

L E X I N G T O N
LifeTimes
A CREATIVE ARTS JOURNAL
ISSUE 17 | WINTER 2026

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gratitude
gladness
generosity
geniality
goodness
gentleness
genuineness
graciousness
gleefulness
grace



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ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

*Happy Winter from the FCOA! With this our 17th issue, we are celebrating with gratitude the publication of over 600 pages of creative output by Lexington seniors 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. This current issue showcases the genuine talents of 22 literary and visual artists 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 received generous underwriting support from local businesses, while still getting some funding from the FCOA. Starting with our eighth issue, we have been so glad for the additional financial help of Lexington LifeTimes Patrons.

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

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BY ELAINE ADLER

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Last Leaf of Autumn

BY BOB MOSS

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Self-Portrait

BY SUSAN POLANSKY



Art quilt with AI graphic composition printed on fabric and machine stitched
56" x 58" (2025)

Marc

BY MARLENE SCHULMAN

WITH MY POCKETBOOK tucked under my arm, I stroll down the hallway from the bedroom to the living room to do a little shopping. “What a nice day. I think I’ll go downtown to buy a birthday gift. Oh, there’s a store.” On the living room couch sits the proprietor, in front of an uneven sign reading “MARC’S TARGET STORE” taped to the back. And what an endearing entrepreneur he is!

Marc is five years old. His hair is as blond as straw, lighter than even Clairol could produce. The blue of his eyes is borrowed from the sky, and as yet contains no clouds, only an innocent and earnest devotion to his enterprise of the moment. His rosy smile reveals a row of tiny, shiny square tiles, all white except for the gray one, the result of a forceful encounter with the front steps.

“Hello!” I say. “Is this a new store? I don’t recall seeing it before.” He pipes in the clear voice of a piccolo, “Yes, this is Marc’s Target Store and my name is Marc. We have lots of good stuff here. Want to buy something?” His wares are displayed on every surface in the room, including the floor. There are crayons, paints, books, and small plastic animals, treasures shipped in from his warehouse in the bedroom. I ask for some suggestions for a birthday gift for a four-year-old. He scans the chaos and suggests a paint set. “Little kids would like this, and it costs only twenty fourteen dollars.” When I protest that I don’t have that much money, he considers for a moment and says, “OK, then the price is two

cents.” I pay him and he gives me change from his cash register, a box constructed of popsicle sticks.

I realize that this miniature merchant is already in training to join the American work force when, after two or three encounters with his only customer, he announces that the store is closing because it is time for his coffee break. He returns only to say that he is going on vacation. He invites me to go with him, and we fly down the hall, arms flapping to propel our imaginary aircraft to Alaska. We sit together on the bed in our far northern hotel room and call room service for a snack.

Later, he helps Grampy count tomatoes in the garden. Our little plot, consisting of a dozen tomato plants and a few flowers, seems like a farm to Marc. Agribusiness suits him. Wearing denim shorts and a red Power Rangers tee shirt, with his sun hat on his head and a pencil tucked behind one ear, he solemnly records each tomato by drawing rows of shaky lines on the clipboard which he clutches with great pride. This is serious work and he does not excuse himself for a coffee break. I watch from the porch as he and Grampy labor in the fields.

After supper Marc asks, “Grammy, are you old?” I say, “Yes, I am old, and that’s why sometimes I can’t pitch balls to you or chase you around the track at the playground.” He replies with the perfect logic of his five-year-old perspective, “Well, I’m not old. I’m new.” And so he is. And for him, so is the world. ♦



California Christmas

BY SUSAN ROCKWELL

"SHOULDN'T WE PUT OUT THE FIRE and go to bed now?" my six-year-old niece asked, anxiously looking at the fireplace.

"Why, Joanne?" asked her father.

"Because Santa is coming soon and we can't let him get burned up!"

My brother dutifully put out the fire as Joanne headed for the kitchen followed by her ten-year-old brother and sister exchanging knowing grins. Shortly they came back, Joanne carefully balancing a plate of cookies and small carrots and a large glass of...beer!

"Joanne, I thought Santa liked milk." I said.

"Daddy says he likes beer better, especially after a long night getting all the way here to California. He needs to rest a bit before finishing up his deliveries." She carefully placed the plate, beer, and her letter to Santa on a table.

This was a very special Christmas in 1980, the first time that my brother Dick's family shared it with us in California. Dick's in-laws had flown in from Australia to complete the three generations. My parents and I had come to San Jose from Massachusetts, flying to L.A., then driving up the coast. We took time to tour the spectacular Hearst Castle, sample cupcakes at a bakery in nearby Solvang, and drink in the rugged coastal views.

It was a bit of a culture shock for me to experience Christmas in shirtsleeves. Christmas Eve day I joined the kids for a bike tour of the neighborhood. I marveled at the plastic Santas, elves, and snowmen set upon the green lawns and holiday lights sparkling in the branches of fully-leaved trees; very different from New England in December.

That evening, once the kids and

grandparents were off to bed, Dick, Jenny, and I went to work retrieving presents, placing them under the tree, and filling stockings. We ate some of the cookies and Dick sprinkled some crumbs from the table to the fireplace, a telltale sign that Santa enjoyed his snack on his way up the chimney. Dick took away the carrots and drank the beer. I wrote the response to Joanne's Santa letter so she would not recognize the writing: "Dear Joanne, Thank you so much for the wonderful cookies and beer. The reindeer, especially Rudolph, thank you for the carrots. I am bringing your nice letter back to the North Pole to share with Mrs. Claus. You have all been very good this year so you will find some special gifts under the tree for you, Ric and Belinda. Merry Christmas!!!! Ho! Ho! Ho! Love, Santa."

A traditional, chaotic Christmas morning was followed by everyone moving out to the back yard to break in the new volleyball set. The children participated throughout, with the adults rotating in and out depending on their level of stamina.

An outdoor supper of hamburgers hot off Dick's brand-new grille was followed by everyone piling into the van to tour the area to admire the many Christmas lights. Again it felt a little strange to see the "traditional" lights trimming vibrant fruit trees.

The day after Christmas, the family picnicked on top of a small mountain and experienced the beautiful lush green vista of the town of San Jose.

Soon, we were headed home, the in-laws to summer in Australia and my parents and I to the cold and snow of a typical New England winter. ♦

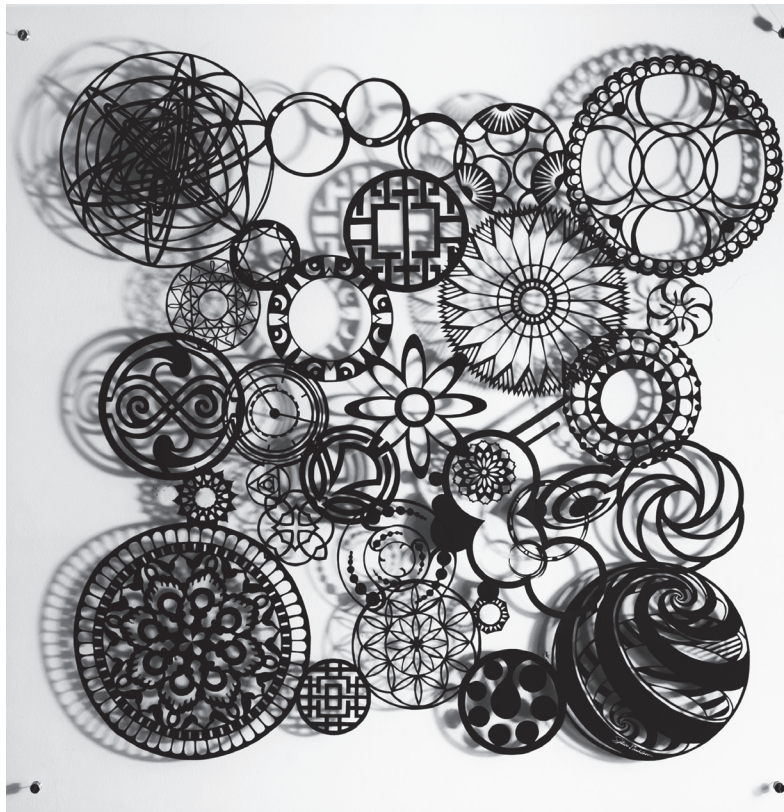
Silhouettes, Circles, & Squares

Mixed media artist JANE PAULSON creates intricate cut paper constructions. Paper cutting might seem tedious, but this artist finds it soothing and even meditative. Her cut paper work ranges from representational fantasies to geometrical abstractions.

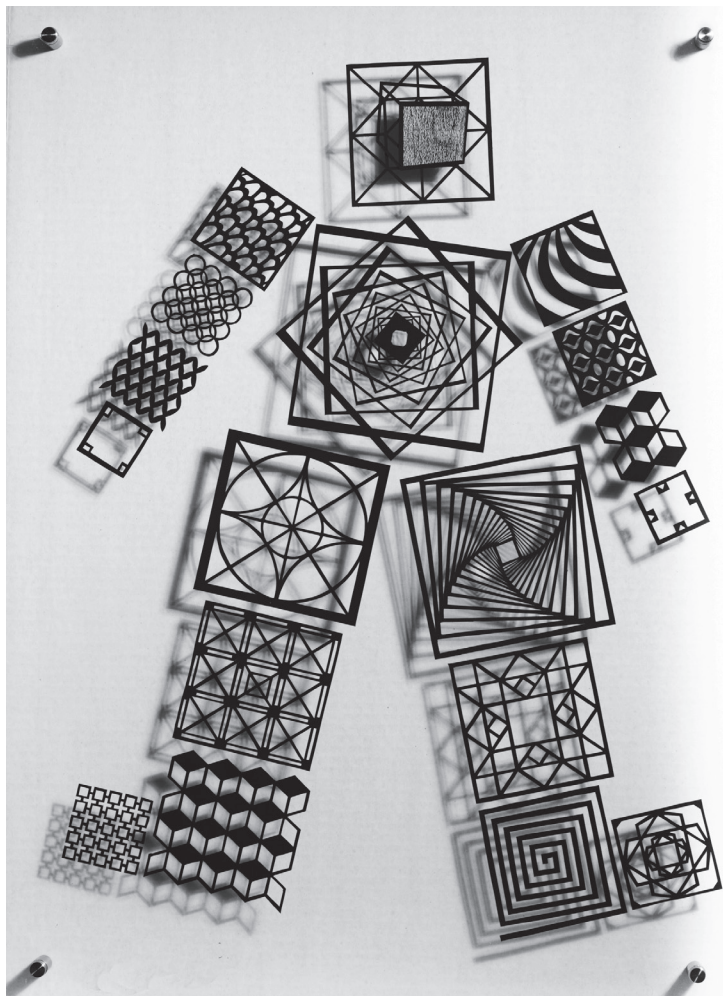


Choose Your Comic Adventure (2020)

Cut paper
11" x 14"



Circles, Squared (2017)
Cut paper
24" x 24"



Cubular, Man (2025)
Cut paper
30" x 22"

A Farm Grows in Topsfield

BY JAMIE KATZ



I'M A BABY BOOMER who lives and works in close proximity to numerous Millennials, a generation that has taken a fair share of abuse.

There are a few positive stereotypes about Millennials: they care more about new experiences than material goods, and they seek more social purpose in their lives and jobs than other groups.

Negative stereotypes run deeper. They are entitled, expecting positions and rewards without working hard. They hop from job to job. They're financially irresponsible. They want more work-life balance—often translated as laziness.

Stereotypes often carry kernels of truth. I've seen young workers trying to move up ladders too quickly. Some have sought full-time remote work to the detriment of their professional development. I've met others who simply seem confused and lost, unsure of what they want.

But it's easy to sell people short. I've also seen young women with babies who

complete their work on nights and weekends. I've had young employees help their colleagues without being asked. Other young employees switched jobs quickly and embraced new challenges. And I've seen Millennials work hard to achieve some

extraordinary results.

In the spring of 2023, my daughter Lee and her husband Cam purchased a property sitting on the Topsfield-Boxford line that included a modest ranch house that needed a lot of work and an old, weathered barn with structural issues. The value to Lee and Cam lay not in the house but in the land behind it. The property of twelve acres included a small cleared area around the house and a large forested area.

They brought in a contractor to restore the house. The improvements were many, large and small. There were complications along the way—the most interesting being a snake that showed up in the shower.

By the winter of 2024, most of the work on the house was done. The next big project

began—clearing about six acres of land. A crew came in to pull out boulders, do some grading, and level a swath of forest behind the house. Lee and Cam owned three horses they boarded at another barn and they wanted to care for them at their home.

Then a contractor built a set of covered stalls with an overhang, to provide shelter for the horses. The winter, though, brought more ice and snow than had the previous winters so they added more stalls and created a lovely, high-ceilinged barn providing more protection and storage. Next came a riding arena and a road through the property.

And then, to ensure the safety of the horses, the open land needed fencing so horses couldn't go far if they escaped and people and potential predators couldn't get in.

Lee and Cam went to work. They decided to do the fencing themselves, which included more than 8,000 linear feet of fences. Fencing meant digging holes, putting posts in place, mounting fence boards in the posts, then starting all over again.

On an early June day in 2024, my wife and I drove up to Lee and Cam's farm. Since nobody was home, we drove around to the back where we saw two people at work on the fences. One of the workers would pick up a post and place it in a previously-dug hole. The other worker on a small tractor equipped with a digging arm drove over and patted down the soil around the post, then rode a short way and dug another hole, while the first worker put the fence boards up between the posts and put another post in the ground. As we approached, we discovered Cam placing the posts in the ground while Lee operated the tractor, not a sight we ever expected to see!

Lee and Cam both grew up around Boston. Both have backgrounds as athletes, good

students, and recent college graduates. Apart from goldfish, Cam's family never had pets because of family allergies. Our family did have dogs. After an affluent relative gave Lee a horse for her bat mitzvah at the age of 12, Lee and Ernie, the horse, stayed together for some years with Ernie boarding at a couple of different barns. But neither Lee nor Cam had any experience managing contractors, building fences or sheds, or running a farm.

Fencing took most of 2024. Lee and Cam also had jobs so during their free time, on nights and weekends, they fenced and put up sheds. They worked right through a very hot summer. In the fall, they had done enough to bring their horses to the farm.

The farm now has ten full-sized horses, four mini-goats, a dog, and two cats, and the farm has gained some fans. Many neighbors have stopped to take a look, including the family that sold the house to Lee and Cam. They'd been worried that the new buyers would tear down the house and put up a mansion. Seeing the house restored and the farm in operation thrilled them—it was exactly what their father would have wanted.

Lee and Cam are not free of all of the stereotypes that people apply to Millennials. About a month into her first 9 to 5 job, Lee burst into our home at dinnertime.

"Dad," she called.

'What?'

"How did you work like this for FORTY YEARS?????"

Clearly, her professional path will not look like mine. But given what she and Cam have built, no one can label them as lazy.

I worry about a lot of things these days. But I don't worry about Millennials. We Baby Boomers may still have things to teach them, but they're showing us remarkable efforts and accomplishments. ♦

Arctic Intrigue

BY DEBI DULBERG



Mixed media collage
10½" x 8" (2025)

Old Boots

BY CHARLES RZEPKA

At two o'clock the sun was already low
as we headed down a different way.
By now, a January thaw had turned
the breathless streams of our ascent
into brawling tenors,
and the snow dimpled
over ice-bridges full of melting tracks.

You halted us at the edge,
jabbed for rocks with your telescoping poles.
"Step here, and here," you said, torsioning back
to point them out.
At the next crossing, I ventured first—
"If it holds me it will hold you."
Fathers should lead.

When I went through the ice, a long time
passed before I heard the scrape
of snowshoes on rock and knew
I would stop sinking.
Miraculous fibers keep the water out,
even when it's up to your waist.
But my boots were old and cracked.
The water crept into them, pulling me down.

I heard you yell not to move,
and then you dragged me out across the ice
by my shirt-collar.

This trek was your gift, snowshoeing
up to the ravine where every winter,
with friends, you skied the headwall,
while your mother and I imagined horrors.
At the trailhead lodge we'd had breakfast
with the wilderness medicine trainees.
They were learning to heal and save
in an uninhabitable world:
avalanche, fracture, frost-bite, hypothermia.
How to cross a snow-slope, or an icy stream.

We'd left them to their lessons
down in the Notch.

The ravine was empty, overcast.
The quiet cradled our voices before they went out.
You pointed uphill at the lid of clouds.
"The headwall's up there." I saw
gray nothing.
We ate under a house-sized rock
whose reflected heat had scooped out
seats from the snow-pack.
We saw the clouds lift.
The blue ice of the headwall floated out
like staves of—Bruckner?
One of that destiny-
stricken generation.
I cannot think who, now.

Driving home we made up the delays.
Traffic was light. You let me drive.
Under our intermittent talk,
radio voices stumbled, disappeared,
and staticky melodies gave way
one to the next.

Hip Replacement

BY DAVID ROTHSTEIN

AFTER ENDURING LOWER BACK PAIN that is not relieved by physical therapy (PT), I decided to consider hip replacement surgery. It's a remarkable procedure. A surgeon would implant a metallic ball into the top of my left femur, where it would rest and rotate in the ceramic socket embedded in the pelvic bone. 'I wish I had done it years ago!' is a typical refrain of patients today. Yet, I'm freaked by the thought of getting cut up. Will the prosthetic hip really endure for years? Without the operation do I become a couch potato, limping, fearing the nightmare of my hip giving way some dark night on a staircase?

My wife Marcia and I walk into the surgeon's office. Dr. G. is wearing a tie, his dark blue suit coat hanging on a hook behind his desk. His neatly-combed light brown hair has the slightest touch of grey. He seems dour, solid, thin. He exudes a sense of steady hands and is rated 4.8 of 5 stars.

I shake his firm hand and give him a one-page summary of my thoughts and concerns. He stops me as I start to read it to him. "What are you doing!?" he asks sternly, barely politely.

"I've summarized my concerns on a single page," I explain sheepishly.

"I'll just read it," he says, grumpy that I would consider wasting his precious time. He scans the page quickly.

"Yes, I understand these concerns," he says. "The X-ray confirms your suspicions that the untreated hip will be more symptomatic in the future. Your best bet is to move forward," he says with certainty. "The trail

hiking, biking, cross-country and downhill skiing, extensive swimming, and tennis that you love – these all seem realistic if you work hard to recover your muscle strength. But I can't stop you from hitting a tree on

the ski slopes this winter," he says smiling. He's gruff, but it's nice that he considers the concerns of an ambitious 77-year old.

"The table you wrote, I think, is the best short summary of hip replacement procedures I've seen," concludes Dr. G. His praise warms the heart! Both Marcia and I were molecular biologists. We selected Dr. G. because the scientific literature supports a quicker recovery time using the 'anterior' or front procedure.

"In addition, we've improved the 'anterior procedure' resulting in less blood loss," continues Dr. G. I thank him for sharing valuable, unpublished results

"Any words of advice," I ask, "to prepare for the surgery May 13?"

"Stay active, but stop any exercise that's uncomfortable. Let pain be your guide," he says. "And don't forget – no food after midnight May 12!"

Marcia and I agree to move forward with Dr. G.

On May 13, I call the hospital. "Arrive at 2 pm," the attendant informs me. "No forms to fill, no images to take before surgery."

At 2 pm, at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, the administrator says, "Head up to the second floor, Operations, at 2:30. Relax! Take a walk on this beautiful spring day!"

Two minutes into our relaxing walk,



a phone call directs Marcia to haul me over to Operations immediately! I'm in my gown by 2:15. The tall, thin and gray-haired anesthesiologist stops in briefly at 3:30. "Allergies? Any trouble with previous surgeries?"

In pops Dr. G. in his white lab coat with his light brown hair tucked so neatly into the blue scrub cap. He smiles, shaking my hand firmly, ready to deliver what he does best with professional precision. He slides the finger of gloved hand where the top of the incision is to be made. It's at waist level, considerably higher than I anticipated. "If I were doing the 'traditional' incision, it would happen one belt buckle to your left," he says. Dr. G. cuts the discussion short, saying "We'll see you later."

At 3:45 p.m., the anesthesiologist reappears. "First anti-anxiety drugs, then pain killers," he says casually. He chatters as we head to the operating room, but the drugs are working. I have not one shred of memory of pain, conversation, or dreams, until I awake dazed, and happy, to see my love, Marcia. My God! It's 8 pm!! Too late to leave tonight. I give up on a tasteless spaghetti dinner.

"Are you feeling, OK?" asks Marcia, who has never seen me turn away food for so long. I simply shrug.

"Did you bring any protein bars?" I ask hopefully.

"Sweetheart, I haven't been home."

"You stayed the whole day," I say, welling up with tears. "You're the sweetheart!"

It's dawn, and nature calls. I rustle out of bed and grab the walker. Leaving the bathroom, I'm accosted by two young nurses on early rounds. "I want to get out of here," I tell them conspiratorially. "I peed successfully. I have to walk up and down stairs before I can leave?" I ask in a hushed tone.

"Yes, you have to show us that you're ready," says the young nurse. "Here, sit down on the bed, and raise your left foot, bending at the knee. Careful now!" she says softly. "That's enough!"

"We have to do the stairway?" With a drug-inspired surge of maniacal energy, I grab the walker and lead the way to the testing site.

"Slow, please, and always hold the railing. Good. Now coming down, lead with your injured leg."

Judy, the send-off nurse, says, "Sign here please. We're prescribing oxycontin, very strong pain med. Please do not exceed the daily doses," she emphasizes.

"I'm not going to take oxycontin if I can help it!"

"Mr. Rothstein, this is NOT the time for heroic action. The early shift nurses said you were cavalier about your injured leg. Healing requires restraint and concentration, not bold action," scolds Judy.

OK, OK. I leave, via the obligatory wheelchair ride. The nurse provides a walker, a gift from the hospital. After a quick lesson, I hobble into the car, Marcia grabs the walker, folds it up, throws it in, and we're off!

A four-pound metal portable vacuum is attached above my wound with a rubber tube. The wound is protected by a durable seal of plastic as transparent as Saran Wrap, but considerably stronger. The vacuum will dry the oozing four-inch wound completely. I hate lugging the vacuum around. Otherwise, it's great to be home!

Two days later, the hospital sends the physical therapy administrator who tours our house, making sure we're ready for home recovery. She compliments me using the walker and stair-climbing. Earnestly, she warns, "So many trinkets and toys litter this house! I'm concerned that you're putting 'The Recovery' at risk. she says. "One slip

can ruin the best work of our surgeons,” she says, pointing upward with her index finger.

Marcia explains quietly, “My granddaughter Chaya’s toys.” She does not elaborate that Chaya and family are living with us.

Three days later my phone rings. It’s Sam, also on my home PT team. He visits us three times, offering exercises to limber up my hip. “I’m so impressed that you’re walking,” he says. “Are you sure you never used oxycontin? It helps you sleep.”

“Quite sure,” I reply. “But look at my swollen left calf and ankle! I’ve gained 8 pounds after the surgery,” pointing to my oversized left leg. “Occasionally I feel intense pain, like a muscle cramp, or a dagger cutting through a muscle. Is something out of place since the surgery?”

Sam’s response: “Wear support stockings, and see how it feels in a few days.” The swelling does go down, and I stop using the walker inside the house.

On Sam’s final day, 13 days post-surgery, he takes the despised vacuum. Thank God!! Sam cuts and removes the transparent material covering the wound, revealing nine black stitches over the incision. “Keep the wound clean and dry. Six to eight months from now, it’ll be all better. You can walk outside without the walker, and you can drive now,” says Sam, as he signs my release from home PT. “Stay vigilant,” he says. “And DON’T FALL!”

In June, I see Paul, my new PT, for 8 sessions. “How is your left leg?” asks Paul, a middle-aged man with neatly combed grey hair, who evidently takes good care of his body.

“I do the exercises, walk four or five miles per day, slowly but surely.” I reply.

“Good follow through!” Paul says. He has me assume various positions on his therapeutic table, observing the quadriceps,

hamstrings, and other muscle groups surrounding hip and knee, comparing right and left legs. “Great. If you complete your recovery in 6 months, it’s cross-country skiing by snow season,” Paul says, supported by measurements of flexibility and strength. At one point, Paul carries out deep massage for a knotted-up area of my left leg, breaking up adhesions without damaging structures.

“End of July is our last appointment. You’re graduating,” says Paul. “Try continuing the daily exercises three times a week,” says Paul.

“I’m not sure I’m ready to graduate.”

Paul dismisses my concerns with a wave. “Schedule more sessions if you feel the need,” he says.

August 11, I’m with Dr. G., who sits next to the enlarged X-ray showing proof that I’m ready to fly the nest. He declares, “In two days, it will be 3 months post-surgery! End of the recovery phase.”

“At our June meeting you said not to swim. Is swimming OK now?”

“Unrestricted! Any activity!” he proclaims, opening his arms for emphasis. He points to the shimmering, metallic hip so evident on the X-ray, and says, “Your prosthesis is stabilized, and won’t reposition. Congratulations! A+ patient,” he says. Victory is declared, affirmed by a beautiful X-ray image, but without attempts to measure strength, flexibility, function.

I have devoted a good deal of effort towards recovering, but any fall while walking, biking, or skiing could unravel the wondrous new mechanical part of me in an instant. ‘Unrestricted’ carries a sense of exclusion. Dr. G., and physical therapist Paul have done their jobs. I’m on my own now. I will see Dr. G. next May for my one-year checkup. ♦

Close to Home

Photographers JANE GRIGNETTI, GARY FALICK AND SAM LEHRER didn't venture far to find inspiration. All three images capture the transformative nature of light while having a strong graphic sense of geometry and shape.



SAM LEHRER
Sunset Upper Courtyard (2025)



GARY FALICK
Not the Infinite Corridor (2020)

JANE GRIGNETTI
The End of the Party (2018)



Regrets and Glories

BY MANNY BLIAMPTIS

Caught in the jaws of time past,
Bracing for the avalanche of time future,
You stand wondering, uncertain, perplexed.
You carry regrets in abundance,
Glories and triumphs
In the yeast of life's dough.

Stop vacillating, friend, your time has come.
Gather up your life's regrets,
The things you did and wish undone,
The careless words that escaped
Your guarded tooth palisade,
The actions not taken when the time was true,
The kind words you never uttered,
And all the opportunities lost.

Put them all in a gunny sack,
Tie them to the starboard rail, and toss them overboard.
You circle now in the open sea.

Gather up your triumphs and glories,
The things you cherish, the actions that led to success,
Words of wisdom and kindness
Offered to a friend or a stranger,
Healing a wounded soul or spirit,
Glories that followed clever work,
The persistence that led to creation.

Put them all in a gunny sack,
Tie them to the port rail, and toss them overboard.
Your ship is now sailing slow but true.

Cut the cords, right and left,
Your ship is now sailing true,
My friend, you're sailing free.

Moonrise Moments

A LIFE-WORTHY VERSES POEM BY BHUMIP KHASNABISH

On the eve of a Moonlit night
The Moon is rising near an ocean
And the Earth is asking the Moon,
 “How Do You Live?”
 The Moon says,
“By doing Good things and expecting Great things,” (per Carey),
 Or
“By doing Better things and expecting Nothing,” (per Krishna).
 The Earthly people ask,
 “How Do You become Successful?”
 The Moon says,
 “Be Curious
 Be Patient
 Be Resilient, and
 Be On-time, Every time.”
 Then the Elderly people ask,
“What Do You or Can You Take with You?”
 The Moon says,
 “The only things You can take with You
Are the Things that You Give Away
So, Give Generously, Never Stop, Period.
 Enjoy the Moonshine, and then
 Rise, Live, and Give
 Live, Rise, and Give
 Live, Give, and Rise
 Give, Give, and Give.”

Losing Time

BY TRACY MARKS

The first years were deeply etched,
as if in stone foundations, enduring
through inclement weather,
ever-present despite memories
buried in the digs
of vanished civilizations
of self.

The later years slip silently by,
rounding a corner I do not recognize
until ahead I see the cul de sac
marked Tomorrow Street,
and wonder where I have been
through decades of so many
unrealized dreams.

For some tribes, calendars
were once pictograms,
years named for events
that marked them.
I could name years
for my dying mother,
rogue tornadoes
of loss, communions
with nature, visitations
of the Muse,
lovers intertwined
and ripped apart.

I do not grieve the past,
but the years ahead—
too few to be filled
with all I did not live,
can not live,
will not live.

Epiphany

BY RICARDO CALLEJA

For a long time I searched for the meaning of life.
I pored through sacred texts.
I knelt, prayed and bowed.

But in the end, I could not surrender to Allah's and Yahweh's omnipotence.
They required too much penance and self denial.

I wasn't willing to extinguish all desire in order to follow the Buddha.
So I left my boat by the lakeshore
and began seeking the kingdom within
as Jesus had challenged.

But I realized that what I was seeking was much closer at hand.
I found it in the woman I love,
in the company of trusted friends.
while doing useful work,
re-reading Neruda's Odes,
and tending my garden.

I no longer search for the meaning of life.
I get up every morning and simply go on living.

The Ballerina

BY MANNY BLIAMPTIS

THE STORY

A man exited from a limousine in front of the opera house. A young woman, it turns out she was a ballerina, came out of another limousine and immediately fell into his arms, apparently falling on the street ice. The man carried her into the lobby and went to the ticket window. An usher guided them to the back stage.

The man's wife stood at the curb and waited. She was furious.

RANDOM COMMENTARY

- This is a new trick: playing such games in public.
- How can the wife stand such abuse?
- I think she should get a good divorce lawyer.
- I bet he doesn't even care for opera.
- I wonder how long this has been going on?
- They should call her the fallen ballerina.
- He had a bow-tie on. I don't trust such people.
- It must have been prearranged. Very clever.
- She was clinging to him like an old carnation.
- They should put a picture of them in the paper.

THE FACTS OF THE MATTER

Three days later, a beautifully handwritten letter arrived at the house of the couple.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for saving my career. A ballerina with a broken ankle is helpless.

I asked the usher to use a pair of binoculars to find you in the audience. Fortunately, you have season tickets and we could get your address.

You have a lovely wife.

*Gratefully,
Mirabella*

Snow Birds

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA JOLIAT



In the Swirling Snow (2025)



Solitude (2025)

Gulf of Mexico

A PROTEST SONG FOR 2025 BY FRANCESCA BINI BICHISECCHI

*Dedicated to The Associated Press
The Ancient Central Mexico Nahuas called the Gulf of Mexico “House of Chalchiuhtlicue,”
the goddess of water and fertility.*

Let’s go down to where the palms are swayin’
Sweet white sands, that’s all I’m saying
Taking me down, Let’s all go
To the Gulf of Mexico

Margaritas, chips and salsa
Surfin’ on a piece o’ balsa
Grab your suits and cool sunglasses
Sunnin’, roastin’ with the masses

Take me down, Let’s all go
To the Gulf of Mexico
Take me down, Let’s all go
To the Gulf of Mexico



*To hear the song,
focus your phone camera
on the QR code and
click on the link that appears.*

Amaranthus

BY JAMES JONES

AS A GARDENER, my preference is for perennials, particularly the low-growing alpine plants that mingle and spread. It was therefore a surprise when I saw red leaves poking up through the topsoil that had been laid the last fall. They seemed to be portending a rather gaudy annual. But, I said, no harm in seeing what comes of it.

A full-size plant came of it, and it was a little gaudy. But I found that I don't mind a touch of gaud--bright red leaves and flowers with a fine sturdy form. So, I sat back and enjoyed it, figuring that was the end of it.

Not so! Late spring brought another three sprouts of red, all in much the same area. Summer saw them grow and bloom with more bright leaves and fuzzy flowers.

What next? And, yes, there is a next. This spring, I saw eight red sprouts scattered here and there around the yard, some forming lovely combinations with existing plants, such as glowing red with the white flowers of an allium (*A. tuberosa*).

Now the question is, how far will this go? And how much gaud can I stand? ♦



Season's Tickets

BY CAROL L. ROSE CAMELIO



OUR FAMILY HOLDS SEASON'S TICKETS to one of the best games in town.

Our seats are not as luxurious as the "skybox" seating at Fenway Park, but from our vantage point we are far closer to the game.

We sit between homeplate and first base and are so close we can hear the manager encouraging the team members and discussing plays. Sometimes, we sit on the 3rd base line and get to hear the coach giving orders to go when everyone else is focused on the pitch.

It's priceless to watch these games but our tickets cost nothing. We the fans are the ones given something each time we walk across the grass to Center Field or Estabrook Field for the Men's Senior Softball League Games.

We watch the transformation of men, whose ages span several decades and whose occupations range from the boardroom to the locker room and everywhere in between.

They embrace the field. It is a sight to behold. There are no limitations here, only men of the moment who have come to play. Many move naturally around the diamond, others work harder at the moving, but all share that common bond—love for the game.

They've thrilled the crowd and invited the summer once again to rule the night, to enter our hearts.

Officials are here, purists who keep the

game respectable but often make light of the disrespect they sometimes endure.

There are teams with names both funny and fearsome like Good Timers, Swing Away, Prime Time, Foul Play, Raiders, Lemon Grass, Carrolls, and the Chiefs. We sit so close we can hear the ball when it finds the glove at the end of an outstretched arm. The dust trail from a well-executed slide dissipates as it reaches our bench.

The playoffs are on now and the winning team is yet to be determined. Some teams are out while others are still vying for a spot in the finals. All the teams are winners though, when even by losing they have played their best and had a great time doing it. They are all victorious enjoying the sliding, stealing, base running dance of summer.

All the world's a stage and these performances, scheduled on mostly Tuesday nights throughout the summer, are spectacular ones that we can view even if we left our wallets at home because tickets aren't required, but savoring memories of steamy evenings at dusk, honoring the game of inches and feet are.

Next year we plan to reserve our seats even earlier. ♦

Three Poems

BY RONALD W. PIES

THE LAST DAYS OF NORMAL

It's just an ad
for a large-screen TV:
a loving couple
sitting on the couch,
the woman's long, blond hair
caressed by—I'm guessing—
her husband
of twenty years.
A dish of popcorn
sits steaming
on the coffee table
and sunlight streams
through a picture window.
All this is normal.

In two weeks,
we'll begin a journey
through a country
of jagged cliffs,
whirlpools
and volcanic springs.

You'll swallow a pill
with the lyrical name
lenalidomide,
as if Lena,
like the blond woman
in the ad,
were a soft presence
in our living room.
None of this is normal.
The cells
crowding your bones
are also
not normal.

STEM CELL TRANSPLANT

If you please, Lord
 (Lord of uncertainties
who hears
 and doesn't hear)
let the stem cells
 do their work.
Let them labor
 deep in wounded marrow;
let mother cells
 build back neutrophils,
platelets
 and all the teeming life
cancer crowded out.
Let red cells
ferry oxygen again;
let lymphocytes
hound each virus.
And, if you please, Lord,
let this green, April day
be rebirth of life, leaf
and all sweet growing things
from eternal earth.

HOMECOMING

Mid-May,
and finally,
we are home.
If we heed
the doctor's warnings,
our antique house
is a sweet deceiver:
mold lurks
in dark crevices,
and spores
from tracked-in dirt
wait to blossom
in your lungs.
No runs to the cellar
for you: even mildew
is villainous.

Oh—and gardening
is out:
any turning
of the soil
could unleash
the treacherous
aspergillus.

We are cheerfully
disobedient:
decked out
in mask and gloves,
you stand
up-wind of me,
pointing
to black swallow-wort
invading our garden.
I dig it out
by the roots,
and you give me
the thumbs-up.

Love and work,
it seems,
will outlast blight
and the bone's burden.
I catch the light
from your eyes
and know
that wild blue indigo
will always flourish
in our garden.

CONTRIBUTORS

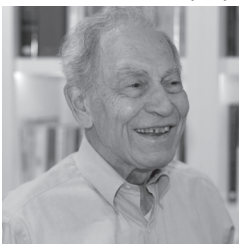
ELAINE ADLER has been playing with words, color, texture, and design for most of her 86 years, whether on paper, fabric, her walls, or her garden. The fun is in seeing what reveals itself.



FRANCESCA BINI BICHISECCHI is a retired public school visual arts teacher, who continues to work as a mixed media artist. She is a member of the Waverlys, a quartet cover and original music band. An old swing upright and a ukelele bass are her preferred instruments. She loves her garden and the wildlife that share it.



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.



A native of Cuba, RICARDO CALLEJA is a retired Brookline High School teacher who currently teaches Spanish Conversation at Lexington Community Education. He is an active volunteer but still finds time to read, write, go for walks, ride his bike and sit in his favorite café.

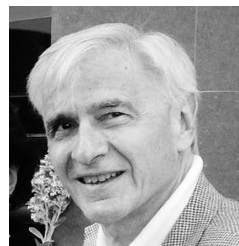


As an artist, a former educator and IT consultant, CAROL ROSE CAMELIO has had the opportunity to make observations and is intrigued by how the arts, including painting images with words, can touch the soul.



A psychologist for 30+ years, DEBI DULBERG plunged into the unknown world of an art student. The rewards were unimaginable at this age--a spontaneity and freedom borne out of her lack of formal education and expectations.

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



Since retiring from Beth Israel, JANE GRIGNETTI continues a clinical psychotherapy practice and has developed a passion for photography.

ANDREA (ANDY) JOLIAT retired after running her portrait photography business and has turned her attention to photographing nature. She enjoys staking out a spot in her yard and waiting for the birds to visit.



JAMES L. JONES worked as a physicist in the MIT Radiation Protection Office. He has written books and articles on gardening and recently published a science fiction book, *A Matter of Perception*.



JAMIE KATZ lives with his wife in the Lexington house he grew up in. He writes non-fiction, essays, and has published two novels with a major publisher, all of which do nothing to help with the family expenses. He has a day job as the General Counsel for Beth Israel Lahey Health.



BHUMIP KHASNABISH is a technology evangelist with enthusiasm in entrepreneurship and innovation in the fields of advanced networking and services. He has an interest in photography, running, and yoga and has been a participant in the Vision for Lexington.



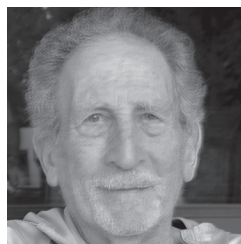
SHERWIN (SAM) LEHRER is a retired research scientist who has been photographing as time permitted after family and work since the late 50s. He has been a Lexington resident for almost 50 years.



TRACY MARKS is a poet, author of four self-help books, and an instructor in creative writing, poetry and classic literature through Lexington Community Education. She has a masters degree in the teaching of English and is also a retired psychotherapist.



BOB MOSS is a native of Ohio but longtime Massachusetts resident. Originally a black and white film photographer, he now shoots and edits with digital cameras as well as with film.



JANE PAULSON is a native of Lexington, a retired librarian and a mixed media artist. She works primarily with textiles, paper and found objects.



RONALD W. PIES, MD, is a physician, medical ethicist, novelist, and poet. He has published fiction in *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *JAMA*, and other journals. He is the author of the poetry collection, *Creeping Thyme*; the chapbook, *The Myeloma Year*; and *The Levitov Trilogy*.

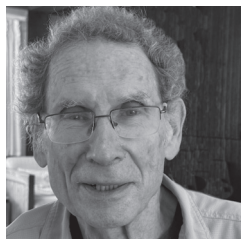


SUSAN POLANSKY creates detailed stitched fabric collages, known as art quilts, inspired by current events and personal meaning. She lectures worldwide and champions arts education.



A 70-year resident of Lexington, SUE ROCKWELL is a retired attorney active with the Lexington History Museums, Hancock Church and the Council on Aging. She is the 2025 recipient of the White Tricorn Hat award.





DAVID ROTHSTEIN 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.



MARLENE SCHULMAN is a longtime Lexington resident whose love of languages led her to an exciting career in international shipping. Among her many passions are opera, hiking, cooking, writing, friends and other people, and her grandchildren.



CHUCK RZEPKA is happily married with two sons, two daughters-in-law, and three grandchildren. He once taught literature and is now trying to write. There is more at romansympos.com under his pen name, "Roman Sympos."

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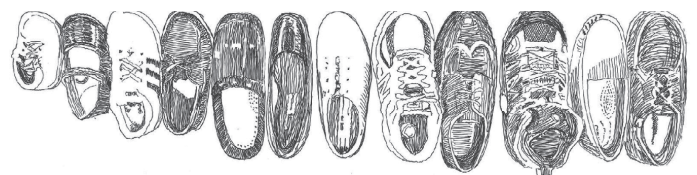
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