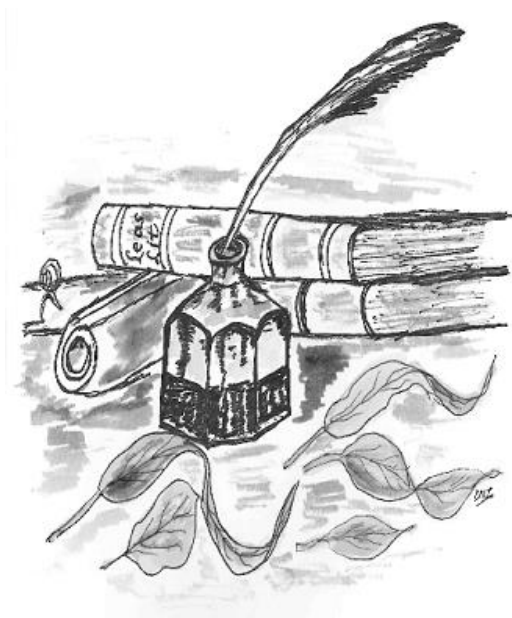


# Leas Lit



ORIGINAL WRITING AND ART  
BY RESIDENTS OF MEDFORD LEAS

**NUMBER 30**

**DECEMBER 2015**

**PUBLISHED CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1998**

## **LEAS LIT STAFF**

Roberta Foss  
Ruth Gage  
Herb Heineman  
Maggie Heineman  
Joan McKeon  
Sally Miller  
Edith Pray  
George Rubin  
Joyce Sichel  
Helen Vukasin

### Illustrators:

Sally Brummer, John Brzostoski, Pat Heller-Dow,  
Eileen McConville, Gini Mutschler, Jean Nicholson,  
Joyce Sichel, Marilyn Thomas

Cover illustration by Dorothy Cebula

Writing and Art at Medford Leas  
Published by the  
Medford Leas Residents Association  
Medford Leas, Route 70  
Medford, New Jersey 08055  
609-654-3000

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## **READERS CAN BE WRITERS!**

*If you enjoy reading **Leas Lít**, please consider contributing your own writing. Whether you have a short story, a memoir, a poem - or more than one - we want to hear from you.*

*In a few weeks formal solicitations for the next issue will be distributed. But it is not too soon to think right now about what you might want to write.*

*Remember, **Leas Lít** is for you and by you, the residents. Each time you read it, you're reading what your fellow-residents have written.*

**BE A WRITER  
AS WELL AS A READER!**



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**FOR LARISSA**

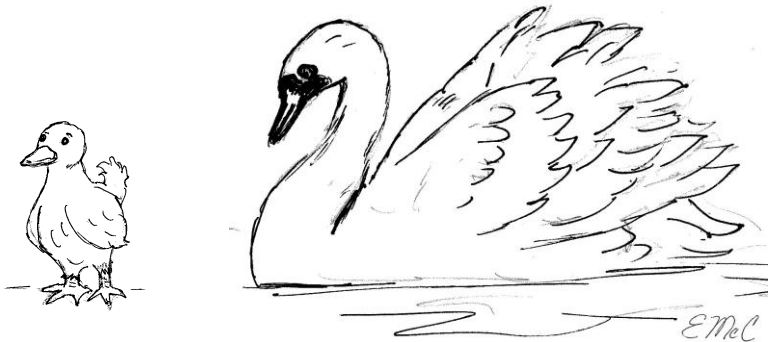
13 YEARS OLD, FIVE FEET SIX INCHES TALL

She bellyflopped, she bobbed, she teetered  
Sea-unworthy legs, over-ample feet,  
Neck and wobbly head seeming unscrewed.  
Was this the ugly duckling of the brood?

The brood, in time, put on its mallard trim,  
Marched in chevron file, mocked the clown  
Who bigger grew and floundered like a moose.  
Was this ungainly duck a silly goose?

In time, her neck arched queenlike from  
A creamy bosom above a waist that some-  
how trailed a hammered-silver wake.  
Then, the ducks who had jibed, the fussy drake  
Who'd sorely ridiculed the dingy clown  
Came ranked, to adulate the lovely swan.

*Charles Perrone*



## BEING YOUNG

Who wants to go camping anyway? Well, we did in our family. For many summers our parents had gone off and left us behind. Temagami was where they went. It's a forest preserve near Algonquin Park, and they came back with stories of canoes, and forest animals, and balsam beds. We, my brother Dave and I, wanted to go too. Their promise was that they would take us when we both got to be good enough swimmers. Well, we finally made it and for months we prepared for our trip.

The plan was that my mother and I would share a tent, my father and brother would have a tent, and for the first time my father decided to take a Native American guide, Pete (whom we called an Indian) with us and he would have the WWI pup tent, which Dave sometimes slept in in our backyard. Our mother wanted two things. First, she demanded that our tent, which would be new, have a sewn-in ground cloth so that no wild animals could sneak in with us. Second, she wanted a sleeping bag. No wool blankets or big blanket pins for her. She got what she wanted.

Back to our preparations. We all worked on maps. My dad had ordered from the U.S. Government geodesic maps of the area we were going to be in. We cut them into pieces of the same size (maybe 8 x 10) and glued them onto a large piece of cloth making the map again, but leaving a little space around each paper piece. We dried it on the attic floor and after it was finished we could fold it or open it to what we wanted to see. It could be put in a pack and didn't tear or blow away in



the wind. For years we would hang over those maps re-tracing our two-week trip both by water and by foot. We made six camps and the short walks, a mile or two, from lake to lake were called portages. We all carried the same load across each portage so everything got there. The three men went back for a second trip, and each brought a canoe. Dave paddled with mother, I traveled with dad, and Pete traveled with his grandson, Frederick, who joined us at the last minute.

Paddling has a great rhythm. The person in the bow is the stroke and sets the pace as well as looking out for what may be in the way of travel. The stern paddler steers the canoe, mostly by turning his paddle rather than changing sides of his stroke. Our little crews seemed to work well and we traveled in our group of three. Sometimes the water is like glass, but sometimes you have to buck the wind or hug the shore where it may be less rough. We usually had a good idea what lake we wanted to camp on, but we knew we could change our mind if we were too tired, or saw a beautiful point which called for us to explore it.

My dad and brother spent a lot of time with the fishing tackle. How much line to take, what flies and lures they would need, and what sort of nets – lots to decide. Our mom worked on eating utensils for five, tin plates, tin cups, a large cooking spoon, etc. She and I also sewed a large bag for clothes and a small bag for toilet articles for each of the four of us. These all had cross-stitched initials. We ordered quite a bit of what we needed from L.L. Bean, and when that didn't work we moved to Abercrombie's. We took few clothes, two changes of

underwear, an extra shirt, a sweater, and, on my father's insistence, a hat and shoes that laced over our ankles.

When our departure date finally came we drove west from Rochester, New York, where we lived, around the end of Lake Ontario and up into Canada to Huntsville, where there was a Hudson Bay post from which we ordered food, a guide, and canoes. We got there in the early afternoon and before evening we were on our way with our sixth companion, Pete's grandson Frederick, who had no functioning parents and needed to be cared for. He was about 12, my age, and for me a new friend and a wonderful addition to the trip.

We soon found a beautiful island, a nice place to set up our first camp. The Indians went to get firewood and balsam for our beds. Dad and Dave paddled out into the lake and dropped a canvas bucket on a rope to get drinking water from way down where it was clean and cool, and mother and I unpacked some cooking utensils and our personal belongings. The bag of clothes would be used as a pillow, and the bag of toilet things could hang on a tree branch. When the balsam arrived mother and I made balsam beds to go under the ground cloth of our tents. Balsam beds are wonderful, a springy mattress with a heavenly scent. To make them you turn the bough upside down and push the cut branch into the ground. You start at the top and work across and down, covering the cut ends with the next row of springy top needles. We made new beds for each campsite. With these chores done we pitched our tents, cooked dinner, and made sure we knew where our flashlights were. We probably had something special that night that was still cool from the chunk of ice at the Hudson Bay post, perhaps ham-

burger. After that day nothing could be refrigerated, so we ate canned hash, cooked cornmeal, beans, onions and potatoes, and with Pete's help we caught and ate a lot of fresh fish.

My mother had been to cooking school and she prepared tasty meals, but my dad did most of the actual cooking. We had a reflecting baker oven. In this mom made Johnny Cake muffins with blueberries if we found them, and gingerbread from a prepared mix. For breakfast we had cooked cereal or cooked dried eggs, jams or berries, and maybe canned fruit. For lunch, we had hard-tack and jam, nuts, and tea, and there was a big chunk of dried herring, which no one ate except my dad. Everyone got three squares of Baker's chocolate every noon. Mother always saved hers and ate it about four o'clock in the afternoon, which made us very envious.

After lunch we usually had a sort of quiet time. Frederick could not read, so I read to him. We were reading Huckleberry Finn. Dad had a project going with Pete. He was collecting a list of Iroquois words and writing them out phonetically. They were mostly nouns. I remember some. Wig-wa-sati (birch bark tree), kitic (cedar tree), cini (stone). Interestingly they had no general word for tree, each was so special to them. I'm not sure what Dave and mother did. Perhaps they looked for berries to pick. Mother liked to explore the plants in the woods and find us wintergreen leaves and sassafras twigs to chew on. Dave always liked swimming and was very good at it. Pete and Frederick had no such skills. They often asked him to swim to a distant island or point while they followed him in a canoe.

Another project Frederick and I had was a sort of gymnastics contest. I was very good at back bends, cartwheels, and standing on my hands. These were all beyond him, so he showed off his strength. If we were staying at a camp for a day or so Pete would put up a trapeze bar for us. I could “skin the cat” like a whiz, but he could hang by his stomach for a very long time! Pete carved me a large bow and some arrows that were weighted at the end where the point would usually be. He told us in the winter he hunted mink, rabbits, and animals whose pelts he could sell to support himself and Frederick. He said he mostly used a bow and arrow to save the cost of ammunition. He showed us how to find a rabbit run and set a snare trap made out of string and sticks. He caught a rabbit. He also tried to grab a mink to show us. It bit him terribly and he said he would come back and get it in the winter.

All this was a large and lovely experience for Dave and me. We were a happy little community and we never saw another soul for the two weeks we were traveling, but we did see very bright stars, windblown water, lovely sunsets, glorious forests of trees and bushes, plus many birds, deer, and small animals. I will remember our time together for the rest of my life.

*Cynthia Mott*

## SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF WWII

**T**oday, May 8, 2015, is a most important day in my life – the seventieth anniversary of the ending of WWII in Germany, the “Day of the Americans.” This day is one of reflection, remembrance, and gratitude, celebrated in a meaningful way in Europe and reported there at great length and in interesting details.

The day the Americans arrived in our town in Southern Germany (Lower Franconia) will always remain fixed in my mind. People were glad that there was no fighting in their town: women, children, and old people filled the streets; white flags were everywhere. The young men were still at war, dead, missing, or imprisoned. In some towns there was last-ditch fighting which led to destruction and civilian casualties. Diehard Nazis killed opponents of the regime to the very end, and I saw one young man hanging from a tree.

On this day in 1945, I met my first American soldier, the first black person I ever saw, who greeted me with the word “Blondi” and gave me my first orange with a piece of chocolate.

Since my mother (who had been an American citizen, but had had to report daily to the police headquarters in Nazi Germany) spoke English, she acted immediately as translator and guide to the American military.

My grandparents’ house in the next town became the U.S. headquarters for this region, and two MPs drove my mother to our relatives in Nuremberg. She wanted to find out whether they were still alive and how they had survived the daily bombing. Since the city of Nuremberg

had been Hitler's city of *Parteitage* (Nazi party days) – a gathering of the faithful and a place of big parades – it was leveled to the ground; very few buildings were left standing and finding one's orientation was extremely difficult.

My aunt's house, near the zoological garden, was the only one still standing among the ruins, and she greeted my mother and the U.S. soldiers with tears of joy. My aunt and relatives had spent days without food in the shelter at the bottom of their house. Had they gone to the official shelter, as demanded by the authorities, they would not have survived, and neither would I be here.

My mother worked for the American military government as translator and interpreter, and I was taken care of by my grandparents. One day, a strange man appeared, very thin, emaciated, and physically neglected. I did not recognize him, but my mother fell into his arms, and explained that he was my father, whom, of course, I didn't know, since I was born in 1940 in Nuremberg, in the midst of the war, and was raised by my aunt while my mother was working. My father, an anti-Nazi, had been on the Russian Front during the entire war, and was one of the few at the front who survived. (Many Nazi sympathizers had stayed behind in relative safety.)

My father had been in the Resistance from the beginning of the Third Reich (1933) and was sent to Dachau, the first concentration camp built in Bavaria. At that time he lived in the region of Coburg-Lichtenfels and was betrayed by friends. He was held until 1938, doing forced labor, but survived after suffering many hardships. (He is pictured on the cover of *Münchner Illustrierte*

*Presse*, a Munich newspaper that I found much later in a book entitled *Day of the Americans* by Nerin E. Gun, one of the American soldiers of the 45<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Divisions who liberated Dachau.) After his release from Dachau, since he spoke Russian, my father was sent to the Russian Front for the duration of the war as part of the *Nachrichtendienst* (Military News Service).

Here, in brief, is how I remember the last year of the war in the region where my mother and I lived – about an hour’s drive from Frankfurt, near the city of Würzburg, in Franconia, the northern part of Bavaria. Since it was easier to survive in a rural area, we settled there after we fled the daily bombings of Nuremberg. We were able to barter (*hamstern*), exchanging personal possessions for food, and we were thus able to survive hunger and cold. The bombers flew daily missions because in the next valley was a factory that produced gunpowder. However, the planes missed the factory since it was located in a narrow valley, surrounded by dense woods, in the Spessart range.

My mother and I spent our time in the cellar of the house where we lived (which belonged to the Fürst (Prince) von Löwenstein, a fervent anti-Nazi, where my grandfather had been *Domänenrat*, administrator in charge of all holdings and possessions), and we listened to BBC news, which was forbidden by the Third Reich and punishable by death. (The radio was covered with multiple blankets and the windows were covered as well.)

To this day, I get frightened by planes overhead and am fiercely against war.

In spite of all this, I don’t think that I had a deprived childhood. After the war had ended, my father

was immediately employed by the U.S. Military Government for the region (since he spoke English very well) and was put in charge of *Wiedergutmachung* (restitution) for Lower Franconia. He also assisted many young U.S. servicemen who had found German brides. He acted as a fatherly intermediary and interpreter, speaking to parents and relatives.

My upbringing was not without joy. I was raised with a great love of nature, since taking long walks and hikes were part of the Sunday routine in the *Spessart* and *Rhön*, mountainous regions. Picking flowers and berries was also a hobby. Years later, I still find peace and enjoyment in my daily walks at and around Lumberton.

However, most important for my personal development was the cultural environment my parents established at home despite the bleak surroundings. My mother was musically gifted, in voice and piano, and insisted that I take up the instrument when I was six years old. My father spoke five languages and had an extensive library, to which I was introduced early. This love of literature influenced my career choice.

I became a teacher of foreign languages (Spanish, German, French) – after working as a translator and bilingual secretary for the inventor of fiberglass in Munich and London – first at the high school level, then college where I could convey to my students the importance of studying a foreign language, literature, and culture, in fulfillment of a meaningful and enriched life.

A number of survivors of the Holocaust contacted us after the war, the first of whom was my father's best friend from Argentina. Justin Kraus located us and visit-



ed thereafter on a yearly basis. He also lent my father money so that he could start his own business.

In the fifties, we also opened our house to my father's former commander on the Russian front. He and his family lived with us until he could find employment and housing. His oldest son became an important CDU functionary in the party of Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany.

My father's new business partner, Klaus Marcus, who was half-Jewish, had escaped the Germans by deserting – on his commander's advice – and found refuge with his girlfriend, who hid him until the end of the war. They married afterwards and he became my father's life-long friend.

A former girlfriend of my father's, who escaped from Germany in 1938 and settled in New York City, found us in Germany after the war and provided me an affidavit of support to come to the United States, which I did in the mid-sixties. I met my husband, Eric, whose family had escaped from Nazi Germany just in time, in 1939. I completed my studies in Spanish (Ph.D. in Latin-American literature), subsequently receiving a succession of academic appointments.

*Hannelore Hahn*

## BERGEN TO OSLO

The sleek red express train from Bergen to Oslo  
Swishes along its way hurrying home.  
It passes the farms and the tiny Norse hamlets,  
Evergreen forest and high mountain dome.

Summer rains cover the city of Bergen,  
The streets and the market are somber gray hue.  
We rumble through tunnels beneath the great mountain  
Then out through the pass to a sky azure blue.

First after Bergen come Arna and Dale,  
Vos, Vaksdal, Upsete and Myrdal so proud.  
With boxes of asters and bright yellow daisies,  
But don your warm mittens in the high Finsecloud.

The old folks descend with their ski walking sticks,  
The young with their knapsacks high over their head.  
A little girl runs at the speed of the train.  
“Good-bye, dear brother, I love you,” she said.

The houses are barn red or bright yellow ochre.  
They’re blue or they’re brown or a dark forest green.  
And filling the boxes at every train station  
Pink asters and bold purple lupines are seen.

We clatter by mountain peaks ridge after ridge,  
The highest among them just bare rock or snow.  
Good-bye crofter’s cottages, brown railway stations,  
Onward to home via busy Oslo.

*Edith “Deedy” Roberts*



## EVIL WATER

I was about seven years old and my brother Michael was ten. We lived in a market town of about 45,000 inhabitants, located along the Regen River in Germany. My father was one of two judges in the district, which encompassed our town and several other small towns and villages. He was six feet tall with straight build, black hair sprinkled with lots of gray, and a scar on his forehead due to a dueling hit while he was at university. Serious gray eyes looked at you through gray-steel-rimmed glasses.

One day at the customary noon dinner he announced that he would be visiting the university for several days. It was located in his home town of Würzburg, where he was born. His mother lived there and he would be staying with her. Then came the second announcement: he would take Michael with him to get him better acquainted with his grandmother and to introduce his son to his friends. My ears picked up. Why could I not also go? I was instantly jealous. I had forgotten that older siblings get to experience things first while the younger ones have to wait their turn.



Michael was a typical boy with a sturdy body and twinkling brown eyes. And he was three years older than I. Upon their return Dad disclosed that during his visit he had enrolled Michael in a swim class and Michael came out of it a swimmer. Now I was really upset and full of envy. Why him and not me too?

Not long after that our father took Michael and me to the river for bathing and swimming. This was a private area, but he had permission to use it.

We left from the rear garden gate, crossed a large meadow and arrived at the river's edge. At that point the water was shallow, only gradually increasing in depth farther out. Dad wore a white shirt over his bathing suit to protect his sensitive skin from the sun. We arrived at the swimming area and Dad and Michael went directly into the water while I stopped when the water barely reached my ankles. All of a sudden I was scared of the water. Its wide expanse terrorized me and there was nothing to hold onto. I started crying bitterly. It was some time before Dad noticed my distress. He came rushing to my rescue, assured me that there was nothing to fear and carried me into the river. I calmed down.

After our sojourn at the river we headed home along its edge. Along the way the river had formed little pools about three to four feet deep, partially surrounded by growths of weeds. Michael had picked up some sticks to play with and proceeded to drop one. I yelled "I'll get it!" and reached for it. I promptly fell headfirst into one of those pools. Dad jumped in and pulled me out. My only comment was "All of sudden there was all that water around me!" At that moment I decided I would learn how to swim and conquer the evil water.

The riverbank at the town's swim facility was similar to the one we three had been bathing in, but it was much more extended. There was a metal platform with a metal railing and wooden walkways separating different swim depths. A barn-like clapboard structure contained changing rooms. We usually went with mother, although

father joined us on weekends. Mother would go into the water to cool off and then sit around with her girlfriends gossiping. She didn't pay much attention to us.

My parents made me wear a cork safety belt. But over a period of several visits to the swim facility I executed my plan. I had studied the breaststroke movements. First I laid myself in water, just covering my prone body. I started moving my arms and legs like a breaststroke swimmer. When I felt comfortable with my progress I moved to slightly deeper water and repeated my exercise until I was satisfied. Then into still deeper water, continuing the movements. Eventually I was delighted to experience some forward movement. When the water was waist-deep, with the cork belt keeping me afloat, I began to move forward easily. I kept on going deeper with great success. Now it was time to jettison the cork belt and repeat all the previous movements. After a few more increments I went into the deep area where I could not stand and swam along the side of the area. Just then my father espied me and started yelling for me to get out and get my cork belt. I refused and instead swam across the pool. He was amazed and wanted to know who taught me. I said: "I taught myself!" He was quite surprised.

Later he showed me how to breathe properly. At last I had conquered the evil water. My endeavor became the talk of the family and I was no longer jealous.

*Stefan Frank*

## HAVING A GOOD DAY

“**H**ave a good day!” people enjoin one another when about to part company.

But what is a good day? For some, it is when the stock market rises. For others, being spoken to by an important person makes a day good.

For me, however, if the number of things I drop is fewer than eight, the day has been good. I meet this standard rarely. Dropping things isn't the real issue. It's retrieving them that is the challenge. I don't know where the dropped object will land and whether I will have to bend, stretch or squat to reach it. The object I drop the most is a cane. Although I use a walker to get around outside of my apartment, inside I use two canes. They prop me up like Therapy staff trying to keep ailing patients on their feet.

When not on duty, the canes stand upright on their cloverleaf-shaped bases. It is easy to knock one over. Fortunately, when fallen it doesn't lie prone but curves up off the floor. I am able to grasp and right it with a short stretch of my arm.

This isn't true of coins and paper clips that lie flat when they fall. They are so thin that grasping them is impossible. So instead, I chew a piece of gum, attach it to my grabber and push it on to the errant piece of metal. If the gum is sufficiently sticky, up comes the coin or clip.

Retrieving fallen objects most often involves using agile fingers and good body balance, but occasionally a situation calls for more than these. Such was the case

when I dropped a paperback as I was passing through the double automatic doors leading from ground floor Haddon to parking lot I. When I started to rescue my book, the doors calculated I had used up my allotted time for getting past them and began to close. I was halfway through when they slammed my rear end, almost laying me as flat as the book. With a burst of energy I squeezed through them, barely eluding their grasp.

My cat Goldie has a different approach to dropping things. She only drops; she doesn't retrieve. If she finds a small object on the kitchen counter or night table, she gently nudges it to the edge until space runs out and it drops. Then she peers down to see what has happened to it. She takes no responsibility for returning it to where it belongs.

Having to retrieve fallen objects has caused me to focus more attention on what I am doing, and that is a good thing. But it is not the best. The best thing about my dropping objects is the opportunity it offers for people to be kind – to smile and say, “Let me get that for you.” That creates a bond between us of giving and receiving, enriching us both.

*Kay Cooley*







Bittersweet-laden.  
ancient willow, can you last  
'til spring robins come?

*Elizabeth Hicks*

## DECEMBER

Brave poinsettia  
Radiates its warmth.  
Its wild nature is bent  
To green growth and  
Extravagant crimson.  
Behold its Crowning Star.

*Chris Darlington*





JLS

## THE TANGLEWOOD QUARTET

*Dedicated to the Founding of the Tanglewood Music Center by Serge Koussevitzky in 1940, on its 75th Anniversary.*

New England in the summer can be hot and humid, especially if you find yourself stuck in summer school. A college dorm is not the most pleasant place to be when most of the students and teaching staff are gone, possibly enjoying themselves at some beach or mountain resort. Stan and Walt, sitting on their dorm room beds, were their usual grumpy selves. Davis came in and tried to cheer them up by putting a jazz record on the turntable. It didn't seem to help. When Mort came into the room they hardly looked up. He also tried to lighten the mood: "So, what's on for tonight?"

Stan looked up and mumbled, "A movie?"

Walt nodded to this suggestion, "Let's go to the Loews Paoli."

Two hours in an air-conditioned movie house helped lift their sour dispositions. The four took the short walk after the movie to the Wagon Wheel tavern. When they entered it was noisy, filled with students and old-timers. The air was heavy with smoke and the smell of beer. An old racing Trotter Cart hung from the ceiling and wagon wheels decorated all the walls. Mort ordered a pitcher of tap beer and Davis found an empty table. After they had finished a round of drinks Davis said, "I've got a plan if you guys are game for it." He swallowed the beer that was left in his glass and continued, "I would like to hear a live concert at the Tanglewood Music Festival. I know none us has the

admission money to get in, so how about we go and get in as music students?”

“As students!” echoed Mort.

“As music students?” said a shocked Stan.

This brought on a fit of laughter as they finished another round of beer.

“Yes,” said Davis, “students. We can drive to Tanglewood with our musical instruments and get in with all the other students.”

“Instruments, music instruments?” the other three chimed in. “You’ve got to be kidding. None of us except you has ever played an instrument in our lives.”

Davis raised his hands to quiet them down. “Just listen for a moment, will you. We can make a bunch of fake cases out of cardboard, violins, violas, clarinets, and paint them black and away we go.”

“Away we go to nowhere,” said Mort. “How do you know it’ll work, and where do we get all the material to do this?”

“You know, Davis, this means a 100-mile drive in your old Ford, with the chance for an unhappy ending,” said Walt.

“Ease up, guys, I can get the cardboard and paint from the Art Studio and I can make the outlines from our band instruments that are stored in the Music Department. Since I play in the band, that’s no problem. All I’m asking of you guys is to give it a chance.”

There was a dead silence around the table, a silence that seemed out of place in this crowded, noisy saloon.

With a deep sigh, Mort exclaimed, “OK, why not, what have we got to lose. Let’s give it a try.”

“You’re right,” said Walt, “it’s been a dull summer so far, books, tests, and heat.”

With unanimous agreement the four began to put the next steps in place. Davis obtained the instrument outlines, while the others helped prepare the cardboard cutouts and painted them. Finally on a cloudy Friday afternoon they packed up the old Ford and headed west toward Lenox. It was early evening when they reached Great Barrington.

“OK, any suggestions where we stay tonight?” Davis asked.

“I know a place,” said Mort. “Just follow my directions.” He led the car down a country road, just outside North Egremont. The car’s headlights illuminated a small Victorian chapel.

“They call this the Shrine,” said Mort. “Some wealthy guy built it for his wife a long time ago. Hardly anyone ever comes here anymore. It’s a good place to camp tonight.”

In the moonlight the quartet laid out their blankets, ate the sandwiches and drank the sodas they had brought, and went to sleep.

They woke up early to the sound of birds as a light wind whispered through the trees. The Shrine looked even more medieval in the morning sunlight. They had a quick wash-up in the small lake nearby, then packed up the car and headed out to Tanglewood. Davis parked the car in one of the Music Center parking lots not far from the student entrance gate.

“Well, here goes nothing,” said Walt as he grabbed his handmade violin case.

“Do you think a prayer would help?” Stan asked with a smile, putting the clarinet case under his arm.

“Just a little bit of luck,” chimed in Davis and Mort as they picked up their viola and violin cases.

There was a large contingent of students at the Music Center gate. After a short wait two security guards came over and opened the gate entrance. Slowly the line of men and women went through. The valiant four mixed into the student groups and with the sun shining down through the trees, they became part of these eager, excited musicians with their instruments who were enrolled in the Music Center School. As part of the flow they were on the grounds of Tanglewood. Now they had to find a way to appear inconspicuous – at least until the main gates opened for the concert. They deposited their cardboard instruments behind one of the rehearsal sheds and took turns watching for security guards.

They were tired and hungry when the main gates opened and a flood of people entered the grounds. When the food stand opened they purchased something to eat and drink.

The sun was low in the western sky when the four settled on the grass lawn facing the music shed. At the sound of applause they stood up with others and watched Serge Koussevitzky step onto the podium. They settled back on the grass and listened as the strains of Beethoven filled the air. It made everything they had planned and executed seem worthwhile. Even better than they had expected. More applause followed with the



entrance of Isaac Stern, and with it the music of Brahms's Violin Concerto. Now each note felt like icing on the cake. The four looked at each other and with smiles and understood that this trip, this evening at Tanglewood, was something they would never forget.

On the drive back to school they said very little. Davis spoke for all of them.

“How about we try this again sometime?”

No one answered as the car headed east into a new day for the Tanglewood Quartet.

*George Rubin*

## MEMORY, LONG TERM AND SHORT

Whatever happened to that brash 13-year-old  
who shamelessly threw her arms around my neck  
and locked the gaze of her hazel eyes on mine?

Whatever happened to that 14-year-old in the Juliet cap,  
whom I sought so eagerly when the curtain parted  
at the end of the worship service?

Whatever happened to the girl whose cheek I kissed,  
leaning out the window in that precious last second  
before the train began to move  
– a kiss that would sustain me for months to come?

We were children, uprooted from parental home  
by persecution and war,  
deposited in a strange country where people spoke  
a strange language,  
and after five loveless years we had found each other.

But postwar reunion with parents, who had been denied  
bearing witness to their child's flowering,  
was just as disruptive as the original parting.

Preoccupied with memories of suffering  
they had barely survived,  
they had little patience with my romantic awakening,  
did not rejoice with me, did not allow my adolescence  
to run its natural, happy course.

Fearful and suspicious, they maligned, blocked, warned,  
and thereby sullied our parent-child relationship.  
What a shame they didn't simply let youth's fancy  
bloom and wither of its own accord.

Seventy years later – years of maturity,  
settled with life partner, children, grandchildren –  
she vividly remembers that lush oasis  
in the desolate landscape of our childhood.

But the present eludes her.  
She forgets my answer  
to the question she asked just minutes ago,  
even forgets that she asked.

So she asks again,  
and asks again,  
and forgets both answer and question each time.

That's what happened to her.  
She did not choose what to remember  
and what to forget;  
her illness mercifully chose for her.

Mercifully, because forgotten questions can be repeated,  
over and over until remembered,  
but forgotten memories of youth are lost forever.

*Herb Heineman*

## WEB OF FRIENDSHIPS

When it comes to friends,  
my network is a spider web  
of fluttering, fragile filaments.  
Each change of affiliation and geography  
has left my web frail.  
Few ties still bind from shared  
experiences, attentions, kindnesses.  
A web is not a robust structure,  
it loses shape, it blows away.  
I let many gossamer connections go  
when new life phases offered others.  
A pinch of guilt, a sense of sadness  
when I hear of troubles those friends have had.  
But I never left some special ones;  
even over phone lines or e-mails, we re-connect;  
they are the strongest strands.  
Deaths cause the greatest dissolutions.  
They are gaping holes in my web,  
with memories in place of threads,  
empty spaces I cannot reweave.  
New friendships may fill some disappearances,  
but their endurance is still unknown.

*Joyce Linda Sichel*



## CHOICES

Whenever I walk I seem to look down as I put one foot in front of the other. This may come from spending eighty years living on a dairy farm. When walking in cow pastures you always look down.

Then one day while shopping at ShopRite, I saw just ahead of me something crumpled in the aisle. Picking it up, unfolding it, I saw it was a \$20 bill. I knew the right thing to do was to turn it into the office, but it would fit in my pocket very nicely. However, I did what my conscience said I should and went up to Customer Service and asked what the policy was. The store employee said they would keep it and if no one reported losing a \$20 bill, they would call me. I forgot all about it until about a month later when I received a call from ShopRite saying the money had not been claimed and I could pick it up.

Another time I found \$5 in a grocery store and turned that in. It was later returned to me when no one claimed it. I walked out of the store with the \$5 happily in my hand. How lucky I am. I got to the car and there was a \$5 parking ticket on the windshield. I learned virtue wasn't always its own reward.

Then I remembered pushing wheelchairs to Vespers, sitting down and listening to the talk about choices. The minister said we have choices: choices of where we live, our occupations, our family values, and most things in our lives.

I think about the choices that daily life provides. The store could have just kept the money. I would not have known it. I could have kept the money, but that

would not have been the right choice for me. The person who lost the money would not have had a chance to claim it. Maybe the next time I have the opportunity to give to the less fortunate, I will be a little more generous. In the meantime I will continue to look down when walking.

*Irene Jones*

## NO TEARS IN SMALL CLAIMS COURT

“All rise!”

The judge enters, walks to the bench, and says: “Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, you may be seated.” A minority of those in attendance are here for the first time. Maybe they’re intimidated by this rite, maybe not. For the majority, including the mediators, it’s just a church-like routine: sit, rise (hiding the crossword puzzle), and sit again.

We’re in Burlington County Superior Court, Mount Holly. This is where cases are heard that fall within the jurisdiction of the Special Civil Part (maximum claim \$15,000) of the Civil Division. The majority of claims are actually for \$3,000 or less, so-called Small Claims, for which the trial procedures are less elaborate and faster. Mediators treat them all the same and refer to them all as “small claims.”

Judges typically open the proceedings with a brief “speech” (their term), in which they advise litigants what to expect, and what is expected of them should their cases come to trial, i.e., should they fail to settle in mediation. Special emphasis is given to the following:

*Litigants representing themselves without an attorney (pro se) are held to the same standards as attorneys.*

*Monetary awards will be made only to cover monetary losses, not annoyance, frustration, or punishment for discourteous behavior prior to coming to court. Some judges suggest that litigants “check their emotions at the door.”*



*Supporting opinions by witnesses will be admitted only if the witnesses are present for questioning. All else, including written statements, will be rejected as “hearsay.”*

*Decisions will be based on preponderance of credible evidence, be it ever so slight.*

*By order of the New Jersey Supreme Court, all special civil suits must be submitted to mediation.*

Enter the mediators, who offer a way to bypass the trial procedures. The judge introduces us as people with life experience, specially trained in settling disputes. (S)he goes on to explain the advantages of mediation: speed, a mutually acceptable resolution, and time payments if agreed on. (The judge cannot order a plaintiff to accept installments.) Litigants are expected to mediate in good faith. One judge used to drive home her point by promising two consequences to anyone unwilling to do so: first, they'd be sent right back to mediation; second, if they didn't settle then, they'd go to the bottom of the trial list. That could mean several hours waiting, because trials are held on the same day; only rarely does a judge grant a continuance, or postponement. With upwards of 20,000 cases a year to dispose of, they are loath to carry any over.

The judge next calls the cases and in each case asks plaintiff and defendant to stand and identify themselves. In about half the cases, only one party is present. If plaintiff has failed to show, the case is dismissed; if defendant has failed to show, plaintiff is awarded a default judgment. In the latter case, plaintiff still has to show that the claim was reasonable before receiving authorization to pursue payment.

Mediators are trained by court personnel. A typical course of training occupies two full days in class, upon completion of which trainees are assigned to observe actual mediation sessions. Next they are permitted to “co-mediate,” or take an active part. When deemed competent by experienced mediators, they are ready to mediate on their own. I took my training in 2002 and have served on average three mornings a month ever since.

Mediators develop their own styles, but all must subscribe to a code of ethics, whose most important components are impartiality and confidentiality. The first of these seems self-evident, but projecting an impartial demeanor when one party seems so obviously in the right demands self-discipline. A mediator also must not forget that a litigator who *seems* to be in the right may be judged at trial to be in the wrong, or special circumstances may complicate the issue.

The need for confidentiality seems equally self-evident, but there is an interesting twist: *even the judge is not permitted* to know about the deliberations in mediation. The reported outcome of any mediation is either an agreement or no agreement, never what was offered and rejected. Otherwise neither party would make an offer, for fear that the other party would use it against them in court as admission of responsibility. If either party refused to negotiate in good faith, however, that fact may be reported to the judge.

Attorneys may be present at mediation together with their clients. Strictly speaking, while permitted to counsel their clients, they can be required to refrain from actual negotiation, or argument, and leave the discourse up to the principals. I personally welcome attorneys, be-

cause in most cases they bring a calming influence and help keep negotiations on track. Not all my fellow-mediators feel this way.

If an agreement is reached, it is entered on a standard form, usually by the mediator, and signed by both parties. It is then forwarded to the judge for approval and signature (rarely refused), and copies are given to both parties. The agreement has now become a court order and all are free to leave.

In the absence of an agreement the parties take their place in line for trial.

Here's my personal style of mediating.

*Greet the parties and introduce myself.*

*Ask whether they've been in mediation before. (The majority have!)*

*If even a single participant is in mediation for the first time, I explain the process: (1) reinforce what the judge has already said; (2) encourage them to compromise rather than risk an adverse ruling; (3) point out that rejecting an offer in favor of putting the matter to the judge may mean going away empty-handed; (4) explain that the judge will not allow a rejected offer to be mentioned at trial – in other words, (s)he will rule on the entirety of the claim.*

*I point out that an agreement allows both parties to walk away partially satisfied; a trial verdict produces a winner and a loser, and the latter is likely to be resentful.*

*If either party is represented by more than one individual, I request they choose a spokesperson. However, I don't require total silence from the others. The objective is an orderly proceeding without inhibiting anyone's freedom of expression. If an attorney tries to cross-examine the other party, I remind them that trial tactics are*

*inappropriate in mediation. In all cases, I encourage members of each party to consult with each other, in private if desired.*

*If I feel that either party is being unreasonable or unaware of the consequences of their position, I speak with each separately and in confidence. (The technical term for this one-side-at-a-time conversation is caucus.) Having guaranteed not to tell the absent party the details of our conversation, I feel free to express my concern without embarrassing either side, and they feel free to tell me what they don't want the other to hear. This is a good opportunity to tell the defendant that losing in court would mean a judgment against them, with possible credit consequences. If either side suggests a settlement in caucus, I ask that they, rather than I, put it on the table when we reconvene – unless they ask me to do so.*

*I don't suggest a specific settlement unless requested. If one side asks, "What do you think is reasonable?" I request the other's permission before answering.*

*At any time during our conference, I may remind the litigants that I'm not a judge and have no authority whatever, except to keep order. This doesn't diminish the respect with which all parties, including their attorneys, treat me.*

After a successful mediation, the parties often thank me; I tell them the agreement is their doing; and on that note we all part friends. As often as not, they'll thank me for the effort even if they don't settle. It's virtually impossible for the mediator to lose; the ego benefits are considerable.

Early on I kept records and found that my success rate, like that of other mediators, was about 75%.

For mediators, special civil court differs in many respects from family court, about which I wrote earlier ("Tuesday Morning," *Leas Lit*, number 27, June 2014).

Most important, the judge is present and a mediator may watch the trial in any case that has not been settled. (I once took my fifteen-year-old grandson along, with the judge's permission. He sat in quietly on the mediation and on the trial that followed. His verdict: "Cool.") In family court the mediators don't meet the judges, who try the cases elsewhere and often weeks later.

Although special civil court is meant to be strictly, and only, about money, interesting situations arise that prove the parties did not check their emotions at the door. A lawsuit is often the climax of a relationship that has soured progressively due to ignored letters, texts, or emails, unreturned telephone calls, or other slights. In such cases, parties bring a considerable reservoir of anger to court, and telling them to leave it at the door may be asking the impossible. Here skilled mediators can be helpful by, first, reiterating their neutrality; second, giving each party to understand that the other's position deserves respectful consideration; third, emphasizing that the judge will not allow emotional issues to enter into consideration; and finally, caucusing to give them the opportunity to vent feelings without further stoking resentment. In fact, a skillful mediator is a buffer between warring parties and can, once feelings have subsided, actually produce handshakes between former adversaries.

A mediator needs to understand the basis of the claim and the defense against it. However, when either of the parties begins to present evidence or witnesses, they are reminded that their task in mediation is to convince the other party, not the mediator. I routinely tell the parties that documents, photographs, and witnesses may be offered in court – where they may or may not be

accepted into evidence – but are useful in mediation only as a means of negotiating a settlement.

Despite the serious nature of the proceeding, there can be a lighter side to small-claims mediation.

A Sikh plaintiff claimed that the defendant, also a Sikh, had not reimbursed him for fuel expenses transporting heavy goods in his truck; the defendant claimed he had paid, but could not produce supporting documents. Instead, he brought his teenage daughter, who carried a book-sized package wrapped in colorful cloth. I asked her what she was carrying, and she said, “The Holy Book.” Why not unwrap it and show us? The Holy Book is unwrapped only on holy occasions (which a lawsuit evidently is not). Whether the hidden object was in reality The Holy Book, her calculus text, or a box of chocolates, only she and her father knew. To my surprise, plaintiff volunteered to drop the case if defendant swore on The Holy Book that he had paid. Defendant swore. *Dismissed.*

Two parties negotiated a settlement of hundreds of dollars for a claim but refused to compromise on the \$22 filing fee. I suggested that the judge might not take kindly to adjudicating a case hung up solely on the \$22 fee. A moment of silence, a shrug of the shoulders, and an even split. *Settled.*

A plaintiff rejected a compromise offer and insisted on going before the judge. The judge ruled for defendant and sent plaintiff away with nothing. This scenario is quite common but evidently not common enough to sway litigants who are convinced the judge will see things their way. *I try to dissuade them from gambling but don't always succeed.*

A plaintiff appeared before the judge, after failed mediation, stating that her claim was a matter of principle, which meant as much to her as the money. The judge famously said, “All right, you get the principle and defendant keeps the money.” *A rare win-win verdict.*

Some cases seem to sit astride family and small claims courts. A separated couple arguing in family court over a parenting schedule revealed that the soon-to-be ex-husband had purchased a ring for his soon-to-be new wife using the credit card he still shared with the first wife. The first wife objected to subsidizing her rival’s jewelry. They settled out of court.

Unlike family court, tears seldom flow in small claims court, but there are exceptions. A teenager (legally minor) came to court with his mother, who represented him in claiming that the defendant dog breeder had sold him a puppy with kidney disease. Despite heroic efforts and large veterinarian bills, the puppy died – but not before establishing a bond of deep affection with son and mother. (Can you imagine otherwise?) Mother broke into tears as she spoke of their bereavement, while son wept silently next to her. Before long defendant was crying too. Mine were the only dry eyes in the room. Telling myself that I must remain strong in the face of so much grief, I conducted the session to an acceptable resolution: the defendant refunded the cost of the puppy. My wife later explained to me: “A puppy? Aw! That really belonged in family court, don’t you think?”

So there you have it: No tears in small claims court.

*Herb Heineman*

## SABBATH

I sit here facing benches covered with bright blue cushions. A large beach umbrella shades this page. Tall grasses wave in the slight breeze. Here on Holly Tree Road the holly trees stand taller than the houses.

Is this my Sabbath? Is this my time of renewal? Do I find solace in the quiet exercise of writing? For most of my life my hands have had to be busy. I look at them: cracked, lined fingernails, darker patches where my skin has done battle with the sun, deep veins forming ridges across the wrinkles. When these hands are quietly at work my mind is at peace. Today the work is writing. Some days it is crocheting. On other days these hands pick up a violin. Lately the work of my hands has been more strenuous and thus the need for Sabbath, the need to find a break in the massive task I have set myself.

From floor to ceiling our cellar is full of STUFF – STUFF with capital letters. It's the remains of long active lives and of a husband who felt that the paper trail of our lives could house our memories. I grumbled and complained for years as the cartons rose higher and higher. I have the sense that my rest will finally come when all the boxes and all the papers have gone. A break comes when I have filled the recycling bin for the week. Yesterday's task was three small cartons of address cards. I looked at every single one. Each one represented a good strong handshake, a good look in the eye, a smile, a word of thanks. There were so many, many people – UN wannabes, Quaker activists, innumerable personnel people in the long search for work, handymen, musicians,



map stores. On and on it went in the swirling circle of Chris's life. I saved out a few and dumped an overflowing scrap basket in to the recycling. I gave myself permission to rest for the day.

A special treat has been the presence of my son Jamie, who yesterday purchased a huge bag of African brown rice. He mixed some with green beans, peas, zucchini, onions and lots of strong spices. There was no meat. The taste was heavenly. I went to bed early last night and slept without waking. And now we have this day, this beautiful day – Sabbath.

*Edith "Deedy" Roberts*

## ONCE UPON A POEM

A poem can be short or long,  
It can tell a story or create a song.  
It can make you happy when things go bad,  
Remove the sadness and make you glad.

Sophistication is not required,  
With simplest thoughts you become inspired.  
It doesn't matter if the sky is gray,  
You can chase those nasty blues away.

If there is rain and the sun's not shining,  
Around the bend there's a silver lining.  
Make the best of what life imparts,  
Bring only joy to human hearts.

It's a waste of time to sit and brood,  
Think happy thoughts, it'll change your mood.  
Each new tomorrow is on its way,  
Night's always followed by a brand new day!!

So many gifts to be thankful for,  
Although pain's not easy to ignore.  
Dispel the gloom that's in your head;  
Sit down and write a poem instead.

What can you do to make life better?  
Make a call or write a letter.  
Put down the words that will set you free;  
And change the world to what it ought to be.

*Yolanda Guastavino*