

LEXINGTON
LifeTimes
A CREATIVE ARTS JOURNAL
ISSUE 16 | SUMMER 2025





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With this our sixteenth issue, we are celebrating the publication of 600 pages of creative output by Lexington's senior population since our inception in 2018 when the Friends of the Lexington Council on Aging launched the bi-annual publication of **LEXINGTON LifeTimes**: A CREATIVE ARTS JOURNAL with a grant from the FCOA-funded Bright Ideas program. This current issue showcases the talents of 22 seniors who live or work in Lexington.

An editorial board of volunteers sets the criteria for submission and selects entries for inclusion. Distribution is electronic and worldwide with a limited number of copies printed.

Since the Summer 2018 issue, the Journal has gratefully received underwriting support in the form of display ads from local businesses, while still receiving some funding from the FCOA. Starting with the eighth issue, Lexington LifeTimes Patrons have also provided critical financial support.

You can support the Journal, and the activities of the FCOA, by making a gift to the Friends of the Lexington Council on Aging. If you wish to be recognized as a Patron, please note this on your check or on the donation envelope or online form. Please help to keep this popular publication going!

Submission guidelines for future editions as well as information on how to support the Journal and FCOA can be found on the Friends of the Lexington Council on Aging website:

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ON THE COVERS

FRONT:

Wet Green Leaf
BY SHERWIN LEHRER

BACK:

Come on In
BY RICHARD GLANTZ

Table of Contents

3

Summer

BY MARIANNE LAZARUS

4

Bells

BY ELIZABETH ROZAN

5

The Man with the Keys

BY RICARDO CALLEJA

6

Paint Pour 08.31.23

BY EILEEN KAHAN

7

Sunday Morning in Deep Waters

BY LESLIE STEBBINS

9

At the 1939 World's Fair

BY ALICE S. LEVENTHAL

10

Quiet Reflections

BY DONNA CALLEJA

12

My Parents' Journey

BY DAVID ROTHSTEIN

15

Dad

BY ALEXANDER MARIO CAMELIO

16

The Beach

BY JIM POAGE

18

Making History

KHORSHED DUBASH & AMY MCGREGOR-RADIN

20

Ear Candy

BY MARY LEVIN KOCH

21

Daddy's Little Girls

BY ROBERT ISENBERG

23

Stories

BY ALICE S. LEVENTHAL

24

Kitchen Memories

BY MANNY BLIAMPTIS

26

Fanciful Forest

BY PAM SMITH

27

The Tree

BY RICARDO CALLEJA

28

Tapestry

BY TRACY MARKS

29

Sleeping Beauty Woke

BY TRACY MARKS

30

Lunch in Kyoto

BY GARY FALICK

31

Dream Time

BY JANE GRIGNETTI

32

Peace

BY JOHN EHRENFELD

33

Contributors

Summer

BY MARIANNE LAZARUS



Mixed media collage (2024)
22" x 30"

Bells

BY ELIZABETH ROZAN

IN THE TOWN where I feel grateful to be living, one of the four churches in the center of town recently began to ring its bells again, at 12 noon and 6pm. I'm never sure of the name of the hymns, but the sound is familiar. When I am out in the yard trimming the bushes, watering the flowers, or moving a plant to a different location and I hear the bells, I stop my activity and close my eyes.

I think of the shape of the bell, wondering how its form produces exactly that sound. I think of how it is being rung. Is there an old man or a sexton climbing up to the rafters, pulling an old waxed rope? Or is it on some sort of electric timer, programmed to play exactly this tune at exactly this time every day?

I feel the resonance coming from the center of my being, the reverberations that still me, that ground me, that transport me to a time of tiny villages with cobblestone streets pressed together by yellow or white stucco walls, red geraniums, and vinca spilling out of window boxes along the way, reaching for the sunlight that slants through the architectural angles.

There are distant voices in a language of my youth, escalating laughter, smells of espresso and baking bread wafting on a breeze toward me. The stir of wooden spoons against old metal pots filled with tomato, basil and pepper sauce--staple fruits of this earth. The women, wearing black, come out with anisette or whiskey or wine to the sidewalk table where men in fedoras laugh and play cards while they smoke their cigars.

My silent garden is awakened. The wind chimes echo the bell, entrained somehow, ever so slightly. The sonorous tone of the selected note begins--first one low on the scale, then the higher pitched one on the tree, and then another out by the rose bushes. The call of the bell and response of the chimes give pause: each day is filled with sacred moments. A sound, a memory, a smell, a taste, or a gentle breeze on the skin are ever present joys that accompany the toil of the day. ♦

The Man with the Keys

BY RICARDO CALLEJA

THE OLD WALKWAY LOOKED WORN, too many decades of footsteps, freezes and thaws that allowed weeds to surface through the cracks. We wanted a new walkway like our neighbor's across the street, with elegant grey pavers, and a red brick trim. So we asked our neighbor to tell us who was responsible for such beautiful work. And he gave us the email and phone number of the man with the keys, who the next day drove up to our house in his black Ford F150. He was pleasant enough with a slight Italian accent and an aura of competence. He measured the length and the width of our walkway, but because he was old school, he did not carry a laptop or even a tablet. He wrote down the numbers in an old looking notebook he pulled out from his pocket. We asked him for a ball park figure of the cost of the job, but he said he wouldn't venture a guess till he worked out the numbers. "My secretary will send a written proposal by e-mail tomorrow," he said. As he drove away I noticed he had a rather large American flag attached to the cab of his powerful truck. I really couldn't tell if it signified heartfelt patriotism or right wing leanings.

The day of the job the temperature was in the 90s, the humidity in the tropical 70s. The man with the keys arrived with Juan and Josué whom he said were accustomed to heat. While the two former farm boys quickly set to pulling out the chunks of concrete, the man with the keys drove off in his air-conditioned Ford truck.

After pulling off the old concrete, Juan and Josué leveled the ground by hand and machine and gratefully accepted glasses of water. The next day they set all the pavers in place in an elegant pattern like the floor tiles of churches all across Latin America. On the same day a presidential candidate talked of mass deportation of people like Juan and Josué, I thanked them for a job well done, while I waited for the man with the keys to come collect the check. ♦

Paint Pour 08.31.23

BY EILEEN KAHAN



Acrylic Paint and Pouring Medium
12" x 16" (2023)

Sunday Morning in Deep Waters

BY LESLIE STEBBINS

EVIE AND HAZEL HEAD UPTOWN. Hazel looks to Evie to lead, not sure of the best way to go. They usually take a windy route up Olivia Street and cut through the backyards of the frat houses bordering the campus. They need to get to the flower shop to meet Steinberg. Steinberg said she would be there later in the afternoon to pass on some meth to Evie to give to Granny. Granny will hand it off to her sister, but Granny is tied up and they owe Granny this favor, picking up the drugs for her sister.

They know that when they do a deal with Steinberg she will pull them into a corner and give them a little extra. Hazel keeps a rolled-up dollar bill in her pocket just in case, but she wonders if this makes her look too organized. She tries to adopt Evie's air of spontaneity and manufactured apathy, and decides that even if Steinberg offers them some meth she will wait for someone else to pull out a straw or rolled up bill. Steinberg has pulled out a hundred-dollar bill before, especially when Granny is around. Steinberg has a girl thing for Granny.

"Oh, what a beautiful morning," Evie sings loudly as they prance down the sidewalk. They pause and tie their shoe laces together so that their inside feet have to work together as one. Hazel likes feeling connected this way and they have to wrap their arms around each other's shoulders in order to not fall over. Evie likes all the attention they get from people walking by as they stumble around trying to coordinate their inside legs. They walk in a funny jog skip and they say in

hushed spooky tones, "Lions, and tigers, and bears!" and Evie squeaks out an "Oh my!" on each round.

They walk by the fountain in front of the Michigan League, oblivious to a building that was built for female students who were not allowed to enter the Student Union until fourteen years ago, 1958, the year Evie and Hazel were born. They are also oblivious to a stocky man holding a fancy camera with a zoom lens. He has a ponytail, thick mustache, carefully trimmed sideburns reaching down almost to his chin, tight bellbottom jeans, neatly tucked T-shirt. The shirt advertises Mr. Flood's Party, a bar downtown, with Mr. Flood himself prominently displayed, echoing the man's sideburns and handlebar mustache. It's like the man with the camera is wearing a picture of himself, though Mr. Flood is dressed in a fancier dated style with starched collar, button down shirt, suspenders, like he is a bartender that has materialized to serve a drink to the early settlers of Annarbour.

Mr. Flood neatly steps into their path, as if he has just noticed them. He stands next to a plaque that identifies the immense bronze fountain as *Sunday Morning in Deep Waters*, though the waters surrounding the fountain are barely knee deep, pennies sitting on the bottom just visible through the murky water. Much of the fountain is dominated by the paunchy sea god Triton, who holds a conch shell up to his mouth that spouts a powerful river that shoots up into the air and then back into the water as his young boys climb

Lying feels like the only way to try for some control, regain a foothold, though they know that it is much too late for that.

on his back and cling to his long merman tail. This bronze meaty family is encircled by jumping fish that are splayed into impossible back-arching angles as they spout smaller streams of water into the dark rectangular sunken fountain.

"Hey, I work for the *Ann Arbor Sun*. Can I take your picture in front of the fountain?"

Evie's on board immediately. She's, like, jumping up and down. He explains that he is taking pictures for an article he is writing about the "youth" of Ann Arbor. He promises to send them a copy when it comes out. He snaps their picture. Evie is smiling broadly and chatting the whole time, flirting. Hazel is quiet. She hates having her picture taken, feeling ugly today, her hair frizzy from the humidity, her glasses sliding down her nose and getting splattered by the nearby water. She rounds her shoulders and wishes she was Evie, not needing to wear glasses, comfortable in her curvy body and chubby new breasts.

Mr. Flood says "The picture would be so much better if they just take off their shoes and step into the water. Could they do that? Just one more picture?" It is hot and they have already committed themselves to him. They untie their shoelaces, nervous-giggle as they struggle with the knot that has joined their two shoes together. Evie shrieks as she heads in first, as if the water is cold.

The light is perfect he says. He is quietly excited. He asks them to stand just next to where the frenetic Triton is blasting water peppering them with pinpricks of water. He says encouragingly, just an inch to your left, one more inch, the light is perfect, just a little more, over that way. He motions with his hand, lanky flapping fingers indicating where to move.

They feel too awkward to say no. They have already said yes, yes, yes, and don't

feel they can change direction. What would they say? And so they follow his command as they stand directly under Triton's Conch shell as the sea god uses his trumpet to summon up a storm of water that falls down hard on their heads like a pounding rain. They are drenched. Mr. Flood is snapping photos quickly. He says "Yes, yes, yes!"

Hazel wants to disappear, feels small and wishes she were erasable. Even Evie turns sullen, her eyes darken, mouth forms a round pout like a drain unhappily sucking down water. They climb out drenched, shirts cling to their breasts like cellophane. He says "Let me get your address. I'll send you a copy." Evie gives him their usual fake address; tells him they are sisters named Sunny and Ingrid. Lying feels like the only way to try for some control, regain a foothold, though they know that it is much too late for that.

There is a silent understanding between the three of them. It's like when folks smoke a lot of pot and everyone is too stoned and feeling self-conscious to even say "Oh, I'm so stoned, man." Mr. Flood waves an offhanded goodbye, fingers flickering again, says "Be cool." His eyes are mean now, only pretending to smile. He has gotten what he wanted. Triton, unmoved, continues to blast water, his boys still cling to his back, their dark bronze bodies wet, slippery, muscular, darkly laughing.

Evie and Hazel are too soaked to walk to the flower shop now to meet Steinberg, and they head back to Evie's house to change into dry clothes. Their shorts cling to their thighs, water drips down their legs and into their shoes, squish, squish. Evie takes her shirt and pulls the bottom into an angry tight bunch and squeezes some water out, they watch as it hits the ground. They don't speak. They will tell no one. Evie does not sing on the way home. ♦

At the 1939 World's Fair

BY ALICE S. LEVENTHAL

On a hot August night while dining with friends
my parents were shocked
when my mother's water broke two months early.
She gave birth to my identical twin sister and me—
the size of tiny chickens.

Afraid and worried we wouldn't survive,
our parents gave permission
to the world-famous Incubator Doctor to put us
in his modern baby exhibit for preemies
at the 1939 World's Fair
in Flushing Meadows, boasting,
Once Seen Never Forgotten.

Unable to feed, hold, or touch us,
our parents had free passes
to look at us through a glass barrier
while nurses fed us other mother's milk
one drop at a time—and they longed for the day
they could carry us home.

After eight weeks, plumped up, ready to leave,
old pictures show our smiling parents holding us,
beaming with pride and joy.

A sterling silver baby cup inscribed with our names
became a testament to our survival.



Quiet Reflections

DONNA CALLEJA, a painter and teacher, creates still life paintings of the flowers from her home garden. Her compositions combine direct observation and imaginative recreation of the light, color, and shapes of natural materials.



Zinnia (2022)

8" x 10"



Peony and Leaves (2023)

8" x 8"



Rose of Sharon (2024)

8" x 8"

My Parents' Journey

BY DAVID ROTHSTEIN

I FLY TO TORONTO to celebrate my father Aser Rothstein's 90th birthday party. I'm impressed with Dad's ability to assess the reality of his situation. "We have to move," Dad asserts, reaching with his hands for added emphasis.

"But you love living on the water, seeing Lake Ontario from the 24th floor," I protest, and my brother Steven nods in agreement.

"I stumbled on the stairs heading for the bathroom in the middle of the night. Time to move from our split-level condo," Dad says, accepting the stark reality as he did 20 years ago when he retired. We're eating our last meal at The Pink Pearl, a gourmet Chinese restaurant, a short walk from their Toronto home.

"Well, let's make the most of this delicious food," I proclaim, embracing the spirit of getting the most out of life.

Mom and Dad purchase a condo unit within the Assisted Living quarters at Arbour Trails, in Guelph, Canada, a 15-minute walk from Steven's and wife Carolyn's house. Assisted Living provides a robust Canadian breakfast, and unlimited full course dinner. But in spite of the reliable meals and activities — exercise classes, movies, performances, and lectures — my parents do not thrive. A year after joining the community, people greet Evelyn and Aser by name, while they return a smile and an anonymous salutation. My mother has lost the resilience to make new friends as she used to, despite the fact that meeting new people was one of her duties in their relationship.

Mom and Dad are also snowbirds, spending half the year in Florida. In November 2013, Steven and I decide it's best that I fly down

to meet Mom and Dad at the Fort Lauderdale airport, and drive them to their Boca Raton home where they live for the cooler half of the year. The driver of their packed car will drop it off tomorrow in Boca.

My brother-in-law Ben has argued that my parents should end the snowbird migrations. When Ben, a psychiatrist, brought up Evelyn's short-term memory issues, Aser shot back, "That's what you say," ending the discussion.

"Dad's respect and love of his mate, his insistence, above all, in *not* discounting Mom, in spite of cognitive limitations, must be respected," I argue, and Steven agrees. I plan to support their Florida stay with several visits.

My parents continue their partnership of 73 years. Aser can't hear well, and often refuses to wear his hearing aid. Instead, he listens carefully, reading lips as best he can. Evelyn answers all phone calls, and Aser chastises her if she fails to write messages down, because otherwise she may forget. They continue to be a synergistic, if impaired, team.

In February, Steven calls. "Hi David. Dad broke his arm playing tennis."

God! This has to be the last Florida trip for them!

Steven says "I'll extend my stay a couple days, but then I have to get back."

On their return north, remaining in the assisted living unit becomes problematic. Mom begins to wander at night, requiring more attention than the staff can provide. Connie, the head nurse, suggests that they consider moving to the Memory Unit. Steven and I are concerned; are Mom and Dad both ready to 'progress' to the Memory Unit?

Meanwhile, Aser provides the spark that puts nurse Connie's Memory Unit plan on the front burner, when he begins to get ready for bed at their dinner table, in the public dining room. Clearly now Mom and Dad have a unique opportunity to 'progress' together to the Memory Unit. The staff calls them 'the honeymoon couple', which I appreciate because it pays homage to their commitment to the finish line.

Shortly after waking on moving day, I walk to Arbour Trails from Steven's house, to meet Mom and Dad for breakfast. My assignment is to explain to them their move to the Memory Unit, hoping that the physical confinement, and the locked door at the end of the Memory Unit, does not spook them out. Meanwhile Steven and Carolyn will frantically ready my parents' new quarters, moving the essentials into their two rooms in the Memory Unit, replacing their larger quarters at their Assisted Living suite.

I find Mom and Dad in the huge main dining hall, flooded with light from the huge ceiling windows. I plan to take Mom and Dad to exercise class, which I hope will continue for them, but Mom is getting exercised about this new room, a new place, perhaps a hotel room. I explain that the Memory Unit is their new home, a nice, caring home, smaller, but with more staff to take care of them, a big community room, lots of couches and soft chairs, a terrace overlooking the pond, beautiful views, and an independent kitchen room within the Memory Unit.

Now the dreaded moment. On the second floor I punch in "Unit 2014" on the keyboard, the door buzzes, and we enter. A new reality, heavy concentration of canes and walkers, grimmer, less bubbly talk, slower pace, worn out people. *Must think positive. People mostly speak in complete sentences, though repeated questions and concerns permeate the air.*

Mom, Dad, and I walk down the corridor, to the office area having three attendants and a central view of the small eating facility. Steven and Carolyn are waiting, looking calm despite their intense physical effort just a few minutes before. We walk into Mom and Dad's unit. "Wow, this arrangement looks great!" I say. "The rooms are handsome, with a nice view of Guelph University," I continue. "Such a nice job of arranging the furniture," I say, turning to Steven and Carolyn. "In the middle of the first room are the adjoined single beds for you, Mom, and you, Dad," I say. "You like the setup? And the TV and stereo in the next room – it's so cozy, isn't it?"

Mom turns around, a bit bewildered. She mumbles, "Are we staying here a few days?" which might explain how their living quarters are 'cozier' than before. Dad is subdued, concerned about Mom.

"We should walk back to the central office," suggests Steven, "and meet the Staff. You'll see, I'm sure, how helpful they are."

"Aser and Evelyn," Tricia, one of three attendants, says. "It's so unusual to come to the unit together."

"Yes," says another attendant. You are the only couple in our Memory Unit. You have each other, 'The Honeymoon Couple'!"

Mom likes the discussion, but it is still moving too fast for her

At our first dinner at the Memory Unit, just Mom and Dad and me, Mom launches her hunger strike. Mom is inconsolable, no cajoling, as she expresses her dissatisfaction by closing her mouth. Mom has no words that fit. She just shakes her head, eyes nearly closed, tears welling up, trickling down one cheek. Two servers sense trouble and fuss over Mom, murmuring words of encouragement, hugging her, giving her at one point a comforting, delicate kiss on her cheek. Mom's eyes are mostly closed, but

she allows the spoons having carefully mixed whipped potato, gravy, and rib meat, to enter. And the dessert, a blueberry pie with a touch of soft ice cream, enters too.

Mom and Dad slowly walk into the community room and find a place to sit, a grand couch with large cushions covered in dark brown faux-leather. Dad's eyes are more closed than open, and Mom holds his hand.

I thank Tricia for their tender care.

She softly touches my shoulder. "It's very difficult. You will probably feel better, relieved, in a month or so, when your parents adjust to the situation."

"Oh, I was thinking about them, not me, but thanks for understanding. Yes, it is difficult for me, too," I realize.

"Remember, they have each other. It is so rare; this is usually the time that couples are separated, but your parents will help each other through this transition."

Thank you for your kind and wise words," I say. Then I ask the intended question; "I was wondering if there are any problems with the locked doors," I ask with trepidation.

"You have probably noticed that our residents are on the quiet side. But," she hesitates, "best to be on guard for Irene; she tends to scamper out if you don't pay attention. And be careful about Harry, the Runner. The trick with him is to smile, shake his hand heartily, talk, and hold on tight to that hand!"

Two months later my wife Marcia and I leave Steven's and Carolyn's house, and walk through the snow to Arbour Trails. I see Mom and Dad sitting down on one of the big couches in the communal living room, holding hands. Dad's eyes are thin slits, and he's about to slip into dreamland. "Oh! Great to see you!" cries Mom, smiling broadly. "And Marcia! You're here too!" Marcia is pleased that Mom recognizes her. After Mom drops

Dad's hand, he also smiles broadly and nods his head.

"Tomorrow we'll see the movie *West Side Story* with you," I interject. "Should be really good".

Dad is fine with the movie, but has recently demonstrated a stubborn determination to look like a homeless person. "I'm done with shaving. Too much trouble," he smiles, shaking his head for emphasis. "It's a grey beard for me from here on out." And clothes that sometimes smell. I think there is only one person in this universe who can tame Dad at this point – Mom.

The next day, Mom wants to take a walk to the old condo unit, to make sure the furniture, the piano, the artwork is all in its place. Problem is, the condo was sold, all the contents donated or distributed to family and friends. This is not the time for stark honesty. Confusion can be enemy #1 of people suffering memory loss.

Diversion is the better immediate choice. "We have to wait for Marcia to come before making plans for the day. Remember the plans to see *West Side Story*?"

"*West Side Story*?" asks Mom, thinking, wrinkled forehead. "Oh! Leonard Bernstein!"

I turn to Dad. "We're all going to see *West Side Story*!" I repeat to him, loudly and slowly, so I'm sure he hears.

"Are they serving popcorn?" Dad asks, smiling.

"Buttered popcorn, as many cups as you want!"

"Count me in!" Dad responds.

"Oh, Aser! It's more than the popcorn!" Mom admonishes. ♦

Dad

BY ALEXANDER MARIO CAMELIO

The young boy awoke
 amid the tears and sighs,
A wall of people, some he knew,
 Some he hardly remembers.
His mother, from a haze, emerged and spoke,
 “You must be a man now, for me...”
As she leaned down and held him tightly.

The nights in tears,
 were there any when a muffled sob,
 the dark song of the child,
Could not be heard?

The toy boat is adrift on the ocean,
 no direction, aimlessly afloat,
Pounded, wave after wave,
 some large, others larger.
At times he can see the shore,
 But he can't keep it in sight
 very long.
The tide pulls the toy back,
 or a storm blows him out to sea ... again.
He must avoid the rocks.

Dad, I needed you then.
 It hurt so bad.
I need you now,
 It's been so long:
Did I ever tell you
 I love you?

The Beach

BY JIM POAGE

I DASHED ACROSS THE SAND into the ocean water up to my ankles where the incoming waves petered out. Gradually, I scampered deeper up to my knees as the waves splattered against my thighs. When the waves splashed too high, I scurried back to the safety of sand. Sometimes I waded up to my waist if the ocean was calm.

I was in the early primary grades living in Hollywood. My mother took me to Santa Monica Beach regularly. I dug holes in the sand, buried shells, and built crude sandcastles. As I grew through the primary grades, I built more sophisticated sand structures. I dug a hole in the sand and packed it to make a seat on one side of the hole. I sat on that seat and drew airplane wings on either side of the hole. I was an airplane pilot.

I built drip sandcastles near where the ocean lapped onto the sand. I dug a hole in the sand until water pooled in the hole and formed a slurry with the sand. Grabbing a hand full of sand slurry, I let the mixture ooze through my fingers onto the ground and then onto an ever-growing tower. As my hand dripped more wet sand on top of the previous dribbles, I created a sort of stalagmite. By dripping the slurry in different mounds next

to each other, a castle of multiple dreamlike spires appeared. Each spire looked much like

candle wax that has dripped down the side of a candle, but with a point on the top. To finish off a spire, I carefully touched the tip of my finger to the top of it, let the slurry trickle down my finger, and pulled my hand away leaving the spire a drop wide at the top.

As I learned to swim, I wandered farther into the ocean, though not yet over my shoulders. My body rose gently as the forming waves passed around me. When I was older, I jumped head-first

through the waves as they towered up to break. Sometimes I stood still as they approached and let them knock me over, flipping me head over heels as my feet searched to find the ocean bottom.

Then I went to college, graduate school, and began working. I rarely went to the beach.

When I had children, the beach returned to my life. I have first memories of my kids at the beach. My oldest, holding a stick, drew floor plans of a playhouse in the sand. I'd never thought of that and admired her imagination. She understood the sand. She drew full size rooms—her bedroom, a kitchen, a TV room—and complete outlines



of sand furniture. She skipped from room to room. When my middle child was crawling, I placed him where the water overlapped the sand. He crawled into the water. I pulled him out and placed him back at the water's edge, but he again turned and crawled into the water, laughing. Over and over he crept into the water—his face full of glee. Very young, he already delighted in the ever approaching and receding sea. My youngest would not leave the blanket during his first trip to the beach. Any hand, knee, or foot that touched sand was immediately pulled back to the blanket. He took longer than the others to feel welcome at the beach.

I wanted my children to fully experience the joys of where the calm and pliable sand met the ever-pulsating ocean. I taught them how to make drip castles; how to jump headfirst into oncoming waves; how to look for shells and sea glass; and how to stand at the water's edge, let the incoming water lap over their feet, and watch their feet sink into the wet sand. We looked for driftwood shapes and pulled seaweed ropes with slimy leaves from the water. One time at Crane Beach in Ipswich, Massachusetts, we sat holding hands in a few inches of water while the waves came in sideways, washed over our lower bodies, briefly lifted us, and moved us sideways. We shouted and laughed for so long.

For 45 years, my family has spent a summer week at Boothbay Harbor, Maine. I always bodysurfed at nearby Reid State Park. I loved to wait for the gathering wave, guessing where it would break so I could catch it mid-break. I'd stroke my arms and kick my stretched legs to propel my body ahead assisting the wave in pushing me forward. At the right moment I'd straighten my legs and put my arms along my sides to form a human surfboard. The wave would catch me and

propel me forward—the ride had begun. The best part was my head, sticking out ahead of the wave that had broken, skimming forward just above the undisturbed water in front of me.

Being from Southern California, the US surfing capital, I prided myself on getting the longest bodysurfride of anyone on the beach. One time in my 50s, a young man around 20 bodysurfed next to me and rode the waves as far as I. But not farther. I was upset. He exited the water, wearing scarlet red swim trunks on his tanned and trim body, and climbed onto the lifeguard stand. A lifeguard who could perfect his bodysurfing every day. I felt better. While I had not outdistanced him, he'd not caught a longer ride than I.

As I aged through my 60s and 70s, my annual bodysurfing became a validation that I was still fit and hale. I could still bodysurf—and ride the waves as far as anyone. I still had it.

I returned to Reid State Park last summer at age 80, looking forward to my bodysurfing test to demonstrate yet again that I was ageless. But the winter's storms had redistributed the sand such that the beach no longer sloped gently into the ocean. Now the sand dropped steeply at the water's edge so that the waves broke right onto the sand where the water ended. There was no room to ride a wave once it broke. If I caught a wave, I'd immediately be smashed down onto the sand. Bodysurfing was impossible. I could not test if I still could bodysurf. That I still had it.

I wonder if the beach is letting my aging body off gently. Instead of showing that I can no longer catch a wave and no longer ride the wave as far as anyone else, the beach has maybe changed itself so I cannot test myself ... and fail ... and have to accept that I'm aging. ♦

Making History

KHORSHED DUBASH's drawing and AMY MCGREGOR-RADIN's photograph refer to events of 250 years ago in different ways. The punning title of Dubash's whimsical drawing of Paul Revere refers to the OWLL lifelong learning program. The owl's pose is based on the John Singelton Copley portrait of Revere. The hungry re-enactment Minutemen in Amy McGregor-Radin's photograph are ordering pastrami on rye at Via Lago. Via Lago has now closed and become part of local history.



KHORSHED DUBASH
PO.W.L.L. Revere (2025)

Pastel, pencil, cut paper
5.5" x 7.5"



AMY MCGREGOR-RADIN
Lunchbreak (2025)

Photography

Ear Candy

BY MARY LEVIN KOCH

IN MY MID-TWENTIES I rented a one bedroom apartment in Cambridge. Ironically, my father lived only a block away some thirty years earlier while attending law school at Harvard. Whenever he stopped by to visit me he commented on how little the neighborhood had changed. The same familiar buildings lined the quiet street and the tenants were still a mix of students and young professionals.

My near neighbor was a graduate student in the Department of Audiology at Boston University who was completing her dissertation. One afternoon she knocked on the door and asked if I would serve as a subject. She needed someone with normal hearing for the control group. I readily agreed and, a week later, I drove to BU after work, sat down in a small room, pulled on a set of ear phones, and raised my hand whenever I heard a beep. The test was to take fifteen minutes but lasted much longer. Exiting the booth my neighbor revealed that I had moderate loss in both ears and should consider hearing aids. While this surprised me, I chose to ignore the recommendation. After all, my neighbor was a student. Perhaps she had made a mistake!

Now, fifty years later, I acknowledge that my hearing has declined. I sit in the front rows of lecture halls and theaters; I inch closer to anyone who addresses me. All too often I smile when spoken to, nod my head, and pretend to hear a conversation. And, most important, I struggle to understand my seven-year-old granddaughter. Her high-pitched, school-girl chatter sounds like gibberish.

It is time to take action. Hoping the problem is only wax build-up, I have my ears

cleaned. Wax is not the problem. Next I meet with an audiologist at a local hospital. Seated in a grey sound-proof booth I diligently raise my hand at the mere hint of a sound. And bingo, within minutes I have a diagnosis: moderate hearing loss in both ears. Hearing aids advised. I am not surprised. I am ready to take the plunge. But apparently nearly every baby-boomer in Eastern Massachusetts is as well and I must wait six months before I can see the audiologist again.

When the appointed day finally arrives my hearing is retested. There is no change. I sit down with the audiologist and together we select a pair of hearing aids which I expect to take possession of then and there. Silly me, what am I thinking? Not only must they be ordered but the audiologist has no openings for three months. If I am in a hurry, I can go elsewhere: a big-box store, a nation-wide hearing center, or order a pair off the internet. No, I'll wait. In truth I've waited 50 years!

The day arrives and I am so ready. But, only hours before my appointment the phone rings. There is a glitch. All computer systems are down. A CrowdStrike reboot has given me the boot. Have patience, I tell myself.

Two weeks later I enter the office and see my hearing aids resting on the table as if they are awaiting the arrival of a new friend. I gingerly remove them from the small, silver box and try them on. The volume is adjusted and my long-awaited ear candy is all set. Perfect. I pull out my credit card. Neither Medicare nor private insurance cover the cost. No matter. The hearing aids are worth every nickel. As I skip through the parking lot towards my car, I can actually hear my feet brush the pavement! It is music to my ears. ♦

Daddy's Little Girls

BY ROBERT ISENBERG

“DAD, DAAAD...HEY DAD!!” He turned around. It was coming from a stranger’s face, this call for Dad. For a split second, he forgot that his children were away, too far away to hear their voices. He continued his walk through the center of the small town, the town where he had raised his children and they had raised him.

He flashed back to his first awareness that he was a father. There she was, a scrawny white mass mixed with mean red blotches, tufts of straight black hair sticking up, squirming legs and arms. This is his kid, his daughter.

His wife Dana holds the baby tightly and says, “Look! She is so beautiful.”

He stares at his wife and baby in disbelief.

Beautiful! Beautiful, my behind! Is there something wrong with Dana? Did she lose her sight when she delivered the baby?

He has heard that strange things happen to women after giving birth. He hadn’t heard of anyone losing their sight, anyway not yet.

He holds the door, reaches down and tries to pick Rose up. Tears are streaming down her already smudged face.

“Dad, how come kids aren’t nice to each other? Wouldn’t it be easier for everybody if they were?” asks Rose.

He has no answer for her, but he treasures her question.

They are sharing a sandwich at the local club. Rose is telling him all about the boy she likes in her third grade class. Rose is very impressed by this boy, but she doesn’t think he likes her.

He says, “You have beautiful insides that he will one day discover.”

“But Dad don’t you know that if they don’t like the outsides, they will never look at the insides.”

He is driving Rose and her friend J.C. to school. He is half listening to their conversation in the back seat. He is driving cautiously hoping to set a good example.

“How do you get in with your group?” asks Rose.

“All you do is come over to where we hang out.” answers J.C.

They both giggle with delight.

Rose responds with disbelief and wonderment, “All you do is come over and stand there?”

His older daughter, Beth, twirls, throws her racquet up, catches it and smiles at him.

“Isn’t this supposed to be fun?” Beth asks.

For a moment, a brief moment, he feels his muscles loosen-relax. He knows Beth is right and there should be no reason for him to be fretting that she hit the ball out twice in a row.

Beth comes home from a fencing match. She is furious. She is ranting about what happened with the other kids at the match. Dana is listening, not speaking. He comes in the kitchen where Beth is carrying on.

He asks, "Which kids? What did they do to you?"

Beth looks over at him and patiently says, "You know Dad, if you are going to get involved with every disagreement I have with other people, you are going to have a very long parenthood."

He is upset with them both. He scolds them and angrily tells them how upset he is with their constant squabbling. His anger has become his total essence. He continues on.

Finally, Rose looks up at him with her big brown eyes and asks, "Don't you know how much we love you?"

Is he too easy? Is he too strict? Is he both at the wrong times? He must watch the small things. Did she turn off the T.V.? Did she put out the lights when she left the room? Did she help clear the table? Watch the small things and the big things will take care of themselves. Ha!!

Will he be able to take care of them? Will he be able to help them be happy? Can he answer their questions? Should he feel hurt when they go to their mother for answers? Does he know where they are? Does he know whom they are with? Is it any of his business?

They come home from time to time. He is even less sure of his role now. They have grown up bodies, but then so does he. They speak to him. He senses differences, but he has trouble defining them. There are boyfriends, almost men. He watches them. He often feels their pain. He can do nothing. He says nothing.

***There was a time
when he thought
there would be answers,
but he was wrong.***

He is now a grandfather. He has waited a long time for this to happen. He has heard that this is as good as it can get. He treasures his grandchild. She smiles and so do his insides. It's still not easy. Not easy for him.

He is being told that he and Dana better do as they are told. He is not sure what to do, so he remains as quiet as he can. He watches his wife Dana pour out her

warmth, her love, her joy, only to be told that she said the wrong words. We are being told that they have a new way to raise a child. It is very different from what either she or her husband went through, in her case with Dana and him.

His daughter tries to explain to him that her partner is instilling the confidence she never had, and this is helping her to be a better and more confident mother. He tells her that only simple, foolish people are confident about raising a child. Nobody, nobody can know for sure what to do and how to do it.

It seems that his questions started a long time ago. There was a time when he thought there would be answers, but he was wrong. ♦

Stories

BY ALICE S. LEVENTHAL

We have *Our Stories*, the ones we tell ourselves.
It is how we wish others perceive who we are
in the picture we frame.
We preserve it, though it is a limited version
of who we are.
We have memories and details that elaborate
our past and present,
pieces we weave together,
a tapestry of our lives.
Sharing our vulnerable parts,
we show a view of ourselves,
that tells a nuanced tale, a more authentic narrative.
We open the space to see ourselves
in deeper ways.
If we hear what we say, we may learn truths
we did not understand until now.
We surprise ourselves when our stories
gain clarity, and a richer story unfolds.
We can know ourselves as we are today,
not as we were, but as we have become.
Yet, we are not our stories.
They are not who we are.
We are more than what we know and share.
We are more, this I believe.

Kitchen Memories

BY MANNY BLIAMPTIS

IT WAS A PRESTIGIOUS RESTAURANT near the center of town. It was relatively small but it served sumptuous food, and the service was excellent. There were two dozen tables in the front, a salad station behind and then the kitchen and dishwasher station.

That was 1951. I was a newcomer, learning English and trying to figure out appropriate behavior for a university student from Greece on scholarship in post-WWII America.

It was Christmas break at the university. All cafeterias were closed for the holiday. I needed a way to earn some money for food, since my scholarship did not make any provision for that.

I was fortunate to find a job at the restaurant as a dishwasher. I worked on the dish conveyer belt with Harry, a recent arrival from Greece who had come over to visit his older brother. He was quiet and efficient. The third person in the washing operation was Hanson, who was always humming while remaining calm and unperturbed. He cleaned the pots and pans, a job that required extra strength and technique. He was tall, massive, and good-humored.

Some afternoons, when the workload diminished to a trickle, a friendly waiter would bring us ice cream and water so we could enjoy our time of rest. I asked him to bring some for Hanson, too, but he did not answer and seemed to be upset. He sent a colleague of his to explain that since Hanson was black, it would be inappropriate for him to sit with us. I had no experience in the matter and thought that such a thing was wrong. I gave my opinion to the waiter, who shook his head and said, in Greek, "This will get you in trouble."

I worked at that restaurant for the entire Christmas break earning sorely needed money. I returned to the university with a sense of achievement and understanding. More importantly, had several new friends.

I visited the restaurant in the spring and asked Tom, the big boss, about a summer job. He thought for a moment and then he exclaimed loudly, "Of course! You will be the perfect person for the job. It is just a summer job, but that's what you need."

The job was at an exclusive summer resort, where a few dozen families rented cottages for the season. Tom had the food concessions. I was put in charge of the ice cream station with the hamburger section twenty feet away next to the kitchen door. George and Melvin, two rising high school seniors, were in charge of that section. Both of them had worked there before and were conscientious and efficient.

I dished out cups and cones of ice cream, learned how to make frappes and floats and had the pleasure of talking with many youngsters, who found my accent interesting.

A week after the resort opened, my old boss Tom and the general manager Ted came to visit and stopped by the stand to see me. They asked me some general questions, wished me luck, and left smiling.

Their next stop was the kitchen. As they approached the door, Tom shouted, "Hanson! Where are you hiding? You have company!" Hanson came to the kitchen window and said hello with a big smile, but he did not come out. The rules prohibited him outside the work area. The visitors went in the kitchen and chatted with him for a while.

In the evening, youngsters gathered in

the resort's outdoor pavilion to review the events of the day or discuss their future plans. Initially, I was reluctant to join in, but I realized that this was an opportunity to improve my language skills.

The group initially consisted of a few teenagers, but it grew quickly to 15 or more. Most of them were in junior high school and were interested in stories about the World War and the German occupation. I became a celebrity of sorts. One of the girls told me that the group was my 'fan club', which was an unknown concept to me. My dictionary did not give me a meaningful answer, so I went to the on-site manager, who told me to be very careful and not to allow myself to be alone with any one of them. That could mean real trouble. I was aware of possible complications, but this was a clear warning.

Often after these evening sessions, I went to chat with Hanson. He appreciated the company, and with him I could have actual conversations.

One night, he said that he wanted to go in the water some time, but the rules did not allow it. I told him that I would watch out for him. I stood on a boulder looking around for possible trouble, while he walked in the shallow area since he could not swim. Suddenly, there was total silence. Frantically I looked for him and when I did not see him, I panicked. After an unbearably long time, he resurfaced—alive. He thought that he would play a trick on me by submerging himself and disappearing, but the trick gave me a real shock. We laughed about it afterwards.

About a week after Tom's visit, a new chef arrived at the resort with his high-school son Jimmy. Some evenings after work, George, Melvin and I sat around and chatted. Jimmy sometimes joined us, but he did not really fit in. He thought my accent was proof of my total ignorance, that I was lucky to come

to America and not starve. He was totally ignorant. He made insulting jokes about me, most of which I did not understand. Finally, I decided to give him a thrashing, but I did not want to do it in the open area.

"Come to the kitchen! We can discuss this matter inside," I said.

He followed me, with George and Melvin trailing behind us. As we entered the kitchen, Jimmy saw a knife that was lying on the food counter and reached for it. I saw his move and quickly grabbed his wrist. I squeezed hard, his grip loosened, and the knife came loose.

"George, take this knife out of here! We don't need any trouble."

I pushed Jimmy against the wall while keeping his legs trapped.

"Jimmy," I demanded, "Say you are sorry, and I will forgive you."

Jimmy exploded with a stream of invective and tried to free himself, but I kept my grip and squeezed.

"Tell him to say 'uncle,' recommended George and Melvin, but Jimmy did not comply. I kept the pressure on and asked again, "Say you are sorry, and I will forgive you." I could have done some real damage to him, but restrained myself.

At that point, Hanson came on the scene. "Jimmy, you is in deep, deep trouble! Tell your father to get you out of here tomorrow. You hear? Tomorrow! Out of here! The police will come. Say uncle and go!"

Hanson motioned to me to release Jimmy, who mumbled a weak 'uncle' and left the area like a beaten dog with its tail between its legs.

Two days later, Jimmy and his father left the resort early in the morning. I was told that the chef had to leave because he had cut his thumb while slicing a baloney sandwich. ♦

Fanciful Forest

BY PAM SMITH



Mixed media collage, zentangles
18" x 24" (2025)

The Tree

BY RICARDO CALLEJA

It had loomed large over Murdock Street,
like a silent giant from an earlier era.
A witness that predated the arrival
of multifamily dwellings and SUVs.

But the man who bought the brown house
on the corner of Murdock and Saybrook
could not abide so much majesty.

He may have been haunted by a nightmare
in which the tree's copious leaves
would flood his tiny yard every fall.

Or perhaps he was afraid the tree's ancient roots
would crack the foundations
of his newly purchased property.

So he hired a crew of tree cutters,
who, mindless of the crime
they were contracted to commit,
turned majesty into an ugly stump.

Tapestry

BY TRACY MARKS

Weaving silken threads
upon the loom of my life,
I let slip some years,
wish to unravel others,
repair the warp and weft ripped

from fragile fabric.
But oh! the vibrant colors,
original design,
threads blood red and others gold —
this bold brilliant tapestry.

Note: This piece is in the form of a double tanka. A tanka is a five line Japanese form of sound units, which, in English, consists of 5,7,5,7,7 syllables.

Sleeping Beauty Woke

A HAIKU POEM BY TRACY MARKS

Sleeping Beauty woke
and looked into her mirror.
Aghast! Her wrinkled

face, her greying hair.
“Seventy years old!” she cried.
“I slept fifty years.

Is it now too late
to attract a handsome prince?”
“They are all taken,”

Her ladies told her.
“or dead or only wanting
a bedmate, laundress,

or nurse.... And besides,
handsome is over-rated.
Kind is what you want.

But kind men are not
princes.” Never mind,” she said.
“What’s this Internet?”

Lunch in Kyoto

BY GARY FALICK

OUR WEEKEND IN KYOTO more than 20 years ago was a combined business and pleasure trip to Japan. Having already visited the modern high-rise cities of Tokyo and Osaka, the tranquility of ancient Kyoto was a welcome experience. My wife Bebe and I arrived in Kyoto by bullet train, taking in impressive views of Mt. Fuji and the countryside as we smoothly rode along.

Upon arrival we taxied to our lodging, a ryokan or traditional Japanese inn. It was like entering another world. We left our shoes at the entrance, donned slippers and were escorted to our room. There was an entrance to a lovely garden and also a small room with a traditional wooden soaking tub, in addition to a bathroom. Our attendant was an elderly woman who spoke no English. At meal time, she would appear and set out beautifully prepared portions that were tasty but unfamiliar. We didn't know what we were eating, but we enjoyed it. Later, she would draw hot water in the soaking tub. When it was time to sleep, she took futons out of a storage area.

The next day we toured Kyoto, once the capital of Imperial Japan. Our first stop was the Zen Buddhist Ryoanji Temple. It features a rock garden in which uniformly-sized, light-colored, small stones are raked into well-defined patterns with an occasional large rock protruding. They almost looked like tops of mountains protruding through a cloud cover as viewed from an airplane passing overhead.

Our other very memorable stop was Kinkakuji or Golden Pavilion, a beautiful temple covered in gold and dramatically placed overlooking a large pond. The surrounding grounds had beautifully

manicured plantings which visitors could view as they strolled, sometime for hours.

After being immersed in these two magnificent experiences, we decided to visit a lesser-known site reputed to have the most beautiful wooden Buddha statue in Kyoto. Afterwards, in a nearby, less touristy, middle-class neighborhood, we felt hungry and went looking for an authentic Kyoto lunch. We came upon what looked like an ordinary corner restaurant with a few oilcloth-covered tablecloths, but not many patrons. The hostess was welcoming but didn't speak English.

Even the poshest Japanese restaurants had window displays with wax models of the foods they serve, and this one did, too. They offered a couple of different bowls of noodles, one with a red sauce and one with a brown sauce. We indicated to our hostess that we'd like to try those. She nodded her understanding, escorted us back to our table and scurried off. She reappeared a minute or two later to set our places – giving me chopsticks but knife and fork for Bebe. We assumed that since I did most of the hand waving communication, including ordering a beer for me and tea for Bebe, it was expected that I was okay with chopsticks but Bebe might need more help.

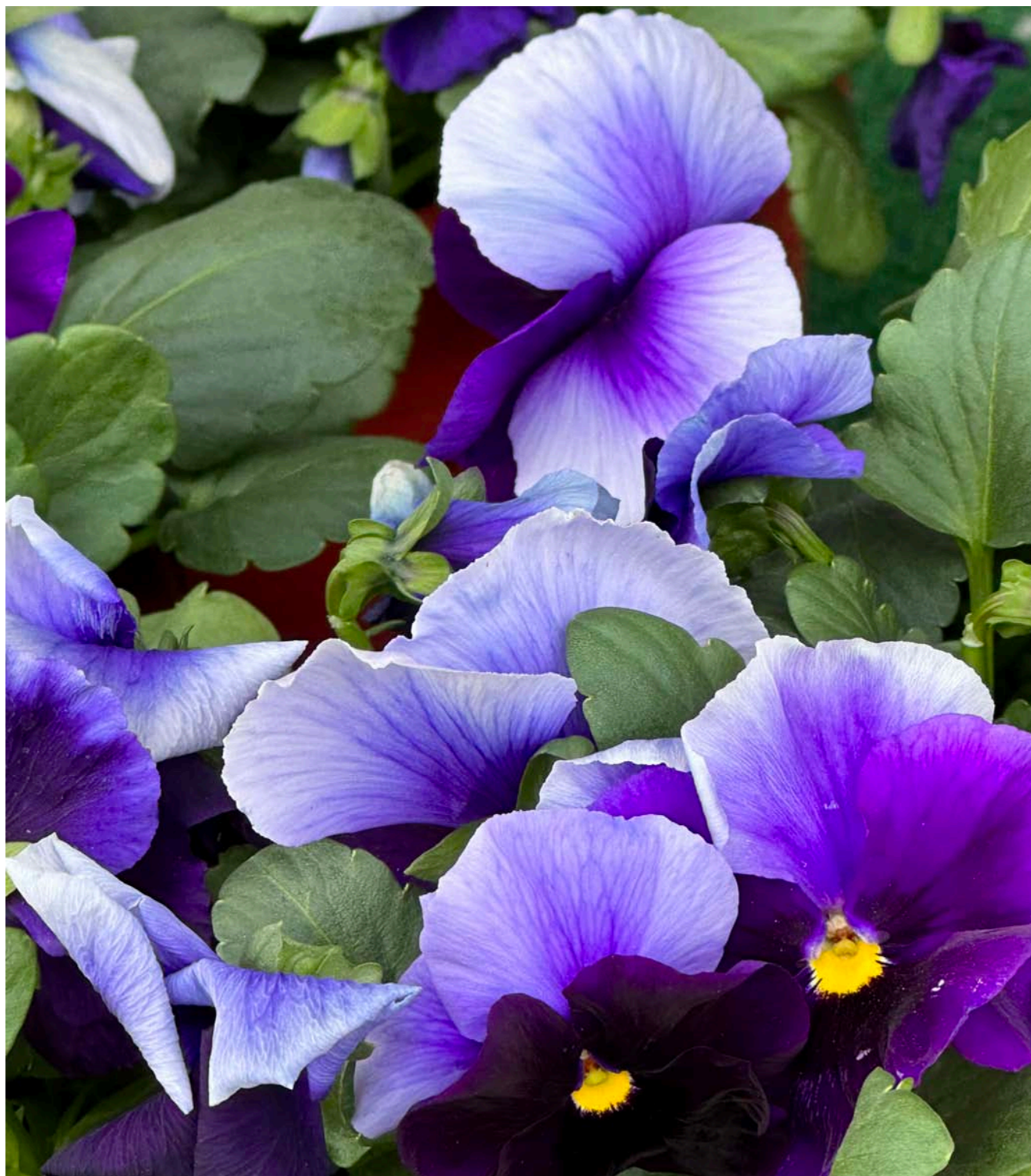
Before long two steaming bowls of noodles arrived, the red one proudly placed in front of Bebe and the brown one in front of me. Immediately our hostess scurried back into the kitchen, reappearing with a familiar-looking green, cylindrical, cardboard canister that she placed next to Bebe's bowl.

She then stepped back, hesitated momentarily and announced EE-TAL-YAN-SPA-GET-EE! Lunch in Kyoto was ready.◆

←————→

Dream Time

BY JANE GRIGNETTI



Peace

BY JOHN EHRENFELD

"Peace is where you find it."
Sometimes at hand.
Sometimes far away.
Maybe nowhere in sight.

The Hebrews call it shalom—
Life's most precious gift.
Peace nourishes the body
And opens the soul to light.

In human beings, peace.
Comes from a life of caring,
Knowing that others are attended to
And the world has been made right.

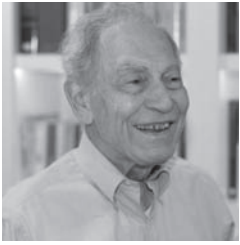
Peace needs close attention
And hard work. It arrives only
When devils have been put to sleep
And angels have risen in flight.

Nothing else can match peace,
Our species' special gift, it
Brings magic to every day
And welcome rest to every night.

Note: Inspired by a line from David St John's "Beeches"

CONTRIBUTORS

MANNY BLIAMPTIS has been a Lexingtonian for over fifty years. He grew up in Greece and lived through the wars and the German occupation. He came to the USA with an academic scholarship earning degrees from MIT and BU. He became a research scientist and director of engineering, published many research papers, and holds several U.S. patents. He has a lifelong interest in creative writing.



DONNA CALLEJA had a rewarding career for many years as a high school visual art teacher. Her paintings have been featured in gallery exhibitions in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. She currently enjoys teaching painting classes with the Lexington Community Education program.



A native of Cuba, Ricardo Calleja is a retired Brookline High School teacher who currently teaches intermediate English as a second language and Spanish Conversation at Lexington Community Education. In his free time, he enjoys reading poetry and fiction in English and Spanish, writing poetry, memoirs, short stories and personal essays, cooking, gardening and traveling.



For over fifty years, ALEX CAMELIO has had careers in education, media and art. He has produced video documentaries, hosted a program for artists at Tufts University, holds one of the first universal Master's in Media Literacy and was president of the Medford Arts Council.

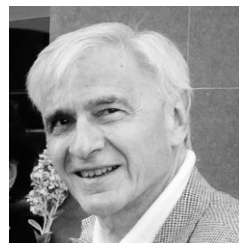
KHORSHED DUBASH, MFA Brandeis, is a children's book author and graphic artist. She has published an iPad book, Marcel. She produced posters, logos, T-shirts, murals, greeting cards, and puppets for the Lexington public schools and sold commercially. From 1977-1981 she was a principal actress at the Boston Shakespeare Company.

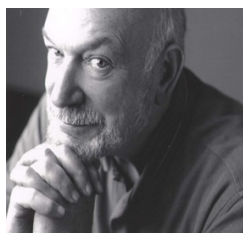


JOHN EHRENFELD came late to poetry. A long-retired MIT-trained chemical engineer, he returned there after working in the environmental field for many years. He authored *Sustainability by Design* and *The Right Way to Flourish: Reconnecting with the Real World*.



GARY FALICK is President of Lexington At Home, a non-profit helping seniors age in place. A graduate chemical engineer, during his career he wrote numerous articles in technical magazines. MIT Class of '58 Secretary, he writes Class Notes for Technology Review.





With degrees from MIT and Harvard, RICHARD GLANTZ spent most of his career managing engineers at Digital. Upon retiring, he “unleashed the under-utilized right hemisphere of my brain.” Now his Kodak moments focus on reflections, shadows, patterns, and silhouettes.

Since retiring from Beth Israel Hospital, JANE GRIGNETTI continues a clinical practice of consultation, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis and has developed a passion for photography. She cherishes time with family and friends and enjoys taking courses at Brandeis.



ROBERT ISENBERG was the humor columnist for a group of Gatehouse Newspapers for five years. His second book, *Wham Bam!: NYC in the Roaring Sixties*, was just published and is available on Amazon.



EILEEN KAHAN has been a resident of Lexington for forty plus years. She’s a retired psychiatrist who’s interested in quilting, painting, and gardening.



With degrees from the Universities of Wisconsin and Georgia, MARY LEVIN Koch has worked in art museums, published scholarly articles and coauthored a book on Athens, Georgia. Now retired she chronicles her family’s history and their current comings and goings!



MARIANNE LAZARUS began various crafts at age 10 when her mother put her to work at a treadle sewing machine. She started ceramics in 1958 in Cambridge, later working in pottery studios wherever she found herself living. Her crafting also extends to two-dimensional artwork, textiles, and some woodworking.



SHERWIN (SAM) LEHRER is a retired research scientist who has been photographing as time permitted after family and work since the late 50s. He has been a Lexington resident for almost 50 years. His son and grandson lived in Lexington and attended Lexington schools.

ALICE S. LEVENTHAL is an identical twin and mother of identical twin daughters. She has been a psychologist in private practice for over 50 years and is writing a memoir, *Dear Alice: Love Letters From A Lonely Boy and Love Diaries of a Lonely Woman (1977-1981)*



TRACY MARKS, M.A., teaches poetry writing, wordcraft, literature and personal growth courses at Lexington Community Education and elsewhere. She is a counselor, poet and author of four self-help books translated into nine languages.



Generally, AMY MCGREGOR-RADIN takes photographs for use with her printmaking practice. She has been creating white line woodcuts for more than 20 years and relishes the chance to play with shapes, color and wood. Capturing some of our beloved re-enactors ordering a very modern lunch in December made her day.



JIM POAGE grew up in Hollywood and Pasadena where the proximity to Southern California beaches sparked his love for sand and ocean. He has lived in Lexington since 1976. He enjoys New England beaches, particularly Reid State Park near Bath, Maine.



DAVID ROTHSTEIN and family have lived in Lexington since 1982. He was a microbiologist/molecular biologist searching for novel antibiotics, such as tigecycline. Currently he volunteers for the METCO College Scholarship Fund of Lexington, and for the Lexington Symphony.



ELIZABETH ROZAN has lived in Lexington since 1988. Having recently retired from a career with various public schools, she works with symbols and metaphors in both writing and the visual arts.



PAM SMITH spent 42 years as a teacher and administrator in a variety of elementary schools. Now retired, she has followed her other passion and become a collage artist.



LESLIE STEBBINS is a writer and independent researcher. She is the author of five books, most recently *Building Back Truth in an Age of Misinformation*. She has turned to writing fiction as an act of escapism and radical self-care in these challenging times. ♦



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