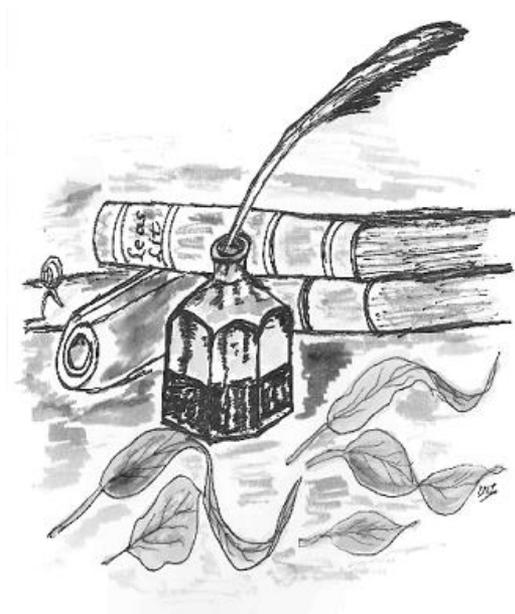


# Leas Lit



ORIGINAL WRITING AND ART  
BY RESIDENTS OF MEDFORD LEAS

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The staff of Leas Lit gratefully dedicates this issue to Helen Vukasin, a writer as well as an artist.

Helen's interest and support of this publication has been genuine and helpful over the years. She guided us through troubled waters, dealt with contentious writers and editors, and did a difficult job well. Her artistry and spirit will be greatly missed.

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## DAD'S PIPE SMOKE

The scent of smoke permeates my memory.  
Warm hugs — clothes rich with the smell of tobacco  
The old chair from college days — ashtray to the side  
That moment of blessed rest after a long day  
Puffed circles in the air . . . “Oh, wow!”  
Blessed Daddy, was it the smoke that lofted you  
away from me far far too soon?

*Edith Roberts*



## IN THE TRADES

In the 1950s I was a compliant, frilly-frocked, white-socked little girl. By the 1970s I was an orange-bloused, brown-slacked, work-booted woman on a forklift.

I left college with a useless but entertaining degree in cultural anthropology, a field that was alive for a few decades but ultimately dove into statistics and died. The economy was ill, too, and I had student loans to repay.

Every morning I went through the Help Wanted ads, which were in those days still segregated into Man Wanted and Woman Wanted. Jobs considered female would never provide enough money, so I decided to cross the gender line.

In the newspaper I read an ad for a job as a car mechanic trainee. An Egyptian couple who owned a garage was looking for a helper. What did I know about cars? Well, I owned a Volkswagen Beetle, with an engine secured to the frame with only four bolts. I liked to take the engine out, set it on the driveway, and clean what I could reach or maybe change a simple part. Therefore I could learn to fix car engines. The Egyptians were hospitable, serving me tea and cookies at the interview. They were willing to hire me. But I never made it to the garage job. As soon as they told me that the work also entailed making tea for customers, I fled.

Next, I registered at the employment office, making it clear that I was interested in the trades. “There’s a manager trainee position at a lumberyard,” a job counse-

lor told me doubtfully. At the lumberyard, the manager asked me, “Why should I hire you? You don’t know a thing.” “Precisely,” I told him. “You can train me any way you’d like. I’ll follow your directions exactly. I’ll be a model employee. I have to prove that we women can do this work.” The manager thought about that. “OK, that makes sense, but we don’t even have uniforms for women.” As I filled out all the new employee paperwork, I put in an order for brown uniform slacks and orange shirts in small men’s sizes. When I started work, I wore my own T-shirt or turtleneck underneath. But men kept coming up to me from behind and asking, “Excuse me, sir, can you help me find...” Having no desire to be confused for a male, I promptly took four uniforms to a tailor who gave me back my waist, and I sent the huge bill to Grossman’s Lumber. Shortly thereafter, one of the head honchos appeared from headquarters. “Do you think there will be more women working in the trades, or are you just a fluke?” I gave him my best forecast. Within a few months Grossman’s had contracted with their uniform manufacturer for women’s work clothes.

Life in the lumberyard was grueling but often amusing. We kept informal score of which employees hit the most light fixtures inside the store when raising the forks of the forklift to put sheetrock or plywood deliveries onto the shelves. I never hit any at all; it was necessary to prove that I could be better than the guys. Every few days we drove the forklift next door to the gas station. I always got a reaction while I was gassing up. Usually women looked absolutely delighted. Once a man asked me, “Is that some kind of a car?” He just couldn’t process that what I was driving really was a forklift. I cherish the day an enormous flatbed truck drove in to

deliver bags of concrete mix, when out of the cab popped the driver, a tiny Vietnamese woman. She and I gave each other a proud smile.

Although I did my best, of course I made mistakes. The boss asked me to price a delivery of molding, the thin, expensive strips of wood that go around edges of walls inside buildings. I took the price-per-foot guide with all the photos, the stamp, and the ink pad and sat down on the floor to identify each kind of molding so that I could price it correctly. But I didn't know which side of each molding would face out, nor did I know to ask. I hate to reveal that I stamped the price on the good side of at least a thousand dollars' worth of molding which then could not be used because the purple ink would bleed through paint or stain.

Our Grossman's customers saw that I worked hard and tried to be helpful. I started getting job offers. After three years, I went to work for a man with a small, well-reputed windows, siding, and insulation business. We drove around New England together showing samples, measuring, and calculating prices. In those days we crawled around in attics with no masks or special clothing, a hot and itchy job. Often we would sell to a large institution such as a school. I learned how difficult it is to count and measure windows on a Victorian home with multiple additions.

It was the beginning of the energy conservation era, so there was plenty of related work. My state set up a program of inexpensive residential energy audits through the utility company. I jumped over to that. Homeowners would call a central number to request an audit. Each auditor would be scheduled to perform fourteen audits

per week. We put a lot of mileage on our own cars. By now, more women were interested in doing non-traditional work, but the sight of us still caused consternation. I wore a tool belt for this job and not surprisingly that elicited comments. I remember ringing one doorbell where a man answered, looked me over, and said, "Is the auditor in the car?" Another man wouldn't let me do the furnace efficiency test, which involved simply putting a special thermometer into the existing hole in the flu pipe for a few moments. He growled, "No woman touches my furnace!" As part of energy auditing, I needed the exterior measurements of each home. As I unspooled my extra-long measuring tape, some suspicious guy said, "Who taught you to measure?" I refrained from saying that it was probably my second-grade teacher.

Delightful surprises did counteract any hostility. I remember one day when I arrived about ten minutes early for an audit appointment. I parked my car at the street end of a long dirt driveway. As I walked toward the home, I heard someone playing stunning piano pieces. I sat on the porch in goose bumps, without ringing the doorbell, and listened until it was exactly time for the audit. Later I learned that the musician was a well-known pianist who was practicing for a New York concert the following day. Many artists and musicians hid from publicity in homes in the New England woods. We auditors worked nearly invisibly, so we were privy to wonderful music and art exposures.

At times we witnessed moving episodes in our clients' lives. People in their homes sometimes confide intimate stories or secrets to tradespeople whom they will only see once. In one home there were photos on every surface. But they were all pictures of one young teenage

girl. As eerie as this was, it was not my business to ask questions. At the end of the audit, the homeowner asked me to stay for tea. I had time. Crying, she whispered that her daughter had been murdered the year before.

Having completed two thousand audits, I relocated to a different state. Crawling around attics or bare-dirt-floored half-cellars wasn't a pleasure any more. But I had a huge, updated store of knowledge of energy conservation. I took a position in a small energy policy nonprofit organization that helped large nonprofits to develop their own energy use policies. Perfect, except that I had no work clothes besides the tattered khakis and button-down shirts I had worn for audits. I wrongly assumed that the first day of work would be an orientation in the office. The director took one look at me and actually sent me home to change clothes. We had an important appointment in an hour. I rustled up a black turtleneck and an old red and green wool kilt from high school and scurried back to the office. You could see the steam coming from the top of the director's head. "Let's go. But don't you ever wear that again!" Our appointment turned out to be with the Catholic archdiocese concerning energy use in their entire system of churches, schools, and administrative buildings. I could see that formal work attire had been called for, but somehow my plaid kilt felt perversely appropriate to the surroundings. The director didn't see the joke. As soon as she and I returned to the office, she fired me.

At that point I decided perhaps I ought to give up the trades. I went back to school, studying law, where I was nearly tempted to specialize in construction or housing law. The Mt. Laurel low-income housing cases were happening right on our doorstep and they raised

fascinating issues. My cumulative work experience meant that I could comfortably talk with builders as well as legal professionals. But just then the field of mediation bloomed. It made sense to me. I let the trades go and went back into employment that was more traditionally female, talking things out.

I wish I had kept my tool belt. There's something about having everything you need right there in case something needs fixing. Life should be so easy.

*Judy Kruger*

## CHANGES AHEAD

Through relentless frigid weather,  
Days and days of endless snow.  
Dreams of meadows, hills and heather,  
Warmer days we soon will know.

As we make it through the winter,  
New hopes rise within our hearts.  
Nothing can forestall or hinder,  
All the promise spring imparts.

Snow so pristine as it is falling,  
When it first lies on the ground.  
Cause our lives now to be stalling  
And just waiting to rebound.

Robins in our lawns are feeding,  
Feverishly searching all around.  
Do they know warm weather's coming?  
God's own creatures hear the sound.

Soon the crocus will be growing,  
Followed by the daffodil.  
Tulips, tree buds will be showing!  
Recycling life renews our will.

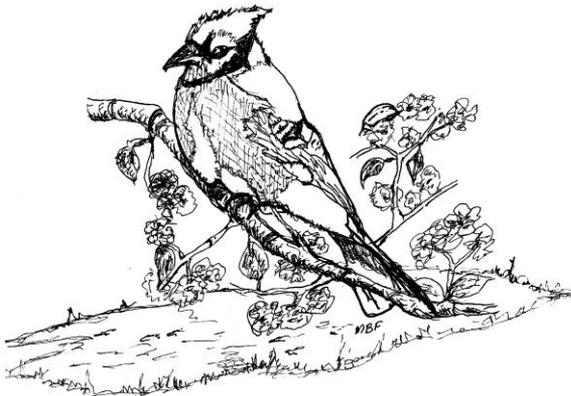
Hope renewed with each new morning,  
As we greet a brand new day.  
Making plans with each new dawning,  
For summer will soon be on its way.

We can stroll along the seashore,  
Watching seagulls in their flight.  
Tell me what more could we ask for.  
Rolling waves from morn till night.

Drop a fish line in the water,  
If you're lucky, you'll get one.  
Either way it doesn't matter.  
Just as long as you have fun!!!

Just be patient and believe it,  
Sunny days will soon return.  
Lifting hearts and lifting spirit,  
Promising change for which we yearn!

*Yolanda Guastavino*



## CLAMBAKE: OR, THE DAY I KNEW I WAS AN ADOPTED CHILD

**I**t began with Aunt Rae.

She was not a relative. My family lived in one half of a double house in a small town in South Jersey. Two of my parents' longtime friends lived in the other half. We children, out of respect for our elders and after the custom of the day, called them Uncle Alward and Aunt Rae.

Aunt Rae had an infectious laugh. When it was in earshot everyone had to smile. We joined in her mirth whether or not we were in on the joke or got the humorous situation. It is no wonder people would do anything to include her in their social events. Her laughter was the epicenter of good times. Certain words would start her laughing, such as Nescafé coffee or Lydia Pinkham Tonic. Humorous implications were too irresistible. After that it was difficult to continue a sane conversation. Aunt Rae was not a bubbly personality. She was a hard worker and a helpful person in our small community. She was a good friend to many people.

Aunt Rae worked in Philadelphia with a woman, a Mrs. Yeager, who lived in Spring City, PA. I never knew her first name. In late summer 1941, the Yeagers invited Aunt Rae's family to a clambake. For some reason, and happily for me, our family was also invited. In this instance we were the beneficiaries of Aunt Rae's ample goodness and friendship.

We traveled to Spring City in two cars, Uncle Alward and Aunt Rae with their daughter in one car and

my father, mother and me in the other. For nearly a two-hour journey six people riding in one car would have been most uncomfortable.

Upon our arrival I had a revelation. I knew right away that Spring City was my real home, the Yeagers were my real father and mother. All I could think was, “Thank you, Aunt Rae!”

Being a Sunday we arrived at least a half-hour before the beginning of church. On short notice my “adoptive” mother decided to attend the Yeagers’ church, two blocks from their house. She wanted me to go with her. Initially I balked at the idea. I wanted to explore this fascinating house, “my home.” To keep the peace I put off my explorations.

After church I was given a peanut butter and jelly sandwich by my “real” mother, Mrs. Yeager. She was so nice, she just had to be my real mother. My “adoptive” mother suggested I take a nap. This was another delay to my getting reacquainted with my real home. I played along. I was ushered into the back bedroom on the second floor. It was very quiet in the house. Everyone seemed to have disappeared. The strangeness of this silence did not interfere with a few minutes of sleep.

After my nap I had free rein to explore the house and yard. The Yeagers lived on a street where all the houses were semi-detached dwellings with stone exteriors, much richer looking than our old South Jersey clapboards. The narrow side yard had a radical slope from the front of the house to the backyard. A concrete flight of steps made the descent easier. This descent meant that the front entrance was at street level and the basement entrance at the back of the house was one floor

lower. I was so fascinated by this feature that I was in and out of the basement door four or five times in fifteen minutes.

I soon tired of my entering and egressing. My attention was pulled to the activity in the backyard. Two men, Mr. Yeager and another man, perhaps his brother-in-law, were working around a large brick box which had a chimney. I wandered out to take a closer look. They saw my curiosity and allowed me to watch them at work. Of course, the two men knew absolutely that I belonged to them. Mr. Yeager kept our secret. He never let on I was his child.

The brick box at which the men were working was a firebox with a flat top. The men had built a fire in the box. A thick layer of wet straw was spread on top. The straw was covered by a thin burlap. Several dozen potatoes were laid on the burlap. Then another thin burlap was spread on the potatoes. A mound of corn on the cob with a thin husk left on the corn was built on the potatoes. Washed clams in string bags were placed on the corn. Several heavy layers of burlap were tightly secured over all this food.

An hour is a day for a seven-year-old. So much happened in the hour from the building of the outdoor clambake to sitting down at the dinner table, I didn't have time to think. There was the fire to feed, the chairs brought to the long table in the basement. (Basements were cooler during August. This was pre-World War II. Air conditioning did not become common until after the war.)

More and more people seemed to move about the house. Table settings appeared. Platters of sliced toma-

toes and large bowls of pole limas were placed on the table. These came from Uncle Alward's and my father's gardens. Plates of butter appeared. All at once a gathering of sixteen adults plus several children took their places. The men tending the clambake brought in the baked potatoes, corn on the cob and opened clams.

The noise was deafening. There were exclamations up and down the table. After the abundant food and the cooks were praised, talk of baseball took over. At times these were serious discussions. Were the A's a better team than the Phillies? When was the next trip to Shibe Park? There were even jokes about the A's manager, Connie Mack. I could hear Aunt Rae's laughter above all the conversations. This was a summer feast not to be forgotten. I was so proud of the hard work of Mrs. Yeager, my Spring City mother.

Dessert time came. There were pies, cakes and ice cream. My favorite was a tall multi-layered yellow cake with a generous amount of coconut icing. I devoured a large piece with a healthy dip of vanilla ice cream. At my last bite Mrs. Yeager happened to pass by the kids' table. I don't know what possessed me. I asked Mrs. Yeager if I could take a piece of coconut cake home. "Why, yes," she said. She warmed my heart. She wrapped a large piece in wax paper. She handed me a brown paper bag containing her precious gift.

The next memory I have was coming downstairs to our South Jersey breakfast table. My mother was busy making breakfast. The brown paper bag was at my place. "You made Aunt Rae very happy," my mother said. "She was glad you liked her coconut cake. Mrs. Yeager gave you such a large piece, I think you should have half at

lunch today and half tomorrow.” For once my mother made sense.

I’m forever a South Jersey kid. But because of Aunt Rae I had the joy of being a “son” of a wonderful Spring City family for a day. In the bargain I was given TWO big pieces of my favorite, her coconut cake. Thank you, thank you, Aunt Rae!

*Chris Darlington*

## THE WALL

**M**y cousin in Jerusalem, two years older than I, was the last surviving repository of missing pieces in our family history. When I told my daughter he was willing to meet with her, she didn't hesitate a moment. That's how we came to be in Israel – and to catch a glimpse of what it's like to be an Israeli or a Palestinian in that country.

### **Historical Background: What If . . .**

In July 1945 the leaders of the victorious Allies had met in the Minoux villa at Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, to discuss the postwar administration of Germany. Winston Churchill, just days before ceding his place to the anti-Zionist Clement Attlee, shrewdly suggested that part of Germany be split off and designated a Jewish state. His plan had the dual virtue of ensuring autonomy to the world's surviving Jews and making Germany, architect of their near-annihilation, provide the land. The Germans, of course, had no option to resist; some, indeed, might have agreed that justice was being done. Josef Stalin, happy to grant exit visas to Soviet Jews, embraced Churchill's plan; Harry Truman followed. With little debate, the group chose the state of Bavaria, rich in symbolism as the birthplace of Nazism and holding within its boundaries Nürnberg, the site of Nazi rallies, Dachau, the first concentration camp, and Berchtesgaden, a favorite hangout of Hitler's. The choice of Wannsee was likewise deliberate, for it was there, only three years earlier, that the "final solution" to the "Jewish question" had been hatched.

An exodus of Bavarians into neighboring states was expected, although the Jews might show compassion

for what German civilians, too, had gone through during the war. Besides, thousands of Germans remembered, after their defeat, that they had been anti-Nazi from the beginning. And as long as they were disarmed, the Germans could not make war on the Jewish state. Should they try in the future, Czechoslovakia and Austria would be bound by treaty to intervene. Eventually a lasting peace would be achieved, and the Jews would treat the Gentiles dwelling among them as welcome guests, in fulfillment of God's commandment (*Leviticus 19:34*).

### **Historical Background: Actually . . .**

In July 1945 the leaders of the victorious Allies met in the Cecilienhof at Potsdam, elsewhere on the outskirts of Berlin, to discuss the postwar administration of Germany. Jews weren't on the agenda. A home for them, less than one-third the size of Bavaria, symbolic in a different way, was proclaimed almost three years later by the United Nations in a former British protectorate inhabited by a majority of unwelcoming Arabs (mostly Muslim but also Christian) and a minority of Jews from prior immigration. No sooner was the Jewish state born than the fighting began. Almost seventy years later, it's still going on.

Under constant threat from the outset, the new nation nevertheless flourished. In 1967 and again in 1973 Israel turned back invasions by neighboring states. After capturing the West Bank of the Jordan River from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria, they were safer against attacks from without. But the victors created new problems by annexing East Jerusalem and establishing more than two hundred Jewish settlements in occupied territory. In the end Israel came to be seen as aggressor.

## Our Tour

*The following describes my observations, refreshed by notes that Lisa kept along the way. The story would not be worth telling without historical and political context, but my treatment of those subjects is limited by my lack of expertise. Although Jewish, we went with open minds, and any appearance of bias is unintended. Lisa has reviewed the manuscript for factual accuracy. I am immensely grateful to her for conceiving, planning, and executing the tour and bringing a scholarly perspective to it. Lisa is professor and chair of the history department at the University of Iowa.*

Our education began just minutes after we left the Tel Aviv airport. The route to our B & B in Beit Sahour, a town adjacent to Bethlehem, took us through Jerusalem on a superhighway accessible only to Israelis. Palestinians, many of whom work legally in Israel, are confined to other roads. In fact, exclusion of Palestinians is not uncommon on Israel's major highways. It was the first of many unpleasant revelations.

Our hosts were West Bank Palestinians: Christian, educated, fluent in English, and well-to-do. Their balcony commanded a panoramic view that included the Church of the Nativity in nearby Bethlehem and the Har Homa Jewish settlement. The latter, like all settlements, was surrounded by a patrolled security barrier, which in this case totally isolated a Palestinian farmer from his fields.

Naturally we visited Bethlehem, as tourists do. But its outskirts were just as interesting as the better-known historic sites. First was Aida (no relation to the opera), a Palestinian refugee camp in occupied Palestinian territory. What makes it special is its program to educate its children in the arts and theater, under the guiding princi-

ple that “Beautiful Resistance” is preferable to violence. The number 194, the U.N. General Assembly resolution addressing the right of return, is prominently displayed, and the entrance gate is a huge keyhole-shaped arch with a key on its top bearing the words “Not for Sale.”

Second was the Wall, which we saw up close for the first time. It was covered with graffiti, some of it text (in English and other languages), much of it graphic, mostly expressing messages of peace. Visitors make space for their art by spraying white paint over the previous artist’s work, as Lisa’s son Josh, who accompanied us, did.



*American graffiti in Bethlehem*



*A wistful depiction of role reversal*

Across the street from the wall was a souvenir shop, offering the usual tourist kitsch, albeit with a Palestinian bent. A refrigerator magnet showing a Palestinian girl frisking a disarmed Israeli soldier caught my eye.

Our hosts treated us warmly. The husband introduced me to arak (anise-flavored, resembling ouzo), his favorite liqueur, and as we drank together I asked him how he felt about U.S. policy toward the Palestinians. His reply: “President Obama may mean well, but he can’t do anything without permission from Congress,

and they're all Jews.” I pointed out that the majority of congressmen and women are Christian like himself, but he brushed me off. Facts were not about to get between this schoolteacher and what he needed to believe.

A public bus took us from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, where we visited the Yad Vashem museum before proceeding to my cousin’s apartment. The bus fare was modest, appropriate to commuter traffic. We found ourselves in the company of Palestinian workers en route to their jobs and had our first experience with a checkpoint. Just outside the Wall two Israeli police, armed with sub-machine guns, boarded the bus. They herded the Palestinians off, to be screened for legitimacy. We showed our passports and were allowed to stay in our seats. The bus then proceeded through the barrier and the Palestinian passengers came back on board. We soon discovered that this routine, submachine guns and all, was the norm at checkpoints, applied to taxis and private vehicles as well as buses.



*With Lisa in Jerusalem's Old City*

After a day’s sightseeing in Jerusalem’s Old City, we visited Tekoa, an established Jewish settlement in the West Bank. We were met by an American-born settler – journalist, Middle East security analyst, and director of the Islam-Israel Fellowship – who spoke with us about living in peace with the Arabs (settlers don’t call them Palestinians). To illustrate his point, he told of his cordial relationship with

the Arab contractor he hired for a building project; the construction crew likewise was Arab. (Regrettably we did not ask whether there were also Arabs employing Jews.) Picking us up later, he distributed a piece he had written, "ReIslamification," in which he quoted the Muslim scholar Sheikh Abdul Palazzi as saying that "the good Moslem [sic] should be a Zionist . . . [and] a Moslem who is not a Zionist, is not a Moslem" – Zionism meaning "reestablishment of the Children of Israel in their homeland." Palazzi, it turns out, is a controversial character with variable allegiance to Islam and/or Hinduism and dubious credibility as an advocate for Zionism.

The term "settlement" can be deceptive. Tekoa is an actively growing community of about 3,000 with paved streets, homes, public areas, shops, etc. On a wall in the building in which our hosts met us was a series of maps showing the continuing expansion of Tekoa since its founding in the 1970s. This, of course, is the intent of the settlements: to grow into permanent, self-sustaining communities and perpetuate Israeli presence in captured land. Palestinians, among others worldwide, point out that the settlements violate the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which forbids transfer of civilian populations into occupied territory. Our settler hosts consider that argument irrelevant, holding that the West Bank (known to them as Judea and Samaria) was promised to the Jews by the League of Nations in 1922 and illegally annexed by Jordan after the State of Israel had been established. In other words, it's not occupied territory; it's reclaimed territory.

We were received by two well-educated, articulate spokesmen, both American-born, as are 15% of all West Bank set

War conscientious objector, felt completely comfortable in the present. “I live right here in Tekoa, in *Israel*. The so-called West Bank, it’s Israel, it’s all our land.” Asked about the Oslo Accords, they “didn’t exist, because the Arabs never signed them” (an assertion neither Lisa nor I have been able to confirm). The other was a legal scholar who had practiced law in the U.S. I asked him what he thought about U.S. policy toward Israel. “Atrocious from the very beginning,” was his answer. The U.S., like the British before them, had consistently frustrated the Jews and favored the Arabs.

At that point I realized that Israelis and Palestinians actually found common ground on one point:

*The U.S. favors the other side.*

The settlements not only take up land but disrupt communication among adjacent areas. Palestinian frustration, sometimes expressed with deadly violence, has led to protective measures, which include both barriers and enforcement. Their extent was laid bare for us next day, when we joined a guided tour of Hebron, a particularly troubled West Bank city with a settlement in its very middle. Our guide was a veteran of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and member of the organization *Breaking the Silence* ([www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il)). After an informative walk through the center of the city, deserted because of concrete roadblocks and areas of forbidden access in the name of settlement security, he gave the tourists a booklet containing dozens of damning testimonials by disillusioned IDF veterans.

Just outside the city is a hero’s grave lionizing Baruch Goldstein, an assassin who in 1994 murdered twen-

ty-nine Muslim worshipers and wounded one hundred twenty-five more in the Cave of the Patriarchs before himself being beaten to death by survivors. His ultranationalist mentor, Meir Kahane, had been assassinated in 1990 in New York City by an Egyptian-American. Both Goldstein and Kahane were U.S.-born.

We left the West Bank and spent the rest of our visit in Israel proper (pre-1967). Haifa, a beautiful city and Israel's major port, was a world apart from the occupied territories. To all appearances, life was normal. We spent a day sightseeing before driving north into Lower Galilee, where we once more confronted Arab reality – even though we were in internationally recognized, pre-1967 Israeli territory. Our destination was Sakhnin, an Arab Israeli city, predominantly Muslim but with a sizable Christian minority. (Sakhnin, incidentally, fields a championship-class soccer team that has played in Israel's premier league.) Our hosts were a mixed couple, he an Arab nonpracticing Muslim and she a Dutch nonpracticing Christian; they had met while she was traveling in Israel. From him, a quiet man who expressed his anger in a calm tone, we received a tour of ruins, the remains of villages laid waste during the expulsion of more than a half million Arabs in 1948-49. She was more outspoken. In her view, the State of Israel is evil [her word] and there'll be no peace until it's abolished. Her solution is that everyone should simply live together in peace. A lovely thought, with the thinly veiled implication that peaceful coexistence is up to the Jews.

The director of the Islam-Israel Fellowship would have shared her wish for peaceful coexistence, but without abolishing Israel (while, by relentless expansion of settlements, all but choking Palestine to death). His

formula for peace would boil down to this: Israeli land-owners should treat their Palestinian subjects like friends (*Leviticus* 19:34).

After a brief walking tour of the ancient city of Acre (Akko), we drove to the modern city of Tel Aviv where, as in Haifa, residents and tourists alike seemed to be living a normal life. Both cities are at a safe distance from disputed territory.

We flew home two days later.

\* \* \* \* \*

Establishment of the State of Israel, the ultimate goal of decades of Zionism, in 1948 was precipitated by the recent German genocide against Jews. Arabs indigenous to the designated land, who had had no hand in those atrocities, were displaced and dispossessed to make room for the new state. The resulting clash began a circle of violence that continues to this day.

Could those consequences have been foreseen in 1948?

What if the imagined conference at Wannsee – call it Wannsee II for context – had actually taken place in 1945? Would Israel (formerly Bavaria) and the rest of Germany be coexisting peacefully today?

*Herb Heineman*

*My cousin died five months after our visit.*

## HANGING ON

Mid-March when early daffodils  
bloom lustily for our delight,  
a green friend steered me round to see  
a subtler superseded sight.

Left clinging to the beech tree twigs  
were lots of last year's leaves intact.  
Silvery, yellow, beige and tan,  
survivors of winter winds' impact.

Pick up some newly fallen ones.  
They are a bit the worse for wear.  
And find some dried-out oak leaves too  
still hanging straggly in the air.

Marcescence is the proper term  
for this unusual delay.  
To every leaf a finite span,  
but undetermined when the day.

The botanists cannot agree  
if genes are still half-evergreen.  
Or some advantage is conferred,  
so evolution kept this scheme.

Around us we see sturdy folk  
who have long outlived their season.  
They too have held on and survived.  
We can only guess the reason.

Their genes perhaps or sheltered life,  
protected by low stress and kin.  
Or healthy habits, fortune's smiles,  
like trees with good soil, rain and sun.

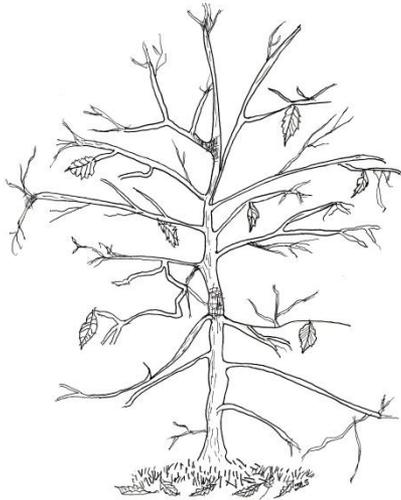
Hold on tight if the ride's still good,  
contentedly live out your time.  
You still won't have eternal youth,  
but nor do any humankind.

Good memories to hold on by,  
welcome warmth of community.  
A great grand's little hand in yours,  
when dears and peers no longer be.

We are self-conscious forms, not leaves,  
take stock of good times and duress.  
See failing body, failing mind  
or life with pain make longer less.

A life well spent for most of us  
means more than years a hundredfold.  
When our ties to life we'd sever,  
may we by choice release our hold.

*Joyce Linda Sichel*



## HOW A SALAMI SANDWICH CHANGED PHILADELPHIA HISTORY

I know that much has been written about the demise of the Philadelphia Athletics and why they abandoned the city in which so many loved them. But today, as I watch my beloved New York Yankees play a spring training game against the Phillies, who in 1954 became sole heirs to the hopes of generations of Philadelphia fans, my thoughts turn to a heretofore unchronicled event that may have contributed to the Mack family's decision.

Now mind you, I am not suggesting that this event was the sole cause. Certainly, as a former player of America's great pastime and now age-wizened fan and student of the game, I, too, appreciate the economics of declining attendance, a team whose talents were decimated by the requirements of wartime draft and never restored, and a city whose fickle fans could ill afford to support two teams. Nonetheless, the little-known event that has been locked away in my memory for over sixty years, the story of the salami sandwich that forever changed Philadelphia history, deserves to be revealed for the sake of honest history.

Let us go back to the summer of 1953 and a sultry August afternoon – one of those Philadelphia days when your shirt clings to your back. At twelve years of age, I'm at Shibe Park at 21st and Lehigh with Gramma Ackerman and her neighbor, Mrs. Gottlieb. It's Wednesday, "Ladies Day" for the Philadelphia Athletics, who under the stewardship of Roy and Earl Mack, sons of the immortal Connie, have instituted all manner of last-ditch promotions, ranging from free ashtrays to

nickel beers, to attract a dwindling fan base. On this day, ladies – as well as accompanying children – are admitted for 50 cents.

Gramma Ackerman, who lives in a modest row home four blocks from the ballpark, is a regular attendee at these Ladies Day matinee performances of the Philadelphia A's. She represents, as my Scottish-Irish father always pointed out, the Teutonic side of my bloodline. Once a raven-haired beauty who had been crowned the Belle of Brewerytown, Gramma lives in my memory in paler shades of gray and what might euphemistically be called “larger” proportions than shown in the photos of her earlier years. But she is perpetually jolly and fun to be with and quite able to live through the many disappointing summer afternoons I spend with her on Ladies Day watching her beloved Athletics struggle through the final years of their Philadelphia citizenship. Together with Mrs. Gottlieb, who like Gramma Ackerman knows the first names of every Athletics player, they present a half ton of Philadelphia loyalty, who will stand and cheer for every occasional hit or good play by their heroes and, in true Philadelphia fashion, consistently and raucously boo the opposition.

So here we are at Shibe Park, at the top of the ninth inning of a pitchers' duel between the Athletics and their most dreaded rival, the New York Yankees. In the bottom of the eighth Eddie Joost, the A's wiry second baseman, has managed to beat out an infield hit. And then Gus Zernial, the A's clumsy left fielder, recently recovered from a broken shoulder sustained tripping over third base on his way to the outfield between innings, has managed to lift a long fly ball into the first row of the left field stands, giving the A's a 2-0 lead.

Your author, then of very slight build with a 24-inch waist, is sandwiched in his upper deck seat along the third base line between Gramma and Mrs. Gottlieb, whose girths required that they sit in seats on either side of me so that their excesses could hang over the edge of the seat railings into my space. “Little” Bobby Shantz, whose name was never spoken without adding the diminutive to reflect his five-foot-six-inch stature, is pitching a shutout game and has held the Yanks to only a handful of hits. But the little lefty is tiring and has given up consecutive walks to Hank Bauer and Yogi Berra. Sweat is streaming from beneath his cap, and when Jimmy Dykes, the A’s manager, goes to the mound, Little Bobby just shakes his head knowing that he has finally run out of gas.

Next up is the young Yankee phenom, Mickey Mantle, the muscular Oklahoma farm kid that the Yankees have recently chosen to replace Joe DiMaggio in center field. Dykes taps his left arm signaling that he wants a lefty reliever to face Mantle, and in from the left field sideline, where he has been warming up, trots the only lefty reliever the A’s have, “Bobo” Newsom, an overweight, overaged, heavy-drinking refugee from practically every major league team, most of whom quickly tired of him. The A’s have picked him up after the Washington Senators let him go.

At forty-four years of age, Bobo, like many of his trade, has become an exceedingly quirky individual. He never would – or maybe never could – remember anyone’s name and would call everyone Bobo, eventually earning that nickname for himself. His superstitions are equally odd. Before heading to the mound, he has to first stop at third base and sift dirt through his hand on

the foul side of the line, and then repeat the same ritual on the fair side. Once on the mound, he gets down on his hands and knees and carefully picks up every scrap of paper he can see. This often creates long delays in the game, particularly between innings, when opposing players taunt him by tearing up hot-dog wrappers and scattering bits of paper on the mound on their way to the dugout.

And so as we wait for Bobo to perform all of his rituals and warm up, Gramma and Mrs. Gottlieb reach into the cloth sack they have brought with them for one of their salami sandwiches. These are monstrous creations made with huge slabs of salami slathered with gobs of yellow mustard and placed within thick Kaiser Rolls. In the meantime Mickey is quietly swinging his huge bat by home plate, gauging the warm-up pitches that Bobo is tossing after completing his rituals.

Finally the umpire, Augie Donatelli, signals that Bobo has had enough time and waves Mickey into the batter's box. Bobo's first pitch is a high and tight fastball, "chin music" in baseball parlance, designed to move the batter away from the plate. Mickey leaves the batter's box and calmly swings his bat several times while the A's fans — all 1,385 of them including Gramma and Mrs. Gottlieb — erupt in fierce boos. Gramma, still gnawing her salami sandwich, yells out: "YER A BUM, MICKEY, YER NOTHING BUT A BIG NEW YORK CITY BUM!"

Her strident voice echoes back from the empty center field seats to home plate, and for a brief moment it seems that Mickey hears her. But then, with what I interpret as a smirk, he steps back into the batter's box

and methodically digs in. Bobo is glaring at him from the mound, and Gramma is still yelling how Mickey is a BUM, with bits of salami spewing from her mouth. Then, at that very dramatic moment, a gust of wind suddenly blows the wax paper wrapping of Gramma's sandwich from her hand and up into the air and then out onto the field.

Bobo, a lefty, never sees it coming from the third base side, and at the moment that he is fully into his windup and can't stop, it plops down on the front of the mound between him and Mickey. Bobo can't help but see it and winces as the ball then leaving his hand becomes a slowly floating curve ball that even I — maybe even Gramma — could have whacked. Suddenly the action is reduced to slow motion and the 1,385 fans fall silent and watch in horror as Mickey coils and swings his heavy bat. There is a deafening crack and the ball sails skyward and is still going upwards when it clears the forty-foot "spite wall" in right field that the A's management had erected in better days to prevent residents on Somerset Street from selling cheap seats on their roofs to watch the game. Mickey trots around the bases, and after rounding second looks up toward Gramma, who has abruptly stopped munching her salami sandwich, fully aware of what she has just allowed to happen.

The game moves on to the bottom of the ninth while the storm clouds darken and lightning flashes. It starts to rain as the A's are quickly snuffed out by the Yankees' fireballing reliever, Tom Gorman. Fans start to file out and look at Gramma and Mrs. Gottlieb and just shrug their shoulders. Disappointment has become routine for them and although I know better, nobody is

blaming Gramma or her salami sandwich for what has transpired.

Fortunately for Gramma it is just another loss for a team that finishes seventh that year, forty-one games behind the Yankees, who clinch the American League pennant and go on to defeat the Dodgers in the World Series. Mickey's homer is called a "moonshot" and its 495-foot trajectory is detailed the next day in the sports pages of the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. There is also a photo of the homeowner on Somerset Street holding the baseball that suddenly came crashing through his front window while he was listening to the game on his radio.

As for the A's, they sell out the following year and move to Kansas City. Bobo Newsom finally calls it quits in baseball and runs a drive-in diner with scantily clad female carhops on roller skates. And your author — chronicler of what took place on that fateful day at Shibe Park — becomes a lifetime Yankees fan.

*Pete McCord*

## BORGO GORGIOLANO, CITTA DELLA PIEVE

The house was heaven with two terrazzi  
Where we shared the salamander's silence  
Gathered cherries from the courtyard tree  
And scanned the garden for the Falerini,  
Man and wife, who brought forth from earth and air

Brussel sprout, cabbage, empty cocoon  
Lettuce, trilobite, carrot, cardoon  
Celery, scrap of bone, artichoke, leek  
Fennel, basil, foraminifer, beet  
Radicchio, arugula, amber, quartz  
Parsley, zucchini, scallion, shallot, shard  
Strawberry, raspberry, ammonite, kale  
Spinach, snail, handmade rusty nail  
Radish, alabaster, oregano, thyme  
Prokaryote (from primeval slime)

Falerini earth and air

We plumbed Etruscan tombs in Chiusi  
Joined Perugia's passeggiata  
Longed to splash in Bagni's piazza  
We sought the verities in Pienza  
In preparation for Firenze

Leonardo, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Giotto  
Brunelleschi, Buonaroti, Cimabue, Lotto  
Piero, Pintoricchio, Pollaiuolo, Pitti  
Antonello di Messina, Antonino da San Gallo  
Lippi, Caravaggio, Figlio di Nessuno  
Biccio, Baccio, Anonimo, Masaccio  
Ferragamo, Foppa, Schricchio di Scarpone  
Attribuzione Perugino, Scuola D'Ignoti  
Mimmo, Memmo, Cossa, Tura, Piombo  
Daddi, Gaddi, Dosso Dossi, Duccio ....

Falerini earth and air  
Winnow, scarify, rend us  
Fold us in your nimbus

*Charles Perrone*

*Borgo Gorgiolano is a hamlet near Citta della Pieve, a large town in Umbria. Mrs. and Mr. Falerini tended the garden for the owner of the villa who was absent.*

*They would present the vegetables they reaped together with the geological and archeological artifact they found, with an air of sharing wonderful things.*

蝉

Ringing in my ears  
endlessly cicadas sing  
waning summer's song.

*Elizabeth Hicks*

## COLUMBIA

When I was ten years old I received a totally unexpected and marvelous Christmas present, a gift which decades later still brings me joy. The gift, a two-wheeled, balloon tired, Columbia bicycle in blue and shining silver, quite impressive for an immigrant family. It was the only gift I received that year, but guessing what it must have cost, I was overjoyed. My buddies would be quite impressed, perhaps a little jealous. I felt so well loved and truly special.

The bicycle chain even had a blue metal cover, obviating a need to wear clips around the bottom of my trousers to prevent them from being caught in the chain, with resulting unfortunate consequences. A big battery-powered light was mounted in the middle of the handlebars, permitting me the luxury of early evening enjoyment.

Back in the early 1940s, South Ozone Park, not far from what is now known as Kennedy International Airport, was only partially developed. Across from my home a vacant lot the length of the street and two blocks deep was covered with third-growth forest. At the right-hand side of our block, a truck farm operated on a plot two avenues wide and six blocks deep, probably ten to twelve acres in size. Annual crops were tomatoes, zucchini, corn and sometimes melons. I say this to emphasize how rural this part of New York was at that time.

Our streets often lacked curbs, much less asphalt pavement. The road, whose surface was but a mixture of sand sprayed with road oil, was filled with a variety of

ruts and potholes of assorted sizes and depths. Such road conditions made the balloon tires the thing to have.

My Columbia made it easy for me get to church, some seven blocks away, where I served frequently as an altar boy. Just hop on my bike and off I went. One day, after mass, when I went to ride home, I was devastated. Someone had stolen my Columbia from beside the sacristy. How I berated myself for not buying a bicycle lock. But who would expect someone to steal from the churchyard? What grave sin had I committed to warrant this punishment?

My faith was restored some three weeks later when, while I was walking in the neighborhood with three of my buddies, my Columbia came rolling towards us. "That's my bike" I screamed and the four of us dashed towards the perpetrator, who hit the brakes, dropped the bike and ran for his life, wisely more concerned with his own welfare than his stolen property. I recognized my Columbia although it was missing its chain guard and handlebar light. I guess the thief was attempting to make the bike look a little different.

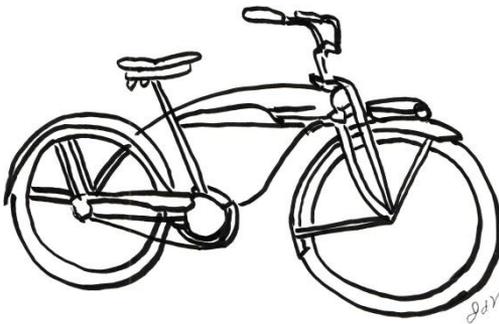
When I was fourteen I obtained a paper route and put my Columbia to work. I was happily complying with a message I had often heard my dad tell me in Italian, his native language, "Get a job my son, get a job." My route consisted of delivering 120 copies of the *Long Island Daily Press*, an evening publication. I installed a large square metal wire box over the front wheel to carry the load. My paper route generated a weekly income between twelve and fifteen dollars, not bad when the minimum wage was fifty cents an hour. My parents were kind and let me keep my earnings. I kept my paper route until I

graduated from high school, putting aside some money for college.

I became quite skilled in tightly folding each copy and wedging them neatly in the basket. Riding down the sidewalks I could toss them one by one on the front stoops of the houses with either hand. In less than an hour my route was done, just me and my Columbia.

With my Columbia I travelled far and wide throughout Queens, visiting both the Rockaways to the south and Flushing Meadows, former home of the World's Fair, to the north. After the war, in the late 1940s, I often rode down to watch construction of the new international airport, Idlewild, amazed at the size of the equipment moving the earth and dredging a channel across the mud flats of Jamaica Bay for the barges to bring fuel for the airplanes. When I felt particularly daring I left Queens and ventured into Nassau County, to see what Long Island was like. My Columbia. It gave me such freedom to explore my world and to begin earning my way.

*John Sommi*



## THE DARK SIDE OF THE MERRY WIDOW

*Die Lustige Witwe* premiered at the Theater an der Wien on the evening of December 30, 1905, and was immediately a worldwide success. In Buenos Aires, it was given simultaneously in five languages and in the United States became the first large marketing tool for numerous products. In the 100 years since its premiere, it has never lost its popularity as musical theater and today is given in the leading opera houses all over the world. But why does such light entertainment have a dark side? Hitler, despite his reputation as loving the heavy operas of Wagner, loved *The Merry Widow* above any other music.

Although Goebbels had classified Lehár as a tainted artist because of his Jewish associates, he quickly reversed course in the face of Hitler's mad love affair with *The Merry Widow*. Albert Speer recalled that the first thing Hitler did to celebrate the "Anschluss" was to ask Martin Bormann to play a recording of the operetta. Hitler's housekeeper recounted seeing him preen in front of the mirror, asking "What do you say? Am I not Danilo?" And during the last two years of the war, Hitler drove everyone in his Wolf's Lair crazy by listening to nothing but *The Merry Widow* over and over again.

In 1939, at the Nazis' annual summer festival of German values (*Deutsche Tage*), the centerpiece was a command run of performances of *The Merry Widow*, which Hitler advised all good Nazis to attend. The piece thus became a prime example of "holy German art" and, as a result, productions of the operetta mushroomed all over the Third Reich, with ever more bloated production budgets, thanks to generous state subsidies.

Lehár went out of his way to make the relationship reciprocal. He composed music in Hitler's honor and courted his favor. He even tried to dedicate his last operetta to Mussolini. (Il Duce turned down the honor on the grounds that he did not want his name associated with a work that did not adequately represent fascist ideals. He serenaded Lehár on the violin with some of the composer's earlier melodies, however, as a way of softening the refusal.)

Hitler claimed his love affair with *The Merry Widow* started at the 1905 Vienna premiere, when he was an impoverished would-be artist. The plot, which involves trying to keep the widow's gold for the "fatherland," combined with Lehár's music, proved irresistible. Never mind that almost everyone connected with the work -- Lehár excepted -- was Jewish. The initial Danilo and the librettists of *The Merry Widow* were all murdered by the Nazis, and Lehár's wife, who was born Jewish, barely escaped due to Lehár's influence. She was said to have kept a cyanide capsule in case the Gestapo arrested her.

Ironically, at the same time, with two part-Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe, husband and wife Jan Keipura and Marta Eggerth, in the lead roles of Danilo and Hanna, *The Merry Widow* was performed hundreds of times all over the United States. In Chicago, this included performances in English, German and Polish, one week at a time. Marta Eggerth, a huge movie and opera star in Europe before the Nazi period, again became an icon in Germany and Austria after the fall of the Third Reich. She died in 2013 at the age of 101 at her home in Rye, NY, having sung Hanna over a thousand times.

*Hannelore Hahn*

## MY PET PEEVE

I brought a little doggie  
back home on New Year's Eve.

He looked so cute and soulful  
alone in Tel Aviv.

I took him past Security  
a-hidden in my sleeve.

The wagging tail protruded.  
Oh God, where's my Alev!



My fear of being stopped and searched  
you never would believe.

And yet the agent winked me through  
– though he was not naïve.

His overwhelming kindness  
to grant me that reprieve  
Restored my calm while wishing  
our flight would quickly leave.  
My doggie used the wait time  
his bladder to relieve.  
I spilled a glass of water  
onto my other sleeve.  
One arm felt warm, the other cold.  
Thus tried I to deceive  
my boarding fellow passengers  
so they should not perceive  
the odor emanating from  
my jacket's worsted weave.  
Once in the air, I sought a name.  
My wife suggested Heave.  
I thought she was just trying  
my mis'ry to aggrieve.  
That's when I knew what I must do:  
I christened my pet Peeve.

*Herb Heineman*

## WRITING FOR *LEAS LIT*

Residents of both campuses, as well as staff, are encouraged to submit original manuscripts at any time for publication in *Leas Lit*. Each issue carries a deadline for submission. Manuscripts received later will be processed for the next one. There is no limit to the number of pieces an author may submit. However, at most two by the same author, one in prose and one in poetry, can be included in any single issue. Additional works judged acceptable will be held over for the next one.

Authors' names are removed immediately on receipt of the manuscripts. Therefore the editors do not know whose work they are reviewing. This system is designed to ensure that personal feelings about individual authors do not enter into evaluation of their work.

A flyer headed *Attention Writers!* contains instructions for submitting your work, as well as contact information if you have questions. It is distributed by house mail to all residents and staff twice a year.

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