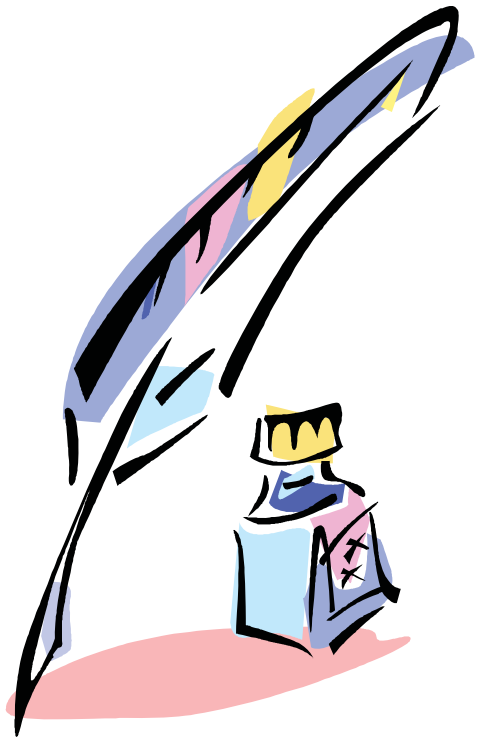


Founders Hall Writings

SPRING 2011



Founders Hall Writings Spring 2011

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Writers Workshop

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Mariposa

Isabella Blake

Harvesting that which is
Most beautiful
Gli-i-ide Madame Butterfly
Harbinger of Goodness
You a flower's lover
Wisdom no, not, just endless...
Golden dre-e-eaming
Witless of your shortened time
I know not if it is you or me
A misty border of crazy gods
Knowing not if beauty is or dies
No Matter
Gli-i-ide buttery creature glide

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Postcards, Dreams and the White Cliffs of Dover

Donna Biller Curran

Aunt Mayme was a dreamer. A lot of people were, I guess, as the country puled through the Great Depression. The movies and radio fueled their fantasies. When she was 90, Mayme could remember lines she spoke in her fifth grade play, plus the gestures that reinforced them. She was my mother's oldest sister and her memtor in things dramatic and musical. Together, they had me to act out their dreams.

In our big kitchen, I, too, learned to dream of fame and fortune. My muse was music, the lyrics poetry for a lively imagination, and my mother was my agent.

While World War II raged in Europe and the Pacific, we worked and played in that kitchen singing its songs. Radio brought us the great Judy Garland number "The Trolley Song" from "Meet Me in St. Louis." In the movie, Margaret O'Brien played her little sister, Tutti. We saw it seven times, and I always wondered how Margaret could cry so well on cue. My aunts were always praising the harmony of the Little Moylen Sisters and telling me I could sing just as well.

"Uncle Bill's Children's Hour" was a Sunday morning radio show on WEBR in Buffalo. We listened religiously as Uncle Bill interviewed the city's stars of tomorrow. Then we critiqued their performances. After telling their age, school and grade, contestants would entertain the citizens of the Queen City of the Lakes with a song or poem, an instrumental piece or even a tap dance.

In my imagination, I saw the scene. Cheery, supportive Uncle Bill questioning me, a few moments of glorious performance, the applause of my fellow performers, polite but award, of course, that I was best. There would be the city-wide response - all the penny postcards flooding the station, bearing the name of the winner. In my dreams, I saw the words "Donna Mae" on those cards and knew it would be the beginning of something big.

As if this wasn't motivation enough, Uncle Bill rewarded each winner with a crisp \$5 bill and a pair of new shoes from the Liberty Shoe Store on Broadway. The cherry on my sundae would be another chance to perform the following week as the newly discovered star of Buffalo radio. And then...anything could happen!

We rehearsed in the living room at the upright piano, the same piano my mother had played as a girl, unaware that her father was sitting in a darkened corner until he applauded when she took her bow.. "There'll be bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover, tomorrow, just you wait and see" - I loved the "just you wait and see," and sang out my feelings of hope and confidence for the battered world with all my 6-year-old heart.

The studio that Sunday morning was not the fairy tale stage of my dreams, but in some ways even a more electric, if sterile, setting for my song. We sat in rows on folding chairs, our feet together on the polished floor, awaiting our turn at the microphone for our chat with Uncle Bill. For some of us, a wooden box meant the difference between reaching the microphone or not, and coming face to face with our radio uncle and, behind their thick wall of glass, his control room engineers.

In an instant, I was standing on that box and Uncle Bill was asking me my name. Word faded into the piano introduction for my song. My heart told all Buffalo awake at that hour that “tomorrow” was coming if the “would only wait and see.” Then it was over and I was proud.

My mother was even more pleased and determined. To my amazement, she armed herself with several stacks of penny postcards, all bearing my name in her distinctive script. All a person had to do was sign their name! She would mail them.

Out on Genesee Street, we sat in a circle in Charles Schwab’s Optometry waiting room. Forty or so strangers resting on high-backed oak chairs in various states of pupil dilation, waiting to return to Schwab’s inner sanctum to get prescriptions for their new glasses. There was silence among the strangers in that circle, making my comment, “Oh, no Mother, not now!” all the more audible. She countered with “Honey, they won’t mind a bit, probably be delighted they were asked,” as she took the rubber band off the pile of postcards jamming her pocket book.

She snapped her bag shut and I watched in amazed horror as she worked the room, approaching each bleary-eyed customer with the announcement that Donna Mae had sung on Uncle Bill’s show, and needed their support. Would they take just a minute to sign a card?” She’d do all the rest.

A well meaning woman asked the inevitable. “Would she sing a little now?” My mother answered for me. So it was that on that bleak winter afternoon, I stood, much less confidently, in the middle of Schwab’s circle of patients and rendered a reprise of “The White Cliffs of Dover.”

Everybody signed.

A slap of the metal flap on our mail slot announced the winning letter as it dropped to the floor at the bottom of the steep front all stairs. I flew down them to see the call letters WEBR emblazoned on the thick envelope, and tore it open. Inside were the words confirming my dreams. I ran back up, two steps at a time, calling out “Mother...!

The date for my return engagement was listed with instructions to call the station to confirm. Loretta Agnes Godfrey Biller dialed deliberately as though she knew all along the victory was ours. Then she called Aunt Mayme.

Early Sunday morning, we climbed into my father’s black Plymouth, which had been polished for a triumphant ride down Main Street to the station. Aunt Cons came too, my practical aunt who worked at the bank and kept accounting. We were ready for the big time!

Uncle Bill announced the winner, and once again those bluebirds flew. I stood on the box to accept my \$5 and the shoe store certificate, saying my thank yous. But there was in me a new and unsettling awareness. I was my family’s hope in this dream world, and it was a responsibility. I wondered if the Little Moylen Sisters had so many mothers who also carried stacks of penny postcards in their pocket books.

My father took me to the Liberty Shoe Store to redeem the certificate. We went alone, one of my few memories of times I felt touched by his presence in my life. But that is a story for another day.

So Winter Passes

Danny JD Cutting

Deep and deeper still,
beneath the ragged elms and gnarled oaks,
Tangled roots as fingers lie, knotted,
and entwined, as in prayer
In a dark, winter-night dream.
Snow over ice layers upon the brooding woodland floor
Where tiny skulls of mice and bones of voles
Lie buried in a sacred grove, a holy grave.

Far below, life stirs...
A drowsy waking from a season long asleep.
Tiny cells, seeds, fungi... shudder, stretch and groan,
Beetles, nourished upon their deathly repast
Now grope and crawl, pushing upward
To tepid warmth and low horizoned sun.

Brazen amid the monochrome,
green daggers poke forth,
Pregnant with blooms, waiting, impatient for spring;
Not soon enough their fragile beauty to
Decorate soft mosses and the ice cold stones.
Old winter-stiffened reeds, brown and broken,
Form cruel beds for rats and wrens,
Nestled there, hidden, huddled from the bitterest winds,
Now will be cut down,
Giving way to verdant shoots, tender wands
To gently sway in summer breezes.
Months of near death and ice cold pain
Yield grudgingly in the dark earth womb.
So winter passes and spring is slowly born.

Mountains, An Enduring Passion

Anton Deiters

I was born in a flat, wet, country, close to the North Sea shore. Water and wide vista's marked my childhood outdoors experiences. These included roaming in the sand dunes that formed our defense against the sea. One day I climbed a high dune and was delighted to find that I could see the grey-blue sea.

Our home was high and had a steep-pitched roof. I was a good climber and, pulling myself up along the lightning conductor, I climbed to the very top of the roof ridge and sat on it, astride. I hoped I could see the sea, but my view was obscured by trees and dunes. I was exhilarated nonetheless.

This exhilaration upon reaching heights has stayed with me all my life. It is there still today. I cannot resist climbing up to get a view. I can say today that I have seen many spectacular panoramas in my life. Most of them were mountains-capes.

A vacation in mountain air, to recuperate from pneumonia when I was nine, took me to Switzerland in the winter of 1951. When I saw the snowy mountains, my heart raced. I feasted my eyes on them, and I learned to come down in them on skis. The sensation of skiing, the early sense of mastering this strange sport set me on a course of mountain sports, winter and summer that took me to the Alps, the Rockies, the Appalachian Hills, the Volcanoes of Indonesia, Mt Kenya in Africa, and, the crown, the Himalayas, where I, in 1976, I was member of a small Dutch expedition.

I was very lucky to awaken a similar passion in Ann, and in Bevin and Erik, our two children. We had many joint

mountain vacations, all seasons, and it was a delight to teach them to ski, and to take them on hikes, light rock climbs, and when they were a bit older, real mountain climbs. Ann, who had not had any such childhood experiences, soon shared my exhilaration. One of the highlights of our joint passion was the climbing of Mount Rainier, near Seattle, in 1981.

Climbers find it sometimes difficult to explain their passion. They prefer the company of other climbers with whom there is common ground. That is why I so enjoy my annual trip to the Alps with my group of nine. We call our week-long trek -- from hut-to-hut over mountain passes and an occasional summit -- "De Herentocht." (The Gentlemen's Trek.) Though we do tough hikes, we underplay the "athletics," even though we all have a serious climbing CV, and go for the companionship and the shared enjoyment of the nature around us, the endless variety of granite formations, glaciers, snow and ice faces, and the warmth of a hut or an inn.

When Mallory, the famous Englishman who perished on Mount Everest in 1924, was asked why he wanted to climb that dangerous mountain so badly, he responded: "because it is there."

No other justification needed. He might have said, "It is my passion." I feel that way. Passion cannot be explained, but it can be shared. As long as I am mobile, I will seek to spend time near mountains with like-minded friends or family. In fact, I will do just that again in three months.

Which Is Spring ?

Muriel DeLorio

Is it a noun or a verb? That designation has eluded me for quite a while. This experience recently settled the question to my satisfaction.

Really, Spring is a verb. This is true, because Saturday morning I did my usual routine, looking out from the kitchen window at the thermometer to determine whether to dress for “cold” or “chilly”.

The bare brown branches of the tree closest to the widow had new green buds starting to show at the ends. How nice! Very encouraging! Could Winter finally be on the way out?

After two, warm, sunny days, this morning at my temperature peeking, a new sight captured my vision. This caused my heart to beat a little faster. A smile creased my face. The branches that were so dreary looking were fuller, and a brighter shade of emerald. There were actual leaves on the trees ! Now I knew: Spring had sprung forth.

Yep, Spring is a verb !

Can Democracy Save Our Planet?

Barry Finch

Before I attempt to answer this question I need to define and qualify Democracy. “A government of the people, for the people and by the people” is how I like to characterize true democracy. However, since the January 2010 decision of the US Supreme Court to grant additional First Amendment Rights to the wealth of individuals and corporations, I believe that we have regressed and transgressed to an Oligarchy of the corporation, for the wealthy and by the special interest. And let’s not forget the abortive attempt at Constitutional justice by the Supreme Court to decide a president into office in 2000, the only major candidate adamantly opposed to campaign finance reform? I’m now convinced it’s time to exchange our laborious administrative impeachment procedure for a public or peoples vote of confidence, a petition process that applies to Supreme Court justices as well as presidents, administration and congressional leaders who lack the integrity to live up to their oath of office and or disenfranchise their fellow citizens.

Beginning with the laissez-faire capitalism (1) of the 1960’s the market place soon became free to practice usury (2) while the FTC was encouraged to abandon it’s mission statement of promoting competition by eliminating and prohibiting monopoly. The massive failure of this “let the market work” approach has allowed capitalism and technology to overshadow democracy to the extent that democracy is no longer our way of governance. Sadly, we have become a Capitalistic Technocracy (3). The resulting “organizations that are too big to fail”, the Real Estate market crash and subsequent soaring foreclosure rates of under water homeowners, and the resulting overwhelming advantages amassed by Wall Street over Main Street all keep the carbon

fires burning to support a world economy dependent on continued expansion. Are we not blinded by the monetary and mental depression we are in by thinking otherwise?

Our planet, Mother Earth or Gaia (4), whichever you prefer, has proved herself resilient and resourceful for many a millennium as we have grown from Lucy (5), 4 million years ago, to a sustainable 1 billion human inhabitants by about 1850 to today's unsustainable, untenable and unmanageable 6.5 billion. Where the hell are we going? Pun intended, from the relative heaven that Lucy knew to a hell on earth of our own creation. If James Lovelock (6) is correct in "Revenge of Gaia" then most of our children and grandchildren will expire from the 130 F temperature that over 80% of our land mass will experience during this century.

Having defined the present state of our democracy to have degenerated into a capitalistic technocracy or oligarchy (7), I would have to answer my question, NO! Not only can it not save the planet, our present system of governance is responsible for her eminent demise. Yet, if I look to true democracy, I see hope for the restoration of Gaia's evolutionary process and her ability to sustain all the life forms that she has mothered and nurtured with a friendly environment for their interdependent development and existence. How to achieve true democracy, which has likely never existed on the planet, is the major question.

That there is already 5xs a sustainable human population (8) on the planet is certainly in debate and will continue to be so as long as our corporate economy, codependent on continual expansion, governs our way of doing business. How to accomplish a lower more sustainable population is a huge question that no one is willing to debate and will likely become apparent only when it's too late and the only habitable parts of Gaia are near the poles. And what a horrific

way to realize a "sustainable" population once again.

Unfortunately we are not likely to change as long as money determines who leads this country. Our system of legalized bribery is not only an impediment to true democracy, but apparently a hindrance to higher intelligence. Public funding (9) of our elections, envisioned by Granny "D" Haddock (10), would be a good place to start and Common Cause continues that fight. A national usury limit of 5.5 to 6% interest and refocusing the FTC on it's mission would also help establish an economy that can breath. Wall Street and Main Street can coexist without one or the other having the upper hand. Money should be a means to the end, not the end in an of itself and we should once again become a community of producers as well as consumers. Just ask a successful producer about the sense of satisfaction they derive from their work.

True democracy might be the answer and it might not. Perhaps we are just headed in the direction that so many intelligent life forms in the universe have experienced, that have come and gone like minor blips, in the 14.3 billion years since the Big Bang. And that will ultimately have to be OK. If that is our fate, my only regret would be, "Why couldn't we have given an Integral Education (11) a chance?" One in which media, government, commerce, technology and education integrate to allow every child on the planet to identify, validate and develop every aspect of their human intelligence, evolving into a world community of integrally gifted human beings that will facilitate turning Gaia back into the heaven she once was. And one day we could read of elections, impeachments and votes of confidence in our history books with amusement from our world of wisdom and grace that embraces cooperation, consensus and compassion.

Still Life

D. David Hostler

My poetry's a distillate of feeling and of word.
Life's agonies and ecstasies with shards of the absurd
fermenting unrelentingly . . . coarse, raw and unrefined . . .
within the seething, roiling, boiling cauldron of my mind.
Pure vapors rise and leave life's superfluities behind.
Defying weight they elevate . . . and soon are serpentine.
The whirling, swirling nimbus curling through the cooling
coil . . .
still recollects and still projects the burn that fired the boil.
And then condensed . . . without pretense it drops upon a
page . . .
and there to cure . . . and to mature . . . to mellow . . . and to
age.

Imbibe my drams of poetry. Inebriate yourself with me.
Then please remember that you've swilled . . .
the essence of a life . . . distilled.

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Wind Wizen

D. David Hostler

Once in a whirlwind waiting a while . . .
I courted a girl with a mystical smile.
And wandered I whither . . . and wandered I whence . . .
and wondered I whether her love was pretense . . .
and wondered I whether my wand'ring was wise . . .
and whether love ever was simply disguise.

And weighty the lessons I finally learned:
that love freely given . . . must also be earned . . .
that wounds left unattended grow brittle and dry . . .
and love . . . left unattended . . . will wither and die . . .
that love never given cannot be returned . . .
all these, but a few of the things I discerned.

And oh . . . is it painful to tally the cost . . .
of wisdom extracted from love's labour's lost.

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A Legal Summation

D. David Hostler

I must make my summation brief.
The reaper will not stay his scythe.
I've no defense . . . make no pretentious
off'ring of an alibi.
My guilt is clear. My wrongs severe.
On prayers for mercy I'll rely.

No loud lament of wrenching grief
should mark the moment when I die.
Let trumpets blow and champagne flow
and laughter linger on the air.
Let song and dance . . . perchance romance . . .
emerge from hiding everywhere.

Let my demise be recognized
as a diminishment of strife . . .
for when I go they'll be . . . you know . . .
one fewer lawyers in this life.

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Mathematic Matters of the Heart

D. David Hostler

Oh, you can offer up your heart a thousand times . . .
but is that smart?
For there are those who'll take the gift
then set what's left of you adrift
with just a gaping cavity
where once there was anatomy.
And if they take your heart away
there may be little left to say
except to bid a sad adieu . . .
and give your heart away anew . . .
and hope this time . . . to someone who
will give theirs . . . in return . . . to you.

In mathematics of the heart
you needn't be too very smart
to know that love will never do . . .
where one has none . . .
and one . . . has two.

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That Godlike Spirit

Emelie Howard

I had just ended my painting class at Founders Hall – we laughingly call it the Founders School of Art likened only to the “Surrealists”, the “Impressionists” and possibly the “Post Impressionist” schools.

Painting always gives me joy; it takes me out of the ordinary humdrum events that fill life and as I’ve told my fellow artists, “It makes us god-like.” Oh, I don’t mean in the religious sense, I mean it more in a creative sense ... a lot less than creating a universe, but on a lesser scale it offers the satisfaction of creating something that hadn’t existed before in any form.

Any creative process, be it writing, painting, dancing, singing or even developing a new business concept allows us to create our own world. We can make the world more beautiful, uglier (sometimes that’s really difficult), simpler, more complex or even more abstract. When we create our own vision of the world, then what we have done is a form of godliness. Something we see that perhaps no one else does and we are willing to share a glimpse of our vision with others ... just as God shared his/her image of a perfect universe with us.

And this past Wednesday, after cleaning up my brushes and putting away my paints, I went downstairs to get my coat from the closet. As I stepped out of the elevator someone was creating her own world. Her world happened to be at the piano at that moment and I heard the first few notes of my favorite Judy Garland song, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.”

I didn’t see the pianist at first but I did see one of our writing members, Victor Malfi sitting slumped in his chair looking a bit bored. An accomplished pianist himself, he might have been waiting his turn to become “god-like” with a bit of music.

The omnipotent attitude was still with me from my class and although I rarely sing solo in public, I let loose full voice with the song as she played. Victor’s head shot up; the others in the room looked around bewildered, where was that voice coming from? But I was still concealed in the alcove by the closet.

It was a delicious moment and I was tempted to stay hidden right there, but I did want to share that special feeling with Victor so I left the alcove, still singing, and walked into the living room. A happy smile greeted me (that was Victor). I think the pianist was a bit annoyed by the intrusion. So I sang another measure or two and then left the room. Victor gestured for me to return and continue, but I felt the lady at the piano was in her “god-like” zone and didn’t want some strange female attempting to snatch it from her. As for Victor, I gestured I would see him in class on Monday.

I didn’t really need the opportunity to “voice” my pleasure; I was still enveloped in my own warm, comfortable feelings brought on by my painting of “beautiful” fragmitties, almost complete. The real fragmitties have little resemblance to what I’ve painted, but then again remember ... the creative spirit is a god-like gift to be treasured and I can make my world look exactly the way I choose ... at least on canvas. That’s almost as good as living on Mt. Olympus.

Southwest Memories

Port-a-Potties in the Desert

Ray Morse

In July of 1984 I began a one year assignment at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico. My wife and I had rented a brand new adobe home that overlooked the city of Las Cruces and the University. The house was located in high desert and was surrounded by all types of cactus, pinon trees, Yucca plants, and other exotic desert flora. Looking to the west from the house we could see Deming, New Mexico, sixty miles away. To the east we looked at the Organ Mountains which were the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. After living most of our lives in New York State we weren't accustomed to having such wide open vistas.

Since we were new to this part of the country we wanted to learn as much as we could about the cultures, history, and geography of the area. One of our early sources of information was the local media. In the morning we started listening to the local radio stations to get an idea of what was happening locally. After a week or so of listening to the radio we became curious about one announcement that was being repeated almost every day. The announcement would state that Route 70 going east out of Las Cruces would be closed for a specific length of time and at different times during the day. We assumed that there was some major construction occurring on route 70.

After settling into our temporary home and learning how to get around in Las Cruces we decided to start exploring the surrounding area and the many interesting sites. One of the first things we wanted to visit was the White Sands National Monument. We learned that if we went to White Sands we could also visit the Three Rivers Petroglyph

National Site where there were petroglyphs dating back to the Anasazi, the forerunners of today's Pueblo tribes. On the way to Three Rivers we would stop in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Planning our visit to these places we realized that the only way to get there was to take route 70, which went right over the Organ Mountains and through the desert to White Sands and Alamogordo. How were we going to deal with the frequent delays that were regularly announced on the radio? We decided to wait for a weekend when it would be likely that there would be no delays. We decided to just get in the car and go for it. That strategy worked and we decided to go on a Saturday when there were no delays announced on the radio.

Driving out of Las Cruces and climbing up and over the Organ Mountains was a spectacular trip with beautiful views in every direction. As we descended down the eastern side of the mountains we found ourselves looking at nothing but miles and miles of desert. As we started to drive across the desert we experienced something that we never had seen before. Every quarter of a mile or so there were port-a-potties on both sides of the road. There was no sign of any construction on the road, but the following warning signs appeared all along route 70.

**BE PREPARED TO STOP
YOU ARE IN THE WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE**

Now we understood why there was a plethora of port-a-potties. If a missile was going to be tested all traffic on route 70 had to stop for at least an hour. Since it was over 50 miles across the desert to White Sands National Monument the port-a-potties were a welcome sight. Fortunately, we didn't have to stop.

Switchboard of Terror

A Child's War Memories, part 50

Ingrid Polonius

Draped in the darkness of the deep forest near the small town of Rastenburg in East Prussia, now Polish Ketrzyn, is another place of pilgrimage visited by more than 300 000 tourists each year. With traces of camouflage nets still hanging from the trees, this place seems to keep its secrets behind the thick and now overgrown walls of the so-called "Fuehrerbunker". On this vast terrain of 865 acres, surrounded by three security zones, are the ruins of a huge bunker complex which once accommodated more than 200 buildings. At its peak in 1944, up to 2000 people lived here devoting their services to non-transparent causes.

On our journey through the area that is now Poland, it was in the late afternoon of a rather gloomy day when we arrived at the infamous Wolfsschanze. Fog was hanging in the tree branches and millions of mosquitoes swarmed around us, ready to attack. It was a somewhat spooky welcome, we felt. "Wolf's Lair" is the standard English name for Hitler's military headquarter from which his devilish strategies were planned and executed, feeding his ruinous East Front war machinery. To guarantee his operations, numerous barracks were occupied by his highly trained police force. There were centers for telecommunications, stations for teleprinting, a power plant, waterworks, a railway station and two landing strips, all built in 1940. Hitler arrived here at Wolfsschanze for the first time in the dark of night of June, 23, 1941, the very next day after his unprecedented surprise attack on the Soviet Union. With countless comings and goings, he actually lived here for a total of 800 days until November 20, 1944, the day of his last departure. In those 800 days the majority

of Hitler's murderous decrees, committing the most horrific criminal acts against humanity, were dispatched from this place.

With great trepidation one enters the compound by first crossing a frequented parking lot. To our left, while passing the former living quarters of the Waffen SS, Hitler's security guards, we noticed a Hotel sign on this long stretched rather unattractive building. "Who in the world would want to stay overnight here in this creepy place?", I had to ask myself. After a few more steps towards the wooded area, we suddenly found ourselves among Hitler's enormous, fortified structures. As remnants of a terrible time gone by, huge dark concrete blocks hung from one side over our heads. Here any imaginative faculty renders itself inadequate and a deep silence came over us. Here again words fail to describe the feelings that surface while standing at the source of the unspeakable evil that mad and misguided political brains were capable of producing. Having stopped here at this switchboard of evil exceeded our comprehension.

Bunker #13 was Hitler's residence. It was often described as an old Egyptian tomb with walls eight meters, 26.25 feet, thick and with no windows. The massive concrete walls significantly minimized the actual living space for those who spent time here. It was said that Hitler was the only one of the Nazi celebrities who liked living in that deadly, dark place. It seemed as if the imposing walls not only isolated him from the outside world, where millions of people were dying due to his ill will, but also held him hostage to his own madness.

Creating a stark contrast, less than a hundred meters away was a truly remarkable memorial site. On the side of the walkway, we found this memorial in bronze, designed as an oversized wide-open book. Coming as a pleasant surprise,

its epigraph seemed to penetrate the somberness of this place like a beam of light. The unfailing message here is one of hope for all humanity. This memorial marks the exact spot where the “Lagerbaracke” once stood, where from this hotbed of evil Hitler used to hold his regular briefing sessions. It was overwhelming to stand here on the grounds where Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg’s assassination attempt on Hitler had failed!

Graf von Stauffenberg was one of Hitler’s general-staff officers and commander-in-chief of the Reserve Army. Despite or because of this high position, he had become one of Hitler’s early critics. Yet he retracted his criticism due to the instant military successes during the first phase of the Nazi regime. In 1942, however, Stauffenberg and the like-minded military personnel around him fully recognized the fatal course Hitler was taking. A year later they were prepared to take measures to remove Hitler from power by force!

On July 20, 1944, Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg succeeded in placing a briefcase unnoticed under the conference room table to be used by Hitler in finalizing his combat schemes for the East Front on that day. In the briefcase was a time-triggered bomb! After several attempts on Hitler’s life had to be aborted in the past, this time Stauffenberg and his accomplices were so unshakably convinced of their success that they flew back to Berlin even before any message about the outcome could have reached them. In Berlin a coup d’etat had already been prepared and the so-called Walkure Plan, Valkyrie, was ready to be implemented after Hitler’s death. Under this plan, all of Hitler’s policies were to be undone and the occupied territories to be returned.

But in the blast, Hitler was barely hurt, while five other people around him had been killed. Graf von Stauffenberg,

at age 38, and his accomplices were executed in Berlin that same day while Hitler watched the proceedings on the screen in his movie theater on the Wolfsschanze compound. That same night, a detectably shaken Fuehrer gave a radio address “An mein Volk”, to my people. In response to this blow, waves of relentless arrests took place with more than 200 executions following the failed assassination attempt.

During the final retreat of the German army from the East front in January 1945, Hitler gave orders to demolish Wolfsschanze. For this impossible task, each bunker required eight tons of TNT explosives. Nevertheless, this undertaking on January 25, 1945 rendered minimal results. Because the bunker city had been built for eternity, we were able to eyewitness the results of Hitler’s absurd directive. Still today, there exists no equipment on earth strong enough to lift the enormous concrete slabs left in wild disarray. These symbols of violent almightiness will be there for generations to come as a warning cry to the world!

Only two days after the demolition efforts had ended, the Red Army took the site without a single shot on January 27, 1945. Yet it took eleven years of work to clear the 54 000 landmines that had protected this place.----What a mania, what insanity!! Wolfsschanze will never be able to claim memorial status for Hitler and his network of evil, but without a doubt it will always stand as a monument to the courage and vision of the resistance movement in Germany, which operated under the most perilous of conditions. The “Open Book” memorial is a shrine honoring Graf von Stauffenberg, signaling an openness to a better future of the world.

If only the day of July 20, 1944 had been crowned with success! Its possible consequences and effects for the world and us Germans could only be conceived as some kind of utopia!

The Heart of the Matter

Eileen Riggs

I just finished a wonderful book called “Cutting for Stone” by Abraham Verghese, an Indian physician who grew up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and now lives in the United States. It was one of those rare treasures that I did not want to put down even though the tale was finished.

When I began reading the book, I thought it might be somewhat somber and heavy with Eastern philosophy, afraid I might eventually be distracted. Let me amend that assessment now to not boring, not ever, not once.

The story is about a family of medical doctors living in Ethiopia beginning in the mid-1930’s. Identical (mirror-image) twin sons, joined at the head, are born to an unmarried expatriate British doctor and an Indian missionary nun who succumbs giving birth, resulting in scandal and heartbreak which would reverberate down through the years and into the hereafter. After the death of the twins’ mother and the disappearance of their father, Dr. Thomas Stone, the twins are raised by two other physicians, Dr. Kalpana Hemlatha and Dr. Abhi Ghosh, both Indian expatriates who eventually marry.

While reading this exceptional book, I had to put aside my Western beliefs and values and try to view life from the perspective of a “have not” culture whose successes and failures were measured more by the needs of the moment than the dictates of society. While the main characters within the story are civilized and educated, their tangible assets are nil, compared with their wealth of spirit and compassion. Their view that each person deserves to be cared for is in

contrast to the sometimes Western view that rations care to those who can afford it.

In Ethiopia at that time there was not the vast physical gulf between the people and their leader as there was and is here in the States between the average citizen and his president. Therefore in some respects, life in that faraway land sometimes moved at a very fast pace. Displeasure was readily expressed and reactions from the ruling class were often immediate. Also during the time period of this story, there was much political upheaval and revolution adding to the tension of poverty and lack of adequate medical facilities.

Suffice it to say, this wonderful book, Cutting for Stone, was for me a real epiphany. It had a profound effect on my “set-in-stone”, if I may use that phrase, rules of behavior and morality (or lack thereof) and I was forced to embrace these characters from a perspective other than the one I am most familiar with, that of a Westerner. For me, understanding the inner workings of these characters, required submission to a point of view with which I was not hitherto familiar.

Coming face to face, as it were, with such a defined multi-cultural and multi-layered society so different from my own, was something of a challenge and perhaps an awakening in my own mind as to why the world is always at odds. It is easy to see why we are all somehow strangers to one another.

The twins, Marion the narrator, and Shiva pursue careers in the medical field, one as an outstanding physician, the other a renowned expert in treating certain maladies of the female anatomy. They are as close to one another as twins can be and there sometimes appears to be almost a mystical aura about their connection. That is, until one feels he has been

betrayed by the other in matters of the heart. This coupled with the festering loss of their natural parents, takes them on separate paths until their journeys eventually take them to the States. It is here that Marion is able to face his nemesis and ultimately to find forgiveness in his heart. Shiva is not so lucky.

The title “Cutting for Stone” emanates from the Hippocratic Oath as detailed below*, but sometimes circumstances in life dictate that leap of faith which changes the composition of stone to a more malleable substance, though not without risk.

This book will not disappoint. It is beautifully written and illustrates the dedication of those who are really “dear and glorious” physicians who are able to combine their scientific knowledge with the ability to be compassionate. Above all, it illustrates the power of forgiveness in a way that will not soon be forgotten.

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*Q: Where does the title “Cutting for Stone” come from?
(from an online interview with the author Abraham Vergheese□

A: There is a line in the Hippocratic Oath that says: . . . I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest . . . It stems from the days when bladder stones were epidemic, a cause of great suffering, probably from bad water and who knows what else. Adults and children suffered so much with these—and died prematurely of infection and kidney failure. There were itinerant stone cutters—lithologists—who could cut either into the bladder or the perineum and get

the stone out, but because they cleaned the knife by wiping it on their blood-stiffened surgical aprons, patients usually died of infection the next day. Hence the proscription, “thou shall not cut for stone.”

Eileen R.

Time and Again 3

Tom Thulin

In the 1940's many families living in non-air conditioned New York apartments would head to the mountains or the seashore where the mothers and children would spend most of July and August while the fathers would visit on the weekends. In our case it was The Breakers in Mantoloking, NJ. My mother and I shared a small room with only a sink and two single beds, and would spend the weekdays on the ocean beach, which began at the foot of the hotel's rear stairs. My father would come down on weekends and sleep in the men's dormitory. I vaguely remember four to five hours plus, depending on traffic, as the travel time from Jackson Heights to Point Pleasant and access to the 30-mile-long barrier island, between Barnegat Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, where the hotel was situated

I did not spend a lot of time thinking about it, but it was always somewhat of a mystery to me as to how we found Mantoloking. There was no Jersey Turnpike then, the Route 4 Parkway (later to be renamed the Garden State Parkway) was a "work-in-progress" from 1946 to 1950 leaving town-to-town route 35 as the most likely way to drive to Point Pleasant.

While my mother was content to sit on the sand and read, when my father was there he and I spent a lot of time on the small wooden bridges spanning the many tidal pools and channels leading out to the local yacht club's floating docks on the northern part of Barnegat Bay, which was as short walk from the Breakers. If the weather was marginal, Dad and I would take a short ride over to the Naval Air Station at Lakehurst. My recollection is that we made the trips at my

request. In the 40s, blimps were used for shark patrol and since I might get lucky and get to see a blimp up close in or near the enormous hanger at the air station, I was always anxious to go.

By best friend Doug Floren and I have known each other for almost 70 years. His father and my father roomed together in Brooklyn in the late 1920s. I was born in January, 1941, Doug in July. His parents also moved to Jackson Heights in 1941, and from 1944 to 1953, I spent many hours at their apartment. During one evening visit, Doug's father mentioned, almost in passing, the Hindenburg. "Did you know that Einar was there when the Hindenburg exploded?" I had not known that and when asked later, dad said yes without elaborating; That was all, and I said nothing more about the Hindenburg..

My father had assembled scrapbooks and folders containing clipping of all his newspaper articles with the glaring exception of the Hindenburg, which had exploded while trying to land at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station on the afternoon of May 6th, 1937. I contacted the Swedish National Library regarding the Hindenburg articles in their Stockholms Tidningen Newspaper archives. They responded with ten pages from May 8, 9&12. Perusing the material, I saw only one short article by Thulin and it was in the May 12th edition.. However, there were two articles from May 8th Frdn St. T:s correspondent. One from New York was about Brink and the other from Lakehurst, was about Rolf von Heidenstam.

My father was at Lakehurst to meet one of St T's editors named Brink who was coming from Sweden to meet with then Governor Earl of Pennsylvania regarding early Swedish settlements in the State.

Dad is quoted in a number of books and articles saying that shortly after the explosion, and it appeared that there would be some survivors, he had cabled Stockholm asking "do you want me to cover the story or find Brink?"

They cabled back "Find Brink

When something like the Hindenburg disaster happens, it is a one in a million chance that your man will be the only foreign journalist there to witness the event. What happened?

Recalling my trips with Dad to Lakehurst, my first inclination was to ascribe our sojourns to the Jersey Shore as planned opportunities for my father to revisit the place where he had lost a friend. That is to say, his silence regarding the Hindenburg was based on sorrow for his friend Birger Brink.

However, while waiting for the National Library's photo copies to arrive, I finished looking through the scrap books, and moved on to the file folders still residing in Dad's old "streamer trunk" in the attic. In an unlabeled folder that at first appeared to be empty, I found an RCA RADIOGRAM, received at 64 BROAD STREET, new york at APR 30, 1937, from STOCKHOLM, addressed to NLT THULIN 127 EAST 61 STREET NYK. Even though it was in Swedish, the word Hindenburg was plainly visible along with "MOET BESON, BIL CHRYSLER, NABOTH HEDEN, GVERNOER EARLE and PANAMERICAN AIRWAYS INTERVJUN BESON.

No mention of Birger Brink. If "old Swedish" is difficult to translate, a telegram in "old Swedish" is next to impossible, unless, of course, one knows the subject matter. Moet Beson

might be meet Beson, but who was Beson? Was Bill Chrysler alive? Was he also on board the Hindenburg? And, what do Naboth Hedin and Pan Am have to do with the Hindenburg? Instead of one noodle to focus on, I had a whole bowl of spaghetti.. At that point my “sorrow” hypothesis seemed way too simplistic.

Using a Swedish to English dictionary, I came up with: Meet Beson arriving Lakehurst on Hindenburg. Rent limo at Chrysler building and take Naboth Hedin with you to also meet with Governor Earle. Pan Am is now flying Atlantic interview them. Interview Beson?

Why the follow on, interview Beson? One does not interview ones own editor. Who was Beson, While Birger Brink is listed as a passenger, there is no mention of a Beson being onboard the Hindenburg, either as passenger or crew. An invisible man?

When the newspaper copies arrived, they were in date order and there on the first page was an illustration of the Hindenburg with radio waves flaring from it and the words “Beson rapport fran “Hindenburg.”

Now that’s interesting, Beson was a real person who would send radio broadcasts while in the air, and was on the Hindenburg flying to Lakehurst.. Was it possible that there was a person not accounted for on the Hindenburg who might have access to other areas forbidden to regular passengers.

A person with access to the radio room might also have access to other sections of the airship. And, whether Beson had anything to do with the explosion or not, the fact that he was not counted as on board, might be of sufficient concern

to both the American and Swedish authorities to try and downplay and erase any mention of a third Swede on board that day. Einar Thulin should quietly disappear and not testify at the hearing.

Now that could account for my father’s reticence regarding the Hindenburg.

Powerful stuff!

Having read Stieg Larsson,.... why not?!

While Sweden’s relationship with Germany was always very close, during the 1930’s Sweden also sold military equipment to America. The Bofors 40mm antiaircraft gun was so good and ubiquitous that all anti-aircraft guns were referred to as “Bofors guns.”

I looked over all the pages from the library and saw nothing that would undermine my new theory. Dad had been told to get lost, and would revisit Lakehurst with thoughts of what could have been.

I continued to search for new Hindenburg info on the internet and found: the following:

BIRGER BRINK, EDITOR,
OF SWEDEN, MISSING

Planned to Visit Governor Earle
of Pennsylvania - Passenger
Tells of His Escape

Special to The New York Times

LAKEHURST, N. J. May 6

Birger Brink, one of the editors of the Stockholm Tidningen, whose body is believed to be among those buried in the twisted framework of the Hindenburg, was making a brief visit to this country to interview Governor George H. Earle of Pennsylvania and Dr. John H. Finley.

Having planned to return on the Hindenburg at midnight, Mr. Brink.....

.....Einar Thulin, New York correspondent for the Tidningen, also was at Lakehurst to welcome the Swedish Editor.

Mr. Thulin was about to enter his car, parked near the hanger, when the explosion occurred. It threw him to the ground. Then he ran toward the burning wreckage, hoping to find Mr. Brink among those stumbling from the twisted girders.

He was unable to find the editor, but Rolf von Heidenstam, whom he had know in Sweden, stumbled into his arms and collapsed. Mr. von Heidenstam had been watching the landing manoeuvres from one of the dirigible's windows, he explained. According to Mr. Thulin, Mr. von Heidenstam was so dazed he could remember little of his experience.

Mr. von Heidenstam was badly burned about his head and was suffering from an injured back. Mr. Thulin was unable to learn to which hospital he had been taken.

Who and where was Beson?

The mystery remained until last year when I decided I needed better copies of the Tidningen articles relating to the Hindenburg.

When the new copies arrived..... all was revealed.

On page 10 of the May 8th issue, the smudged picture of a man at his typewriter I has assumed was Beson because the accompanying text began: BESONScould now be clearly seen to be Birger Brinck.

Birger Brinck was BESON. Apparently, Birger Brink had a second career. While he was an editor at Stockholms Tidningen, he was also BESON, the well-known free lance journalist flying the world for stories.

Still, that one short article in the New York Times contained more eye-witness info than all the other Hindenburg related articles in Tidningen...one wonders...

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The Art of Writing

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Writing is often a solitary endeavor, but each week the writers in the Art of Writing and Revision class brought their work to share, to receive constructive critique from their peers, to learn from one another and to laugh. As the facilitator of the class, I often felt honored to be a part of this writing process. The stories and poem that appear in this book represent the variety of topics explored and the talent for storytelling of the class participants. In a world of texting and one line blurbs it is wonderful to read stories of substance.

~ Cheryl Panosian Haddad

Small Things

Ellen Becker

A few years ago, a friend who spent Easter with us brought me a planter full of lovely miniature daffodils. Before her gift, I had never seen such small daffodils; each was no bigger than a half dollar with trumpets the size of my pinkie. They were so pretty I decided to make them the table centerpiece instead of the spring bouquet I had planned to use.

After the blooms faded, I ignored the dictum that bulbs should be planted the fall and buried them in a small area at the back of our house. Despite its northern exposure, I knew that spot would be sunny enough in the early spring to allow the flowers to bloom. After a final tamp of the soil, I forgot all about the tiny daffodils until one day the following March when I went out back to clear away some branch debris from a recent wind storm and found them in full bloom, bobbing in the mild breeze and as luminous and cheerful as child ballerinas in bright yellow tutus.

I remember gazing at the flowers for a long moment, feeling a bit like a conjuror who is shocked when the rabbit actually emerges from the hat. Unremembered, and without fanfare, those flowers had fulfilled their essential purpose. I was moved to bear witness to their buoyant splendor and promised myself that I would watch for their emergence every spring, which I did – until the spring of 2010.

Looking back, nothing beyond the typical busy movement we all engage in accounts for my forgetfulness – the phone calls, the endless shopping, the time spent on the computer, the driving here and there that take up so much of our days. Who knows what blocked them from my mind that year? But when I happened that spring to go into the back yard, I was dismayed to discover the mini daffodils had come and gone

and were now withered and bent, each yellow bloom as dry as parchment.

Is it foolish to say that I experienced grief at that moment? Of course what I felt wasn't the grief of big things, of the life-tsunamis that leave us crushed and bowed and struggling for breath. No, what I felt was a smaller grief for a smaller loss, for the missing of a quiet but still important gift that had slipped away unregarded. I stood beside those dead blooms as if at a gravesite, full of regret and hoping at least that the birds had gloried in them. I knew the flowers had lost nothing by being forgotten; it was I who had lost.

How lucky that within each bulb there exists a world of second chances. I re-made my promise that day to watch for the arrival of the tiny daffodils each spring, and so far I have kept it. A small thing? Absolutely. But I am learning the truth of a quote from writer Robert Brault: "Enjoy the little things in life . . . for one day you will look back and realize they were the big things."



The River Everflowing

Isabella Blake, Tay McKamy

O Allegheny! One of a trinity
A tiara of bridges
over your green azure, everflowing
water seen by “Almond Eyes”
Arrows perhaps, a hatchet buried
Knowing life was never harried
Canoe on the river, everflowing

Returning from Europe
Having seen the rolling hills of the Rhine
I see the Allegheny as though for the first time
Three quarters of a century passed
Cleansed, a recovery sublime

Hidden in the smog, not fog
The brackish river flowed
Cloaked by greedy rapacious “Moguls”
Cigars of gold, smokestacks billowing
Soot, smoke, out of mouths bellowing

Only caring for their forward thrust
a reckless jab, a senseless rape
For money they can’t possibly spend
Steel and coal being carried
By giant erector sets
Against the shrimp-colored sky

Site of sacrificial fires
A body drops in molten steel

Guzzled cheap vodka splashes
Over deadened lips
While frenetic polkas play
“Roll out the Barrel”

Memories of ashes and bile in the river everflowing
Always an “unspoken” horror covered
by an unholy smoky veil
A child stands by the riverbank
Yearns for a summer swim
The decadent river was choked by fish
Sad song “the river chokes the fish”

Hired Pinkerton detectives go hunting,
Bullets for their prey
Union men who want a decent meal
About the steelyards lay

Carnegie flycasting his bread upon Scotland waters
Avoid Home-stead fast eyes
Abandoned Henry Frick, his partner, is shot not dead
Lines drawn, Carnegie returns
Hands over eyes asks to meet with Henry
To see if he is well

Henry posts a letter “we will meet? in Hell”

When the apocalypse comes, devours us in fire
The embers of steel furnaces burn, beyond that hour

Minions have passed, the workers, the drudge, the child
Allegheny unseen by their hollow, unknowing eyes
Expect Resurrection

O Allegheny! One of a trinity
A tiara of bridges
Over your green azure, everflowing
From her depths a reflection
of rolling hills, recognizing

An enchanted world where
dwells the unrealized joy and beauty of glorious souls
Everflowing!

Field Day

Daniel C. Hudson

Johnny Jordan held his breath as if submerged in water; his arms flailed, struggling to raise him to the surface of the lake; and he felt sheer terror. Gasping he awoke from his restless sleep. How could it be that a whole year had passed, and another Field Day was at hand?

He hated the annual event. He imagined headlines in the Middletown Press, various wise guy reporters practicing their eloquence with material he provided:

“Young Johnny Jordan suffered cramps and drowned half way through marathon swim across the lake yesterday at the Lake Beseck Community Association Field Day. A young lady, Joanie Hartwell, describing herself as an acquaintance said, ‘It was too bad. We told him he was too wimpy to do it’.”

Or:

“Someone should have reminded Johnny Jordan it was a diving, not a belly whopper, event before he retired in painful agony bare tummy shining like a stop light after his first try.”

Or:

“Johnny Jordan expired from a heart attack in the middle of the bicycle race when the ambulance from Middlesex Hospital got lost, arriving two hours after receiving the call.” Some of the kids had special talents to demonstrate like handling a Sunfish or water-skiing. Not Johnny. If he had only taken the first aid, or the water rescue course, he could strut around looking official and feeling important ready to

assume responsibility in an emergency. What if one of his friends, especially one of the girls, became ill or got hurt?

Maybe he could avoid Field Day altogether escaping into the woods in one of his long, lonely walks. But, he did that too often. Everyone had an excuse to get together on Field Day. It was by its nature a social occasion. No contrivances were needed to bring his group together. There were no unanswered phone calls because others weren't home, out somewhere having fun without him, no frustrating exchanges with Joe, “What do you want to do?”

“I don't know, what do you want to do?”

His friends would not allow him to avoid Field Day, if he tried. Moreover, he feared exclusion from what was likely to be the topic of conversation for many days. Who wanted to be left out even if only he was the butt of weak humor? But, why did the others so enjoy his discomfort, his mediocrity of performance, even his humiliation? Was it because he so often gained recognition for leadership and academic achievement at school? That's it, they were jealous. The thought helped shield him against the swords and arrows ahead.

As the day ran its schedule, Johnny looked forward to applauding the achievements of others. I enjoy it; really, I do, he told himself. Tommy always performed well in the swimming events, both sprint and long distance. She had the best women's time across the lake last year and finished behind only one or two of the men, and she won the diving competition. She intended to stand aside and give Margie Harris the chance to take that prize this year. Ed Turner with his strength, his endurance, mostly his stubbornness of will

trained to pedal up the two grueling climbs of the cycle race - Algonquin Road, and later Kickapoo Road, to make his bid for victory. He was the favorite. Most of the other participants walked their bikes at least part way up the two hills. Joanie Hartwell and Alice Harris were not athletic, but they charmed a large lunch time audience with their vocal and guitar duets. Joanie also gave sailing lessons to younger kids. Even Joe Harris made his mark by chipping golf balls into a pail. His Dad's money made lessons and country club membership possible for him from a very young age. Field Day provided the opportunity to fleece professional men who made big deals on the golf course and could not resist Joe's obnoxious challenge.

The new kids, Josh and Rebecca Paley, won recognition for their special skills. Josh gave a spectacular rendition of the national Anthem on his trumpet to open the program and honored World War II veterans with taps in commemoration of V-J Day. Rebecca set up her trampoline on a corner of the beach, gave a demonstration, and allowed others to try out the device.

Someone always dragged Johnny into the more clownish activities. He entered the three-legged race with a heavier boy. The pair led at the three quarter mark when Johnny's partner tripped and stumbled. In a panic he reached out for balance, arms swinging, delivering a solid punch to Johnny's cheek. The two struggled, balanced precariously on their bound legs, their free legs waving like the tentacles of some primordial creature yielded up from murky depths of the Lake, then re-established their poise just long enough for Tommy to snap a photograph before they collapsed in ignominy, Johnny blinded by the flash of another camera shot. Before and after.

It appeared that Johnny might win the pie eating contest. Lined up with several others, mostly fat men, like pigs at a trough, hands behind their backs, bent over their plates, Johnny gorged himself on large slice of pineapple pie, bits of the fruit lodging in his nostrils. Joe nudged, accidentally or not, Johnny's plate off the table. "What's the problem?" Joe said. "You could have gone to the ground on your knees and scarfed the rest of it off the plate."

"Right," Johnny responded. "Then I could have 'oinked' to get the judge's attention."

"That's your trouble," Ed observed. "You care more about how you look than about winning. No competitive spirit."

"You're so vain," Joanie chimed in. "God forbid that you look a little silly. That's why we love to laugh at you, not with you."

Johnny tugged lightly on her blond pony tail. She pulled less lightly a handful of his hair.

"Time for the sack race!" boomed the sound system.

The others looked at Johnny. "No way," he protested. "No! No! No!"

They dragged him over to the registration table. "Here's one more contestant. He's just a little shy," Joanie explained.

He wasn't going to refuse. He wouldn't have his friends, especially Joanie, think he was a bad sport. The sack race ran true to form. He had a premonition, perhaps a self-fulfilling prophecy? At the climatic moment, Johnny in the lead, a few yards from victory, smelling it, tasting it, jostled from behind, a child's sand pail and shovel in the way, feet entangling in

the loose burlap, sweating in his supreme effort, gulping for air, Johnny went tumbling. Hilarity unrestrained. Wit unsheathed.

“Johnny got sacked!”

“Disheveled by a shovel!”

“Impaled!”

Tommy took the women’s first in the cross the lake swim, behind only one guy; Ed a first in the bike marathon; Margie a second in diving. Everyone congratulated them and admired their prize ribbons. An article in the Middletown Press accorded them recognition. Joanie’s, Alice’s, Josh’s musical talents received notice. So did Rebecca’s demonstration on the trampoline. Joe got special mention for donating his winnings to the Animal Welfare League, under pressure from the other kids, of course. Only, Johnny got neither a prize nor press notice. Sometimes putting on an angry scowl of protest or assuming a posture of exaggerated hurt, but joining eventually in their hearty laughter, he felt good among his friends. There were expectations he had to fulfill too, and he did so superbly.

He had no ribbons to show his grandchildren, but he cherished the memories, companionship, and high spirits. He saw that he got more attention from his assumption of reluctance, from long suffering acceptance of his Fate, from the amusing futility of his performances, and more fun from the general laughter which ensued than did those who felt the pride of individual victory after suffering the anxiety of possibly disappointing expectations. He knew there were some people who should not be ridiculed for their ineptitude,

because they were inept in all things. He knew he was not one of them.

As the days passed, lively conversation, high spirits, outrageous mimicry, fond recollection, sharing pictures, some of still another series of field day fiascos featuring Johnny Jordan. His misadventures became community folklore.

After one of the gatherings at the community soda shop, Johnny walked Joanie home. In the dark stretch of Lake Shore Drive, Joanie reached for his hand. Her grip was strong, guitar practice, he thought. It didn’t get any better than this. Maybe, Field Day wasn’t so bad after-all, as long as it was only once a year. What about every other year? A proposal worth considering for sure.

The Dream and the Mouse

Jane Knox

It is often unsettling when night dreams and everyday reality intersect. In a recent dream, my bed was unmade and the white sheets were dragging on the floor and slightly under the bed. I noticed mouse droppings on the sheet that was hanging down. This could not happen in waking reality because my mattress is on a platform.

Four evenings after the dream, I went to walk into my bedroom and from the entryway saw something on the carpet. It moved. The lamp is on the opposite side of the room so I could not see clearly. A mouse was trying to right itself and then it took a few halting steps. I shuttered as I thought that I had walked barefoot over that area of carpet a few minutes before. Did I almost step on it? The thought of having mice in my bedroom is repugnant to me.

Something needed to be done. I could not bring myself to kill it. I felt fear about getting closer. Finally, I went to the storeroom and got a waste paper basket and a piece of cardboard. I pushed the mouse into the basket with the cardboard. I walked out the French doors and across the patio to the lawn and I flung it with all my strength from the basket a distance from the house.

I remember the last advice I ever received from my father before he died. I had found a dead mouse in the house and didn't know what to do with it.

He told me to flush it down the toilet.

The next morning I sat, drank my coffee and looked out the

glass doors. I wondered if the mouse were still alive. No sooner had that thought come to mind when I saw something small move on the patio. I don't know if the mouse had some kind of birth defect or, if something happened to its legs to cause partial paralysis. The mouse continued to slowly drag itself back and forth on the patio periodically becoming very still for a while. Finally, I steeled up my courage and went out the door. The rodent was not moving at this point. I got close enough to see that it was small and cute. When I left the house, it was still there. Later in the day, I stopped back home and the mouse was gone. Perhaps the neighbor's cat or a hawk flying by got it.

It dawned on me there would not be only one little mouse. It was sure to have siblings and a mother and a father. I certainly did not want mice in my bedroom. The thought of a mouse running up on my bed is horrifying.

I have been haunted by the various emotions the episode evokes. The animal struggling to right itself and to walk reminded me of seeing animals in the past who had been hit by a car or were rabid. There is something deeply disturbing for me to see a life struggling to move; struggling to survive. I can still see the terror in a wounded deer's eyes.

All of these images are distressing. I think of my paralyzed younger sister who is a prisoner in a nursing home bed. Annie lives with constant pain and is unable to move her legs or even turn over in the bed. She looks so young, small and helpless.

Spires

Garry Thomas

Sparse spires poke the sky
Does anyone notice or ask why?

Long needles hang around
Turn golden, drop to the ground

Soft cushion under my feet
As I hike in the heat

Closely clustered, withstand much drama
Holding up against nature's trauma

Thunderstorms dance, lightning hits
Pillars crash down, broken to bits

Shattered trunks and branches fall against others
Perhaps down come sisters and brothers

Wood grows brittle and cold
Decays and returns as earth's gold

Whence seedlings sprout and grow
New spires I will get to know

(Assignment - - - write something about a forest without the following words: Softness, Dim, Cool, Green, Hidden, Mysterious, Windy, Pine, Trees, Scary)

Our appreciation goes to Cheryl Panosian-Haddad, Anton Deiters and Ray Morse for their encouragement and patience throughout the writing and publication of these pieces.

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Founders Hall is a recreation and education center open, without charge, to individuals 60 years of age or older in the Ridgefield area. Founders Hall was built in 2002 by Founders Hall Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit partnership of the Couri and Goldstone families. The foundation operates Founders Hall with financial support from the families as well as from its members, civic-minded corporations, foundations and individuals.