

LEAS LIT

The Medford Leas Literary Journal



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Fourth of July night

fireflies wink in deep deep dark.

Better than fireworks.

Elizabeth Hicks

THE OLD BEECH TREE

Sap rises in the hidden spaces of the old beech tree

Putting forth sharp new points of unfurled leaves.

Rain drizzles down her gray sides washing clean the
knife-cut murmurings of teenaged lovers.

It loosens the desiccated pale brown leaves which hung
clinging to her through the long cold winter.

Newness and vitality spring forth, rendering her strong
and beautiful.

Green garlands crown My Lady Beech, reigning queen
of the northern forests.

Edith Roberts

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this tour of Ludovico O. Giardino Terrarium, the indoor extension of the Lewis W. Barton Arboretum. I hope to acquaint you with the wonderful and variable amenities which our community enjoys. It seems appropriate that we begin at the Atrium, a true reflection of our love of nature here at Medford Leas. Please know that you are welcome to walk through our gifts from Mother Nature at any time.

But now, let's take a tour of our many indoor treasures. Walk this way to the Willow Room (formerly known as the Lounge), where residents come for solitude, for quiet conversation, for reading pleasures and, occasionally, for special programs. Adjacent to the Willow Room you'll find the Paper Birch Room (once called the Library). Perhaps you've heard of the recent intensive research done here on the subject of tree identification.

We'll now walk past the Black Forest Ingestion Preserve, once referred to as the Colonial Dining Room, on our way to the Tree House Diner (earlier residents called it the Coffee Shop!). The room on the right is the Maple Room. Yes, sir! You're correct! That's the old Private Dining Room. A stroll along this corridor takes us to the Poplar Room. Actually, I don't recall if that room ever had a previous name. And here, folks, is the site of many meetings, entertainment events, and home of the famous Employee Holiday Show: Magic Forest

Hall (until recently known as the Theater, and before that, the Auditorium.

I beg your pardon, madam, is something wrong? You say you're a little confused about room names? Not to worry! Each of you will receive a copy of the official Boy Scout Tree Identification Merit Badge pamphlet together with an official LOG Terrarium map at the end of our tour.

Ahead is the Holly Room, which is adjacent to the Gathering Room. Ah, no, sir! I've never heard of a "Gathering Tree" myself. It may have something to do with William Penn's meeting with the Indians under an elm tree at Shackamaxon. After all, this is a Quaker-related institution.

What's that you say, madam? Oh, the restrooms? You'll find them at the end of the Sherwood Forest Art Gallery, ladies to the left (the Swaying Palm Room), men to the right (the Lignum Vitae Room).

Well, we've come to the end of today's tour. Thank you for visiting our campus. If you have time, you might want to look in at the Linden Room. You'll find it downstairs next to Walden Pond (formerly known as the Pool). Also, consider a visit to some of our lovely garden apartment areas before you leave. Of special interest is our MiracleGro Acres (once called Court 51).

Good-bye! And, have a nice day!

Harry Forrest

MY FIRST KISS

I was a child of the Depression, having been born in 1927. However, I was shielded from the Depression by my parents; they just pretended the Depression did not exist. Similarly, as I grew up in my early years, I had no understanding of what sex was. Yes, my brother and I grew up in a typical uptight Irish Catholic family.

Dad had a solid job for the Depression. He taught math and applied physics at the Worcester Boys Vocational High School until 1932, at which time he was promoted to principal of the school, although he was called the Director. He was a city department head because he also oversaw the girls' vocational high school at another location. But we continued to live in our same home; it was a three-story house owned by my paternal grandparents, who lived in the ground-floor apartment. We lived in the second-floor apartment, and the Barretts rented the third-floor apartment. I was considerably older and long removed to our own single-family home before I realized that we had stayed at 27 Dover Street and overpaid the rent as a means of keeping my unemployed grandfather financially viable through the Depression.

Worcester was noted for its thousands of three-story tenement homes, and Dover Street was no exception. As a result, the street, which was our normal playground, was swarming with young children, both boys and girls. When I was in kindergarten, I was playing outdoors, as usual. In this particular instance, I have no recollection of my particular playmates. The important element was that I was playing with a classmate who lived next door,

Alice Maguire. We separated from the rest of the group and she led me behind the garage in her backyard. She not only led me there, she KISSED me. My very first kiss! Now this was not just a kiss. She put her tongue into my mouth. I was horrified. It was something I had never encountered before. But being a good little Catholic boy, I knew I had committed a mortal sin – although I am sure that, at age five, I did not understand the definition of mortal sin.

I do remember fleeing home screaming to my mother. She tried to quiet me. After much hysteria on my part, she finally calmed me down and asked what had happened. When I could finally talk, I told her I was going to have a baby. She naturally could not contain her laughter, although I'm sure she tried very hard. Finally she assured me, "No, only girls can have babies and perhaps, at least for a while, you should avoid that naughty Alice Maguire."

When I was twelve years old, and our family had added a baby sister and a dog, we moved into my parents' dream house, a new neighborhood, and a new school district. Time passed. World War II was upon us. My brother was fighting the Germans in France. I graduated from high school and the next day joined the Navy. The war ended and I had already been accepted at Worcester Polytechnic Institute to study engineering. Since my parents were living only half a block from the Tech campus, I moved into my old room and had a three-minute commute to classes while my brother enrolled at Cornell.

In my senior year, I decided to supplement my resources by working occasionally at the local railroad sta-

tion. The foreman would call and ask if I could work from 6:00 pm until 2:00 am. If I could, I would sort U.S. mail packages for five hours and then our crew would walk across Union Square to the Villa Nova pub for a sandwich and a beer. One evening, while we were there, we observed a grungy fortyish woman hustling the bar patrons for drinks. Everyone seemed to know her and treated her kindly. Someone occasionally bought her a drink. She was friendly and appreciative. And the barflies called her Alice. When I took a close look at her, I realized she wasn't forty but much younger. Clearly she was showing the ravages of time. And clearly she was my Alice Maguire.

Walter Dennen

THE PAUSE THAT REFRESHES

The trucks are lined up like soldiers in a parade. Their motors are running and the noise drowns out any conversation. The exhaust fumes fill the air with a burnt, pungent odor. Salvatore walks over to me and signals with his hands to get into the truck cab. I nod with a thumbs-up, step up onto the running board, open the door and settle in. Shortly, Sal gets in on the driver's side. As he closes the door, he hands me the clipboard with the delivery and pick-up schedule. Sal is tall and his big frame fills the cab. He slips a baseball cap over his shiny bald head. He puts the truck in gear and we head out of the bottling plant, a parade of Coca-Cola trucks.



G.M.

On this hot summer day, I am a delivery assistant working for Coca-Cola. This is another way to make some money during a graduate school break (see also “Behind the TV Camera,” issue 32, page 7). It’s early morning and the streets of Brooklyn are quiet except for a milk wagon and a garbage truck we pass. Our first stop is a deli. I get out and get the hand truck out of the back. Sal opens the side door and we start to load the cases of Coke, making sure that the glass bottles are upright and not cracked in the wooden containers. I wheel the hand truck through the front door and the

owner points to the back room, where I unload the crates. Then it's outside and I open the metal doors to the cellar. It's dark and cool as I descend, and when I turn on the light I see the empty bottles sitting in their wooden crates. I drag them up the steep steps and into the sunlight, stacking them on the sidewalk. I close the cellar door and load the empties onto the truck. Sal is inside, talking to the owner. The conversation is in English and Italian, but I get the gist: it's about their families. I take the clipboard out of the truck and get the owner to finish all the required paperwork. Sal says goodbye and it's back into the truck and off to the next delivery.

So the day goes. A grocery store, a restaurant and a candy store. The sun is now overhead and Sal says, "Hey, doc, how about lunch?" I smile and nod in agreement. We park in front of an Italian restaurant that he knows. We eat and drink. Then it's back to work. Sal turns to me "We've got two options: we can take the empties back to the bottling plant, reload and go out again, which would give us overtime; or we can head over to the city pool and go for a swim." I listen as Sal finishes his exposition and smiles at me. I know it's going to be option two, since I'm driving with the union shop steward, and I know I don't have to worry about goofing off. Sal pulls out two bathing suits from behind his seat and we spend the next hour in the cool waters of the city pool.

At 4 o'clock it's time to check in – so we return to the warehouse and bottling plant. I stamp my work card and take a cold Coke off the assembly belt. Sal comes over. "I'll see you tomorrow, doc. Don't forget the foot

powder sample.” I give him a thumbs-up. (Now, that’s another story altogether.)

I put my work clothes in the locker and walk out onto the busy street. What was so quiet earlier is now bustling with traffic. The large Coca-Cola sign on the bottling plant reflects the rays of the late afternoon sun as I head home.

George Rubin

LONDON BRITCHES

I have been struck over the years by the changes in children's games from generation to generation. In fact, changes seem to occur even more rapidly at present. The games I played as a child and the places where we played them seem to have vanished. Of course, the obvious difference is that we had no television and no computers, and we, poor deprived creatures that we were, were forced to devise our own entertainment. Major differences between then and now seem to be that:

- Games were played OUTSIDE.
- No adult was supervising.
- Participants covered a fairly wide range of ages and included both genders.
- Many of the games required that one participant be "IT."
- There was usually a great deal of running involved.
- Games went on for some time or evolved into another game according to interest.
- Rules were subject to change and occasionally hotly debated.
- Debates did not usually degenerate into physical combat.

The close of school for the summer was looked forward to as an infinitely long period of time when we could revel in the luxury of doing as we pleased. Once breakfast was over and chores were done, we were released into the great outdoors. No self-respecting mother in our neighborhood would have allowed her offspring to remain inside short of a local tsunami. Lunch

and going to the bathroom were the only permissible reasons for returning indoors.

The first game I can remember playing with any regularity was *London Britches*:

*London britches falling down, falling down, falling down,
London britches falling down, my fair lady!*

The logic of this jingle was never investigated or remarked upon. It was recited by rote as a singsong formula for the progress of the game without any question about why our contemporaries on the other side of the Atlantic suffered so miserably from chronic wardrobe malfunction. It was the same with our nightly *Now I Lay Me*. We happily chanted, “fysha die/four I wake,” totally unaware that this phrase was related to the possibility of our own demise.

I know that there were even earlier games I must have played because “the little kids” were still playing them, but I have no memory of *Ring around the Rosie* and *A Tisket, A Tasket*. *London Britches* was the precursor to games that had even more activity, such as *Red Light*, *May I?* *Spanish Flag*, *King of the Hill*, *Scatter*, *Simon Says*, and *Mumblety-peg*. Were these games indigenous to the part of New Jersey in which I grew up or did they have more universal exposure? It seemed like every child of my acquaintance knew them in every neighborhood. All of these games except *Mumblety-peg* required an IT, who functioned in different roles. In *Red Light* and *May I?* IT stood at the head of the field of play and issued instructions to the other participants at the other end about what conditions they would have to fulfill in order to advance and eventually take his place. In *Spanish Flag*, IT

knelt on the ground curled up like a turtle to avoid getting kicked by the other participants as they jumped over his form, each shouting a variation of whatever object the initial jumper had designated. It always started with Spanish Flag, followed by flags of whatever countries other players could remember, then proceeded to random categories such as vegetables, trees, movie stars, or whatever. The game culminated in someone shouting, "Chase the white horse to market!" and everyone running off as fast as he could while IT attempted to catch somebody to assume his role.



We had our own version of *Mumblety-peg* different from the way it was usually played then because we marked off a really big square and let everybody play. Since only a couple of the boys had pocketknives, we had to share them and label the spot where our throw had landed before passing the knife on to the next player. This game was one that occasioned lively disagreements about whose mark was really closest to the peg and periodic resort to field first aid, as well as some plau-

sible explanation to your mother about how your finger(s) got cut.

By the time I had children of my own, television had arrived on the scene, but lost appeal for them once they outgrew the Saturday morning cartoons. They also preferred to be outside, but the games of my childhood were completely unknown to them. There was in addition a distinction between what the boys did and what the girls did. Since we had a fairly large yard with an open field behind it, the boys occupied themselves with building obstacle courses and race tracks for bicycle runs and skateboarding (another difference: EVERYBODY had a bike, a big difference from the Depression era). The open field was the venue for the construction of “forts,” periodically stormed by opposing groups so that they changed hands from time to time. There were town-sponsored teams of various kinds, mostly for boys, but occasionally a female version existed (softball for girls). The team activities had limited appeal in our neighborhood.

This was the era of Barbie and Ken, so the girls were frequently involved in drawn-out pseudo-teenage scenarios of activity interspersed by bicycle riding to the various town parks to check out activities of other friends. *Dress Up* was also popular, and all the mothers in the neighborhood were importuned for discarded clothing, particularly high-heeled shoes, which precipitated a lot of falls but miraculously no broken bones. This group generally disdained town-sponsored activities.

Since there was about a ten year hiatus between grandchildren, there was even more disparity between their activities. When the older grandchild achieved game

status, there was much more emphasis on publicly sponsored team activities and many more of them. There were also frequent calls for a grandparent to deliver or retrieve a child who “had a game” at an unfamiliar location, that is unfamiliar until these runs became routine. This grandchild was not particularly interested in team sports or any kind of games that I was able to discern, although his parents made sure he participated as long as they could insist on it. He *was* interested in the local flora and fauna, and he and his buddies went far afield in the rural area in which they lived exploring them and bringing home live specimens (including a black snake), which he sometimes got to keep. I don’t suppose that any of these activities could be called “games,” but they did take place outside.

Fast-forward another ten years, and the number of games played by grandchild #2 was overwhelming. However, these games were all played INSIDE. They also involved television sets and computers and “programs” of all kinds. My granddaughter lived in a small town where most of the local backyards featured a “playset,” sliding board, swings, etc. These seemed to get outgrown in short order. There were bicycles and skateboards in the garages or tossed on front lawns, ridden occasionally, but unable to compete with the popularity of the games. Parental involvement seemed to consist of sporadic efforts to dislodge the children from their accustomed roosting places in the living room, family room or wherever the electronic equipment was installed, and get them outside. Unfortunately, I had the definite impression that when the group departed, it simply changed venue, and the games resumed elsewhere. Now the members of this group are all college

students or beyond, and their principal recreation seems to consist of texting.

It is tempting to assert that our generation was much more creative? athletic? intellectual? cooperative? accomplished? talented? (choose your adjective), but my children and grandchildren all seem to have survived the different patterns of recreation that they enjoyed and taken their various places in society without undue suffering. Likewise, no one of this generation of my granddaughter's acquaintance was afflicted with childhood obesity, the scourge of those with a heavy investment in indoor activities. Perhaps if my generation had been exposed to these later "games," we might have responded in the same ways. Actually there don't seem to be any obvious morals that can be drawn from these generational changes. Like many other facets of life, maybe things are just *different*. Didn't someone once say, "*Vive la différence*"?

Ruth Gage

THE CURLY MAPLE DESK

Suddenly I had become a student. Gone was the little army cot and no place at all to write. “Take good care of this desk. It’s curly maple,” my father had said. And I have. I’ve loved it and studied at it and written my secrets and joys and sorrows on its wide drop-down front.

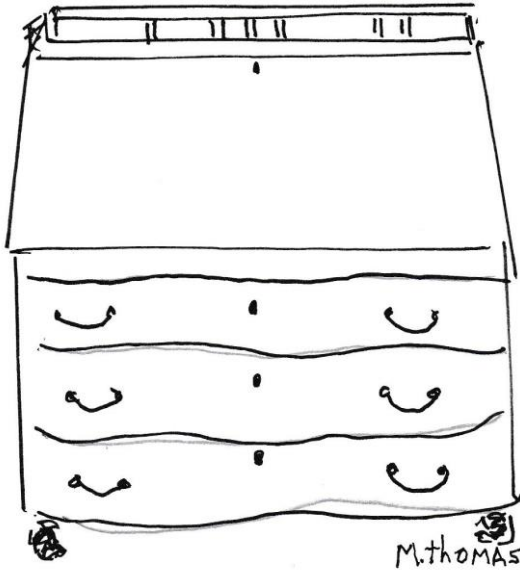
The lovely maple desk with its cubbyholes and drawers was inherited from my cigarette-smoking Quaker grandmother when I was ten years old. It has always been just to the left of my bedroom door in whatever house I have been in. It came along with the huge handmade bed with the rope-webbed base.

It’s gone from a thing of beauty to its present state of ill repair. The drop leaf is supported by a book, sitting on the pulled-out drawer below. The cubbyholes bulge with bills to pay and old letters. I can’t seem to part with the letters, Mother’s Day cards, final notes from friends who have died, and Christmas cards to answer in the following year. It also holds my attempts at poetry stashed away in one of its drawers. And there are rollers for artwork and a wooden child’s recorder. The same drawers hold fast all of my old diaries.

For now, it’s the center of making the household tick. It holds the ever evolving “to do” list clamped down by a round glass paperweight. The little wooden edge around the top is weighted down by a homemade file tied to one side. The top file is “in.” The “out” basket hangs below and is bulging with tape and pamphlets, answered letters, and paid bills. All will eventually find their home.

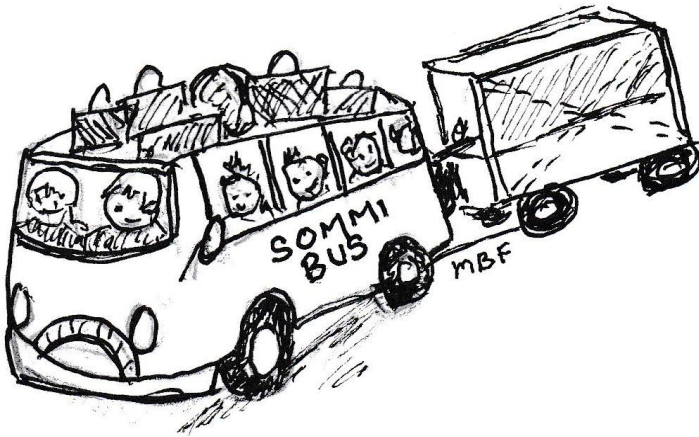
It is here that I write. What a joy in my retirement to have my curly maple desk and perhaps the shade of my grandmother right here beside me. Is there a book in me? Probably not, but my dear family who unearth the diaries and my special loved things will one day know me better. That gives me joy.

Edith Roberts



SUMMERTIME

Summertime brings to mind the beginning of a song, “Summertime, and the livin’ is easy.” With a monthlong vacation each summer and six children, one’s thoughts revolve around two goals, enjoyment and affordability. Camping was our solution and we began with a Starcraft pop-up camper, which could sleep eight and was light enough to be towed by a Greenbrier ten-seat microbus with a Corvair air-cooled engine that would have made Ralph Nader proud. Without the camper we faced renting four rooms per night, one for my wife and me, another for our two daughters and two for our four sons. We were not about to attempt to have four boys share one room. A major disaster was thereby avoided, or at least postponed.



The camper had canvas sides and slept eight. Two wings pulled out, making two double beds at each end, with two inside tables that folded down to create two additional double beds. The four-inch-thick cushions

became the mattresses. The canvas roofing and siding kept us all snug and dry during stormy weather, provided no one touched the wet canvas, because otherwise water would soon begin seeping through, followed by a steady drip – a lesson quickly learned by all. Also there was much less space to clean than in a four-bedroom home with multiple baths.

We focused on state and national parks containing campgrounds, which usually featured lakes and trails. These campgrounds permitted us to enjoy swimming, boating and fishing, and hiking, which we all enjoyed. All of this for less than ten dollars a night, with a full hookup, water, sewer and electricity.

On one of our first trips, to Nova Scotia, we were reminded of the limited power of our microbus when we faced a long, steep, serpentine climb up a mountainside. I pulled to the side of the highway, unhitched the twelve-hundred-pound Starcraft, took the family to the top of the hill, and deposited them there. My eldest son and I then returned to the base of the hill, hitched up the trailer, and brought it to our waiting family.

Feeding our large family was another problem to be solved, without incurring extraordinary costs by dining out. We purchased a ten-by-fourteen-foot canvas canopy designed to be threaded through a metal track affixed just below the roof of camper. A center rod, side poles, steel pegs and ropes helped lock the canopy in place. We simply moved the campground picnic table under the canopy and had a proper place to both cook and eat, while not feeling cramped inside the pop-up.

Most meals were cooked outside, although the camper did have a two-burner stove fed by a twenty-pound propane tank. Our three-burner Coleman portable stove had a large grill that covered the entire surface, a bare necessity when making meals for eight. Breakfast would see a-dozen-and-a-half eggs cooking, together with at least a pound of bacon. If pancakes were the featured dish, almost three dozen could easily disappear. The campground barbecue was also put to great use, with pounds of chopped meat and hot dogs eagerly consumed. Disposable paper plates and cups reduced meal cleanups to a minimum, so we could return to the pleasures of outdoor living.

With the birth of our seventh child, a lovely little girl, enlarging both our accommodations and towing vehicle became necessary. I must admit we first tried staying with the Starcraft by placing her crib between the two lower double bunks each evening, but we all felt thoroughly overcrowded. We upgraded to a twenty-three-foot travel trailer, a Prowler, again sleeping eight, which also meant purchasing a larger, more powerful tow vehicle. We also bought a two-man tent to house our oldest boys, who liked to rise very early to go fishing. We thereby solved two problems, the need for the extra bunk and their ability to leave without waking the trailer passengers.

The tow vehicle was a Ford Chateau passenger van, with a 254 hp V-8 engine, and seating for twelve. Fortunately gasoline was much, much cheaper in that era, which helped offset the cost of ten miles per gallon towing the trailer, fifteen without. The tank held about forty gallons. Two wonderful, very comfortable, tall cap-

tain's chairs, with armrests, were provided for the driver and front seat passenger, which made us feel we were sitting in our living room while roaring down the highway.

Seating for the children consisted of two three-seat benches, with a four-seater at the very rear of the van. This was an excellent design, providing a lane for passengers or mom and dad to reach the rear of the vehicle without anyone having to move. An invaluable added benefit was the three-seat benches, because two children could occupy each of the first two benches with a wide space between them, reducing the complaints of "infringement on my territory." In the rear seat, three children sat, again with sufficient space between individuals to minimize unwanted body contact and consequent complaints. Nevertheless, children being children, it was often necessary to declare, as we traveled along the modern interstate, "Don't make me pull to the side of the road and come back there. I don't care who did it. Better stop before I stop this car."

Quite often we found passengers in vehicles passing us doing little head counts to determine our number of occupants. We'd smile back at them and one of the older children would respond with a finger count held up against the window, five fingers splayed out with the right, four with the left. We thought it nice to be included in the count.

Summer vacation being a time for fun and relaxation by all, we told the children, "Enjoy yourselves." During a sudden shower someone decided to test limits and asked if they could play in the rain. "Yes," we replied, "just put on your rain coats and sneakers or san-

dals.” They did, and off they went, making certain to take along their baby sister, who wasn’t about to have her siblings leave without her.

They placed her in her small, low, four-wheeled metal stroller and raced down the campground road. Amid her screams of delight were her cries of “Faster, faster.” When one brother tired, another picked up the task and tried to make her change her request. Running through puddles was a special delight for both, and of course the bigger the puddle, the higher the splash, the louder the laughter. I must admit, it was a pleasure to see them have such complete and unexpected enjoyment. I believe that was how our youngest acquired her continuing pleasure in driving fast.

Occasionally we treated ourselves to eating out, that is, going to a restaurant. We would search for “all you can eat” buffets because many of our children, having reached middle and junior high school age, had very good, healthy appetites. My thought was “Today their profit margin takes a hit.” At one establishment, our oldest son enjoyed eleven desserts, all topped with whipped cream, despite his mother’s earnest warning that “you’re going to get sick.” He learned later that evening to believe in his mother’s wisdom.

Sometimes we would visit a McDonald’s as a special treat for the children. We could never send the children by themselves to place the order. Imagine a fifteen-year-old appearing at the counter and asking for four vanilla milk shakes, five chocolate, twelve sides of fries, and twenty-one hamburgers, fifteen with everything on them, six with extra onions. We had to chuckle as we saw the person working at the counter assume a doubt-

ful, worried expression, before we nodded to confirm the order and pointed to ourselves, indicating we would pay the tab. As comprehension occurred, a warm smile replaced the questioning look.

Our trips broadened our children's horizons, permitting them to explore various parts of our country with their differing lifestyles, and to develop ever closer bonds to each other through their shared experiences. They spent much time together in close quarters, enjoying countless laughs with and at each other. With children of their own, they still take great pleasure coming together, sharing and thereby reliving their happy childhood experiences.

John Sommi

MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

I am now 86 years old remembering how important Memorial Day commemorations have been in my life.

In high school I was one of three majorettes leading the Millburn High School Band, marching down the center of Millburn, New Jersey, in our blue and white uniforms – blue velvet, long-sleeved jackets with white wool swaying skirts that I made myself along with our white tasseled boots.

For the next thirty years while living in Glen Ridge, New Jersey (ten of them leading 350 Girl Scouts of Glen Ridge down Ridgewood Avenue as their director) it was always a special occasion of commemorating the event, listening to speeches by the mayor and greeting neighbors.

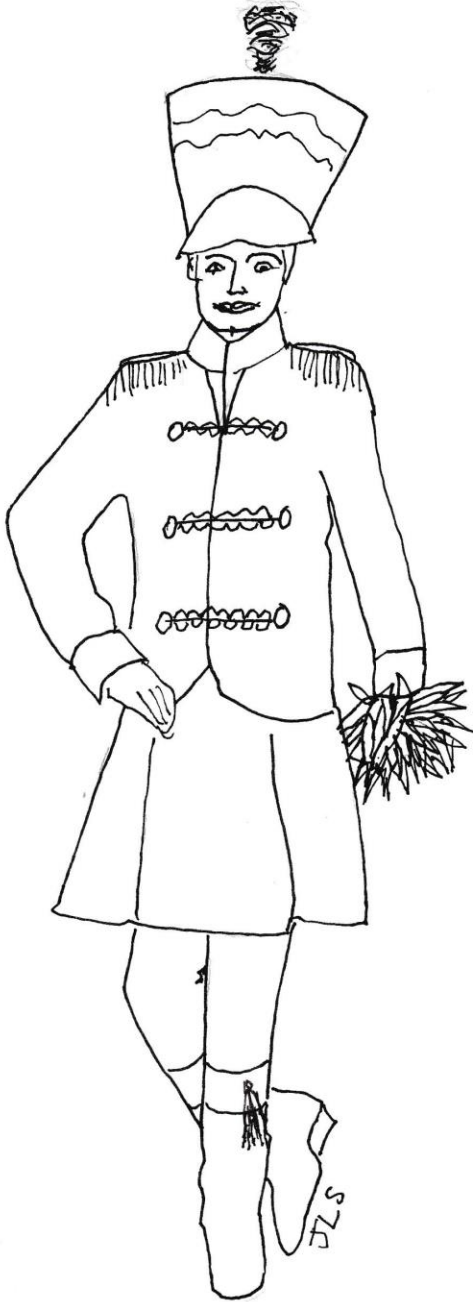
A few years later when I first moved by myself to Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, after a family trauma, I needed some way to start my own new tradition. I was lonely and I didn't recall there was a parade in town, but I read an article in the local newspaper about a National Memorial Cemetery in Old Town – the first official Memorial to the Civil War in the United States and it was on my street, Jefferson! I walked five blocks, crossing Washington Street, and came to a high fence overlooking Route 1. I turned right and walked along the fence, took a left over the highway and turned left until I was back on Jefferson Street. I kept walking past some brick factory buildings on one side and low-rent houses on the other, then a variety of cemeteries belonging to various churches of Old Town. At the end and across the street

there was a very large, beautiful thick black metal gate with gold trim and official American plaques on each door. Both open and welcoming. I walked in and, lo and behold, there was a magnificent cemetery within. The tombstones were all the same – very old with American flags in front of each one. The large area was well manicured with beautiful cut grass on rolling hills, surrounded by a stream and tall trees of a wild Virginia type and in the near corner was a cute cinder-block house with an open porch in the corner. What a delight just to be there and not have to fight the traffic or see crowds of people, but quietly be grateful for the reminder of what this commemoration meant and the history of this sacred place. When I turned around to walk back I saw a large memorial plaque on the side of the porch with the Gettysburg Address engraved on it. I read through it and felt so tranquil and sad for all those killed and families affected by wars.

In the following thirty years, this became a meaningful tradition with my friends, always reading aloud the Gettysburg Address, in unison, on our way out of the cemetery from the plaque on the side of the porch. As always we then walked back to my house, for strawberries, shortcake and ice cream.

On the last Memorial Day, before moving to Medford Leas, when we stopped to read in unison, we noted a young boy's clear, proud voice joining with ours. We all became silent so we could hear him as he recited the Gettysburg Address out loud from memory.

Sally Smith



THE BIG ROLE REVERSAL

I have lived in Medford Leas for thirteen years and thought that I lived in independent living. Within the last two years I have made the following discovery: rather than telling my children what to do, they tell me what to do. Not only that, but I actually do what they tell me. I am not sure when this change took place, but I am aware of the fact that I have actually given up control – and I don't seem to mind it. How does this happen? And I see it all around me: sons calling their mother every day; daughters buying clothes for their mother; families staying for long periods of time with a parent who is temporarily in Woolman; sons checking prescriptions.

We used to do all these things, and now they frequently don't even listen to us at all. Now I speak of those who believe that, while we may be forgetful, we are not ready to be placed in the Memory Section of Medford Leas. The worst thing is that it is quite pleasant to be accompanied by a son or daughter for a doctor's visit. I have noticed that doctors speak much more rapidly than they used to. I end up asking my child to summarize what the doctor said – and they understood everything while I didn't have a clue.

I came to Medford Leas because I didn't ever want to be a burden to my children. I took care of my mother for the last 14 years of her life. That's what she wanted and that's exactly what I didn't want. And here I am, with my sons changing their schedules to make sure they take turns taking me for appointments. I like it, but I didn't realize it was that late.

Kit Ellenbogen

DANIEL

Spring seemed to have begun; there were purple crocuses open and red buds on some of the trees. But in the night it began to snow. When I woke up and opened the curtain, I saw that the daffodils were nearly buried. Even though the winter had not been as harsh as other years, I suddenly felt discouraged and blue about the world and life.

It was Friday. Perhaps the chorus would be rehearsing today. I can't sing, but I love to lurk and listen outside their practice room. Live choral music touches me deeply, despite my musical deficits.

There was indeed a music rehearsal today. I took my winter jacket off and settled on a sofa with some coffee. The group started with warm-ups, a series of sighs that turn into scales. Just then Danielle Peterson, who works in the Therapeutic Recreation Department, came down the hall accompanied by a young African man. Before she went into the Gathering Room to play the piano for some of the songs, she settled him on the sofa with me.

"My name is Daniel," he told me. "I'm from Uganda."

Startled, I asked, "How long have you been in America?"

"I'm only here for two months," he said. "I'm speaking on behalf of children in Uganda. I lost my parents to the war there when I was very young. For my organization, I've just been to the United Nations and I

have a lot of other engagements while I'm here. We are trying to build a hospital and school.”

Just then the chorus began to sing a song that was written on a basement wall during World War II by a Jewish prisoner. The words are, “I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining. I believe in love, even when there is no one there. I believe in peace...”

We sat spellbound. Through the windows we watched the snow come down onto the fir trees and the meadows. Daniel and I listened and looked and my heart rose.

Judy Kruger

A SELF-ASSIGNMENT

In January and February of 1998 I took time off from my job on a newspaper and gave myself the assignment of doing a spiritual photographic journey through houses of worship in Great Britain. There are certainly plenty of them, as I found out, and I managed to get to a very small fraction of them. But I shot many rolls of film, and in my quest, I found beauty, peace, art and formidable architecture.

I photographed many of the London churches designed by Christopher Wren, each one different and interesting in its own way. Some of them are in what is known as the City of London, which is London's business district and one of the city's distinct boroughs. In the East End, I toured the Bevis Marks Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in England, dating back to the early 1700s. The pews and chandeliers are the very ones that have been there from the beginning. In fact, the only new things in the building are a small amount of electricity (installed in 1921) and replacement of part of the flooring that was beginning to collapse. The architect was a Quaker, which may account for its simplicity of design. Unlike many of the other buildings in the area, the synagogue was not harmed during World War II.

I spent quite a bit of time photographing in St. Paul's Cathedral, the most famous Wren-designed place of worship. This was built on a huge scale in comparison to most of the other Wren churches.

Feeling slightly obsessed, I spent many hours in that section of London, often dodging raindrops, going from church to church.

But I also found churches and cathedrals of interest in other parts of Great Britain. The city of Coventry had been bombed to smithereens during World War II. Instead of rebuilding the cathedral as it had been, the ruins – some walls, a steeple, a few statues – were left intact and a new cathedral, very modern in style, was built next door. It is connected to the ruins by just a bit of a roof (called St. Michael's Porch). The new cathedral has beautiful art, tapestries, statuary and stained glass.

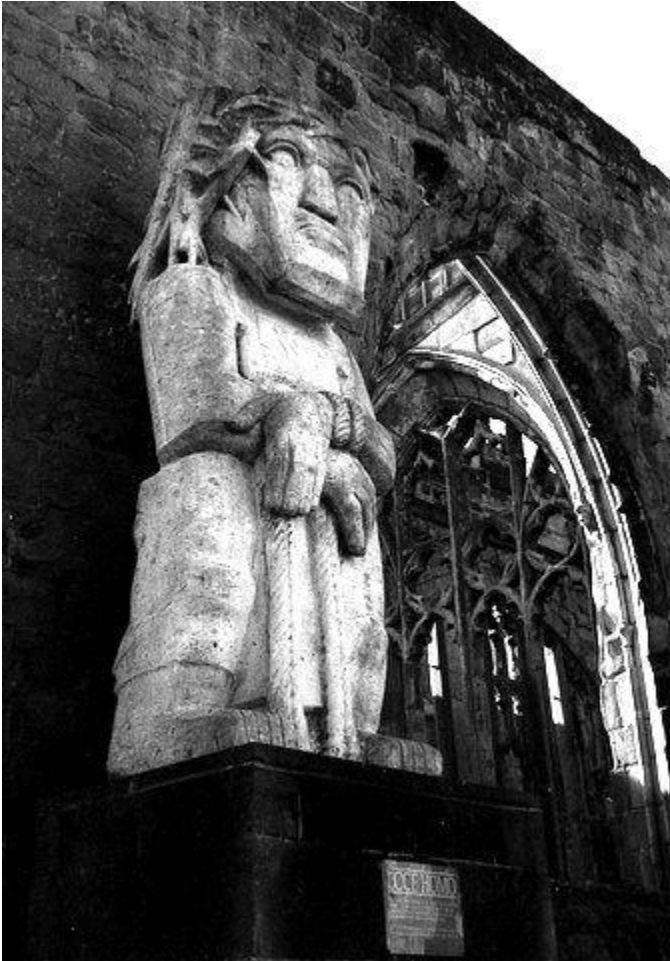
While visiting Coventry and spending much of a full day within the walls of both the new and old cathedrals, I couldn't escape a feeling of great sadness at the terrible loss of life that took place there.

Another church that made a very deep impression on me was in Lincoln. It is huge, built of stone, and *very* old, dating back to 1072! It is sometimes called a "sermon in stone." A deep spiritual feeling overcomes the visitor when entering that hushed stone edifice, and this was the feeling that I tried to capture in my photos. The people who built and worked on it over the centuries must have had a sense of humor, since there are some very odd and weird gargoyles sitting up very high, both inside and outside.

In the end I lost count of the houses of worship I visited, but there were a lot! I finally managed to get all of my rolls of film developed, although they took many weeks to print to my satisfaction. I am pleased with

some of these pictures and I do think that in some ways I caught the essence and feelings of mystery and eternity of those beautiful and mostly very old places.

Margery Rubin



ACHIEVEMENT

Randy Jackson got an “A” on his science project. He had spent long hours after school making the papier-mâché model of a volcano. He had crafted the mountain, the crater, the lava. He had painted the parts until erupting from the worktable in the science room was a miniature Vesuvius spouting and sputtering and threatening Randy’s books with destruction and oblivion. And for his project Randy had received an “A.”

That meant that he would definitely get an “A” in science for the third quarter. He already had calculated his math average, and it was a solid 95. He had an “A” in history and English too, but the big question had been science and now he was sure of that. His project had been the best in the class, and Mr. Fredricks was planning to send it to the all-city science fair in May. Until then Randy was to take it home and keep it in a safe place. Randy looked down at the project as he held it tenderly. What was wrong with it?

Maybe it was the texture. Too rough? Too smooth? Last year in seventh grade he thought he had a perfect topographical map of Pennsylvania, but his father had showed him how his application of the papier-mâché had made the surface more difficult to paint. He even gave Randy the tools from his workbench and sat by Randy to make sure he was doing it right.

Then there was his monarch butterfly. Randy had mixed the paint badly and got a color more reddish than orange. He had had to do it over, but at least the finished product was a bit more acceptable to his father

than his first feeble attempt at reproducing the exact color of a *Danaus plexippus*. He surveyed the volcano. The colors were just right. He had checked and re-checked and mixed them three or four different ways in order to get the mixture that he wanted. He had stayed after school every day for three weeks in order to finish the project. And he could have spent another two or three days if only he hadn't had to turn it in.

“Now promise you won't do one more thing to it,” Mr. Fredricks had said.

Now at least he would have more time to spend on history. History was his favorite subject, but it came fairly easily so he had to devote much more time to science, which was his weakest subject. He had had a “B” in science the first quarter and had only managed to get an “A” the second quarter because they were studying the solar system, where he was fairly secure in his knowledge. His father had been showing him the stars and planets ever since he could remember, and he could name them at will. Any given night they could stop by the side of the road and get out. It didn't matter what questions his father asked. Randy could answer them all.

“Well,” he sighed. Only one more quarter to go and he would be through with eighth grade. In high school subjects were more specialized and you could spend the summer preparing for biology or chemistry because you knew what the subject would cover. Eighth grade science was less defined and each teacher could concentrate on the aspects that he or she liked best. One more quarter to go.

He crossed Front Street and turned into Walnut Park Drive. He gazed once more at the volcano. It moved in his hands and he almost dropped it to keep them from being burned by the lava which was flowing from the bubbling crater. He knew it was perfect. He swung open the door.

“Dad,” he called. “I brought my science project home to show you.”

Doris Kabley

SECOND CHANCE

I can picture myself at nursery school standing at a children's easel with an oilcloth smock covering my dress. I remember enjoying myself fully, just finger-painting. Growing up in Manhattan in the 1940s on the West Side in a matriarchal household, where my mother held things together. She encouraged my interests – to a point. She had been a young woman during the Great Depression and emphasized the importance of a secure job, with a preference for the civil service. She had been an elementary school teacher for her whole life and firmly believed that a woman must be able to earn her living.

So I was allowed to take ballet lessons, but I understood that was to be only an avocation. As for my Art Students League Saturdays, which I loved and continued for many years, she conceded that I had natural talent. It was a very professional place, where we learned to stretch our own canvases for oil painting, had classes with nude models for life drawing, and used charcoal, pastels, the old smelly oil paints, turpentine and linseed oil. I assembled a portfolio that earned me admission to the High School of Music and Art, which I wanted to attend.

In New York City, middle-class families, like ours, needed their adolescent children to be accepted by the “special” public high schools because private schools were too expensive. The neighborhood public high schools were generally mediocre and the student bodies were too rough for sweet young ladies. Fortunately for my family, I was a smart girl and a good student, so I was accepted by three public high schools where admis-

sion had to be earned: Bronx High School of Science, Hunter High School, and the High School of Music and Art. To my mind, Hunter High School, a bus ride from our apartment, was unacceptable because they only admitted girls. My mother stepped in with “Bronx Science is the best school, and that’s where you will go if you won’t go to Hunter.” So I commuted by subway to its distant Bronx campuses until I had graduated.

I took every art and mechanical drawing class that they offered. Mechanical drawing was done with a drawing board, a large T-square, clear plastic triangles, graphite pencils, India ink, pens and other tools. It wasn’t exactly loose, spontaneous expression. It probably is done electronically now, but I adored it and applied to universities with good architecture colleges. I spent the next year buried in Sibley Hall at Cornell University, rarely enjoying the beautiful campus. My mother saw this as preparation for a substantial job, and so my university years were financed by her and my father. (Jewish families did not stint on higher education, but majoring in art history would not have qualified.)

Our projects were very difficult and exhausting, keeping us in the big drafting room until it was past time for bed. It is amazing that we stayed healthy, because we also cleaned our drafting tools with carbon tetrachloride and used mouth-sprayed fixatives for charcoal and graphite very liberally. You have probably guessed by now that I did not continue in the architecture program beyond my freshman year. There were only two other girls in my year, and they left at the same time I did. Perhaps our professors didn’t like the idea of women architects.

I transferred to Cornell's College of Arts and Sciences as of my sophomore year and began to shine academically in psychology and sociology. I majored in social psychology, then research psychology, and clinical psychology for the next thirteen years of my life, right through postdoctoral degrees leading to psychology licenses in three states. I found satisfaction in my profession, was glad that my skills allowed me to help distressed people, and had many welcome challenges. But I began to burn out with the growing weight of the hospital patients' very serious problems. I looked forward to my retirement at age 70.

I snatched art experiences when I could during my working and child-raising years. For a while I was the serious photographer in the family, making child portraits, developing the film and printing the best ones at our local high school darkroom (again with nasty chemicals). I always went to new art exhibits; after we moved to Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas where the museums were wonderful (honestly), we saw fabulous shows. When we traveled back to see New York family, there was additional wonderful art at the Metropolitan, the MOMA, and many venues.

When we finished with the travail of moving ourselves from Texas to Medford Leas at Lumberton, my artistic interests began to blossom again. Besides collecting and decorating with art objects, I began to take art classes in the nearby towns. I took two rounds of drawing instruction at the Medford Arts Center, which refreshed my sketching ability. I re-read classic how-to art books, joined the Philadelphia art museums and discovered the Art Studio on the Medford campus of the Leas.

I was surrounded by people who were interested in art and actively practicing their specialties. They were helpful and generous to me, warmly welcoming.

I tried a lot of media in turn. Pastels in beautiful colors were my first choice, then oil paints that were water-soluble and didn't smell, an innovation that was pleasingly new to me. One of my first oil paintings was hung by my very loyal daughter-in-law in her dining room, but my first still-life paintings had fruits and vegetables that appeared to jump out of their bowls. Gradually, I began to put my beginner's pictures on the walls in our resident art shows for the public. A colored pencil portrait which I drew of my husband attracted a lot of notice because it is a good likeness. Soft colored pencils were an exciting discovery for me, opening up ways for an amateur to create real works of art. I have been fortunate to take part in many workshops and other art experiences with this wonderful Medford Leas Art Studio group. I also got to study calligraphy, which is a specialty at Medford Leas.

My most recent focus has been watercolor painting, having started my third series of classes at the Perkins Center for the Arts in Moorestown. I am learning a lot. We use clear, beautifully colored paints to suggest, but not detail, all kinds of subjects. Right now I am trying to develop a looser style, which watercolorists prize.

Classes and demonstrations aren't the only art-related fun for me. Since I also like to write, I turned out to be the art reporter for *Medford Leas Life* and *The Lumberton Campus Chronicle*, our monthly publications. I cover the visiting art and photography exhibits on our campuses. These exhibits are usually excellent and offer ideas for

painters-in-training. I also write about the excellent resident art and photography shows, which change twice yearly. This year I became the illustrations editor for the twice-yearly literary magazine, *Leas Lit*.

I wonder whether I would have been happier if I had followed the road not taken. I certainly am enjoying this second chance to discover and develop my creativity. I am happily surrounded by art. My fellow artists and teacher are starting to notice my improvement, which is very gratifying. My main retirement satisfaction has, unexpectedly, been picking up where I left off so long ago and taking it as far as I can go.

Joyce Linda Sichel

CHINESE LANTERNS

I forgot to light your yahrzeit candle this year.
We were too busy.

Our lives have moved on, but yours stopped,
and you deserve a better memorial.

I will always remember you with love.
You were a gentle spirit, not given to judging,
almost too fragile for womanhood.

Devastated by the loss of your own parents,
well before I even knew your son.
You were still grieving.

You loved the beach, your old friends,
the security of your mah-jongg games.
You took our children to playgrounds.
Inexpensive local fun to keep them happy.

You played penny-ante poker with us,
and seemed happy yourself.
But I wonder if you cried when we left.

Your husband arranged his kitchen stage,
for the assembling of stuffed cabbage rolls.
You did the prep work and you would cook them,
but you gave him the limelight as we all looked on.

Eventually his business guard dog died,
and you were freed from your weekends
with the fierce German shepherd.

You grew more inward as we all turned outward.
Our lives were busy, your sons had little patience,
their teenage children had little contact.
You dwelled with memories instead of family.

Your cave grew into your being.
Yours had been a static house, and gradually
it became like a mausoleum.

Peopled with your younger son's stuffed animals
won on the boardwalk and enshrined
in an unchanged bookcase in an unchanged room,
gray with dust, as were the Chinese lanterns.

Dried flowers,
lovingly arranged to last those twenty years.
Pale salmon with age, still puffed,
but too papery to risk disturbing.
Dusting might well have destroyed them.

The closets of your parents' clothes
preserved for decades
with mothballs and reverence.
Were they touched or donned
when you were alone?

You liked pretty things.
We bought you a giant paper parasol
on a trip we took
while you were probably taking care of our children.

You displayed it open in the living room
where it rested in a zen garden on your floor.

You still went to sit in the sun of the front yard,
but there were fewer outings,
less window-shopping through shops of décor.
There was never much money,
and your cousin and old friends were aging,
moving, dying.

Your fears of the world grew overwhelming.
You gave up trying to look pretty yourself,
the scope of your life was narrowing quickly.
Your dentures hurt your mouth and your pride.
We didn't understand how much.

When your husband decided it was time
to give up the scrap yard and retire to Florida
(his well-deserved retirement)
your anxiety reached panic level.

The men overrode your objections,
saw you impeding the move to paradise,
wondered at your inability to plan and pack.
You were supposed to be happy,
and they didn't understand how your life
was supported on brittle dried flowers.

You bargained with them
for an inland garden apartment,
resigned, I think, to salvage what you could.
You had never lived in a storied apartment house,
but again you were overridden
and brought to a high-rise by the sea.

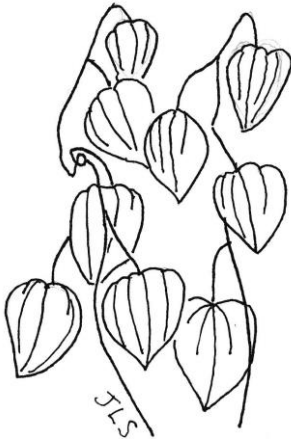
We helped you pack.
We took the items too big to move.
The sofa you had splurged on, still slippered in plastic,
its white yellowed to ecru.
Dusty, delicately carved chairs,
white-painted wood pieces,
your fight against dark ugliness
would be ending, we promised.

All carried out of the cave.

We reassured you that new things would please you.
You weakened visibly, unable to act, led like a child.
Your capable in-law sisters, already reborn in Florida,
chided you to relax, that it would soon feel like home.

Amid the boxes and the teetering view of the Atlantic,
you broke down, you cowered, you couldn't make sense.
You trusted very few and very little.
We cajoled you into a hospital
and left you in your husband's care
while we went back to work.

You were so terrified; we should never have gone,
have never let the doctors shock your brain for healing.
You did not heal.
Like your brothers before, and your older son later,
your heart exploded.



And the pale Chinese lanterns,
in newspaper wrappings,
sent to the promised land,
crumbled with you into the
dusty ground.

And I miss you.

Joyce Linda Sichel

THE BADER HOUSE

At the Bader House the front porch was the one place to be. This was the strong opinion of young Norm Dolson. The porch gave him an interesting and often entertaining view, particularly in the evening.

In front of the porch was a sandy front yard trying desperately to grow a crop of shore grass. Beyond the grass the block-long Bader Avenue ran from Madison Avenue northwest to Melrose. On the other side of Bader Avenue the real fun began, period. Double trolley tracks came from near the top of Atlantic Avenue, having made a wide curve on their way to and from the Inlet. Every ten minutes or so Norm heard a rumble of steel wheels on rails and the stinging hiss of the sparks made by the trolley pickup arm running along the overhead power line. There it was, another yellow and black Brilliner trolley gliding past. "The Miss America Fleet" was painted on the sides of each car.

On the horizon straight ahead the sound of the waves on the beach beyond the boardwalk was constant. The white tops kept coming and breaking, leaving their muffled sound. The ocean sound blended with the sound of thousands of diners being hosted by Hackney's Restaurant, a block up the Boardwalk from the Bader House. It was the largest restaurant in the world, capable of seating more than three thousand guests at one time. Intermittent sounds of high-pitched laughter floated from those strolling under the lights on the Boards on the ocean side of Hackney's. (The "Boards" was the local expression for the famed Atlantic City Boardwalk.) And to top off the evening's entertainment, after dark (if

he was lucky to be up) he would see the two floors of Hackney's lit up like the finale of a Broadway musical. This show, seen from the Bader House front porch, never failed to entertain.

Norm's parents stepped onto the porch, ready for a walk on the Boards. The three Dolsons walked down Bader Avenue, turned the corner onto Gramercy Place and boarded the next streetcar headed downtown.

The Bader House was one of many summer boarding houses in the city. This particular establishment was managed by a Mrs. Jaquett. One could engage a large room for a week with a double bed and cot for ten dollars. Two double beds cost twelve dollars. For an additional dollar a family enjoyed kitchen privileges. These privileges provided the use of the dining room and kitchen with a shelf for dried stuffs in a metal cabinet in the kitchen and a shelf in one of the three iceboxes on the kitchen porch.

There were a few seasonal patrons at the Bader House. This meant that people stayed for a month or two. The Rosenbergs were one of two seasonal families. Mr. and Mrs. Rosenberg came down from New York City with their college-age son. Guests at the Bader House rarely saw the son. He was off making friends at the beach. At night he caught headliners like Rudy Vallee at Steel Pier or he played escort with the girls, dancing the nights away with the music on the Million Dollar Pier.

Mrs. Rosenberg was a good-looking middle-aged woman whose studied sophistication and fashion had carried her through the Great Depression. Someone

made the aside that her cloths were tagged with the label “Designed by F. Scott Fitzgerald.” This was not meant to be unkind. It recognized her ability to create current costumes out of past fashionable glories. She often took lunch with friends at the Traymore Hotel. The Marlborough-Blenheim was beyond their means. She stayed away from the Bader House as much as possible. Mr. Rosenberg was the opposite of his wife. He embraced the Bader House and all its limited offerings.

The other seasonal patrons were Mr. and Mrs. Arbagast of Philadelphia. Mrs. Arbagast always introduced herself to new acquaintances with “Call me Mrs. A.” It was a rare occasion when Mr. and Mrs. Arbagast went far from the Bader House together. During the day Mrs. A. liked to lounge on the side screen porch off the dining room, mostly reading her favorite author, Agatha Christie, or browsing the weekly magazines provided by Mrs. Jaquett, such as *Colliers* or *Life*.

A typical day for Mr. Arbagast found him at the back bay, tending rented crab traps, or on Brigantine beach, surf fishing. Mr. Rosenberg, having not much to do, joined Mr. Arbagast in his fishing and crabbing exploits. Mr. Arbagast and Mr. Rosenberg (they always addressed each other with “Mister”) formed a “seasonal friendship.” They found that unlike fishing, for them, crabbing was easy. By the middle of the week their work would yield at least a half bushel of crabs.

When the men brought the crabs into the house, usually after the evening meal on Thursdays, Mrs. A. took over and went into action. She used the largest pot Mrs. Jaquett provided. She emptied the live crabs into the pot, added cold water to cover the crabs and placed

the pot on the large range. She lit the gas ring with a match. As the water in the pot slowly approached boiling, the noise in the pot became louder with the crabs' frantic attempt to escape. In a few minutes all was quiet. The hot water was poured off and the cooked crabs were laid out on cookie sheet to cool. Kitchen shears, pliers and forks to release the crabmeat were laid out on one of the large tables in the dining room. The three adults made fast work of producing more than two quarts of crabmeat. The bowl of crabmeat was immediately placed on ice. In the next several days Mrs. A. would work her culinary wonders. There would be crab salad one day and Crab Imperial the next. For the Arbagasts and Rosenbergs this was the best of the Bader House.

When the table was being cleared, Mrs. Rosenberg came into the dining room carrying a deck of cards. She suggested the two couples play several hands of pinochle. The table was readied, the light was adjusted and a card dealer was chosen. There were complaints about the missing cards and foul hands. It was all done in good humor and with much laughter. The good humor was helped along with iced tea and cake.

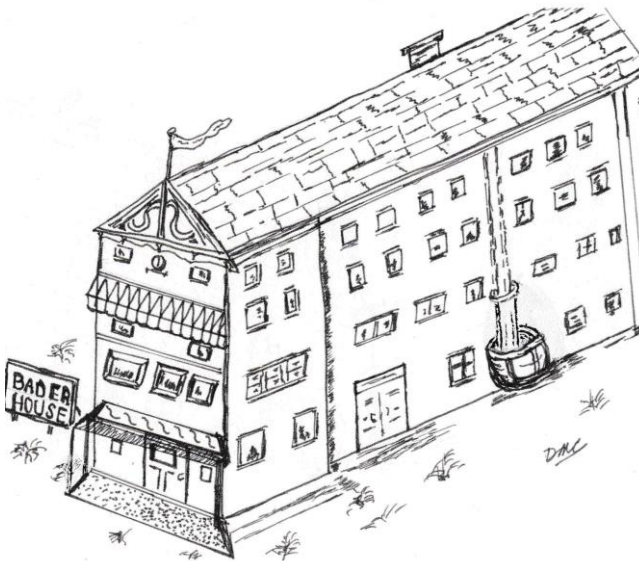
Later, returning from their Boardwalk excursion, the Dolsons entered the dining room. Mr. Dolson was carrying a quart of Hershey ice cream, purchased from a deli on Gramercy Place. As they entered the dining room, the last pinochle hand was being dealt. They greeted the two couples. Mrs. Dolson commandeered bowls and spoons. The family sat at a small table in a far corner. They commented on the quality of the ice cream. They agreed that Hershey ice cream was not as

good as their favorite, Breyers. Mrs. Dolson consoled herself with the observation, "At least, it's cold."

By ten-thirty all the guests had gone to their rooms and Mrs. Jaquett began her nightly routine. She closed the front door. She left the light on in the front hall and made certain the small lamp was lit on the dining room dresser. She checked the kitchen and the back of the house before returning to her room.

Soon after midnight the side porch screen door opened. The young Rosenberg son slipped in. He removed his shoes and lay down on one of the cots, happy to spend the night on the side porch with its cool night breezes. Besides, at that late hour he did not wish to disturb the other guests, walking through the silent house. For the short time he was awake, the sound of the ocean kept him company.

Chris Darlington



WHY I MARCHED

I had been experiencing disbelief and grief over the presidential election. When I learned of the women's marches in November I knew instantly I had to march. It was not just political; it was personal. I had thought a woman would become president of the United States. I was excited at the prospect and reflected on some of the role models and messages from my formative years. I realized that a woman in the most powerful position in the world could have made a significant difference for me.

Here are some of the messages I received from my own family while growing up in the 50s and 60s in Haddonfield:

“You don't have to think about a career, you'll get married and have children.”

“Being a doctor is no career for a woman.”

“Be a social butterfly in college. Get C's. What good is a Phi Beta Kappa key when diapering babies?”

These thoughts were far from my mind when I took the High Speed Line into Philadelphia from Haddonfield with four friends. It was 9:00 a.m., January 21, 2017. When we arrived at the station I was surprised to see that the line for purchasing tickets snaked around to the outside door. When we got on the train, there were hardly any seats left. By the time we got to Camden, the train was totally packed. It was hard to keep from hitting people with my sign. What immediately caught my attention on the train was, despite the

crowding, how pleasant and smiling everyone was. Naysayers had predicted that it might be dangerous. Wrong.

We got off at 16th and Locust. There was a big crowd, all moving down 16th toward the Parkway. There was no wondering where to go. Also, there were smiling ladies with directions and signs pointing the way. By the time we got to Logan Square, no one was moving. I have never been in a crowd that large. Of course, we wondered, should we just stand still? But no, I led the way, gently pushing through the crowd down the Parkway. We kept saying, "Excuse me." It was very slow progress.



Wherever we looked there was a sea of people. My male friend was originally afraid he might be the only male, but from the moment he got on the train, he knew he was not alone. I feel so "uplifted," he said. "I am so happy I came." We enjoyed looking at signs and people. I particularly liked the sign, "Now You've Pissed Off Grandma." One person was standing on another's shoulders with a sign, "Lift People Up. Don't Put Them Down." We exchanged smiles with women, children, and men in pink hats. While the crowd was predominantly



white women, there was significant diversity in age, gender, and race. We were excited and calm at the same time.

The day was chilly, gray, and overcast, in contrast to the warmth of the crowd. We moved very slowly to Eakins

Oval in front of the Art Museum. The crowd seemed to be stretching all the way back to Logan Square. There were huge TV monitors, but we could barely see or hear. Sometimes people started a chant. It was exhilarating. People including the Philadelphia mayor, a congresswoman, and others spoke and entertained those of us who could see and hear. Around 1:00 p.m. we started saying “Excuse me” again and moving out of the circle to the road to get back to the High Speed Line.

How to explain the sense of purpose and unity? The joy of being together with friends and strangers. Of knowing I was doing the right thing and not just being a good girl who does not make waves.

I had had the opportunity earlier in my life to make a small difference for women, but I chose not to take advantage of it. It started when I was interviewed for a high school teaching job. The department chair told me that I was the best-qualified candidate, but that the principal wanted to hire a man who could coach football. The chair was clearly on my side. However, after interviewing with the principal, I did not get the job. Amazingly, I was not outraged. I probably thought, “Well, that’s just life.”

I am sure the department chair was the one who added my name to the class action suit against Red Clay School District in Delaware. When the papers came I was very happy living in southern California raising two baby girls and married to a successful man on the fast track in a corporation. I had moved on from my days of wanting to teach in Delaware to what I felt was my true vocation — raising a family. And I was afraid I would have to travel back east if the case ever went to trial. So I ignored the papers. Another set of papers arrived several months later. Again I ignored them.

We can never know what will happen in life. It turns out my husband had a cancerous brain tumor removed when he was 34 and I was 33. I needed to be the primary breadwinner. Our financial situation was bleak. I was jealous of my brothers who were doctors. I was angry at the necessity of finding a job. I looked at discrimination in the work place with new eyes. I am very grateful that my mother saw my need and babysat our children while I took courses in accounting and computer science at a local university. After a number of false starts I ended up with a very satisfying career at the University of Delaware in information technology.

Now I am happily retired. Amazingly, my husband survived, and we have had a good life together. Our two daughters and their wonderful husbands have given us four terrific granddaughters and one glorious grandson. I marched for all of them. Discrimination is insidious and touches so many. I am so happy that I have participated in history. This is a moment that still calls out to me.

Janet de Vry

EXISTENTIAL THINKING

In the midst of chaos, how does one find peace?

To answer this question is difficult at a time of horror and war in the world.

We, here at Medford Leas, live in a bubble of peace and comfort while the rest of the world is replete with scenes of horror and barbarity. To keep one's sense of balance, listening to music, such as Joyce DiDonato's new CD on "War and Peace," and reading novels by Salman Rushdie, such as *Two Years, Eight Months, and Twenty-Eight Nights*, and *Moonglow* by Michael Chabon, will let us enter a universe of thought, imagination, and reflection on our own existence.

Besides, we have the soothing effect of nature and winds of the elements, which make us come alive and attentive.

Love of music has always strengthened me throughout my life and I still find comfort and meaning in the exploration of the powerful works by J.S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven in particular. Not only the musical output of these two masters, but also their life struggles have made a special imprint that has endured for centuries. Peace of mind flows from their creations, reminding us that life is a continuous fight for recognition, respect, and endurance.

Reflecting on the readings for the Book Club, I was struck by the sudden importance and influence of "Magic Realism," which was begun in the 1920s by Franz Roh in Germany; came to fruition in the 1960s in Latin

America in the boom of writers such as García Márquez, Ernesto Sábato, Jorge Luis Borges, and my special favorites Marcos Aguinis and Julio Cortázar; and is currently popular in the works of Louise Erdrich and Salman Rushdie.

Since I taught Latin-American literature for over thirty years, the ideas of this movement have become part of my life, especially under the influence of Franz Kafka on the above-mentioned Latin-American authors, who – as they mention in their autobiography – were inspired by Kafka’s unique world view, his use of language, and philosophical ideas of existentialism, especially the concept of alienation and solitary existence. Borges, who had taught himself German, was the first Latin-American author to translate a work by Kafka, namely *Metamorphosis*, which became one of the most popular works in Latin America. Kafka’s use of symbols, metaphors, and options of philosophical interpretation became the basis of their thinking and enabled them to express unpopular, and even forbidden, thoughts and concepts. These led, at times, to revolutionary movements and to political revision as well as influence on Latin-American societal changes. Authors unable to express their thoughts openly could couch them in their literary expressions and incite their readership. While living in a dictatorship made open artistic expression difficult, and almost impossible, reading a work of fiction that espoused possible change was entirely possible. My favorite Argentine author, Ernesto Sábato, based his most famous novel, *El túnel*, on Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and showed through existential thinking the possibility of change and the metamorphosis of human thought processes.

Re-reading the works of these once famous authors, who were instrumental in spreading this literary movement, enriches my existence and helps me focus on the present situation of insecurity, the ever-present possibility of death, and the vanishing environment of culture, such as music, literature, art, and philosophy, in other words, the humanities.

Perhaps understanding the importance of the healthy environment that surrounds us will aid in healing our minds and promoting a more positive attitude toward life.

Similarly, listening to a work of music and reading a creation of the mind will help us make sense of our daily life, the frightening reality of today, and the possible repetition of Nazi philosophy.

Our understanding of the world should be geared especially toward the avoidance of nuclear conflict and to the creation of human coexistence.

Hannelore Hahn

TERROR IN THE NIGHT

She didn't know what woke her. A dream gone sour? A noise, a bump in the night? She sat, peered at her bedside clock. Four-ten. Too early to get up even for a new retiree who could rise at any hour she chose. Maybe a glass of water and some Tylenol for the whisper of a headache. She swung her legs over the side of the bed and slid her feet into slippers.

Walking across the bedroom, she stopped. Her door was closed. Why? How? She lived alone in this one-bedroom bargain. No need to close the door. It was only her and the cat. Fergie went wherever he wanted to, as cats will do. If she closed him out, he'd just scratch to be let in, and then out, till the night became a blur of opening and closing the door. But the cat couldn't close the door, and she knew she hadn't.

Now her brain shifted into a higher gear. Someone had shut her door. Was that person in here? She felt like someone had splashed a bucket of terror in her face, and it flowed from her head, down to her chest, pooling there and freezing. Don't panic. There had to be an explanation. First, eliminate the possibility of an intruder.

Her eyes adjusted to the meager rays that crept around the edges of the venetian blinds from the street light. She breathed shallowly, trying to listen while looking into the dimmest recesses. The space under her bed was used for storage, so there was really only one place in this room another person could be. The closet.

No sounds emanated from the apartment except the hum of electrics: clock, refrigerator, computer. Com-

puter? She'd turned that off as she did every night. Why was it on now?

She tentatively walked over to the desk in the bay window, frequently looking over her shoulder, as if that would stave off an attack of some kind. The green light indicated the computer was on, so she moved the mouse, pulled up the screen. There was a picture of her, one she'd never seen, a photo of her walking down the street, but they'd added horrible objects to it. Knives, swords, and arrows were sticking into her body at grotesque angles. Scarlet blood had been painted dripping from her figure and pooling on the sidewalk beneath her image's low-heeled shoes.

She slumped to her knees by the desk, clipping her chin as she went down. She started to cry in pain and fear, rocking back and forth, but stopped. She had to save herself; there was no one else to do it. She quietly reached up to the edge of the desk and looked around for inspiration. Her cell phone! She grabbed it, pressed the side button that muted sound, hoping she was pressing it the correct way. It had so many damn buttons. She turned it on and the light was like a roadside flare. She quickly shut it off, hoping it hadn't alerted anyone to what she was doing. After a few seconds of anxious silence, she peered up at the desk once more, and found what she was looking for, her letter opener — a possible way to defend herself.

The closet. Either someone was in there or he wasn't. If he wasn't, that was good, because then she could hide in there and use her cell phone. But first, should she get her heart pills? They were in the kitchen,

which meant opening the bedroom door. No way. She'd have to do without them.

She started to stand, but quickly dropped to all fours. Stupid to be an obvious target! She crawled over to the closet — left knee, right knee, left knee. It took forever and was hard on her aging knees, but she didn't hear a thing while she was doing it. She kept looking for the cat while crossing the room, hoping for his company, but didn't spot him. At the closet door she grabbed the knob in slow motion, turned it, and gently pulled it open, flattening herself to the wall beside it. Silence. No boogeyman rushed out. She stuck her cell phone in the closet, turned it on, providing light. No one in there.

She leapt up, ran to the bedroom door and turned the lock, trying to make no noise. She felt a bit safer. Not safe, but safer. She ran back into the closet, closed the door, and dialed 911. In a whisper she quickly gave them her name and address, and said she was sure someone was in the apartment, and to please send help right away. They could break in if they had to. She was hiding in the bedroom closet. They asked her to leave her cell phone on and the line open so they could listen in.

That thought brought the freezer burn back to her chest. She'd been thinking the call would be the end of it, almost. But it wasn't. She sat down, burrowing back among some blankets, assorted shoes, and the dirty-clothes basket. She grabbed a blanket and pulled it over her head, hugged her knees, and stared at her cell phone beaming light into her little tent of survival

The longer she sat the more her anxiety escalated. When were they going to get here? When would this end? Her head was an overinflated bubble, ready to pop at any second. Stop it, she told herself. Face your fears, don't give in to them. She'd always tried to do things even if they frightened her, hoping they wouldn't be so scary the next time. Like eating alone in a restaurant, but then her divorce had helped her practice that, plenty. Living alone, well, she'd had a few years of getting used to that and it was almost humdrum now. Ah, she thought of a good one. She'd taken a helicopter ride over a Hawaiian volcano. That had been terrifying, and she'd felt brave after that adventure.

But now, recounting attempts at fighting fears didn't do the trick. And where was Fergie, her lovable lump of a cat? Her heart thundered, trying to become the center of her universe, which was now a small blanket tent in a closet. But she faced this last fear, and whispered into the phone.

“Can you hear me?”

“Yes, ma'am. Please hang in there. A patrol car should be there soon.”

They found her around five-thirty in the morning. It had taken over an hour for the police to respond, due to a domestic violence incident on the other side of town. They didn't have to break the door down. It was unlocked. She was under her blanket, cell phone lighting her way into the next world. At first glance, the medical examiner thought it was her heart.

The mutilated photo on her computer led to an older man at the company she'd recently retired from and who had a reputation as a difficult person. He'd wanted to date her and had been gently rebuffed. He was arrested for manslaughter. The cat was found giving himself a bath in a rocking chair on a neighbor's porch.

Joyce Koch

A UNIVERSAL SADNESS?

Do ever those who years ago
Carved hope of love for naught,
On trees within our wilderness
Regret what time has wrought?

Harsh winds have carved since then
The fragile limbs above,
Should this now cause sadness
To such hastened thought of love?

Or might it bring sad thought to all,
And pause as we pass by,
To ponder what in life is fleeting
And time and chance deny?

Pete McCord

WRITING FOR *LEAS LIT*

Resident and staff writers 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, no more than two by the same author, one in prose and one in poetry, can be included in any one 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 intended to minimize the chances that opinions about individual authors influence 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.

If you have a story to tell – true or fictional – or a sentiment to share, but are not confident in your writing skills, do not let your hesitation stop you. We can help!