

# HASP Review 2020



*An Anthology  
of written work  
and original art  
By members of HASP  
Volume XXIX*

*Jan Gebben*



# HASP *Review* 2020

Volume XXIX



## Your HASP *Review* Team

Jan Gebben  
Susan Miller  
Dave Schmitt  
Kim Mendels

## Discussion of Cover Art by the Artist



### Fragmented Lighthouse

Cubism. It began as an Idea, but became a style based on Cezanne's three main ingredients of painting; geometricity, simultaneity, (multiple views) and passage. Cubism tried to describe (in visual terms) the concept of the fourth dimension.

“Fragmented Lighthouse” was influenced by analytic Cubism, the second form of Cubism, developed in 1910 by Picasso and Brague. This form of Cubism analyzes the use of rudimentary shapes and overlapping planes that intersect at various angles. The basic element of this painting style becomes the plane or facet. It is not abstracted art. It has clear subject matter and intent. It is conceptual representation, not abstraction.

As I began working on this painting, I realized that the lighthouse itself contained many different planes and as you followed the lines that made up the planes, out into space, the intersecting lines created their own components of water and sky.

A conceptual representation of Big Red began to emerge. It had geometric patterns, multiple views and when you put them all together VOILA: it took you into the 4th dimension.

I hope you will enjoy this rendering of our beloved “Big Red” and keep in mind that this is a conceptual image, based on what is known about it, rather than an optical image, based on what is seen.

Whether or not “Fragmented Lighthouse” will carry you into the 4th dimension depends on just how you look at it with your 3 dimensional eyes.

Jan Gebben

## Thoughts from Our HASP Director



**We are living in strange times and never expected to be separated from one another in this way** and for so long. Our daily routines have been disrupted and we miss our face to face interactions and conversations. At the same time, our lives have slowed into a time and space where we can be more intentional. We have become acutely aware of how important our human relationships are and the sense of community we feel when we are able to be together. Perhaps we will no longer take that for granted moving forward. It has been my prayer throughout this pandemic and “shelter at home” order that you are safe, healthy, and finding ways to stay connected to those you love, as well as staying engaged in lifelong learning and enrichment. Whether it is reading, writing, artwork, gardening, cooking or caring for others – or something else, I trust you are keeping your bodies and minds active. HASP members are committed to this pursuit and you are a truly inspiring community.

A quote that comes to mind for me in this time, and as we have worked on assembling this HASP 2020 *Review* is by Ram Dass, an American spiritual teacher and author of the book *Be Here Now*: “We’re all just walking each other home.” It’s important to acknowledge that “home” means different things for all of us, but the author reminds us that we do not go through life alone and the concept of walking each other home is an important one. Whether we’re with family, chosen family or friends, most of us interact with others every day. We keep company, so to speak, and mutual support is what binds us together. I believe the same is true of learning and conversation, something HASP does so well. It’s also what I believe the HASP *Review* accomplishes. In sharing our stories, poetry, artwork, etc., we learn something about each other. It gives us a window into each other’s lives and minds that is unique and beautiful. It is also published and shared at our fiscal and program year end...a time where we acknowledge those HASP members we have lost but not forgotten. Like the pages of this book, their stories live on and their contributions to HASP are not forgotten.

I’d like to express a heartfelt THANK YOU to each and every contributor. Thank you for your brave sharing and creative energy.

Thank you to our small but mighty 2020 HASP *Review* Committee: Dave Schmitt, Jan Gebben, and Susan Miller, for their commitment in seeing this publication through even in the midst of COVID-19. Special thanks to Steve O’Connor and the HASP writing group for their many contributions. We are grateful.

Please know that this year some things are different and some of the old rules have been “relaxed”. **Submissions are printed just as they were received – unedited by anyone other than the authors.** If there are imperfections, we apologize. We are simply grateful for each piece, for each member who shared their work, and for the hands and minds that prepared this 2020 edition.

Kim

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*Your HASP Review*

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of written work,  
compositions and  
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by HASP members*



Original illustrations by  
Jan Gebben



## Five Haiku for a Time of Pandemic

Coronavirus  
“totally under control”.  
Can you believe it?

Last week at Meijer’s  
Big run on toilet paper.  
We need our blankies.

Pandemic terror!  
Agoraphobia cure:  
Self-isolation.

Coronavirus  
When it will end I don’t know.  
Meanwhile, read big books.

Will I survive this?  
Enjoy this sabbatical  
One day at a time.



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**Whistler's Mother in Time of Pandemic**



Image created by Judy Parr

With thanks to artist James McNeill Whistler and  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistler%27s\\_Mother](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistler%27s_Mother) and  
<https://www.ebay.com/itm/VTG-Needlepoint-Handmade-Wood-Framed-Dont-Forget-To-Wash-Your-Hands-/221933181562>



## **A Prayer for the Pandemic**

Lord of light and love  
Shine on us from above  
So we may share your hope and care.  
God hear our prayer  
in Jesus' name  
Burn bright your flame  
Turn this dark night  
To a dawn of love and light.



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## Since the Virus Came

Since the virus came, our lives have changed, quite unexpectedly and for some, dramatically. We suddenly feel such a lack of certainty. We worry about our loved ones and worry about ourselves. COVID 19 is indeed frightening. People become ill and some will die. But there has been little time for grieving because we had to quickly adapt. Many of us feel sadness as we look for the positives. Some of us find acceptance and have become resolved. Others of us were labeled ‘essential workers’ and they don’t have a lot of time to ponder it as they have to continue with a strength of will to manage both a job and family.

Since the virus came I notice day-to-day changes in how we relate to others. Walks in the neighborhood have taken on a new face for me. Those I meet and greet get a little more time from me, and I from them. Finishing neighborly conversation, and moving along takes a little longer, like handshakes at funerals that seem to linger for a few extra seconds.

I am aware of more notes, e-mails, calls and messages from family and friends. They just seem to want to make contact. It seems good. I sense a yearning in voices for connectedness. Now that the virus has come, we allow that yearning, ache, if you will, to surface. It feels ok to own it now. We have permission to reach out without embarrassment or shame.

Since the virus came, we are using more social media options. Those nervous about technology are learning to use Zoom and Face time. Text messaging and Facebook are part of our lives in ways they never were before. Visits on porches, six feet apart have become the norm. My mother in law turned 94 recently. A party was given for her. Using Zoom technology, 25 people showed up from across the street, from across the town and from cities and states across the nation. There were signs, balloons and birthday songs. Her response to all of this, was “I felt surrounded by love.” The effort was worth it.

But there is an incompleteness with respect to social media. The chance to shake hands, to hug, to pat on the shoulder brings in important part of the human connection we desire. It is a dimension we can’t have. On the Internet, with only the virtual world as our reality, we miss the beauty of the sense of touch. An elbow bump or an “air hug” just is not the same.

Since the virus came, many students, finishing school early for the year are truly missing their peers, classrooms, teachers and the whole milieu of their school experience. I learned from my granddaughter that graduates are left feeling a void without their well-deserved ceremony and closure.

A young friend shared some thoughts with me about his college year abruptly

ending.. This man is in his early 30's. He has dealt with alcoholism and substance abuse. He has been sober and working for years. He is the first one from his family to attend college. When the virus compelled the university to close it's doors, he shared with me, "I loved my first year at college, but am sad it ended the way it ended. I have no sense of closure."

Since the virus came, we miss our church family. Now it feels more like that family has moved on in life, and has gone it's own way. I have attended church meetings on line, watched Sunday service, listened to morning devotionals, all virtual, and on the internet. We see the priests on the alter, in front of the empty church pews.

Since the virus came, we are struck by the stories coming from hospitals. The gloom and trauma shared by front line workers are disturbing and painful. Doctors, nurses, and all patient care staff have a new special deserved status, thanks in part to all the media attention. But they work with courage. The year 2020 has been declared as "the year of the nurse." The nurses will accept that and wear it with a hesitant kind of pride. But they don't have time to indulge in it. Maybe some day they will. I love that grocery workers, truck drivers and other

essential workers are getting their due recognition, as well.

Since the virus came, I see people stepping up to help in a manner I didn't expect. Women are sewing and making facemasks at a rapid rate. Food bank shelves that were quickly emptying were beginning to fill back up with donations. Phone calls and shopping trips for elderly relatives and neighbors is common. Businesses and factories are hurriedly retooling to create sadly needed hospital face shields and other PPE's. It is something real and tangible we can all do to fight back the unseen enemy.

We wonder what it will look like at the other end of this. Will we continue as concerned neighbors? Will we be able to see beauty in spite of our shaken foundation.

I would like to believe the spring and summer flowers will still come and they will be picturesque and lovely. Kindness and gratitude will still exist. Much of what we valued in life remains. Perhaps we will simply be a little more grateful. The poet, David Whyte has a poem entitled "Everything Is Waiting For You." So it is that, on the other side of this, God will still have beauty, truth and good things of life waiting. We will clean up following the storm, and we will stagger onward, shaken, but thankful.



## Even in Quarantine

Two days after the first day of Spring,  
Snow came in the night.  
Not much,  
But enough to cling to every twig, leaf, mailbox, roof.  
You get the idea.  
The world became monochromatic—one of her best looks.  
Quiet, Still. Pure.  
Dusted in wonder.  
A pair of cardinals flitted and flirted in our maple, playfully dislodging puffs of crystals.  
Reminding me that perfection is fleeting.  
And that I would rather be “in it” than viewing it.  
So...  
At Keppel Forest, I was the only intruder.  
Glorious trees overlap the path.  
Creating a cocoon of sorts.  
All silent.  
No.  
That’s not right.  
Silent save for bird calls and the crunch of snow under my feet.  
And another subtle sound.  
Melt.  
Snow melting, becoming liquid.  
I could hear that, too.  
Clumps of snow were beginning to cascade from the trees.  
Every which way.  
Suspended in nature’s perfect beauty,  
I stood still as a statue.

Striving to capture every sight and sound.

Within my being I heard:

*“Do not be afraid, for I am with you always.”*

Words for me.

A forest for me.

Bird song for me.

Peace for me.

Peace for All

God be with you.



## Woman in the Window

By Jan Gebben



## Luther's Mirror IV

Gulf Oil Spill - 2010

“For they sow the wind,  
and they shall reap the whirlwind.” (Hosea 8:7)

Your treasure is where your heart is.

Be careful what you choose.

There's a lot to lose.

Sow the wind's ever darkening downward spiral of despair,  
reap the whirlwind's devastating destructive desolation of no repair.

A perilous priority builds a life or nation of ill fated illusion cumulative confusion.

Blatantly bank on petroleum's delusion storied pollution.

Haplessly hoping for the “mother lode”, petropolitics' abode.

Willing to wage wanton wars in liberty's blasphemed name.

Eager to sell our Gulf water's birthright for crude's craven gain.

Puncture the precious earth beneath the shattered sea,

unleashing oily treasure from its vaulted lea,

reaping the whirlwind of a Midas Touch covering,

silently slithering, coating and gilding, enveloping and smothering.

Killing us softly with black gold's mire, our heart's desire.

Dare we look in “Luther's mirror”

**to see the mourning land through Hosea's tears?**



## The Three Legged Dog

“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

A tall lean man with a military gait walks cautiously down the road.  
His piercing eyes peer straight ahead, no wayward glances,  
planning his path progresses.  
Steady, directed, mission minded,  
he tailors his timeless trek preferring precise precision, strategic position.  
Caught between two worlds he wanders,  
heart at home and thoughts of war,  
fractured mind, wary and watchful.  
He turns around in sudden awareness.  
His golden haired, lame legged dog limps far behind.  
He waits for him, together they embark,  
advancing to the park.  
Got to get there before dark.

A tall lean man with a military gait walks cautiously down the road.  
His piercing eyes peer straight ahead, no wayward glances,  
planning his path progresses.  
Steady, directed, mission minded,  
he tailors his timeless trek preferring precise precision, strategic position.  
Caught between two worlds he wanders,  
heart at home and thoughts of war,  
fractured mind, wary and watchful.  
He looks ahead in sudden awareness.  
His golden haired dog charges ahead,  
on his three strong legs, the lame one gone, a surgical operation.  
Leaping, jumping, romping, running,  
he stops to wait for his master.

Reunited together they tread much faster,  
advancing to the park.  
Got to get there before dark.

A tall lean man with a military gait walks cautiously down the road.  
His piercing eyes peer straight ahead, no wayward glances,  
planning his path progresses.  
Steady, directed, mission minded,  
he tailors his timeless trek preferring precise precision, strategic position.  
Caught between two worlds he wanders,  
heart at home and thoughts of war,  
fractured mind, wary and watchful.  
He experiences a sudden self awareness.  
He cuts off the bleeding monstrous memories, a momentary mental amputation,  
barricading, disengaging, escaping.  
He joyfully joins his golden haired, three legged dog,  
walking, running, dancing, prancing,  
advancing to the park.  
They both get there well before dark.



## Truly I Tell You

Nearing the main entrance to our downtown Grand Rapids office building, I noticed a young woman walking toward me, about 25 feet away. She abruptly changed her forward momentum without breaking stride, veering away from what appeared to be a sidewalk panhandler while saying something to him that I could not discern.

This is not an uncommon occurrence on our block; I have seen and experienced it personally many times over the years. Occasionally, I stop and make a token contribution of loose change or maybe a dollar. I frequently wave them off while shaking my head in a gesture of disinterest. This time I briefly considered backtracking to the alley entrance in an effort to avoid the “pitch.”

But for some reason I just kept walking and then stopped when he asked me for help. Perhaps it was because I had been reading *Turn My Mourning Into Dancing* in which Henri Nouwen reminds us that we tend to turn away from unpleasant circumstances, preferring everything and everyone to remain sunny side up.

He told me that he’d been on the street for two days and needed money to get something to eat. I offered to buy him breakfast in the adjacent coffee shop instead. While marginally interested in my proposal, he nonetheless declined. I suggested that the nearby mission might be of some assistance but he

countered that he was not welcome back there after missing his curfew a couple of days earlier. All he wanted to do was return home to Lansing and he needed \$18.50 for the bus ticket.

A very slowly rising tide of compassion began to temper my skepticism and perhaps my better judgment. I asked his name and he replied, Byron. Standing close, I looked at his fatigued face and into his weary eyes, and then surprisingly I placed my right hand on his left shoulder. I did not remove it for several minutes as I narrated to him the dilemma in which I found myself: “I’ve been told that I’m not doing you any favors by giving you money. In fact, when approached like this I generally keep moving. I really don’t know what to do, Byron.”

As we regarded one another silently, he would glance down now and again, avoiding eye contact with me for a few seconds. But that feeling of compassion continued to arise. “Against my better judgment, I’m going to give you some money” I told him, pulling a money clip from my pocket. We both saw the twenty on top as I folded it back hoping to reveal a five or even a ten dollar bill but there were only singles.

I deliberated for quite a while and then handed Byron the twenty knowing that it was more than he was seeking and probably way more than I should be giving him. I put it into his hand and said: “Now that you have it, this money

is yours and I cannot place any conditions on it.” And then immediately I did just that: “Take this and use it for what you told me you need, a bus ticket to Lansing. It will break my heart to see you here again like this.”

In silence we continued to softly gaze at one another and I shared with him that I too was hurting that day. And then Byron blessed me, saying that I was a godly man. We lingered in a quiet handshake and then wished each other good luck. Moving toward the entrance of my building, I turned to see him still standing there and reminded him that he had a bus to catch. He began walking in the direction of the station.

Now the point of all this is not to confirm what a kind, caring, gracious and godly man I am. It’s also not about whether I got taken, although it certainly appears that I may have been. The real point is that in those few minutes of relationship, I experienced deep communion with another human being who asked for my help.

I likely will again decline someone’s request and simply pass by. But when that happens, I hope at least to be looking into their eyes and remembering Jesus’ admonition: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”



## A Grand Piano and Four Cats

Life is good for a cat in Manistee, Michigan, in the 1950's. Everyone says I am elegant, graceful and sociable, not like other indoor cats. They call me Beethoven. I am white with a black spot at the end of my tail. I have emerald green eyes and was the "pick of the litter" my family tells people. My birth mother and the rest of my cat family still live at the downtown hardware store that the father of our family owns.

Our human family, the Bristol's, includes a father, mother and two girls. We have a lot of music in the house because we have a beautiful grand piano that besides me is the focal point of all activity. Our mother,

Garnet, gives piano lessons to children, and she plays for the church sometimes for community events. The girls, Sue and Blythe, love to sing and sometimes people from the community come and sing with them. Guests always make a fuss over me and I enjoy being the center of attention with praise and cuddles. I guess the piano and I are the community attractions.

The piano is where I nap. As the sun rises and warm spots move across the living room I move from one side of the

piano to the other. If they leave the lip up on the piano I just make myself comfortable on the padded bench. I often sit there to enjoy the music and the vibration of sound with the girls or when our mother plays and practices. I never enjoy the sound of piano students so I sneak off to the closet upstairs.



"Cat" by Susan Miller

People say that our classically trained Mother should have lived in a big city like Chicago or New York so her musical talents could have been appreciated by a larger and more appreciative audience. She was able to save enough money to buy this big piano before she got married and moved

here. She sometimes played for the silent movies when she was young.

As the years pass, I noticed the girls are leaving for college and life is quieter. Our parents still enjoy the piano music each evening and there are no longer the noisy students. It is hard for me to jump up on the piano to follow the sun so I often just nap on the piano bench.

One day four men came and took away our beautiful grand piano. I could not understand why or where there would

be another place for this beautiful piece of furniture. What would the girls say when they came home and it did not look like our home? That afternoon I just went to the closet and took a forever long nap.

### Alley Cat

Manistee is a good place to be a wild cat. People leave a lot of food in the trash and sometimes nice ladies leave left over food on their porches. I look a little “frayed” because I have to defend myself against some bigger cats and a few dogs. I hold my own and am proud of the missing pieces of my ear and scars. My gray fur is missing in a few places but it does not affect my ability to avoid the dog and cat catcher or chase mice and chipmunks.

About ten years ago in the winter a grand piano was moved into the local Congregational church. There was such fuss and commotion that day that I slipped in to look around. I got lost and could not find my way out before all the doors were closed. I had a very restful night in the warm room and slept on top of the grand piano. I found some water to drink and a couple fat mice for breakfast. This was the first time I had slept inside a building and it was so comfortable. I decided that maybe I should try staying here. I would avoid the people and maybe there were enough mice to keep me happy.

While napping in the morning sun a woman with mean eyes came in to dust the piano. She startled me and as I jumped off the piano she hit me with a broom. I got away and this for the rest of the day. Another lady with nice brown eyes called, “kitty, kitty, kitty”, a sound I had never heard and then she

put out a dish of good smelling food. When she left the room I ate it and longed for more. I followed her at a distance and watched her for a long time in a small room with only one door. Pretty soon she put out a bowl of the same good food, a dish with water and a box of sand. I could not resist the smell of that food so I slipped past her to the dish. She jumped up and closed the door so I was trapped. I did finish the food and then I assumed I was in for a fight. She started talking to me in a nice voice and called me, “Alley Cat.” When she left and the church was quiet I spent the night on the piano with a full stomach. Not bad for a wild cat.

Over time I let the lady, named “Gertrude” touch me because it made her happy and I didn’t mind it. She continued to say “Alley Cat” in her nice way and sometimes when we were alone she would cry. I learned that if I rubbed up against her legs she would feel better and sometimes I would sit on her lap until she stopped crying. Cats don’t cry like that so I didn’t understand. She often locked me in her small room when people came to church to sing or talk. I guess she knew I didn’t trust anyone but her.

Occasionally, I would bring her mice I caught to show her my appreciation. She would thank me and put them in a big silver pail with a lid.

Sometimes on weekends she would come to the empty church and play great rock and roll songs on that grand piano. She would sing as loud as she could and hop around on the piano bench. I kept my distance but I could see it made her so happy. People are hard to figure out but I think we made each other happy. I have a nice warm

place to sleep and plenty of food and my first human friend.

I lived at the church for a decade when someone decided to give the piano to a resale shop. It was too big and electronic machines could play just as well, folks say. It was also time to let Gertrude leave the church and she and I left together on a snowy day.

### Liberace

Life is interesting for a cat that lives and works in the antique shop in the 80's on the shore of Lake Michigan in the resort town of Manistee. I was born in the downtown hardware store that closed a few years ago. Mr. Bristol, the owner kindly gave me to the resale shop because he knew I wasn't able to live outside like an alley cat. I come from a long line of black and white cats from that store and we are all good looking and hardworking mousers.

We catch mice because tourists don't like to see mice when they shop at our store. We have four store owners but one of them, Patrick, has adopted me to be his special cat and affectionately calls me Liberace because when there are no visitors in the store I walk along the grand piano keys just to hear the sound. He loves this and often begs me to do it when someone seems to have an interest in that old dusty piece of furniture. Almost no one plays it but it is a good place to display smaller items for resale. I take my naps on it sometimes because it is a good place to keep an eye on all the activity in the store.

One day a lady came in the store and she spend a long time looking at the old piano. She walked around it, looked under it and carefully dusted it off.

Patrick was eager to find a buyer and get rid of it so he begged me to walk across the keys. I wasn't in the mood so I just took a nap on a nearby fainting couch. The lady asked where it had come from and when she found out it was the local Congregational church she said, "I think this was my mother's piano. We lived on Magill Street and she taught lessons. I learned to play on this piano but I was never as good a pianist as my mother. I still love to play but have just been using an electronic piano and nothing has the sound of this piano." She sat down and played but it was out of tune.

She could see that it was an expensive item but Patrick needed the sale so they agreed upon a reduced price. I could tell the woman was so happy that I just walked over to that piano and gently walked on the keys. She loved that and within a few weeks a big moving truck came and took the piano to Kalamazoo. Patrick knows that my playing helped sell that piano and I am hoping we get another piano in here so I can entertain him from time to time, when I feel like it.

### Tooeey

Kalamazoo is a big cultural city I have been told, but as a pampered indoor cat I don't get out to see around the neighborhood or the city. I was rescued as a small kitten from a kitty shelter by Sue Bristol Butters. She is a grandmother with two daughters and six grandchildren. Just the two of us live in a big house with windows and a grand piano. She grew up in Manistee, north of here and she loves that piano music. She always sings and even toured Europe when she was young to sing with Alma College.

Five years ago the piano moved in with us. Sue spent so much time with some bad smelling lotion on the finish of that piano that I hated it. I wondered why a piece of furniture could have all that attention. I guess it needed to be completely refinished and I am glad that is done. Someone came and tuned it one day and now Sue can play as much as she wishes. I learned to like it too because her music fits my style. There is a picture of Sue's mother and father and a white cat with a black spot on its tail on the piano where I nap in the afternoon. That is strange to me because I am a white fluffy cat with a black spot on my tail too.

I am a rather sassy city cat and I enjoy the good life. Sue's guests always want to see me and I make myself available for some petting or playing. It is easy to entertain people and most people understand that we are in charge of our own lives. People own dogs but we cats own the people in our houses.

I know how to make Sue happy and she is kind to me. I chase balls and return

them to her and she thinks that's exceptional for a cat. When she was ill a couple years ago she rarely went out so I stayed near her because it made her more comfortable. We sleep together and if I want to tease her I pretend to sleep somewhere else. I am not the sort of cat to catch wild things. There are striped critters in our basement sometimes and Sue thinks I should help her catch them but she always tricks them and gets them to go outside on their own. That is work for common alley cats. I prefer the good life with gourmet style food from a can and to watch Sue get rid of the critters.

Cats are good observers of people because we are not emotional or judgmental. We are also good pets because people need comfort and companionship. People need to understand that cats have "attitude" and that sets them apart from the ordinary animal.



## The Story of Dorothy and Her Life on the Streets

I was a fledgling EMS worker, for a local ambulance service the first time I met Dorothy. One summer evening, early in my career, coming back to the main station from an emergency call, our radio dispatcher had just announced a “fight in progress, injuries reported, and police are on the scene.” So we were en route, lights and siren, to the side of town where rescue workers and police spend seventy five percent of their time. Over the wailing sound of the ambulance siren, and swerving around cars who had stopped on the side of the street to let us pass, my partner declared, “this is a bad neighborhood we are heading into, Bill. Watch your back.” As we neared the address, there was a disheveled appearing gentleman, wildly waving and pointing to an alley behind a party store. There we discovered two police cars and a motley group of men standing in a circle observing two combatants, both seated now and both appearing to have no fight left in them. One was a clearly older appearing gentleman, with a sad, downtrodden appearance. The other, I had to stop and assess, to decide if this person was a woman or a man. I was truly not sure. The police were bantering and laughing with them both. And the fighter who had been a curiosity to me, was telling a story and slapping her knee. One of the police officers turned to me and said “Dorothy had just been engaging in another altercation over a dice game.” She looked up at us and gave my partner and I a broad,

toothless smile. Her overall appearance caught my attention further. She was short, stocky and sturdy appearing. She had a bit of a harmless appearing swagger and bluster about her. She wore a Humphrey Bogart style fedora hat and her graying hair stuck out all around her head under the hat brim. She wore a worn rumpled, faded man’s suit, complete with necktie and an old and wrinkled white shirt. To complete her wardrobe, she had heavy, black combat style boots. Like Bogie, she had cigarette, a non filtered Pall Mall, dangling from her lips. Upon our arrival she was already smiling, laughing, full of chatter and bantering with the policeman and the man with whom she fought. She and her adversary had obviously made up and were friends again. Dorothy claimed to be uninjured but the police officer on the scene wanted both fighters checked out anyway. I learned over time this was a regular occurrence with Dorothy and that she knew the city police, fire department rescue workers and ambulance first responders quite well. Along with her little apartment in a rooming house, the streets were home. As it turns out, those who patrolled the streets all looked out for her. At my first encounter with Dorothy, I sensed a child like and needy sort of charm about her. One could say Dorothy was a colorful character. She was likeable. Over time, I grew an appreciation of her and a respect for her survival skills.

Dorothy lived in a little rooming house in a fairly run down section of town. Her presence on the 'streets' was fairly ubiquitous. She was always ready for light-hearted banter and small talk. Dorothy had a warm, friendly, big smile and one could count on a welcoming hand slap, or a friendly smack on the arm as a greeting. She could often be spotted at food pantries and shelters where meals were served. But her place was on the streets and hanging out on corners, in front of party stores, or on neighbor's porches, laughing and hand slapping and swapping stories. Because, police and first responders, by nature of the job, would spend a considerable amount of time in her neighborhood, she knew us all by name or whatever nickname she assigned to us. Dorothy's name for me was "Bill Boy Bill." She seemed proud that she knew all of the city rescue workers. I was told, early on, she had no family and her 'family' was all of us as well and the workers in the soup kitchens and shelters.

After a year or so on the job, with several encounters with Dorothy behind me, my partner and I received a call for a "fight in progress, with injuries." As we responded, lights and siren to what we knew to be Dorothy's favorite street corner, we wondered out loud if it was Dorothy having been in another fight over a dice game. The police had arrived and quieted things down, and not surprisingly, Dorothy was one of

the participants. It seemed that her only real fault that got her into trouble was her short temper when she was gambling in the alley. Once again, she had had a disagreement, which led to an altercation with a man, clearly larger than she. He, however, appeared to have gotten the worse end of the exchange. As we assessed Dorothy for her injuries, it appeared she had a broken nose. She insisted on a ride in the ambulance to the hospital. As we loaded her for transport, the group of men from the corner cheered and clapped for her, while she shook her fists in the air like Rocky Balboa. This was a Dorothy kind of moment. She was obviously in an upbeat mood, on the ride to the

Emergency Room, because she spent the entire ride telling me a funny story while she laughed and slapped both her knee and my shoulder all the way to the hospital. As we dropped Dorothy off and transferred her care to the ER nursing staff, Dorothy looked up at me and with her engaging grin, she said "thanks, Bill, Boy, Bill" with genuine gratitude in her voice.

There would be times Dorothy would stand on the edge of the street, and flag us down just so she could greet us and engage in a little amiable small talk. Sometimes we would give her a couple of dollars to go buy some coffee and a donut, and with a pretend stern look, tell her not to spend it on gambling. She would laugh, promise not to, then she would puff her self up, straighten up her man's suit, she always wore, and



proudly, with a big smile and shoulders erect, strut back to the street corner as if to show off a little for her group standing around watching her talking with the medics. Other times it would be a big wave from the sidewalk as we were driving by.

Dorothy had another talent. She had a uncanny sense for where trouble in her neighborhood might be brewing. Like the character Radar, on the TV show Mash, who would call ‘choppers coming,’ she had an ability to know where excitement was occurring in her neighborhood, and she was known to beat the rescue vehicles to the scene. Often, she would be standing there waiting for us when we arrived. I would look up and see Dorothy standing there shouting instructions to us, such as “she needs oxygen, “or “she’s got pain in her chest.” It was always a mystery to me how she would get to the scene first.

Once we responded to a “woman unconscious” call. It was a hot, muggy August night and the apartment we went to was in Dorothy’s neighborhood. It was in a building high on a hilltop, and our unconscious patient was on the third floor. We arrived to find, an extremely obese woman lying on her bed, semi conscious, and showing all the signs of having had a stroke. Unfortunately, to reach the patient we had to get through a mountain of several hundred empty wine bottles (Wild Irish Rose) that surrounded the bed where our patient was located. There was only a very narrow path to reach her with wine bottles literally stacked to the ceiling. The only way get the unfortunate lady out of there and to the hospital was to, one by one, relocate the empty bottles to a different room. Knowing that task would take an

hour or more, we radioed for help. It took two police officers, two fire fighters, my partner and myself 30 minutes to clear out a path sufficient to carry our patient out on a backboard. In the meantime the advanced life support crew arrived and literally climbed and crawled over the stacks of bottles with their EKG monitor and equipment and medications and sat in bed with the patient monitoring her while we worked on clearing out the plethora of wine bottles.

So finally we had our patient ready and safe for transport to the ER. We appeared out the apartment door, and to our surprise, discovered a crowd had gathered on the street. There were easily 100 or more curiosity seekers on the sidewalk. In addition, because It was an August evening and a spontaneous party had erupted, in and among all the emergency vehicles. The mood had become festive. Boom boxes were blaring, a small group was dancing, and I caught a glimpse of one man cashing in on the opportunity and was selling single bottles of beer out of his cooler. He even had a sign that said “beer - \$1”). There were police officers meandering through the crowd, working to keep the mood friendly.

So as we made our way through the celebratory crowd, once reaching the back of the ambulance, the group of neighbors who had come to watch erupted into whoops and cheers that our patient, their neighbor, was soon to be on her way to the hospital.

Now I had not thought about our friend Dorothy, who is always on the scene observing at such an event. But for a quick moment, I realized had not seen her up close and observing the scene unfold. This was unusual.

Regardless, we wheeled the ambulance cart in position to load our patient into the awaiting unit. My partner and I were bent over to lift the patient, when I, still bent forward ready to lift, suddenly felt a friendly whack on my backside and heard the familiar sound of “good job, Bill, Boy, Bill” and followed by a long burst of laughter. It was Dorothy, to be sure, combat boots, fedora hat and the rest who waited for that key moment, when, like a fast moving shadow, emerge from the crowd, to provide a resounding blow, in front of the 100 or more street revelers. The crowd spewed uncontrollable laughter and clapping. Dorothy stood there giving me her familiar smile, and the policemen simply stopped and stared, somewhat incredulous. I pretended to be annoyed as I hurried into the ambulance. After making sure all the equipment and patient were ready and safe to transport to the ER, I flipped on the overhead flashing red lights and siren to move some of the crowd out of the way, took a quick look back in the mirrors, and noticed a smiling and waving Dorothy as we drove off. It is with irony that that was, in fact, one of my final days working the streets, and the last time I recall seeing Dorothy.

As I look back on the eight years I worked as a first responder, I was a young man then and I left the job feeling quite humbled in many ways. It was the kind of engagement that allowed me to see humanity at it's worst

and humanness at it's best. Not realizing it at the time, but Dorothy was one of my teachers then and my encounters with her and others were teachable moments in my young life. I am grateful I had this opportunity at this time in my life because it was then I first started to become aware that we all have the ability to learn to survive and create meaning for life, regardless of circumstance. I observed so many people, who, like Dorothy, and in spite of circumstance was able find a way to live a life with daily purpose, have appreciation and even enjoyment. Dorothy felt she was helping us by showing up at an emergency and telling us what equipment we needed. I believe her effort to befriend us was her way to feel part of something bigger than she, and something of importance. We all want to feel that. As far as the policemen and other rescue workers, I watched them react to Dorothy in a way God intended. Over the years, I saw cynical policemen, and busy paramedics find time to stop and say hello to Dorothy and treat her with kindness. I have seen harried and overwhelmed ER nurses take time to greet her with warmth, and bring her coffee. I then observed Dorothy, in response to the dignity she was being shown feeling pride when she was treated with respect, as we all do.

It reminds me of a line from a Maya Angelou poem, when she declared that “we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike.”



## Our Visit to the Dominican Republic

### Crocodiles, Smugglers and Pink Flamingos

Our shortcut through the little two-track mountain pass was nerve wracking but quite beautiful as we slowly crawled and strained our rented jeep along the rugged narrow and barely drivable pathway. I had not seen this rugged picturesque side of the Dominican Republic, in my previous trips. At the same time I was not happy driving along the remote narrow path, with the steep cliff only a couple of feet from our left front and back wheels.

My brother in law, Lauren, had gone to this beautiful country, initially on a Peace Corps mission. He had been living there for many years now. He loved to have friends and family come visit him.

He was not concerned about the unmapped and uncharted road, as we bounced, rebounded and ricocheted back and forth between the rocks, ruts, and some sections where the road that simply disappeared.

We were on our way to a mountainous area near the Haitian border. From there, our destination would be the town of Los Rios, on the shores of beautiful Lake Enriquillo, a large inland salt water lake. Locals boasted that there was a bask of crocodiles, accessible for viewing to anyone who wanted to get close and take a look. Lauren, who was always thinking of adventurous road trips for his family when we visited

thought this would be perfect trip for his family.

As we continued the questionable short cut thru this rugged mountain pass, the road was becoming more and more thick with foliage, trees, brush and vegetation the further away we traveled from the main highway.

Lauren's passengers and fellow travellers for this trip included his sister Wanda, (my late wife) our Michigan friend, Mark, and myself. Lauren had travelled this road previously, and continued to reassure us that it was quite drivable and safe, even as we watched the two track path disappear from time to time.

Knowing it was too late to turn back, as we were already half way through the mountain pass we rounded a bend in the road. There, to our dismay and alarm, and totally blocking the little road, was a truck. It was a very large truck with it's cargo area overflowing with something unseen, as it was covered with a tarp. The truck was clearly not moving. Upon a closer look, we noticed the truck had a broken rear axel and was sitting firmly on the ground. To add to our sudden uneasy feeling, we quickly garnered the attention of four machete carrying Haitian men, none of whom appeared to be smiling or friendly. As Lauren was assessing the situation, he was, with a certain lump in his throat, quickly advising us that we had just made

contact with Haitian charcoal smugglers. Charcoal, it seems is a scarce commodity in Haiti and most of the people who live in the countryside cook with it. There is much money to be made by smuggling it from the Dominican Republic into Haiti.

But Lauren confidently declared, “don’t worry, I will speak with them.” But we were worried. The Haitian gentlemen smugglers didn’t seem to be warming up to us, as Lauren continued to speak with them, in an animated way.

Lauren, recognizing the urgency of keeping the Haitian gentlemen calm, explained to them in his rapid fire Spanish, that we were simply gringos touring the mountains and trying to get to the town of Los Rios to see crocodiles. The Haitians told him someone had gone to get help with their truck and to bring another truck back, and they had been camped there without food for over 24 hours now. To win their good graces, we gave them sandwiches, some mangos and water, and they suddenly visibly relaxed. We, just as suddenly, felt like we were not about to become the object of their ire.

But we had to get off the mountain path and there was no way to do so except to turn around. This was going to be a challenge and quite nerve wracking. There was still a steep cliff, precipitously close the mountain path. Mark and I had to walk behind the jeep directing Lauren driving now backward, foot by foot, directing with our hands, so he didn’t drive off the cliff. Finally we found a place to make a 6 point turn and we were soon driving on the little path again, heading back to

the main road. We looked back and were grateful the Haitians didn’t seem to be following us. Their main interest was likely to get the charcoal moved to a different truck and deliver their payload.

On the main road, Lauren, now relaxed, sang along to Dominican music on the radio. The rest of us sighed with relief and prayed prayers of gratitude for our safety. Once again, we were on our way to Los Rios, our destination town.

Eventually we arrived, in the late afternoon, in Los Rios. We were tired, hungry and thirsty, as we had given all our food to the smugglers. We found a little road side open air café. It was a rustic looking place with mismatched furniture, and Dominican music blaring loudly from huge speakers on the wall. Even though the menu was limited, we were grateful to order avocados, cheese, bread and mangos for dinner. We asked the owner if he had any chilled coconuts, which he did. He pulled out his machete and with one loud whack on his countertop he split the coconuts and handed them to us to enjoy the chilled sweet liquid. Then with the same large knife he split the avocados for us and sliced up the mangos. He smiled broadly, and with pride, with the machete still in his hand as watched us hungrily enjoy the fresh food.

Our storeowner knew of a guide who could take us to see the crocodiles and called him for us. He also knew of a small inn, called a pension where we could stay that night.

We found the little inn easily enough, and a lovely, 50ish, friendly, smiling, Dominican innkeeper met us at the door. She took us on a tour to proudly point out to us that the beds all had sheets and came with mosquito netting. There was a single toilet, in the building that flushed, and sinks that ran cold water. We were each, smilingly, issued a small hand towel, and a single roll of toilet paper for the group. We clearly had everything we needed. She promised bread with peanut butter, mangos and coffee the next morning. What she neglected to mention, was that in just a few minutes, at 8 pm, the



music from the cantina across the street began. It was loud, blaring, and nearly deafening. It was relentlessly non-stop. We lay in bed helpless under this musical form of bedtime torture. Then, at midnight, as the innkeeper had acknowledged, the music promptly quit. . It was so eerily quiet we could now hear the mosquitos buzzing outside the netting as we rapidly fell into a deep and profound sleep. Tomorrow would prove to be an interesting day. Our guide was coming early and we were going go hiking, and to see the crocodiles.

To be continued....



## Our Visit to the Dominican Republic

### Part 2

It was an early morning misty light that awakened us. Rays of dawn crept its way across the floor of our small hotel room. Gradually the room began to brighten from the dawn sun. It seemed to be a typical small town morning in Los Rios, the Dominican Republic. Outside the window, activity was abuzz. I could hear motor scooters beginning their darting about. Vendors pushing unwieldy carts were shouting out their morning wares as they struggled and pushed along the bumpy streets. Burros were heard braying and clomping. It was exciting to hear the stirring sounds of an awakening little mountain town. Sleep time was too brief, but that was ok. Our innkeeper had already prepared the first cup of Dominican espresso coffee, which was very strong and sure to awaken every fiber in our bodies. My wife, Wanda, brother in law Lauren, and friend Mark were now recovered from our experience yesterday with meeting up with charcoal smugglers. (see part 1). They were feeling ready to begin the adventure of the new day. As I climbed out of the mosquito netting, last night's imposing, loud sounds of the merengue music from the cantina across the street was now only a vague memory.

Today there would a long boat ride sightseeing around beautiful Lake Enriquillo, a picnic on the beach, likely staring in awe at the lovely hillside and, spending some time communing with, and relating as best as we can with our

reptilian friends, a basket of crocodiles. Our innkeeper was busy fixing up a picnic lunch of mangos, bread and cheese to take along with us and our spirits were on the rise. My brother in law, Lauren, popped into our room to remind us that we are in a tropical region of the country so, be sure and shake out your shoes before putting them on. He had noticed some crawling things wandering about the floor during the night. I was quick to take his advice. My shoes were gratefully empty.

Our guide, Raphael, arrived promptly at 7am, as promised. He was eager to move us along so we could have time to see every thing today. He had an ambitious agenda, including a surprise that would be revealed later. As I pondered the surprise, I could not imagine what would top our other plans.

Our little group easily fit into Raphael's small fishing boat and the boat ride across the lake was breezy, cheerful and full of sunlight. The water was calm and the surrounding shore line was green, lush and beautiful. There were fishermen in small boats, and straw hats, holding old fashioned cane fishing poles, dotted across the lake providing friendly waves as our boat passed. Raphael was pointing out features around the lake as the boat bounced and slapped against the water. He was sure to mention that the eastern shore of the large lake was near the Haitian

border. I had no knowledge of the cultural and historical animosity that exists even today, between the DR and Haiti. Therefore I didn't understand when Raphael exaggerated a cringe and shutter when he pointed at the shoreline and announced "there are Haitians over there on that shore." as he shook, frowned and furrowed his brow. Lauren quickly described to us in English that many Dominicans still look down on Haitians, with an element of prejudice resulting from a long-standing historical resentment. For myself, knowing that our safe return to shore was very dependent on Raphael's good graces, I decided to also simply acknowledge Raphael's commentary. That seemed to satisfy him, as he smiled.

Finally, as we approached what is known as "Playa Cocodrilo" we saw our first crocodile in the water. Then there were two. And very quickly as we rounded a bend near the shore, there were shockingly, easily 100 crocs in front of us. Our guide stayed a reasonable distance away as our boat slowly chugged past the bank of crocs and we stared in awe at the seemingly menacing creatures peacefully sunning themselves. At the moment, they were paying no attention to us. Well past the herd of crocs, our guide took the boat up to the shore. He reassured us if we walk a big circle leaving a wide berth, stay quiet, duck down behind a sand bunker where we can't be seen we can simply relax and watch them. It was sunny, breezy, quiet and after Raphael advised no more talking the only sound was the breeze and low growling, and rumbling from the croc herd. They were 50-75 yards away. It was, unbelievably, almost a peaceful moment. I observed Raphael, continually scanning the beach around

us, apparently watching for any stray crocodiles who may have wanted take a closer look at us.

Our time of peace with the crocodiles lasted only about 30 minutes. Something caught the croc's attention, because those that were on the beach quickly began to move into the water. The crocs in the water were swimming out further. They were quickly scattering. Raphael decided it was time for us to leave and walked us back to his boat. That magical moment in communion with a large herd of crocodiles had ended. I was quietly grateful.

With the crocs far enough down the beach we could barely see them now, our guide stopped to share with us the surprise for us for the rest of the day. For a few more pesos, He wanted to take us to see a large flock of pink flamingos. We excitedly agreed, and off we were in his boat to another part of the lake. While the crocodile adventure was interesting enough, I was not sorry to be saying goodbye to the herd of crocs, none of which seemed warm or friendly.

The boat took us into a part of the lake that was a mangrove. This was the area we would find the flamingos, our guide explained. As we floated further it was getting more shallow and the boat was beginning to scrape the bottom. The water was quiet and still with occasional small ripples from fish coming to the surface. The color of the water was lagoon black. Branches from trees provided a canopy, and flying insects from tiny to large, darted around us. Raphael stated it was time to begin wading, as the birds were still a ways away and his boat could go no farther.

As we waded slowly, trying not to fall into the murky water, we began to hear the flamingos before actually seeing them. The honking, grunting and squeaking was becoming louder as we rounded a bend in the lagoon and we were suddenly gazing, wide eyed, in awe and reverence at a thousand pink flamingos. We were encircled by pink and red. Their long necks, striking pink and reddish feathers and stick like legs of a thousand large birds, was a view that was staggering. The noise of the large flock was nearly deafening. We had only a few minutes to try to absorb what we were viewing. None of

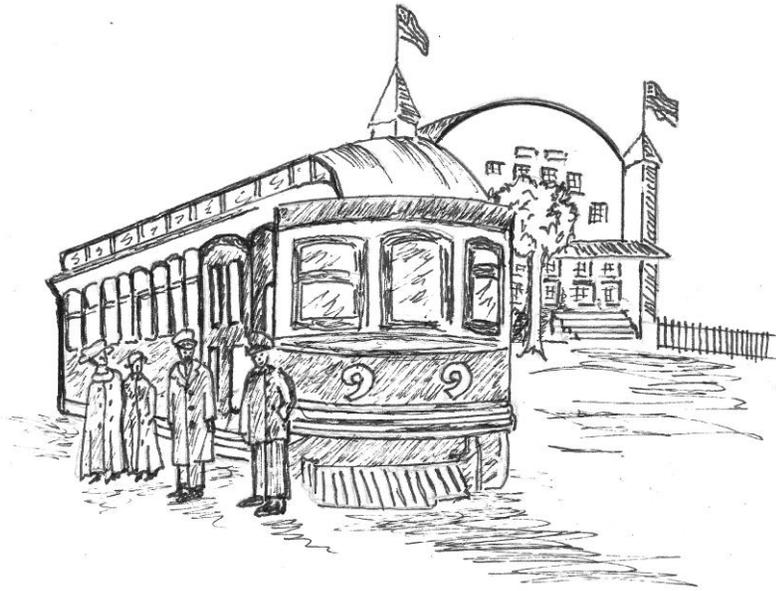
us were speaking as we stood quietly in wonder. But sadly, something spooked the flock and they took flight. All of them. We were mesmerized as we watched 1000 flamingos fly over our heads. For a moment they darkened the sky. They were gone too quickly and the suddenly the moment felt empty. The flamingos did not return.

Our guide indicated it was time to return to the boat and we waded our way back through the lagoon. We went back to our room at the little hostel, exhausted and content as we shared events of our day.

I feel blessed for the chance to have family in such a beautiful country as the Dominican Republic. We have been able to see some more remote, interesting and obscure places unknown to most visitors. I feel humbled to have been part of the lives of some very special Dominican people. They are a nation of people I have grown to respect and love. And their sense of pride in their country is palpable.



## The Interurban Memory



“I hear that train a coming – a coming round the track.” As a child I could almost imagine this happening. I lived on a road where the old Interurban train ran their route 25 years before I was born. I would hear the stories and find evidence of the track when old metal spokes from the train tracks would emerge from our dirt road. It also became alive in my playtime as my Grandparents had an old Interurban station in front of their home named the Belvedere. I lived next door to the station which had an enclosed waiting



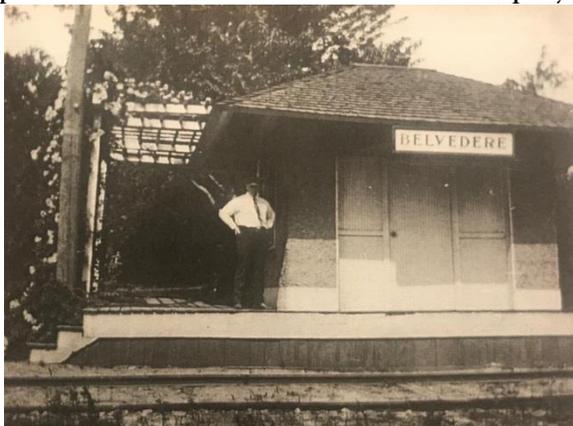
area and an open porch in front. The outside walls were brown stucco and a trellis covered a wooden walkway to the road or tracks in earlier days. In the summer the trellis would be covered with beautiful orange flowers called the Trumpet Creeper Vines that fit on my fingers making my hand look like an orange claw. As a child I would play in and around the station, often pretending I was a sophisticated lady

from the Belvedere. But before I tell you more, let me give you a little history of the train.

The Interurban was an electric train which ran from Grand Rapids to Saugatuck between the years of about 1900 to 1926. It carried passengers from Grand Rapids through several smaller communities like Grandville. The tracks ran through Holland on 8th Street, turned on River Ave. and then headed toward Macatawa Park. At the water’s edge there were tracks on a pier over Lake Macatawa where the train would pick up passengers and freight from ships which came into the channel. The train also traveled to Jenison Park which was an amusement park with a wooden roller coaster and other rides and games. The Interurban then traveled south to Saugatuck where it ended at the Big Pavilion, a dance hall, where the train would go around

the Pavilion and then traveled back toward Holland.

As a child playing in the old Interurban Station, I would imagine the wealthy ladies from the Belvedere all dressed in their finest traveling suits and gloves waiting for the train in the enclosed room of the station. The Belvedere had their own stop so few if any passengers would have been waiting with them. They would be helped onto the train by a conductor and may have gotten off on River Ave. where they could have entered the Old Clock Tower, which was a bank, to take out some extra money for their shopping. They might have strolled down 8th Street and glanced at the dress shops or shopped at the millinery for a new hat. For the trip back they may have stopped at Fabianos for a sweet treat on the train or to take some candy home for their children. In the summer months, they may have waited on the train station's porch in their comfortable skirts, sailor blouses and wide brim hats with their children to travel on the Interurban to Jenison Park with a picnic basket made up by the made at the Belvedere. They might have taken the children on the Figure 8 Toboggan roller coaster ride or sat along Lake Macatawa to watch the boats sail by while having a leisurely picnic lunch. The train station as a play



area gave me many hours of fun and fueled my imagination.



The Interurban Train came at a time when the roads to places like Lake Michigan were not highly developed. It was an easy way for a family to travel from Grand Rapids or surrounding communities to the lake shore or Saugatuck. The train stopped running around 1926, but some of the train stations survived. For me, the Interurban Station at the Belvedere was a solid place of history in my own neighborhood. Unfortunately, the station at the Belvedere was torn down when I was in my teens by the owners who bought the Belvedere from my Grandparents. I can remember feeling very sad over what the new owner did to the old station. As a teen, it was more of a memory of my favorite place to play, but as an adult I have become saddened by the historical loss. Jackie Kennedy once said, "We are the only country in the world that trashes its old buildings. Too late we realize how much we need them." The Belvedere Interurban Station was a monument to a time long ago and now it is only a memory and pictures in an old photo album.



## Abraham's Blessing

I love the holidays. The Christmas Eve services, the Christmas music, the special foods all lend to my love for the season. But there is one thing I do not like – the lines. The lines at the grocery stores, the bank, car washes and department stores all have excessively long lines during the holiday season. Since I've retired, I have learned to go earlier in the day which helps with this issue. But the problem with lines is they can occur any time of the year, any time of the day, and 9 times out of 10, I am in the slow line.

Now I need to confess I have a big problem with waiting in line. As a rule, I am not a competitive person, except when it comes to lines. For example, when I go to the market, I end my shopping trip by evaluating each of the check out lines. I determine which shoppers have more groceries, whether the check out person looks slow, if there are children who might slow the process down, or if there is alcohol that needs an extra step before the shopper can finish. Once I am in line, I check the shoppers in other lanes to see if they are moving faster than me. I feel a little bit like I am in a horse race and I want to pull ahead to the finish line (i.e. cash register) and win! Unfortunately, I usually don't and I feel defeated.

On December 30, I had a late start to my day. I enjoyed a leisurely lunch with a friend and then headed to the grocery store. Big mistake! The parking lot was full! I wondered why

and then remembered the next day was New Years Eve, and there was a prediction of snow coming, so I realized people were doing their shopping early. My competitive spirit quickly kicked in. I thought if I could get my list done quicker than normal, I could beat others to the check out lanes. But unfortunately, my plan didn't work. There were only two lanes that had cashiers, and I had too many groceries for the mini checkout lanes. The other self check lanes were also backed up with shoppers. So I did my evaluation check list and selected a lane. Of course, it was the slow one! The horses (Oops the shoppers) in the next lanes were moving ahead of me. I resolved myself to the fact that I was yet again in the slow lane, and I would have to deal with another defeat.

As I impatiently waited in line, the gentleman behind me leaned toward me to get my attention. He said, "May I pay for your groceries today?" My first thought was I must look destitute and checked my outfit to see if I had holes in my shoes or jeans. But no, I didn't look too bad. I looked at my groceries and saw that my bill would be expensive and I didn't want him to spend that much money on me.

So I politely said, "No thank you, I am fine."

He then smiled and responded, "I am Jewish and my wife and I like to do good deeds at the end of the year, and

my good deed today would be buying your groceries.”

I rethought his offer, smiled and then said, “thank you.”

As I stood waiting for my groceries to be checked and bagged, I had two

thoughts. First, I remembered The Old Testament when God told the Patriarch Abraham that he was “blessed to be a blessing.” Here thousands of years later, in Holland, Michigan, one of Abraham’s ancestors was blessing me and I truly did feel blessed! Second, I for once was glad to be in the slow line.



## To My Dad

My Dad, Adelbert (Del) John Buttrey, celebrated the 60th Anniversary of his ordination in Columbus, Ohio in 1991. I was then a United Church of Christ pastor in New Brighton, so I put on a tape the following words that were played at the event.

Hello, Dad, this is John, your son,  
Your Minnesota 'lad' in New Brighton.  
I sent this tape and want to say  
'Congratulations, Dad, on this special day!'  
Sixty years of ministry, that's a lot!  
Has it stopped now? No it has not!  
You continue to serve, where you are living:  
Loving and laughing, sharing and giving.  
I'm grateful for the model and support I got.  
From you and Mom and others on my way,  
That keeps on guiding me today.  
From all the things I learned from you,  
I want to mention, to share a few:

1. To speak the truth from the pulpit is right,  
Even if it makes some people want to fight.
2. To be open to the Bible in a non-literal way:  
For then its message has so much more to say.
3. To believe in Christian unity,  
And for us, anyway, to support the UCC.
4. To reach out those in another Christian Church  
Does not make us leave our faith in the lurch.
5. To show respect for people of different views:  
Hindus and Buddhists, Muslims and Jews!
6. To love and care for people in other races;  
For all are God's children, with any color faces.

7. To deal with possibly controversial issues,  
And to listen to people whose tears need tissues.

8. To live with faith and peace and hope,  
Helps us to rejoice, or survive and cope.

So thank you, Dad, for the influence you've had,  
On many in the church, and this Minnesota lad.  
So from afar, I honor you:  
Though I wish I were there, with my sisters two.



## MY FIRST SPORTS HERO JACKIE ROBINSON

In 1947 Jackie Robinson became a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and I became a big Dodgers and Jackie Robinson fan. My father was a strong supporter of racial equality and integration. When he was a student at Stanford University, he and my mother became members of the Cosmopolitan Club which brought together students of different races, ethnicities, religions and nationalities. I feel very fortunate to have that background from both of my parents. My father was delighted when Jackie Robinson, an African American, became a Dodger. So Jackie Robinson was not only my first sports hero, but probably my father's as well.



In 1947, at the age of nine, I did not know much about Robinson's history. Here are

some of the pieces of information I found. It is, of course, a very limited description:

At Pasadena Community College and later UCLA he lettered in four sports: football, basketball, track and baseball. He served as a second lieutenant in the US Army from 1942 to 1944. In 1944 he was arrested and court-martialed for refusing to give up his seat in the front

of the bus and move to the back of the bus. This is just one of many instances in which he was a big advocate for civil rights. Because of his excellent reputation, many friends and the NAACP, he was acquitted and received an honorable discharge.

In 1945, Jackie played in the Negro Leagues for the Kansas City Monarchs. "Negro" was the word that was used by many in our country at that time but it

has been replaced by "Black" or "African American," because "Negro" is too easily changed to a very racist and demeaning word. Branch Rickey, the president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, learned of Jackie's talent and offered him a contract. However, Rickey made it clear to Jackie that he would have to promise that he would not fight back if he was confronted with racist comments and

actions. In 1946 he started playing for the Montreal Royals, a farm team of the Dodgers.

In 1947, at the age of nine, and even at fourteen, when I moved to Grand Rapids I had learned only a little of that history. I was living in the present as a big fan of the Dodgers and Jackie Robinson. I was living in Montclair,

New Jersey, not far from New York City and 20 miles from the Borough of Brooklyn. I went to see the Dodgers five or six times, often with my Dad and a friend. In the summer of 1952, before moving to Grand Rapids, I went by public transportation with a friend to Ebbets Field to watch the Dodgers play.

When Jackie first played for the Dodgers in 1947, he had an amazing year – in spite of the fact that some of his teammates and many of the fans in away games AND home games – inflicted him with racial abuse. A few of the Dodger players indicated that they didn't want to play with Jackie. Leo Durocher told them he would rather trade them than Robinson. One time when fans harassed Jackie from the stands, PeeWee Reese walked over and put his arm around Robinson.

Jackie led the league in stolen bases and was named Rookie of the year. Over the course of his career from 1947 to 1956, he stole home (yes, home!) 19 times. That was possible when the pitcher did a wind up instead of a stretch before delivering the ball. Overall he stole 197 bases, he had 1518 hits and his batting average was .311. He was the first African American inducted into the Hall of Fame. The Dodgers retired his jersey number of 42. In fact, to honor Jackie Robinson all major league players wear 42 on their jerseys on April 11! Watch for that next spring. All of these facts just increase his heroism for me.

After retiring in 1957, Jackie became active in business and, along with his wife Rachel, worked for racial equality. In 1958, the Dodgers moved to Los

Angeles, because they were not able to find a place to build a new stadium in Brooklyn. Ebbets Field was very old, with limited seating. It would have needed multiple expensive repairs. The field was torn down in 1960 and the vacated area was replaced with a housing complex.

I don't believe many Brooklyn Dodger fans switched their loyalty to the LA Dodgers. I certainly didn't. I am very much a non-fan of the Yankees. One of my grandsons is a big Yankee fan and I have fun teasing him if the Yankees are having a bad year - or even a bad game. I would have a very hard time to have a favorite if the Yankees played the Dodgers. Otherwise I would also favor the opponents of either of those teams

When I lived in Montclair, New Jersey, only about 10 percent of my baseball fan friends were Dodger fans. There were New York Giant fans and Chicago Cubs fans. Yes, there were Cub fans even in New Jersey!).

I am guessing that a majority of my friends were Yankee fans. That may account for my feelings about the Yankees. The Yankees just kept winning and the Dodgers' slogan was often, "Wait til next year!" Finally the next year came in 1955 when the Dodgers beat the Yankees in seven games! I was VERY happy!

I lived in Minnesota for 39 years and became, and still am, a Minnesota Twins fan, but nothing close to the feelings I had and have about the Brooklyn Dodgers and my first Sports hero, Jackie Robinson!



## Forgiveness

Growing up as a marginalized minority was a challenge especially in the inner city of Milwaukee. DeAnte was a product of that environment. He remembered his mother slapped him when he was three or four. He was playing with matches in the closet and set the closet ablaze. A piece of burning fabric fell on his head. Instinctively, he closed his eyes and screamed. Anita was startled and she pulled the burning cloth from her son's face and doused the fire out with several buckets of water. She was so angry she slapped him. The blunt force made the burn wound uglier. When DeAnte recovered the mark on his left cheek was distinct.

He and his older sister Jo would walk home from school in the late afternoon. They stepped over drunk and overdosed men leaning against the front door of their apartment building. After entering the cold and dingy vestibule his sister would quickly insert a key into the door which allowed them to enter the apartment complex. After walking up two flights of squeaky staircases they were in a dimly lit hallway. Using a second key secured around her neck, Jo opened the front door to their apartment. Jo quickly closed the door, double-locked it and then latched it to make sure they were

safe in the home. Mom was still at work. The two kids were left alone to take care of themselves. In the winter they would surprise uninvited visitors. Roaches would scatter the moment they turned on the light. To entertain themselves they would sit in the dark and wait by the gas stove. The starving roaches would come out to feed on the kitchen grease. The children could grab the crawlers. These roaches were no match for DeAnte's quick hands. Holding these helpless roaches by the antenna, Jo would turn on the burner and proceed to torture the helpless bugs by burning their feet. DeAnte witnessed the demise and death of each bug. The smell of the smoking insects vaporizing as roach parts dripped onto the burner kept them occupied.

The 600-square feet one-bedroom apartment was home to DeAnte, Jo, baby sister Chaska and Anita the mom. The front door opened to a living room/kitchen combination. It was equipped with a sink, a stove and a rusty white refrigerator. It had a brown stain on the side. It might have been left as a souvenir by the previous owner's dog. Parquet and porcelain tiles separated and defined the living and kitchen areas. The eating space has a small round table with three vintage

mismatched chairs and a hand-me-down high chair. On the other side of the living room was a smokey, smelly stuffed couch with fading brown and black fabric. At night the couch was DeAnte's bed. There was a small black and white TV resting on a metal cart. The TV has aluminum foil wrapped on its antennae. Adjacent to the living room was the bedroom. The rest of the family slept there. It had a bed, a sleeping bag and baskets of dirty or unfolded laundry. A small closet and the cruise ship sized bathroom were to the side of the bedroom.

Anita worked three jobs. In the morning she fed her kids and departed for her first job. She carried Chaska in one arm and rode the city bus to her mother's house where Chaska would be safe with her grandmother. Then she caught another bus to the elementary school where she worked in the lunchroom. For five days a week she labored from about 8 AM to 2 PM in the city public school. She earned about \$160 every two weeks. Three days a week she cleaned for wealthy people. That income was under the radar income; the wealthy did not want to pay employer payroll tax and Anita agreed because she could shelter her small income from federal tax. Her third job was on weekends. Late at night on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays she rode the bus to an east side nightclub. She arrived when most patrons had left. After stacking chairs, mopping floors and cleaning toilets for three hours she would be paid twenty dollars cash.

Mondays were especially burdensome because Anita would arrive home around 4 AM from cleaning the nightclub. It was too late to go to bed. She would shower and start her daily school lunch room work. By the time she took Chaska home from her mother's she would have been on her feet for over fourteen hours totally exhausted.

DeAnte was very fond of Chaska. She was less than a year old and ready to learn to speak. Babbling with big brother DeAnte was fun. Chaska would always reward DeAnte's laughters with big grims showing her baby front teeth. The good time did not endure. One night two men (one was DeAnte's biological father and the other was Chaska's father) were fighting in the kitchen area. Chaska was sitting and playing on the kitchen floor. The two fighting men tipped over the refrigerator onto Chaska. There was dead silence followed by Anita's bloody curses.

The two men were charged with manslaughter. Social services deemed her a risk to her children. She tried to regain child custody but lost. As a consequence Anita lost her job at the public school and custody of her children. DeAnte and Jo were placed in different foster homes. Their relationships with their foster parents never appeared to be permanent. They drifted from one place to another but always not far from the school they were attending. These foster parents

must have personal motives, some downright criminal. In fourth grade, DeAnte met Jo at her foster home to walk to school. DeAnte noticed Jo was not quite herself. A few weeks later while he was meeting her to walk to school he could hear her crying inside her foster parents' home. DeAnte was a big kid. He ripped the door off its hinges and saw Jo's foster father physically attacking her. The man was laying on top of Jo. DeAnte grabbed a coffee mug nearby and smashed it on the skull of the vile man. Red blood oozed out of the dazed man's Afro. He stood up, turned around and knocked DeAnte unconscious with one punch.

DeAnte woke up in the police precinct. He was charged with B&E, breaking and entering. Because of his age, he was referred to juvenile court. DeAnte became an angry lad. He was desperate, hopeless and angry at everything and everyone. He did poorly in school. By the time he was fourteen he was a member of his neighborhood gang. One day he was asked to be a lookout for a burglary. They did not know they were robbing a Milwaukee policeman's home. Sergeant Washington recognized the teen with the scar. Several years earlier Washington was the arresting officer of DeAnte's B&E. This time DeAnte was arrested and charged for robbery.

DeAnte was a frequent visitor at the local youth center where Fr. David worked. Fr. David was a social justice advocate. He knew DeAnte because the

kid frequently played sports in Fr. David's gym. DeAnte stood out on the basketball floor because of his height. Below his left eye was an ugly scar. Fr. David asked DeAnte if he would join the social justice group to just talk. DeAnte knew that if he kept up with his MO he would be in even more trouble. So he reluctantly agreed. Separately, Fr. David spoke to Sergeant Washington who was also unwilling to meet with DeAnte. "Why should I meet this creep who terrorized my daughter?" said Sergeant Washington. His five-year-old daughter was so traumatized by the teen gang that she was sent to live with grandma for a week to calm down. Fr. David was persistent. Sergeant Washington eventually agreed to meet.

At the first meeting the victim and victimizer were tentative. Each was uncertain what to say or how the other party would react. Fr. David was pleased. He knew something good would be coming. The two individuals had exchanged stories of their families. After about a month Sergeant Washington came to the meeting with his daughter. The moment DeAnte came into the room the usually talkative little girl recognized the intruder. She hid behind her dad and peeked with fearful eyes staring at DeAnte, anticipating he might pull a knife like his accomplices did on the night of the burglary. DeAnte looked at the little girl. She looked like his sister Chaska. All he could recollect was the moment of the falling refrigerator. DeAnte suddenly broke out crying. His hidden

fear, anger, hatred and self-pity came together and burst out like a failed dam. His teardrops were small but the emotional effect was monumental.

In the spring his case came to court. Sergeant Washington agreed not to press charges. The judge gave DeAnte probation. With encouragement from the support group, DeAnte took advantage of his second chance. He became a model for Fr. David who frequently asked DeAnte to help with other at risk youths.

Sergeant Washington died several years after his retirement. Fr. David was transferred to a different part of his diocese. DeAnte served his probation. After completing his probation, DeAnte continued to do community work in his neighborhood and lived a fruitful and meaningful life. He mentored other inner city young men and women until he became ill. Fr. David returned to Chicago upon hearing DeAnte's failing health. On his deathbed he confided to Fr. David and thanked him for teaching him the meaning of forgiveness. He passed away in his mid-forties from sickle cell disease.



## Why Did I Move to Holland?

Someone in Holland asked me bluntly, “What brought you to Holland?”. That is a good question. Do you have an hour to spare? Do you want the unabridged version or the executive summary version? I came to Holland because of a job change. I arrived in May 1986 to begin work at Parke-Davis. The events and complex issues related to my job change are historical.

In 1975 my college friends at Cornell sent me off to my first job in West Virginia with a John Denver album, “Almost Heaven, West Virginia” after I accepted a job at Union Carbide. During my first eight years at Carbide our four children were born. My career was on track. I was recognized for developing a process for a new pesticide product, solving the product instability problem and saving the company many million dollars of capital investment. A large plant was built in Institute, WV in 1982 and many factory jobs were created because of my invention. During that time the company relocated all the business functions to the Research Triangle Park in NC. Our family was one of two hundred relocated to NC. We chose to live in Chapel Hill. Our children went to a Chapel Hill elementary school. It was utopia. But, on the morning of

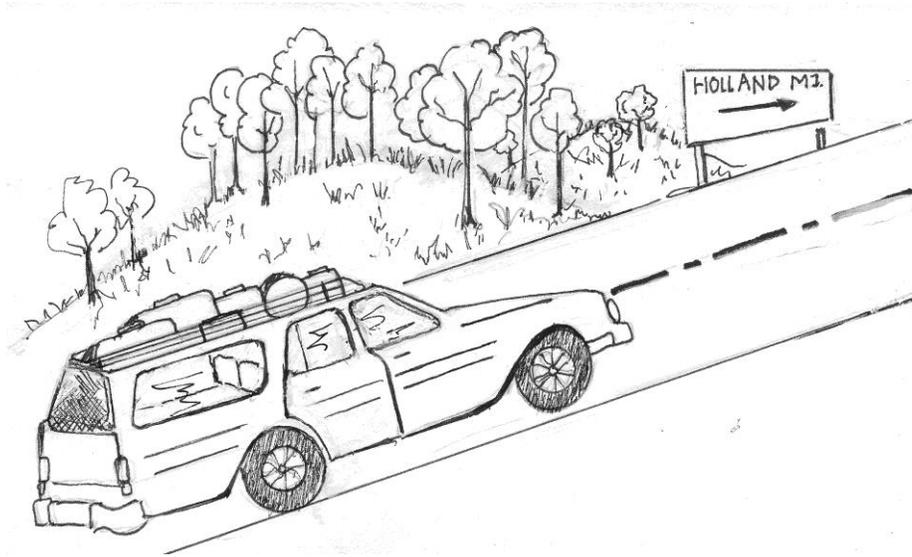
December 3, 1984, everything changed.

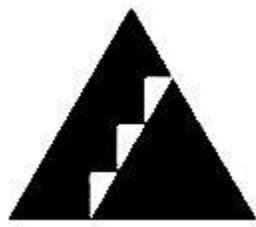
That very morning I hopped into the backseats of my carpool. My co-workers did not greet me. They were captivated by the radio broadcast of an industrial disaster. The reporter was describing a poison gas release in Bhopal, India. The Union Carbide India plant had a tragic industrial accident the previous night. The accident killed several thousand natives. My life changed in an instant. I had been with Union Carbide for nine years. I was hubric like the rest of my co-workers. My retirement was not vested. We had no savings. I had four young children and my wife was working part time. There was no financial safety net. Saving for retirement was the last thing on my mind. I knew I was in trouble. Would some kind soul throw me a lifeline, please. The feeling was like having dinner with my family in the first class dining hall on the Titanic. All of a sudden I saw a big rat with wet paws scurrying up the elegant staircase.

By August of 1985 I realized I needed to do something monumental. With fear and trepidation we made a desperate leap into the abyss with our children and landed in the safe cozy place called Holland, Michigan. I spent nineteen years with Parke-Davis until

the company was bought by Pfizer. After retiring from Pfizer I landed a teaching job at Hope. I made the right decision. My career continued to flourish until my retirement. Union Carbide went bankrupt and was bought by Dow Chemical Company.

Why Did I Move to Holland? The short answer is a job change. To those who asked, "What brought you to Holland?" The executive summary answer is "A white 1981 Cutlass Supreme station wagon."



The logo for Junior Achievement, featuring a stylized black triangle with three white upward-pointing chevrons inside, resembling a staircase.

# Junior Achievement®

About twenty five years ago my neighbor friend Steve asked me if I would consider teaching Junior Achievement jointly. I have heard favorable comments of JA and I immediately agreed to teach with Steve. We went through the orientation and were given a stack of printed materials to share with the middle school students. For several years, Steve and I showed up once a week for about twelve weeks each semester to work with the middle schoolers.

We were a great working team. Steve, a local business owner shared his know hows on production cost, people management and related aspects of running a business. He was an effective communicator. In one session he outlined the cost of a hamburger from a fast food restaurant. He arrested the students' attention. Then he delivered the punch line -- the profit margin of a hamburger was less than two percent. The facial expressions of the kids varied from astonishment to bewilderment. We also worked on the soft skills. Dependability, trust, honesty and

maturity were emphasized by both of us in our classes.

As a scientist I leaned towards the logical and the mathematical side. Another fault of mine is that I deviated from the written syllabus because I believe in teaching the kids how to think and how to use their resources.

I enjoyed doing the unconventional things. In the Junior Achievement brochure were numerous statistical data on per capita income, family size, education level, and life expectancy. I tabulated and graphed the data. It blew away the smoke which obfuscated the facts. When it was my turn to speak to the students I presented the tabulated data from the brochure and then the graphs were shown. The United States was third in the world on education level and per capita income. We in America are not number one. The graph showed Singapore was highest in both categories followed by Switzerland and the US. The bottom quartile was represented by nations with higher birth rates and less education. For example, plotting family

size versus GDP showed an inverse relation.

One day I was presenting the power of compounding. Instead of talking about the virtue of compounding, I put up an example using Excel spreadsheet and its accompanying graph. A boy asked me after class if he should move his savings certificate to Warner-Lambert stock. Warner-Lambert was the parent company of my employer, Parke-Davis. I was not sure how to answer him since I was employed by Warner-Lambert and I did not want to step into the untested area of offering investment advice. The boy put me at ease. I did not know beforehand. Both his

parents, Tom and Connie worked with me. I told him to seek parental guidance. I told him I invested almost entirely into my employer's stock because I felt the company had hidden value if it was broken up and sold.

The next day at work Tom said. "You made a great impression on my son." A few days later Connie told me she helped her son move all his savings from a bank certificate of deposit to Warner-Lambert stock. Tom and Connie's boy graduated from college totally debt free. This boy today would be around thirty-eight years old. Does he remember me?



## Conspiracy Theory

### **Things disappear!**

I have lost, misplaced or accidentally thrown out so many, many things in my lifetime. I have experienced this phenomenon in every home or apartment that I have inhabited. But maybe I'm not the responsible party. Maybe there's an invisible force at large.

### **What happens?** Where do these things go.

It usually starts with somewhat insignificant things like socks. Socks are the number one offender. What happens when you put matched pairs of socks in the washing machine. Well here's my theory. They swish around in warm soapy water, getting all worked up, doing the sock dance known only to them. Red, blue, striped, argyle, short and long socks - all colors, all patterns.

They don't care. They have no prejudice. So what happens when their wild dance is over. Do they divorce the partner they jumped in with? Do they pair up with a new and completely different sock, producing offspring of their own, perhaps a mixture of stripes and prints, or do they do away (heaven forbid) with their original sock spouse, entering into a life of solitude in the drawer for widowed socks.

### **I don't know.**

Well...socks are where it all begins. From there the disappearing act moves on to more important things. Things like a favorite necklace given to me by my husband on the occasion of my birthday; a beautiful little gold chain with a charm of the little "Morton Salt girl" hanging proudly from its golden bezel. A "fetish necklace" purchased in the Coachella Valley, from a little native American girl.

### **Gone!**

Yes gone - never to be seen again. Have they all joined forces with the many lost socks?

There have been many pieces of jewelry that mysteriously disappear from my bedroom. Necklaces, pins, rings, an earring, sometimes just a solitary pearl or gem stone.

### **They just disappear.**

Did you ever lose a bra? Well I have. I've had that necessary piece of lingerie, freshly washed may I add, disappear from my dresser drawer. Are the socks holding it hostage?

Screws, bits of paper with important phone numbers, tiny samples of perfume, cans of artichokes, favorite pens, favorite pencils, favorite paint brushes, cherished photos of

family members, a brace for my right foot, my boots, my kids Easter baskets. There's more...so much more. More than I could ever remember. But why bother. I'll never see these things again. But I do have a theory. I think, that maybe, just maybe there's a family of tiny thieves living in the space behind the walls. They are led by a very mischievous tiny thief – well trained in the art of thieving in the night. He teaches the others just how to steal without being caught. And...when the tiny thieves have completed their training, they are set loose in a darkened home, free to take whatever catches their tiny eyes. Then they turn their attention to removing each and every item. I believe they have furnished their homes with **my things**....things they have boldly taken from my home while I slumbered in my recliner.

So take heed my friends and remember the words I have written. Keep in mind that if you ever lose or misplace something... it's not necessarily **you** who have done the deed. -

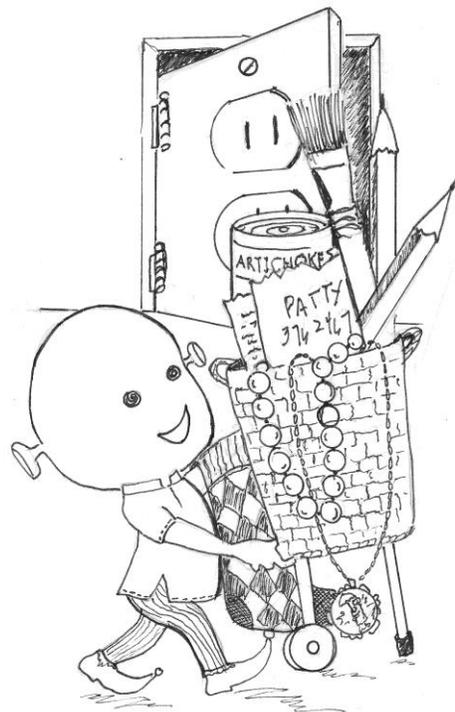
**Listen -**

Listen hard, for the scurrying of little feet, late at night. You too could have a band of tiny thieves...living in the space behind your walls and.....

*they're waiting...*

*just waiting...*

*for the lights to go off.*





## What an Experience

In my day Catholic schools were run by nuns...from the Mother Superior, to the teachers. Their mode of dress was called a habit, usually consisting of a long black or white dress, some sort of veil, or head-dress, and a very long string of rosary beads (with crucifix) hanging from a heavy leather belt. Stockings were black, shoes were black with a small heel, and a gold band was proudly worn on the 4th finger of the left hand, signifying that they were brides of Christ. They were servants of God, and dedicated to teaching. Sometimes they were kind and loving and sometimes they were “human”, like the rest of us. And being human included having a temper, some bad habits (not their clothing) and mastering the art of punishment by ruler. They were good...yes they were very good at many things, both good and not so good. I remember several times that I was the recipient of “not so good”.



**In the fourth grade**, my mother decided that my sister and I should take piano lessons. We joined the ranks of the other little puppets, taking lessons from the good (did I say good?) Sister Catherine Jerome. My sibling Carolyn was more adept at this musical venture than I. Of course I was younger and I guess piano was just not my thing...but I plodded along, doing my best, or so I thought. One day while I was having my lesson, I was jarred by the sharp crack of a ruler hitting my knuckles. Tears began to stream down my red little cheeks. Sister left the room and returned with my best friend, Pauline. She led her by the hand, over to the piano where I sat and began to humiliate me telling my friend how stupid and bad I was and how I never played my pieces correctly. Insult after insult rained down on me. I broke out in hives, and was sent from the room.

**Moving ahead to the 6th grade** and Sister Teckla. Somehow the word got around that I could play the piano. And wouldn't you know it, Sister Teckla just happened to have a little two-octave pump organ and someone had to play it. I was the chosen one. I was the chubby little sixth grader who had the devious honor of sitting at that hateful instrument, every day at music time. As I sat there pumping those abominable wooden pedals playing pathetic one-handed songs, I can remember hearing not just singing, but the quiet undertone of laughter. What was so funny? Was it me? Was I that funny?

**Grade 7.....**a most awkward time of life (for most). We had all progressed to Sister Martin Therese's room. We called her Sister Mountain Therese. You see, she was a very large woman. She had a peculiar sense of humor and used it to her advantage. She was a smart woman and quite aware of the way we ridiculed her. I can see her now, standing there with her hands folded across her belly, smiling from ear to ear, saying "You're trash! Now sit in the waste basket!" I was once subjected to this, ( her favorite form of punishment). We didn't argue with her. If you were the one who had offended her... you sat in the waste basket. No ifs ands or buts! (No pun intended.)

**Congratulations!** You're in high school. Catholic High School was an experience known only to those who have attended – been a part of - experienced the good and the bad; the praise and the humiliation, the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever , AMEN! Catholic High School was not wearing cool clothes, but

wearing a uniform, every day. The fabric of that uniform was gabardine. Recognize that word? It sends chills down my spine. Gabardine started out OK, but by the end of the year it turned into a shiny, slippery, very dull blue mess. The uniform skirt was flared, the jacket was boxy and the blouse was a rough, wrinkly white cotton. Topping things off was a very stylish blue beret. Sox were white and saddle shoes were required.

**Violation of Uniform code!** One afternoon around 2:00 about 10 of my classmates and myself were called to the principal's office. We were shaking in our saddle shoes. We were all friends, and mother superior knew it. We were accused of a cardinal offense...having a sorority. Sororitys were forbidden. And...why were we so accused? Two reasons, (if you were a nun). First , we broke the rule and wore red knee socks. Second, we all wore the same little shiny pin, on our jackets. Little did they know that the pin was simply a paperclip shaped like a cursive lower case "l". We stated our case, exclaiming that it was just a paperclip, not a sorority pin, but ... to no avail. Mother superior disbanded our so-called sorority. That was the end of something that never was.

**Dancin' in the basement** When the nuns put their wimpled heads together, they usually come up with an idea...sometimes good, sometimes bad, but never the less an idea with benefits. The idea this time was teaching the students how to dance. It would take time and money to teach the untrained feet of the student body how to do more than trip some unknowing student walking down the isle. Dance lessons loomed on the horizon. At this time

many well dressed men with very shiny shoes were seen coming and going through Mother Superiors Office. Interview after interview was held and finally, after much deliberation, a dance instructor was chosen. He would come to our basement dance studio “Pgymatorium” every Friday afternoon, to teach us the fine art of ballroom dancing. So, every Friday afternoon we would all file downstairs. We lined up- (we were very good at lines in Catholic School) girls on one side, boys on the other. There was no picking of partners. Whoever was across from you was your partner. The instructor turned on the phonograph and on came Glen Miller and the smooth

sounds of Moonlight Serenade. He demonstrated the “box step” as beautifully as any Fred Astair “wannabe” ever could. Now it was our turn. Slowly we walked toward each other...met our partner – assumed the dance position and began our journey into ballroom dancing. And as we danced the sisters moved quietly around the dance floor watching carefully checking each couple – making sure no one was dancing too close and all you could hear was Glen Miller, shuffling shoes, an occasional giggle and the quiet swishing of Rosary beads – slightly, just slightly swaying to the music.



## Words, Words, Words

I sit down  
you sit down, they sit down, everyone sits down -

To write  
compose, create, make-up -

A story  
memoir, poem, novel, commercial, sonnet, Haiku -

Choosing words  
that work together, are beautiful together, tell a story, don't tell a story -

Words, Words, Words  
words of love, hate, intrigue, honor, contention, hope, wisdom -

But the words don't come -  
the words are stuck in my brain, my thoughts, my throat, my subconscious, my intellect  
-

**DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!**

**FORGET ABOUT IT!**

Put it in the basement, the attic, the desk, your back pocket, your purse, your bag -

Then some day,  
someday the words will all come together in perfect harmony, arrangement,  
agreement, order -

One word after another -  
parading, marching, lining up, single file

Forming the perfect story -  
memoir, poem, novel, commercial, sonnet or Haiku

Across page after page  
Breaking the writer's block

at least for the time being – the occasion, the present time, the day...

the hour...

a minute.....

for now



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## Holland Municipal Stadium

A study in 1973 on development of Riverview Park brought about the future of football on the site. Constructed in 1932, the Riverview Park update could cost the city over \$400 thousand dollars.

The playing field was East & West with grandstands that had been moved there from the Fairground located on sixteenth street. (Playing fields are now constructed North & South) Field goals /extra points would often hit the home located on Columbia Ave that is now Freedom village property. The vision to build a new facility would be a joint venture of the City, Holland Public and Holland Christian schools. Some saw Riverview a site for future community events with projects such as Window on the Waterfront.

As in the planning for new projects and construction, the necessary funding does NOT come easy. In 1975 the Economic Development Agency (EDA) had funding for Communities for new ready to build projects. With plans already available, the City of Holland in 1976 built the Kollen Park Fire Station. Additional funding was requested from EDA to use the Riverview Park study

for construction of a Football facility. EDA funding was approved, additional dollars to complete the project local funds were needed. After receiving the necessary financial support from the Business community and Hope College the Stadium project was approved by the required two thirds vote of the Holland City Council. Not all council members were for the construction.

It was agreed that Hope College, Holland Public School and Holland and Holland Christian Schools would have use of the stadium. With all the planning and funding in place the 13th and Fairbanks site was approved. All were aware of the many springs that were on site and the nearby Pilgrim Home Cemetery. In 1978 construction began on the Holland Municipal Stadium. In the fall of 1979, the project was ready with the new football field, and seating for 5000.

The stadium stood proud while serving the area with football and many other many activities for over 40 years. Recently the Holland City Council agreed to sell the Stadium and facilities to Hope College. The College has completed a major renovation.



## John Henry Smith

A legend is a story coming down through time, regarded as history, but not all verifiable. Such is the case with John Henry Smith.

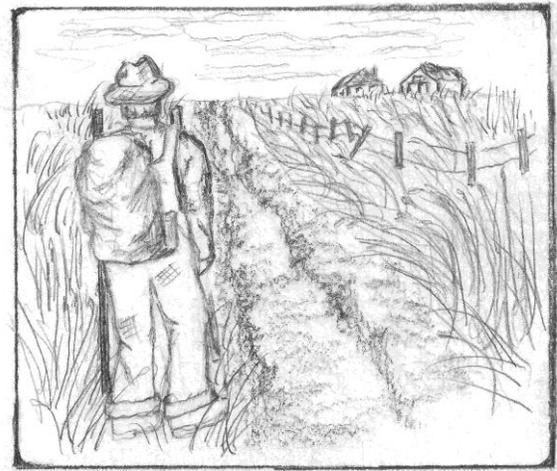
“Old” John was a name associated with my mother’s family as long as I can remember. He died at the age of ninety, almost two years before I was born. Therefore I only know John through the effect he had on our family, a few surviving photos, and the stories told, which triggered my imagination through the years.

John Smith’s story began in the predominately German immigrant village of Westphalia in Clinton County, Michigan, where he was born in December of 1849. His family planned for him to be a Catholic priest. However, John would tell folks, he got in trouble at a dance hall, which badly messed up his life.

This community’s Catholic faith background, brought with them from Westphalia, Germany in the Rhine River region, may account for the story John liked to tell about the small Catholic church which had a new organ installed. It was such a large, powerful instrument, that when they pulled out all the stops, it broke the windows in the building.

John left his home area, perhaps around the time of the Civil War or just after, became a hobo on the road, and eventually found himself in the

Holland, Michigan area. There, in 1881, he married a German immigrant woman nineteen years his senior. She had been a bareback horse rider in a circus, so the story goes. The couple lived in a shanty near Pigeon River. His wife was remembered as sitting in front of their little home smoking black cigars.



The remembrances include no children of their own, but a girl who lived with them, perhaps adopted or a foster child, age unknown. One day John let out a yelp while reading the newspaper obituaries. “The sister of our girl has just died!” What relationship the girl had with the couple, and whatever happened to her, is not known within the family.

John worked for several farms within the North Holland area before looking for farmhand and handyman work at the home of John and Kate and their four oldest youngsters: three sons and my Grandmother Henrietta. John was

about forty-two years old when he started working for the family, and continued working with them for close to thirty years, thus developing a life-long relationship. When the family moved into the city of Grand Haven with their multitude of children, which eventually totaled fifteen, they no longer had a need for a farm worker and John Smith's employment with the family ended.

One would think the story ends here, but such is not the case. In 1919 "Old John", now sixty-nine years old, widowed and retired, came walking down the rural road outside of Grand Haven. He must have known that my Grandmother Henrietta, now grown, had married Lou. Together Henrietta and Lou bought an eighty-acre farm, along with three horses, five cows and chickens for the coop. John approached the young couple with a request for work as a handyman, with some gardening, stable cleaning, and light farm work in exchange for room and board, a dollar or two for tobacco each month, and a place to live for the rest of his life.

Lou, a string butcher, was both business man and farmer, and on the road much of the time. He and Henrietta could not afford John's help. But they did remember the many years John had been with Henrietta's family, and they could use some help on the farm. So they agreed to hire John with the promise of light work and a place to stay for the rest of his life.

Lou and Henrietta's two oldest children, Tony and Kay, were born and the house was getting too small for the four of them plus John. Besides, the soil was not that good for farming.

Therefore, not long after their daughter was born, Lou and Henrietta sold that farm and bought an eighty-acre farm in the North Holland area. John moved along with the family and continued as their hired hand. Two more children were born at their new home, and Henrietta was expecting another soon.

A December day in 1924 was a tragic day for the family. Who would have guessed that the lovely weather Lou enjoyed as he left in his Ford Model T Touring car, would switch to a treacherous, icy mess by the time he was returning home. For after delivering the load of pigs for Christmas Eve meals to Grand Haven, Lou's car slipped on the icy roads into a large drainage ditch. John Smith and Henrietta anxiously kept watch all night for Lou's return. Henrietta realized the truth as the sheriff and minister drove into the driveway the next morning to relay the awful news of Lou's death.

Henrietta, now seven months pregnant, was left with four children under seven years of age. Families were asking to take in her children, assuming she could not handle them, a new baby, the farm, the mortgage on the farm, and so many other things by herself. "Fortunately", as the wife of the minister who married my grandparents told me decades later, "your grandmother was a strong, stubborn, independent woman, and she had to be under the circumstances." Henrietta decided to stay with the promise to Old John, which she and Lou had made together, to give him a place to stay for the rest of his life. With John's help on the farm, she could keep her children with her.

Old John, now seventy-five years old, came out of retirement and began working the farm full time. He took up all the farm work until the two boys were old enough to take on their share. The expected child, a daughter, was born in February.

On a Saturday in March of 1925 a large auction was held to pay off the farm debts, hoping not to lose the place. Only the items that were absolutely necessary to keep the farm going were kept. They included two workhorses named Mabel and Babe, a couple of cows, some chickens and a plow. Lou's newly purchased tractor was repossessed. With the livestock and rescued implements, Old John and Henrietta did their best to work by hand the eighty-acre farm.

No story is complete without a mysterious romance. And this is John's, as told to me by my Grandmother. Somewhere in his lifetime he fell in love with a Catholic woman. The story goes

that they were not able to marry due to something involving her faith. They exchanged rings. John wore his proudly, never taking it off. One time each year John spruced up in his Sunday best, hair trimmed, fingernails washed, for his yearly trip to the Michigan State Fair in Detroit and their precious time together. This continued year after year. One sad year she did not show up. She had died. That was his last yearly pilgrimage. John's skin grew around that ring which symbolized their unique love. Although it became embedded in his finger, he would never let anyone cut the ring off. He was buried with the embedded ring.

John became a father figure to Lou and Henrietta's five children, farmed the land until he was no longer able, and was still helping with silo work a couple weeks before he died in April, 1940, at the age of 90. Old John's funeral was held in May, and he was buried next to his wife.



## My 1963 Visit to a Tribal Hill Village in India

This was it; an opportunity of a lifetime. Our traveling group of twelve were invited to visit some aboriginal hill villages in India. Divided into three groups of four, each would visit a different tribal village, so that a large group would not overwhelm the small communities. The group decided all cameras were to be left behind, so we would not destroy our purpose of visiting people so isolated from civilization.

After lunch three cars, accompanied by Rotary Club members who owned the land of these peoples, arrived to take us to the hill villages some thirty miles from Gopalpur. I traveled with the first group, which consisted of David, John, Maggie and myself. Our village was isolated from civilization to a great degree. The tribe had only begun wearing clothes in the past five years, due to recently built roads bringing contact with outside areas. Still, some of the men's garb barely covered the necessary areas, and the women had no coverings from the waist up.

The village was set in the lower hills, with some trees, several hundred yards off a lonely road. We walked down a muddy, dung-littered path, scaring a few water buffalo and children. As we approached the two parallel rows of abodes composing the village, it seemed as though all twenty-eight families had come out to greet us. They crowded around as Rotarian Dr. R. spoke Oriyn, which our driver then translated into

the village dialect for the aged headman. The people at first were very shy, but they smiled and were very friendly.

These villagers, whose income was very low, had never been more than eight miles away from their village. Many had never seen white skin before, and the height of David and John overwhelmed them, as well as the red hair of Maggie and myself. We learned that the people had voted in national elections, had heard of Mahatma Gandhi, but had never heard of Nehru, prime minister of India at the time. They did not know that America existed. There was no schooling for the youngsters.

The village consisted of twenty-eight homes, fourteen on each side, each house containing one common wall, a backyard, and a front porch. The homes were made of wood, and had a thatched roof. There were stakes to tie the cattle. Each family cleaned the area in front of their own home.

Most of the fathers were in the fields and mothers were drawing water. The people earned their keep by selling their rice. They seemed generally healthy due to the open countryside and fresh mountain stream, rain fed waters, and the meat they killed such as deer and bear, and hens and pigs. The people were not Hindus, but had their own tribal gods. They drew pictures of them on the outside of their homes and

on the inner walls as a worship center area.

Maggie and I peered into one of the homes, a two room affair with grain spread out on the dirt floor, one small bed for a child, and a shelf with brass water jugs and cooking utensils, holes and poles with which to pound rice, space like an attic or balcony for grain storage. It was dark inside, so at first it was difficult to see. There was a kerosene lamp, I suppose used at night. Just inside the door was a very young woman carrying her twin infants, and a boy about two, who hid behind the folds of mother's waist-high sari skirt. Maggie and I slipped out of our shoes, smiled at the woman, and stepped inside to examine the various items. She showed us some grain she was sifting and pounding into the holes, and showed us the tools of her small kitchen. We attempted to talk to the young boy, but he ran behind the door, big tears welling in his eyes.

We learned that most of the women are married at the age of twelve or thirteen, and a dowry is paid. The girl then goes to live in the father-in-law's village.

I was completely won over by the children. Walking back outdoors to the open area. Maggie and I discovered the way to win smiles from the villagers was to hold some of the infants. With a few gentle motions and smiles, we were able to take some of the babies from their mother's arms. Even those as young as around three months had ears and nose pierced and black outlines around the eyes.

I carried a darling baby about three to four months old, a girl with a little dress on. The dress surprised me because

most children were wearing nothing. I think this was put on her especially for us as guests. I looked at the sewing quality but it was poor. The baby Maggie carried was about six to seven months, and laughed often. With the universal baby language, we won grins from both infants and villagers.

I was completely won over by the children. As usual in much of rural India, the children were taking care of the younger children. Maggie spied a small girl, around four to six years of age, with a small bundle tied round her waist. Curious, Maggie followed her. The girl hid behind her sister and then, as Maggie drew her out, she shyly unfolded her bundle: an eight day old baby, still wrinkled and covered with hair. She handed him to Maggie, showing surprising concern for the baby's head support.

Most of the younger children were nude from the waist down. Some wore earrings pierced along the tops of their ears. Many wore multi-stranded beads, metal bangles and ankle bracelets. Some had seven to eight rings on each finger and up to ten rings in each ear. At least five bracelets were on each arm and necklaces consisted of multi-stranded purchased beads or homemade necklaces. Many of the children had runny noses and coughs, and some potbellies, a sure sign of malnutrition, but I saw few skin diseases. Most of the children's hair looked straggly and ill-kept, matted like wool, at least among those with long hair. Hair was long or short, according to the desire of the persons, rather than the sexes. Among the children, the only way to tell the girls from the boys was to look at their organs.

Maggie admired some of the beads worn by the children and decided to try a little bartering. One child took hers off and tried to place them over Maggie's head. The whole crowd broke into laughter when they wouldn't fit. Another girl brought hers and garlanded Maggie with the fifteen strands. Yet another girl, about twelve years, brought Maggie an orange strand at the urging of her friends. Now all were laughing. Maggie questioned Dr. R. how acceptable a barter would be. After the question translated to the local language, the headman smiled and recommended two Rupees each. Maggie then took off her gold satin hair ribbon and fastened it around the head of the girl who had presented her with the orange strands. The girl grinned, obviously now the center of attention, and was very pleased by it all.

By this time we had gained the confidence of most of the people. We now walked around asking questions and receiving answers. The two complaints we heard were the lack of rainwater, and the complaint against the government for making laws which limited the amount of kerosene which they could obtain.

I suggested I would like to see a local dance. When nothing appeared to happen in regards to my request, David and I ventured out into the rice

paddies, where most of the villagers worked. On the side of the nearby mountain that overshadowed their homes was a small hut with a constant fire to keep away wild animals, such as the often seen tiger. I did not realize the dance request had been taken seriously, and that inside that hut some village men were heating up the drums for the dance. Much effort and time went into preparing the drums for the event. I watched the fire in that dark hut, sweltering with the extreme heat.

One musical instrument consisted of a semi-circle drum and cord, which was carried around the neck and played with two semi-hard jute ropes, which felt like hard rubber. Two other drums were made with a round metal ring covered on one side by animal skin and played by using chopstick-like sticks in each hand. A third instrument was a pot hit with a stick.

The three drums the boys carried started parading back and forth, keeping the rhythm as the children and women formed lines, doing a kind of marching up and down to the beats, a very simple folk dance. One of the women motioned for us to join them. Maggie and I joined arms and grabbed the hands of two girls and paraded up and down with them. What a special experience and delight to be remembered a lifetime.



## Remembrances of Refugee Life Life on the Run

Sunday, January 21, 1945. I, Al Hoffmann, am now eight years old. It is late evening. Normally we are in bed by this time. But not today. Mom holds a small backpack filled with some clothing, my cup and my eating spoon. Strapped to it is my blanket. She holsters it onto my back. She does the same with my six-year-old sister, Gerda. Mom then puts on her backpack. Additionally, she carries a suitcase in each hand, with a few essentials such as spoons, knives and forks, a few photos and documents. Dad is standing nearby carrying my three-year old brother, Werner. Russian troops are now approaching ten miles outside the city across the river. It is time to leave our home.

We are one of a group of families that are forced to leave the only place we know as home – Neuenburg (Nowe), a small town along the river Weichsel (Vistula). This is an area that over the centuries was either part of Poland or Prussia (Germany). The population is mixed – either Polish or German.

Outside it is bitterly cold. Heavy snow blankets the streets. Our mode of transportation is refugee train. It is a thirty-minute walk to the railroad station. There we meet with the

remaining German families. We are told to climb aboard one of the several freight cars, probably cattle cars. How many fleeing folks are gathering there I do not know, but we fill a number of these freight cars. Among the people besides us are my mom's two sisters and their children. Together there are twelve of us (I later learn we are the last of the German families to leave town). My Dad and the other German men stay another week, leaving the town on January 27 as German soldiers. Soon after the town is occupied by the Russian Army.



Our freight car is bare except for some straw balls pushed into a corner. A small cast-iron stove sits on one side of the car. I see a few wood pieces stacked along the side. About midnight the train begins to move. No men are on the

train – only women and children. One of the women stokes the stove to get a fire going, while all watch carefully that the straw does not catch fire.

The next afternoon the train stops along a rail siding. Mom, myself and several women jump to the ground to fill several pots with snow. A call soon follows for all to board, and we climb back up into the car. Melting the snow on the stove is the only drinking water available to us that day. A few more cars with refugees are added to the train. We are moving again.

Our next stop is a small village by the name of Schlenzig (Slowienko). This is our stop to leave the train. A fellow meets us with a long horse drawn wagon. After loading our limited baggage, the three sisters and we cousins climb aboard the wagon, traveling for two hours to our first temporary lodging. It is a huge farming estate with the name “Gut Vierhof”. The estate history goes back to the twelfth century, when it is gifted to a royal knight as reward for his service to the reigning king. You can imagine for us kids this is an exciting new experience. Even better, for the first time in days we have food to eat! Unfortunately, our stay here lasts only a few days. The Russian Army is advancing westward.

We load up onto a train again. We also move westward. The plan is to cross the river Oder by the city of Stettin (Szcecin). It is February 3. The train stops. We are ordered to disembark the

train and move to a bunker below the railroad station. During the move under-ground I view the city with its buildings and streets intact. Why the sudden change in plans? This day the American Forces launch the largest air raid on Berlin, which is about 60 miles southwest of Stettin. Over 1,000 B-17 bombers are involved. Since Stettin is a major river crossing point it also comes under attack. All major bridges are destroyed. We are one of the last trains to cross the Oder River! When we leave the bunker several days later, there is virtually nothing left standing in the city. The good news? Amazingly, none of the rail tracks leaving Stettin westwards are destroyed.

From Stettin we move northwards. We climb down off the train (yes, there still is a train) in the city of Grevesmuehlen (Meklenburg-Vorpommern). Our family group is still together. By wagon we are carried to the small village of Boerzow. Our three families now separate, moving to three small farms not far from each other. It is early March. With the exception of women, children and a few older men, there are no men around. They all are serving military duty. Thus an influx of refugees to work on the farms is welcomed. We are all put to work. I never worked on a farm before, but quickly learn how to clean out the pig pens and horse stables. My mom takes care of the cows. The owners of the farm where we stay are in their sixties. They reward us with free food.

On a lovely April spring day I walk from the pigsty to the horse barn. As I cross the yard between them I hear a plane overhead. Looking up, I see the plane make a turn. Oh No! It is heading straight for the yard and me. Seconds later machine gun bullets are hitting the ground around me. I dive through the large door into the barn. Inside I dash under a bunk bed used formerly by farm laborers. The fighter plane also drops a couple small bombs. One hits the manure heap next to the barn. It explodes. What a mess! Fortunately, there is no explosion as the second hits the ground. My mind just cannot understand why the pilot in the plane should decide to bomb this farm at this time. My mom, observing what happens through the kitchen window, races across the yard, terror in her eyes,

heart beating heavily. Luckily, I only have a few scratches from diving under the bunk bed. A Divine save! What a very lucky boy I am!

At midday a few days later I hear noises. Curious, I climb up on the roof of the pigsty to have a look. Several fighter aircraft are attacking a string of refugee wagons a couple miles north of the farm. There are no military vehicles to be seen. After the attack some of us run to the site. It is a horrific scene. Dead horses, dead people, crying children and women. I cannot stand it and run back to the farmhouse. Why attack now? And why a refugee convoy? My childhood is no longer one of innocence.



## The Lunca

There is not a whisper, not even the softest murmur, no utterance nor visual remnant that can reveal the heart throbbing vibrancy that had once taken hold amongst its streets. It is all gone except for the ghost memories of the very few of us left to tell the stories of the Lunca, the urban village of our parents and grandparents. That place was wiped out and swallowed up by the steel mill which gave sustenance and then sucked life from those who served the mill's appetite for workers. The mill hovered over us with stacks belching smoke and with eternal fires and heat, and noise, and scenes of ever present piles of coal, sand and rock. The neighborhood men went to work at the beginning of their shifts clean and ready, then when time was up, they were released dirty and spent. The next day or night would repeat the same cycle.

The Lunca, which meant village in Romanian was called so by the Romanians who made it home in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The area was also called The Rolling Mill District and sometimes The West End. If you were to drive or take the streetcar west on Taylor Street, past G.E. past Franz Market, past Annie's Tavern, past Frank's Tavern, just past the Quonset hut where the Zerzalos lived, you would come upon Saliff's junk yard at the corner of Berghoff and Taylor. Turn right at the wooden frame building with all the paint worn off and an enormous faded ad for Mail Pouch on its side. At

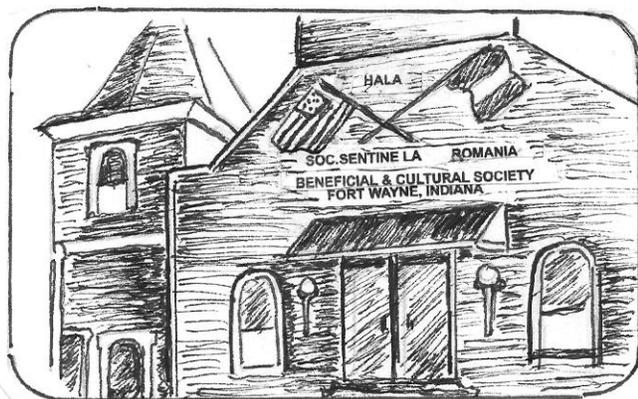
one time the building had been a grocery, but when I was growing up, several African Americans lived in the old store. Saliff's was piled high with once necessary ice boxes, cars in one stack, their wheels in another, discarded and bundled newspapers near mounds of rusted metal and oily machinery. The junk yard and defunct store announced the entry into the Rolling Mill.

Berghoff was the main street into the Lunca. It was a ribbon of concrete choked off along its curbs by the debris of gritty living. There were broken bottles of Seagram's and Wild Irish Rose having outlived their usefulness. There were empty packages of Lucky Strikes, and Chesterfields summersaulting over each other on windy days. Layers of Cho Cho wrappers, Popsicle sticks and Dixie Ice Cream cups, all remnants of pleasure, kept each other company. The streets were littered as if the city street cleaners didn't know or care we were there. The powerful brushes and spray did come around on rare glory days when Berghoff's five blocks were swept clean and tidiness reigned at least for a while until life grew up along its edges again.

Some of the streets which crossed Berghoff were Culberson, Beadell and Greater and also a few others that were only three to four blocks long. On these streets lived the immigrants whose human determination had brought them thousands of miles from Eastern European villages to live with and near

African Americans whose ancestors had been part of the Great Migration. The mingling of survival hopes dominated everyone while they surrendered their lives to Midwestern industries. City lots in the Lunca must have been very cheap since they lay within the ever present shadow of the steel mill. People bought the bits of land, put up short fences with welcoming gates around their lots and proceeded to build homes, have families, plant vegetable gardens, flowers, grape arbors and fruit trees. They raised chickens, made soap and wine and whiskey as they endured in their transplanted old country village. This is the environment into which I was born in 1943. That very year ten other girls were born in my neighborhood.

Greater Street crossed Berghoff. At the east end stood the steel mill. Just west of Berghoff at 2509 Greater was the Romanian Hall. These were the two entities that welded the Romanian people together, the mill for work and livelihood and then, the Hall for all else that was physical, spiritual and cultural. The Hala was the center of life for the



neighborhood. We lived across the alley directly behind the Hall for which my grandfather was the caretaker. So much of my memory is imprinted with the goings on at the Hall and the role it

played in my earliest life. The priest, Simion Mihaltian only came to Fort Wayne once a month from East Chicago. I was companion to my grandfather when he set up for the Orthodox service which was to come and would be attended by not only the Romanians, but the Greeks and Macedonians who also were part of our neighborhood. A little alter table, incense, candles, embroidered linens, a chalice and folding chairs were brought forth from storage. Communion bread was baked by women. Bouquets of Basil filled vases along with flowers gathered from Lunca gardens. A holy scene was set and made ready. The thrilling terror of following my grandfather up into the bell tower on creepy foreboding steps was worth it when excitement caused blood to rush into my head and my hands to fly up to my ears at hearing that first clang when he pulled on the heavy ropes...first one then the other. The messages rang throughout the neighborhood, a Sunday service, a joyful holiday or sadly, the death knell announcing the passing of a neighbor.

The Romanian Hall was the cradle that comforted people and allowed them to quiver in grief at the loss of one of the community's own. At the sound of the death message, women gathered in the kitchen, which was in the back of the Hall, to cook the traditional foods of Galuste/Sarmale and Mamaliga (stuffed cabbage and corn meal mush.) C.M Sloan & Sons funeral home was so entwined with the neighborhood that when misbehaving kids gave fits to dramatic mothers, the moms would grasp their chests and cry out pleas of, "Call Sloan's, you're making my heart suffer." C. M. Sloan serviced most funerals in the Lunca. They whisked

the body away and returned it in an elegant hearse for the wake which always took place at the Hall. Every single Romanian person in the neighborhood attended the funeral and burial as they had for generations. As very young children we were always part of these traditions and we were also subjected to widespread superstitions brought to the new world by peasants. It was strictly forbidden to remove any flowers from a wake or funeral and take them into your home. Something bad would happen to you. Once when I was about 6 years old, I picked up a beautiful yellow chrysanthemum off the floor. It had fallen from one of the floral arrangements that surrounded the deceased. My covetous nature won out over the Evil Eye as I dashed off across the alley to our house with it. I ran up the stairs and hid it in my child sized record player. That single flower created a guilt and fear in me that I still remember. We weren't shielded from much and learned about death early on.

Before my time, it was customary for the neighborhood to gather for a professional photograph with the propped up open casket. The picture was sent to relatives in the old country showing them that their loved one had a Christian burial and he was mourned by many. After burial, everyone returned to the Romanian Hall, ate stuffed cabbage and got drunk in celebration that three days of crying and praying were over and that the mound of dirt over the deceased was evidence of the final goodbye.

My grandfather, Nicolae Todoran who had prepared the Hall for all festivities, who had mowed the grass and cleaned the floors, opened and locked the doors when needed, who had rung the bells for so many, and who had served as acolyte to Rev. Simion Mihaltian for countless Romanian funerals, died on April 7, 1959 at the age of 72. He was the very last person in the Lunca to have a wake and funeral at the Romanian Hall.



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## Lunca Part 2 - The Corner

It too is gone. The place where so many words were exchanged, the place of gathering, connecting, playing, laughing, arguing, moving about, sitting still, seeing, being seen and heard. It was where recurring sensations of daily life were always blossoming or perhaps dwindling. The corner. Our corner.

The Westfield Package Liquor Store stood on the corner of Berghoff and Beadell. The store was owned by the grandparents of one of my best childhood friends, Mike Olson. He lived above the hoard of alcohol inventory, in the same building as his grandparents, Sylvester and Lucretia Derlashon. I lived next door with my grandparents, Maria and Nicolae Todoran. Our grandparents, like most in our neighborhood had emigrated from Romania and were learning the ropes of becoming American through their children and grandchildren. We spoke to them in their native tongue while we spoke English in school and to each other.

During summer nights that were sizzling from heat and quietly relieved from the ever present noise of the streets, when moonlight was augmented by utility lights strung up high at main intersections and shone on our urban village, the old women began to collect on the corner. Mrs. Derlashon set out folding chairs on the sidewalk in front of her liquor store to welcome weary evening companions. Some came in

their aprons. Some came with light cotton kerchiefs on their heads and tied behind on their necks or they came bare headed with grey braids pinned up on their crowns. They often had mismatched patches on their old house dresses. Some came to the corner with thick stockings rolled down to their swollen ankles. Garden work, had made their arms brown. Raising chickens, making soap, picking grapes for winemaking, sewing and bread baking made their feet ache and their backs bend. But, still they gathered for a time of respite, comradery and a liberal dose of gossip. At times during these sessions the women spat curses of contempt for those of questionable morals or for people who had become objects of neighborhood feuds. Heads turned over their shoulders, lips and tongues moved in a pretend spit. Phuet!

I often accompanied my grandmother on a visits to the corner. The women talked about the old country and what they missed about it, but they were glad to live in America. They were dismayed that their grown children had become wild, going out at night wherever they wanted. They became independent with American ideas like marrying whomever they wanted outside their tribe or church and they sometimes sacrilegiously failed to bestow a saint's name upon their babies. The Romanian mother's adult children were disobedient even as they still lived in their parent's home. Their offspring had seen too much when they became

acquainted with the larger American landscape by having gone to war and as they worked at jobs that took them outside the neighborhood. But, the women were glad for the money their grown children brought to them. And of course, our grandmothers loved us, the children of their children. They thought us brilliant and delighted in our ability to ricochet our words at a glance between languages. Three generations in one household could be a comfort even while not always harmonious. At times, corner talk branched into the mundane and of the small wonders brought into their lives. The old foreign women adored American ice cream and ginger ale. When they assembled on the corner, they often said so.

As daylight came, the corner was ready to receive others. On especially sunny days, the corner became the prime location for the taking of photos. Sunday was the preferred day because we were customarily dressed up and ready to record ourselves as looking our best. A favorite picture of myself was taken on Easter, the day which was celebrated as the holiest in the Romanian Orthodox church. Becky Segedy and I are in our Easter get ups, we're standing underneath a glass window that reads "Westfield Package Liquor Store, Wine, Brandy, Gins". Later that same day, I'm sure we went Easter egg collecting, a Romanian custom. On Easter Sunday, we children went from house to house with our baskets, knocking on doors and instead of "Trick or Treat", when the door was answered, we sang out, "Christ is Risen!" Then, we received an Easter egg.

The corner wasn't reserved for the innocent. Teen boys sometimes took over the territory, smoking cigarettes and eagerly showing off a developing swagger. Often there were hot games of craps shooting by the older guys in the neighborhood. It was not unusual to witness a bunch of men hunched over a set of dice thrown out onto the pavement, hitting the liquor store's foundation wall, then coming to rest, determining the luck of the roll. It was as if we did everything in orchestrated shifts, a symphony of movements when it came to who owned the corner at any particular time.

Most times during the day the space was surrendered to kids for playing the usual games of marbles in dirt next to the sidewalk, hop scotch and if we were lucky enough to have a roll of caps, we could pound them with a rock to hear them pop. Corner activities were almost always accompanied by the scent of cabbage floating up from Mrs. Derlashons below ground kitchen. There was an expansive opening into a deep window well, above which, a large metal grate was fitted into the sidewalk. Liquor deliveries were made by conveyer into the well and bottles merged with all manner of other kitchen business.

One day as Mike and I sat on concrete contemplating possibilities for our next adventure, one presented itself in the form of Nielka. His familiar figure came ambling toward us. Nielka, in his battered fedora and dirty saddle shoes chuckled out his compulsive greeting, his tic like expression of, "Boy Oh Boy". Nielka was always around and seldom sober. He attached himself to any gathering of two or more people and it was clear that we were it for the

moment. We declared our usual request of him. "Nielka, don oun nickela". We begged, we pleaded even though we knew our cries for money would slip past him like unanswered prayers.

Today, he motioned for us to follow him. The arm of his food soiled jacket made a c'mon signal which we obeyed quite willingly. Nielka stepped down off the curb into the street. He began to pick up discarded cigarette packages and crinkle the cellophane and foil with his fingers. With a flourish, Nielka made a quarter magically appear from the Lucky Strike treasure chest. We tried it as we walked along with him, Old Gold, Chesterfield, Pall Mall. Nothing. The idea of wealth coming by way of something so abundant in our neighborhood turned us into maniacs as we tore into more and more empty packages. We followed Neilka through cinder covered alleys, past houses of friends and relatives, along the Ditch which had a sickening green algae cover from which old tires poked up. Everyone just referred to this putrid water as "The Ditch", as if it were a legitimate landmark. As in, "Mister Jones lives down by The Ditch". We trailed Nielka to the far end of Beadell where some of the African American businesses sat....Wilson's Chicken restaurant with its checkered tablecloths, we rounded the corner past the shanty shoe shine parlor where several ebony skinned men sat outside on a bench laughing and talking. All this time, not one single coin for Mike or me, but Nielka, was loading up as he found more and more cash, all the while he would burst into frequent, "Boy Oh Boy" After a couple of hours we faced reality as we saw our

prosperity from cigarette packages evaporate.

We followed Nielka along the street that bordered the steel mill and to where he lived across from the mill's guard house. He lived in a dilapidated three story building which could be described as a tenement since all rooms were occupied by other old derelict men. At the sidewalk opening there was no door and we could barely see that there was a stairway leading upward. Nielka was the first to enter and Mike and I followed him up. The stripes on the back of his saddle shoes guided us as we ascended steps whose centers had been hollowed out from years of use. We moved toward some faint illumination above us.

Nielka took a key from his vest pocket and opened the door to his room. "Boy Oh, Boy", he chuckled. Mike and I followed him into his sparse room which at least had a small window allowing some natural light to invade the dreary space, home of the old, tired man so familiar to us. Nielka switched on the naked bulb hanging from the ceiling. There was a black iron bed. The mattress was covered in a dirty bluish cover. There was a pillow of raw ticking which had a darkish stain in the center that showed us where Neika's head must have dreamed his many dreams. And nightmares.

As Mike and I gripped the bed's metal railing, Nielka began to dive into his pants pockets pulling out handfuls of silver confetti that he tossed into the air then let it land in a magnificent pile onto his bed. One pocket then the other, pants, jacket...every receptacle of his, holding fortune beyond what we could possibly imagine....dimes,

quarters, nickels. Riches we had sought. Nielka picked into the pile. He gave Mike and me each two nickels. We charged down the steps of Neilka's tenement onto Greater Street. We ran to Beadell and Berghoff, we sat on the curb of our corner and spread out our

four nickels, gliding our fingers over them. My mind drifted to Punch's grocery store where Mr. Punch could so adeptly dip his Ice cream scooper into creamy chocolate and precisely slip the delicious glob onto a cone. All for just two nickles.



## The Gift

It was so beastly hot in Lutheran Hospital that summer long ago that even the Amish who came in from the surrounding farms bought electric fans for their rooms. I had just begun my rotation on fourth floor medical after having completed labor and delivery and post -partum. The new mothers who anguished over the nightly news from Vietnam, hoping the fathers of their just born infants would be kept from harms-way, were already becoming a blur to us as we moved on to new challenges. We student nurses were a vision of coolness in our snowy starched aprons and caps. It was an illusion, for we could be withered into a heap by a slightly critical look from the head nurses calling our names in pinched formal voices. It was their job to terrify us into learning and they succeeded.

I was twenty and strong with hard calf muscles packed into white stockings. We were taught to cover vast territories of polished hallways efficiently and to lift, pull and tug without complaint. We went about the business of healing and comforting in soft soled shoes and with iron constitutions. It was then that I was assigned to fifty six year old Mrs. Dorothy Merrick in room 423 west. She had already been admitted several weeks prior to my appearance on the medical floor. Mrs. Merrick had not been out of bed since her arrival. She was paralyzed on the left side by a stroke and as a result her waif like body was no longer under her command.

The side of her face had been drooped and frozen into a benign snarl and her wiry gray hair was shedding its last covering of Clairol Auburn #6. It all served to give her a gently mad look.

In the succeeding weeks, along with a number of other patients, Mrs. Merrick was assigned to me frequently. We became familiar with each other and I found myself looking forward to seeing her. She asked that I call her Dorothy. Addressing a patient by a given name was not a common practice and considered unprofessional, but I did it anyway. It was the first of many barriers between us to be set aside. It wasn't just the condition of her health that made her seem isolated, but also the reality of her life. Dorothy was divorced, had no children and as far as I could tell, only her sister came to visit her on occasion. Dorothy was a bookkeeper for a small business concern, working numbers into order at some solitary desk. The only thing about her that hinted at her connection to a larger life was her skin. She had a gardener's patina, golden and rough and worn into a respectable leather made beautiful by earth and sky.

Dorothy was no exception in her experience of frustration felt by most people who have serious strokes. An inability to maintain a focused mind and the loss of verbal communication skills could reduce her into a weeping silence. But as the days and weeks went on Dorothy began to regain some

movement on her paralyzed side. When I could finally get her up out of bed she could take a few steps while struggling to lift her stilled leg as she fought to make progress. As she progressed to the point of going out into the hallway a cadre of nurses formed a cheering section and marveled at Dorothy's dragging march toward freedom.

Every day began with the same plaintive plea from Dorothy. "Baaath. Reeel Baaath. Pleeeze." She wanted more than anything to sit in a tub of water and no longer be washed out of a small basin. The request was more complicated than it seemed on the surface. I went to Mrs. Nussbaum the charge nurse of the floor. Mrs. Nussbaum was a formidable presence even to someone not a student. The girdle worn midsection on her body squeezed out doughy flesh top and bottom like a pastry decorating bag. When she walked her nylon covered thighs rubbed together creating a warning signal that everything had better be up to code when she arrived at her destination. When I worked up the courage to timidly ask her about the bath, she looked down at me through her huge dark rimmed glasses, paused and said, "Well, Miss Purdy, you know you have to get the doctor's written order." I worked for days securing the permission. Dorothy was jubilant and fell into a state of frenzied anticipation. I was thrilled that I could give her something so important. We behaved like children preparing to go to the circus. There was a flurry of excitement and activity when the bath day came and all morning she stroked and patted me with her good hand.

Since the ambulatory patients took showers and the bedridden were given bed baths, the lone room which held the old claw-foot tub was never used. The room was as neglected and distant as a forgotten storeroom. An elongated window with pebbled glass permitted diffused light to reflect on the stale green hospital walls. I found a straight backed wooden chair I scooted to the tub over octagonal, gray white tile that reminded me of an antiquated drugstore floor. After preparing the water, it took some maneuvering to get Dorothy down the hall. After she was covered with several towels preserving her modesty, Mr. Constable, the orderly, helped lift her onto a gurney and then we both lowered Dorothy into the warm cradle of water.

After Mr. Constable left, the two of us sat there in our joy, me in the chair, and Dorothy dabbling her face and chest, splashing and cupping water with her functional hand. She reveled in the water's life force and of the sensual rejuvenation in its healing power. It didn't seem to matter to her that the freshness of youth no longer lingered in her body. Her simple and frail frame could barely resist giving the appearance of wilting. But what did remain of her was happy at that very moment.

After the wonder of it all had waned and the water had cooled, been warmed and then cooled again, it was time to get Dorothy back to bed. I put out a call for Mr. Constable to help, but before he got there I began to get her ready. The water circled her limbs just below her knees as I helped her stand. Suddenly, without warning, as she stood her bowels failed her and a profuse discharge ran down her skimpy legs to

meet and mingle with the water. The look of bewilderment crossed over her face and tears of anger, appeared quickly on her cheeks. It was hideous--this body mutiny and its precision weaponry designed for optimum humiliation. I held my own revulsion and fury in check. I knew that I could not make it right for her. Ever.

In the weeks that followed, we never again spoke of the bath. On the day

Dorothy was discharged from Lutheran Hospital, I took her in a wheelchair down to her sister's waiting car. After she was settled her eyes sought mine and in a glance that permeated through any false boundaries and reached so deeply into me that even today I can call up Dorothy's look and make it my own. It was the look of will. Then, as I stood transfixed, her little hand with its bony stick fingers raised up in a wave that said, "so long, kid."





## Rotterdam, middle 1950s

Cold!

January. February.

My third-story bedroom is far from the heat source.

Getting out of bed into the frozen world is agony.

Goose bumps on skin we called chicken flesh.

Parting with the warm nightgown unbearable.

The garter belt with four dangling suction cups swing on my thighs. Should have taken it to bed with me.

Pull on nylons. Careful of run repaired yesterday at Hema.

The suction cups pressed to nylons create icy holes on my thighs.

A full slip. Then a woolen dress. Another one of sister Sabien.

Plenty of areas where the slip does not protect the skin.

Chicken flesh touching wool speeds the agony.

Keep arms outstretched. Only the top touches the wool.

Three centimeters of wool near the hem.

Carefully I descend one flight of stairs, then the other.

Living room door opens to heat. Bliss. Life again is bearable.



## Norm and the “Deep Drop”

I first met Norm Lunderberg sometime in the middle of the 1960’s. Norm was a numbers guy and I was a hands-on mechanical guy. We were as different as two people could possibly be, but we established a friendship that lasted through all the years of Norm’s life.

If I had a situation that required an above-average knowledge of the financial stuff, Norm was there for me. When Norm and his friend made a rather large hole in their condo wall, I was there for him. When his beloved wife, Mary Ellen, passed, we were all there for him.

At the time of Mary Ellen’s passing, they were both living in the Warm Friend and loving it and Norm continued to stay there. I visited Norm a lot and on each visit I came away with some small jewel of new knowledge. What a blessing he was to me!

As time passed, Norm’s health began to fail, and he had to go to the hospital or to a Rest Haven location for further treatment. He was moved about several times, and on each visit I would tell him he was like a floating crap game and I had trouble

finding him. Even as Norm weakened, that comment always brought a smile or a laugh.

During his moving he always wanted to get back to the Warm Friend and be at home. One evening I visited him at Rest Haven re-hab, and as usual he was sitting looking straight ahead. As we started our visit he said, “I think I know how I can blow this joint but I need your help.”

He handed me a small slip of paper with a few numbers on it for me to follow. Then he told me he needed a “Deep Drop” toilet in his room at the Warm Friend. Then he explained that on a trip to Africa to see daughter Carol

he had used what they called a “Deep Drop” outhouse. So now the information started to flow.

The deep drop outhouse was dug very deep and thus called a “Deep Drop.” The resting place for the buns while using this outhouse was very tall and you did not have to bend your knees much to be in a good position for doing your business. One of Norm’s problems was he could not bend his



knees, so the Deep Drop had an appeal to him.

His verbal and the note gave me all I needed to make Norm a Deep Drop. The altitude of the landing zone for his buns was to be exactly 29-1/2 inches above the floor. The armrests around the landing zone were to be raised in proportion to the original design. So there, I had Norm's design in hand and I was off to implement his instructions.

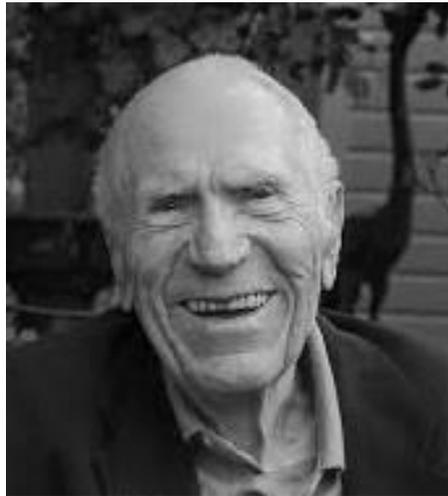
It was fun shopping for some toilet seat extensions that I thought I could modify. Airway Oxygen was a bit leery of what I was doing, but they were also a great help.

After the selection of the extension and extending materials, I was able to get

Norm a 29-1/2 inch "High Drop" landing zone. I also altered the arm rests to give Norm proper leverage for takeoff from the landing zone.

Norm was then allowed to get approval to go to the Warm Friend with a PT to give him a test to see if he could go back home. I watched as Norm went through the many steps to get approval to return.

He was able to return to the Warm Friend for several more months. I had to correct Norm when he told people that if it had not been for me he would not be home. I told Norm if it had not been for him and his great mind, I could not have helped him. Norm's great mental design work allowed him to "Blow the Joint."



Norm Lunderberg  
1930 - 2018  
Past President of HASP



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## God's Purpose Found Me

When I was seven and eight I often played with my dolls in our front yard. Usually the setting was a tea party or school with me as the teacher. One day after such play my mother excitedly told me that a neighbor lady had driven by and told her how uplifted she had been by seeing me happily playing in the yard. My mother's excitement confused me. Why shouldn't I be happy? The fact that I had cerebral palsy which created problems with my balance most certainly didn't prevent from me being happy doing what I could do. Were adults crazy, I thought as I shrugged my shoulders and shook my head.

This incident always puzzled me, but it wasn't until 50 plus years later that it became clear to me. It was 10 years after I left Waco, Texas and was back visiting with a former co-worker who asked me if my ears had been burning that morning. Bob, who was a fellow co-worker when I worked there, had become head of the department during the intervening years. At the staff meeting that morning Bob claimed I was his personal hero. His reason for saying that was because I didn't let my handicap stop me from doing what I wanted. The fact that I lived very independently in a log cabin 20 miles from town seemed to have really impressed him.

Hearing this reminded me of another incident that happened with a co-worker while in Waco. When Louetta found out I had been a social worker before becoming a computer programmer, she sought me out to talk. Louetta was in her early 20's and was worried because schizophrenia tended to run on one side of her family and those were the relatives she most resembled. Unfortunately she did eventually have a schizophrenic break, after which she told me that she thought God had sent me to Waco just for her. At the time, I think I blushed and thought, no, not really.

At that point in time I realized God would use me for his purposes, I really didn't need to wonder and agonize over what my purpose was. All I had to do was be myself and God would do the rest. Of course, there were thoughts like thanks a lot, God. Couldn't there be something else for me better than having to cope with a handicap? And did I really like the idea of people thinking if Navyne can do it, so can I? I also wondered how many people I may have touched, but then decided my ego really did not need to know that. I just thanked God that I now knew the answer to the question that many people ponder over - what is God's purpose for me?



## Death of the White Horse

I buy myself flowers when my garden is frozen and empty. Any blooming plant or colorful bouquet will do. The flowers help me celebrate being alive. I have been celebrating for thirty some years.



This all began when I killed the White Horse. My little feat' and I were nearly home when it happened. The long day spent in Lansing, gently fighting the research assistant graduate student, hired to assist me. We would hold public hearings, gather statistics and expert testimony and write a report for Governor Blanchard, the House and the Senate. The Michigan Public Health Department's goal: to secure money to develop care-models for Alzheimer's and related diseases. They needed a "Non-Paid Volunteer Member of the General Public" to direct and chair the effort. I was it. Policy prevented any member of any department from lobbying for funds for their department, but I could ask, request, plead, or beg.

Perhaps I had been a bit pig-headed. I wanted the graduate student to write den Hague, Holland, requesting permission to use a specific Escher drawing named "Rind" for the cover of our report. I felt strongly the drawing would have visual impact. We would need to grab the attention of members of the house and senate. This group of elected officials were known for glancing at the first page of reports. The drawing would have visual impact, even if they did not read our extensive well-organized report. I planned on winning this "difference of opinion" as well as the overall challenge of funding care models and research.

Back to the dead horse. My little red feat' and I were nearly home, zipping West on Riley Street, between 160th and 168th Avenue, just at the top of the rise in the road when gentle-enormous snowflakes began to fall creating a charming last-snow-of-the winter evening. Suddenly I heard, or felt, something black very close to the passenger side of the car. It sent chills through me. Did I just almost hit someone or something and not even see it? I must slow down and concentrate on my driving - pay attention!

The towering monstrous White Horse appeared in the headlights, galloping directly to me. I recognized it as the White Horse from Revelation 6. I hit the brakes and the clutch with all the force I could muster, forcing my body

back, directly aligning my head to the door post. The horse's hoofs hit the grill, his enormous body slid over the hood, shattered the windshield, crushed the top of the car, then rolled off into the center of snowy Riley Street.

The horse was dead. I was alive. The door post next to my body was the only erect part of the poor little fiat.' The remainder of the top of the car was crumpled, crushed into the seats. I could move. My legs and arms were shaking but moveable. One leather glove was cut from wild flying windshield glass causing a small drop of blood on my right hand. I had a new concern, the bulky white horse I killed lay stretched out in the middle of the road. A car could approach from either direction. The unsuspecting driver would crash into the white horse. If my car would start It could be a warning if I backed it up into the middle of the

road. It stared and moved in reverse! The head lights shown directly on the horse, just as a little sports car came to a stop a few feet from the dead horse. Four teen-agers showed great concern and compassion. One took me home. I told my story to Harris and phoned the sheriff to report the accident - and the dead horse. When we returned to the horse and the car, three young people reported catching a black horse and walking it to the neighbor's barn. They had to leave to attend a meeting at a church somewhere on Riley Street. The four teens disappeared into the fluffy snowflakes.

So, my car is totaled, the white horse is dead, and I am alive.

This is worth celebrating. I keep flowers on my kitchen table, as-long-as I live, to remind me to celebrate life.



## Lie to Me

Lie to me! This is not a simple foolish suggestion. Please, this is an earnest heartfelt request.

When I am very old and unsure of the year, the date, the time of the day, and I tell you my daughter is picking me up and taking me to a bridal shower for my cousin Elenore. Listen to my story, even though you know my cousin is 91 years old and her husband died 20 years ago. Be kind. Live with me for this moment in my reality – my year, my day. Lie to me.

When you come to see me in the hospital, I may tell you I did not sleep well last night because a group of children ran up and down the corridor all night. Tell me how sorry you are. Tell me you will have a stern talk with the nurse about this. Don't correct me. Don't tell me the nurse's station is just outside my door and I must have heard the nurses talk and run down the corridors to help other patients. Join me in my memory. Be with me. Simply lie to me.

If you visit me; tell me who you are, and how happy you are to see me, I may even tell you about the choir that sang two songs to me last night:  
"By the Sea of Crystal  
Saints in Glory Strand,

Myriads in number,  
Drawn from every land." And another hymn – my favorite – but I cannot remember the name of the second song. It was beautiful, the entire wall moved, regressed, and the large choir sang in flawless four-part harmony. Strange thou, they were singing to me, but they had their backs to me. If I tell you the story, believe me. It happened to me. I remember the beauty and the wonder of the experience. Join me this in the wonder. If you don't believe me, please, simply lie to me. It will make me happy, content with you in my reality.

Please don't ask me if I know who you are, if I know the year, the date, the time of day. Please, don't test my memory and make me feel my aloneness, my forgetfulness, my isolation, my stupidity. Tell me who you are, even if you are my favorite grandchild. Please, by kind. Lie to me.

If I ask you "Whose children are those?" and you see no children. Say you don't know. Lie to me.

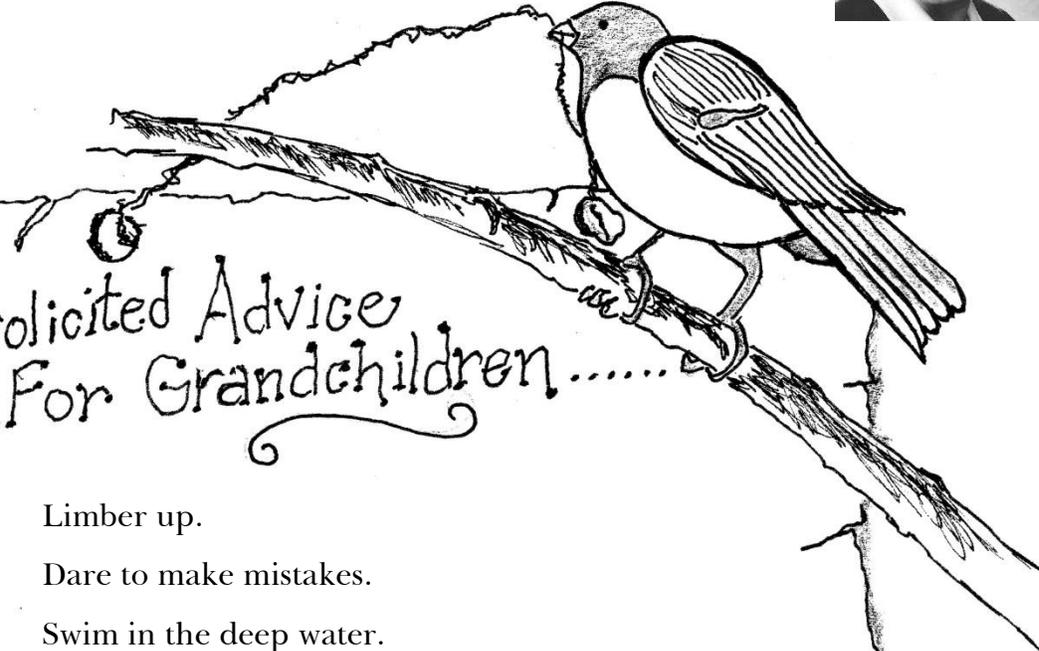
If I ask about the people sitting on the sofa, and you don't see people, you may tell the truth, say "I don't see anyone, but you see them, so they must be

angles". It may not be a lie, but if it is, thank you.

When I can finally go home and you carry me from my easy-chair to my bed, and I grin and say, "I walked, even though my feet hardly hit the floor!"

Smile and say, 'Good job'. Lie to me. It may be the last time I walk. Just for our times together, live with me in my reality.

Lie to me.

A detailed black and white line drawing of a small bird perched on a branch. The bird is facing left, with its beak slightly open. The branch is thick and textured, with some leaves or small flowers visible. The background is plain.

Unsolicited Advice  
For Grandchildren.....

Limber up.

Dare to make mistakes.

Swim in the deep water.

Climb mountains, even if you don't  
own hiking boots.

Forget the raincoat, the parachute, the umbrella;

Travel light.

Walk barefoot early in the spring.

Spend time alone.

Find out who you are

When no one is looking.

Live in a prayer of silence.

Morn when you hear the wailing.

Dance when you hear the pipes.

Ride a merry-go-round every summer.

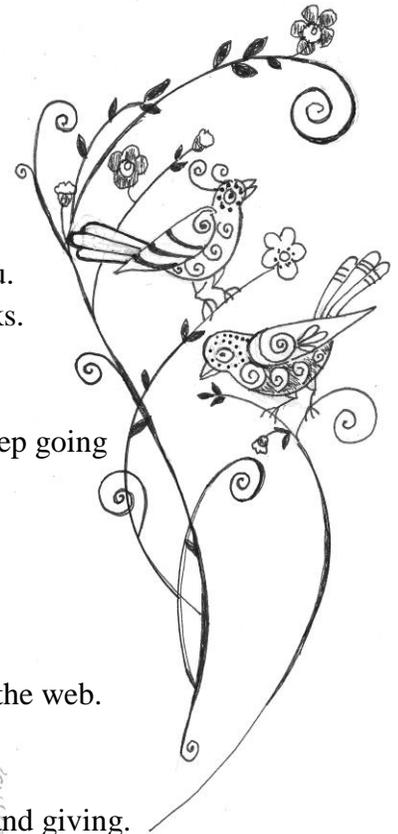
And pick a wild daisy for me!



## Amy and Kim



You are not Siamese twins, but you move together as if you were.  
You each have only 3 letters in your name but use all 26 in everything you do.  
You've worked on the second floor but are well grounded in HASP's purposes.  
You are mothers who warmly embrace those who have lived that life before you.  
You have 800 people breathing down your neck as you carry them on your backs.  
You are so bright you walk effectively among the seasoned intelligentsia.  
You prance through requiring days yet pull a load like a team in harness.  
You walk briskly and purposefully enabling those who have slowed down to keep going  
and growing.  
You make sure the hard of hearing "get it" and the poor of sight find their way.  
You are the effective predicate for all those who bring you their subjects.  
You are holding 800 pieces together like horses in a glue bottle.  
You move with patience and grace among a multitude of shuffling toes.  
You brandish the modes of technology effectively among those of us caught in the web.  
You direct the ways of those who give us their life-gained leadership.  
You do the same things time and again but are far removed from being robots.  
You treat us as if you believe the seasons of our many years were worth living and giving.  
Therefore, the HASP will always be flung open to all desiring to be more fully alive in their late  
years.



Note: To publicly acknowledge two very important people to HASP, member Earl Laman was asked to write a poem that would reflect our appreciation for all these two people have done for HASP over the years. The poem was read at the December 2019 monthly meeting by President Larry Lynn and Vice-President Barbara Stegink.



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## A Fishing Adventure

In July of 1965, my closest cousin Nate and I planned a fishing trip for a week in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (in northern Minnesota and Ontario, Canada). Leaving our families in Holland, we drove to Ludington, took the ferry across Lake Michigan to Wisconsin, then drove to Ely, Minnesota, with Nate's lightweight plastic boat on the roof. At Ely, Minnesota, we picked up the gear and food supplies from an outfitter company, camped in the woods overnight, and with a map of the territory and all our gear stashed in the little boat, set out in the morning on our fishing adventure. We had decided to leave modern life behind, so we left our watches and even our flashlights locked up in the car. We would just forget schedules and live by nature's clock for a week.

Boundary Waters incorporates numerous lakes, many linked by small streams or creeks, a few navigable, but most requiring portaging between them. With Nate's small outboard motor attached to the plastic boat (Nate was not an enthusiast of canoe paddling), we quickly crossed the first lake and were soon several lakes back into the quiet wilderness, where there were no powerboats and we would see only an occasional canoe party pass by. Camping is only allowed at single designated campsites, where there is a cleared spot for a tent, a rustic picnic table, and a small campfire place. We found a great site on a small peninsula,

pitched our tent between several saplings, dug a latrine, and, our camp all set up, we were ready to fish. True to the information we had garnered, it proved to be great fishing, and we soon had fish to fry for supper. We were catching small-mouth bass, great eating and fun to catch because they always put up a good fight. We would put them on a stringer that hung in the water next to the boat, occasionally taking a picture, and then releasing all but those we would eat, but keeping track of the numbers. We caught 155 small-mouth bass in five days.

In the evening of the fifth day, after supper Nate said he was going out in the boat to fish again for a little while until dark. I stayed in camp to clean up, preparing for the night by putting all the food-related stuff in a canvas rook sack on top of the picnic table and tying it down under a canvas sheet to protect it from varmints. Just before dark I heard something in the brush nearby, looked up in the dusk, and caught a glimpse of a dark furry animal. When I moved, it took off behind some trees and I heard heavy footsteps as it ran off. When Nate got back I told him he had missed all the excitement; we had had a moose in camp.

It was soon pitch dark on a silent, moonless night and we were settling into our sleeping bags when we heard something outside. We were only six feet from the table, and something was tugging at the tarp over our food. The

“moose” was back. The grunts were unmistakable. It was a black bear! I peeked out of the tent, but it was absolutely pitch dark. No flashlight! I had the small camp shovel inside the tent, so I reached out with it and banged on a sapling, and the bear ran off. But soon he was back, and we listened helplessly as he tore off the tarp, ripped open the canvas rook sack, and began devouring our remaining food stores. Again, I banged on the sapling, and we could hear him run off dragging the food bag. Helplessly, we snuggled down in our sleeping bags,

waiting for daylight. At first light we surveyed the situation, and we found the clawed-open rook sack about twenty-five yards away; we had no food left at all. The fishing adventure was over one day early, and we had no choice but to pack up and leave. Back at the outfitters in Ely, we returned the camping gear, and the fellow looked at the torn tarp and shredded rook sack and shrugged, as if to say, we’ve seen this before. We headed home, satiated with amazing fishing, and with a bonus adventure to share. After that Nate nicknamed me “Moose.”



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## **Brain Pain to Boyish Prank “He Who Laughs Last Laughs Best”**

My immersion in Japan into acquisition of Japanese, a non-cognate language for an English speaker, proved at first to be a mentally painful experience for me as an adult. The language school we attended used the inductive method, i.e., teaching by Japanese teachers using only Japanese. That meant no English at all in class from the very first day. I soon learned that the mental question, “Why does it have to be that way?” was unhelpful. Logic was irrelevant. So, I simply had to learn to accept the reality and plug away at the task, and gradually the “pain” subsided.

One thing became certain. My first year of struggle in language study in Tokyo had reinforced my sense that to be able to fulfill my calling as a missionary in Japan, I would need to become truly fluent in the Japanese language, and that I needed to maximize opportunities to speak in Japanese. Standard language school classes were six people each, which meant that as the class drill and conversation proceeded, each student had one-sixth of the time to actually interact with the teacher. One of my classmates, Dan Breunsbach, a Lutheran missionary, and I decided that a class of two would maximize our class experience. Of course, that would require much higher tuition, but we requested it and our respective

missions, the RCA and the LCA, approved. For the entire second year of language study we continued as a class of two, and while it made class time more intense and exhausting, it definitely accelerated our progress.

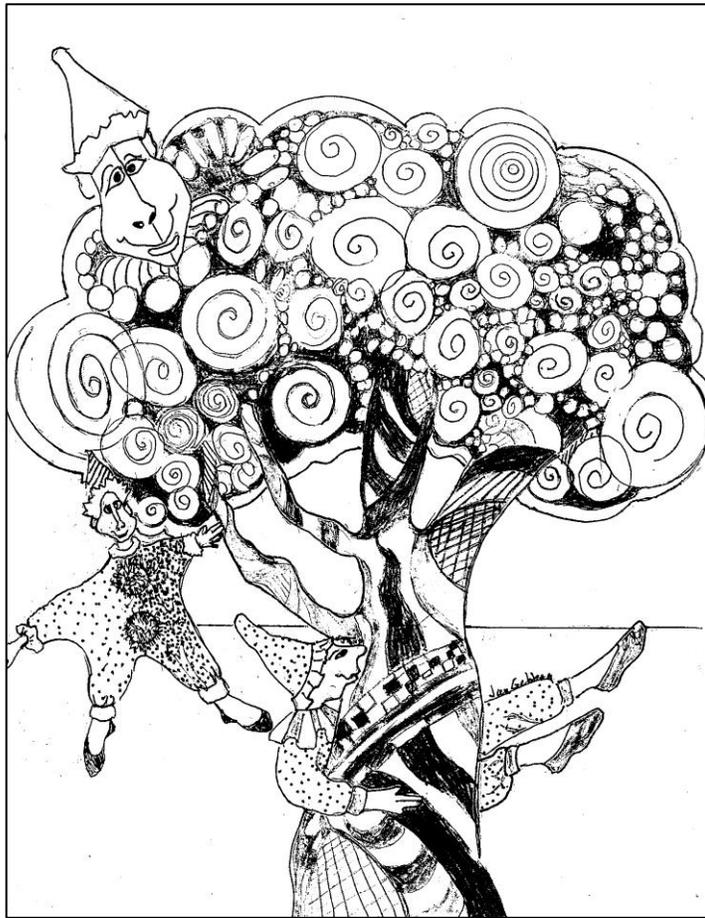
Toward the end of the school year our language skills had grown to the point that we were beginning to have fun in class. One of our teachers, who was a young woman probably about our age, sometimes teased us, in Japanese, of course, speaking to us twenty-seven-year-olds as though we were little schoolboys. One day at the end of class, she said that we had been such good little boys that day she had a reward for us, and she gave us each a wrapped piece of candy, or so it appeared. Actually, what looked like a piece of chocolate wrapped in cellophane was a little cup-shaped piece of dark brown metal with a tiny cardboard lid. Inside was a metal spring. When you untwisted the wrapper, it released the spring, and pop, the whole thing flew apart. After class, we opened our “candy”, and had a good laugh, but also realized what fun she was having at our expense. That night I had a thought, “He who laughs last laughs best,” and I got an idea. I telephoned Dan and we hatched a plan.

The same teacher would teach the first period the next day, so Dan would be there on time and I would tell her I would be a little late, because I had gone to see a doctor. I had prepared a fake medicine bottle with a label, and I arrived a few minutes late and plopped the bottle down on my desk, saying, "Hideo, desu ne" (What a terrible thing to do). Then I went on with my story (lie) that since it is improper to eat in public in Japan, I had put the "candy" in my pocket for later, but had decided while riding home on the streetcar to slip it into my mouth. I had remembered that clear candy wrappers in Japan are usually made of "oblate" (edible rice paper), and I had swallowed the whole thing. A little bit later, I had felt a sudden pain in my stomach, like something sharp had let loose, and the pain had lasted all night. I had gone to



the doctor and he had given me this medicine to dissolve whatever was in what I had swallowed. Our teacher took my story completely seriously and obviously felt terrible, but we didn't tell her it was all a practical joke to have fun and turn the prank back on her. After that class period, she went to the teacher's room and told the other teachers she had done something terrible and "confessed." When the next teacher came in for the

following class period, we told her it was all a joke. She laughed heartily and went back to the teachers' room to tell all the teachers. Maybe sometimes it's true. "He who laughs last laughs best." We had become able to have fun with our teachers, and Dan and I rejoiced that our Japanese had progressed to the point that we could pull off such a prank in the Japanese language.



## Clowning Around

By Jan Gebben



## Grandma and the Garment Store

My mother's mother, Grandma Ethel, never learned how to drive a car. When Grandma wanted to shop downtown in Grand Rapids, she would ride the Greyhound bus from Grand Haven. We would pick her up at the bus depot. She would spend the night

with us and Mother would bring her to the depot the next day for her trip back to Grand Haven. This particular day

Grandma had an appointment with the specialist at the "garment store." Mother drove

Grandma to the store on Monroe Avenue. I rode along. The "garment store" was

on the second floor above Woolworth's Dime store. We needed to climb the stairs as there was no elevator. It was a very hot and humid day. Since

Grandma was a big lady and had rheumatism, it was not an easy task for her to climb the stairs. When we entered the store, I was surprised to find that Grandma was going to be

fitted for a corset. Mother and I sat on an uncomfortable bench across from several dressing rooms. The dressing rooms were no more than a small stall with a drape to close for privacy. Grandma was approximately 5'9" tall and was heavy and had large "bosoms."

The dressing room was hardly adequate for grandma and the "specialist," but they squeezed in together and grandma was measured. Before I knew it, the drape was pulled open and there stood grandma in her new corset! I was stunned not only seeing grandma that way, but the corset was amazing! It was full length from grandma's bosoms down to her "bottom." It had garters hanging from it, two for each leg. It had "stays" to hold "everything" upright, plus it had long laces on the back of the corset that the

"specialist" was pulling tight and then tying. I wondered how grandma could breathe! There are a lot of things a young girl would like to have when she grows up, but that was not one of them!





## Miracle on 8<sup>th</sup> Street

Scottie entered my classroom seething and burning like an ember ominously glowing at the bottom of a fire pit. He had a bone to pick for sure, and there was no hiding it. His demeanor was one of challenge, and his eyes were lasers cutting through the atmosphere of an already tension-filled classroom. It did not take me long to discover that this glowing cinder of a student was intent on burning me. Why? I didn't know. It didn't matter. I remember the prickles on the back of my neck, and the adrenalin rushes coursing through my being when Scottie perched in my room like the raven in Poe's poem. The animosity was withering. The angry, hateful eyes followed my every movement, and his daily presence in my classroom triggered what I came to recognize as my descent into teaching hell.

Leaving an indelible impression on me, when I think of the ten years I spent teaching in the newly mandated desegregated country village, it's Scottie's face that flashes across my mind before I can move on to any other thoughts. Scottie. The kid who represents my failure.

Little did I know when I accepted a high school teaching position in a small, tightly knit farming village in southwest Michigan in the late 1980s that I was walking into the Twilight Zone of my 34-year teaching career.

Entering this particular school system, I showed up just about the time that busloads of city blacks were delivered to the white kids' school house. Tension radiated from all sectors.

As I grappled with a mediocre mindset that ran from the superintendent to the parents to the old guard teachers and to most of the students, I floundered like a fish caught in that huge sea of plastic now plaguing the Pacific Ocean. I wrote then that "The rules that govern civilization are suspended in this village." And I meant it. Every single thing I knew about classroom management and parent conferences and even teachers' meetings was negated here. I couldn't understand it, and I refused to succumb to a substandard teaching philosophy. I call it substandard, but have come to realize that the school's loss of autonomy was the catalyst that cut the soul out of the system.

Scottie and the other village kids were mostly solid family workers who held no higher ambitions than to make their livings right there on the family farms. Literature, music, writing skills, history and such were anathema. No one needed that knowledge. No one appreciated that knowledge, and no one sought to excel in those classrooms.

Even though the reasons for abject negativity were there, I was incapable of understanding the mindset.

It cost me.

Much of what it cost me has swirled around in my heart and head for nearly 30 years.

September 20, 2019: I receive a message on my iPhone. I could see that it was from Scottie because it was sent to me in Messenger where the name appears before the message is displayed.

For a moment, I was dumbfounded. I mean REALLY dumbfounded! I remember the moment I saw the name, and the soft words I breathed to myself. Something like: “Are you kidding!?” “Am I dreaming?!” “Holy camoly” Then: “Could it be? Scottie? Is this a joke? Should I open the message?” Since I was sitting at home in my favorite chair with our doggie at my feet and a cup of coffee in my hand, I felt relatively safe. Surely a few words on my iPhone could not do too much harm.

Regardless, I hesitated before tapping on his name for fear that I would read a gush of hateful, horrible words. Maybe Scottie has been looking for me since we parted ways. Maybe he has spent all these years wanting to finally “get me.” Surely, he has malicious thoughts. Maybe unfinished business?

Steeling myself, I decided not to ignore this message from the Twilight Zone.

I opened the text and saw:

*Hi Mrs. L.*

*We kind of had a falling out years ago during my senior year and I want to thank you for pushing me, you became the fire in my life and made me whom I am today. I am successful and in high demand. I do think of you often and wish you only the best.*

*Please forgive the typos and the improper grammar still my week point.*

*Love Scott*

Oh My God! I was ecstatic! Are you kidding?

Scottie is going to be 50 years old soon.

He lives and works in Louisiana, but still comes home to his village when possible. In fact, he was home for Thanksgiving. He drove to Holland November 27 to meet me for dinner. First, we met at a brew pub. I went alone and wondered if Scottie might be packing a gun. Maybe his words were just his way of

luring me into a place where he could shoot me. Honestly. I really had moments of thinking that!



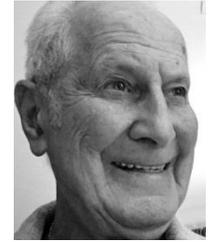
But he wasn't packing. I arrived at the pub just moments before he came through the door looking just like a regular citizen. We recognized one another immediately. Scott was wearing a medical boot due to a sprained ankle—which served to ease my nerves. I mean who can shoot and run when strapped into a leg brace. Regardless, he quickly made his way down the entire long room to get to my table. He hugged me! He smiled!

This all happened on 8th Street. A miracle. My 8th Street miracle. Especially since he didn't shoot me, and after drinks, we did go to dinner. That happened on 8th Street, too.

Scott explained to me that when he and his classmates attended the village high school, they were totally unprepared for me!..

“Mrs. L. None of us had ever encountered a teacher like you.” He explained. “You expected things from us. You demanded our best. You wouldn't let us get by with sloppy, inferior work. We didn't know what to do. And, even though we made it hard on you, you wouldn't give in. Thank you. You made all the difference in my life.”

A miracle? Yes. Nearly 33 years in the making.



## Sweet Spot

As a boy, baseball was the love of my life. I remember when my dad bought me my first glove which was a first baseman's mitt... way too big for my young hands. First basemen are normally left-handed and taller than average. He was aware I was left-handed and assumed I would grow tall enough to play the position with ease. Growing tall did not happen. A few years later I received an outfielder's glove. Left handers do not normally play any positions in the infield other than first base.

My dad and I would play catch in the back yard. The goal was to see how many balls we could each catch and throw in a row without the ball hitting the ground. By doing this over and over you learn how to throw to a spot, move your body to the spot needed to catch the ball and learn how to receive the throw by turning your glove forehand, backhand, and/or up or down. The more you do this..... muscle memory sets in. As you grow older you can throw more accurately, harder and longer distances.



Sometime, after receiving the glove, I was given a wooden baseball bat. Many days I would stand on the side of our road which had a gravel border and throw stones in the air to hit as they dropped down into the hitting zone. What joy to make solid contact and watch the rock fly off the bat.....Nearly broke a few of the neighbor's windows in the process. I also ruined a few bats doing this. At the time I did not know that I was developing bat to ball eye contact. This was part of a routine that would make it easier to hit a baseball after it left the pitchers hand when in the batter's box. Today we hear coaches and parents tell kids "keep your eye on the ball."

At the end of the street where I lived was a weedy baseball field that needed tamping down at the beginning of each season. The backstop was not high and had numerous holes in it. We spent lots of time chasing balls that went foul. Every morning when we did not have school, I would leave the house with a baseball, glove and bat and

join boys in the neighborhood headed to our adopted baseball field. We would mark off the bases, pitcher's mound and home plate in ways that I cannot remember. After hours of playing various games we would head home to grab a bite of lunch and then return to the baseball diamond. We did the same thing after supper. After the sun went down we struggled to see the ball and reluctantly called it quits for the day.

One of the most gratifying feelings when hitting a baseball is to hit the ball on the "sweet spot." My recollection is that the bat needs to be held in your hands with the trademark of the bat on top as you stick the bat out over the plate. When you swing the bat, the goal was to hit the ball on that small two inch area of the bat two inches from the end and 90 degrees left or right of the trademark depending on which side of the plate you hit from. After making contact the ball would jump off the bat, but you could barely feel it. What a great feeling!!

Baseball is not just a game of hitting. Great fun is learning how to correctly gobble up a ground ball and chase down a fly ball. Although I became a very good contact hitter with minimal power and loved to hit my greatest memory is an act of fielding and throwing. I made the high school baseball team as a freshman and for four years I anticipated the beginning of spring and the "game." Anyway.....I played center field and during a close game against Dyer High School in Indiana and with men on first and second and two outs in the ninth inning I made the big play. As the ball flew off the bat and skipped through the infield the runner on second was already rounding third as I fielded the ball and threw to the plate on one bounce. In a bang bang play the runner was out and the inning was over. A memorable moment in my life.

After high school I played a year in an industrial league but was not successful as my nearsightedness became more obvious. I still follow the game and will always remember the "sweet spot."



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## Mercurochrome

When I was twelve years old, in 1961, I rode my bike everywhere. My Schwinn Black Phantom would take me anywhere in the neighborhood I needed to get to or away from. She was a hand-me-down from two older brothers so by the time it made its way down the sibling stair steps to me this old beauty was well broken in. With its large white sidewall tires, worn leather saddle seat and a streamlined tank with a built in push button horn it was a stallion of a bike. The original fender light and automatic brake light had long since stopped working and the spring on the kick stand was flimsy from years of abuse but Shadow could still glide like a black swan. I'd careen up and down Maple and Williams streets and the shortcuts through the alleys that ran behind the houses. Being the youngest and last boy in the litter I knew she would be mine forever. This beautiful bestowed bicycle had been shamelessly abandoned by my older brother Joe and left in the back of the garage. He was three years older than me and earlier that summer had just stopped riding her, having discovered Brylcreem and girls that year.

Sometimes I'd ride in packs with some of the other neighborhood boys like Joey Wolfe and Tom Cash and we'd patrol our part of town, riding three or four abreast, looking for fun or trouble. This particular day I was riding alone down Maple Street. Father McKuin from St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church was making home visits that

day and I noticed him on the front porch of one of the houses with his large German Shepherd dog that went everywhere with him. As I rode down the sidewalk in front of the house that Nazi beast made eye contact with me, began barking loudly and leaped off the porch in my direction like he was shot out of cannon. To this dog my prepubescent gluteus maximus must have looked like a hot cross bun wrapped in a denim napkin because he was making a beeline for me snarling and barking. When I could see he wasn't going to abandon the pursuit I put it in overdrive, which on a bicycle means you lift up off the seat, butt in the air, lean halfway over the handlebars and pedal as fast as you can to achieve maximum torque on the pedal sprocket. I glanced over my right shoulder hoping he'd given up and that Shadow and I had outrun him. The German Shepard was no longer running. He was now bounding down on me in large, long leaps like a hungry lioness gaining on a gazelle, barking incessantly. My calves were screaming. This canine's canines were wet and gleaming and the drool that hung from the corners of his mouth whipsawed around in unison with his stride. I knew he was getting closer and I was running out of gas. Then it happened. With one final burst of dogged determination he leapt upon me from behind, mouth open, and sunk his teeth into my skinny white keister. For a long moment we were joined together as one mass of forward motion. The momentum and

the impact knocked both of us to the ground and Shadow lay on her side in the grass as the beast and I rolled to a stop. The smell of grass and wet dog filled my nostrils. I was up on my feet, detached from the animal's mouth by the impact, and running in the opposite direction by the time Father McKuin got to the scene and restrained the animal.

Before the priest could inquiry about my condition I was gone. Across Maple Street, over Mr. McIntee's fence and up the alley that ran behind our house on Chittock Street. Safe in my backyard I was bent over, holding my knees, sucking wind and crying. Terrified. I remember tasting tears and dirt. Then two thoughts collided into me at once. First that I'd left Shadow, my trusty steed, at the scene of the crime, and second that I was going to have to tell my mother that I'd been bitten by a dog ON MY BUTT. This second prospect was particularly dreadful because I knew what it foretold. My mother, like most mothers in our working class neighborhood, maintained a supply of the one universal topical antiseptic for any abrasion, laceration or puncture: Mercurochrome. Mercurochrome was an orange colored liquid solution of merbromin and mercury. Sold in a small glass bottle, (and later deemed ineffective as an antiseptic and banned because of fear of mercury poisoning) the liquid was applied with a glass rod dropper and would dry to orange blotches like freckles. I knew I had to tell her and I knew what she would do. So into the kitchen I slumped, still sobbing like a sputtering motorboat, and told the tale. "Father McKuin, ..big dog...off my bike... bit me!!". "Where?", she asked. "On Maple Street", I responded. "No, no, I mean where did

he bite you?", she persisted. "On, on, my bottom", I think I said. "Turn around and pull down your trousers", she directed while reaching up and opening the door to the cabinet over the refrigerator. I knew instinctively without looking she was going for the Mercurochrome. Luckily none of the other kids were home. This process was going to be ignominious enough without the added embarrassment of my taunting siblings. With my britches and tightie-whities shackling my ankles, eyes crimped shut, standing in our kitchen, my derriere was poised for treatment. I could feel the cold drops of the orange elixir as the eye dropper kissed the puncture wounds banishing bacteria left by the dog. When she said, "you'll be fine" that was my cue to pull 'em up and end this mortification.



I've thought about that day often over the years and how it has shaped my fear of dogs. I've also wondered about what my mother thought about that event and which look occupied her face while she ministered to my posterior. Fearful

for my safety and health? Angry with the good Father for not restraining his dangerous dog? Or was she quietly amused by my predicament and stifled a grin when my back was turned? She'd raised five older boys and I was the last

son. She'd see it all by then so I imagine she was mostly relieved that I wasn't hurt more seriously and slowly shook her head as she returned the Mercurochrome to the cabinet.



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## Neighborhood Watch

I used to dread Fall. And not for just the usual reasons of cold temperatures, shorter gray days, and lack of sunshine. For me the trepidation was about the relentless cascade of leaves that shrouded our backyard from the army of maple trees that stood sentry at 1412 East Mount Hope Ave in Lansing. The annual dilemma of how to rid them from our property weighed on me like a heavy winter coat. This challenge was financial, logistical, and required exact timing.

In those early days of our family, when the kids were small and our budget was smaller, decisions about home maintenance were based on money. The cheapest way to accomplish a necessary task was usually what happened. This was especially true of the fall leaf removal. By the second or third week in November our maple leaves, once brilliant with yellows and reds, were reduced to dry, brown scraps of stubborn foliage blanketing the lawn. Their proud days of photosynthesis behind them. They needed to be raked, bagged, and transported to the recycling center in the cheapest method possible and during that brief window of opportunity between the descent of the last leaf and the first snowfall. A door slowly closing. Wait too long and you have a frozen mess to deal with, often deferred until Spring. Do it too early and you do it twice. In 1985 this dilemma almost got me shot.

That year I waited until just before Thanksgiving, carefully calculating which day would allow for maximum leaf detachment just shy of the first snowfall prediction later that day. I would need supplies, transportation, and more than a little luck to pull this off in one precisely targeted afternoon. I had a list. Black plastic trash bags. Check. Twist-ties. Check. Bright red pickup truck borrowed from a coworker. Check. New rake. Check. Hooded sweatshirt for the cold wind forecasted. Check. I was ready.

Mary had taken our two children, ages five and three, somewhere for the day. I had means, motive, and opportunity. The essential ingredients of a crime. So I began. The first truckload went pretty easily. Raking the leaves into individual piles in the fenced-in yard behind the house, I stuffed and twist-tied the black bags before chucking them into the bed of the pickup, which I had backed into the driveway beside the house. This must have looked curious to my neighbors but I wasn't thinking about them. I was on a mission. I reckoned that I could accomplish the transfer in three trips to the recycling center before snow and darkness ended the task.

Returning from the first drop-off, I quickly backed the small red truck up the driveway parallel to the rear of the house. I remember smelling the exhaust fumes leaning out of the driver's window as I backed. I turned

off the engine and the lights, not wanting to waste gasoline or battery life. Hopping out of the cab, I jerked up the hood of the sweatshirt to cover my head and ears which were beginning to tingle from the cold. I attacked the preparation of the second load periodically checking the dark, gray snow clouds coalescing above me. The truck bed was full again. Off to the drop point and back to the house as fast as I should. Stuff, twist and chuck, over and over, faster and faster. Small bits of dry leaves, now airborne, were in my nose and mouth, inhaled with the November air and tasted like chalk.

I was running out of daylight to get this third, final load evacuated. Then the wind picked up and it started to snow. I cinched my hood down tight around my face, like the end of a burlap potato sack and forged on. Almost finished. My fingers were numb inside the brown leather work gloves, now barely able to grip the rake handle. Night was falling faster than the snow. With the precious, final, overstuffed bag lobbed into the bed, I jumped into the driver's seat like Roy Rogers doing a saddle jump onto Trigger and started down the driveway, momentarily forgetting to turn the lights on. The driver's side window crank had broken some years ago and the window was permanently open. As I started down the driveway I began to relax knowing that the hardest part was over. I was in the home stretch. Because I was relaxing, what happened next was even more jarring.

Through the open window the sound hit the left side of my head like a cold slap. "Stop! Don't move!" Instinctively, I turned in the direction of the shout and was immediately staring directly into the barrel of a dark gray, standard

issue police pistol. Searching for my next breath, I slowly peeped over the top of the gun barrel and saw that it was attached on the other end to a very young-looking man wearing a uniform. By now the snow was falling hard, obscuring his eyes under the shiny, black brim of his hat, as he struggled to keep the gun trained on my face. I could see the peach fuzz on his pale cheeks and traces of red acne dots on his chin as the street light cast his shadow on the white snow in our front yard. For a long moment neither one of us said a thing. Silence. As I returned my gaze to the gun barrel, which now looked as big as an oil drum, I noticed that it was visibly shaking. Shaking, as in "this gun could go off any second" shacking. I remember thinking, "Is he trembling because it's so cold or because he's two weeks out of the academy and this is his first bust?"

Recalling what I'd seen on an episode of Columbo, I slowly moved both of my hands to the top of the steering wheel, ten and two, and found my next breath. Grasping what was happening and praying that the gun was not going to accidentally go off before I could get to the end my first sentence, I managed to say in the calmest tone I could muster, "Officer, this is my house. This is my friend's truck. These bags are full of leaves. I am going back to the recycling center with them. My wallet with ID and registration is in the glove compartment. May I reach over now and get them for you?" I was betting that asking for his permission to move provided him the belief that he was getting the drop on this perp. He nodded that permission as the gun continued to quiver.

As I carefully reached for the button on the glove box, never taking my eyes off of the perfectly round, black hole that would decide my future, the pistol gradually stopped quivering. Forcing myself to slow motion, I returned my right hand to the top of the wheel, now clutching my paperwork. Switching the documents to my left, I handed them to Barney Fife through the open window, watching his eyes intently as he processed the information. Mercifully returning the gun to its holster and my paperwork to me, he said, "We got a call about a burglary in progress. Strange truck with no lights, man with a hooded sweatshirt removing bags of belongings from the rear of the house."

As we were both acknowledged the misunderstanding and began to

disengage, I looked through the windshield and saw my wife and two small children standing at the base of the driveway. They had been watching this drama the whole time with gaping mouths. I remember hearing my five year old say, "Mommy, was that policeman going to shoot Daddy?" With no explanation, and wanting to escape the cold, the cop turned on his heels and proceeded back to his patrol car bounding through the snow in long leaps. I completed the final run for the leaf drop leaving my family at home to wonder what kind of life of crime I had been living on the side. I never did find out who called the police that day, but I'm pretty sure this isn't how the Neighborhood Watch program was suppose to work.





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## Selling Smoke

I graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 1972 on the five year plan, before it was fashionable. With a foolish disregard for the practical application of my degree to the labor market or any relevancy to a discernible career, I acquired a Bachelor's degree in English Literature with a minor in Psychology. That year I reluctantly exited academia and was compelled to consider full time career employment.

Richard Nixon was in the White House (pre-Watergate) and Bill Milliken was Governor of Michigan. The economy was a mess. The severe U.S. Recession that lasted from 1973 to 1975, bringing with it a 9% unemployment rate, wouldn't begin for another few months yet, but the economy was already beginning to slow. The Michigan unemployment rate was nearly 6%, minimum wage that year was \$1.60, and the local labor market was lousy with college graduates. My total gross income for 1972 was \$3,805. I was 24 with a newly-minted degree and it was time for me to get a grown-up job.

Through a fee-paid employment agency in late November, I was offered a full-time job at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. as a Sales Representative in Washtenaw County, mainly Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. I had zero sales experience and was apparently hired because of my boyish charm and good looks, that I had a college degree of any description and no criminal record. The

compensation package seduced me. Nine thousand dollar salary, health insurance, and a company car! I was on my way in the business world. Big commissions and a career to fill my newly-acquired polyester big-boy suit.

The job training consisted of two weeks in the Reynolds corporate office in Detroit attending endless meetings in densely smoke-filled rooms talking about important sounding concepts like market share, profit margins, suggestive selling, inventory up-selling, and retail product placement. I was enthralled. I could hardly see the Kodak Carousel slide show images on the pull-down screen because of the blue carcinogenic haze that hung in the room like gun smoke. I could taste it, harsh and stale. So this is what big business was like and now I was on the inside. Of course I had to smoke. It was part of the job. I was an occasional smoker but now it was a career, a job requirement. Two weeks of sales graphs, pie charts and aggressive selling techniques and I was ready to be unleashed on local retailers, like a hungry Pit Bull with a briefcase, educating them on the wisdom of buying more of our product.

My job was essentially convincing store owners to order and stock more cigarettes than their sales volume would support and their experience would deem wise. I was a pusher in every sense of the term. Order more, sell more. In those early days of lung cancer

awareness, denial about tobacco's causal relationship to cancer was still well entrenched and cigarette sales as a public health threat was not yet an issue. Ignorance still prevailed and profits ensued. The competition was intense. My product brand was Winston cigarettes. I stuck Winston stickers on the glass door of the liquor stores and grocery shops on my route after peeling off the competitor's label with my company-issued razor blade. When I returned on my next sales call my Winston stickers would be gone replaced with a Kool or Pall Mall or Kent sticker. Product placement guerrilla warfare in the retail jungle. Fifteen calls a day, five days a week. Daily volume reports to the District Manager and excuses to my supervisor for my performance.

By week six I was growing weary of the grind and questioning this career choice. I hadn't seen a commission check yet, only promises of big money to come after I got the hang of suggestive selling and countering sales resistance. My clothes wreaked of tobacco, my lungs ached from smoking constantly and I was beginning to notice a worrisome, consistent cough. I was not sleeping well. As I started week six, still in denial, I was undeterred. This was my chance to make some serious money for the first time in my young life and I was not going to wimp out. Suck it up and push forward.

My first stop on that Monday morning was the Busy Bee Convenience Store in Ypsilanti. The owner was a huge, hulking man about six foot five, with a black busy beard, eyebrows to match, bald as a cueball and chest hair that sprang out of his V neck shirt like steel wool. His demeanor was even less

welcoming than his imposing stature. I approached the counter looking like a young Ron Howard. Opie Taylor in his first suit. As trained, I launched into my sales pitch about increasing inventory to maximize sales and profit, all the while flipping through the colorful, cigarette pages in my three ring binder, strategically rotated for the customer to view.

"No, my standing wholesale order is fine. I know what I sell. I know what I need," he said flatly. "But we've got a big weekend coming up. Bigger demand," I suggested, leaning in now for emphasis. "No, really, I don't need to increase my order," he said, straining to be cordial. His breath smelled like old pork sausage. Step two in suggestive selling mandated a firmer push. "I can give you a volume discount if you increase your order," I offered. "No!" he said more loudly, barely containing his agitation. "Well, the regional sales numbers for this area indicate that an operation of your size should be maintaining a much higher inventory level for the anticipated demand," I said, flipping my brochure pages frantically.

In my exuberance for success and a commission check I had overplayed my hand. That last comeback from me was a bridge too far. His face morphed from tolerance to rage. In one seemingly fluid movement, this mountain of a man came around the counter making straight for me, roaring what must have been an expletive in a language I did not understand. Before I could take a step back in retreat, he had me by the collar, his massive hand tightly gripped around my shirt collar and the lapel of the suit in one sweaty, ham-handed clutch. I barely had time to snatch my

three ring binder off the counter before this enraged retailer dragged me to the door. Grabbing the door handle with his left hand he flung it open and pushed me through with a loud grunt, like an Olympic shot-putter. I felt his spittle spraying my face. Once on the sidewalk, still clutching my collar, he lifted me up off of my feet with his one massive arm, barely straining, directly up in the air, out and onto the cold, January asphalt. As I felt my wingtips leave terra firma, my perception went into slow motion.

As my body moved up through space at roughly a 45 degree angle to the ground I thought about those sales graphs during the training. My body's trajectory at that moment was replicating a disappointing quarterly sales volume graph showing a jagged line heading straight down to zero. I was unsure of my orientation or if I could avoid a humiliating face plant. As I struggled to get my feet under me, I became aware that my pretty, four-color sales brochures were also airborne and preceding me towards a hard landing on the icy parking lot. I arrived before the brochures. My right shoulder hit first, ripping my brand new J.C.Penny suit. I instinctively did a "stop-drop-and-roll" tucking my shoulder in and initiating a perfectly lovely 180 degree

rotation landing squarely on my back. Once landed, I opened my clinched eyes just in time to see the brochures slowly fluttering down on me like a January snowfall. Not wanting to move before determining my next move, I laid there long enough for the brochures to slowly drift down onto me, covering my upper torso and face like a warm afghan. I didn't want to get up but knew I had to. Peeking around the corner of the Winston brochure that was now laying on my face, I could see that Sasquatch had gone back into the store. I slowly got up, gathered my mess of marketing material and what was left of my dignity and slinked back to the car.

I was done. I'd had enough. Finding the nearest pay phone I called my District Manager and told him I was quitting. After providing a hastily written letter of resignation, I returned the sales equipment and surrendered my company car. As I handed him the car keys a profound calmness washed over me and I realized how tense I'd been for six weeks. I went back to my old job as a desk clerk in a "residential hotel," embarrassed, relieved, and more confused than ever about a career direction. What am I going to do now? What am I going to do now?



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## A Childhood Memory of Post War Germany

After the war, millions of people in the cities were starving. They came in droves by trains to the villages and begged for food.

Peter was a little boy who lived with his mother, an older sister and a twin brother in Offenburg, a city near the Black Forest. His father was in an Internment Camp. Life was difficult with very little money and hardly any food in the shops. They had meager meals, often only cornbread or lentils, which the French Occupation supplied for the starving German population. The lentils came from Indo-China and contained almost more worms and tiny stones than lentils. So Peter was sitting quite often for hours trying to separate these “impurities”, but when they had their meal, they were still biting into pieces that he had missed.

In order to survive, Peter who was 9 years old at the time, went sometimes by train to a nearby village to ask for food. He had been there before with his mother so he knew some of the farmers. Over time, to be able to feed her children, his mother had bartered silverware, bed sheets, tablecloths and other valuables they had saved from the French occupation. Since the bridge over the river Kinzig in Offenburg was destroyed during the last days of the war, Peter had to walk 2 miles over the temporary bridge to get to the train station. This was a small local train connecting villages in the area, so his mother was confident that she could let

him go by himself. At the time, quite a lot of children went to the country begging for something to eat.

On this particular day, he went to several farms in the village. He wanted to fill his empty backpack with goodies to bring home to his mother, so she would be able to cook a meal. He was a cute boy, charming the people with his winning smile, and he was quite successful! At the end of his tour, his backpack was full of potatoes, ham, apples and eggs.

When he came to the train station, he discovered that he had missed the last train home. At first he could not believe it and was really scared, but he knew the only way to get home was for him to walk the 10 miles along the railroad tracks. It took a lot of courage, but he had to do it!

After a while, he met two girls, about 2 or 3 years older than him, who were also going this way. That made the walk much easier. There was a small creek next to the railroad, and since it was already late November, it was frozen. The girls took turns to slide on the ice. They offered to hold Peter’s backpack so that he could also go sliding on the ice, which he did. Since the creek was about 5 feet lower than the tracks, he could not see what the girls were doing. When he came up again, they were suddenly hurrying away. His backpack felt different when he picked it up, and he discovered to his horror that it was

filled with stones. They stole everything that he had worked so hard for the whole day. The idea to come home with nothing but an empty bag made him cry. He knew that his mother was counting on what he intended to bring home. It got dark and the fact, that the girls had told him before that there were Moroccan soldiers in the area, was not making him more assured that he would ever see his family again.

Suddenly he saw a light coming from behind. It was a railroad worker riding his bicycle on his way home to a village next to the destroyed bridge. He got off his bike and asked what was wrong. Still sobbing, Peter told him the whole story and the man said: "Come sit on the handlebar. We will catch up with them. You will get your stuff back." After about 5 or 6 miles – it got very dark in the meantime - they caught up with the girls. The good man made the girls empty their bags on the railroad bed and said: "Boy, now take what you think is yours!" And Peter did!

The man asked him to hop on the bike again and then he brought him back to Offenburg after he had offered him a meal at his home. It was already late

when he crossed the river over the temporary bridge. At that time no streetlights existed, and he had to find his way in the dark. He ran as fast as he could to get to his street. Suddenly he heard from far away a woman calling: "Peterle, is that you?" It was his mother looking for him. She was so relieved and hugged him! But she never let him go begging again!



Much later in his life, Peter married a girl named Karola!



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## Trip to the Bahamas

In 1977 we travelled to the Bahamas. Since we did not want to be surrounded by lots of tourists, we stayed at a nice quiet resort hotel on Andros Island. There we were surrounded by beautiful nature: White beaches, blue waves and stately palm trees. It was perfect that we could stay in a comfortable cabin, which was part of the hotel and had a great view of the ocean. The children were very happy because there was a big swimming pool, and the wide sandy beach was also right there. It was like a dream!

Since these cabins were perfect for family vacations, we met several couples with children. All the children loved to play together on the beach building castles and forts, and they also enjoyed swimming and splashing around in the swimming pool. There was never a dull moment for them. One day, we took a trip to other parts of the island, arranged by the hotel. Along the coastline were several other nice tourist accommodations, but the inland was still quite a wilderness with beautiful trees and flowering bushes.

After getting to know some of the other hotel guests quite well, we sometimes watched each other's children. So Peter and I could one day go snorkeling at the Barrier Reef that we had heard so much about. What an adventure that was! Since this was our first snorkeling event, we were amazed about the miraculous world under water. The

beautiful fish and corals we discovered were incredible. The coral formations looked amazing, sometimes like tree branches, fingers, fans, mushrooms or many other forms. There was a great profusion of fish and other underwater life quite close to the surface, so that we could easily watch quite a lot of this wonderful world while snorkeling. The water was so clear that we could see lots of sea creatures of all different colors and shapes moving around in the reef. There were schools of fish, all going in the same direction and then suddenly, as if they had received an order, all turning at the same moment into another direction. This underwater world with all the different shades of color looked like a lovely sea garden. The beauty was overwhelming to us!

On another day, we went fishing with a few of the other hotel guests. I did not go to catch any fish but wanted to enjoy the boat ride on the beautiful sea. When we stopped at a great fishing spot, everybody got the fishing gear out and flung the lines far into the water. Since I had become enthusiastic about snorkeling, I had brought my snorkeling gear and jumped into the water, paddling away from the boat but staying in its vicinity. Again, I was impressed how clear the water was and how far down I could see. When I came back close to the boat, I saw that they had already caught some fish. Snorkeling around, I could also see how the fish swam toward the fishing lines to

get the bait, which meant, of course, that they were swimming to their certain death! For me, it is hard to kill any living thing. I even apologize aloud when I have to kill a spider in my house. So I snorkeled very quietly closer to the side of the boat and chased each fish away that came close to the

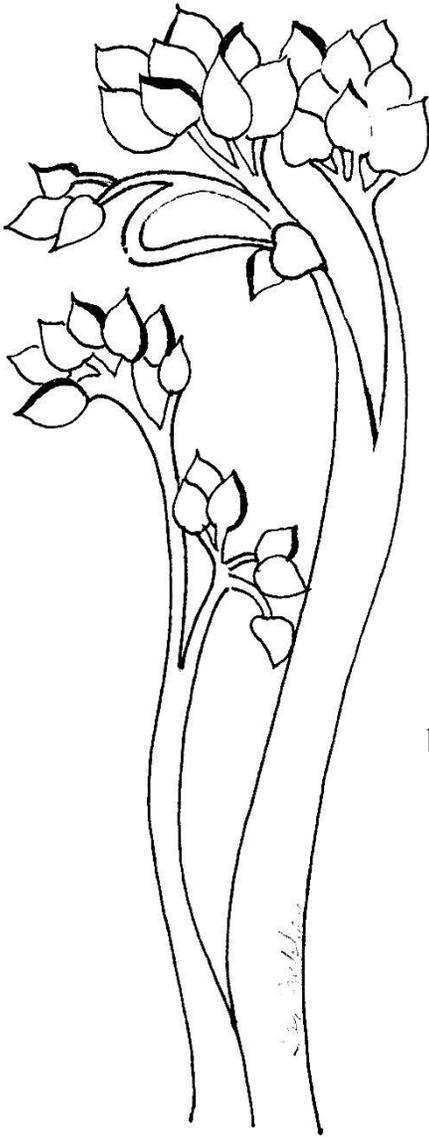
bait. It did not take long, however, until the anglers realized why they did not catch any more fish, and I was ordered out of the water immediately! Everybody was, however, amused about my actions, and we all laughed about my life-saving efforts. Even at dinner that night, I was still teased about it.





## By Chance

How shall I keep my soul from touching yours?



Only time will answer that.

Time to share our unlike pasts.

Time to play in games of mirth,  
On distance beaches, mountain paths;  
Forest trails, and distant lands.

Time of contemplative silence  
unspoken thoughts; furtive glances;  
begin to break down our unfamiliar pasts.

But one warm touch and a knowing  
smile, breaks down the distance  
once thought so vast.

Might this be more than just by chance?



# Mother Teresa's Hymn

Text by Karen and Herb Tews  
 Music by Emily Rutherford

SOPRANO  
ALTO

1. Stand ing in qui-et re - flec - tion\_\_ a - wait - ing your gen - tle com - mand;  
 2. Flood my soul with Your spi - rit, make my life a re - flec - tion of You;  
 3. Make me a hum - ble ser - vant, Your spir - it gui - ding from a - bove;

TENOR  
BASS

5

Much\_\_ was gi - ven much re - quired how can\_\_ I best lend a hand? The  
 Strength - en me, shape me, shine through me\_\_ to serve You in all that I do.  
 O\_\_ pen to the cares of oth - ers, re - flect - ing the truth of Your love.

9

fruit of si - lence is prayer,\_\_ the fruit of prayer is faith;\_\_ the

13

fruit of faith\_\_ is love and ser - vice the fruit of ser - vice is peace.



## **Mentors**

**A teacher, a preacher, a business leader  
A poet, a painter, a national figure  
A friend, a lover or inspired thinker  
Enriching our souls  
Shaping our lives  
Instilling a thirst for knowledge, a new set of goals  
A yearning for success  
Concern for others  
Giving deeper meaning to life**

**Some are by choice, others by chance  
To them we say “thank you” and vow to be  
Mentors**



## Pure Michigan

A walk in October brings out the artist in me  
though no painter can match Mother Nature's palette

A symphony of sights, sounds and smells await  
as I take a stroll through my own small town

The air is crisp and appealing, my pace quickens  
the sun warms my back

Leaf smoke billows from the village green while at  
the yacht club slips lay desolate

Gray and black squirrels scamper everywhere  
harvesting nuts for winters long siege

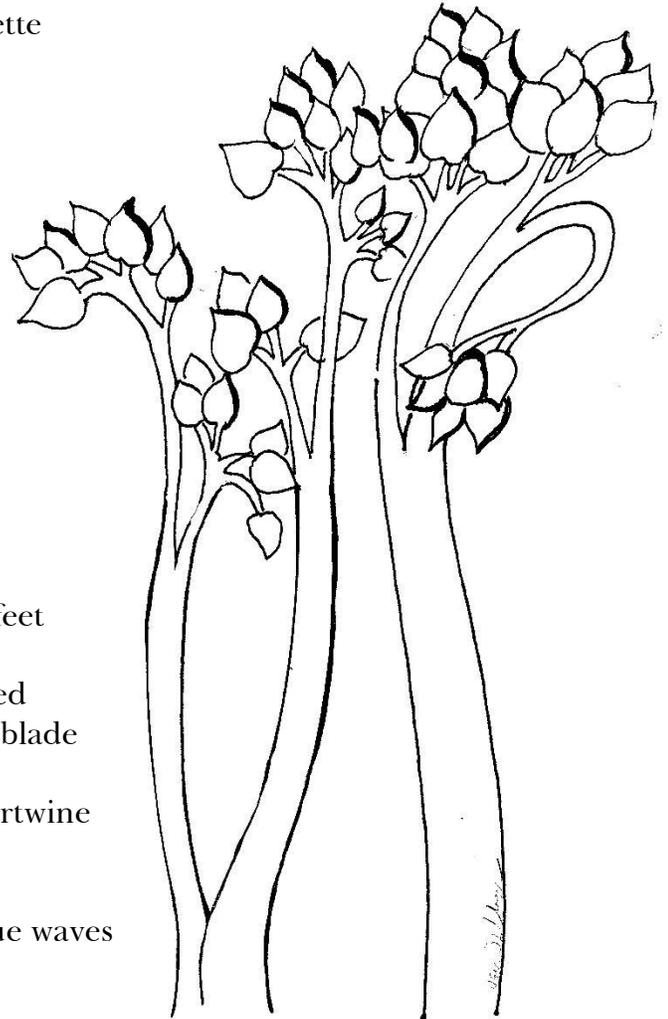
Overhead, v-shaped flights of geese head south  
while brown, yellow and orange leaves drift to my feet

A distant corn field is shorn of its crop, a few tasseled  
stalks stand sentinel, having missed the harvester's blade

Vines flamed red now by Mother Nature's kiss intertwine  
with tree branches along my path

Out on Lake Michigan tiny white caps top deep blue waves  
as they make their way to shore

Home again, I give thanks for the pleasure of living in Michigan  
in autumn, the time of year when I feel most alive.





Score

# Step Up for Him

Text: Herb Tews  
Tune Maryton.  
Reharmonized  
Steve O'Connor

Piano

1. Step up for Him, He needs your hands. Step up for  
2. Step down for Him, He needs your humble soul. Step down for  
3. The journey's long, and not always kind. Yet worth the

6

Him, He needs your feet. Step up for Him, He needs your  
Him, He and needs your caring ways. Step down, He the needs your  
peace and joy you'll find. Keep the faith and hands to reach  
don't de

12

heart. This is His way; this is His way.  
out. This is His way; this is His way.  
spair. He's al ways there; He's al ways there.



## Saved by the Milkman

I grew up on a fruit farm in a very rural area of western Michigan. One of the unique characteristics of the area at that time was that people tended to be more isolated and homebound than their city neighbors. Because of all the orchards and farmland there was much more distance between houses. We were fortunate to have one family living directly across the road and two other houses within a half mile. Often there would be a mile between houses or no other dwelling would even be in sight. Most families only had one car but this was not a problem. The mothers were full time homemakers and needed to be home. Along with raising the children, they were busy with numerous household and farm chores. My mother spent many hours tending to our large vegetable garden in the spring and then during the summer months she canned the fruit and vegetables for our winter food supply. She also did most of the bookkeeping for the farm. There was a store in a village about 10 miles away that delivered groceries. My mother called in her order each week rather than leaving the farm to grocery shop. We also had a milk man who delivered milk to the farm families on our road. He drove a special refrigerated truck and arrived at our house three times a week. He would always carry the milk

right up to our porch and leave it in the special case. Our job was to wash the empty bottles and put them back in the case for him to retrieve on his next visit. My mother would leave a note with our next order. We never thought about touching the note; however, some children were more mischievous. One little boy would write carefully mimicking his mother's handwriting that a quart of special chocolate milk was requested. The milkman, of course, complied. I am sure his mother was quite surprised and a little annoyed when the chocolate milk appeared in her case. Our milkman was Charlie.



He was a friendly, redhaired man. He always made a point to wave at the children as he drove throughout the area in his special truck. So even though the population was sparse and the farmhouses some distance apart, the

people of the area were very friendly and we had a sense of being part of a community.

At that time there was a state law that said no child should walk more than 2 miles to school. Because of these there were many small country schools that dotted the landscape. We always had other children to walk to school with; however, some other children were not so fortunate. My friend JoAnn had to walk by herself for almost two miles on a gravel road with very few houses. The school schedule was such that not everyone was dismissed from school at the same time. This was so that the younger students had a shorter school day and the older students had more time for special projects. School started at 9 o'clock for everyone. The kindergarten students were dismissed at noon and began their walk home. The first through third graders were sent home at 2:00. The older students stayed until 4:00.

Before I started kindergarten, my mother felt she had to teach me how to walk safely by myself. She had me practice before the school year started. She did this by having me walk to visit her friend, Martha Fry who lived in one of the other farmhouses on our road. The first day my mother walked me to the edge of our yard and instructed me to walk carefully on the left side of the road. She said to watch for cars and, of course, to not talk to strangers. Then she waved me good-bye and watched me walk carefully down the hill. There was

only one other house on the way; however, I was not worried. I knew that Grandma Fry lived in that house and it was only a short distance on from there to Martha Fry's home. Martha Fry was a kind woman who had children a few years older than myself. She was expecting me and gave me a welcome hug. Then I played with her toys for about a half hour before she sent me walking carefully back up the hill toward home. My mother had me practice this several times until she was convinced I was prepared to walk safely home from kindergarten.

Then kindergarten began. I walked to school every morning with my older sister and her friends. At noontime those of us who were in kindergarten were sent home. There were four of us who began the walk together. We all walked together to the first corner. Then Doris and Tommy turned left on the gravel road. Rusty continued straight ahead on a narrow dirt lane that went into the woods. I turned west on the paved road and walked the last half mile alone. I walked past orchards and woods with only one house along the way. Everything went very well during the fall. Sometimes my mother would walk to meet me with my baby sister in the stroller; however, many days I walked alone. And then the winter came. We found that walking in the winter was much more difficult.

One day that winter, which was especially cold, the wind was blowing. Although the road had been plowed,

the snow was still very deep. When we left the schoolhouse freezing snow was blowing into our faces. We wrapped our scarves tighter and pulled our hats down over our ears. I said to Rusty, "I don't want to walk home today. It is too cold." But we kept walking. We walked as fast as we could. We tried to run part of the way, but found it was too slippery. How I wished I was home in my own warm house. We finally made it to the first corner. Tommy and Doris turned to walk up the small hill to their house. They lived the closest to the corner. Rusty and I each had another half mile to walk. I realized I had to walk up two more big hills and then go past our cherry orchard before I would even see my house. It seemed much too far to walk. I felt like I was going to cry, but then I thought maybe Rusty could help me. His family's mailbox was right there on the corner. His mother and mine were good friends and luckily both homes already had telephones. I said to him, "Please help me. I am way too cold to walk any farther. Could you tell your mother to call mine and have her come to get me as soon as she can?" Rusty said "Sure" and hurried off through the woods as fast as he could go. I squatted down next to the mailbox and began my wait.

I leaned against the mailbox post and sat with my back to the wind. I was sure that my mother would be coming soon. I waited and waited and waited. The snow howled around me and the air was bitter cold. Not a car came past and not a person was in sight. I could see

Tommy and Doris's house and I knew their mother would let me in, but they did not have a telephone. If I went there, my mother would not know where to find me. I decided to continue my wait. I was getting colder. I wanted to cry, but knew my tears on my face would only make things worse. I hunched down, pulled my scarf tighter around my face and wished that my mother would be hurry. It was really taking Rusty a long time to get home. I hoped that he made it in the snowstorm and did not get lost in the woods. I hoped he did not forget to tell his mother.

In the meantime, Rusty did make it home. He did remember to tell his mother and she did call my mother right away. But there was a bigger problem. Our family only had one car and my father was gone with the car to take care of some farm business. My parents also owned a large fruit truck and two tractors, but my mother did not know how to drive any of these or even if they could be safely driven in the snow. Rusty's mother did not have a car. So while I sat shivering in the snow, my mother was frantically trying to find a way to get me home. The older students, including my sister, would not be walking past the mailbox for two more hours. That might be too late.

And then the solution came. In the midst of the snowstorm, Charlie and his milk truck drove into our driveway. It was his day to deliver milk to our area and he was walking up to the door with

our newest supply. My mother was so relieved to see him. I am not sure how their conversation went, but within 10 minutes the milk truck arrived at the mailbox. I was still hunched down trying to keep my fingers from going numb and was very surprised when the milk truck stopped. Charlie asked if I would like a little ride in his truck. Of course, I had been taught to not ride with strangers, but Charlie was not a stranger. He was our milkman. Charlie said he had just talked with my mother and she had said asked him to give me a ride. Initially, I thought he meant that I would ride along the whole rest of his milk route with him. I thought it might be a very long ride and I was not sure my mother would approve, but it was so cold outside. I jumped up and happily climbed in his safe, warm milk truck. Charlie turned his truck around and drove me right back to my own house where my mother was waiting.

I have no idea if Charlie remembers saving me from the snow, but I remember his friendly smile and his big, warm milk truck. My mother, of course, scolded me when I got home and told me to never again wait in the snow. She reminded me that she did not always have a car and I could have gotten frostbite or worse. Then she gave me a great big hug and told me she was so glad that I was home and safe.

I don't know what ever happened to Charlie and his milk truck. Eventually, the milkmen quit coming to our area. Farm families had more cars and milk was usually bought in grocery stores. I don't know if Charlie even remembers me, but I know that I remember him and his rescue on that blustery, cold, snowy winter day. And I know I learned an important lesson. I learned that milkmen are wonderful people.



## The Baby Shower

We had an upsetting thing happen in my family when I was 7 years old. My mother became very ill. She was tired all the time and she kept vomiting. Often in the mornings she would start to make breakfast and then run quickly off to the bathroom. My sisters and I could hear the sounds of her throwing up. This had been happening for several weeks when my parents had my two sisters and I sit down for a family talk. They both looked very happy. My mother had a big smile on her face even though she had been so very sick.

“Daddy and I have something very important to tell you,” she said. “The reason Mommy has been so sick is because I am going to have a baby. There is a little baby growing right in my belly. Next summer you will have a new little brother or sister.” My parents both looked very pleased and excited. I felt just a little confused. How could a baby be in my mother’s belly? And why would it make her so sick? I looked at my older sister, Jean, but she just shrugged. Sue, who was only five, looked at my parents with her big eyes and then went back to playing with her doll. Then my mother said, “There is one more thing you need to know. It is really, really important that we keep this a secret. We don’t want anyone to know about this baby just yet. Don’t say anything to your teacher or your friends at school. Right now it is just our family secret and next summer we will have a new baby.”

And so I went back to school the next day with a really big, confusing secret. My mother had a baby growing in her belly and we were not supposed to tell anyone. I always tried to be a very good little girl and follow all the rules. I was very careful not to tell anyone at school about the baby. I also was careful to not tell anyone at Sunday School or in my brownie troop. After a while I just kind of forgot about the whole conversation. I am sure my mother’s stomach grew much larger, but I don’t remember noticing it. I was too busy playing with my toys and, anyway, lots of people’s mothers just kind of changed their shape.

Then in the spring of that year, my mother told me there was going to be a special party for her. There was going to be a party called a “Baby Shower” and Jean, Sue and I were all invited to be there. Lots of women that we knew would be there including the wives of the other farmers, the mothers of some of our school friends. The party would be held at the Breedsville Methodist Church and there would be cake and presents and balloons. Jean and I thought it sounded like so much fun.

The day of the party arrived. I went to school that morning and during the day my teacher, Mrs. Lofts, whispered in my ear, “I’ll see you at the party this afternoon.” I must have looked surprised because she went on to

explain, "I'll be at your mother's baby shower today. You all must be very happy that she is having another baby."

I did not say a word. I knew I was not supposed to talk to anyone about the new baby. Somehow Mrs. Lofts had found out and now the secret was out. When the school day was done, I ran home as fast as I could. My mother was in her bedroom getting ready for the party. In a panicked voice, I told her what happened. I said, "I am so sorry Mommy. Mrs. Lofts knows about the baby, but I didn't tell her. I didn't say anything." My mother must have looked confused as she said, "Well, that is okay honey. She will be at the party today". "But you said we weren't supposed to tell anyone," I said with a trembling voice. "It was supposed to be a secret. And I tried to be so good and not tell anyone, but now she knows about it."

I remember my mother smiling and giving me a hug. She then patted her very, large pregnant belly and told me it was okay to tell people now. She was glad I had kept the secret for so long, but it now it was really okay to talk about the new baby. I was so relieved.

Jean, Sue and I went with my mother to the baby shower. It was such a fun party and everyone knew my mother had a

baby in her belly. Everyone! Jean liked playing the Name The Baby game. Sue liked helping my mother open the presents. I just loved eating the chocolate cupcakes. All those ladies

seemed so happy to be there supporting my mother. Mrs. Lofts was there, my brownie leader was there, the mothers of playmates were there--All to celebrate this new baby. And a month later those same people were there to support us when my baby brother, Steve, was born. So I learned some important lessons that year. I learned that we do not always have to keep secrets forever and I learned that that being part of rural Michigan

brought such a wonderful sense of community.





## The Christmas Party at the Country School

I spent the first five years of my education attending a one room country school. The school was located in a very rural area of West Michigan and was surrounded by fruit farms and forests. The school had only one teacher and no other adults in the building. The classroom usually had about 25 students of various grades so we learned to play with children of all different ages. Every December the school held a Christmas party. For us, this was the most exciting event of the year. The party was always held in the evening so that the whole family could attend. The school room was decorated in festive colors and special events were planned. The children learned new Christmas songs, memorized poems and sometimes even got ready to put on a Christmas play. All this was done so our parents could see us perform.

One year our teacher assigned me a very special role. I was to memorize a poem and recite it in front of the whole audience. That would mean I had to perform it not only in front of the other students, but everyone's parents as well. My parents were very proud that I had been chosen, but I was very nervous. I looked at the poem in the book. It was about 5 pages long. How would I ever memorize all that? The teacher assured me that I could do it and so I began. I carefully read the first few lines and then repeated them over to myself. I practiced them over and over. I

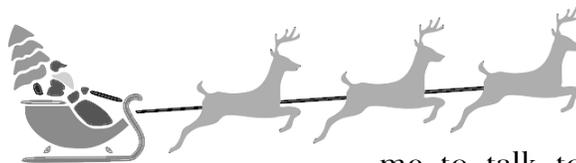
practiced saying the poem to my parents. I practiced saying the poem to my sister. I practiced saying the poem to my teddy bear. Finally I thought maybe I would be able to do it. The night arrived. I stood up in front of that large crowd of about 25 people. I was nervous and a little scared, but I began to recite:

Twas the eve before Christmas,  
goodnight had been said.

Annie and Willie were tucked in  
their beds...

And the rest of the poem continued easily. The neighborhood audience smiled and clapped hard when I was finished. I had done it!

After all the songs and plays were completed, I thought the party must be over. But then we heard some strange noises outside the schoolhouse. It sounded like something was making a scratching noise up near the roof. We heard a voice say a loud 'Ho-ho-ho" and Santa Claus came through the front door. He had a big smile on his face as he looked at all of the children. I felt a little shy, but my mother encouraged me to talk to him and even give him a hug. My sister, Jean, seemed a little uncertain. She kept staring at Santa as if she was puzzled by him. She was thinking that he looked just a little bit familiar. And then she heard one of



the sixth graders whisper, "I think that it is really Mrs. Johnson." Mrs. Johnson was the mother of Jean's best friend. As Jean looked again, she thought that Santa's nose and eyes did seem a little like those of Mrs. Johnson. And Santa's voice was not as deep as she expected and also sounded a little like Mrs. Johnson's. Jean looked at Santa and thought "No, this couldn't be Mrs. Johnson. This is Santa Claus." And besides, he was wearing a red suit with white fuzzy trim. Mrs. Johnson would never dress like that. Santa walked around the room and began handing out candy. He looked each of us in the eye and said something special when he gave us our candy. And, amazingly, he knew all of our names. Some of us even got to sit on his lap and talk about what we wanted for Christmas. I noticed that he seemed to know a lot about what toys Jean had and what new ones she would like.

Then it was time for Santa to leave. We were all very sad as the visit seemed much too short. However, it was time. He told us his reindeer and sleigh were waiting and he had many more little one-room country schools to visit that evening. Jean looked at Santa carefully again and felt very confused. Maybe it really was Mrs. Johnson and not Santa. It looked and sounded a little like Mrs. Johnson. Santa went to the door and waved us good-bye. Then he said that he needed a little special help from one of us. His reindeer were still up on the

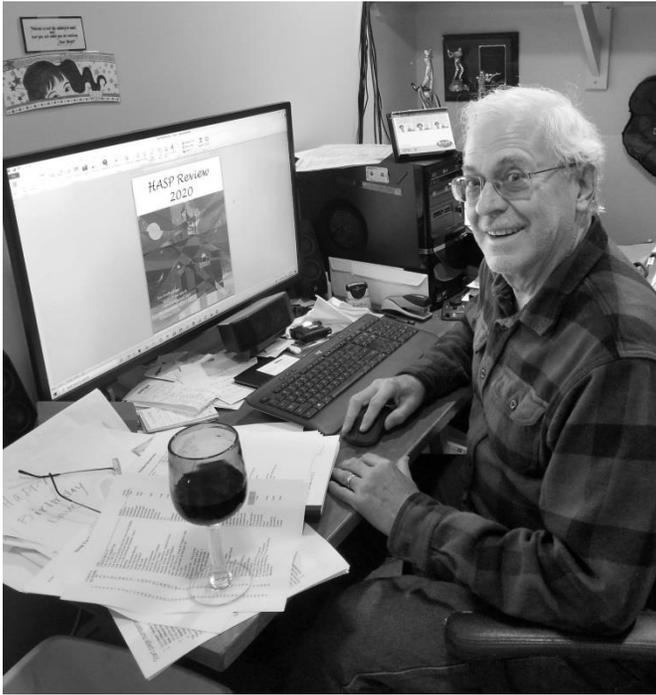
roof and he needed someone come outside and hold their leash until he got up aboard the sleigh. Santa chose Jean to be his helper. Jean and Santa went outside unto the cement porch. It was dark outside, but the light from the school made it easy to see their way. They walked over to the side of the porch and there was a leash attached to the railing. It was a real leather leash not just a piece of rope. Santa untied the leash and said to Jean, "Now hold onto this tight. We need to make sure the reindeer don't fly away before I am in the sleigh." Then Jean felt something tugging on the leash. Something strong. Like maybe a large animal. Santa said, "Don't worry. That's just Dasher. He is always in a hurry to go." Then Santa disappeared around the corner of the schoolhouse. The reindeer tugged some more on the leash, but Jean held on tight. She wanted to make sure they did not fly off without Santa. Then we heard a voice that appeared to be coming from up on the roof. It said, "Okay Jean, you can let go of the leash now." So Jean dropped the leash and it pulled away from her into the darkness. We heard Santa say in a loud voice, "Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas to all." We all looked up into the sky hoping to see the magical sleigh. Sadly, none of us were able to see it, but we knew it was up there. We knew the reindeer were flying and pulling the sleigh to take Santa safely on to the next little one-room country school,



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## Your HASP *Review* Team at Work



“Dave”



“Susan”



“Kim”



“Jan”

## Our Artists



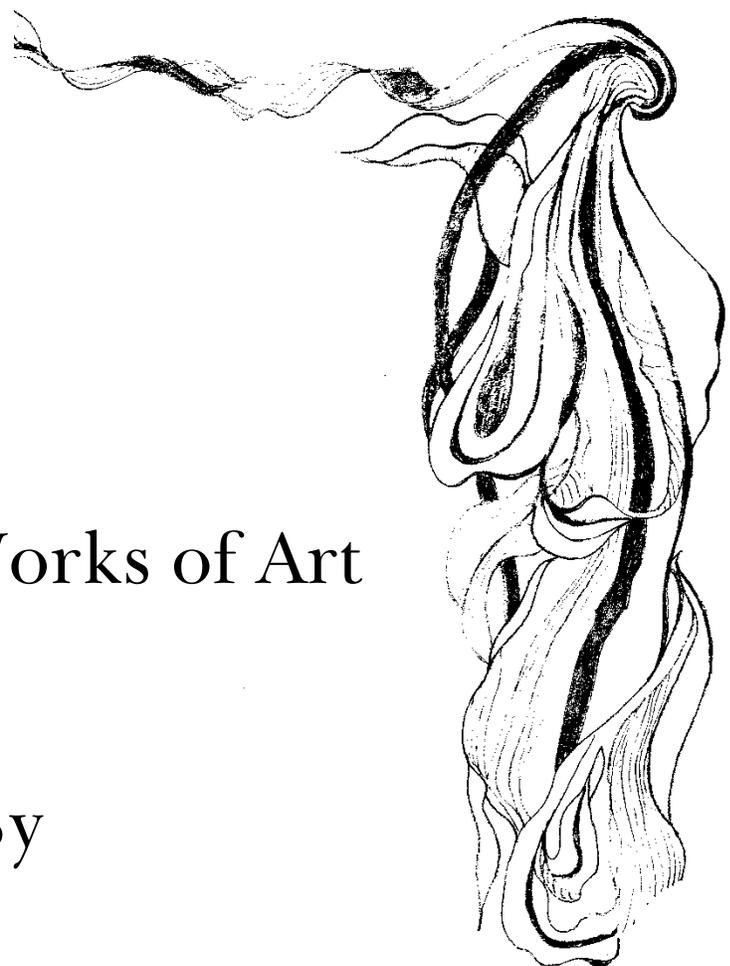
Jan Gebben



Susan Miller

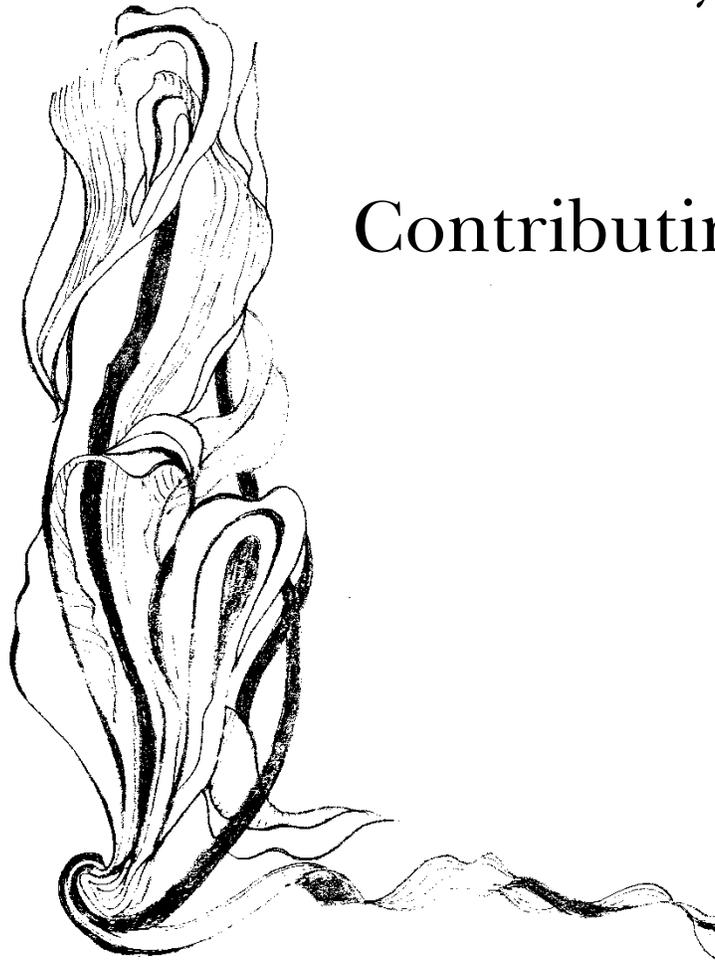


Jane Lindemuth

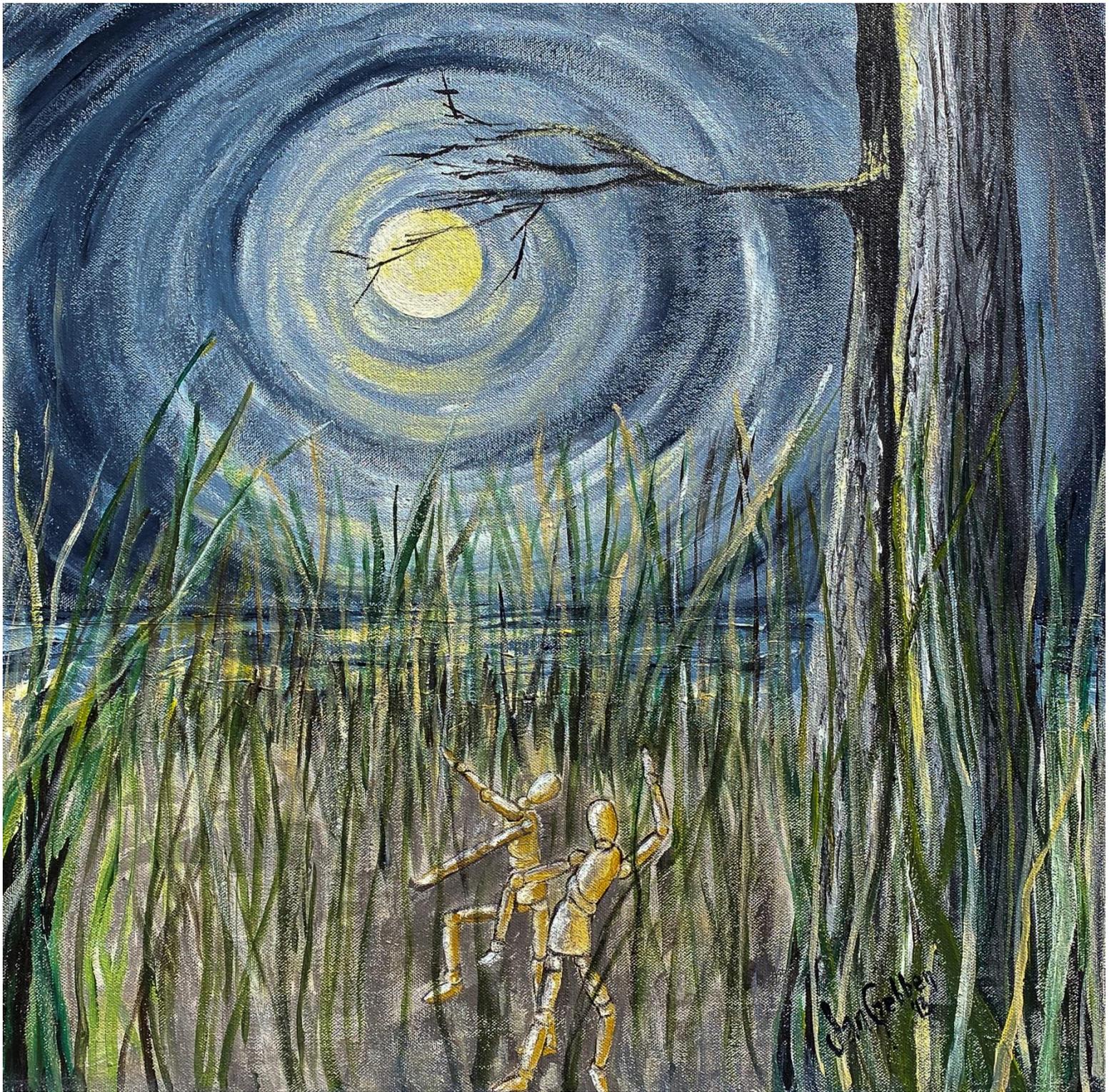


Original Works of Art

By



Contributing Artists



## **Dancing Under the Moon**

By Jan Gebben



## **Cat**

By Susan Miller



**A Scene from Ottawa Beach Road**

By Jan Gebben



**Sunrise – Sunset?**

By Susan Miller



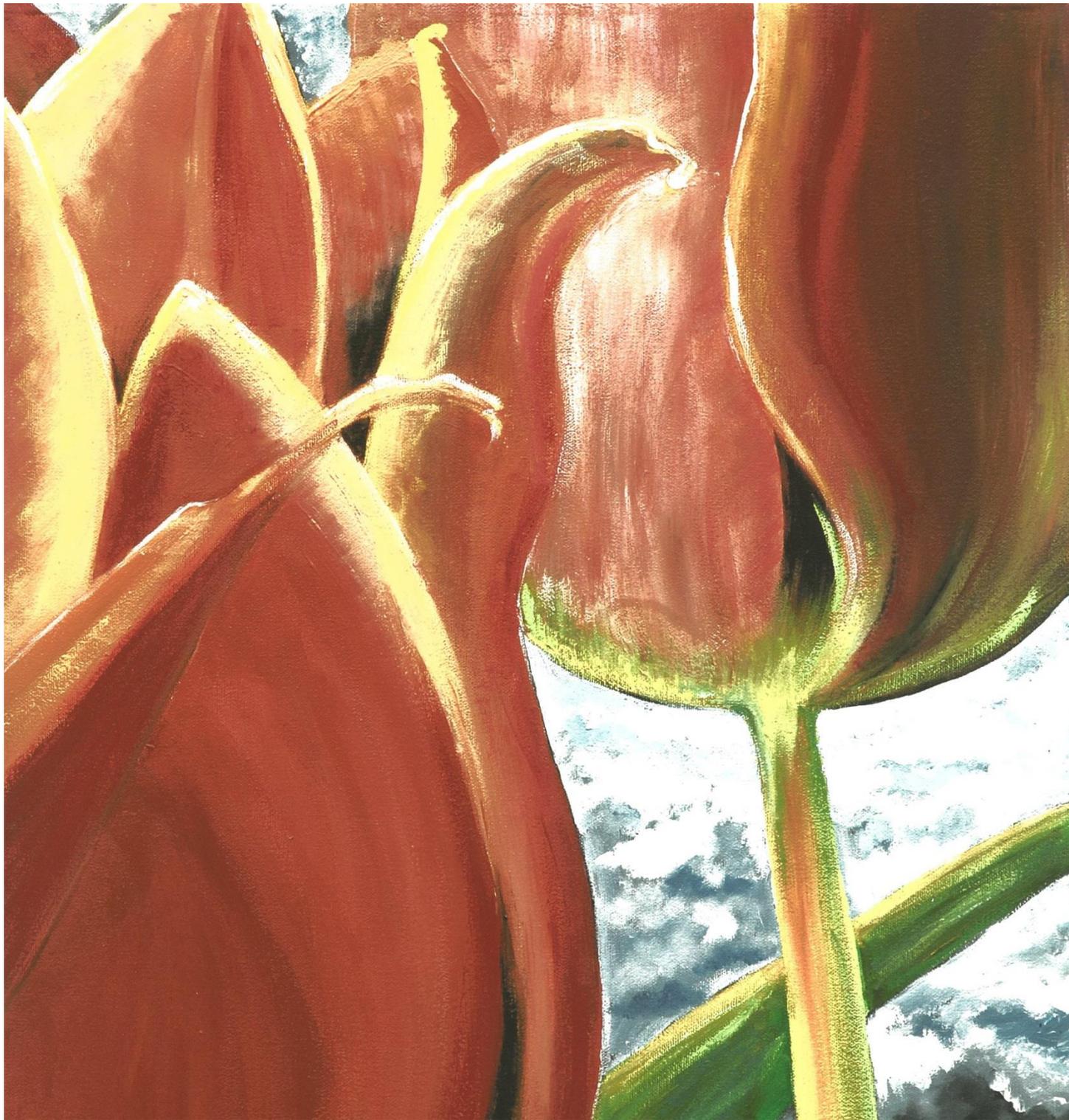
## **Black Trees**

By Jan Gebben



**Snowbound**

By Jane Lindemuth



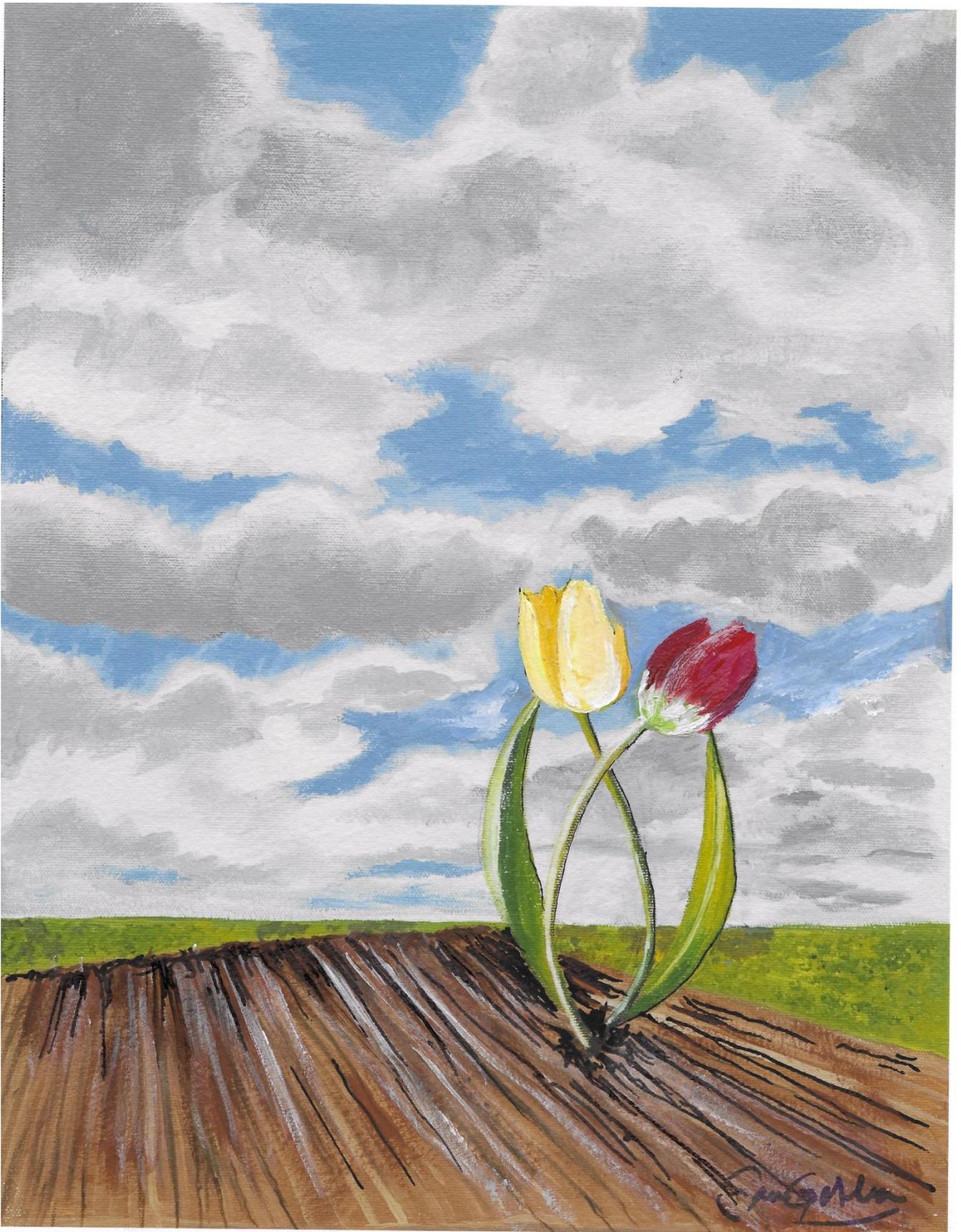
**Queen of the May**

By Jan Gebben



## **Butterfly**

By Susan Miller



**Two Lips**

By Jan Gebben



## **Yellow Tulips**

By Susan Miller



