Kingsley Court Retirement Center



Grandpa Len was big for his age, and left his father's Nebraska farm at age twelve to join a sheep shearing crew traveling across the prairie states in an open horse-drawn wagon. It was 1890, the Sioux had just been settled on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and the Dakota Territories were declared the states of North and South Dakota. The federal government was issuing land grants to encourage settlers to develop the new states. The open dry prairie lands, not fertile enough for good farming, lent itself to grazing sheep. He knew there was opportunity for a young man who was willing to work hard and follow his dream of owning his own ranch one day.

He worked the shearing circuit when the snows cleared each year, and hired on as a ranch hand during the winter months. In time, he became foreman of the crew, and later ranch foreman of the Tubbs' sheep ranch in South Dakota. Ten more years as ranch foreman and he had earned enough money to buy 80 acres from his employer. "His land" (he loved the sound of that phrase) was nestled in the open plain that rolls West from the Black Hills.

With land he could call his own, he began to create his domain. It took all the problem solving and building skills he had learned to carve his ranch out of the barren land. First, he chose the site for his home and barns—far enough from the creek to not be flooded during snow melt, but, close enough to provide water for the well he dug next to the house. He built the first crude house and barn nestled up against a hill, to provide some shelter from the harsh prairie winds. Electricity was introduced to the countryside, and he constructed a windmill on top of the barn, just where the wind would catch it as it swept off the hill. A lone wire was strung from the windmill down to a gaggle of batteries settled in near the kitchen window. This provided enough electricity for several light bulbs and the radio.

There was a hand pump for water at the kitchen sink, and a wood stove for cooking. Another wood stove sat in the living room, where stairs led to a trap door—opened with a rope—that let heat and the children into the upper dormitory to sleep. He proudly installed an ice-box in the kitchen. Each winter he would take his ice saw to the frozen creek and cut

chunks of ice, then haul them by wagon to the shady side of the hill. Deep in a carved out cave he stored them, sprinkled with saw dust so they wouldn't stick together. He provided ice for Grandma's ice-box, all during those scorching hot summers.

In 1912, at age 35, he moved his wife, Emma, and two small children into their new home. Emma was ill suited for the harsh life, and bitter winters. She held on three years, gave birth to a third child, and died before Christmas of 1915.

That motherless third child, was my Mother. She first brought me to the ranch in 1944. World War II was raging in Europe, and all the able-bodied men, including my father and Mother's brother John, were away.

The adults were always busy: Grandma Alice, inside cooking, cleaning, washing on a scrub board, or tending her garden. Grandpa outside with the hired-hand Bart, mending fences and barns, herding the sheep from one pasture to another, sharpening tools and equipment, milking cows, feeding chickens and horses. At age five, I was left to explore the world that my Grandfather had created with his imagination, sheer will and determination out of the bare prairie.

By the time I arrived at the ranch, Grandpa had built a beautiful stone wall around the yard so Grandma Alice, his second wife, could have her beloved pansies and marigolds along the side of the house, and stone walk that lead to the outhouse past the garden. He built seats into the wall, and Grandma and I sat in the shade, on the cool seat eating brownies and telling stories. We had an ongoing story where she was Mrs. Squirrel and I was Mrs. Rabbit—with a very curious child named Peter. (Peter, of course, was me, but, somewhat naughty, so better to tell the story as if Peter had done it, and I was the long suffering mother.) She would enquire as to what Peter had been up to today, and I would tell of "his" exploring the barns, and up on the hill where the discarded farm equipment rested, or even across the bridge that spanned the creek to the big oak tree. We'd shell fresh peas from the garden, and continue the story as we went inside so she could get the peas started on the wood stove.

It was ideal for a little girl with a big imagination. I had an imaginary friend Beth Ann, and we chatted and explored as we sat on one and then another of the discarded tractors and cars on top of the hill, with a commanding view of the whole ranch and lands around. One day, while exploring, Beth Ann and I climbed up the ladder to the second floor of the sheep

barn. There were big round holes in the floor where the wool sacks were dropped through during shearing. I warned Beth Ann to be careful not to fall through the holes as I led her to the far corner. Sun streaked through the gaps in the barn walls, illuminating the thick dust dancing on the beams of light. There, in the back corner I found my most wonderful discovery: a black leather case with a snap holding the flap closed. It was heavy and I had to carefully drop it to the floor, with a huge puff of dust, and pull out the contents.

The plaque on the cover read: Yaggy's Anatomical study, 1915. It had been the prized teaching tool the year mother was born, and the school teacher for the 1-room school was boarded at Grandpa's house. At the end of that school year it was stored for safe keeping in the upstairs corner of the barn. With Grandma Emma dying that year, and the children being sent away to be cared for by relatives in Colorado, it was never located again until my grand discovery 30 years later.

I carefully opened the cover to reveal the magnificent color diagrams of the human body, each part, opening to more and finer detail. There were also pictures as well of the causes of typhoid, malaria, and lungs and livers corroded by "intemperance" and smoking. Now, not only did I have Beth Ann, but I had a whole imaginary "class" to teach with my magical teaching chart. This was going to be a grand summer! Each morning after sour-dough pancakes cooked on the wood stove, I'd scurry to the sheep barn, pull myself up the ladder and begin, "Now Class...."

And so I learned to imagine the life I wanted while exploring open prairies and dusty barns. As Grandpa had imagined "his ranch" while traveling the prairie with a shearing crew in the back of a horse drawn wagon. I learned from Grandpa that if you can imagine it, and you persist, you will find a way to your dreams.

As the only child of a single mother who worked as a domestic in others' homes, I imagined a home of my own, a large family of children, and lots of love and laughter. So, I created a family of five children. We lived in six family homes, I lovingly remodeled and gardened, over the years. And, while raising my children I also worked to earn a Ph.D. in Psychology, and then practiced as a Psychologist for 25 years.

Today, at 75, I have children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. And, a warm family who gathers often to celebrate the lives we are imagining and creating. Now, I live in a small apartment—plenty of room for me and my projects. Yes, the projects. I am a

quilter—taking what I have and making what I want. I patch together beautiful colors in patterns that please me. Like Grandpa, with his pioneer spirit and persistence, I have come full-circle. Still imagining what is not yet. Still excited about what I might discover and create. Still happy to share my creations with friends and family. To me, all of life and creativity is about problem solving. You imagine it: you problem solve to make it happen: you shape it into a beautiful creation: you love it; you share it; and the world is better for it. We all imagined how we could create a better world. That's the pioneer spirit in all of us.

# *A Tale of Two Lanes*

By Joan Graves, Capital Manor, Salem



## **1990**

It is about 7:30 in the morning and she is rushing. Grabbing a bagel and a glass of juice, and quickly brushing her teeth, she kisses her husband goodbye and is off to work. Her drive is about thirty miles in thirty minutes – 65 miles an hour on the freeway, west, to Monrovia where she works at World Vision. She likes to be at her desk and checking her calendar before the day officially begins.

He, as she is leaving the house, is also preparing to head out. He throws a couple of lean shirts and underwear in his case, along with his toilet kit, and he is off – his drive is about the same, approximately thirty miles in thirty minutes – 65 miles an hour on the freeway. He is heading in the opposite direction, east, to the Ontario Airport where he catches a plane to Salt Lake City, arriving there in time for lunch with a customer. While there he visits two or three others, and perhaps over a three day period, sells a railcar of isocyanates valued at about \$200,000. Two or three days later, he flies home. He has arranged to meet her at one of their favorite restaurants where they have a glass of wine, dinner, and head home together – well, not really together, but in separate cars as she has met him following her day at the office.

It is life in the fast lane.

## **2014**

Another quiet day at Capital Manor. After breakfast, he takes the elevator to the basement where he enjoys the ceramic studio and spends most of the morning working on a project. He smiles as he thinks there is little profit to be made from his labor.

She also takes the elevator to the basement and spends forty-five minutes in an exercise class. In the afternoon she finishes a book she has been reading and contemplates the idea of writing a review to encourage others to read the book.

The couple has been invited to a friend's home for wine and then to have dinner. So it is about 4:30 in the afternoon when they walk down the hall together, approximately 100 yards, and knock on the door of their friend's apartment. They enjoy the visit and the wine and cheese, and forty-five minutes later they all take the elevator from the 10th floor down to the dining room for the evening meal.

It is about seven o'clock when they leave the dining room and walk down to the basement to look at the ceramic pieces he has been working on. They return home together by way of the same elevator and settle down for a quiet evening.

It is life in the slow lane.

# *Trial By Fire*

Donna Krasnow, Willamette View



It didn't start well. In 1972 I was a brand new teacher, working part-time at a high school, hoping for a full-time position. And then the unexpected happened. In mid-February, a teacher in another school announced she was leaving. Her last day would be Feb 28, just two weeks away. I was called into the office and offered her position. In my excitement I never thought to question why she was leaving so suddenly; I just jumped at the chance of full-time work. Yes, I wanted a high school position but 8th graders are almost in high school. How hard could a middle school position be?

I was given the day off on Feb 28 to meet the departing teacher and to observe one of her classes. I was filled with excitement as the school's vice principal led me to the classroom. What would it look like? How flexible was the floor plan? What materials were already in the room? We went outside, crossed the schoolyard and walked toward a lone portable classroom, quite a bit away from all the other rooms. "That's it," she said. "Okay," I thought, "Not what I expected but it IS still mine." When I walked in I saw it was old, had mismatched desks and cupboards overflowing with old textbooks and falling piles of papers. The middle-aged teacher looked frazzled. She introduced herself and waved me to a seat in the back. Soon after, the bell rang and a class of 8th graders filed in. She told the class that I would be her replacement, starting the next day, and I felt 30 pairs of eyes turn, zoom in, and size me up.

The teacher's lesson plan included a filmstrip about the Civil War. In 1972 filmstrips made a beeping noise when it was time to turn the knob on the projector. On this day, every time the machine beeped, all 30 students beeped along with it. Given that the filmstrip had 50 screens, and the class had 30 students, that meant 1500 beeps rang out over the duration of the 20-minute filmstrip – and the teacher said nothing. She just kept turning the projector's knob and reading the caption at the bottom of each slide. I was stunned as I looked around at the 8th graders, poking each other, laughing and chiming in with each new beep. I couldn't believe they would act this way in front of their current teacher and in front of me, their future teacher.

When the filmstrip ended, the teacher stood at the front of the room and read a mini lecture about the Civil War. She never looked up from her notes. I, sitting in the back, had one of those jaw-dropping moments as I witnessed chaos break out in the room. Students threw spit balls, moved freely around to toss notes to friends, did homework from other classes – all while the teacher kept her head down, reading aloud. She said not a single word about their behavior.

When the bell rang, students flew out of the room, punching each other as they raced for the door. When I walked to the front, the teacher announced that this was one of her better classes. I took a deep breath, thanked her for her time, wished her well, and left the room quietly, in a daze. What had I signed up for? And now, too late, I figured out why she was leaving. She was on the edge of a nervous breakdown and the cause of it was waiting for me the next day.

As I drove home, I told myself I could figure this out; I could handle it. These students just needed new energy in the room; a do-over. I would succeed where the previous teacher had failed. Oh, the stupidity, arrogance and folly of the young.

It was an incredibly awful four-month experience, from March 1 to graduation in late June. Those 8th graders tested me in every possible way. They had gotten away with murder for 6 months and were not about to settle down for me.

The kids were incredibly proficient at distracting me. Once I was working with a small group at the front of the room and didn't notice 3 boys climb out a back window. I found out when the principal brought them back. She was not amused. Nor was I.

And then there was the old TV, atop a large stand, sitting in a back corner of the room. It was ancient; it took at least 5 minutes to warm up. The students used that knowledge well. One would distract me while another slipped over, cranked it up to full volume and was innocently back in his seat when, 5 minutes later, Popeye blared out into the classroom. Gales of laughter and high fives would ensue – try getting a class back on track after that?

They would groan over any lesson idea I had, assure me that no other teacher made them do whatever I was asking, tease each other unmercifully, and make fun of anyone who tried to learn. And yet, I must admit, there were some moments of joy. There is nothing quite like seeing the light bulb of understanding light up a student's face. Or teaching a lesson that

not only caught their attention but helped them better understand the topic under study in American History.

And there were occasions when the adolescent nature of the beast just made me laugh. One afternoon an 8th grader strolled into class 10 minutes late. When I asked her why, she said, eyes rolling, in a voice dripping incredulity, “Come on, Mrs. Krasnow, I broke up with my boy friend at lunch. I HAD to go to the bathroom to cross his name off my jeans.” The detention I gave her confirmed in her mind that I was completely out of touch with reality.

For me the greatest frustration was walking down the hall between classes, looking into other teachers’ rooms, and seeing my students behave perfectly for them. No back talk, no fidgeting, no note-tossing, just acceptable student behavior. What did these older, clearly wiser teachers know that I didn’t? Why were the kids so awful in my room and so well behaved in theirs? About a month into the assignment I came up with one solution to this dilemma. I started fixing myself a gin and tonic as soon as I got home each afternoon. Then I started fixing a second. When, one evening, I fixed a third, my husband gently took it out of my hand and assured me that this was not the best way to solve my problems.

On graduation day I was filled with joy that my assignment was finally over. I had already been given a full time position at another middle school for the following year so I couldn’t wait to get away from this school with all its associated memories. My 8th graders crowded around hugging me, begging me to sign their yearbooks, wishing me well. “Who are these students?” I asked myself, “Certainly not the ones who made my life a living hell for the past four months.” Ah, the ability of adolescents to see the world only as it affects them at a specific moment in time. We were now, apparently, best of friends.

As I closed the classroom door for the last time, I thought about what it would take to get me to do the whole experience over again. I know everyone has a price so what was mine? On that June day, in 1972, I decided it was \$48,000 - \$12,000 for each of the four months. To put that in perspective, I recently went online to an inflation calculator and discovered that \$48,000 in 1972 is worth \$273,115.41 today. That works out to almost \$70,000 per month or \$3,500 for each school day. What a difference it might have made if I had been handed \$3500 as I walked out the door each afternoon.

I look back on the whole experience with a mixture of frustration and gratitude. Frustration in that I received no support from any administrator or teacher. I was left alone for those 4

months, in my portable classroom out in the schoolyard, left alone to cope with the circus I inherited. I was afraid to ask for help, embarrassed at my seeming ineptitudes. What would they think?

But I also look back with a degree of gratitude. In those 4 months I learned more about teaching and the need for a set of behavioral expectations that are clearly explained and consistently reinforced than any education class ever taught me. It honed my skills. But would I redo those 4 months, given the exact same circumstances? Hmmm, not unless I was handed \$3,500 each afternoon!

# *Unseen Dangers*

Eva Christian, Parkview Christian Retirement Community



I like new adventures. I am enthralled with the challenges they present provided they are not dangerous, but often I am unaware of the danger. Let me share three incidents that did involve danger.

The first one took place in Portland, Oregon, as my husband and I were visiting our daughter's family. Early that summer morning, I glanced out the west window and saw several policemen hurrying by with guns drawn. Swinging open the front door, I quickly stepped out onto the porch to find out what was happening. Maybe I could help. Maybe I could be a crime-stopper.

"Mom, you get back in here," I heard my daughter say in a non-negotiable voice, so I grudgingly stepped back inside.

"Grandma, are you going to let your daughter boss you like that?" piped up my six-year old granddaughter who was just as intrigued as I was to discover what was happening.

Later we learned that the policemen were chasing down a rapist in the neighborhood. I guess it was good that I didn't get involved.

My second chance to be a crime-stopper occurred in Coos Bay, Oregon. From the kitchen window of our cream-colored house, I could see the Pacific Ocean and watch the big ships coming in. However, not all the views from my kitchen window were so enchanting.

One day as I was standing at the sink preparing lunch, I glanced out the small window above the sink and saw nine teenagers gathered in the alley. I recognized them as students from the alternative school two blocks east of our house. These students often came down the alley at lunch time on their way to a small grocery store nearby. Because the girls were huddled in the background and one big boy was talking loudly, I knew trouble was brewing.

As I watched, the big blond boy grabbed the second boy's glasses and handed them to a third student who then tossed the glasses into the brush. The one-sided fight began. A fist

shot out, knocking the victim to the ground where he lay curled up as the bully proceeded to kick him. I ran out the front door yelling, “You stop that.”

The bully shouted back but I didn’t understand what he said. It must have been bad because my neighbor on the other side of the alley heard and shouted, ”Don’t you talk to her like that. I’m calling your school.”

Those students fled at lightning speed except for the one curled up next to the alley ditch. I rushed out to the fallen boy and urged him to come into the house with me until help could come. Ten minutes later, a teacher showed up. Later the Principal came, and even the police came to see if I was all right. You see, that bully was head of a gang of Bloods, and he was trying to force the victim, who belonged to the Blues, to join his gang. This incident was the fighter’s third charge. Because he was on probation, he was immediately hauled off to Juvenile Detention. I let on that I had certainly been very courageous in dealing with gang members, but actually I had been oblivious of any danger involved.

However, just wait until you hear about my third adventure. This one also happened in Coos Bay. One of our middle-aged female church members wanted to have some time away from her aging mother who did not approve of her daughter’s friendship with a certain fellow. Therefore while my husband conducted a Bible Study which the mother attended, I conducted a Bible Study in the fellow’s home which her daughter attended. Little did I know what kind of dangerous situation I would soon encounter. On this particular evening the lady’s sixteen-year old granddaughter brought along her nineteen-year old boyfriend. In the process of talking about how much God loves us, the young man, Jason, spoke up hesitantly.

“I need to ask a question. I have done a terrible thing. Can God forgive me?”

This was a golden opportunity to explain salvation to him and share just how much Jesus loved him. When I was sure he understood, I asked, “Are you ready to ask God for forgiveness and invite Jesus to be your Savior?”

Jason bowed his head as he softly said, “Yes,” and asked for forgiveness. I did not ask what he had done that was so bad, but I was soon to find out. Shortly after Bible Study, police arrived, and Jason was taken into custody, charged with six counts of attempted murder, three counts of first- degree robbery, and three counts of unlawful possession of firearms.

“I’m so glad it’s over,” Jason told police. “If you had confronted me earlier, I was prepared to shoot it out.”

He had stolen a fully automatic Uzi machine gun and a .45 caliber pistol, plus a knife. He had used the knife to cut the throats of the gun-owner and a walk-in customer, wounding, but not killing the two men. Would God forgive him? Yes, and by Jason asking for that forgiveness, a heart was changed and lives were spared---possibly the lives of those of us at the Bible Study.

This time I didn’t even pretend to be courageous, just thankful that I had been protected. New adventures can be fun, but sometimes those exciting adventures can also be filled with unseen dangers.

## *Winter*

JoAnn Reed, Ya-Po-Ah Terrace



The year that defines the word “winter” for me was 1962-63. In the spring of ‘62 we purchased an old farm house on 38 acres just a mile from a lake. My husband and I, heled by our four young children, spent the summer renovating the house. We moved in Labor Day weekend.

It was a brilliant October day when my oldest left to catch the school bus. The three younger children finished their breakfast and, as I cleared the dishes, I was thinking we might have a picnic down at the lake. I heard the wind rising and went out on the porch. This wind was from the south and strangely warm for October. Small branches and fir cones were falling from the trees and clouds moved in fast from the west. The landscape was washed in an eerie yellow glow. I called my son in from his morning explorations and tuned the radio to get a weather forecast.

“...high wind warning on the coast and a severe storm is moving inland.”

In less than an hour the storm was upon us. A roaring wind tore at the trees. Our old house shook as the ferocious blast sought to clear us from its path. We heard a cracking, splintering sound as a tall fir barely missed the corner of the house and crashed upon the barn. The lights went out.

I stood by the dining room window with my three-year-old in my arms and the two others huddled close. We watched the school bus pull up at the corner and my daughter get out. She looked so small, as if the wind would carry her away. Between the bus and the house downed wires writhed and sparked among fallen tree branches.

“Don’t move”, I told the little ones as I dashed for the door.

Out side I could only watch my fiercely independent eight-year-old fight the wind and tiptoe through the wires and branches. I didn’t dare call out for fear I would break her concentration. When she reached the porch, I gathered my brood inside and we waited.

The telephone was dead, but our battery operated radio reported buildings damaged, cars thrown through the air, and huge trees uprooted. I felt sick with anxiety until my husband arrived home.

The next morning we discovered that ninety mile-an-hour winds had devastated our area. We had no running water or electricity. I cooked on our little Franklin wood stove. We brought our water from town in five gallon milk cans each day. It was weeks before the wires were cleared and we had electricity. We cut up and cleared the downed trees and savaged what we could of the barn to store the wood. that storm is still remembered by us old timers of the Northwest as “the Columbus Day Storm.”

The storm was the beginning of an unusually hard winter for Oregon. It didn't snow, but remained below freezing. In the lull between ice storms, we dressed in coats, caps and mittens and ventured out into the meadow to slide on the frozen puddles. We laughed as bewildered ducks landed on ice and slid for yards before stopping. Why did they stay? Perhaps, like us, they were too stubborn to leave the place they chose as their home.

## *Winter Haiku*

Colombe Leineau, Foothill Retirement Community



Icy street so slick  
Driver awaiting sunlight  
Idle car at peace

# *Yearning*

William K. Ousterhout, Capital Manor



Seagull's mournful cry echoes across the bay.

The sea, ever restless, murmurs with the tide,  
Bringing memories of former days.  
Here once again, trying to remember,  
But found, instead, a yearning ache.  
Oh, to return to those early days!  
Life was fuller, then, with family small.  
Life was good, the future rosy.

It's gone now, along with the years.  
Time passes, and the world changes.  
I hoped, perhaps, a small part remained  
Of what was once before,  
But, alas, it was not to be.

It's gone, as if it never was,  
Changed, what was once familiar.  
Progress and time left only remnants  
Of those early days.

Only memories now remain,  
Though waves still beat against the shore,  
The shore itself is changed  
And little is the same,

Just the seagull's lonely cry,  
And the murmur of the restless sea.

# *Young Love*

Betty M. Hockett, Friendsview Retirement Community



1

## In Recognition of Young Love's Suffering

It's hard to lose a friend.  
We've shared a lot these last two years;  
thoughts and prayers, laughter,  
smiles and tears,  
long walks with fingers plaited,  
now and then a kiss.  
Special moments, we two alone,  
hearts and spirits merged.  
But now all that has gone where faded  
dreams and crumbled hopes assemble.  
Where sun no longer shines,  
only darkened skies with threat of rain.  
Loneliness becomes the pattern.  
Oh, it's hard to lose a friend.

2

## In Recognition of Young Love Rekindled

It's good to have a friend,

my special friend from years gone by.  
We work and study miles apart,  
yet close in mind and heart.  
Spirits once more merged  
we talk and laugh,  
share thoughts and prayers.  
Faded dreams begin to flower,  
blue skies with radiant sun,  
threats of storms erased.  
Hopes restored, we two agree.  
Happiness unfurls the pattern.  
Oh, it's good to have a friend,  
my special friend from years gone by.



