



Voices  
and  
Visions

2014

Annual Review

UConn OLLI

# *The UCONN OLLI Annual Review*

*Volume 4  
August 2014*

## *The 2013-2014 OLLI Review*

### *Editorial Committee*

*Chuck Miceli*

*Cindy Eastman*

*Peter Freeman*

*Bob Grady*

*Elizabeth Hanahan*

*Richard Kupstis*

*Evelyn Marshak*

*Allen Smuckler*

*Nancy Whitney*



**UCONN**  
**WATERBURY**

Front cover painting by Judy Jaworksi  
Back cover photograph by Allen Smuckler

## FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to this fourth edition of *Voices and Visions*, the annual literary and arts review of UCONN's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). Once again we on the editorial committee have been privileged to review the many items of poetry, prose, art and photography submitted by our OLLI members and once again we have been awed by the beauty, vitality and creativity of those submissions.

In the pages that follow, you will experience the fruits of labor of many of your fellow OLLI members. Some are "veterans" who have submitted to past editions. Those of us who have served previously as editors marvel at the creative growth we see in these individuals from year to year. Others appear here for the first time. Like their predecessors, they will continue to grow and evolve from year to year. We strive to print at least one piece from each submitter and applaud all those who have had the courage to submit their work, the openness to accept constructive criticism and revise if necessary, and the generosity to share it with you and the rest of the world through this publication.

Members of our committee have taught and/or practiced written or visual art for many years. We appreciate that creativity is ultimately a subjective assessment and we are sensitive to remaining faithful to the "voice" of the author or the "eye" of the artist. While we scrutinize each submission for obvious errors in composition and rules of style, we recognize that a creative writer or artist may intentionally "bend or even break the rules" in order to have a desired impact. Punctuation and capitalization may be altered or omitted for emphasis, subject matter may be skewed to provide a particular impression, and even spatial relationships on the page may be arranged to enhance the overall experience of the work. We encourage you to look at each of the exhibits in this volume with this thought in mind. Revisiting specific pieces may yield additional insights and provide a richness that might otherwise have been missed.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to UCONN and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute for recognizing the enormous creative potential that resides within each individual regardless of age, and for providing the opportunity to express that creativity through the OLLI program and this publication.

**The Editorial Committee**

**August, 2014**

## FROM THE COORDINATOR

OLLI's learning communities never cease to amaze. The member-editors of this year's Review have captured our community at the height of its creativity and worked tirelessly to present this work in its most professional form. We are proud of our storytellers, poets, and prose writers; our two-dimensional artists; we honor the muses that spawned such output, and the editors that examined each piece for placement within the whole collection for your enjoyment. We present here our thoughts, our musings, our prayers, our creations, our Voices, our Visions. Here we are. Enjoy!

**Aleta Staton,  
Coordinator, UConn OLLI**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

We give our thanks and congratulations to the contributors and editors of this publication for again giving our membership the inspiration of OLLI creativity. *Voices and Visions* is a vital part of OLLI at UConn, and for those who enjoy its pages, a lasting, portable treasure.

The arts are alive at OLLI, and *Voices and Visions* is a testament to their vitality and to the variety to be found in the hearts, minds, and experiences of the OLLI membership.

**Richard K. Fogg  
President, UConn OLLI**

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**GERANIUMS ON THE WALL**

**Anna Ascione**

## **THE WAY OUT**

The top drawer holds rows of balled-up ankle socks  
And knee-high stockings  
With twenty-dollar bills tucked inside.  
We keep the money  
And toss the stockings.  
Mother has no need for stockings  
On her short journey from Assisted Living to Nursing Care  
And, finally, to Hospice.  
We have time to sort through her life:  
Her underwear and her jewelry  
Her treasured artwork and family photos  
And decide what we will keep  
What we will give away  
What we will throw out.  
She will never know the difference.

**Harriet Fotter**

## PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY

There is something sweet,  
poignant,  
about a photograph of a child  
taken from behind.

The body is as familiar  
to the parent as the child's face,  
angles, curves,  
held in memory.

Once upon a time,  
there was a young man  
seated among a group of fellow P.O.W.s  
listening to a speaker.

A photographer, standing in the back of the room,  
captured the moment.

The young man, our friend, shared with us  
that his mother recognized,  
from that grainy, black and white photo, published in *LIFE*  
magazine,  
the back of his right ear  
and learned he was  
alive.

Our friend held his own son on his lap  
as he told this story,  
unconsciously rubbing the boy's head,  
breathing in his scent,  
absorbing his weight,  
recording his right ear.

**Harriet Fotter**



## THE POWER OF THREE

Kneeling in the pew,  
Giving thanks for family, friends,  
And all the blessings of this life,  
I am visited by a memory.

Three hawks slowly rising  
Lifted by the updrafts  
Of an unusually warm autumn day,  
Circling, one clockwise,  
Two counter.

The hawks are not hunting.  
They are waltzing in the sun,  
In and out and round the spiral,  
Framed by my kitchen window.

I pause in washing the dishes,  
Feeling my breathing slow to their rhythm.  
Memory brought me no revelation or sign,  
Only calmness and the serenity I feel when the world is in  
balance,  
When three hawks move my breathing to the pace of a rising  
breeze.

**Harriet Fotter**

## BY THE NUMBERS

You look like an older version  
of your younger self.  
Arithmetic has had its way  
of course.  
Lines have multiplied;  
a strange geometry  
has re-drawn  
the makeup  
of your face.

Still  
an impish glee  
flickers—  
however wanly—  
behind  
those sky blue eyes.

Minus  
the accoutrements  
of youth and love  
alluringly worn by you—  
and me—and all of us—  
there still is beauty there,  
a freshness and flair  
that the numbers cannot erase.

Fated by the abacus  
of Time,  
a transformation  
Nature had in mind  
changes us into something  
old and new.

**Philip Benevento**



**KOI**

**Allen Smuckler**



**ROCKY MOUNTAIN VISTA**

**Anna Ascione**

## THE NIGHT THE SCHOOL BURNED DOWN

This past week, an elementary school in New Jersey burned down - the result of a carelessly discarded cigarette by a school custodian. People interviewed by TV news expressed shock, dismay and heartbreak as they wondered how the children would handle this loss. Counselors surely will be on hand for the remainder of the year to help them “cope.” School authorities were quick to locate an alternate site where all of the children could finish this school year “together.”

As a child, my friends and I spent hours imaginatively devising ways our school might disappear, freeing us to play. This was delicious fun. Not that we didn't like school; it just got in the way of what we considered to be the important things in life.

These were the “old days” when television was only an occasional treat, and technology as we know it was nonexistent. Most days, children played outside. Children had rules imposed by their parents and rarely questioned them.

In Naugatuck, the fire whistle blew every night at 8:00. That was my signal to return home and get ready for bed. Once in bed, I was allowed to spend my time reading or listening to the radio until “lights out.”

In June of 1961, I was finishing my seventh grade year at Hillside Junior High School. Summer was fast approaching and I was looking forward to the long, lazy vacation. In the fall, I would be an “upper classman,” before heading off to high school the following year. Despite being twelve, I was still bound by the “eight o'clock whistle rule”, so was in my room early, reading as the sky darkened and I drifted off to sleep.

In the middle of the night, I was awakened by the fire whistle, always an ominous sound. The number and pattern of the whistle blasts identified the location of the fire. After listening for a few moments and counting the blasts, I decided to check to see where the fire was. Clicking on the light and flipping through the directory, I stared in disbelief as I read “Hillside Junior High School.” Carefully I recounted the whistles, but the results were the same. How could that be? Sure, we had joked about the school burning down, but never, ever, expected it to happen. It must be a false alarm. My mother came in, but had no answers, saying only that we would find out in the morning. For now, I should go back to sleep since, more likely than not, I would have school in the morning.

It was not a false alarm and I did not have school the next day. In fact, I would never return there. The school's interior had been demolished and it would not open again until I was in high school. Over the next days, everyone drove by the devastated building, a local landmark which had been featured in *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* for its unusual design features. Most were recalling their years there when it had been Naugatuck High School.

As children, we were unconcerned about the historic loss. This was, for most of us, the most exciting event we had ever experienced. We recounted to each other those things which had been in our lockers and would never be recovered. For me, that meant the sewing bag I had painstakingly made in Home Economics, and the unfinished skirt inside it. Conversations among us were limited to our immediate friends, however, since the school received a dispensation from the State so we did not have to finish the last days of the school year. We were immediately thrust into summer vacation. No counseling sessions or drawn out discussions about how we were "feeling" took place, and yet, no one I knew suffered any long-term emotional scars from this loss. Because, it was seen as a loss rather than a trauma. Now, as a former teacher, I wonder about the massive logistics of ending the school year like that, but as a child, I accepted what I was told and had little curiosity about the broader issues that must have been involved.

The following school year was the best one ever. No, I was *not* reunited with all of my classmates, since classes were held in two separate buildings and then further divided into two sessions. Students remained in one classroom all day and teachers rotated with their teaching supplies carried on carts. I attended the morning session so was finished by noontime. Instead of being limited by the separation from the rest of my classmates, I had infinitely more time to spend with my friends, a group which grew to include most of the people I spent time with in class. Friday was our special day. After school, we went downtown for pizza and mint fudge sundaes, then spent the afternoon bowling. How could you beat that! No one spent much time talking about the fire, although we watched renovations throughout the year as we walked by the school on our way home. It was, you see, not *our* school any longer. We were focused on high school which was awaiting us the following year.

Looking back, I realize that we learned some valuable lessons from this experience and the matter of fact way in which the adults in our world handled it. From the models of our parents and teachers, we matured to understand that bad things can and will happen, but the ways in which you handle them allow you to move on and help define you as a person. Our junior high school years were certainly not as we had expected them to be, but we all adapted to the changes. The fire was relegated to its rightful place, as a shared childhood memory.

**Elizabeth Hanahan**

## SUNSET

Ethereal sunset

Waning years

Compression of illuminating ideas.

Wildebeests graze

Satisfying their concern for sustenance

Darkness descends, ideas cease

The circle of life persists

In the end

There is beauty



**Ira Mickenberg**

## HAIKU

### **Spring**

*April, Oh April  
Soaking rains and warming sun  
Daffodils erupt.*

### **Breakfast**

*Eggs sunnyside up  
Adam and Eve on a raft  
The yolk's on you.*

### **Italy**

*Touring Tuscany  
Crossing the top of the Boot  
Summer sunflowers.*

### **Seasonal**

*The season's chartreuse  
Leaves unfurl and blossoms bloom  
Now Spring has returned.*

### **Gifts**

*Spring in Hubbard Park  
The Daffodil Festival  
Nice place, Meriden.*

### **Noise**

*Terrifying sound;  
An onomatopoeia  
Screeching loud and long.*

**Richard Kupstis**

## INTELLIGENT DESIGN

On a higher plane of vibration than our own lives another race. Like us in many ways, it is advanced far beyond us in others. Like us, their young need to be taught how to behave like adults and to have adult skills. In one moment, a gathering of young is being taught by an elder how to create a small, momentary universe in preparation for understanding their own. Each learner is expected to create a personal universe that, to fulfill the assignment, must be self sustaining and able to function without any further input from the scholar in training.

Each student has a set of instructions:

Start out by creating a light source reads the first.

To do this say, “***LET THERE BE LIGHT***”

and it goes on from there.

At some point – probably around instruction four or five – the students must populate their worlds with animals. The assignment requires that these would work together to make the universe self-sustaining.

Each student finishes the assignment and shows the work to the instructor. It is examined. Approval is given and the student is released. Time passes. Only one trainee remains. The universe of its creation has dissolved into chaos. At the start of the project, this student’s world had worked as required: the light came on, the dry land emerged out of the waters, plants grew. The population of animals created to use the land fit in nicely. All worked well until, in step six, the student put an



animal into the universe that had free will and consciousness. Whatever the student created in this last step had gone completely out of control. In only a short time, this newest addition began to destroy and pollute and depopulate the student's creation. One by one, and then by tens, and then by hundreds, the other animals were destroyed by this last creation. The land and the seas were made uninhabitable. The very air became unbreathable. The student, aware that its creation was failing, finally asked the instructor for help. The instructor looked over what the student had created and saw that it was not good. "It all went well until the last step didn't it," it said. This effort is a failure I'm sorry to say. Why don't you turn it off and try again tomorrow? This time, when you get to your final step, be sure that you add a few more characteristics to your last animal. Consciousness and free will are all well and good but, along with those, understanding of place in the universe and empathy with other living things and appreciation for the gifts you've provided might help. I'm sure that you can do better."

The student sighed and reached for the switch that would turn off his creation. "The instructor is right," he thought, already contemplating the next day's effort. He throws the switch. The light goes out.

The student goes to lunch.

**Barry Davis**

## **MUSIC SENDS ME TO ANOTHER DIMENSION**

Music sends me to another dimension

Lullabies remind me of sleeping babies  
Nestled on my shoulder  
Classical music brings thoughts of my ballet years  
Or skating on the ice making figure eights

Rock and Roll and my feet want to dance,  
Tapping to the beat, swirling to the music

Soft jazz and mellow blues make me melancholy  
Sensual and reflective

Music heals my soul

**Marjorie Fitzgerald**



**GENERATIONAL ROOTS**

**Marjorie Fitzgerald**

## AND JUST LIKE THAT EVERYTHING CHANGED

It was a sunny fall afternoon in northern Indiana. I was pushing my two-tiered cart along the third floor of the library re-shelving books for my work study job which paid \$1.75 an hour. Time dragged by slowly on the four-hour shift which, when I punched out at five, would net me exactly seven dollars toward my next paycheck. However, on this late November day, time was moving a little faster than usual because Thanksgiving break was only days away. I was already planning what I'd be doing on this long anticipated respite from studying, beginning with Thanksgiving itself. I would be united once again with my parents and my brothers and sister. The "ooohing" and "aahing" as my mother made her entry into the dining room with the Thanksgiving turkey would be followed by a feast of home-cooked delicacies not even considered as possibilities on our menu in the student dining hall.

As I continued down the row of shelves, I focused in on the call number of a philosophy book I held in my hand, having pinpointed its exact location. I was about to slide the book into its place when I looked up and saw Bill, the amiable supervisor of student workers, headed right toward me with an uncharacteristically serious expression on his face. His panicked look immediately sent shockwaves in my direction reflecting the devastation he was experiencing as he managed to get out the words: "The president has been shot! President Kennedy is dead!"

Just like that in one breath, everything changed!

Bill's words were like a solid punch in the solar plexus knocking the wind out of me and sending the book I was holding hurtling to the floor.

"But wait!" I thought. "This couldn't be true. President Kennedy was the personification of life itself, of youth, and of hope for the future. He was proving too, that a Catholic could be president and not influenced by a pontiff thousands of miles away. And what Bill said couldn't be true for another reason. People in my life weren't dying yet. Everyone around me was young and healthy, preparing for a future after college just as President Kennedy was preparing the country for its own new hopeful idealistic future: the Peace Corps, Civil Rights, the Alliance for Progress. The lifeblood of these programs pumped through the veins of this young handsome president whose humor, whose laughter, whose Boston accent, whose beautiful wife and their regal demeanor as president and first lady all spelled LIFE not DEATH!

And it couldn't be true for another reason. Even if there was someone who hated the president, even if there was some deranged killer out there, members of the Secret Service, with their dark suits and sunglasses, with all their training and their mission to protect the president at all costs, they would never let this happen. There was definitely a mistake somewhere along the line. Bill had clearly misunderstood what he had been told about the president. I reached down, picked up the book and placed it in its exact spot on the shelf, certain that everything would return to normal as I prepared to leave for the Thanksgiving break.

**Tom Melesky**

## SQUEAKY CLEAN SNEAKERS

At a pit stop outside Nairobi  
Bathrooms are appendages of salesrooms  
Filled with carvings and trinkets,  
Cooperatives for local peoples  
Eking out an African living.

Tourists admire the wares,  
Desire the artifacts,  
But enjoy bartering and bargaining more.  
A young male employee greets me  
Admiring my sneakers, a status symbol, I presume.

“Wait” he commands and runs to a back room.  
I linger while other shoppers pick and choose.  
“Does he want my sneakers?  
Am I ready to part with them?”  
While waiting, I contemplate options.

The minutes pass.  
My mind wanders, evaluates, judges.  
A pair of sneakers becomes the dominant symbol of  
My connection with the Third World.  
I remain open to the unfolding events.

The young man returns with a bucket of soapy water.  
He gestures for me to place my foot on a stool.  
Startled, I follow his directions.  
We communicate in tourist dialect.  
I am the passive world traveler.

Picking up a soapy moist rag  
He scrubs the right sneaker,  
Dries it off,  
Instructs me to lift the other foot  
And proceeds to wash the left sneaker.

The sneakers are white, sparkling and dry.  
Perplexed, I contemplate the events.  
In a rural suburb of Nairobi I have been had.  
Reaching into my pocket  
I hand the winner his prize.

**Ira Mickenberg**

## KING OF THE BEASTS

Here he sits all alone  
A pachyderm on a throne  
Others search for a better site  
Not the home of a termite

He'll try to team up without regret  
With a synergistic cattle egret.  
They love the insects on his back  
And eat them with the beak he lacks.

The termites consume organic debris  
So that trees and grasses can grow free.  
He tramples trees and causes much damage  
Trying to eat as much as he can manage.

These elephants, belong to a herd  
As a flock, if he were a bird  
Their leader, the matriarch is their mother  
When they roam they follow no other.

As siblings they all are one  
Until the boy starts to look for fun  
Then from the herd he is sent  
To find the female for whom he is meant.

He starts a family of his own  
And from this herd he is also thrown  
As mama's descendants grow old  
And he is no longer welcome in the fold

Now a big wandering old bull  
He seeks out females to get his full

As he ages he can have his fling  
"Old is gold" has a ring.

But as he ages his teeth decay  
Every decade a set of teeth go away.  
By 70 years his six sets disappear  
Toothless he has something to fear

He'll ultimately move to a marsh  
Where conditions are favorable, not harsh

Eating little he'll watch his weight diminish  
As his life slowly comes to a finish.

As king maybe he should just rule  
Not have reflective thoughts fit for a fool.

His long memory serves him well  
Though in the past he must dwell.



**Ira Mickenberg**

## CONTRASTS THEN AND NOW: A REMINISCENCE

Every time I enter the main hallway at the Waterbury branch of UCONN, the word "contrasts" comes rushing into my mind. Here are some, past and present that I see.

Now, there are undergraduate students doing their homework or studying in the hallway. They are using laptops and iPads.

Then, in my undergrad years on the Storrs campus, there were none of the electronic devices that we depend on today. We wrote with pen or pencil or typed on manual typewriters.

Now, we can bank on line or on our smartphone or use the ATM.

Then, we had a "bank" where one could add or take out money, housed in some poorly lit building with minimal hours.

Today, the women wear pants every day and some cover their heads with a hijab.

Then, women could only wear pants on Saturdays until 7 p.m. No hijabs were ever seen.

Now, women are free to leave the dorm at any time.

In my sister's freshmen year, 1961, which was also my sophomore year, the dorm mother required a note from our mother saying she could come home for the weekend. Without a note, I guess the house mother thought her women were up to bad things.

Now, women are free to leave the dorm at any time without permission

Now, you can find an assortment

of sandwiches in the bookstore.

Then, there was a Friday night special – white fish, boiled potatoes and cauliflower. Saturdays and Sundays, since there were no meals served on weekends in the dorms, we cooked Spaghetti Os etc. on illegal hot plates or walked to the Huskies Restaurant at the edge of campus. There was no choice of the main course for dinner. If the meal was bad, people would soon ask, "Who wants to order from the Huskies?" as we left the dining room.

On both South and West campuses, at the time totally women's dorms, residents were required to do a week of waitress duty every semester. That meant setting the tables, bringing out the food, clearing the tables, and scraping the plates. Lucky me, I always got the dishes from the lemon meringue or blueberry pie - the ones hardest to scrape.

Now, students eat in the Student Union's Food Court and simply dump their paper plates in the trash barrels.

UCONN was founded as an agricultural school in 1881. In my college years, there were still chickens in the agriculture area. I was shocked when I noticed the wastebasket in the dorm bathroom had formerly held powered eggs and learned that powered eggs were being served at breakfast!

Now, students eat breakfast at the Food Court or go to the Golden Arches where powdered eggs are

thankfully unknown.

Today, ads and doctors are discouraging tanning behavior. Then, women mixed baby oil and iodine together, smeared it all over themselves, and baked in the sun shining on the West Campus quadrangle.

In 2016, there will be 400 new dorm rooms at the Stamford branch. Men will be allowed on all floors as they are now on the Storrs campus.

Then, only fathers and brothers were allowed above the main floor of the dormitories.

Then, the girls' only choice of sports was Dolphinettes, the synchronized swim team. Girls' basketball and the national attention it attracts were years in the future as were other women's sports including lacrosse, hockey, track and field, baseball, and tennis.

Geno Auriemma, the women's basketball coach, would never have risen to his status as Connecticut's superhero. The men's team wasn't attracting much attention then either.

During my undergraduate years, UCONN student walked up or down the four stories of the major instructional buildings: Social Sciences and Humanities. The number of students, who trudged the stairs, could be judged by the concave appearance. The dorms on South and West Campus also did without elevators. I lived on the fourth floor for all four undergraduate years. To avoid walking the stairs several times a day required me to be organized and not run back for a notebook or a pack of tissues.

Now, while most of the undergraduates at the branch favor

the stairs, we OLLIs gladly use the elevators.

Is everything better today? You decide. In my first years at Storrs, room was \$96, board was \$125 and tuition was \$75 a semester.

Now, instate tuition (including room and board) is estimated at \$25,348, out of state \$48,528, and regional costs (excluding room and board) at branches, \$18,050.

Many a night I'd walk back from the Student Union where the Daily Campus, the school paper, had its offices. I didn't much think about being in physical danger. In my senior year, I had a car and a job taking the newspaper copy to Willimantic for printing. I'd get back to Storrs around 10:15 pm, park the car in the South Campus lot, and walk back to my West Campus dorm.

Somehow, the Dean of Women found out about this "danger-laden trek" and made arrangements for me to park in the driveway of house located near my dorm for the night. Next morning, I moved the car back to it designated parking lot.

Now, you must have a key card to enter a dorm.

My aunt used to address my mail to Yukon. Then it was brutally cold. We walked everywhere and couldn't wear pants.

Now, it is still brutally cold in winter, there is bus service on some campus streets, and women wear pants at a whim.

In my freshman year the stacks in the Wilbur Cross Library were closed to students. You went to a card catalog and found a book that might help you with a paper you were writing. A paper would fetch the book

for you. If you needed another book, it was back to the card catalog.

The following year, we were invited to search the stacks ourselves. Such progress! When you had enough material to fill the assigned 15 pages, it was time to type the paper and pray that there would be enough space at the bottom of each page for the required footnotes.

Now, there is the net for

research, or iPad, cell phone etc. Each can be used in your bedroom if you are snowed in, or if the UCONN library is closed.

Three cheers that I joined OLLI and get to see the contrasts every time I walk from the parking garage to my classroom.

**Evelyn Marshak**

## **AMISH VISITORS ON ELLIS ISLAND**

My grandson, Dovid, was on a field trip to Ellis Island when it was time to daven the afternoon prayers or mincha. Each of the eight boys had recently made his bar mitzvah, the ceremony when a 13 year-old boy assumes adult responsibilities as a member of the Jewish community.

For the field trip, each boy had taken his hat box with a large, black hat usually worn for Sabbath and holiday services. But since their assumption of adult responsibilities had happened only recently, they felt they should wear this special head-covering at mincha.

Now, routinely observant men don't wear these large black hats, they do wear kippas, or yarmulkes, small skullcaps, as a sign of respect. They were easily identifiable. A few such men were approached, and readily agreed to join to make a minyan.

Think, holding a minyan on Ellis Island, where many of their ancestors had first reached the "Promised Land."

A small crowd of Ellis Island visitors moved in with their cameras. They thought these black-suited men, with their broad-brimmed hats, were actually Amish who are rarely seen outside of their communities in states like Pennsylvania and Illinois. The visitors saw this as an unusual opportunity to see Amish men in New York.

The tourists' decision, to visit Ellis Island on this June Day, had begun as a trip to connect to their past. What could be better than a sunny day at our country's premier tourist site?

Suddenly, the ideal weather and the incredible feeling one gets from visiting Ellis Island had a bonus, they were seeing, close up, "Amish men" and not having to travel from New York City.

The whole event lasted perhaps 10 minutes. Mincha services are short. Once over, the "men" put their big hats into the hat boxes and the Amish vanished.

**Evelyn Marshak**





**MARBLES BY THE TAVERN**

**Carl Gemino**

*When I heard about the passing of Pete Seeger a poem formed in my mind and on the page before me. In Pete's own words: "I think the world is going to be saved by millions of small things."*

## **PETE**

From the back of his truck  
To the deck of his boat, his  
voice rang out with song.  
From sea to sea, land and sky,  
the theme was  
This land is your land, this  
land is my land...

He sang with a clear voice and  
a banjo to play.  
Folks drove for miles and days  
to hear him sing songs of  
peace.  
Peter, Paul and Mary were his  
pals.  
Joan Baez and more wrote and  
sang his songs.  
The back of the truck. The  
deck of the boat.  
These were his stages.

Pete. He was a hero to folk like  
you and me.  
A man to cheer for, to praise,  
to be proud of.  
An icon. A hero. A voice now  
stilled, but not gone.  
Now in thought, in tune, in my  
head.

From the back of the truck,  
To the bow of his boat,  
He sang to us, for us, as us.  
He sang of love, of war, of  
peace, of the land.  
He sang for us, of who we are,  
and who we can be.  
His music told us a story, a  
theme, a task to take on and  
carry with us.

His song was a bag of balm to  
the weary.  
A quilt of calm to be worn.  
From the back of the truck,  
To the deck of his boat,  
His Song will live on.

**Nancy Whitney**

## A LOVE POEM, OF SORTS, TO MY MUSE

A muse knocked on my side door  
Moved in and made herself at home, never  
Undertaking house cleaning, laundry or dishwashing.  
She claimed my chair, my pencil, my notebook, and My Spirit. She  
Even ate my chocolate! All the while making me write. We are a  
Marriage of minds, Spirits and Creativity. I laugh  
Enjoying her humor, her entity, her  
Nuances and nonsense. Together, we create Magic on  
The page.

**Nancy Whitney**

## NASTURTIUMS

Nudging the earth with her trowel, she parts the soil with her fingers.  
A seed is gently pushed into the moist earth. Another spring unfolds.  
Surrounded by the passion of her life, her garden, my grandmother  
Tends the ground like a goddess dressing for a pageant.  
Under her tender care, the earth beneath her fingers brings forth a  
Riot of color and fragrance. White-haired, bespeckled, soft skin  
That glows in the sunlight, the old woman moves with grace  
Imitating the flowers she so lovingly tends. She feels and  
Understands the need of every plant entrusted to her care. In the evening she  
Makes her way through the house, placing fresh cut flowers in every room. A  
Sweet scent filled the house.

**Nancy Whitney**



**GULL LAKE**

**Harriet Potter**



**'49 CHEVY**

**Harriet Potter**

## THE BACK YARD

The winds of March batter  
The beginnings of April.  
The flower beds,  
Newly raked and coldly naked,  
Show brown against the yellow grass.  
The turned earth smells moldy.  
Patches of dirty snow hide in the shadows.  
Winter lingers too long.

However, the bare branches  
Are changing from stark black  
And, from a distance, faint red buds  
Soften the outlines of the maples.  
Forsythia click in the breeze  
Hinting of the gold to come.  
Purple crocuses pop up in sheltered spots.  
The sun rises higher in the sky.

In '*justSpring*', it is hard to see  
The promise of April-but  
The harsh cold snow will change to  
The warm showers that will bring the May flowers.  
The garden will bloom again.  
Another season starts. The next follows in turn.  
Nature reminds:  
Time to plant the seeds of April's promise.

It's about time.

**Robert Grady**

## RETURN

On a December afternoon more than thirty years ago, my wife and I and our four children traveled to New York City for the spectacular Radio City Music Hall Christmas Show. Having arrived early, we made our way through the festive streets teeming with tourists and holiday shoppers. Drawn to the giant Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center we peered down at the famous ice skating rink filled with children and adults looking very much like a scene captured in a holiday print by Currier and Ives.

Growing up, hockey was always my favorite sport. I had taught my children to skate as well. Now as we looked down at the rink at Rockefeller Center, I was excited at the prospect of skating with them on this world famous rink. But once we made our way downward, I was dismayed to learn that there would be a two hour wait! This was indeed bad news since we would not have enough time to skate before the Christmas show began. However, instead of accepting that we couldn't skate on this hallowed ground, I simply put the event on hold, vowing to one day return.

But once back in Connecticut, the hectic demands of work and school made a return trip to Rockefeller Center during the skating season increasingly difficult. One year gave way to the next; the children got older and began to lose interest. Before I knew it, they were leaving home and going off to college.

In the meantime I had started feeling some generalized body aches along with pains in my joints which

were becoming more frequent. Little by little the aging process was taking its toll especially on those parts of my body most necessary for ice skating such as the lower back, the knees and the ankles.

I had begun taking a daily dose of 1500 mg of Glucosamine/Chondroitin. In addition, at my last physical exam, my doctor told me I should lose 20 pounds which I hadn't yet gotten around to. He also had prescribed 10 mgs of Lipitor daily for elevated cholesterol levels and 1000 mgs of Vitamin D and one Bayer Aspirin every night before bed to reduce the likelihood of heart attack or stroke.

Otherwise I was fine-although my legs didn't feel as strong relative to the rest of my body as they once had. This may have been in part because there was more of me to support especially in the mid-front and mid-rear areas.

I still had a strong desire to return to Rockefeller Center, but my confidence was lacking. I had not skated in years. "What if?" I allowed myself to think, "What if I fell down? How would I get up? Would they have to call the EMTs? Would my quest to be once again ON THE ICE, result in the embarrassment of being instead-in plain English- ON MY ASS?!"

One thing was for sure. If I were going to go, I couldn't put it off any longer. I looked at myself in the mirror and saw a senior citizen looking back at me. I heard something on the radio that resonated, "Today is as young as you will ever be!" Right then and there I made up my mind not to let any more time go by without fulfilling my vow to return

to the ice rink at Rockefeller Center!

“It’s now or never!” I said. “Do or die!”

So on Tuesday morning, a week before Thanksgiving, I boarded a bus from Waterbury, my hockey skates in tow, and headed for New York City. Two and a half hours later I found myself in a cab elbowing its way from Port Authority to West 49<sup>th</sup> and Fifth Avenue.

I got out at Rockefeller Center greeted by rows of spectators watching the skaters traveling in their circular route around the rink. With a queasy feeling I descended the concrete steps where I was told that I could get out on the ice immediately! I sat down on a bench and began lacing up my skates.

I happened to look off to my right at the Sea Grille Restaurant adjacent to the rink where by now diners were enjoying their lunch as well as their close up view of the skaters through the floor to ceiling glass windows in front of them.

My skates firmly tied, I stood up and walked over the rubberized surface. I paused, took a deep breath, said “Here goes nothing!” and pushed myself out onto the ice!

At first my ankles were wobbly as I struggled to maintain my balance. I felt like a kid going out on the ice for the first time. I even found myself holding onto the side of the rink for support.

I checked in with myself, “Are you all right? More importantly, are you UPright?” When the answer came back in the affirmative, I said, “Okay, so far so good.”

Two more pushes with my skates and then I let myself glide slowly toward the gleaming golden sculpture

of Prometheus. As I looked up at this icon, it hit me: “I am actually here ON THE ICE at Rockefeller Center!”

I felt a surge of adrenaline coursing through my body. I dared to go a little faster feeling totally exhilarated, finally here on this rink in the heart of New York City after all these years!

And with this emotional high came a feeling that there should be a celebration or recognition by those around me at this historic moment in my life. But when I looked at my fellow skaters, they continued uninterrupted in their ongoing circular motion and in their conversations. When I gazed up toward the spectators, no one was applauding. I checked things at eye level; no one was banging hockey sticks against the rink wall. I looked over toward the Sea Grille. There was no indication that an announcement had been made inside and that people were on their feet giving me a standing ovation.

In short there had been no acknowledgment of the somewhat overweight senior citizen in a green jacket with a big smile on his face, heading into his second lap, who though not speed skating or jumping over barrels, had not fallen, was still upright, and was still moving forward.

I took a deep breath reminding myself that attention and recognition didn’t really matter. I had not come here for praise or applause. I had come here for a purpose. I knew that true satisfaction comes from within.

I settled down and just enjoyed the moment, commending myself for having seen things through. Yes it took way too many years; yet despite

the obstacles, despite not being on the ice for so long, I had in the end triumphed. I had accomplished my goal. I had made it back to skate at Rockefeller Center just as I said I would!

Now starting my second lap with no immediate plans for stopping, even though I was calm and within myself,

I was unable to hold back a spontaneous shout of “YES!” which was followed by a double fist pump, both more than thirty years in the making!

**Tom Melesky**

## **TRUTH BE TOLD**

I have long arms...  
I don't know why  
I have long arms  
but I do,  
  
and I'm proud.

Everyone should have  
what I have...  
It would make  
hugging each other  
so much better...  
  
and last  
so much longer...

**Allen Smuckler**



## MUSICAL SWAYS



You were, and  
are the music  
in my life...  
I hope  
I will  
some day  
hear the violins  
of your heart,  
and the  
rhythm sections  
of your soul...  
Nothing matters  
more than harmonizing  
and performing  
a concerto  
with the person  
I love...  
Let the band play on  
and the music  
live forever.

**Allen Smuckler**

## IF LIFE WERE A LADDER

I was thinking, what if our lives were a ladder? A ladder is something that has rungs, or steps. Some ladders are straight and tall, some shorter and in an “A” shape. I wonder, does our life start at the bottom and end as we reach the top and move on to another plane of life? Or, is birth on the top and each step downward a trip through life with death the last step off that ladder? I guess this would be a matter of one's own interpretation. Our life is a series of steps, we move from one to the other sometimes ascending and often descending. Yes, we indeed have our ups and downs. Life is like a ladder in that sometimes, the steps get worn. That is not necessarily a bad thing; we are comfortable with the familiar, those experiences that we have over and over, look forward to, or not. Every ladder is different and every climber a unique individual. Sometimes, a rung is lost, or had always been missing. In many lives there is that hole that cannot be filled, whether it is the parent who was never there, or loss of a loved one along the way. We learn to keep climbing though, we step over that empty space and move on. When a ladder is broken, do we throw it away? Or, do we make repairs and move on? We are resilient, we human beings. We love, lose, and sometimes misstep, but hopefully, we catch ourselves and persevere. We keep our balance, and safely negotiate that ladder, in order to find peace, contentment and happiness.

**Julie Fernandez**

**TINY TANKAS (5, 7, 5, 7, 7)**

**PENCIL PUSHER**

Put them on paper  
Sentiments thought but not said  
Put them on paper  
Because you never really  
Know when it will be too late

**TANKA TANKA TWO TWO**

Do you really know  
how much being with you has  
changed my life around?  
Things I used to dream about  
are realities for me.

\*\*\*\*

Planned to be alone,  
had even come to like it.  
Then you came along  
and it was from that day on  
that life went from good to GREAT.

**DAGGERS**

Think before you speak  
Spoken words are out for good  
Can't be taken back  
Sorry doesn't really mend  
What the mind cannot forget

**Denise Whelan**

## WAVES OF ENDEARMENT

EMPHATIC w v s  
a e

emblematically  
*colliding with the stoic shore*  
of Siesta Key Beach...  
Melodic, enabling waves  
coughing and hacking  
heavily upon the shore.

c  
r h  
A ing their bodacious  
brassy bodies,  
crested and climaxing  
to levels of  
complacency and disrespect.

a  
n  
gling toward the  
established order of time...  
long forgotten, e r o d e d  
by the  
waning waves  
*washed wistfully*  
*away by the passing*  
of time,  
unable to recall  
or recognize

f  
a  
lling lines \_\_\_\_\_ ...  
And death, always playing its part,  
settles and seethes in the dust b l  
o w

of humanity and normalcy.  
The lines begin their endless quest  
rising from the nadir to the crest.  
The clouds o < pen, skies brighten  
and the avenue of angels sing.  
Unnamed ... unknown ... unseen ...  
The angels sing.

Allen Smuckler



**WAVES**

**Allen Smuckler**



**SEASCAPE**

**Debbie Dillon**

## LEFTOVERS

### *Saturday Evening*

“Excuse me Madam, Monsieur,” the waiter positioned a silver bucket and stand by the table. “The couple at the corner table would be honored if you would accept this as their gift. May I pour a sample?” As he did, the man glanced at the label: an extravagant vintage.

They sniffed, tasted, and then toasted the gift givers. The other couple smiled and nodded in return.

Their glasses full, the husband looked at Rachel, “To the happy couple,” and they clinked crystal.

The waiter returned with their meals. His *Salmon en Croute*, was a perfect pink separated from the flaky crust by a green line of asparagus. The savory aroma of the butter-wine sauce rose from the dish.

Rachel winced at her plate. Twice the size of his, it was heaped with brightly colored shell fish in a spoonful of light broth. Speaking in French, she queried the server. He smirked and replied in kind. Then he asked a question of his own to which she simply said, “No. Thank you.”

“What was that all about?” the man asked.

She pointed to her food, “I asked him what this is and he answered, ‘Only in America do you order Bouillabaisse and receive the Fisherman’s Platter.’ Then he asked if I wanted him to take it back and I told him no.”

“That’s what you get for eating at your ancestors’ restaurant,” the man teased. “Now mine - you can never go wrong with meat balls and spaghetti.”

“It’s fine,” she insisted. “I love the way it smells, especially with fresh broccoli and garlic.”

The corner-table couple approached. “You look so lovely, dear,” the old lady complimented Rachel. “Anniversary?” she pointed to the purple corsage pinned to Rachel’s low-cut blue dress.

“Our tenth,” the man said.

“Well you make a handsome looking couple,” she ended.

“Relish every minute, son,” the old man added. “It goes by fast,” his voice cracked, “too fast.”

They left hand in hand, taking tiny steps; she, hunched over in her sequined beige gown; he, in his navy-blue suit, with a limp.

The man caught the waiter’s attention, “We’ll take the leftovers to go.”

### *Saturday Night*

Rachel stepped out of the shower and started to dry: still a knockout with her perky breasts, seductive curves, and firm, smooth skin.

She slipped naked under the sheets. He thought about making love, but was bloated from dinner.

He pecked her on the forehead, turned over, and nodded off to sleep.

### *Sunday Morning*

“How about an omelet with cheese and some of your leftover broccoli and garlic?” he asked, still in his bathrobe.

“I really wanted to go to church this morning,” she answered, fully dressed, to which he replied “I really wanted a nice big breakfast.”

“God made us to do more than eat, you know,” she protested.

“God didn’t make us,” he quipped, “we made God.” He didn’t really believe that, but he had read it on a book cover and it sounded profound.

“Remember to take in the garbage cans,” and with that, she closed the door behind her.

He made himself a bowl of Cheerios and opened the Sunday paper to the sports section.

### *Monday Evening*

As he came down the stairs, the flavorful aroma of their re-heated meal floated in the air, mixed with the scent of freshly warmed French bread.

“It smells delicious,” he said, “but I guess I forgot to tell you about the meeting tonight. We’re eating while we work, Sorry, I’ve gotta run.”

### *Wednesday Evening*

“What’s that smell?” he yelled as he entered the back door to the house. There was no answer; Rachael was already asleep. As he sniffed, he inhaled a foul sweetness mixed with an unpleasant sulfur smell and the pungent stink of decay. His nostrils tried to close themselves off from the rancid odor whenever he breathed too deeply. The stench increased as he neared the source. In the cabinet beneath the sink, he spied the wilted corsage atop the leftovers in the waste basket. He held his breath as he tied the garbage bag shut, then moved the offensive trash to a shelf in the garage and retreated back into the house to open windows.

### *Thursday Evening*

The foulness poured out of the garage as soon as the door lifted. It had been a stifling hot day and the smell of decomposition seeped into the Dodge’s air vents. A wave of nausea overtook him. He held his breath, ran into the garage, and retrieved the garbage bag from the shelf. As he lifted it, flies exited the top and a putrid brown oozed from the bottom. He sealed the repulsive heap tightly in the trash can and covered his face with a rag as

he cleaned up the residue. Later that night, they ordered Chinese takeout and he lit into Rachael for not taking care of the garbage herself. He knew it wasn't her fault, but he needed to vent.

### *Saturday Afternoon*

He brought the last of the garbage out to the trashcan. Lifting the lid, he almost vomited from the stench. Maggots covered the inside of the can and lid and began crawling out as soon as it opened. He used every bug spray he could find and a full can of Febreze. Then he wheeled the trash to the curb. While there, he retrieved and scanned the mail: three pastel hand-addressed envelopes, two credit card offers, and a window envelop from the law offices of Pourri, Repporto and Enders.

### *Sunday Morning*

The bed was empty. Rachel must have gone to an early mass. Downstairs, he made himself coffee and a bowl of Cheerios and then he found the note:

“There’s nothing left. I can’t do this anymore. I’m sorry but it’s over.”

He searched for a pen, rummaged through the mail for the window envelop, and then headed outside to retrieve the trash can. At the curb, he reached down to pick up the lid. The mangled corsage lay on the ground next to it. When he threw it in the can, it landed near the center. The dead maggots surrounding it looked like rain-swollen rice long after the wedding.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out the window envelop and pen, thinking it was a good thing they never had children. He signed the divorce papers, stuffed the return envelope into the mailbox, and lifted the flag.

His neighbor, Ellen, smiled and waved hello as she retrieved her own trashcan. She was still in her house coat and a stiff breeze was blowing. Several thoughts flashed through his mind:

I wonder if she knows.

She’s got a pretty nice body and,

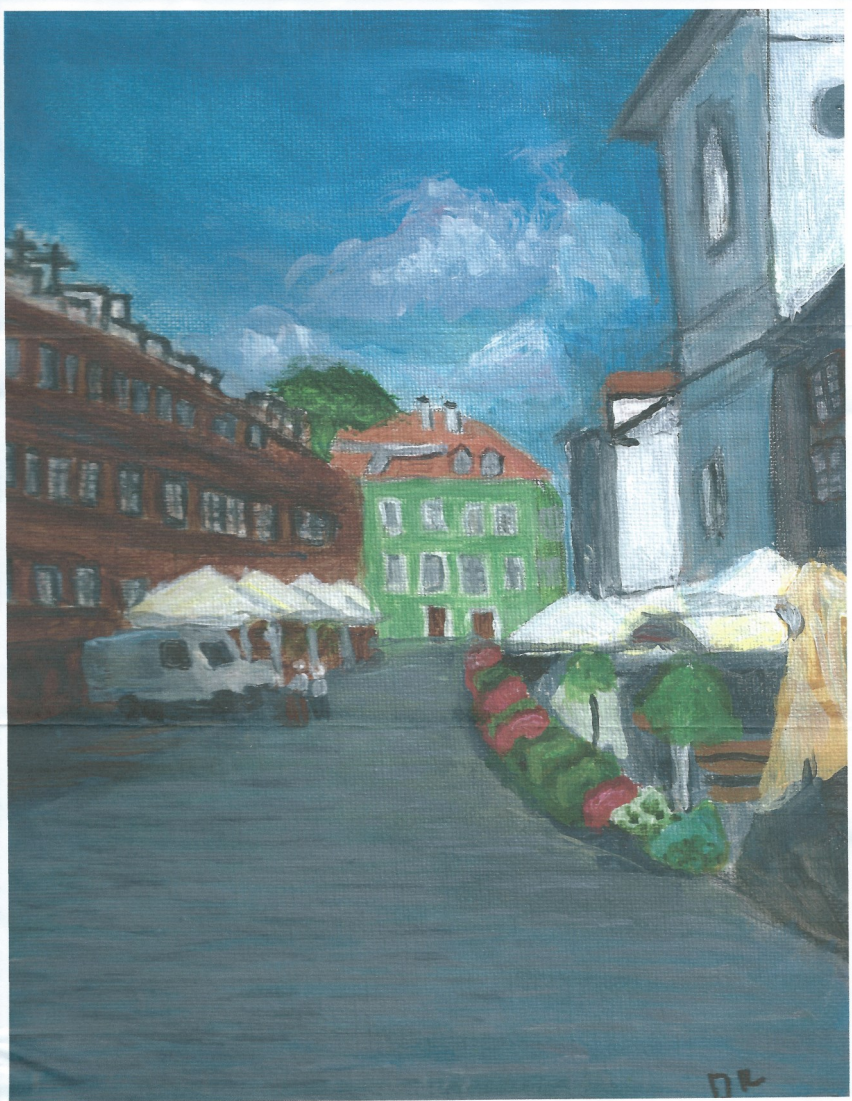
I’ll bet George still works nights.

He returned the wave, wheeled the garbage can back to the house, and headed inside to search for the Chinese leftovers.

*(“Pourri” from French - rotten / “Repporto” from Italian - relations)*

**Chuck Miceli**





**WARSAW OLD TOWN**

**Debbie Ruggeri**

## LIFE'S CHANGES

All our lives we discard something, physically, mentally and emotionally.

From the beginning:

Childhood

Worn out clothes

School memories

Some saved

Some not

Teenage crushes

Outgrown friendships

Discarded diplomas

Stepping stone jobs

Cruising cars

Wedding dreams

Golden promises

Cherished children

Different dwellings

Religious beliefs

Marriage malfunctions

Divorce decrees

Left behind Lovers

Physical attributes

Travel plans

Empty nesters

Vacant rooms

Senior living

Vanishing moments

Possessions for sale

Life on Earth

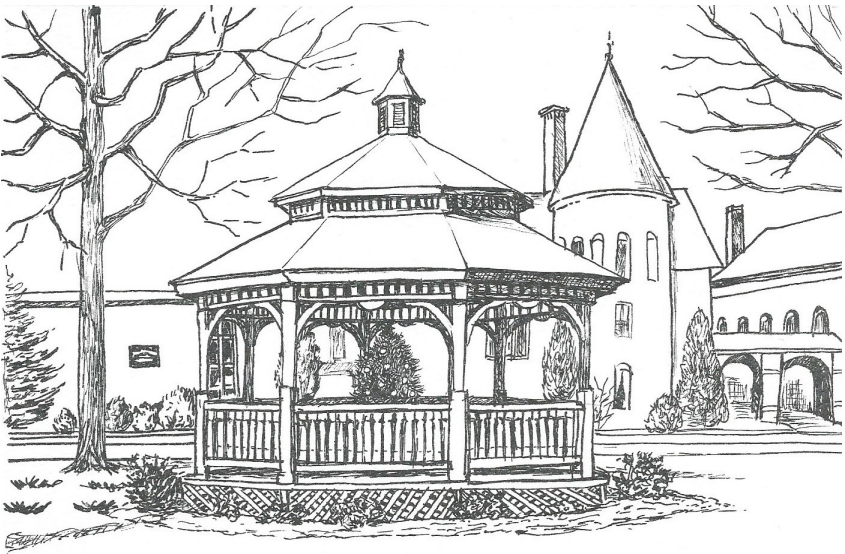
Spirit Rising

**Marjorie Fitzgerald**

## ARRIVAL

ARE YOU COMING TO OLLI?  
ROAM DOWN THE HALLS  
RESEARCH REMARKABLE BOOKS  
ILLUMINATE YOUR MIND  
VOLUMES OF KNOWLEDGE  
ALL AT YOUR DISPOSAL  
LIVE, LEARN, LIFELONG AT OLLI.

**Marjorie Fitzgerald**



*"The Green" Naugatuck, Ct*

JUDY JAWORSKI

**"THE GREEN" NAUGATUCK, CT**

**Judy Jaworski**



**CONNECTICUT WINTER**

**Judy Jaworski**



**EARLY SPRING**

**Jay A. Page**

## DID WE?

Hey, Space Traveler from the fourth Millennium,  
Are we still here?  
Did we ever solve global warming?  
What can you tell from our detritus?  
Where did all our clean water go?  
That fracking-did Arizona finally become the Pacific shore?  
What did we do with all those weapons of mass destruction?  
How many cities became bombed-out ruins-  
Can you tell from the bones how they died?  
Unlike the Neanderthals, if, when and why did we become  
extinct?  
How much can you learn from our colossal dump grounds?  
Were those old computers any help?  
Did our intelligence help us survive-  
Or did we go the way of the dinosaurs-  
One of the many species not listening to the earth  
When it told us beware?  
All that junk in the ground and polluting the sky  
Should have made us take care and keep Nature's balance there.  
We did have the brains to do so but-how about the will?  
I hope so, Space Traveler.  
If so, welcome to earth.

**Robert Grady**

## WHAT OUR GARBAGE SAYS ABOUT US

I haven't the slightest idea what my garbage says about me. Only that I have a lot of it. Many times I pick up doodads that interest me, only to lose favor sometime later. Like the donut cutter I picked up at the Vermont Country Store when I have never, or ever will, bake donuts.

But what does the study of garbage reveal today about our social and cultural patterns? A lot, especially in the media. Take TV, for example. The lack of creativity and intelligence in most TV programming is very telling. Media moguls purposely pump out reality shows to save money. They do so by hiring mediocre talent at little cost to them or their sponsors. As a result, viewers are exposed to mindless episodes of *Honey Boo Boo*, *16 and Pregnant*, *Duck Dynasty*, *Sister Wives*, and the Kardashians, to name a few. And, if that's not enough, basic cable packages come with a disproportionate number of sports and religious telecasts.

Such indifference to freedom of choice and quality programming disrespects viewers. Worse, lethargic acceptance by viewers reaffirms that tag. I guess it's easier to just go along with things rather than make things go along with us.

**Maryellen Joncyk**

## MUD

**Midnight Dreams**

**Unlock Unknown**

**Dancing Mushrooms**

**Maryellen Joncyk**

## FRACTURED

My mind twists and turns away from you  
Seeding errant thoughts of pain and loss  
Why did you stray so far away when  
Our love was meant to withstand the cost  
I cannot mend what has been broken  
Fusing fractured hearts is god's domain  
Why then do you keep slighting me when  
Our love expects what it can't explain

**Maryellen Joncyk**

## RUSH HOUR

The chipmunk scampers up the rocky wall;  
The sparrow flits among the bramble's twigs.  
I hear the crow's hawk-warning urgent call.  
For these, I tell you, I give not two figs.  
A car-brake screech has saved a dashing squirrel,  
But I have urgencies to call my own.  
Care I that nature's creatures are a-whirl?  
It's twenty-three past six, I note, and groan  
That writing, dressing, eating, packing, more  
Still lie ahead, and will I be on time?  
I hear the morning paper hit the door.  
I'll barely get to read the first headline.  
Forgive me, creatures; mortal cares drive you.  
But still, a squirrel before my car--should shoo!

**Richard K. Fogg**

## HAUNTED

Log off, re-start, boot up:  
it doesn't matter.  
Even in safe mode, she is there:  
cold accusatory eyes  
questioning, hectoring, pleading  
from somewhere in cyber space.

In vain, I've tried everything:  
clicked on help,  
pressed delete,  
implored the malware doctor,  
sought support  
from the super anti-spy.

The techs are merciless.  
They stare at me  
with incredulity.  
Don't they see her there  
just the way she looked  
in life --  
before the closing of her eyes.

I never put the speakers on.  
At least I've silenced her voice.  
But looks remain  
recalling mutual pain  
that twenty years of death  
should have long since consumed.

I permanently delete,  
press disk clean up,  
hide, undo, eradicate.  
I pull the plug.  
The screen goes dark.

.....

I stare long and hard  
trying to glimpse a shadow of her  
hiding there, waiting.

**Philip Benevento**





**FIBONACCI SPIRAL**

**Gen Delkescamp**



**THE GREENING OF WATERBURY**

**Gen Delkescamp**

## A HIGHER CALLING

Loretta LeBlanc always wanted to be a nurse, but never had the opportunity. In her own extraordinary way, my big sister was a lifelong angel of mercy who cared for the sick, injured, disabled, elderly, poor. Of profound faith, this woman was often perceived as a nun, yet never got ‘into the habit’ - believing she could reach out to more people as a lay person. She saved many lives. In her early 50s, Loretta was encouraged by her spiritual director to pursue the healthcare aspect of the lay ministry. She could continue to utilize her God-given gifts to do His work, and learn to counsel the needy, a ‘perfect’ combination for Loretta. *A higher calling!*

However, humble as she was, Loretta wondered if she was worthy of this avocation. Knowing she was the ideal candidate, I persuaded my big sister — my idol, my mentor — to pursue her passion, assisting her through the process. The application requested verification of how Loretta qualified for the program, and what she had to offer. As challenging as it was for Loretta to sing her praises, it was like preaching to the choir, from my perspective. Loretta’s acceptance into the program preceded a year of intense study. We brainstormed regularly about anonymous case studies. Being a registered nurse inspired my input, for which Loretta was very grateful.

Incorporated into the lay ministry is the distribution of Holy Communion by a commissioned Eucharistic minister. In anticipation of the ceremony, I was inspired to compose a poem on Loretta’s behalf. I met with Father John, who trained her class, in pursuit of the responsibilities and privileges of this new role. Upon his inquiry, I shared my intentions, a tribute to the new Eucharistic ministers ... “Let it be written!” Father asked if Anne, the coordinator, could contact me in this regard. We met. Anne reviewed my tribute and asked permission to include it as part of the event. I agreed, unaware if, when, where or how it would appear.

“Will you be attending the commissioning?” Anne asked.

“Yes,” I replied, “also our mother, Adele LeBlanc, my son, Scot (Loretta’s godson), and his girlfriend, Patricia.”

“Four of you? Perfect! Just what I need to bring up the ‘Gifts’ - the bread and wine for the Consecration!”

It was 1984... none of us had ever done this before. And this was a special occasion. We all agreed to participate on Loretta’s behalf. I begged my

family to refrain from letting Loretta know beforehand, as she might fear we'd falter at the altar.

The candidates were assembled in alphabetical order in two sets of pews. Being mid-alphabet, Loretta LeBlanc sat in the very last row of the first set of pews. Directly behind Loretta, the very first row of the second section was allocated to "the chosen ones" — her family, to present the "Gifts".

Each candidate, as they approached the altar, received the ceremonial wooden cross and their paperwork. Upon returning to the pew, the lady next to Loretta nudged her, pointed to the top page, "Composed on behalf of my sister, Loretta LeBlanc," and asked, "Aren't you Loretta LeBlanc?" My big sister glanced at her papers, thrust her head backward in disbelief, rapidly returning to the ritual. I knew I was in trouble, guilty as charged for this "faux pas" plus another pre-meditated act looming — the bearing of "Gifts".

At the Consecration, our time had come to present the "Gifts". Ma, a very feisty, young 76 back then, pulled rank on us, claiming, "I'll take the bread!" (Wine could spill, God forbid.)

There in plain sight was Loretta, on the edge of the center aisle. She wasn't the only one on edge. I was "on edge" as well, too tense to look anywhere but straight ahead. I could only imagine what Loretta was thinking as the four of us processed by her. I could 'smell the wood burning' that day in church, though ... Holy smoke!

The four of us ambled up the aisle, Ma and I in the lead. Three steps up from the congregation, awaiting our arrival "on high" was the Bishop himself, resplendent in his satin robe and mitre - the traditional head-dress. He was the 'high priest' all right, six feet plus in stature, appearing a foot taller, given his towering, 12-inch hat.

The bishop bowed his head, which I interpreted as a cue for us to rise to his level! Ma, all five feet of her, nodded back, as if to invite His Highness to c'mon down! An "altar-cation", an uprising was imminent. (Where was Candid Camera then!?) After a few more bows, Ma surrendered to the "higher power", and stepped right up to what must've seemed like the stairway to heaven ... a higher calling!

Following the ceremony, I had some 'splainin' to do ... Loretta was understandably astonished that, out of the hundreds of people, her family

was elected to take part in the ceremony. Loretta asked me, “How did you get involved? What did you do, go to the Pope?” I provided my big sister with the “Bible truth”, honest! I’m lucky that she didn’t ‘throw the book at me’!

Loretta served her church and her community over the years as a Eucharistic Minister, Healthcare Lay Minister, Lector, religious education instructor, blood drive coordinator, women’s retreat promoter, school carnival worker, Confirmation class retreat chaperone, Ladies’ Guild, Parish Council. For 20 years, Abbott Terrace annually recognized Loretta for exemplary service. She was awarded “Outstanding Red Cross Volunteer in the Waterbury Area” in 2002. St. Mary Magdalene Church in Oakville, Connecticut honored Loretta for “150 years of living out the Gospel”, considering her multiple, simultaneous volunteer roles, which she continued as long as she could. In her late 70s Loretta had an even higher calling — heaven! May Loretta and our mom, Adele LeBlanc rest in peace.

**Anita LeBlanc Siarkowski**



## WOOF



### WOOF

A dog day event  
In the artsy town of Kent  
It was to "Meet the Breed"  
Mine a Jack Russell  
Indeed!

Zo Rusl by name  
So friendly & tame.  
I think of him as my star  
Dragging to folks near & far.  
Initially there were many struggles  
But now I get kisses & snuggles.  
The affair's purpose was "look-see"  
Really to help Russell Refugee.

So many need a home  
Being vocal lets it be known  
Undenlably

WOOF

*June 2014*

Eugene Ptachinski

## THE SOUND OF SILENCE

The springtime sky shone cerulean-  
A perfect day to fly.  
The little plane and I  
Jumped off the runway  
Eager to join the hawks in flight.  
Soaring gracefully  
Over the greening landscape,  
We wheeled and climbed,  
Rising high and dropping low,  
Carried with the wind,  
Freed from the bonds of earth,

Until-

The sound no piston pilot wants to hear  
Begins-  
That sound of silence  
With just the wind whistling by  
And no engine pushing us through the sky.  
The first thought, "What The F \_\_\_!"  
The second, "Fly the plane!"  
Check the gauges, trim for glide,  
Take a deep breath and look around.  
Up ahead about eight miles was the airport,  
Relax and enjoy the ride.  
Too bad we didn't make it-some trees and a ridge!  
The craft was totaled, with me upside down inside.  
But-I walked away  
And that made my day.

**Robert Grady**



## POSSIBILITIES

It is a mild February day on the Mediterranean beach.  
The sky is blue, the sun warm and the waves are kissing the sand.  
Wind-surfing figures with their colorful sails, are dotting the water.  
Sailboats can be seen far on the horizon.

The gentle salty breeze is blowing her silver-streaked brown hair away from her forehead. Her eyes are squinting in the bright February sun.

She has a faint smile on her face making her wrinkles relaxed.  
Her mature body still keeps its slender shape, allowing her to wear a  
one-piece

black, flattering bathing suit. She is lying on a beach chaise, her  
pedicured toes playing in the sand. Listening to the waves and the  
screams  
of seagulls lull her into a tranquil state. Some beachgoers are having  
lively discussions around her. Very few dare to bathe in the wintry,  
cold,  
water.

She sees him coming out of the sea, one brave swimmer. His blond hair  
wet and dripping. He wears a European style tiny bathing suit over his  
unseasonably tanned body. He has a little bit of a paunch that is not  
detracting from his lithe six-foot body. His face is mature and  
handsome.

His gaze is directed at her, his clear blue eyes mesmerizing.

She shuts her eyes and lifts her face to the sun.

Oh.....The possibilities!

**Lidia Bram**

## TO SLEEP

At night I read myself to sleep  
a way of letting go the day,  
of thoughts that otherwise would stay  
to blow my needed rest away  
with ideas I would keep.

I could have chosen counting sheep  
that bound across a meadow green,  
erase from mind the thoughts unseen.  
Yet they might find what could have been  
and over fence would leap

To lie in wait 'til two or three  
then pounce, and fast awake abed  
I'd sense a niggling in my head  
that wants to know what I have said  
and pulls me from the deep.

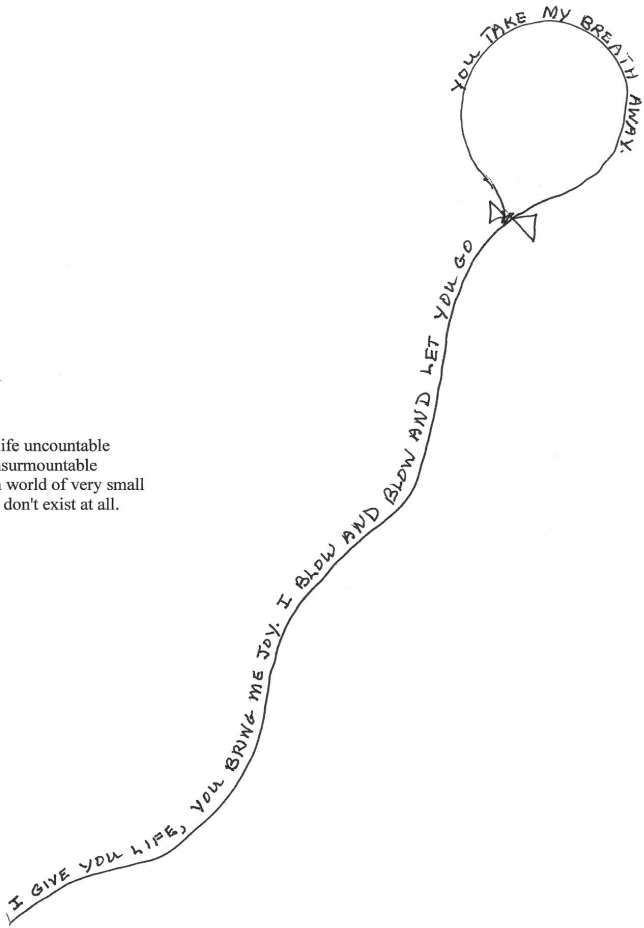
The words they flow in disarray  
Like grasses wafting under sea  
I would be happy to be free  
of ideas floating over me  
They will be gone by day.

**Betsy Nickerson**



A QUATRAIN

If the trials of life uncountable  
Seem all but insurmountable  
In the quantum world of very small  
Your problems don't exist at all.



**A QUATRAIN AND BALLOON**

**Betsy Nickerson**

## FLY ON THE WALL

On a dark, dark night, on a dark, dark street, I find a dark, dark house. I am Arthur, Scout #7Y23, with an appropriate mission to locate a sound and safe haven securing a substantial amount of food for my squadron of flies.

It is a cold night, and the squadron has not had any nourishment since our last attack at the old folks' home. I heighten my movements with purpose and intent. Flying to the nearest structure, the old Victorian mansion will be the next objective. I transmit the message back to headquarters: "Will enter and investigate." Reply---"Advance as planned."

My first objective is to get inside. Passing quickly over the roof top looking for an entrance, I find many nooks and crannies where swarms of my cohorts could penetrate. Advancing with my silver wings pivoted in a diving position, I pierce through an opening into what appears to be an attic. Finding nothing of nourishment there, I proceed to the first lower floor where the occupants are sleeping. Nothing whatever to meet our needs in these quarters.

My next function: fly over a flight of stairs down to the main section of this captive building. Living room, dining room, bathroom, all in order. I proceed to the main objective, eating quarters, the kitchen, where I am sure the mission will be a success.

When there is movement from the floor above, I find a secret cranny where I will be the fly on the wall and observe the family's activity as they begin their day.

The atmosphere changes from darkness to sunlight. Humans of different shapes and sizes emerge. There is a dynamic energy everywhere, young and not so young talking, laughing, eating, packing food into backpacks, washing

breakfast dishes, floor swept, good mornings, goodbyes, have a good day, be safe, be good, love you.

Moments later, all is quiet. The humans are gone: no trace of a mess, no morsels of food around to feed an army, no humans to annoy. Weather does not permit picnics outdoors, too cold. This fly on the wall #7Y23 transmits back to headquarters: “Object not suitable for troops. Moving forward to new location.” This dark, dark house on this dark, dark street does not meet our requirements.

**Barbara Genovese**



**STILL LIFE FRUIT**

**Bonnie Stephens**

## **It Took a Few Seconds to Rouse Myself...**

*Defending Jacob, William Landry*

The alarm sang its morning notes  
As I stirred from a deep, restful sleep  
Filled with enlightening dreams and fantasies  
That I tried to hold in my thoughts.

Turning over in the warmth of my bed  
Trying to keep the memories of the night,  
I reached beneath the covers as if  
To hold them close, preventing escape.

Within seconds this scene ran its course  
As I sought the pencil on my nightstand,  
The pad already in my hand.  
Soon all visions would be lost.

What to do?

Capturing ideas, thoughts, fantasies  
Hoping they are useful treasures  
Marking pieces of life  
Lived in dream time is my dream.

**Marie T. Maag**

**---if the doors of my heart ever close, I am as good as dead.**

**Mary Oliver, from "Landscape"**

It's been a journey to  
Pry open the doors  
To my heart. Not that  
They were ever closed  
Completely.

Truth be it, these doors  
Opened to the wrong people  
Who thought I was the  
Strong one, the one they  
Could lean upon.

Oh, how I fooled  
Most people. Behind  
The smile, the happy face,  
Hid a scared little girl.

Along my path, forks  
In the road appeared.  
Not always did I listen  
To the guides trying to show  
The way.

Yet, here I am in my  
Autumn years blessed  
With peace, and a joyful  
Life. Now, I speak  
My truth.

**Marie T. Maag**



## **MORNING IS WAKING**

**June Gemino**

### **MEMORIES AT DAWN**

One day soon when the dawn is breaking,  
I'll come to you, alone.  
With nothing but memories,  
Pockets empty, but a mind that's full.

In the morning dew  
I'll see your face, hear your voice.  
I'll talk to you.

I'll visit awhile.  
Will you know I am there?  
I'll stand with you and remember,  
There at dawn.

I'll leave no flowers, none allowed.  
But leave my memories and my love,  
At dawn.

**Julie Fernandez**

## CHANCES ARE

It all started on the coffee line  
At Starbucks.  
In front of me stood this tall  
Man of about seventy.

Comfortably rounded, pure white hair,  
He moved one foot to another  
As if impatient, in a hurry,  
Leaning forward, leaning backward.

On one of those backward leans  
He lost his balance,  
Bumped into me ever so slightly,  
Yet enough to know someone was there.

He turned to apologize, his eyes  
Reading mine for what I was thinking,  
Wondering if I was angry,  
Or just chagrined.

As our eyes met chemistry connected.  
This was someone I wanted to know.  
From the smile on his face  
I knew he felt the same.

Introducing himself, apologizing for  
Our casual meeting of sorts,  
He offered to buy me coffee.

Quickly checking my feelings toward him,  
Good, bad, positive, negative,  
I smiled and said  
Apology accepted, coffee as well.

The beginnings of a wonderful friendship  
Began with no outcome in mind.  
It will go where it will  
But for now it was everything.

**Marie T. Maag**

## DAY TRIP — NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

Lush, fragrant blooms line the paths  
entering the Renaissance Garden.

Inside: pungent herbs,  
waterfalls,  
ponds.

Lily pads float in the reflecting pool,  
dragonflies and bees play hide-and-seek in tropical water flowers.

Sunlight filters through puffy clouds.

Rock gardens - lizard, chipmunk, bunny hide-outs.

Rolling hills tinged with waves  
of reds  
and yellows  
and pinks.

Occasional sightings of gardeners working  
quietly,  
their work a meditation - how lucky for them!

The benches shaded by ancient pines  
are the perfect  
resting place  
for the pair of older strollers  
craving nature.

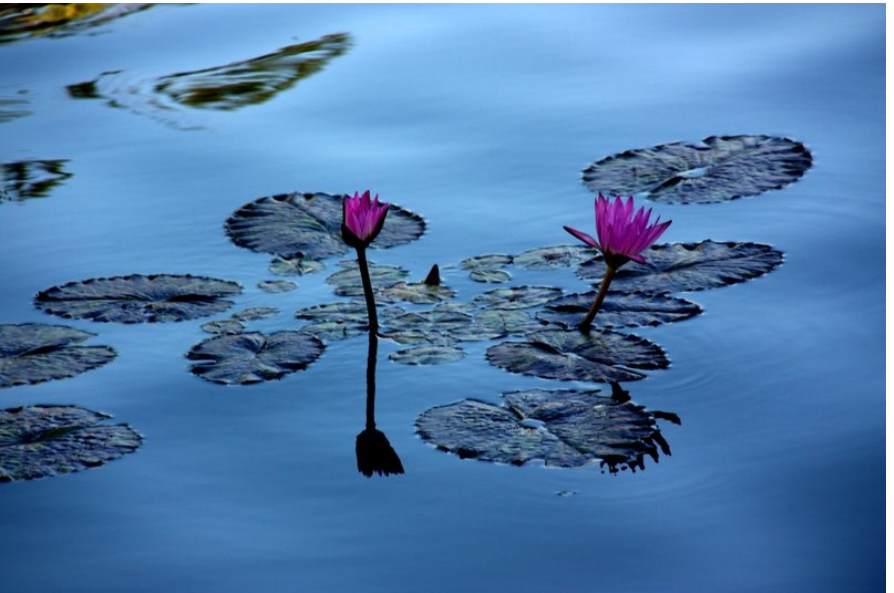
**Wendy Mauro**





**HIBISCUS**

**Peter Freeman**



**SISTERS**

**Peter Freeman**

## ...WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE

In a small basket on my dresser there is, among the seashells, little stones, and other "nature trinkets", a pair of eyeglass lenses - badly scuffed and scratched opaque. They are a reminder of a lesson learned at the beach: Things are not always as they first appear.

It was the summer before my older son Paul started high school, and my brother Hank wanted to rent a beach house in Rhode Island with us. Divorced and with custody of his son Greg (same age as Paul) he was eager to bring some normalcy to Greg's early teen years. Having been overwhelmed with Greg's behavioral issues, my sister-in-law and brother decided it was best for him to be with his father. The plans kept changing as the mid-August week approached. Paul had to attend band camp, so would only be there for the weekends, much to the disappointment of his cousin. Nick, my younger son, and I would go for the week, and my husband stayed home for Paul. My nieces were invited, but there was a lot of drama that played into the potential vacation with Dad, and in the end it was Hank, Greg, Nick, and me for the week.

Day one - disaster struck - and we arrived on the beach to No Swimming signs due to the riptides. Trying to keep the boys amused, we decided to build a massive sand sculpture. Hank and I carried buckets of water away from the roughly breaking surf to the safer spot where construction was underway. As I bent down to fill my pail, I was bowled over by a shockingly powerful wave, and when I surfaced, my glasses were gone! Unless you are as severely myopic as I am, you cannot imagine the terror I felt, unable to see more than a foot in front of me. Hank searched in vain, as did several other kind passersby, with no luck.

Sitting on the blanket, completely undone, I focused on what I could see - Nick and Greg. The first thing I observed was that emotionally they were at the same level, although Nick is four years younger. There were some puzzling behavioral traits - annoying, really - on Greg's part. Even though our blanket was huge, he seemed to occupy about 90% of it. "Selfish", I thought to myself. He did not seem to notice that he and his belongings were actually spilling on to the space of other beachgoers.

"Inconsiderate", my brain declared. I don't know how long we sat there (it was long) before I realized that this child had no awareness of his own body in a communal space! His body, his space, was his whole world. Ashamed of my earlier thoughts, I began to focus with my other senses. I listened to what he was saying. I got comfortable with the physical space I was in with him. I began to see certain behaviors with new eyes, not as problematic, but as the result of living in a very insulated world that he fiercely guarded. I tried poking at his space a bit more. Instead of Greg's belligerent, "I am going to take a shower first! Don't think you can stop me!" we tried, "Would anyone mind if I take the first shower today?" with the instant positive reply from me, "of course you can, Greg. Thanks for being so polite and asking!" I engaged him as my "eyes" for the rest of the week. We cooked together, something I did not know he could do really well. We took walks, with Greg pulling me out of the path of the bicycle blurs I could barely see. We politely and successfully negotiated bedtimes, choice of games, mini golf (they played, I cheered, because I couldn't see the balls), and trips to the ice cream stand. When the week was over we had broken new ground. We were confidants, co-conspirators, friends. He knew without a doubt that I cared about him and wanted him to succeed. He knew he could count on me even if I was strict. He knew I loved him.

On our last day there, Greg, Nick and I took a long walk on the beach. They found interesting shells and rocks to take home. About a mile from where the wave knocked me down, Nick suddenly shouted out, "Look Mom! On the fence!!!" He ran over to a fenced path leading off the beach, and stuck there, in the links, were my glasses - lenses completely opaque with scuffs and scratches, tumbled by the ocean for who knows how long, and ready for me to retrieve at the end of our stay.

Coincidence? I'd rather believe they were taken away for a reason, to allow me to see with new eyes those things that were not so readily apparent, but that reshaped my relationship with my nephew forever.

**Wendy Mauro**

## HIS SKATES

The twentieth anniversary of my father's death just passed. Born in Germany, Dad immigrated to the U.S. in 1929 along with his mother and two older brothers. His father had come the year before, sponsored by a friend already settled here. Once he obtained a steady job, my grandfather was able to send for his family, who arrived at Ellis Island by boat.

Imagine, coming into New York City at the time of the Great Depression, and being here was a better life than what you left behind! My grandparents were poor, but very hard working. All three of their sons went to trade schools, and my father became a carpenter.

Dad was a study in contrasts, really, rough around the edges, and a manual laborer. A casual observer would be hard pressed to imagine the graceful and artistic soul within his calloused, weather-beaten exterior. He was off to work every morning before sunrise, pencil behind his ear, metal lunchbox in one hand, toolbox in the other, and always a hat of some sort. A different man was waiting for us as we arrived home from school, lost in some symphony playing on our old phonograph — Beethoven, Bach, Mozart — humming and tapping along on the arm of his chair. He was the most graceful ballroom dancer — he knew all the steps, and glided as smoothly as Fred Astaire, sometimes twirling my mother around, or my favorite — standing me on his shoes and dancing me with him, hopeful I might inherit his talent (sadly I didn't.) I think, given the opportunity when he was younger, he could have been a professional dancer. I have never since seen anyone move with his polished fluidity.

And then there were the skates. Rummaging through a closet one day, I discovered an old brown leather box, battered from frequent use, covered in decals from places that sounded strange and wonderful. Opening the case carefully, I discovered an equally well-worn pair of skates with wooden wheels, and white, of all colors! Questioning him about this find, I learned that he was an avid skater, roller rinks being a popular “hangout” in the 1930s and '40s. I learned from my mother and his friends that he excelled on wheels, winning many contests, even though he skated just for the pure thrill of gliding across a glossy wooden floor. I loved imagining him as young and carefree and happy — a former self, sacrificed to maturity. Those skates became a symbol for me, a reminder that there is beauty hidden in the depths of each of us that is never seen in a surface glance. The skates were retired when, after coming home from service in the U.S. Army, he began a new chapter in his life, a married man with a wife, and then children, going off to work each day before sunrise, pencil behind his ear, metal lunchbox in one hand and toolbox in the other, with melodies in his head and heart, any rhythm and grace in his feet and soul.

**Wendy Mauro**



**HIS SKATES**

**Wendy Mauro**



**WINDSWEPT**

**Richard Balanda**

## TOO OLD

You've heard it a million times: "I'm getting too old for this." Most recently these words panted out of my own mouth as I tried to keep up with my daughter on one of our frequent walks around town. One of the routes we take (and we have several with varying degrees of difficulty) combines the flat sidewalk along Main Street with the uphill side streets by the firehouse and the post office. It was during one of those uphill stretches that I uttered those words that often describe a once-manageable task now found daunting: "I'm (huffing and puffing) too old (more huffing) for this." And I wasn't even the one pushing the stroller with my 2½-year-old grandson.

The Aging Cheerleaders would have you believe that getting older is all in one's head. Adopt a positive attitude! Do brainteasers! But it's not. Aging isn't just in my head; it's in my knees, my belly and many of my internal organs. Of course it is...these body parts have been around as long as I have, generally, and some diminishment in function is to be expected. My knees don't always bend when I want them to and when they do achieve the desired angle in an attempt to ascend stairs, there is often pain associated with the movement. What other mechanism can last that long without some deterioration? We're not Volvos. The uphill climbs I attempt never get easier, but there are days when I accomplish them with less exertion. And some days I feel like Sisyphus because "it's just one of those days"--another aging adage that explains why doing something one used to do with ease is now fraught with some difficulty.

Until quite recently, I have been slightly oblivious to having to "deal" with getting old. I admit, those lovely comments insisting I must have been twelve when I had my children because how could I possibly a grandmother are sweet music to my ears. And although I am on a couple of medications that help regulate a faulty thyroid and some pesky hypertension, it's not that big a deal. A little wear and tear on this old body has not hampered me in the things that I really love to do, which, quite honestly, isn't that much--physically speaking. I like to walk (on flat sidewalks), do some swimming, putter in the garden and get down on the floor with my grandson to play trucks. I often opt for the low footstool instead of lowering myself all the way to the ground to play, but so far he hasn't complained. I can usually complete one of those brainteasers, too, if it's not too hard.

Facing my own aging struck me recently when I needed to choose a photograph to include with a local interview for my book. There is one (and only one) photograph of myself that I don't mind showing to others. Obviously I use it every chance I get. But it's slightly outdated and I was compelled to get a new one and the new one makes me look old. And it's not the photograph that *makes* me look old. I am old. I am an older woman now and I look it. My hair is grayer, there are deep lines in my face and smaller ones around my eyes. And if you pinch the skin on my elbow, it stays that way much to the delight of my grandson, who tries it out every chance he gets. I must have thought all those aches and pains I've complained about over the last few years were going to go away. But they're not. They're here to stay and I am--to employ

yet another *old* adage--not getting any younger. My body and my mind and my looks are, in fact, aging. But, as they also say (and *they* must be those same AARP cheerleaders), aging beats the alternative.

In an effort to broaden my perspective on the aging process and how to best navigate its sometimes-choppy waters, I consulted my uncle Art. Uncle Art has been enjoying nonagenarian status for several years now. And counting. As far as I know he golfs fairly regularly and he and my aunt Diane play cribbage every night. They enjoy a steady stream of family visitors while managing a full social calendar, which includes continuing education courses. He told me, "Old age is a reward. When you reach old age, enjoy it fully. Don't complain about not being able to do this or that any more than earlier in life when you would dwell on one obstacle for too long. If life is a meal, then old age is the dessert. And dessert is the best part."

So that's the advice I'm going to follow. The changes and challenges of getting older are no different than the changes and challenges at every life stage. A challenge is a challenge. Bodies will succumb to the planned obsolescence of physiology at one point or another. I will learn to remember to enjoy the meal that has been my life. Besides, I always did like dessert best.

**Cindy Eastman**



**WATCH HILL AT SUNSET**

**Judy Jaworski**

## SEQUESTERED

It is the twilight time of day and I am seated  
deeply in the old wing back chair sipping wine,  
listening to the soft sounds of a nocturne--  
nodding by the window as the sun sets  
with tabby boy curled on my lap.

I know! I know! It is too picture perfect,  
if not down right trite.  
You are correct to criticize,  
and yet I was not prepared  
to be jolted so mercilessly back to reality.

The burst of earth, the explosive blast  
of exploding glass, tires, metal  
crashing into the neatly trimmed boxwoods--  
jettisoned like the ship of death,  
striking the side of the house.

The cat takes flight as the car hurtles through the air  
plunging into the bay window frame--  
teetering somewhere between the pink hydrangeas  
and the shattered room  
now strewn with bits of family photos.

Splattered by red wine, dazed, covered in dust  
I assess myself as I strive to focus.  
Cut, bleeding, I push to move, to find my way  
in the Armageddon that was my home.

In the clearing smoke I limp towards reality  
and there she is: old, fragile and gray,  
her body propelled forward and her head  
locked in place by shards of glass.

The motor of the motionless car hums  
as blood streams past her blinking eyes.  
Flowing from her car: the same soft nocturne  
that I was playing when she arrived.

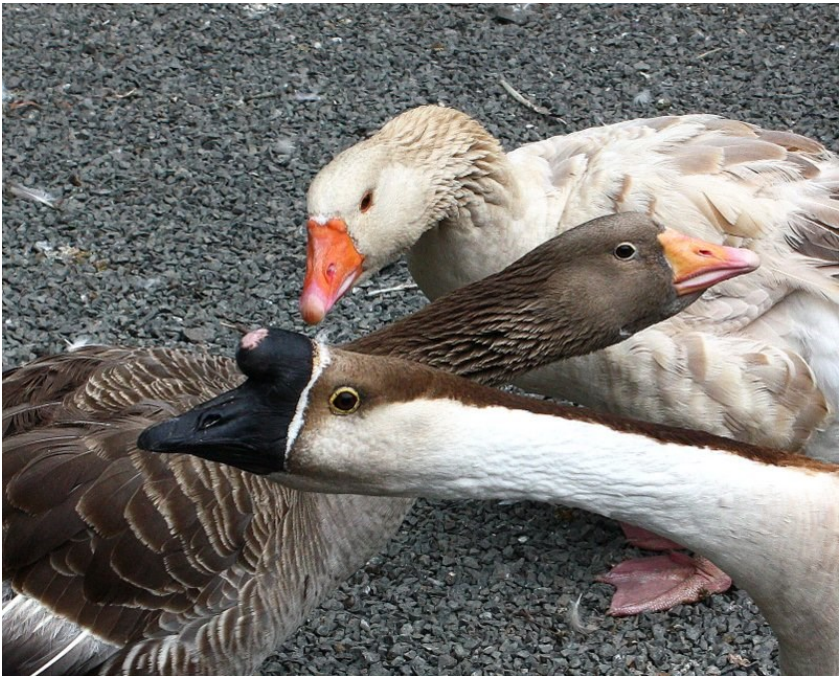
**Philip Benevento**





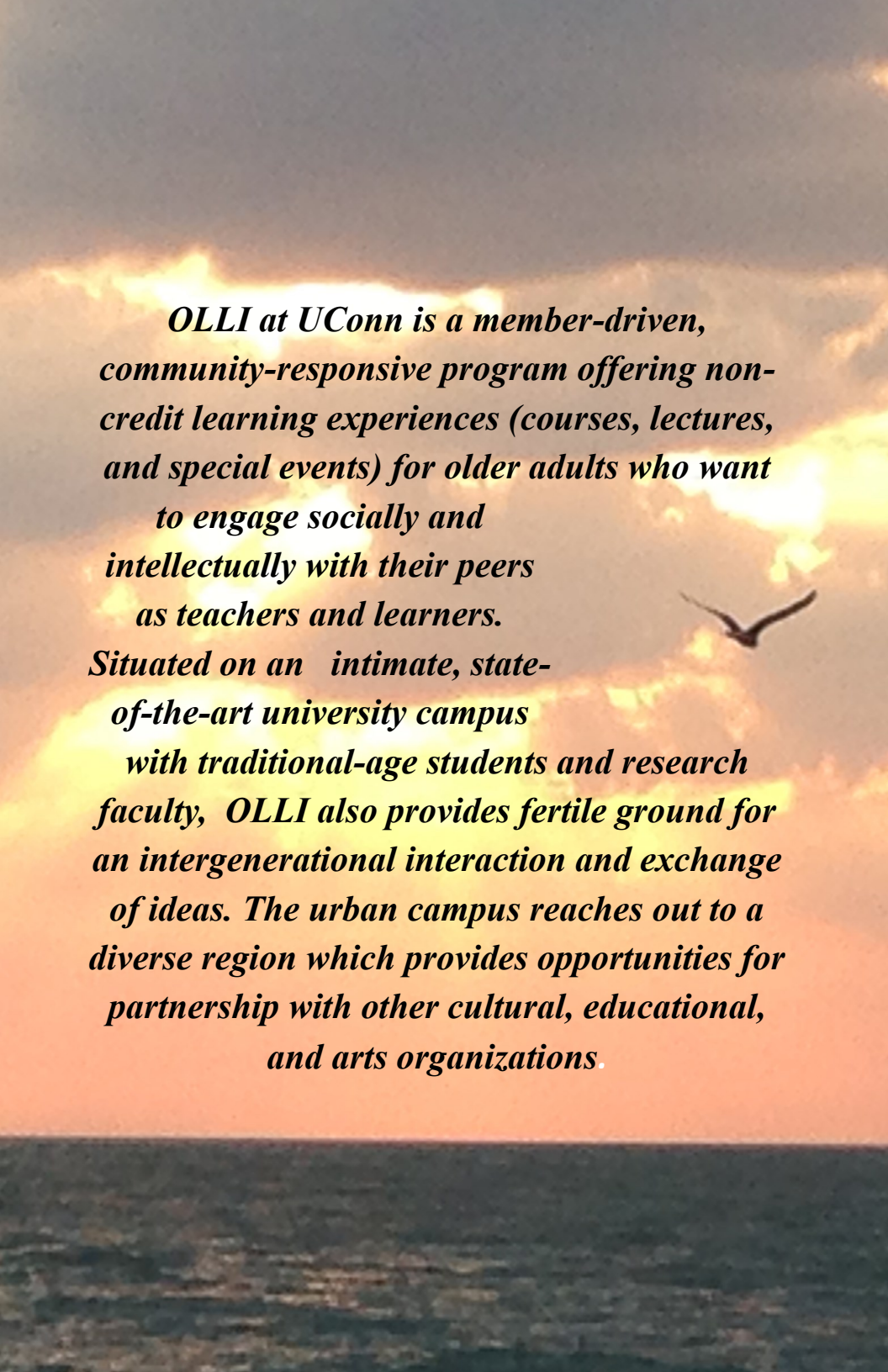
**BOARDWALK**

**Allen Smuckler**



**GAGGLE OF GEESE**

**Peter Freeman**

The background of the page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over the ocean. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from the sun, which is partially obscured by clouds. A seagull is captured in flight on the right side of the image. The ocean is visible at the bottom of the frame, with gentle waves.

*OLLI at UConn is a member-driven, community-responsive program offering non-credit learning experiences (courses, lectures, and special events) for older adults who want to engage socially and intellectually with their peers as teachers and learners.*

*Situated on an intimate, state-of-the-art university campus with traditional-age students and research faculty, OLLI also provides fertile ground for an intergenerational interaction and exchange of ideas. The urban campus reaches out to a diverse region which provides opportunities for partnership with other cultural, educational, and arts organizations.*