

# LEAS LIT

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## A PHILADELPHIA STORY

The laboratory where I worked was just ten minutes on foot from the supermarket. The laboratory also had freezers. Being somewhat of an ice cream junkie, anytime there was a sale, likely as not I'd walk over during my lunch hour to take advantage of it.

The shortest route was via Carlisle Street, a single short block terminating at opposite ends on Pine and Lombard. There's very little traffic, pedestrian or vehicular. A hot summer midday found me on this deserted street, returning to the lab with a satisfying day's purchase – and anxious to get it into a freezer as soon as possible. That's when an unexpected encounter almost derailed my plans.

“This is a holdup,” said a most unthreatening voice behind me. I didn't have time for games, what with my ice cream rushing to equilibrate with surrounding temperature. So I ignored the voice. But my unseen pursuer must have thought I hadn't heard him. He repeated, “This is a holdup.”

I turned around and found myself face to face with a young man about my height (5 feet 6 inches in those days) and weighing at most 130 pounds. There was no menace in his eyes as he held out his left hand, the right one hidden behind his back.

I was intrigued by his posture and, momentarily forgetting my hurry, prepared to enter into a conversation, so I asked, “What's in your right hand?”

“A gun,” he said matter-of-factly.

“Oh,” I answered, chagrined at not having a follow-up question ready. I didn’t believe him, of course, but I had read that it’s not a good idea to quibble about facts in such cases. So I waited.

“Give me your money.” I had anticipated something along those lines.

“I don’t have any,” I replied as innocently as I could. “I just spent it at the supermarket.” For evidence, I held out the shopping bag. He likewise declined to quibble about minutiae (not even a few coins, by way of change?); instead, he advanced to the next level. “You have a credit card?”

He evidently wasn’t going to give up without exploring options, and anyway I no longer wanted to see what he had in his right hand. So I fished in my pocket. As I withdrew my wallet, I noticed a man turning the corner on the opposite side of the street and walking in our direction. He must have seen the back of the man facing me, but he continued walking as if nothing he saw was out of the ordinary. Unfortunately this failed to reassure me, because there are probably lots of guns behind backs in South Philadelphia, all poised to come round to the front when summoned; that would explain the man’s indifference. With resignation I produced a credit card and offered it to my new acquaintance, who took it in his left hand.

“You got a PIN number?” Part of me wanted to admonish him for the redundancy: The N *stands* for number, you dolt, I wanted to say; you don’t have to repeat it! But he might have misunderstood. I still wasn’t

too sure about his mental agility, and he might have responded by showing me what I didn't want to see.

So I said, "Yeah."

"What is it?" That was better. Now I felt like congratulating him on his logical train of thought. But I didn't; he might have thought I was being sarcastic, so I gave him a brand new PIN.

"Write it down," he said, almost respectfully.

"No, you write it down," I answered. Impatience may have been starting to show in my tone, and I was afraid I was provoking the hidden hand. To my relief, he didn't get mad; instead, he asked for a pen. I held one forth, and he took it in his left hand, which already held the card.

"I can't write on this card. You got a piece of paper?"

Wondering whether his next request would be for directions to the nearest ATM, I said, "Look, I've got ice cream in this bag. It's melting. Can we get this over and done with, so I can put it in the freezer?" I pulled out a piece of paper, which he also took in his left hand.

"Satisfied?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Still remember the PIN?"

"Yeah." To show he wasn't bluffing, he repeated it, correctly except for two of the four digits. I shrugged. His version would work as well as the one I'd given him.

I watched as he backed away, card, pen, and paper in the left hand and a gun – of course – out of sight in the right. I would have enjoyed seeing him walk backwards half a block to the corner, never mind the ice cream. But thrift, and the anticipation of gustatory delight, won out. After all, wasn't that what I'd spent all my money for?

*Herb Heineman*



## WRITERS CLASS ASSIGNMENT

**“Write about summertime and billowing clouds.”**

I never have liked the choice usage of “billowing”  
But I rather like thoughts of Japanese “pillowing”  
But with good will I bend to the task in hand  
And think of the ways I might write at command.

At the Lumberton pool we lie prone on our noodles  
Beneath summer skies whilst we bicycle oodles  
When Rick shouts out “move it!” my neighbor splashes  
And my watered-down eyes see the clouds in flashes.

Flat on my back in a meadow past trees  
I try to look upward while resting with ease  
But down from the skies mosquitoes do swoop  
And encircling wee ants like to feast in a group.

So midst 90-degree weather to my home I must flee  
To look out my window while drinking iced tea  
And I must admit that just past weeping willow  
There are lovely, soft clouds that actually billow!!!

*Ariel Hollinshead*

## MY SHORT BOXING CAREER

**F**or those of you who watched Rocky 1, 2, 3, 4 ad infinitum, the locale was not fiction. I know because I grew up mere blocks from where Rocky achieved fame. His gym and his early fights were staged in the Cambria. As far as I know, the Cambria is still a Friday night entertainment center.

My boxing career was more modest, but I retired undefeated. Yes, all one hundred and ten pounds of little “Mick” did not lose inside the ropes.

There was a Boys Club in the neighborhood. Locals went there for swimming, soccer, billiards, and boxing. One Saturday afternoon a couple of parochial schoolmates and I went to the club to take in the boxing matches. I, the smallest in the group, was secure in the knowledge that the card was filled. No substitutes were needed.

Two elimination matches concluded with no great surprises. However, before the featherweight match a club official announced that Joe somebody was sick and a “little guy was needed.” My buddies shouted “Mick, Mick, Mick!” So, much to my surprise and fright, I ended up in the ring, high-top sneakers, borrowed boxing shorts and the skinniest arms on exhibit. My heartbeat must have been 200 per minute. After a referee’s instruction I returned to my corner until the bell rang. My opponent and I circled and circled. Suddenly he threw a left jab, a straight-to-my-nose left jab. My eyes watered to the point I could not see a thing. Blood flowed freely

down my lip and into my mouth. What had I got myself into?

What was happening, no follow-up blows? As my tears stopped, I saw my opponent in great pain. It seems the result of his perfect left jab was a victory for yours truly. Why? He hit me with such force that his left thumb broke through his glove. Oh, and that also resulted in a broken thumb. After stopping my bleeding the referee raised my right hand in victory. My opponent was taken by automobile to the local Emergency Room.

I retired undefeated.

*Jim McConville*



## REMEMBERING THE SUMMER OF 1947

**A**s Ole, a longshoreman from Brooklyn, threw the last rope, the departing ship slowly pulled away from the dock. Boarding the S.S. Stavangerfjord in New York City on July 25, 1947, I heard for the first time the Norwegian national anthem, “Ja, Vi Elsker dette Landet” (Yes, We Love that Land). It was the saddest thing I had ever heard, and I had a big lump in my throat, a strange feeling of leaving my family and my country.

For those who remained on the dock, some shed tears, while those on board crowded the decks and laughed and waved, and some cried. I was probably the last passenger to go below deck as I watched the skyline disappear on that beautiful summer day. I was alone with a ship full of people speaking a foreign language. I was on my way to the land of my ancestors, having been accepted at a college in Oslo as an exchange student.

My mother had emigrated in 1906 at age 12 from Oslo to Boston, via Hull and Liverpool, on her way to Wisconsin. Like so many immigrants she wanted to become 100% American. Because I was raised on the East Coast in the Philadelphia area, I had no opportunities to meet Norwegian-Americans and no Norwegian was spoken in my home. My father was a first-generation American who learned to speak Norsk before English, but he never spoke it again after the first grade. Only a rare visit from a traveling relative tuned my ear to the Norsk accent.

With Einar Haugen’s *Beginning Norwegian* I had hopes of absorbing and learning a good deal of Norsk

on board ship. Beforehand, my mother and I had attempted to cover a few chapters of the book, but she usually ended each lesson by apologizing and laughing. She was dumbfounded that she couldn't remember very much. She had not had the opportunity (nor sought any) to speak Norsk after she moved to the East Coast in 1918. (It was in that year that she married my father, a research chemist with the DuPont Company in Wilmington, Delaware.) When she arrived in America in 1906, she quickly learned English and didn't wish to speak the country dialect her aunt and uncle spoke. She was from the capital, Kristiania, where Danish-Norsk was spoken. I, on the other hand, was curious about this northern land and I welcomed the challenge of learning Norsk.

On board the ship I met many people who were returning to the land of their birth for the first time since the five-year occupation by the Germans. They were eager to speak Norwegian and anxious to see their parents and families. I remember feeling awkward and overwhelmed and shut out by my inability to learn the language. Perhaps they would take pity on me and help me with my language lessons.

As the days passed everyone became more relaxed and sleepy from the salt air and the rhythm of the ship's movements. My lessons in Norsk became less frequent. After one of the smoothest crossings in anyone's memory, we sailed up the Bergensfjord late in the afternoon. As the ship docked we were told that we had several hours to spend before the ship sailed for Kristiansand.

My newfound friend, a Norwegian from Oslo, invited me to go with her to visit some friends across town. We started out walking, rode a trolley or two, then walked some more. Finally we got to the outskirts of town. My friend admitted she was lost. We decided to turn around and return to the ship. We couldn't find a trolley, so we were forced to run. Panting and winded we made our way to the harbor and made the final dash. The gangplank was being raised as we approached the ship. We yelled, "Vent, vent!" (Wait, wait!) They lowered the gangplank and we staggered on board. My heart pounded. We were so completely out of breath that I thought surely I was going to die. So that was my first taste of Norwegian soil. After she recovered, my friend was extremely apologetic.

The next day the ship docked in Kristiansand, a southern port city. Uncle Per (my mother's brother), a Norwegian State Church Lutheran minister, was there to meet me. He was accompanied by his ten-year-old son Per Johan. Uncle Per had hired a car and chauffeur to drive the four-hour trip to Kristiansand. The Germans had confiscated his car during WWII.

Before I left the United States my family, who owned a local lumberyard in New Jersey, constructed a large wooden box. It contained, for the most part, canned foods for me to take along to Norway. At the dock, we waited until all the passengers debarked and watched the freight being unloaded. Alas, there was no wooden box. It had been unloaded in Bergen so it was delayed a week or so.

Uncle Per's English and my Norwegian were about equal, so there was much looking in the dictionary for the right word. He referred to the box as "the casket." For a while I didn't say anything as we waited for "the casket." Later I explained that casket usually means coffin, at which he laughed heartily, and for years afterward he told the story.

Shortly after my arrival, on the second or third day, I was in Dypvaag, a village on the south coast, in the Sorlandet. My Uncle Per had to travel by hired boat to a nearby island to officiate at a funeral. He thought it would be interesting for me to go along for the boat trip. I therefore accompanied him with my cousin Per Johan. Since it wasn't expected that I would attend the funeral, Per Johan and I set out in a rowboat and rowed to a small uninhabited island. We explored it for a while, and then I heard a voice calling from down in the fjord. Per Johan was rowing away. Of course, it was Per Johan's idea of a trick (his first of many) on his USA cousin to leave her stranded! He finally came back to pick up his passenger, probably after I had promised him another pack of chewing gum. That was a much sought-after treat for a ten-year-old.

We returned to the island when the funeral had ended. The black-frocked people who had attended were assembling at the house of the deceased's family. The house was large and set right at the edge of the dock on the fjord. Inside a feast had been laid out on the dining room table. My eyes lit on the hard-boiled eggs, a rarity on any table then. Clearly the bereaved and friends and relatives (and pastor) were hungry. They all ate with great enthusiasm, which seemed to please the widow.

In the meantime the coffin waited on a hill in back of the house on a horse-drawn wagon. Later it was taken by boat to the mainland, where the church and graveyard were located. As the boat docked at Dypvaag, the church bells started to peal, and the coffin was drawn by horse on the long trip up the hill.

The sky had darkened on the boat trip. Shortly after the burial had taken place, it started to thunder and there was lightening. This was what everyone was waiting for. It had been a noteworthy dry summer. There had been a three-month drought, and all northern Europeans were concerned about harvests and the coming winter. Food was rationed for several years after the German occupation ended in 1945. So the rain caused quite a rush of adrenalin.

Uncle Per, still wearing his priest's robe and ruff, suddenly came running down the road from the church to the parsonage. There didn't seem to be anyone else from the family at home at the moment. He called to me to follow him, and we ran down the hill on the garden side of the house, which faced the fjord. Here were located a couple of pear trees. He was afraid the pears would be ruined by the pelting rain. This was strange activity for me, but I did what he asked me to do. It must have been quite a sight to see us shaking the trees for the ripe fruit, Uncle Per's robe flying in the breeze. My aunt later made wonderful jam from the pears. Both the parched land and the sudden rain combined to create this special, never-to-be-forgotten, moment in the dry summer of 1947.

*Doris Allebach*



## THE WINGS OF MORNING

The sound of rain on the roof reminded him of typewriter keys hitting the carriage roller, as he raised himself off the barrack bed, stretched, looked at his wristwatch and walked slowly to the window. Outside he could see that the airfield and runway were covered with deep puddles. The four-engine bombers stood silent, gray sentinels guarding the tarmac. Mort turned away and ran his hand over his chin, "I need a shave," he said to himself. With a deep sigh he flopped down again on his bed and turned to the book he was reading. Suddenly the barrack screen door opened.

"Would you believe even with this lousy weather, we're going to fly today," said Sam, one of his crewmates. His nasal Midwest accent made even this statement seem more angry and threatening than he meant it to be.

"Whose brilliant idea is that?" retorted Mort as he put the book down and ran his hand through his dark brown hair.

"The CO said it would stop raining by one and clear before two. All the crews are on ready alert." Mort shrugged his shoulders, knowing that there was not much he could do about it.

"Where are the rest of the guys?" he asked Sam as he got up from his bed and went to his locker.

“Most are already down at the briefing shack. They were either in the PX or hanging out at the NCO lounge when they got the call.”

Mort opened his locker, took out his flying helmet and goggles, and put on his A2 jacket over his flying coveralls.

“Well, I guess it’s time to run between the raindrops and get over to briefing. Let’s go, Sam.”

The two of them went out the door and began to jog to the briefing hut, a brown wood building with dark green shades over the windows. Once inside, the conversations of a hundred crew members, talking, many with lighted cigarettes hanging from their lips, filled the room with a cacophony of noise and a fog of smoke.

“Attention please,” came over the loudspeaker from the CO. A hush filled the room and the cigarettes were instantly extinguished. “Thank you, gentlemen.”

The details for the practice mission were explained and then, with a subdued quietness, except for the noisy shuffle of flying boots, the briefing room emptied.

Outside the rain had stopped and through the clouds a hazy sun began to dry the field and also the moisture on the planes. Mort and Sam walked along the line of B-17 bombers, looking at the tail assembly numbers for the plane they were to fly in.

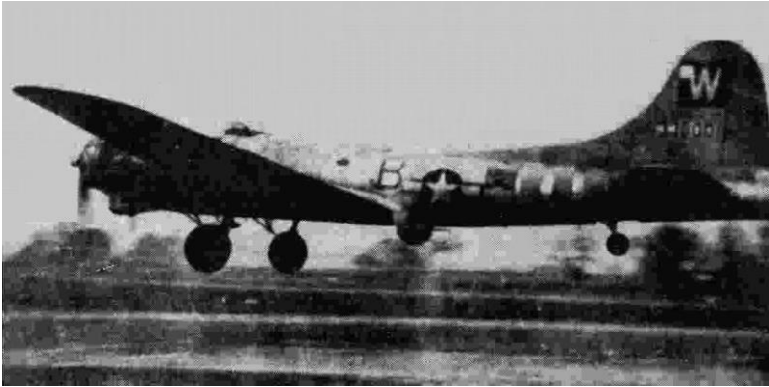
“There it is: 0407.”

“It’s one of the older E or F models.”

Sam opened the hatch door into the waist of the plane and they both were instantly hit in the face by the

strong pungent odor of gasoline and oil. The loud put-put motor was running in the waist area. Trying the best they could to ignore the smell and the noise, they climbed aboard.

“You’d think there would be a better way to give this big bird the power she needs without that damn machine. It’s enough to make you sick even before we get in the air.”



B17 Flying Fortress

Sam nodded in agreement as they put on their parachute harnesses. In short order the rest of the crew arrived. First was the pilot, with his short stocky build and sandy hair. He methodically walked around the aircraft giving a close inspection to the ailerons, tires, engines, and turbo. Next came the co-pilot. His tall, thin frame was bent over beside the right wing and with his slide rule he went over fuel and bomb weight figures. Slowly approaching the plane were the navigator and bombardier. Both were tall robust men, in lively conversation, laughing at some private joke and stopping only long enough to say something to the pilot. Then they

climbed aboard and made their way through the fuselage and down into the nose of the aircraft, where the navigation table and the bombsight were housed. The rest of the crew followed in procession behind the officers: the radio operator, with his wide grin and a set of headphones draped around his neck; the tail gunner, as always determined and serious with little sense of humor; then his opposite counterpart, the flight engineer, tall and gangly with a perennial unlit cigar clamped between his teeth and always a ready smile.

“OK, guys, it’s time to pull the props through,” yelled the engineer in his deep Texas drawl. Mort, Sam and the others couldn’t help hearing this order, even over the noise of the put-put. “Get your asses out here and give us a hand,” he repeated. It didn’t take long to pull the propellers on the four engines the standard nine times to clear the oil from the cylinders.

Now that everybody was on board, the put-put was turned off. In the waist Mort could feel the ship vibrate as each engine came alive, the pilot working the throttles to adjust the power and synchronization. Slowly they moved out along the runway, brakes squealing, the flaps raised and lowered, and the rudder moved back and forth.

Mort pressed his throat mike. “All set back here, guns armed and safety set.”

“Roger,” said the pilot. One after another all the crew members reported in and the pilot said, “It’s time to get this bird in the air.”

The engine roar grew louder, suddenly the brakes released, and with a jolt the plane began to move, slowly at first, then faster and faster, swaying a little from left to right. Then the ground began to drop away, the wheels came up, and the big bird was airborne, as if plucked by an invisible hand. The plane dipped its wing as it made a left turn, circled the field, and then headed south to the firing and bombing range.

“Sam, it’s time to get into your cocoon,” Mort said as he opened the ball turret hatch. Sam nodded and climbed in, squeezing his legs and body into a fetal position inside the turret. Mort locked the hatch and watched as Sam turned on the power switch. The turret began to turn downward. The motor’s whine signaled that it was functioning.

“OK, gunners, we are over the firing range. Commence firing at the targets when ready.”

Mort and the others heard this command through their headphones. He unlocked the safety on the 50-caliber machine gun, pulled the hand-charging lever twice, and aimed the weapon sight on the ground targets below. He pressed the twin triggers in short bursts and watched the tracers straddle the target area. After he had finished he relocked the safety on the gun, pressed his throat mike, and informed the pilot, “Waist reporting. Firing completed and gun secured.” Mort listened as the others called in from tail to nose with the same message. Sam had brought the ball turret around so Mort could reopen the hatch. Sam uncurled his body and climbed out, then stretched his arms and legs to get the kinks out.

“What a hell of a way to make a living.”

The next command to Mort came from the pilot. “We’re coming up on the bombing range. Time to get into the bomb bay and arm the bombs.”

“Roger.” As he worked his way forward he said to the radio operator, “To let the bombardier and pilot know when I’ve finished, watch me and I’ll give you a thumbs up.”

“OK, will do.”

As he watched, Mort entered the bomb bay and stepped onto the catwalk. It was narrow and he had to squat down and lean over the bombs to remove the cotter pins on the front and back propellers of the shackled bombs. At times the plane would rise or drop due to turbulence. He worked slowly and methodically, knowing that when he was done they were armed. He thought about all the training that prepared him for this job. Suddenly, and without any warning, the bomb bay doors below him began to swing open. The force of the slipstream pulled Mort off the walkway. He grabbed frantically for one of the bomb shackles over his head and tried to brace his legs against the fuselage of the plane. In panic he yelled out repeatedly, “Will someone close the goddam doors! Close the doors!”

Don, the radio operator, turned suddenly in his seat, fear in his eyes. In a voice filled with terror he yelled into his throat mike. “Radio to pilot. Radio to pilot. Close the bomb bay. Close the doors. Mort’s still in the bomb bay. He’s hanging in there.”

In what seemed like an eternity to Mort, the doors slowly began to close. Don and Sam were now both on

the walkway and grabbed at Mort's arms and legs. His wristwatch slipped off and disappeared into the void below. Slowly they pulled him up and out of the bomb bay and back into the waist. "Who the hell screwed up?" he asked, gasping and still sweating and breathing in short spasms.

Don, afraid to look directly at Mort, said in a hushed tone, "I didn't look to see where you were, when I gave the pilot the OK to open up." He grabbed Mort and hugged him. "I'm sorry, buddy, terribly sorry."

Don then returned to his station. Mort lay on the floor of the waist, still shaking.

"Pilot to crew. OK, we've had our little adventure and maybe we all learned something. Mort, are you OK and up to giving it another try at rearming the bombs? Then I'll make a second run over the target."

"Roger," Mort replied. He took a deep breath and got back on his feet.

This time, with everyone on alert he climbed back onto the bomb bay walkway. With quick precision he removed the pins and was soon back with Don in the radio compartment and gave him the thumbs up.

"Radio to pilot.. Bombs armed and ready." The crew members watched as the bomb bay doors opened and a few minutes later the 500-pound practice bombs snapped out of their A-4 shackles and like wingless birds headed to earth. They sprayed their white powder as they hit the ground. It looked like white flower petals opening on impact.

“OK, crew, time to get home. Clear up your gear and prepare for landing.”

Slowly the big bird lined up with the runway. The wheels came down, the flaps opened. As the air speed decreased, the wheels gently met the tarmac, once then twice, then held the earth. The whine of the brakes filled the air. The pilot turned off the runway and cut the outboard engines, and then it was on to the taxiway and toward the hangar. The plane came slowly to a halt, with the last squeal from the brakes and a final rev up from the two inboard engines. The flight was over.

The officers disembarked by way of the forward hatch. Mort and the rest exited through the waist door.

“Mort, after today, I owe you a beer,” said Don. “How about the NCO club tonight?”

“Hey, you guys can’t leave me and the rest of us out,” said Sam. Mort smiled at both of them as he removed his flight helmet and wiped the last of the sweat away. “Sure, why not, but first,” as he rubbed his wrist, “I have to get a new watch at the PX.”

The airmen lugged their equipment back to the barracks.

Standing at the window, Mort watched the setting Texas sun cast shadows over the silent bombers.

*George Rubin*



## GOLDIE

Whether she fancied herself my protector or simply wanted closeness to the new love in her life, Goldie was sitting straight up at the end of my bed when I awoke on a lazy August morning two years ago. The day before, she and I had returned from PetSmart to begin life together in my two-room apartment.

Friends have told me that upon arrival their new cat dove under a bed or sofa, not to reappear for a week except to eat. Not Goldie; she was fearless from the beginning. She faced new experiences with a “Bring it on!” attitude.

Wanting to introduce her gradually to her new surroundings, at first I kept her in the bedroom. From there she had access to her food bowl in the walk-in closet and her litter box in the bathroom. After two days, however, she slipped into the living room. With head and tail erect, she marched like a West Point cadet around the perimeter of the entire room, inspecting all its contents and determining they were safe.

Not so the air conditioner beneath the bedroom window. A large metal box, it goes on with an intimidating rumble. The first time Goldie heard it, she transformed into a feline predator: ears, nose, and shoulders stretched toward the danger, spine and hips sashaying from side to side as if priming a small inner motor. A second’s pause, then she sprang with deadly accuracy – a mouse wouldn’t have had a chance. But an air conditioner? After several more courageous confrontations, Goldie realized that the air conditioner wasn’t a danger. She dealt with the washing machine in the same manner.

While she was getting used to her new home, I was getting used to Goldie. Pets had not been part of my life since childhood. Was she just an animal, an “it” that needed to be sheltered, fed, and played with? Was she more like a young child, totally dependent on my care and protection? Or was it, in fact, I who needed her? Did she feel called upon to love and protect me?

Caregiving resolved the issue for a time. Within a month of arriving, Goldie was found to have hookworm, a parasite she probably brought with her. I learned to pop large capsules down her throat. Soon after, it was conjunctivitis and a thrice-daily insertion in each eye of a terramycin ointment. Caring for her dissolved any lingering sense she was an “it.” She became my child.

The notion that I was the only caregiver in the household persisted until the following January, when a virulent virus forced me to bed for three days. Sensing something was seriously wrong, Goldie, too, took to my bed and kept me company for hours on end. Her purring, her beguiling sleeping postures, and her obvious affection were all natural tonics.

Easing into life with Goldie was not always serious. Her antics made me laugh. At Thanksgiving, I left her for my sister’s in Connecticut. Goldie didn’t recognize me when I returned. It took ten minutes for the image she was looking at to match the one stored in her memory. Then she raced around the apartment, speeding like a rocket from the kitchen counter to the top of a recliner to the dining table to the far corner of the bedroom, then back to the counter and across the living

room, where she crashed on the shelf of a bookcase. If only I could feel such joy, I thought.

By now, I know what role Goldie plays in my life. Nothing shows this more than an incident that happened a couple of months ago. Before I go out, I tell Goldie where I am going. When I return, I say where I have been and what I have done. One afternoon I told her I was going as usual to the church office in Moorestown where I volunteer on Friday afternoons. On my way home, I would get groceries at Wegmans and her food at the Medford Pet Store.

Things didn't go as planned. In the parking lot outside the office, my foot slipped from the brake to the accelerator, and the car charged into a tree. I escaped unscathed, but an AAA flatbed truck had to bring me home on the way to a body shop with the car. When I got back, I duly reported the accident to Goldie. She threw up. That was just the way I felt.

*Kay Cooley*

## THE ARRANGER

You may be one who knows no fear,  
Who seeks adventure, far and near.  
But truly, friend, you've not known danger  
Till you've been in a car with a flower arranger.

The screeching stops, the backing-ups,  
The spilling of hot coffee cups,  
The turn-offs from the traveled lane –  
She thinks her car is all-terrain.

I do my best – she holds my feet  
As I climb trees for bittersweet.  
Stop! There's some early goldenrod,  
And in that ditch, some milkweed pods.

There's poison ivy, too, I see.  
We watch our steps. (Too late for me!)  
Back in the car, and off we race,  
A U-turn for some Queen Anne's Lace.

The car's now full of fresh-picked treasure.  
At last it ends. She smiles with pleasure.  
Of dangers risked she'll never know –  
She's ready for the flower show!

*Joan McKeon*





## MY FIRST CAT SHOW

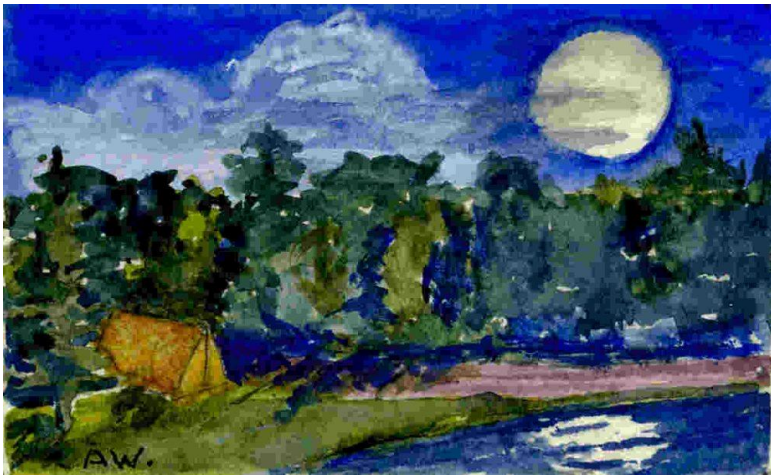
It's my very first cat show.  
Look at me, licking my sheen.  
Look at me, walking on delicate pads.  
Don't look at them.  
Look at me, slowly closing my emerald eyes.  
Look at me, my eyelids are gorgeous.  
Is that a mouse running along the wall?  
Look at me, stalking.  
Look at me, mincing.  
Look at me, yawning.  
Don't look at them, they're not cats.  
They only think they are.  
Look at me, a real feline.  
Look at me, looking interested.  
Look at me, time for my nap.  
You have my permission.  
Scratch behind my ears.  
Listen to me purr.  
Pur-r-r-r-r, pur-r-r-r-r!  
Don't look at them.  
Don't mention blue ribbons  
Or best of show.  
Look at me, it's my first cat show.  
Who? Who brought in that sniffing dog?!  
That cat's disqualified!!  
(I hate sniffing.)  
Look at me. What was that?  
The cat show is over?  
I was leaving anyway.

*Chris Darlington*

## A SPECTACULAR TRIP WITH ADDED ATTRACTIONS

**P**ace and quiet. Uninterrupted conversation. Had Frank and I ever been able to take a trip like this? Martha's Vineyard, here we come! Just the two of us.

The first leg of our trip was to take the children to their Pocono camps. One child was going to be a life-guard; the others were to enjoy days of exciting activities and adventures. Once they were settled Frank and I were able to get halfway across Connecticut before nightfall. We set up our tent in a site we had reserved not far off the turnpike. It was lovely, deep in the woods beside a quiet stream.



The date was July 20, 1969. Forty years ago to be exact. Not only were we all set for a fantastic trip, but so was someone else. Yes, it was about to happen, an even



more spectacular trip. Neil Armstrong was set to take his first step on the moon. My husband decided to find the Visitors Center at the campground to see if there was possibly a television set where we could watch the moon walk. With promises that he would be back as soon as he found out about the television, I arranged myself in a lounge chair and opened my book.

Splat. Splat-splat. The rain began to fall, at first gently and then with heavy determination. SPLAT. SPLAT-SPLAT. It drove me into the tent. I tried reading with a flashlight. Just when I would think that it couldn't possibly rain any harder, it did. I pictured my husband nice and dry and comfortable in the Visitors Center. Perhaps the program had started already, I mused. I couldn't blame him for not walking back to get me. The dirt roads were teeming with streams and deep muddy ruts.

When the rain finally slackened, I left the claustrophobic pop tent. The road ahead was a miserable mess to slog through. When I got to the Center there was no sign of Frank. I saw that there was also no sign of a television set. In complete darkness now with it beginning to rain again, I started to go back to our tent site; surely I had missed him on the way. I passed several tent sites and then came to a row of trailers. One trailer had a large tarp set up to make a porch. Several people seemed to be huddled under that tarp. Suddenly a hand came out and grabbed my arm.

“Shh! Shh!” My husband hushed me. He pulled me down into a chair beside him. And there was Neil Armstrong starting his famous walk on the moon.

The television set on this makeshift porch was powered with a generator. Whether it was the storm or the site itself, the generator kept gathering power, then losing it, so that what we watched was Armstrong staggering through this strange pulsating light with its sudden bursts of scratchy static punctuating every step. His voice throbbed in rhythm with the light and the static, the power rising and falling, rising and falling. “That’s one (brrp-brap) small step (brrp-brap) for (a) man, one giant (brrp-brap) step for mankind (brrp-brap).”

Awesome! With total strangers and our generous hosts, we cheered and clapped, so excited by this amazing, life-changing event. What a spectacular beginning to our trip. But this is not the end of the story. It was about to become an even more spectacular trip in a very different way.

The morning light made the campground look washed and clean. We packed our bags, folded up the very damp tent, and got on the road as soon as we could. Before too long we crossed the Cape Cod Canal, and now it was just a short run to the ferryboat dock. Our timing was excellent. There was the ferry ready to receive us. We slowly inched in a long line until our car was positioned in its special place on the ferry. We then had time to make our way to the deck above, where we could sit and watch the preparations for departure.

We noticed tight little groups of people. You might say they were babbling excitedly. They seemed to want to outdo each other with statements that began like,

“Well, I heard he swam the channel . . .”

“Can you imagine, he just left her there . . .”

“That must have been some party . . .”

“Well, I heard he went back to his hotel room and went to sleep . . .”

The snippets of chatter didn't make any sense to us. We reasoned that they were probably local people sharing bits of juicy gossip. If we hadn't been so absorbed in our anticipation of a peaceful Martha's Vineyard vacation, we might have realized that the clusters of folks were not local people at all. Just like us they were vacationers who had read the little local newspaper article when it first appeared. Later in the day we were to see the article too, hidden and almost lost by the magnificent story of the moon walk. The little news article began:

“In the early morning hours of July 19, Senator Ted Kennedy and a campaign worker, Mary Jo Kopechne, were crossing a bridge on Chappaquiddick when . . .”

The tragedy didn't really become clear to us until we finally drove our car off the ferry and into the downtown section of Edgartown. Photographers, newspaper correspondents, television cameramen were everywhere. The island was awash with people looking for the latest bit of information on the tragedy. More important, or so it seemed, were the rumors that Frank Sinatra had arrived at the marina in his yacht. Did Martha's Vineyard tip a little as everyone made a mad dash for the marina? Then there were the unanswered questions that always got attention, “Did you see Ava Gardner. . .” or, “Wasn't that Bennett Cerf. . .”

We were glad we had our tent with us, even if it did have Connecticut dampness still clinging to it. Every room in every hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast was taken. Forget reservations. Forget confirmation numbers. Actually Cranberry Campground was the most peaceful place on the island. We could retreat there, but sitting around a campground was not exactly what we had come to Martha's Vineyard to do. If we attempted to do a little of the sightseeing we had come to the island to do, we were quickly engulfed in traffic snarls which Edgartown was not equipped to handle.

If there wasn't room to be had, neither was there a seat in a restaurant anywhere. And what do most people look for when they are seaside? They find a restaurant that is known for its outstanding seafood, of course. Even to get take-out food or to buy a bag of groceries took more patience than we had. We had to get pretty creative with the emergency dry food we always traveled with on camping trips. In 1969 they hadn't gotten the knack of making good dehydrated foods for campers. In any case, reconstituted chili con carne was a poor substitute for the anticipated lobster dinner. We remembered that Neil Armstrong was probably eating a reconstituted dinner too. Somehow that made the chili go down a little bit more easily.

At one point, we decided to go out to explore those parts of the Vineyard that might not be quite so frenzied as Edgartown. Surely we could get away from the teeming crowds and traffic. As we inched past the Edgartown police station, we saw the car that had been pulled from the Chappaquiddick. It had been left momentarily in the driveway beside the police station.

Swarming souvenir hunters covered the car like a colony of bees. The police had to quickly remove the car and take it to some unknown hidden location. Picture, if you can, what that did to traffic that was already at a standstill! Sometimes I wonder whatever became of that car. I'm sure that if it had stayed at the police station any longer there wouldn't have been anything left of the car at all. That might have been a good thing, come to think of it.

Every good travel story ought to have one perfectly beautiful sunset. And Martha's Vineyard gave us one when we finally got away from Edgartown and found Gay Head Light on the western end of the island. There we took in a most magnificent sunset over the Aquinnah Cliffs with the surf crashing below us. Now that was a splendid ending to a truly spectacular trip with all its unexpected added attractions.

*Sarah Klos*

## SOME DOINGS ON CONNAUGHT CIRCUS

**D**uring much of World War II, I lived in an Army barracks just off Connaught Circus, a large traffic circle at the New Delhi, India terminus, of the road from “Old” Delhi. The Circus was also the terminus of “Queen’s Way,” where the Indian National Parliament was located along with the Viceroy’s house. Nearby was a house where Gandhi sometimes performed extended starvations to gain sympathy and influence the government. (We were warned to stay at a distance from that house because crowds of sympathizers collected near the house and sometimes menaced Americans.)

The traffic around Connaught Circus was an interesting mixture: military vehicles of various sizes, some civilian motor vehicles, a few bullock carts towing large wagons, and many horse-drawn taxis known as “tongas.” Usually several tongas would be waiting for fares at the Circus.

In addition to those passing through the Circus, certain people tended to congregate there. These included vendors selling trinkets, barbers plying their trade al-fresco, and a snake charmer. I found the snake charmer particularly fascinating.

The snake charmer had two performers: a lively mongoose and a shabby, shy cobra. The cobra was in a large, woven basket, and the mongoose was tethered to a stake. The first act of the performance was a dance done by the cobra accompanied by the loud shrill music of a kind of flute played by the charmer. The cobra opened

his head cape and performed a kind of dispirited undulation.

The second act was a fight between the cobra and the mongoose. The fight was not very exciting because the mongoose was faster than the cobra and always won. The snake charmer would separate the combatants just before the mongoose was about to kill the cobra.



The snake charmer and his troupe disappeared several weeks after I first watched the show. One of the itinerant barbers told me the mongoose had killed the

cobra and that the snake charmer had gone to find a replacement. I was sad for the cobra that had been subjected to such a tortured life.

Another interesting aspect of my life near Connaught Circus concerned the barracks to which I was assigned. When I was first assigned there, a lieutenant colonel, called the “Commandant of Troops,” set the rules for life in the barracks. He was very rigid about the rules that he established and insisted on strict military uniformity. To our delight, however, that lieutenant colonel was replaced shortly after my arrival. His replacement had very different attitudes.

The newly assigned Commandant of Troops made a short speech upon assuming his duties. He said he wanted us to treat the barracks as our home. Subject to his inspection, he said, we could bring rugs, small furnishings, and even small animals into the barracks. The small animals could only stay in the barracks after inspection by the veterinary officer.

My roommate and I immediately bought a small table, small rug, and two chameleons who found a place to live on a wall and changed colors during the course of the day.

One of the other soldiers, a very big fellow, came home one day with a small monkey tucked in his shirt. To our delight, the veterinary officer found the monkey to be in good health. He also gave the monkey certain inoculations and a record similar to a soldier’s “shot record.” The monkey’s owner, a tall, heavy boy from Georgia named Jesse, was instructed to bring his monkey with



his “shot record” for the end-of-month examination required of all soldiers.

The monkey quickly became the favorite of the barracks. We called him “Chota Peg,” which means “a small shot of liquor.”

At the end of the month, we all formed a line on the long veranda of the barracks close to the street (Queen’s Way), where the light was best for the doctor to see us. Jesse held Chota Peg by the hand. After we had been in line for a few minutes, three well-dressed Indian men passed by on the street. “My,” one said, “they seem to have reached the bottom of the barrel in the U.S. Now they are drafting animals.”

When World War II ended, I was sent to Karachi, India (now Pakistan) and assigned to a troop transport to be returned to the U.S. One of the first people I saw on deck was Jesse, the owner of the monkey. I asked Jesse where Chota Peg was. Jesse opened his shirt, revealing that the monkey was there and was perfectly quiet. Jesse was taking the monkey to his home in Georgia where he said he lived on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp where he was sure Chota Peg would be happy.

I never saw Jesse or Chota Peg again. I hope they got to the swamp and were happy there!

*Bill Pickering*

## A MIRACLE AT LAST

**W**hen I discovered that I was pregnant, I was pleased and overjoyed, a first grandchild for my parents and a niece or nephew for my sisters. My baby was born in July and it was soon noted that all was not well.

The pediatrician diagnosed Stephen as a hydrocephalic with a life expectancy of about two years. He was born with an extra finger and toe. Stephen had feeding problems and he never developed to the point where he could sit up or crawl. A quiet and docile child who responded with an occasional smile now and then, he died at the age of two.

Doctors reassured us that our child's situation was extremely rare and would not happen again. When our second child, a daughter, was born, we were much relieved and happy. She met all the criteria of a healthy, normal baby and we were ecstatic.

Wanting a sibling for our daughter, I became pregnant again. A normal nine months and feeling well resulted in the delivery of a third child. Unfortunately again, problems were evident. Daniel had a premature closing of the fontanel or soft spot on the top of his head, as well as a smaller head than usual. For the second time, a child of ours was diagnosed with hydrocephalus, water in the brain cavity. It is one thing to report facts and quite another to describe feelings and emotions connected with personal tragedy.

A specialist from Children's Hospital in Philadelphia recommended Dr. Eugene Spitz, who had recently

become famous for inventing a shunt to be placed in the brain. The shunt acted as a tube or waterway to drain the brain cavity. Little Daniel, dark hair and brown eyes, differed from Stephen, who was blond and blue-eyed. Their limp, little placid bodies entered the world with all the hopes one could imagine, but it just was not to be. Daniel received his shunt and his life of two years matched that of Stephen, both bottle-fed and completely devoid of the natural physical and mental development to be expected. Stephen was a bit chubby whereas Daniel had signs of being slender and tall. My babies were buried together after cremation.

In the meantime, our daughter was keeping us busy with leaps and bounds and all the normal pursuits of a four-year-old. The doctors told us that the similar problem with our two boys meant that there was a sex-link pattern. The boys had hydrocephalus and Laura did not. If we had more children, only the boys would be affected. Needless to say, we were discouraged about future offspring and were advised not to have more children.

My mother had often spoken about her lonely childhood as an only child. We felt that Laura needed a sibling. My husband's grandfather, who was 102 years old, stated, "Those doctors do not know everything!" Perhaps that is all I needed and I became pregnant again. I felt well during the nine months and when I began to feel activity in my body, it was a liveliness I had never felt before. It was as if my baby could hardly wait to get here. The kicking and the squirming increased so much that it kept me awake at night and even bothered my husband!

John was born on a snowy, freezing night. The roads were icy and difficult and my pains were intense as we slowly made our way to the hospital. The doctor appeared in the nick of time and John was born one-half hour before midnight. True to his nature, he could not wait to be born and get out of his “cage”! Midnight brought the dawn of a new day, Valentine’s Day. I teased my son later, if he had waited a bit longer, he would have been my Valentine. However, he is my Valentine, the sweetest one ever! John arrived with all of his fingers and toes and a lusty yell. Blond and blue-eyed, well filled out, he weighed in at a healthy nine pounds. Who could ask for more? Grandpa Palmer was right. Doctors do not know everything! We had not only a healthy son but also a brother for Laura. A miracle at last!

*Martha Palmer*

## A TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL

**I**t all started a few years ago, when I was adopted by a caring family who brought me home and then eventually to Medford Leas, where I have lived for the past few years. The family was very understanding, providing me with love and attention, but had no experience in dealing with the aged. They were unaware of the problems of aging and neglected to use preventive measures to insure a longer and more prosperous life for me.

As a result, they neglected to provide the necessary means to prevent viruses from attacking my innards and I began to slow down, forgot things, started to make errors, and had trouble going to sleep. These well meaning trustees did keep me isolated so that viruses and worms from the outside world would have difficulty in reaching me. They were selective with whom I could communicate, but after a while their negligence in the use of anti-virus booster shots resulted in increasing problems which they just attributed to “old age.”

Finally, a few weeks ago I broke down completely and doctors from Salt Lake, Pennsylvania, and Medford Leas were called in. They helped me to recover for a while but failed to provide me with the few previous virus/worm detectors, and my health decreased even further. What could they do but call Dr. David, who made a house visit. He checked all of my systems, and diagnosed a serious problem. It appeared that of my 140,000 genes, over 3,000 had become infected. One of my caretakers was worried about transmitting these germs to

other people, so with great trepidation I was taken to the Medford Leas Hospital for people like me.

I, like all other patients at ML, was welcomed and for two days I underwent a series of tests. I received some new transplants, some old organs were revitalized, new systems were installed, and most importantly of all, a germ/virus detecting organ/medicine called AVG #5 was prescribed and put to work.

For two days, while in the hospital, I was able to watch, and was entertained, while Dr. David and his associate, Dr. Russell, took care of other patients and often had to rush out to the emergency room or other areas of the institution to perform heroic tasks. I was finally allowed to go home, in a rainstorm no less, protected by a great big trash bag. There Dr. David completed the recovery tasks and I was at home, better than ever. I may need a new memory implant down the road but am now assured of at least a few good years left.

As Dr. David left, I noticed that one of my caretakers slipped him a Heath Bar as a small gift of appreciation. You see, tipping, even for the excellent service with which I was provided, is not allowed.

Lastly, I should note, Dr. David was forced to make another house call a few weeks later as one organ, called AOL, was taking up so much space that other problems were developing. But with one push of his magic button, that organ was deftly removed and now I am whole again.

*Mr. Gateway, #31958831  
as told to Sandy Heath*

## MY FRIEND DAVID

**W**e grew up together. We were the same age and only lived a few blocks apart in Moorestown, NJ. Birthday parties and sandboxes were shared. As we grew older, it was Boy Scouts that solidified our friendship. David was a true Scout and my patrol leader at the Presbyterian Church's Troop 4. I remember several humorous experiences. At an overnight campout at Moorestown's Strawbridge Park, we were bedded in an old-fashioned floorless tent. Any Scout would know to dig a trench around the tent to keep out rainwater, but I convinced David that the weather forecast was for clear skies. No trench was dug. A heavy thunderstorm soaked everything in the tent. On another occasion our troop was part of a weekend gathering along the Delaware. I, for some reason, was appointed our cook, and my mother suggested a pork roast for Sunday dinner. I skipped Sunday chapel to roast the pork over an open fire and somehow let it slip into the ashes. David suddenly arrived on the scene. We conspired to wipe the roast clean with paper towels and tell no one. It was served to the troop without, as far as we knew, gastric complications.

David was the older of two sons born to well-educated, successful, church-centered parents. His father, who held a doctorate from Princeton, once shared an office with Albert Einstein. His mother was a graduate of Columbia University's famed Teachers' College. David was an excellent student and active in his church's youth program, which my girlfriend and wife-to-be, Lucia, also attended. During our high school years, although remaining good friends, we drifted apart. I found

some success in athletics while David was caught up in academic programs – and scouting. The only thing different about David was that, while the rest of us yearned for our driver’s licenses and cars, David preferred his old bicycle, which he rode all over town. Prior to Moorestown High’s Junior Prom of 1950, which was my first serious date with Lucia, we were the guests with another couple at David’s home for a pre-prom dinner.

And then we graduated and, as often takes place with childhood friendships, we never saw each other again. From time to time I would encounter his parents and ask about David. I was always told that he was doing well. But on Christmas Eve, 1995, there came a real shock. In retirement Lucia and I had purchased her mother’s home in Glenside, PA. I was watching the evening news when it was announced that a homeless man had been brutally stabbed to death in a vacant Camden, NJ, apartment building. When his name and age were given, I realized, to my horror, that it was my friend, David. How could this be? How could the bright, funny, ambitious kid I knew become the record 59<sup>th</sup> murder victim of the year in a tortured city? How could someone from his background and education become an alcohol-reeking homeless man with white hair hanging to his waist as described in the news stories?

I soon contacted some old Moorestown classmates with my questions. They informed me that David had indeed returned to his hometown area several years before following a broken marriage and alienation from his family. He asked many of them for money, which he promised to give back, but never did. He couldn’t sleep on the sidewalks in Moorestown so was forced into



Camden for social services and to be with others of similar needs. Interestingly, he refused to accept welfare and often shared the little he had with others. He would show up at various community and political meetings and embarrass even those who agreed with him by his incomprehensible, meandering comments. I dug a little deeper and, from a tribute written by Father Michael Doyle of Sacred Heart Church in Camden, discovered that David held a master's degree in humanities from the University of Michigan. He had become a well-known and, some felt, brilliant social activist in Detroit and Buffalo who organized the powerless and worked personally with Martin Luther King, Jr., Saul Alinsky, Tom Gaudette, and Maggie Kuhn among others. Someone has said that he burned with zeal to establish a compassionate society. He married and fathered four sons.

And then it all went wrong. The Reverend Robert Wilson of Jersey City knew David well and put it this way: "David suffered from messianic burnout. His burning ideals tore his mind and severed his family." Said Father Doyle in his tribute: "David sought a greed-free society. He wanted a water that would lift all the boats, the poor little craft as well as the great tall ship. And when he failed to lift the poor, he became poor himself."

What do we make of all this? Certainly it shows that even the family and environment in which one is raised do not truly ordain what the future may hold. Was he a victim of the turbulent 60s and 70s, which often seemed to link compassionate concern for social reform with personal indulgence in drugs and sexual freedom? Was he simply an addict! Or, like so many dreamers, did he extend his hopes and aspirations beyond human reali-

ty? Did a failed marriage lead to his collapse or did his mental collapse lead to his failed marriage? Gratefully, two of his sons stood by his grave at his funeral.

There is a forty-five-year gap between our prom-night dinner together and his violent, tragic death. I can only speculate as to what took place that changed the boy whom I had known so well. But when I think of him, I still see him so proud in his Scout uniform riding his silly bicycle to the next troop meeting. My friend David!

*Bill LeConey*

## MY FIRST VOTES FOR PRESIDENT

**B**oarding the Medford Leas bus for a chamber music concert at the Kimmel Center, I found an empty seat near a man I didn't know. His affirmative nod to my inquiry welcomed me to the seat. I learned from the usual get-acquainted questions that my seatmate was Alan Gaylord, who lives on the Lumberton campus with his wife Beverly. I often nap on the bus when going to a cultural event, but not this time. We chatted continuously both to the concert and on the way home – about trivia and serious stuff.

We got to talking about our experiences during WWII. Alan had a story in *Leas Lit*, December 2008, with the intriguing title, “How I Did Not Help to Win WWII.” It told about his parents being staunch anti-war pacifists, and young Alan, a schoolboy, followed his parents in marching to a different drummer as the nation demonized our enemies during the war. I said that in WWII I also was a pacifist. I was classified as a conscientious objector (CO) and was drafted into Civilian Public Service (CPS).

It happened that my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday came a few weeks before the presidential election of 1940. (You had to be 21 to vote in those days.) Roosevelt was running for his third term. I was in my senior year at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. My fraternity brothers were Republican. My father, who died before FDR became president, had been a Republican. With this background, I voted for Wendell Wilkie, a Republican from Indiana.

In CPS I found many intelligent, articulate men. Serious discussion was a popular activity that I enjoyed. Most of the men were advocates for racial equality, opposed exploitation of workers, supported labor unions, and believed in the importance of civil liberties. The liberal agenda was consistent with their pacifism. They convinced me. The political leader who best embodied these beliefs was Norman Thomas, a socialist who ran for president several times in this era. He got my vote when FDR ran for his fourth term in 1944.

Thus I had two chances to vote for FDR. First I voted to his right. Then I voted to his left. How many people had that experience?

*Evert Bartholomew*

## THE LIGHT IN HER WINDOW

The light in her window  
Casts a shadowy glow  
On the path to her door  
And the new-fallen snow.

Her clock struck twelve  
Several hours ago  
And church bells rang  
In the valley below.

Yet the path to her door  
Stays lit as though  
Perhaps someone may come  
Only her memories know.

Alone in the shadows  
While the cold winds blow  
She will wait by her window  
And hope that it's so.

*Peter McCord*

## GOING BACK

As I turn the calendar from August to September, I am again reminded of the despair, indeed the utter terror, that every red-blooded American boy experiences at this time of year.

It's 60 years ago in Philadelphia. Nestled between the banks of the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers the humidity hangs like the steam in Chen's Hortter Street laundry. The lawn is parched and brown, and the tomato patch has been invaded by pigweed. Cicadas have taken over, in shrill, from the gentler robins that have long since abandoned our garden for cooler woodlands.

The Phillies are in last place, or second to last place. Football season doesn't start for several weeks.

No hope.

And there we are, Tommy Logan and I, sitting on the back stoop bouncing balls off the wall.

"Just five days to go," Tommy moans.

"Don't remind me ..."

Like two condemned prisoners on death row awaiting our fate, we count the days and hours.

Somewhere in the house an unattended radio plays a seasonal refrain exorcising the demon of our free spirits and reminding us of corduroy's discomfort:

*...School bells ring  
And children sing,  
It's back to Robert Hall again,  
Mother knows for better clothes  
It's back ...*

“You know, my sister actually wants to go back ...”

“Yeah, girls are like that ...”

“At least we get ten days off at Christmas ...”

“And it's all over next June ...”

*Peter McCord*

## A NEST IN NOVEMBER

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose.* Ecclesiastes 3:1

### November

cold snow flurries winds  
unmoving staunch trunks branches whistling  
are you listening?

### Leaves

saying goodbye swirling laughing  
dreaming of transfiguration as compost

### A time to see bird nests

in low branches in high branches  
resting silently  
steady sturdy strong carefully selected  
miniature twigs crocheted in fascinating intricacy  
large nests small nests  
a complicated hummingbird's creation  
a dove's nest may last all winter  
same house/same address  
a nest seen three seasons a fixer-upper  
same couple? newcomers?  
a wren couple chose a busy entryway ceiling  
unnoticed until babies arrived



Please enter a magical world  
do you see the busy parents?  
incessantly finding dinner  
babies growing strong  
non-stop chirping constant twittering  
do you see the patient parents nearby?  
no rescues needed  
their adage leave them alone  
they'll never forget home

Next season  
do you see three nests? same address  
not in a cracked crystal pitcher but  
in three unpainted bird houses placed by Man  
beautifully furnished by Bird

Be not discouraged take my hand  
we will find a nest in November always  
somewhere

*Dunbar Denbam*

## THE WINDOW TREATMENT QUESTION

“Window Treatments”  
The term we use  
for windows “dressed”  
in drapes  
valances  
and blinds

Windows . . .  
Openings  
to the world

The senses five  
or are they six?  
are the windows  
of the being I am

As  
they  
close  
it’s  
curtains  
for  
me?

That  
depends  
on  
me

*Stan Brush*