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LifeTimes
A CREATIVE ARTS JOURNAL
ISSUE 6 | SUMMER 2020



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ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

The Friends of the Lexington Council on Aging are happy to sponsor this sixth edition of LEXINGTON LifeTimes: A CREATIVE ARTS JOURNAL, especially in this time of community stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic when even our Patriots Day celebration of April 2020 was cancelled.

This bi-annual publication, which showcases the creative talents of seniors who live or work in Lexington, was started in 2017 with a grant from the FCOA-funded Bright Ideas program. The Journal is overseen by a volunteer editorial board which sets the criteria for submission and selects entries for inclusion. Distribution is primarily electronic with a limited number of printed copies available.

Starting with the Summer 2018 issue, the Journal has gratefully received underwriting support in the form of display ads from local businesses. If your business would like this opportunity, contact us by sending an email to friends@FriendsoftheCOA.org

Individuals can also support the Journal by making a gift to the Friends of the Lexington Council on Aging. Please help to keep this popular publication going!

If you are interested in having your creative work considered for a future edition, please see the submission guidelines on the Friends of the Lexington Council on Aging website:

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ON THE COVERS

FRONT BY SARASUE PENNELL
Fred: 1776-2018 (edited)
BACK BY CHARLES KETCHAM
Pokeberry Redemption

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Two Haiku

BY JOAN SCHOELLNER



SON-MEY CHIU
Peach (1980s)

Chinese Brush Painting
33 1/2" x 16 3/4"

MOTHER'S DAY

Periwinkles bloom –
The children are grown and gone.
I must pick my own.

JUNE

I wake to bird song;
The mail man is wearing shorts.
Summer is coming.

Summertime



CHARLES KETCHAM
Summer Celebration (2019)

Photograph



HELEN LUTTON COHEN
Lexington Red Iris (2014)

Watercolor
22" x 15"



JOANNE BORSTELL
Day Lily (2019)

Ink and Watercolor
8" x 8"



KATHY SANTOS
3 Men on the Beach (2017)

Photograph



DAVID BOVET
Lifeguard Chair, Good Harbor Beach (2009)

Photograph

My Honolulu

BY ELIZABETH ROZAN

I NEVER HAD SWIMMING LESSONS. There were no pools in the yards of neighbors in the earthy farmland where I grew up. But there was the smell of the ocean when the wind blew in from the east. When it did, I sensed a washing away of all the heat and dust of day-to-day living.

My father felt that too, sometimes, particularly after his long daily drive down the Expressway to his factory job near the docks. The boats from the Dominican Republic would pull into the bay and the sugar cane would be unloaded to be processed into two- or five-pound bags of sugar sold in the market. The production of sugar was a complex operation, which created the smell of blackstrap molasses that permeated the air and often-overworked manufacturing machines. My father worked there with his father as a machinist. He could fix anything, having spent time in the Army in the outskirts of Alaska fixing fighter planes during WWII.

On those hot days, when the wind was just right, he would say: “I’m going swimming—anyone want to come?” I knew he had checked the tide table in the Record American, so it was now or never.

“Me!” I’d shout. “I want to go! Take me!”

I would bring the bare essentials, which was basically a towel. No lip gloss, hat, sunscreen, handbag, wallet, book or any other accoutrements that weigh me down now. I wore everything else: bathing suit, dress, flip flops.

The ride to the beach was usually quiet. My father didn’t talk much. He might be praying, or thinking. I didn’t interrupt. He was a union man who carried the fear of a strike, the fear of not being able to work, of

not being able to feed his family. He would turn the car radio on to WJIB, which played “beautiful music,” familiar instrumentals with a hum line that served as transport to somewhere wonderful. Even its nautical-themed call sign—a buoy bell and seagull—seemed to contribute to the effect of the soft quiet sounds that didn’t demand too much, but created space in your head. Sometimes on those rides, I would imagine being Fred Astaire’s partner, dancing on a shiny parquet floor, following his feather-light lead, silky gown twirling around me.

When we got to the beach in the late afternoon, the tide would be high, and my father would be ready before I laid out my towel. “I’m goin’ in,” he’d say, with a wink. I would sit on my towel, my knees pulled in close to my chest and watch him. My father was a great swimmer. Back and forth he’d go, his head looking small as it moved from side to side, his arms powerful as they propelled him in what looked like effortless joy of buoyancy.

This beach had an elevated section of land that jutted out to the sea. It was a sturdy barrier running perpendicular to the shoreline to prevent the beach from being washed away by longshore drift. I called it a “raft,” but technically it was a groyne, a jetty. Not visible when the tide was high, it gradually appeared as the tide went out. I often wondered how swimmers avoided crashing into it, as there were no orange sticks or flags giving warning and marking it off. I would sometimes walk out on it, with the water just up to my knees. It was constructed out of concrete, and covered by barnacles, which I could feel as I walked, and



that I sometimes examined at low tide. This was not a pink sand beach of Bermuda with gorgeous turquoise water. It was not a beach on an island of Hawaii, with huge Pacific waves. This was Wollaston, a city beach, full of coarse sand and sometimes jellyfish. It was the beach I shared with my father, the beach where the ships heading to his work were visible far in the distance; where people sat on the breakwater, smoking, reading the paper, or talking; where the sidewalks were alive with the beach familiars, tanned from the sun, and able to describe the hazy horizon line as seeming to round a bit at the edges.

After his swim, my father dried off and slept a bit while lying on the sand. I wanted to swim like my father. One day—that day—while he slept, I walked out the length of the raft and just jumped.

The water was deep enough, but not too deep. The waves were steady, but not intense. I imitated my father's movements, and learned quickly that I had to regulate my breathing with the rhythm of my body. I was not afraid. I moved my head back and forth: intake, outbreath; arms up and over, pushing the water away; feet paddling. When I got

tired, I turned and floated, my hair becoming seaweed around my head, my legs rising to the surface, toes sticking straight up. I stretched out my arms and said yes to the element of water, feeling how different it is from earth, or air, or the fire of the sun. Floating in the saltwater ocean, I felt a part of it all, my upturned heart at one with the universe.

I turned and swam back to the raft landing. The ladder was visible now and I pulled myself up. As I walked back to the beach, I could see my father, standing by the towels, shading his eyes, and looking in my direction. I waved; he waved, smiling. He held the towel for me to dry off. "Hungry?" he asked. I nodded, quickly slipping my dress over my head and arranging the flip flops between my toes. He held my hand as we crossed Shore Drive. We stood in line at the concession to order clams and scallops, delivered in a red and white checkered cardboard boat. We drank vanilla milk shakes, and sat at the weathered picnic bench, side by side, facing the sea, quietly watching the eastern sky turn pink by association as the sun began to settle in for the night. This was my Honolulu. ♦

Dance at Bougival

BY MARY LEVIN KOCH



How fashionable the pretty lady looks
in her pink layered dress and red bonnet
her shy eyes averted

from her partner in a yellow hat
that hides his face but not
his longing.

Caught up in each other's arms
they step out
unaware of the festive crowd,

secondary players
who dissolve into the filmy sunlight.
Only a breath separates

these lovers.
It is a sign
that this dance will continue

much longer
than a warm summer day.
Thank you, Monsieur Renoir.

Demystifying the Wands

BY IRENE HANNIGAN



I AM NOT EXACTLY A LUDDITE. I certainly have embraced many technological advances during the last few decades although I still don't have a microwave. I made the transition from a manual typewriter to an electric and then without too much difficulty became a true believer in the advantages of word processing. While I still love to receive a handwritten note in the mail, I must admit e-mail is indeed convenient. I also realized the advantages of having a cell phone even though I was reluctant to trade in my trusty flip phone for a fancy SMART phone until the second decade of the 21st century. I don't think it's a coincidence that my purchase of one occurred at the same time I decided it was time for me to learn how to use the array of remote controls required to turn on our television.

"What would you do if I weren't here?" Bob often asked as I sat on the couch, content to let him take charge. "Wouldn't you want to watch a movie or check out the news?"

"But you are here," I always replied even

though I knew we were at an age when the time would come when it would be otherwise. Not being able to operate the television would be the least of my concerns. Yet, he had a point so I decided the time was right for me to figure it all out.

The largest and ugliest remote from Verizon was the one that was the most intimidating. The sheer sight of its bulbous face, with all its color-coded buttons sent me into a tizzy. The Samsung, which was smaller and more streamlined, had a few similar features but the symbols were a bit more intuitive. There was also a VIDEO – DVD – COMBO, about the same size as the Verizon clicker. I didn't mind the absence of colorful buttons and symbols but that three-word descriptor was foreboding as was the AUDIO – TV – VTR descriptor on the slender black SONY. The smallest one, about half the size of the others, sported a little purple fabric tab at one end that said ROKU. Its simplicity masked its complexity, but at least it was more pleasant to look at and easier to hold.

It was also the key to watching movies on Netflix and Amazon.

Bob referred to the remotes as “wands.” Even though I eventually realized that my friends talked about the love/hate relationship they had with their remotes and clickers, I thought Bob had coined a phrase that was an apt description. It certainly had a poetic quality that described the magical powers the wands could perform, and I was content that Bob was the magician. After almost fifty years of marriage we had both a spoken and unspoken division of labor and controlling the remotes was in his domain. Still I knew that it was important for me to become familiar with the magic, so I set up a small notebook of instructions that I thought would be helpful.

“Do you really think that’s necessary?” Bob asked.

“Look,” I said. “It’s the way I learn. If you weren’t here, I’m not sure I could even turn on the TV.”

“Of course you could,” he said as he quickly picked up the Samsung wand and pressed the power button. I wondered why that was the one he chose. “This is what you do first. Then it’s the Verizon wand you use to change the channels and adjust the volume.” Again I was content to watch as he did it.

“So what are the channels we usually watch?” I hated to admit that not long ago I didn’t know the Red Sox were on 76, the BBC on 107, and Turner Classics on 230. I made a list of these stations and a few others in my notebook.

“Now another thing to remember,” Bob advised, “is that the Samsung wand is for three functions — for on/off, for volume, and for muting.”

Although Bob wasn’t convinced my notebook would be of much use, I added this information on another page. It was

reassuring to have a reference book to consult whenever I was on my own to deal with the television. Sometimes it was helpful but there many more times when the screen would go fuzzy and I would have no idea what to do except to start indiscriminately pressing buttons. When Bob got home from work he would have to figure out how to make things right.

“I’m never going to deal with that TV again,” I shouted one night after having had another melt down.

“Now come on, Irene! You’re being ridiculous. If I can do this, you can too, but you won’t unless you have to. It’s going to be your job from now on. All it’s going to take is some practice just like those piano chords you’re learning.”

“Lots of practice,” I muttered under my breath.

“And I’d get rid of that notebook if I were you,” he suggested. “It’s so much harder to write everything down.” He continued before adding, “And besides, you’re the one who usually doesn’t bother reading directions, right?” He had me there. He also sounded like my piano teacher every time I was tempted to write down all the chord inversions instead of learning them by heart.

I am now proud to say that, with Bob’s help and my perseverance, I have successfully demystified the wands. I no longer need my notebook, which ironically reminded me of the Confucius quote that had always guided my teaching — *I hear and I forget... I see and I remember... I do and I understand*. And my independence in this area may prove to be a safeguard against Bob leaving me any time soon just as having an umbrella with me often ensures that it won’t rain. Now I think it would be a good idea to help Bob with his cooking — just in case. ♦

Meredith Baxter-Birney

BY RICHARD GLANTZ

WE OWN A HOME on the North Shore which we rent every winter. We depend on the rental income to pay both the mortgage and the real estate tax on that home. So tenants need to have a paying job and enough cash in the bank to pay first and last months' rent.

One afternoon, a lovely young woman and her eight-year-old daughter show up to inspect the place. Mom is the spitting image of Meredith Baxter-Birney, who played in the TV series "Bridget Loves Bernie." Mom liked the place. She wanted to rent it for the upcoming winter season. She was so appealing in her blonde hair, well-scrubbed face, blue eyes, short shorts, and sparkling personality that I could not focus on the business at hand. After an eternity, I managed to blurt out, "Where are you employed?"

"Oh, don't worry about the rent," the beauty replied, "My husband will pay it. You see," she went on, "We are getting divorced—amicably—and he owns the big liquor store in the next town."

Snapping back into landlord mode, I responded, "If he is going to be responsible for the rent, I would like to speak with him."

We agreed the two parents would return the next day for a final inspection.

The next day, when they returned, I was immediately struck by the fact that Mr. Liquor Locker—my nickname for him, after the name of his store—was sincerely concerned for the welfare of his wife as well as for the welfare of his young daughter. Typically, in a pending divorce, the parents are too busy hating each other to be concerned about the children's welfare.

It was obvious to me that Mr. Liquor Locker still loved his Meredith Baxter-Birney. After all, they had been high-school sweethearts. Furthermore, I could tell Meredith Baxter-Birney still loved Mr. Liquor Locker, even though she initiated the divorce proceedings.

My wife and I suggested I show the place to Mr. Liquor Locker and she show the place to Meredith Baxter-Birney. On my tour of the house, I drew Mr. Liquor Locker aside and observed, "My wife and I are on our second marriages. Our children from our first marriages suffered greatly during the divorces. You still love your wife, I can tell. All those books about how you can reach full happiness in divorce are bogus. Please, you two should try to remember what first drew you to each other, and see if you can rekindle that romance."

Unknown to me, my wife was giving the identical speech—the *identical speech*—to Meredith Baxter-Birney.

We received a call the next day informing us that the couple would not need to rent our house because they were getting back together. A few days later a truck labeled "The Liquor Locker" delivered a case of their finest wines.

We lost a prospective tenant, but we hoped we made our little world the better for it.

An unintended consequence of our "match re-making" is that we no longer are customers of The Liquor Locker. We are afraid we might learn that the couple later on broke up again. We want our memories to be warm ones. ♦



Hawk

BY JAMES BALDWIN

WHILE VERY FEW HUMANS could match her will, breast cancer could, and, after a two-year stand-off, it took Cassie, just days before school started this year. She was so strong both emotionally and physically that most of her vast community held tightly to the notion, right to the end, that she would find a way to survive.

She was my wife Dana's boss, teammate and good friend as they worked closely in the school's admissions department for the last 12 years. Only 45, tall, blond, fit and always smiling, she was a tireless juggler, alternately offering warm condolences to disappointed families, celebrations to others, and unending challenges to her staff to meet her standards of perfection, all the while nurturing her family including her son Nico, a fourth grader at the school.

In a fitting tribute her visiting hours were held on what was also the first day of the new school year. Classes would be cancelled the following day so Cassie's colleagues could attend her memorial service.

An unsteady Dana and I entered the end of a long line of Cassie's mourners outside the church. The line extended from the altar down the center aisle, out the main entrance, down the steps, where it turned right at the sidewalk before continuing through a vast parking lot and out to the street, some 75 yards from the church entrance. It still didn't

end there, but turned at the street and continued down the sidewalk for a few more yards.

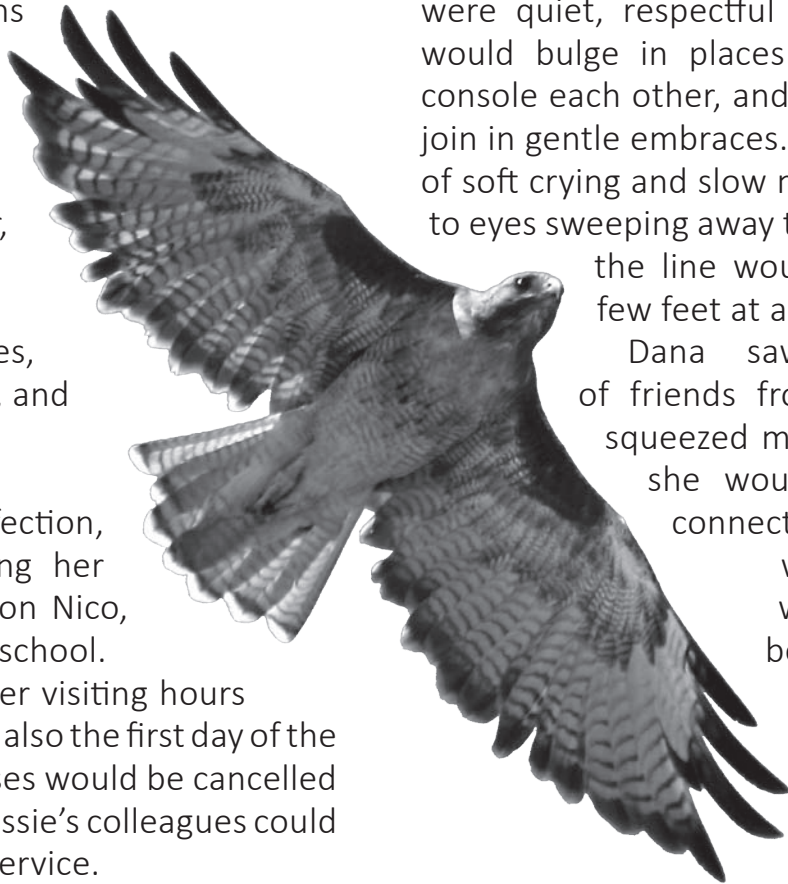
Anticipating the large turnout, we had come at what we thought might be the earliest possible moment, only to find ourselves at the end of this line—a line that moved in the pace and style of a long caterpillar.

The line behaved unlike many others. There was no impatience. Conversations were quiet, respectful and sad. The line would bulge in places as friends met to console each other, and small groups would join in gentle embraces. There were sounds of soft crying and slow movements of hands to eyes sweeping away tears. And gradually, the line would creep forward a few feet at a time.

Dana saw several groups of friends from the school and squeezed my arm to signal that she would move ahead to connect and commiserate with many of her workmates. I stayed behind and prepared myself for some difficult consoling, knowing how fragile she was in the face of her friend's passing.

I watched her join in a group, exchange hugs and whispers, then move on up to the next.

Slowly working her way forward, she reached a group near the head of the line. They were gesticulating and pointing upwards and out towards the street, apparently at



something across from the main entrance. One of them grabbed Dana's shoulders and turned her in the direction they were pointing, stood behind her and extended an arm to point over her shoulder.

Their conversation was suddenly animated, quite different from the relative stillness in other parts of the line. I watched as my wife looked upwards and out toward the street, then turned back shaking her head in affirmation.

Then one of her friends thrust a cell phone in front of Dana's eyes. I watched my wife's look of astonishment. I couldn't tell if she was laughing or crying. Finally, after more looking, pointing and conversation, she turned away from them and headed back to me.

I saw the remainder of tears as she approached. She seemed excited, like she had news for me.

"Look over at that brick house across the street. The one on the left," she said trying to direct my gaze with her arm.

I did.

"Can you see the hawk?" she asked.

I couldn't. I strained and tried but couldn't see it.

My wife was now pointing excitedly and I didn't understand her agitation.

"It's right on the corner of the roof. There. On the far side of the house," she urged.

"Oh, yes. I do see it, now," I said although I really couldn't see it clearly.

Other people in the line in front of us were pointing at it now, too. They were closer and had a better view. But I was still puzzled about all this excitement over a hawk.

My wife continued, but now tears were flowing. I looked at her with surprise.

"This is so amazing," she said, struggling to get the words out.

"This morning at school there was a hawk

sitting on a branch right over Cassie's office. I just saw the pictures."

"And it just stayed there for a long time." Then she added, "In all the years I worked there, I saw a hawk on campus maybe once."

She went on haltingly.

"Then, everyone saw it again at lunchtime, on the green near the flagpole. Right in the center of campus for godsakes. I saw all these pictures just a second ago."

I was transfixed by her story. But it wasn't over.

"Then, oh my god, then..." she stopped and swallowed.

"Then it flew from the flagpole and landed on a classroom building—and of all the buildings it had to choose from....it lands on not just any classroom building."

"No!" I said, not sure I was ready for this. I was supposed to be the strong one, and I was starting to weaken. "Come on."

"Yes. It flew to the fourth grade building. And stayed there."

"And..."

"Nico is in fourth grade," she said, the tears starting again. "That's his building."

There was a long pause as our eyes connected.

"And now," she choked, "here's the hawk. Again."

Her story, the story, brought a rush of energy that waved through me, staggering me momentarily.

We held on to each other to keep our balance.

As the line moved slowly forward, the story of the hawk moved with it, and now most of the mourners were watching it. As the minutes passed I got a better view of it, dead still on the corner of the roof on the house directly across the street, a feathered statue staring at the line.

Then suddenly, all the quiet conversation

stopped as the statue came alive, soaring slowly, just above the front of the line. With a flap of wings we could hear, it rose steeply to land high on a golden metal cross directly above the church entrance.

There were gasps. There was laughter. Heads shook slowly, side to side. Hands came to mouths as eyes turned up to the massive bird then back down to look at each other, as we tried to put words to the moment.

It was as if the hawk knew exactly the right place to be. It sat there for minutes, head cocked and moving occasionally side-to-side looking down on the long line.

“Wow. Can you believe that?”

“Doesn’t it make you wonder?”

“How do you explain that?”

I looked at Dana and whispered, “Knowing Cassie, she’s probably taking attendance.”

My wife was crying and laughing at the same time. “Oh no. She’s seeing this long line of people and positively loving it.”

After a few minutes the raptor took flight again. I watched it rise almost straight up over the church then turn to make a ceremonial pass over the line before climbing to the west into the sun. It finally disappeared high into a distant tree from which it could watch but not be seen.

Finally inside the church, we inched to the altar to offer our condolences to Cassie’s husband. He wrapped his brawny arms around Dana as she said excitedly, “Angelo did you hear about the hawk...”

Angelo released her and stepping back held up both hands and smiled. “Yes, I’ve heard all about the hawk, and, really, I’m not surprised. Not at all. There’s some history here with hawks.”

He continued, “Eleven years ago when our nephew died suddenly, there was a hawk right outside this same church after the ceremony. That was so important to Cassie.

She’s always had this thing about hawks, and that’s one of her favorite stories. I can’t count all the times I’ve heard it.”

We wanted to talk much more but had to move on. There were so many waiting patiently behind us.

Cassie’s memorial service was the next morning. Our trip back to the church would take us directly by the small, pastoral cemetery that would be her final resting place, right next to her nephew.

We were quiet and pensive in the car, both of us thinking about the power and emotion of the day before and what might lie ahead today.

Dana said, “We have to go right by this cemetery so often. I wonder what that’ll be like.”

“It’ll certainly be a reminder, not that we need one. I don’t think we’ll be forgetting her any time soon,” I said.

“Or the hawk,” Dana laughed.

“Yeah,” I said. “That was unforgettable. I wonder what strings she pulled to arrange that?”

We approached the cemetery slowly, crawling over the speed bump that protected the entrance.

“Look!” Dana yelled, and pointed straight ahead at an angle just above eye level. “Oh my god!”

It crossed directly in front of us, low and slow. We couldn’t miss it.

The hawk took our breath with it as it continued on its journey into the cemetery where Dana watched it land.

We looked at each other, amazed at the downright surety of it all and the insufficiency of mere words to describe it or our reaction to it. Then, we proceeded in silence down the other side of the hill on our way to the church. ♦

Robots Know Way Too Much

BY ROBERT ISENBERG

I JUST TRIED TO CALL the computer store for an appointment. A robot answered.

“May I please speak to a representative?” I asked.

“I can handle all your issues. How may I help?” asked the robot.

“I’m having a problem with my screen moving without my permission,” I noted.

“Okay,” said the robot. “No problem. I have your phone number and your name is Robert Isenberg, right? Now all I need is the serial number. It’s on the back of your computer. You probably will need glasses to read it. I know your computer is quite old. More than likely the numbers will be smudged and difficult to read.”

“Representative!” I screamed.

“No need to holler at me,” said the robot, “We can get through this together in a civil manner if you just behave.”

“Please let me speak to a representative,” I begged.

“If you ask to speak to a representative once more,” declared the robot, “I will have to hang up on you. I get a lot of calls, most of them quite polite. It seems to me I’ve heard from you before. True?”

I didn’t reply. I slammed the phone down. Maybe I’ll wait a few hours to call the computer store back. Perhaps I’ll get a different robot.

Every appointment I make at a doctor’s or dentist’s office, or even for a haircut, is monitored by some fastidious robot. They usually call two days before the appointment.

My concern is that soon a robot will not only call to confirm the appointment, but will say, “Please listen closely, since our menu has changed. Dr. Smith has been replaced by Dr. Robot, who will be performing the operation.”

For my next haircut, would a robot be waiting with a long pair of scissors?”

Recently I placed a call for a special egg cooker. The infomercial promised to cook eggs in every desirable manner. It also came with a vegetable slicer. I wondered if I would get the same robot that has sold me so many items in the past. We had always hit it off.

I called. She sounded excited to hear from me again and couldn’t wait to repeat my name, address and phone number. Talk about one-sided relationships. I still had no idea what her name was. As soon as I made my purchase, she told me I was going to receive two egg makers and two veggie cutters.

She went on, “Since you are a good customer, we have some special offers for you. We can increase your order to four egg makers and four veggie cutters for the very special price of only \$29 and free shipping.”

I declined but she didn’t stop. “We can offer you some bacon bowls that will fit right into your microwave oven to make the perfect bacon and egg breakfast for only \$7.95.”

I don’t eat bacon, but maybe one day we may have some guests that do and it’s only \$7.95.

“Okay,” I said.

“Okay is not a good answer,” said the robot. “Please say yes or no politely.”

“Yes,” I said as politely as I could muster.

She wasn’t done. “I sense that you are holding the phone in an awkward position. We have the perfect solution. We have a phone holder that allows you to go hands free anywhere in your house for only another \$7.95. I paused to look at my phone. In order to keep the relationship growing, I whispered, “Yes, yes, yes.” ♦

Facetime

WATERCOLORS BY MARDY RAWLS



Liz and Maggie (1998)

22" x 28"



First Grade Grin

14" x 21"

WORKS IN PASTEL BY SARASUE PENNELL



Jack Tar (1995)
25.5" x 32.5"



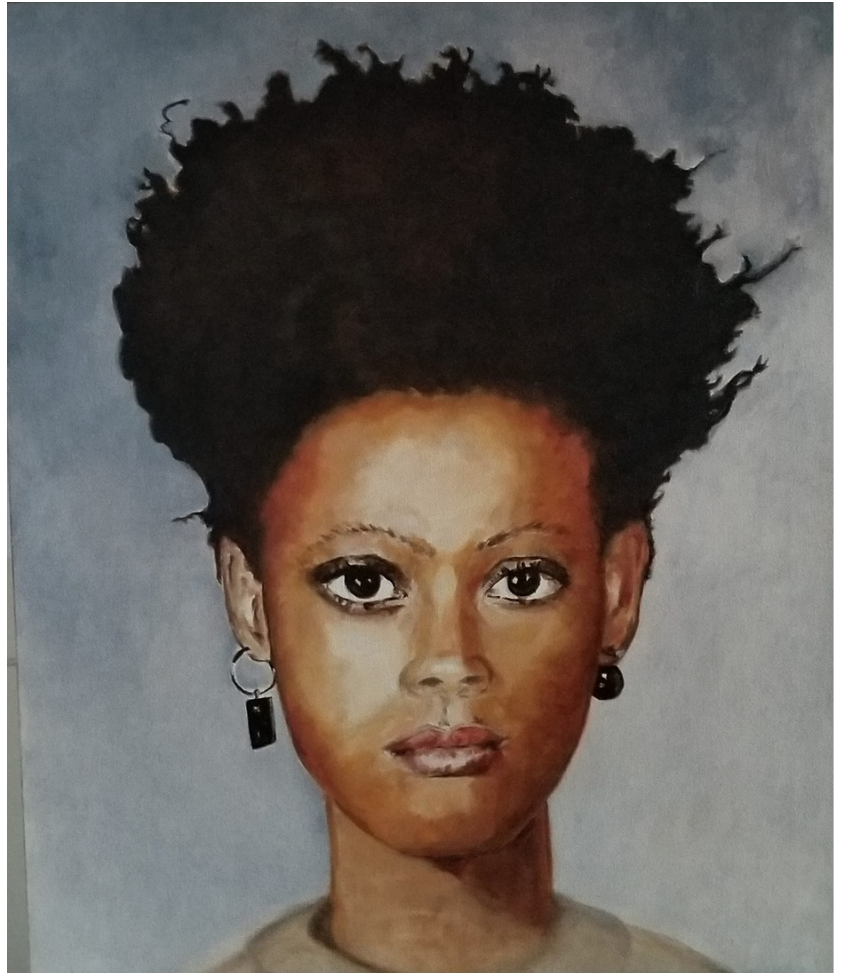
SSP20 (2020)
26" x 20"



Mesmerized
30" x 30"

OIL ON CANVAS BY BONNIE BERMAN

Confident
20" x 24"

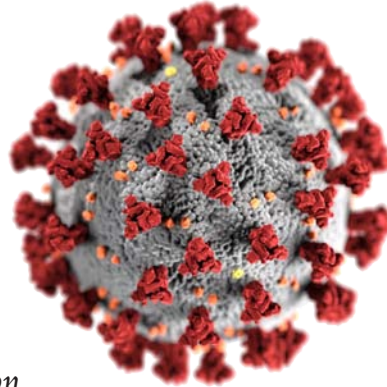


Random Observations at the Time of Coronavirus

The Editorial Board of *Lexington LifeTimes* asked the community to contemporaneously submit poems and prose responding to the unprecedented situation we find ourselves in with the coronavirus. In the following pages, you'll find a selection of the many interesting works we received. Thank you to the writers who are making art out of difficulty. We hope readers will enjoy what the writers created.

Almost every night
I dream
the slight pressure
I feel on my chest
is really
the weight
of my grandchildren
held close to my heart.

~ Heidi Tyson



I sit at the edge of a pond, listening to the falls behind me, watching the trees sway in the breeze. I know this pond in all seasons, all weather. We think everything has changed, but this has not. The natural world pays no heed to our human troubles. I toss a pebble. Ripples form, moving the clouds reflected there. Then it grows still again, my pebble forgotten.

~ Kathy Santos

Zoom – a noun, a verb, a proper name? All of the foregoing, a new way of living – meetings, book group discussions, games, visits, virtual happy hours, religious services, tutorials on sewing face masks, jam sessions, celebrations, so much more – how tethered to the screen we have become! Oh Corona, we long to return to the time when we Zoom at our convenience and unZoom the rest of the time!

~ Gary Fallick

Love In A Time Of Corona

My wife is sitting in a chair facing the back yard. I sit opposite her reading. Self quarantining, we are in no hurry.

She is in her morning competition with The New York Times crossword puzzle.

"Golden Flashes. Three letters," she commands.

"K. S. U.," I say.

"K. S. U.?"

"Yeah. The Kent State U Golden Flashes. Can you believe the worthless shit I know?"

"That's why I love you," she says.

~ James Baldwin

The One-Track Mind of Scientists & Engineers

There is a story often told about Isaac Newton and it goes like this: He owns two dogs, one large, one small. In order to let them go in and out of his house freely he opened two holes on the side of his house: one large, and one small. Then one ordinary person pointed out to him that the small dog could use the large hole just as well. There is no need for the small hole.

Recently, because of the coronavirus situation in the US people are advised not to go out and mingle. Many younger friends of ours have called us and helped us with grocery shopping. So I reminded my wife that when we reimburse our friends by adding up our share of the bill she should

also figure in the portion of total sales taxes we should reimburse our friends for because the tax is calculated based on the whole purchase, hers and ours combined.

This seemed to be a bother until I thought of a clever solution: whoever shops for us should go through the cash register with her stuff first on one bill, and then our stuff separately on another bill. This way what we should reimburse our friend will be automatic and correct.

My wife looked at me incredulously, sarcastically, and said, "What do you think we have been doing?"

~ Larry Ho

What Good Can Come of This?

Parents home for dinner every night.

School age children stepping off the treadmill of

modern young life and having to plan their own activities.

Getting along with less.

Learning to live solely with one's self.

Learning to inhabit joyfully (hopefully) the less distracted life.

Relearning what are true necessities and what are not.

Realizing more deeply that we all now depend on each other.

~ Don Yansen

Post Op

On the last day before the dental office closed due to the covid virus, my dental surgeon checked how my bone grafting was healing.

"All went really well," he said beaming.

"I'll be able to see you sooner now...in four rather than six months."

"No...no...I need at least six months for the healing of the body, the soul, and the bleeding stock market!"

"Oh...me too," he said, and we bumped our elbows in farewell.

Now I wonder if six months will be long enough!

~ Tamara Havens



*Massachusetts Avenue
Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at 3:36pm*

The World Silent

Even the tears rolling down are silent.
The stores are locked up, signs posted,
temporarily closed.
Not a single car parked; not a single car moving.
Reiterating a long stretch of holidays, the world is silent.

The sky is blue, blue as I walk the labyrinth.
The early daffodils breaking out of the thawing ground,
are the only sign of life remaining on the planet.
Notice, they seem to say.
Notice the quiet.

~ Elizabeth Rozan

Love in the Time of Covid 19

sheltering quiet and chastened
as the virus rises, I hear consoling voices
of other creatures in my solitary walks,
the nightly shrieking of the spring peepers
from their miniature sports stadiums,
the chur-churring of red-winged blackbirds
from their cattail turrets, and erupting
from the woods the spring hoot-courting
of barred owls mating near the swamp

we are here, they say, so are you

~ Jill Smith

Reflection

BY JOHN EHRENFELD

The days went flying by so very fast
As old images and memories swirled.
Much of my life lies in the distant past.

The face in the glass looks at me aghast.
The covers of my secrets now unfurled.
The days go flying by so very fast.

The pile of all those should-have-been's is vast;
The arcs of my intentions' arrows curled.
Much of my life lies in the distant past.

How long will my fading clarity last?
I've hardly tapped the riches of this world.
The days go flying by so very fast.

The past and present merge without contrast.
Mirage has replaced light that once whirled.
Much of my life lies in the distant past.

The daily parade has slowed; I have cast
Away the baton I so proudly twirled.
The days go flying by so very fast.
So much of my life lies deep in the past.

William Cooper Nell: Creator of Antebellum Black Boston Milestones

BY MARION KILSON

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED William Cooper Nell in 2002 when I began researching black and white abolitionists for the Museum of African American History. But I really came to appreciate his remarkable contributions as an activist and as a chronicler the following year when I began reading through *The Liberator* for information about Beacon Hill's African Meeting House. I found that almost every article about Black Bostonians and every report on a Black Boston community meeting in Garrison's weekly anti-slavery newspaper bore the initials 'W. C. N.' or the name 'William C. Nell.' Thanks primarily to Nell's numerous contributions, *The Liberator* remains the best source on the cultural, social, and political life of the "colored citizens of Boston and vicinity" in the antebellum years. William Cooper Nell has been my favorite black abolitionist ever since!

William Cooper Nell was first and foremost a Black Bostonian. Apart from twenty-one months when he was the first printer and publisher of Frederick Douglass' *The North Star* in Rochester, NY, Boston was his home. Born on Beacon Hill to free parents—his father from South Carolina; his mother from Brookline, Massachusetts—Nell was the eldest of four surviving children. His father was the proprietor of a successful tailoring business, a leader in Massachusetts' first abolitionist society—the Massachusetts General Colored Association, and a friend and neighbor of David Walker, creator of the influential and controversial pamphlet, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*,



which advocated slave insurrection as the road to emancipation. From early childhood, then, William Cooper Nell was exposed to community activism.

As an adolescent Nell had two transformative experiences that shaped his later life as a creator and recorder of milestones. The first occurred when he was thirteen years old in 1829; the second when he was sixteen in 1832.

In 1829, Bill Nell was graduating from the segregated Boston public school housed in the African Meeting House. At that time Boston public grammar school graduates of academic excellence were recognized as Franklin Scholars; Nell and two classmates were chosen as Franklin Scholars from the African School. But while white students received a medal and an invitation to dinner with the Mayor of Boston, black students received a voucher to purchase a biography of Benjamin Franklin at a local bookstore. William C. Nell was deeply affected by this discriminatory experience. He later said, "The impression made on my mind, by this day's experience, deepened into a solemn vow that, God helping me, I would do my best to hasten the day when the color of the skin would be no barrier to equal school rights."¹ From 1840 until 1855, Nell led the battle for equal school rights in Boston: he called community meetings on equal school rights, recorded their minutes, helped to arrange for alternative schools for black families boycotting segregated schools, and collected hundreds of petitions first to the School Committee, then to the Department

of Education, and finally to the Legislature. In 1855, the Massachusetts Legislature desegregated the Boston public schools. Black Boston recognized that Nell was primarily responsible for achieving this milestone: it held a great celebration for him at which he received a gold watch and laudatory praise from noted black and white abolitionists.² The second transformation in Nell's early life occurred on the snowy blustery night of January 6, 1832 when Nell was sixteen years old. Passing along Belknap Street on his way home, Nell noticed a light shining from a basement window of the African Meeting House. Peering through the window, Nell witnessed an historic event: the founding of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, for Nell saw William Lloyd Garrison and eleven other white men sign the society's constitution. Throughout his adult life, Nell was an ardent supporter of both Garrisonian abolitionism the cause and William Lloyd Garrison, the man. Garrisonian abolitionism called not only for the immediate emancipation of all enslaved people but for the civil equality of African Americans. Nell's adult life was devoted to these twin aspects of Garrisonian abolition.

With respect to the abolition of slavery, Nell advocated immediate emancipation and supported self-emancipated people in Boston and beyond. As an advocate for emancipation, Nell supported the integration of blacks into American society and opposed colonization schemes which would have sent free African Americans to Africa, the Caribbean, the far West or Mexico. He presented his views not only in Boston but as a delegate to national African American Conventions in other cities. As a supporter of self-emancipated people, Nell helped to raise funds for newly freed people in Washington, D. C. and for white supporters

incarcerated for assisting enslaved people on their flights for freedom. He also offered direct assistance to self-emancipated people who found their way to Boston from the South. In 1843, Nell helped to found the New England Freedom Association to assist fugitives; the association merged with the interracial Boston Vigilance Committee in 1850 after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. The Vigilance Committee treasurer's records show that Nell was second only to Lewis Hayden in assisting newcomers to Boston in their passage from enslavement to self-emancipation on the underground railroad. As a *Liberator* staff member, Nell also ran an employment agency for newly-arrived blacks, placing advertisements about positions and candidates for positions in the newspaper. Moreover, unlike Garrison, Nell advocated the use of force, if necessary, to achieve emancipation and to ensure freedom. Thus, he raised funds to support John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry, and warned fellow Bostonians to be vigilant about man-catchers abroad on the city streets and to be prepared to defend themselves.

As an advocate for the civil equality of black Americans, Nell personally challenged colorphobia, authored studies chronicling the military valor of blacks in the Revolution and the War of 1812, wrote articles attesting to black social and cultural achievements, inaugurated celebrations that confronted racial inequities, and created educational, literary, and dramatic organizations in Boston and Rochester.

In 1855, Nell achieved a milestone in American historiography. He published *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, the first book-length scholarly history by an African American. As a second-generation Black Boston activist and as a Garrisonian abolitionist, Nell made the case that civic

equality was due to African Americans, because of their significant contributions to the founding of the nation. He wished to reveal the largely unrecognized history of African American military valor and patriotism not only to enhance the understanding of sympathetic white Americans but to encourage the aspirations for the social advancement of African Americans.

In 1858, Nell achieved another milestone. In protest of the Dred Scott decision of the U. S. Supreme Court that declared African Americans were not citizens, Nell organized a Crispus Attucks Commemorative Festival in Faneuil Hall on March 5, 1858. African American Attucks was the first patriot to fall during the Boston Massacre. At this celebration, fiery speeches by black and white abolitionists, including John Rock, Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, William Lloyd Garrison, and Charles Lenox Remond were interspersed with songs entitled *Freedom's Battle*, *Colored American Heroes of 1776*, and *Red, White, and Blue*. After the exercises *The Liberator* reported that "the company repaired to the galleries, where refreshments had been provided,...and those who felt disposed remained to enjoy yet further pleasures in the dance."³ This was the first of seven Crispus Attucks Commemorative Celebrations that Nell organized to replace July 4 as an Independence Day celebration for Black Boston.

Although I have mentioned three notable milestones created by William Cooper Nell—the integration of Boston public schools, the publication of the first scholarly history by an African American, and the commemorative celebration of Crispus Attucks as the first Revolutionary martyr, Nell himself probably would have noted another milestone. In 1869 at the age of fifty-two Nell married Frances Ames of Nashua, New Hampshire.

Throughout his adult years Nell wrote to close friends about his wish to marry and his concern that he would never find a spouse. His precarious financial situation probably contributed to his long bachelorhood. Until he became a postal clerk in 1861—the first African American to receive a federal appointment, Nell never had a reliable income. He sporadically worked for *The Liberator*; he read law for two and a half years but never practiced, as he would have had to swear to uphold the Constitution which he considered a pro-slavery document; he advertised his services as a clerk, accountant, and copyist; but he never had a steady income. In September 1869, Nell wrote to an old friend, "I am at last rejoicing in Double Blessedness and am quite pleasantly situated."⁴ Nell and his wife had two young sons who were very young when their father died in 1874.

Black Boston did not forget William Cooper Nell. For some years there was a William C. Nell community lecture; in 1886 efforts were made to erect a monument in his honor; in 1996 the house in Smith Court where he boarded for a time was placed on the Black Heritage Trail; and in 1989 a headstone was erected on his Forest Hills Cemetery grave. Introducing his 1863 article on Nell, William Wells Brown eloquently captured Nell's distinctive contributions, "No man in New England has performed more uncompensated labor for humanity, and especially for his own race, than William C. Nell."⁵ ♦

¹ *The Liberator*, December 28, 1855, pp. 206-207.

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Liberator*, March 12, 1858, pp. 42,43.

⁴ William C. Nell to Amy Kirby Post, Sept. 26, 1869.

⁵ William Wells Brown, *The Black Man's Genius and Achievements* [1863]. (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 238.

I Was Talking to My Dead Dog Today

BY HAL FARRINGTON

The loss of a pet is like the loss of a family member. For in truth, they are as such. From the day we brought Tish home, the connection started. We began the process of getting to know each other, trying to figure out who the 'boss' really is, though I knew in my heart, the pup was. She shared her love without condition, did not care how I aged or looked. She wanted only three things: Love, Food and Fun things to do. Over fifteen years of being together, the best times she enjoyed were the hours we spent walking or hiking. She would start howling as soon as long roads, hills or mountains came into view. But as time rushed by, I came to that terrible moment when it was time to stop her pain and let go. The next phase is just as difficult, but there are ways to mentally bandage the wounds of loss.

I was talking to my dead dog today, and I was feeling sad.

"Hi pup, how's it going?"

"Not bad, not bad at all," she replied as she skillfully jumped over a log back onto the trail.

"Listen, pup," I cried, "Sorry I had to put you down, but, you were fifteen, sick, couldn't move on your back legs without pain and ..."

"Hey, no problem," she interrupted, her brown and black fur shining in the sun as it filtered through the trees onto the trail. "I'm fine, feel great! Best I've been in a long time." Her tail was wagging, and her brown eyes sparkled.

"Miss ya pup, miss ya a lot."

"I miss you too, but, you should see me running and jumping around. I climbed Mount Wachusett today, had a ball. Remember when we used to go hiking together?" Her muscles rippled under her fur, as she jumped the stairs into the house, scampering through the hallway onto her blanket in her special corner in the kitchen.

"Sure do pup, I think of it a lot. You'd go flying up the trail, then come prancing down again, trying to get me to walk faster." My tears had begun to diminish now.

"Yeah, boy, you were slow." My pup stretched, yawned, and settled down on her blanket.

"Will you stay around long? I like talking to you like this."

"Hey, you shouldn't be talking to a dead dog. Besides, I've got to get going. I'll meet you at the foot of the Kinsman Trail at Mount Cannon next summer. We'll go climbing together again, just like before."

Her image was a little dimmer now.

"What do you mean? Will I see you?" I said, hoping for the magic to continue.

"No, you won't know I'm there," my pup replied, "But I will be right beside you, racing up the trail, then down again to get you moving faster. Boy, you're such a slow climber."

My pup was almost invisible now.

"Ok pup, love ya Tish, goodbye."

"I know, love you too."

She yawned, put her head on her paws. Fell asleep. Then disappeared.

I was talking to my dead dog today, and I felt a little better. ♦

Lines of Communication



JUDITH CLAPP
Tree to the Sky (2019)

Photograph



JUDITH CLAPP
Tower to the Sky (2018)

Photograph

Jeopardy

BY CAROLYN LEVI

So, I'm watching "Jeopardy"
and the answer (Alex knows this) is "Burt Lancaster" and the blank
faces of the young contestants
and Oh!, I said to Alex, Oh! wasn't he young, once, Burt Lancaster,
and wasn't he so beautiful
then

I'm watching "Atlantic City" at the Art House. This is before
the plexes, the plagues of them, and I'm watching

Burt Lancaster and he's ironing. Ironing in an old man's undershirt. Burt Lancaster is watching
Susan Sarandon. Susan Sarandon and the lemons.

In the ironing and in the watching Burt Lancaster was meticulous.

And I'm thinking, He used to be so

beautiful. I make a mantra of it
and my friend-not-boyfriend beside me is watching Susan Sarandon, which makes sense because

Susan Sarandon and the lemons,
is all anyone
remembers. Now. Not
that Burt Lancaster was
once
so beautiful.

A Sonnet on the Common

BY ADELAIDE MACMURRAY-COOPER

I meant to write about the trials of moving,
On a bench in Boston Common's spring-like sun,
But such a task seems daunting; am I proving
That the Muse is skittish 'til the work is done?

My goal was to bring forth a decent sonnet,
And I think I know the structure fairly well,
But this air is worthy of an Easter bonnet,
And I'm falling underneath its blue-gold spell!

To write of lists and boxes seems a bore
In this spot made sacred by its vivid past
Of heroes, martyrs, villains, maids and more
Whose lives defined a nation that would last.

My oven mitts' location (still a mystery)
Feels trivial in the midst of such a history.

The Lesser Celandine

BY GERALDINE FOLEY

A penchant for the underdog might explain
Why it pains me that the bright sunny splotch
On the barren February earth in the Doolin Winterage
Has to be diminished and demoted with the pejorative “lesser”.

But herself is undeterred.
She reaches up from the rock and inhospitable brown, OPEN.
Reminding that much and many find the energy to reach out
Each day, each hour, even every minute, when the going gets tough.

Refusing to fail to thrive;
Rejecting the weight of it, over the possibilities.
Making the effort,
One season at a time.

Learning to see the rain as nourishment;
And not some dumping of a cloud.
Setting a small example,
In the simple power of regularly rising up.

None the less for its name.
Greater for its effort.
Sublime little celandine.
So grateful for your earnest hope.



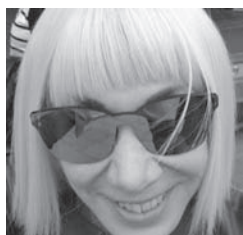
CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES BALDWIN is a retired advertising agency principal and high school English teacher.



Rediscovering writing in his retirement, he covers sports for Gatehouse Media and the Lexington Minuteman and maintains his own blog at www.Storyguy.net.

Four years ago, for her 70th birthday, a cousin gave BONNIE BERMAN a beginner's oil painting set and a neighbor gave her a canvas. She had never painted before. The following spring, she signed up for an oil painting class and found she loved it. She now paints in both detail and abstract.



JOANNE BORSTELL studied at Salem State and Massachusetts College of Art. She works in various mediums and has exhibited in several collections, both local and to a wider audience.



DAVID BOVET has been a Lexington resident since 1981. He has always liked ships and water and has photographed a number of fishing boats and coastal scenes around Gloucester, Mass.



SON-MEY CHIU practices traditional Chinese Brush Painting. She has won a number of awards including two international ones from Taiwan and Washington D.C. Her work has been shown in numerous national and local galleries.



JUDITH CLAPP is a long-time amateur photographer. Recently she has been using an iPhone as well as a 35mm camera.



HELEN LUTTON COHEN is a 40-year resident of Lexington. She is the Minister Emerita of the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, which she served from 1980-2002.

She served on the Lexington School Committee from 2003-2009. She began watercolor painting in her retirement.



JOHN EHRENFELD came late to poetry. A long-retired MIT-trained chemical engineer, he returned there after working in the environmental field for many years. He authored

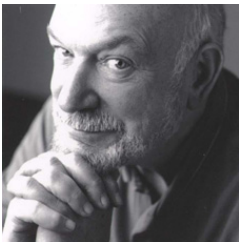
Sustainability by Design and *The Right Way to Flourish: Reconnecting with the Real World*.

HAL FARRINGTON has lived in Lexington since 1963. He is 83, married, and has been writing since the mid-nineties. He enjoys putting pen to paper, and has published several pieces in magazines.



GERALDINE FOLEY is a psychiatric registered nurse and attorney who specializes in mental health guardianship law. She is retired and actively pursuing lifelong

interests in writing poetry and prose, travel—predominantly to Ireland, fabric art, and Irish set dancing.



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



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



IRENE HANNIGAN, a retired educator, enjoys writing and sketching. She has recently been exploring poetry. Her latest book, *Write On! How to Make Writing a Pleasurable Pastime*, is available on Amazon.



CAROLYN LEVI is a long-time Lexington resident. She is a retired scientist/educator who devoted most of her career to improving public understanding of science and nature. Several years ago, she became fascinated by poetry, by the imagery and meaning a few well-chosen words can convey.

ROBERT ISENBERG was the humor columnist for a group of Gatehouse Newspapers for five years. His first book, *Why Men Are Suspicious of Yoga And Other Very, Very Funny Stories* is available on Amazon. He is currently working on a second book of humorous pieces.



ADELAIDE MCMURRAY-COOPER is a former teacher and retired CFP, who recently moved to Brookhaven from Cambridge with her husband David. She has written poetry for many years, most recently with a poetry group in Arlington. She has ten grandchildren!



Having taught religion at Allegheny and Smith Colleges, CHARLES B. KETCHAM has been a lifelong amateur photographer. His focus has been general, though concentrated on the Massachusetts North Shore, Scotland, and Rome.



SARASUE PENNELL grew up in a Quaker family and went to a Quaker school where she met her husband, Arthur Pennell. They were married in 1954 and moved to Upland Road in 1958. SaraSue studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (PAFA) and the Barnes Foundation. Her first teacher was her grandmother, Sara Hayes Fawcett, who also studied at PAFA. Her favorite subject has always been people.



Anthropologist MARION KILSON received her PhD in 1967 and retired as Graduate School Dean at Salem State University in 2001. Her previous publications include eight books and numerous articles on African and African American topics.





MARDY RAWLS moved to Lexington in 1960 and has been involved in town politics ever since. She was accepted into the New England Watercolor Society and has shown at a number of art associations.



KATHY SANTOS has been taking pictures since she was 8 years old living in Idaho where, she says, “there is beauty everywhere you turn.” She now uses her web design vocation to fund her photography avocation.



ELIZABETH ROZAN has lived in Lexington since 1988. An interest in organizational systems and life span development led her to work in public schools in Brookline, Waltham, and Lexington (Minuteman High School). Having recently retired, she works with symbols and metaphors in both writing and the visual arts.



JOAN SCHOELLNER is 73 years old and semi-retired, although she works part time from home on a freelance basis as an editor. For the past 15 years, she has been working for Pimsleur Languages. She has two children and four grandchildren. She works out three times a week and maintains her interest in sports of all kinds. ♦

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