

# LEAS LIT

*The Medford Leas Literary Journal*



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## **LEAS LIT STAFF**

Stanley Brush  
Ruth Gage  
Herb Heineman  
Maggie Heineman  
Sarah Klos  
Joan McKeon  
Edith R. Pray  
George Rubin  
Florence Sawyer  
Helen Vukasin

Original cover design by Harry Forrest

Illustrations by Stanley Brush, Victoria Brush, John Brzostoski, Alice Skidmore Culbreth, Chris Darlington, Sarah Klos, Elizabeth Platt, Anne Wood

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\*Medford Leas Staff

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## SECRET PLACE

I've found a place where I can hide that no one else can find,  
A secret place that's tucked away in the vastness of my mind.

Imagination takes me there and makes me feel at home,  
Tho' no one else can enter here, I'm never there alone.

So find your place within your mind,  
Sit back, enjoy the ride.

Imagination drives this train  
And will welcome you inside.

*Jane Walker*



## KOWALSKI

Ours was the last icebox in the neighborhood. This was because my father said that iceboxes were more reliable than Frigidaires. And he was proven right the summer of the hurricane. The entire neighborhood didn't have electricity for a week and my father was the only man who had cold beer. Ray Cannon came over to our back porch for a cold one and told my father that he never should have given his wife money for a Frigidaire. My father shook his head and told Mr. Cannon that he should always stick with what can be trusted.

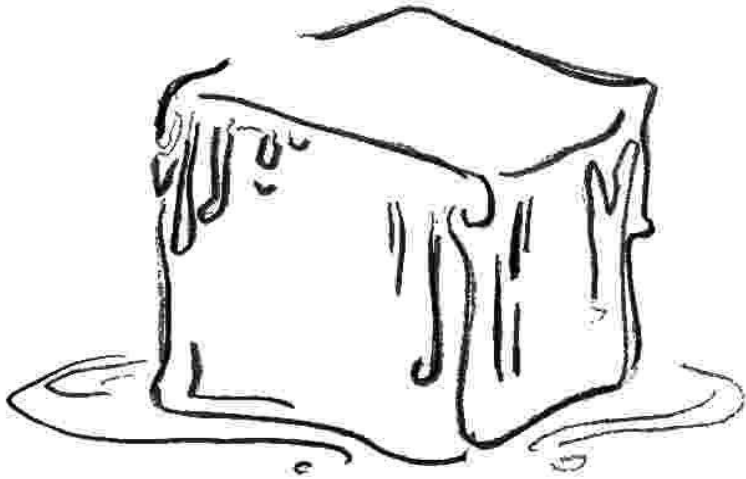
I remember one time I heard my mother say that she admired the "appearance" of Mrs. Cannon's Frigidaire. But she went along with my father's preference and dutifully emptied the drip pan beneath our dull gray icebox until I was old enough to be assigned the task.

Tommy Logan and I both knew that iceboxes were better because there was no way you could make frosties from the ice cubes that came out of Tommy's Frigidaire. Frosties were the forerunners of snowcones and Italian Ices, and were made by shaving the block of ice in the top of our icebox and then flavoring the shavings with cherry syrup or root beer. It was one of the best ways for a kid to beat the Philadelphia heat.

Blocks of ice were delivered to our icebox twice a week by Kowalski, the iceman. He arrived at our house in an open panel truck with the blocks of ice covered by a tarpaulin. Kowalski, without question, was the hugest man Tommy and I had ever seen. He was even bigger

than the monolithic heroes we had once seen charge out of the tunnel onto a frozen field at the Eagles stadium.

Irrespective of the season, Kowalski always wore black flannel. In winter he wore a black flannel jacket and cap with a black flannel shirt and britches, which he hiked with black suspenders. His squared face, prominent eye ridges and massive frame seemed chiseled out of the same block of granite as the WW I soldier whose statue, frozen in a bayonet charge, guarded the entrance to our neighborhood park.



Kowalski was also the strongest man Tommy and I had ever seen. One day we saw him lift the entire front end of his truck from the ground when a wheel got hung up on a boulder on the side of the road.

But Kowalski was stone deaf. Tommy said it was because one night he had locked himself in the icehouse after his boss had gone home. He managed to survive until the morning when they found him, but his eardrums were permanently frozen.

Kowalski announced his arrival by shouting "Ice-man!" My mother would then hold up one finger if we required one block of ice, or two fingers if we wanted two. Kowalski would take his wrought iron ice tongs and grapple the blocks, hoisting them from the back of his truck. Then, leaning to one side to compensate for the weight, he would hustle down our path with the blocks locked in the tongs.

I remember one day when he was carrying two blocks, Kowalski tripped on a baseball bat that I had left on the back stoop and crashed to the ground with the ice blocks skidding down the path. Kowalski muttered something in a foreign language and picked up my bat and snapped it in half over his knee as if it were a twig. But to his credit, he never said a word to my mother.

One morning Kowalski didn't come at his appointed time. Later that day we heard he had dropped dead from a heart attack while making a delivery on Duval Street. The owner of the ice company couldn't find a replacement for him, so he sent his son, Jonathan, and Jonathan's friend, David. Jonathan was tall and gaunt, with long fingers. He carried one block of ice at a time, while David, who was short and fat, held the door for him. But what I remember as being most peculiar was that Jonathan never used Kowalski's tongs and carried the ice wrapped in a towel as if he were carrying a baby.



Several weeks after Kowalski died my father saw Jonathan and David make a delivery to our house. After they left he told my mother that he was damned if he would tolerate a couple of pansies doing a man's work.

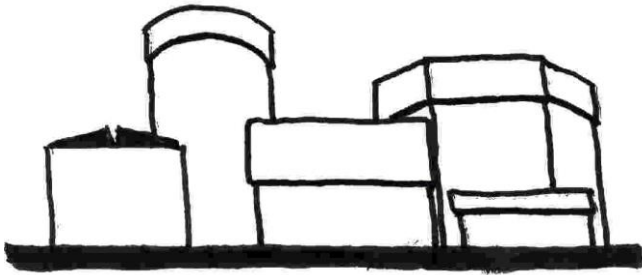
The next day we got a Frigidaire.

*Pete McCord*

*Sketch by John Brzostowski*

## BOXES

I had a thought the other day.  
I boxed it up  
And put it away on the shelf with other boxes  
Of deep memories of myself.  
Some were new and some were old  
Each with a memory of life retold.



Into these boxes I sometimes peer  
Recalling moments fraught with fear  
Or softer stuff that I hold dear  
Or find a vague one coming forth bright and clear.

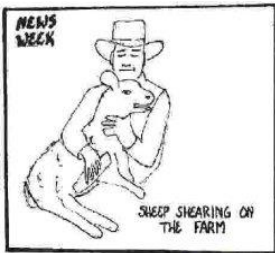
I muse that when my time on earth has ended  
No one will have access to what I've tended.  
The boxes will all be empty and still  
Never again with my memories fill.

*Marian Hartman*  
*Sketch by Stan Brush*

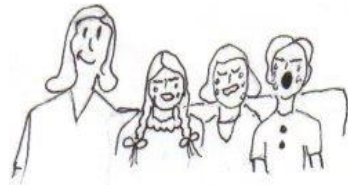
## THE INAUSPICIOUS BEGINNING OF AN AVID MOVIE FAN

The parents all concurred. Sarah, Helene and Shirley would be allowed to go to the movies for the very first time. Such excitement! Such wonderful, delicious anticipation for me and for my two best friends!

At ages five and six we had never been to a movie theater, never seen a Hollywood film, never sat in awe of the silver screen. My sister Jane, who was all of 15, was delegated to take us. With trembling excitement we set off to walk the three blocks to the theater, tightly holding hands, that Saturday afternoon in May of 1930. Jane took us to the balcony and lined the three of us together in our seats, and then she too sat down.



The lights went down in the theater, and the lights on the big screen came up suddenly and brightly, well, as brightly as sepia ever got. There was no Technicolor in those days. The first thing to roll was the “News of the Week.” After a couple of brief news items, a sheep farm appeared. As the farm workers began to gather the sheep for their annual spring shearing, we three girls got more and more alarmed. The sheep bleated pathetically. In fact, they bleated so pathetically that Shirley and I began to cry. Helene, on the other hand, bawled hysterically, so loudly that Jane



gathered us all up and marched us straight home. So much for our first outing to the movies.

In spite of this inauspicious beginning, we did eventually become avid movie fans. In fact, most Saturday afternoons found a wiser and more experienced threesome standing in line, each of us with a hot little dime and without a big sister to chaperone us anymore.

What we got to see on those Saturday afternoons depended very much on what our parents allowed us to see. In fact, my father always checked *The Christian Herald* before I was allowed to go. If *The Christian Herald* said it was appropriate for my age, then I got my dime to go. There were no ratings on movies in the 1930s. There was no PG and not even an X-rating. Families set their own criteria, but in my family *The Christian Herald* was always consulted as well. I thought my parents were the strictest of all. That's the problem, or so it seemed to me, with being a preacher's kid. I never got to see Shirley Temple in "Little Miss Marker" because divorce was too big an issue, and I was evidently not to be exposed to it. (I wonder if that's why I managed 56 years with the same husband. Hmm?)

I remember that one time the advertisement for the movie was enough to bring a firm "No, you may not go." As I recall, the advertisement showed James Cagney sitting on a bench (fully clothed) with his hand on June Travis's knee.

James Cagney and June Travis didn't always get thumbs down. I still remember him as the flying ace in "Ceiling Zero" (1937). Much to the exasperation and consternation of his boss, played by Pat O'Brien, Cagney



dodged flying bullets and every other danger an airplane pilot might ever have to face. When the film ended with June Travis in Cagney's arms and O'Brien looking on fondly, if somewhat annoyed, at his wayward pilot, I was ready to sit through the movie once more. The ushers might eventually shoo us out of the theater, but we managed more than a few times to watch a good movie over again, sometimes even three times. I know one boy who got through "Lives of a Bengal Lancer" four times before his mother came and dug him out of his seat.

Saturday matinees usually had the kinds of films that got parent approval. As children, we loved them. Cowboy movies were probably the most frequently shown on Saturdays. But let us not forget the Charlie Chan series, and midway through the '30s the Andy Hardy series started. Sunday movies were absolutely forbidden simply because it was Sunday. Weekday movies were meant for adults only, or so *The Christian Herald* said.

One weekday movie I do remember seeing was the time my 4<sup>th</sup> grade class walked double file to the theater to see the story of Louis Pasteur.

On the edge of the '40s, before the '30s were over, four great movies came out: "Gone with the Wind,"

“The Wizard of Oz,” “The Mikado,” and “Goodbye, Mr. Chips”. What was amazing about them was that I went to these films with my parents. Was it that Hollywood finally made movies that families could enjoy together, or was it that I had grown up enough that we no longer needed to check it out in *The Christian Herald*?

*Sarah Klos*

*Sketches by the author*

## SAND CASTLES

The sand was hot to the touch and the sun with full summer brilliance made the beach shimmer in the afternoon heat. Mort had taken his peanut butter and jelly sandwich down to the beach. He had left the other day campers so he could be by himself. Quickly he finished his lunch and began doing what he loved most, making sand castles, especially after the tide went out. It was then that the sand was still moist and he could easily mold it into whatever shape he wanted. His best design was a tall tower with curves and tunnels that allowed the yellow tennis ball that he had with him to run inside and out as it followed a downward spiral, from the top to the bottom of the tower.

“Now what are you up to?” Sid asked, his dark long shadow, as he stood over Mort, covering the sand castle.

“I’m just killing time until our camp counselor calls us back,” responded Mort, as he put his hand in front of his eyes to block out the sun, and looked up at the tall blond-haired boy standing there. He put his hand down, and without another word returned to molding the sand tower.

“It’s a waste of time, Mort. Come back to the field. We have a softball game starting and Ben, our counselor, will only chew you out if you don’t get back.”

“You can tell him, I’ll be there in a few minutes. My tower is just about finished.”

Sid shrugged, turned back from the beach and headed, with a slow jog, back to the softball diamond.

Day camp can be a pain, thought Mort. His tower was finally finished and he tried the tennis ball, dropping it into the top of the sand tower and watching as it rolled smoothly down through the tunnels and dropped out on to the sandy beach. Mort rose, his short stocky body tanned by the summer sun. He wiped his hands on his shorts to get the sand off. He slipped his camp T-shirt over his head and slowly walked back from the beach to the ball field. The softball game was about to begin.

“Put on your sneakers and take up the glove and mask. You’re going to catch for the team today,” Ben said with authority. Mort, with a sigh, reluctantly did what he was told. Only because it would fill the time until he could get back to the beach.

The innings went by. His catching hand began to throb from a bone bruise caused by a foul ball. Finally the seventh and last inning came up. At his last time at bat, Mort hit a high blooper that was easily caught by the outfielder.

“You could try a little harder,” Ben commented as the team came off the field. Mort threw down his glove and facemask. “I tried the best I could,” he protested, “There is nothing I do that gets a pat on the back from you.”

“I just want you to do better, to use your hands to get more bat control. I know you can improve,” retorted Ben.

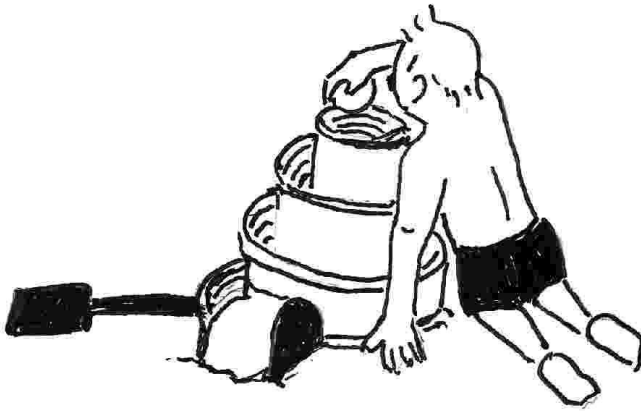
“Yeah, yeah,” Mort yelled back as he walked away.



Back on the beach the sun was now closing in on the horizon. A cool offshore breeze had sprung up and small waves rippled on to the shore. The tide had come in and Mort saw that his sand castle had toppled over, undercut by the incoming tide. The yellow tennis ball had disappeared into the surf. He knew that he had lost his original design for today. But there would be other days when his stubby but creative hands would make sure that the loss would not be permanent. He would mold interesting towers and new sand castles.

*George Rubin*

*Sketch by Anne Wood*



## THE EAGLE AND THE ASTRONAUT

The pine tree stands tall and the bald eagle nesting within its branches is not distracted by the flow of space vehicles, tour buses and cars that pass within fifty feet of its habitat. These rare creatures, once found in all parts of the country, are now concentrated in Florida and Alaska. This particular southern bald eagle enjoys the protection of a National Wildlife Refuge, which consists of 140,000 acres of Florida wetlands and seashore. Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1963 and shares a common boundary with the John F. Kennedy Space Center, a boundary that provides a buffer zone for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in their quest for space exploration.

In the years following World War II, Cape Canaveral was selected as the testing area for long-range guided missiles. In 1958 NASA was established to carry out the peaceful exploration and use of space. Buildings and roads were constructed; concrete and steel structures sprouted above marsh and scrubland. The noise and mechanization of human activity invaded the wilderness. But most of north Merritt Island was left in its natural wooded state, and is now home to more endangered species of birds, mammals and reptiles than any other area in the continental United States. The bald eagle, soaring along with the rockets in the oldest form of flight, is among them.

The dark mass of sticks, seven feet across and weighing up to eight hundred pounds, is the nest of this

magnificent bird. The same pair of eagles, which mate for life, has been returning to this tree and this nest for years, renovating and enlarging it annually. Only one or two eggs are laid each year. When hatched, the eaglet is very small, usually three or four inches long, but it grows so rapidly that by the end of the nesting season it is nearly the size of its parents. Mother and father take turns caring for their offspring, a happy division of responsibility.

Perched upon its launch pad, the space shuttle extends 363 feet into the hazy light of dawn. An egret rises and glides lazily across the flats of marsh grass and palmetto near the pad. The astronaut strapped inside the spacecraft awaits the final countdown before the thrust of powerful rockets propels him into flight, as man takes wing in the newest form.

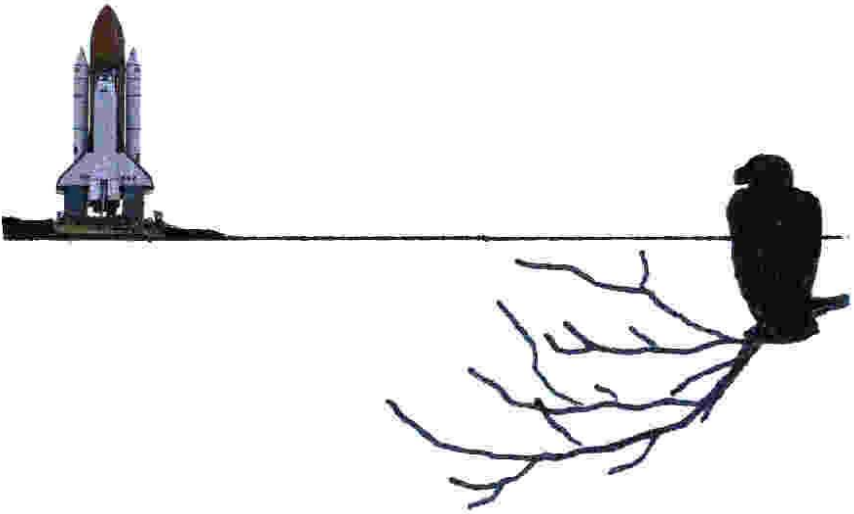
In our ever-expanding universe, we need to be reminded that the fragile flower of life must not be pushed aside or destroyed to make way for the miraculous advances of science. The preservation of wetlands and the nurturing of wildlife are as important in the scheme of human existence as a walk on the moon.

The rare relationship between nature and technology is very evident in this wildlife sanctuary at the Kennedy Space Center. A harmony with the universe is accompanied by a new sense of shared responsibility to Spaceship Earth, which we know we must protect if we are to survive. All life is linked together and must be respected, for without wilderness, forest, trees and fields, there will be no oxygen, no crops, no sustenance, no life, no astronaut, and no eagle.

But for now, this rare and priceless creature, this aerialist that represents our strength and freedom, is protected. It will continue to soar with the astronaut. The journey once begun must be continued. Who knows what distant shores each has yet to see?

*Edith R. Pray*

*Illustration by Stan Brush*



*Addendum:*

Over the years, since the conception of NASA, numerous vehicles have been launched into space. The era of the space shuttle, beginning in 1981, introduced a remarkably versatile and flexible spacecraft, allowing for a wide variety of scientific observations and research. Routine operations could identify problems that might face future space travelers on long-term flights.

America's space effort in the future will concentrate on an orbiting outpost with a permanent human presence, a springboard for manned journeys to the moon and Mars. When fully assembled, Space Station Freedom will be an international effort involving the United States, Japan, Canada and the 17-nation European Space Agency\*, sharing responsibility for its operation and success. Its headquarters are in Paris. The beginning of the millennium saw a new cooperation and partnership with Russia in the exploration and use of space for peaceful purposes, so Russia came on board. Efforts are now concentrated on the Mars Project which involves a Mars Rover that will land on planet Mars and return with samples. This is scheduled for the year 2013.

\*Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

## SUPER NOVA

In some two hundred billion years  
or some such number  
our sun may well collapse  
then explode

A super nova  
to a watcher  
on some galaxy  
on the rim of space

Will he set his instruments  
to measure  
brilliance, mass and  
energy expended

Or in the recess of his mind  
will he see a portent  
of a plan  
Divine

*Howard McKinney*

## THE SUITCASE

**I**t was red. I always wanted a red suitcase so it would be bright and pretty and easy to identify wherever I might be.

Now as I waited for the suitcases to come up out of the hole and plop down on the rotating carousel, I kept thinking, “Red, red, where are you?” Finally, there it came – up, over and plop onto the carousel.

I pushed through the males and children that guard the easiest spots to pick up luggage. Just in the nick of time I grabbed the handle. Almost yanking my arm off, I managed to get the red suitcase off the turntable. There it was safe and sound, not lost, and hopefully intact.

Putting it up on its wheels, I rushed off to the long-term parking lot to pick up my brother-in-law’s car where I had left it. Found it safe and sound. So off I went, hoping to arrive on time at the special dinner at the church on Mission Street.

This was not our church. *Our* church was small with beautiful stained-glass windows and ample icons in red, blue and gold. It nestles in a middle-class residential neighborhood near Lake Merritt in Oakland. The church in San Francisco was our sister church. It was large and nestled in a seedy part of the City. The dinner was in honor of the congregation’s patron saint, St. Sava. The patron saint of *our* congregation is St. George, a much more exciting figure.

Luckily it was a Saturday night and the traffic on Route 101 to the City was not bumper-to-bumper. I sped along quickly to Mission Street. Parking on any

street in the city is a challenge, but the patron saint of parking was on my side. I found a place in front of a public playground across the street from the church.

I was greeted warmly by our San Francisco friends and our friends and relatives who ventured across the Bay for the occasion. It was not a long drawn-out affair, and by nine o'clock I could say my farewells and head for my sister's home.

When I went out to the car, it took me only 10 seconds to notice with horror that the little side window on the passenger side had been broken. We don't have those little wing windows any more. Thank goodness! They were such a boon to thieves. This all happened in the late forties before air conditioning for cars. The little wing windows on both sides of the front seat allowed the air to flow in freely on a hot day.

Horror number two was the missing red suitcase! Only then did I awake to the foolishness of leaving it on the back seat in plain view in an urban neighborhood known for crime. And furthermore, I realized that the missing suitcase itself was not the real loss. It was the contents. In that precious red suitcase was costume jewelry from Uncle Peter in England, two (not one but two) cashmere sweaters purchased in England AND the only copy of my manuscript!

You have to remember the good old days, before the invention of the Xerox machine. Your manuscript was typed with as many carbons as your typewriter would accommodate and each typo cost many minutes



to correct on all four or five copies. So the fact that the one copy still in my possession was missing spelled disaster. There were other copies elsewhere, but they would have to be borrowed and retyped from scratch.

Nothing I could do but go home and start work on an insurance claim. But an insurance claim would not compensate for my missing manuscript that had been on the way to the bindery.

I slept fitfully that Saturday night, cursing myself and wondering how I could have been so stupid. Sunday passed in a kind of daze. On Monday morning the phone rang. My sister answered and turned it over to me with a questioning look. I took the phone.

“This is George Costello. I work at the Mission Street Recreation Center,” a stranger said.

“Have you lost a red suitcase?” he asked.

“Yes, but...but, . . .” I stammered.

“You are wondering how I found you?” he questioned.

“I can’t believe it,” I said.

“Well,” he said, “I am a grad student at Berkeley. When I came to work this morning at the rec center, I found this red suitcase in the bushes. It had been broken into and when I looked inside I found only a manuscript and some letters addressed to you. I recognized the value of the manuscript that luckily the thieves did not.

“I had trouble finding the phone number because you were not in the phone book. I was able to get a directory that lists phones by the address.”

“You are incredible,” I said, “I am so grateful. I am putting you right up there with St. George, my Patron Saint.”

*Helen Vukasin*

*Watercolor by Alice Skidmore Culbreth*



## ALTHEA

A white Rose-of Sharon is filling my eyes.  
It grows near an old bush with blossoms of rose.  
Its ivory buds shine in the early sunrise,  
And dance in the breeze that lazily blows.

In the heart of the blossom a splash of bright red  
Surrounds the gold pistil, which hosts a large bee.  
Deep green are the leaves that hide under this spread.  
By noon it's a wonder for all eyes to see.

The blooms last for a day and by twilight are gone.  
New beauties lie waiting to thrill us next dawn.

*Ariel C. Hollinshead*



## CHIGGERS ON THE CHAGRES

### Panama Revisited

November 29 to December 10, 2007

**Y**es, it's true. There are tiny “no-see-ums” that leave their mark on visitors to the shore and rainforest and beaches of Panama, but that's no reason not to go. The spectacular natural beauty of this mountainous neck of land, the impressive visionary engineering of the Panama Canal, and the friendliness and cool competence (and good looks) of Panameños made our venture there a huge success.



**The Canal at Midpoint**

Let's start with natural wonders and the biodiversity of Barro Colorado National Monument, where the Smithsonian has a world-renowned research center. A slide show informs us (please stick with me... it's a long list): “Plants=1,369 species, Birds=335 species, Amphibians=35 (32 frogs, 2 salamanders, 1 caecilian [look it up!],

Reptiles=71 species (5 venomous snakes), Mammals=110 species (74 bats), Arachnids=Many spiders, ticks, chiggers ..., Insects = At least tens of thousands of species! -1,000 species of true bugs -300 species of butterflies -200 species of ants (14 are army ants) -100 species of cockroaches.”

The flooding of the Chagres river valley a century ago was a “Biblical” event, with earthbound living creatures seeking refuge on the high ground of Barro Colorado, a kind of island Noah’s Ark in the midst of what would become Gatun Lake which would become the water source for the lock system of the canal. Its water is constantly renewed by the daily afternoon rainstorms that pound the isthmus with tons of wind-driven fresh H<sub>2</sub>O. Just reconcile yourself to getting wet. Unless, of course, you have shelter at the ready. Surprisingly, that may be the leafy canopy ninety feet above your head on a rainforest trail where the precipitation gets intercepted.

The canal itself is an engineering wonder. Much to the disbelief of a disgruntled fourth-generation Canal Zone American, with whom we chatted in the Houston airport passenger lounge, Panamanians are managing it well. But it’s “bursting” at the seams. We watched the Holland America “Ryndam” inch through the Miraflores Locks with only a one-foot clearance on each side. Enormous ocean-going carriers loaded with up to 6,000 containers use the canal. A project for building new bigger locks is underway that will allow ships carrying twice that load to make the transit. The Visitor Center at Miraflores lays out visually the tropical setting and engineering achievement of the original canal, now almost a cen-

tury old. Interestingly, the factual presentation is free of anti-imperialistic rhetoric, as are Panameños, themselves. It's nice to be treated as Americans without resentment. Just once our differing views of history surfaced. Answering a question about Sir Francis Drake, who sacked the Spanish Panamanian "gold trail" coastal fort of Portobelo in 1596, our guide responded, "You call him 'sir' – we call him a pirate."

Panama also operates the first transcontinental railroad in the Americas. It dates from 1855. Granted it's only fifty-some miles long and had to be realigned when its roadbed was swallowed up by Gatun Lake, it still links the Atlantic with the Pacific and crosses a Continental Divide watershed that drains in opposite directions. The railroad played an essential debris removal role in the building of the canal. It now features observation cars for tourists, through whom we elbowed our way looking for precious seats.

Tourist hordes were not a problem along the Atlantic coast of Kuna Yala, where the water is too shallow for cruise ships. There were scattered low-lying coral islands, coconut palms, turquoise water and a resort featuring Kuna Indian-style timber and palm-leaf huts on stilts at the water's edge. Kunas provided all our services, the hospitality, transportation and local guides. A bright young man, who took us around the Kuna settlement of Playon Chico, told us that they abandoned the forest, "Our Mother," a hundred years ago to escape disease. He said he learned English by watching television. Sobering thought, indeed.

Getting to Kuna Yala and back was an adventure. There are no roads. We flew in and out of postage stamp air strips in fifteen-passenger De Havillands. The pilot himself checked us in, saw to the correct weight distribution of passengers and luggage and then treated us to the true thrills of low-altitude flying over treetops and water on takeoffs and landings in a plane that trembled to the labored pull of propellers. The sight of those small “dabs” of islands (there are over six hundred of them, in total) in an emerald sea and a pristine white embroidered mainland coastline was the reward for keeping your eyes open!

So that’s our story. A small Brush family and friends sixtieth wedding anniversary tour to Panama, where the aging male head-of-household lived out his wartime service from ’44 to ’46 as a raw late adolescent, but where, with surprising wit, he bought a ring for his stateside girlfriend to keep her heart “engaged” long enough to close the deal after the war had ended.

*Stanley Brush*  
*Photos by the author*  
*and Victoria Brush*



**Capuchin monkey aboard the  
tour launch on Gatun Lake**

## MAISIE MARTIN AND THE AERODROME CAFE

**D**uring the most recent conflicts in the world we are rarely informed of the small acts of kindness that occur almost daily between soldiers and citizens. This is a story about one of these small kindnesses. Although this event took place many years ago, it was, for one person of advanced age, an act of kindness long remembered. In a small way it is a story of those times past when civilian material sacrifice was part of the willing support of soldiers in a major war effort.

On a visit to England in the early 1990s, friends invited me to take a day trip to Woodchester Park Mansion. The mansion is an unfinished, carefully preserved 19th century Gothic stone structure, a keen interest of my friends. Woodchester Park is located in a small valley a few miles south of Stroud, Gloucestershire, in the Cotswolds. It was one of the many locations in England where American and Canadian soldiers trained for the 1944 Normandy Campaign.

On our return trip to my friends' home in Bathwick, we stopped for lunch at the Aerodrome Cafe. It was on the outskirts of a charming, quiet village called Nymphsfield. (A British Ordnance Survey map is helpful in locating the village.) My friends had visited the Aerodrome a few times and had become acquainted with the proprietress, Maisie Martin. The Aerodrome had been established by her parents before the war and, according to Maisie, was one of the favorite spots of the



American GIs and Canadian soldiers in training at Woodchester Park.



*Aerodrome Cafe, 1993*

With only a single visit, my memories of the Aerodrome Cafe are still quite vivid. It was a tidily kept corrugated steel-clad building, recently painted an apple green, attached to a small cottage. The interior was one large, open room with steel structure exposed in the ceiling, tan composition-board interior walls and painted concrete floor. Perhaps, if the room were not so warm and charming, one would hesitate at the door, thinking one was about to enter a machine shop instead of a lunchroom. It was made homey with many colorful

framed prints on the walls, lace curtains on the metal-framed windows and brightly colored tablecloths.

Some of the tables were well laid with containers of various jams, cream pitchers and sugar bowls, ready for tea or coffee. The furniture – sideboards, highboys, curved glass-fronted china cabinets, tables and chairs that did not match – had been in place, it seemed, since the 1930s or earlier. An L-shaped counter occupied one of the corners of the room. Behind the counter was a communicating door leading to a small kitchen area and the cottage next door.



*Edith Wallis*

*Maisie Martin*

Maisie Martin – a cheerful matron with a shy smile and eyes that sparkled – stood behind the counter. She had grown up at the Aerodrome, and was still running the cafe at the age of 81. The cozy charm of the room seemed to be an extension of her sunny personality. It was also warmed by her many memories of

the Aerodrome Cafe in the early 1940s, when American GIs and Canadian soldiers made frequent visits. In conversation with my hosts and me – and learning that I was an American – she recounted one of her fond memories.

One particular GI had been visiting the Aerodrome Cafe on a regular basis. On one of these occasions he remarked to Maisie's father that he missed seeing her. Was she okay? Maisie's father informed the young soldier that she was in bed with the flu and surely would be up and around in a few days. No one in her family thought much about the soldier's comment until he returned the following day. He approached her father, this time with a bag of oranges, saying that they were for Maisie. He hoped that she would be well soon.

This act of kindness impressed the whole family. Maisie said she did not know who the American soldier was, but it was obvious to me that she remembered his small kindness with warm gratefulness. It goes without saying that oranges were a much-sought rarity in wartime Britain.

The last report from Maisie is that two years after my visit she gave up running the cafe. Writing to my friends, she said that she was happy with the prospect of doing more gardening and reading. After so many years of running the lunchroom, she would, most of all, miss meeting people. I like to think that no matter where she is, Maisie is still sharing her many memories of the American soldiers and the Aerodrome Cafe.

*Chris Darlington*

*Photos by the author*

## IMPRESSIONS

Colors splashed on in bright array  
Because the artist saw it that way  
And to the viewer's great surprise  
No symmetry of mouth and eyes  
Yet piercing through the face all told  
The subject's inner life and soul.

*Marian Hartman*

## **EXODUS**

### **Milan, November 1946**

**A**ffidavits, train tickets to the point of departure, spaces on a cargo ship heading for New York, closing off all the links with one's life, have left me in a void of enormous numbness. It is nearly impossible to translate in a few banal words all that this encompasses. All the necessary transition requirements are completed and now the first concrete step into the unknown is to be taken on this dark, moonless, misty frightening night.

### **Genoa, December 1946**

I am going through all the motions of interacting with people, including my family. No one seems to be aware of the numbness, interlaced with heavy doses of panic, that I am experiencing. There is a total dualism, almost verging on what I would imagine as a form of a dual personality. I am about to board a ship into the unknown. I am fifteen going into a void on a very bleak journey. My aunt comes from Milan to see us off. A world traveler, she has used just about every imaginable mode of transportation available during the thirties, yet she is frightened to board this bleak ship today to help us settle into our transitional home. This fear is transferred to me as I climb an almost invisible, shaky ladder whose end can only be guessed due to the heavy fog settling over this winter night.

I have said "Good-bye" to my friends and can't allow myself to think that, in all likelihood, I will not see

them again for a long time, if ever. I have left behind most of my cherished possessions, my favorite books and childhood toys. Kind friends have put a few of them in storage, pending our return. All the things that symbolize home to me could not be brought along on this journey. There was no money for “extras.” All these feelings and thoughts are crammed into my one, small suitcase along with the few possessions that were deemed appropriate to bring to America.

*Lori Berliner*

## SISTERS

I am part of a group that the Lord has called Sisters,  
We're all joined by the strings of our heart.

It's a special group that no one can enter,  
You had to be there at the start.

We're all different you see, like the changes of the seasons,  
But put us together we are one.

My sisters and I will walk hand in hand,  
'Til life as we know it is done.

*Jane Walker*

*Sketch by Alice Skidmore Culbreth*



# GRAMMAW

## Dawn

Rising before the grandchildren, Grammaw begins the soliloquy of the giant wood stove . . . kindling, logs, one Diamond match, stoking, listening, checking, heating water on the back-burner, tossing sausage into the iron skillet, stirring the dough, forming the biscuits, scrambling the eggs, cutting the loaf, getting the butter, the jam, the honey pot from the pie safe, serving the sleepy-eyed, respectful brood. For some, Day is just beginning . . .

## Morning

Discussing and deciding the Plan of the Day . . . blackberry picking, waving at the twice-a-day train tracking through a pine forest close by as the crow flies, fishing the pond, baking molasses cookies . . . . . snacking among the tomato rows with the girl and her umbrella, checking for eggs, leaving some for hatching, taking turns running to the dusty backyard, avoiding the droppings . . . . . a mother is cackling . . . the proudest of the proud announces her egg with boundless spontaneity; walking to the humble cemetery for raking, ne'er stepping on a single grave, sweeping the one-room clapboard church.

Getting corn off the cob, with a firm-rhythmic-twisting pressure, to feed the flock, churning the fresh milk from Great Uncle Sid's cows (he lived up the hill), helping with the churning . . . Great Aunt Neal sloshing



the leftover nectar to the pigs. Endless drinks from the tin cup at her well – it was allowed for black and white.

### **Noon**

Grammaw walks to her well . . . water: chilly, pristine – no tin cup, we are allowed to help with the bucket . . . readying for lunch, spreading peanut butter, homemade jam, something from the cookie jar; resting under the trees on the grass outside the front fence, using two worn quilts placed a yard or more from each other, one for girls, one for boys; if only one boy child was visiting, he could choose one girl cousin to come over to his spot, no child left behind . . . it was allowed. God forgive!!!! you would not leave your gender's tapestry for any reason other than the aforementioned; any offender was called in to rest with Grammaw in the dog run house: perfect for children, too, though not the builder's intent.

### **Good Friday**

The Iceman cometh, mid-afternoon once a week, all activities are abandoned; the sun fairly high on the horizon, we see dust approaching down the gravel road, it is our hero in his olde truck, receiving a wondrous welcome. The task begins . . . . . chipping, salting, pouring, turning, waiting . . . . . finally, ice cream! Grammaw, relieved, nonchalantly smiles.

### **Sometimes**

Rain, a tin roof, a dark attic, mysterious, hushed longing . . . for what? listening . . . a rain symphony,

mesmerizing, never to be repeated, not in any rain, not on any roof . . . held sacred in a special chamber of your heart.

### Occasionally

The Medicine Chest in the oak dresser . . . iodine, Vicks, rubbing alcohol, clean swatches; a safe place: needles, threads, sewing, one pair extra eyeglasses, a little money for necessities, a few important papers.

Ladies visiting for quilting, no scrap denied, whispering, laughing, visiting, working in the spare bedroom, only used for one purpose, the frame: never taken down until all was finished. Sadly . . . never signed.

### Dusk

Talking of our adventures, endless rocking on the porch, chairs with worn deerhide seats . . . . Had we met anyone along the way? Did the engineer blow the train whistle for us? (seldom) Discussing the elderly neighbors and Garden City, population 12; innocently not counting the two honest, hardworking families in falling-down shacks up the road, why was that? about 14 of them would be added to our list years later . . . . Mr. Joe helped Miss Ad faithfully year in and year out when he was needed at her garden, Mr. Joe knew a place where he could get good molasses for Miss Ad, Mr. Joe brought Miss Ad a large burlap bag and took the kittens home to be mousers; we did not know the dire plan. Why couldn't we go to Mr. Joe's house to play with them. "*Grammaw* is it because of so many mice?"

## Night

Nodding, flit-gun-time, lighting the coal oil lamp, shuttering the windows, taking turns in Grammam's big bed, nestled in the not-yet-completed-growing-each-summer-featherbed; the least of us loved it the most and took her turn last, staying the night . . . sleep had come to others, on quilts, content to grace the space around Grammam's bed. In her wisdom she knew a secret no one else knew . . . . . until years later when those with doctorates discovered the middle child . . . for now, good exhaustion, good quiet, dreaming of chinaberry necklaces, doves cooing at dawn, a rattling snake, a giant tree to climb located over the chicken coop, with safety from the gypsies, for making pod jewelry, chaining dandelions, clouds for imagining, stories read by older siblings, quilting days, days of love all around but I never even knew it – I felt it.

## Requiem

. . . contentment, innocence, purity, kindness . . .  
beautifulgnarledhands cross her breast . . . . . I cry

**Grammaw** . . . Grammaw . . . *Grammam*

*Dunbar Denbam*

## GROWING RADISHES

There was a time  
When I grew radishes  
In rows symmetric,  
Crimson red,  
Presented at table  
In glass dishes.

Déjeuner à deux  
By candlelight.

Now radishes grow  
Where Emily scatters seeds.  
With muddy hands  
And a child's faith,  
Served with tops intact  
On worn oilcloth.

And I marvel  
At God's beauty in it all.

*Pete McCord*

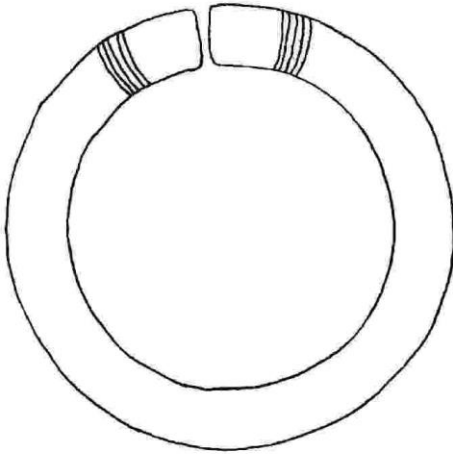
## BAUBLES, BANGLES AND BEADS

### From a Notebook on Archaeological Research in Ancient Jewelry

Someone once said that making archeological discoveries about how ancient people adorned themselves is like opening a window on their world. In the lands of the Ancient Near East is hidden a world of miniature artifacts that we call *jewelry*. The study of this jewelry gives us wonderful insights into the lives of early human beings and their communities.

It tells us of geographical settlement, trade and technology. It provides us with an understanding of how one area could possibly have related to other centers of civilization. The study of jewelry can even tell us about the wealth of a small city-state, its social and political divisions. What utilitarian necessities were there? How did the inhabitants dress? What textiles did they use? What cultural interchange occurred? Were there fine arts? Industry? Craft guilds? What was the social structure like? Was there family heraldry? What were the marriage customs among tribes?

As we discover more and more of these answers, we can look through that window further for sacred rituals, beliefs, prayers, offerings, moral and aesthetic values and burial practices. We will learn about peace and war, victory and defeat, military recognition, invasions by those of quite different practices and about migrations far from home. In these small wonders we see the rise and fall of dynasties and empires, and hopes and dreams for what lies beyond this world.



BANGLE



LUNATE  
EARRING



"MULBERRY"  
EARRING



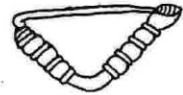
FINGER-  
RING



BONE PENDANT



TOGGLE-PIN



FIBULA

The earliest jewelry can be said to be from Canaanite caves dating to the Stone Age (13,000 B.C.) in the Mount Carmel area. These are shell beads in necklaces and bone pendants. In Galilee a large Neolithic site produces “greenstone” (a dark green hard rock) beads, and those of serpentine and agate dating around 8000 to 4000 B.C. Narrow flint drills discovered indicate the presence of bead making.

The most plentiful and ornate metal and precious stone jewelry comes from the Greco-Roman periods, 330 B.C. to around 330 A.D., from tombs and mound strata. The latest studied artifacts are usually from Arab periods beginning in 640 A.D. and sometimes going as far as the Bedouin crafts until the more recent 1960s when mass-produced jewelry predominated.

In between these basic framework dates, there are several archaeological periods in the geographical Middle East that have produced these small wonders. British scholars did some of the best and primary catalog studies in the 1960s and 1970s. This work culminated in a series of exhaustive books on Greece and Rome, Asia Minor (present day Turkey) and the Levant, plus Egypt of the Pharaohs. \*

My own studies first centered on the discoveries from the Iron Age sites, the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., in the “Levant” or “Palestinian Corridor.” This period from Bible times – the entry into Canaan following the Exodus to just after the return from the Exile – has produced many significant sets of excavation reports. My goal was to have a comprehensive collection of well-

dated ancient jewelry from a limited geographical area at a specific period of time to be used as a tool in archaeology and a primary resource for the historian. A contribution at the outset was to delineate the categories of artifacts worn by humans on the body that could be termed “jewelry” in fourteen chosen excavations.

The most important categories came to be: bangles (bracelets and anklets), finger rings, earrings, bone pendants, rosettes, star-disks, rectangular plaques, frontlets, toggle-pins, fibulae, triangular pendants, amulets and beads. Some of these were depicted on statues and small figurines found from that time period and geographical setting. Others were found in place on skeletal remains. How exciting it was to discover some in literary references in the Bible!

Interesting biblical texts spoke of gold rings brought to Job by his brothers and sisters after his siege, at the very end of his book (Job 42:11). Then there are the men’s gold earrings and kings’ crescents and pendants worn in the narrative of Gideon and the Midianites (Judges 8:22-28). David encouraged the “Daughters of Israel” to mourn over King Saul, who had clothed them in crimson and “ornaments of gold” (2 Samuel 1:24). The Ammonite crown of gold had a precious stone that was placed afterward on David’s head (1 Chronicles 20:2). A bride’s jewels are mentioned in Isaiah 61:10, and there is an entire inventory of jewelry and elegant finery in Isaiah 3:18-21. Texts such as these indicate that jewelry could be insignia of high office or appropriately worn on special occasions.



On the other hand, some plentiful jewelry found in excavations was quite obviously functional for everyday use. Toggle-pins and fibulae, for example, can be classified in developmental typological systems or dated design changes (in the same way that pottery can). Crafted out of iron or bronze (copper and various copper alloys), these pins enabled large pieces of textile (laboriously spun and woven) to be used in a variety of ways. One large piece of textile might now make a cape or coat pinned around shoulders and/or head, a blanket or bag for sleeping, a sack for carrying purchases, laundry, and belongings. The toggle-pin had an eyelet for a tied string to be wound around in an oval or figure eight once the pointed end was inserted in two layers of cloth. The fibula depicted an arm wearing many bracelets with a hand-and-fingers clasp and worked like a safety pin.

Jewelry imported from Egypt or crafted to be in Egyptian style was characterized by its use of recurring basic colors sometimes emanating from semiprecious stones or matching glass. These colors were found in the environment, the natural setting of the wearers. There was amethyst for dawn and dusk in the desert, lapis lazuli of the cloudless blue sky, carnelian of rich reddish soil, turquoise of the pure water, added to gold for the sun and silver for the moon and the stars. Wearing the natural colors on their bodies, such as bead necklaces over the throat and heart, and bracelets over the wrist and pulse, could affirm that divine power was providing for life in their everyday natural setting.

This realistic information helps us to know more about the societies that are the heritage of our modern

world. As we observe these “bangles and beads” in relation to other discoveries from long ago, we can better understand and appreciate the ancient treasures preserved and honored so carefully by those who came before us. There is so much revealed in various kinds of jewelry. What we can learn draws us closer to our ancient forebears. Not only that, but when we think of sharing the meaning of jewelry pieces we wear today, we are often drawn closer to our neighbors because the stories reveal important bonds in our lives. What lovely narratives and memories are held for us in these miniatures that can guide our life together today and tomorrow!

*Elizabeth Platt*  
*Sketches by the author*

\* R.A.Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, 1961. The Methuen Co., London.

- K.R.Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery*, 1971. The Methuen Co., London.

- Alex Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery*, 1971. The Methuen Co., London.

Also of note is C. Aldred, *Jewels of the Pharaohs*, 1971. Praeger. (Professor Aldred’s work was associated with the first traveling King Tut exhibition in the U.S.)

## THE SAD SAGA OF ONE PLASTIC BAG

I began my life deep in the ground and was pumped to the surface as oil. Here I was loaded into trucks and tankers and sent to a refinery, where I was heated and molded into pellets. The pellets were again shipped to a factory, where I was rolled out, bleached, dyed and molded into a beautiful plastic bag. I was packaged again and shipped to a store across the country, where I found my mission in life: holding all the stuff that people buy!

When they got home they could either use me to line their garbage can or toss me in the trash. Either way, I ended up in a landfill. Most of the other things in the landfill were transformed into something else, but not me. I stayed a plastic bag for years and years!

I'm beginning to worry now because some people are using paper bags and worse yet are even carrying canvas and mesh bags to stores....where...would you believe, they are given a few cents off their bill! I am afraid if this keeps up, we plastic bags could become extinct. What do you think of a "Save the Plastic Bags" movement? I understand there is one for Polar Bears.

*Gwen Crawley*