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IN SEARCH OF A CURE

When watching television do you feel the same as I
That the number of commercials has reached an all-time high?
Most of the familiar types we've come to see and hear
Are of crass and noisy auto ads, insurance hypes and beer.
Those weight loss programs always tend to send me for a snack,
and politicians tell us that they'll get our country back.

But now we are bombarded by a stream of new intrusions,
Creating such anxiety, precaution and confusion.
Prescription ads of every kind now vie for my attention,
Like XELJANZ and TRULICITY and others I could mention.
There's BRULINTA and OZEMPIC, SUBLOCADE –
BOTOX and EMBREL,
They twist the tongue to say them and so difficult to spell!

Do I really need EPCLUSA or PIQRAY or ENTYVIO?
The ads say: "Ask your doctor!"
(How 'bout RINVOQ or ZARELTO??)
No matter what the product is they'll take away your breath
With a list of nasty side effects (And, did they just say: 'death'??)
Each ad instructs me: "Tell your doctor all your other ails."
Ain't that what I pay him for – to know all those details?!

These ads are too disturbing! Do I really need such stress?!
I'm fine until I see them - then I become a mess!
Just the mention of ILUMYA can give me hypochondria!
Goodbye DUPLIXENT and NUPLASID!
I'm no longer fond o' ya!
So when CONSENTYX or HUMIRA come on my TV screen
I'll press the mute on my remote and get me some ice cream!

Harry Forrest

AN UNUSUAL EXPERIENCE

Many years ago, we had an overgrown miniature schnauzer named Schultz who, my husband claimed, “was the smartest dog ever.” He even said the dog had a fair vocabulary and could understand about a dozen words. He was also a proud animal who was very dignified. He knew when he arrived home from the groomer that he looked good, and he had been known to bow to compliments and applause. My husband so loved that dog that he would do just about anything for him.

As Schultz got older, he developed some senior problems, and one of them was a repeated kidney infection. After several trips to the vet, the advice was that instead of bringing him in for frequent testing, it would be easier on the animal if we were to collect his urine samples at home. Well, that advice was easier said than done, and January’s freezing temperatures weren’t ideal for this process.



My husband decided that he could not handle this chore by himself and he designated me as his assistant. Soon we were headed out for Schultz's daily evening walk with two people: one with the leash and one with the "collection jar." The plan was that we would switch assignments on a rotating basis. As with everything else, my husband was precise about the collection locations, and he absolutely abhorred the idea of making these vile "collections." As a result, we did not switch assignments on a regular basis. Most times, he was racing ahead of me and acting like he had no idea who the crazy lady was who was chasing him and his dog.

Our conversations would be regularly interrupted by him saying "Sssh...see the oak tree (or whatever) straight ahead? Be ready, because he always hits this spot." Then, there was a loud "HERE!" This was my cue to make a mad dash with the jar in anticipation of the dog lifting his leg. Well, it didn't take long for this intelligent dog to figure out what was going on and he soon refused to cooperate. When my husband finally agreed for us to switch positions, the dog would "test" us.

He would arrive at a designated spot, lift his leg, turn around to watch whoever was about to dive after him and decide it was no longer a regular stop. Then, as we were heatedly debating the process, Schultz would lift his leg and do his business uninterrupted. Miraculously, after several trips, my husband was finally able to get Schultz to cooperate and when his jar contained a specimen of about 3 cc, he immediately made a furious sprint for home where I found him at the kitchen sink.

Immersed in soap suds up to his elbows, he looked like a very unhappy surgeon prepping for major surgery!

Around this time, I was invited to a Tupperware Party a neighbor was hosting. I decided it was a good time to explain what we had been doing, in the event they had seen us chasing our dog and making what probably looked like attacks on the poor animal. When I finished narrating the tale, there was a short, hushed silence followed by a burst of laughter, until finally, one of the ladies said, “We haven’t seen anything at all, but we’ll be sure to keep a lookout from now on!”

Shortly afterwards, Schultz happily returned to the vet for his tests.

Joanne Thomas

THE BALLOON RIDE

Fearing a calamity, I jumped out of bed to answer the phone at 5 AM on a Saturday. In the process, I stubbed and broke my toe. Ignoring the pain, I answered, and a voice said, “Good Morning, this is Balloon Man. Be at the park in Lumberton by 5:30. This is a good day to fly.”

Balloon Man? Then I recalled that several months previously, I received a balloon ride as a birthday gift. Wearing the oldest pair of sneakers I could find to ease the toe, I made it to the park by 5:30, and there was the gaily colored balloon lying on its side – waiting.

Balloon Man and I climbed into the basket. Not knowing what to expect and being somewhat apprehensive, I was delighted when the balloon slowly left the ground, hovered for a few seconds, and then rose gently. We floated in silence, hearing only an occasional whoosh from the gas burner. I suppose I knew that the higher you go the colder it gets but hadn’t fully appreciated that until now. At least cold helped with the pain in my toe.

Just as I was starting to enjoy the gorgeous autumn colors spread out below, there were gun shots. Automatically I crouched in the bottom of the basket, wondering how high bullets could fly while Balloon Man assured me it was only hunters. Who knew it was deer season?

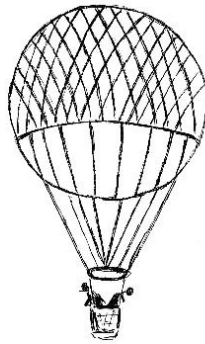
High tension wires appeared, and I envisioned not only being shot but electrocuted high above Burlington County. Reassured as Balloon Man skillfully avoided the

wires, I began to relax and enjoy the beauty of the sunrise. My enjoyment was short lived, however, as the balloon began its descent.

Landing in a swampy area, the basket tipped over, and we were dumped into waist-high cold water through which we struggled to a road. Mrs. Balloon Man was waiting with champagne. Champagne? Because we survived? Seems it is a tradition on one's first balloon ride.

At 7AM sitting in my kitchen, cold, wet, hungry, broken toe, I pondered the meaning of the experience. Deciding there wasn't any, I took some aspirin and went back to bed. However, looking at it from the point of view of today's pandemic, I would love to be soaring above it all, savoring the beauty all around us.

Jean Ricketts



HINGED

The hinge is an invention of genius. Whether an elemental strap of leather or the hundreds of interlocking fingers of a piano hinge, it takes two unwieldy objects that want to be together and makes them into a machine of purpose. This conceptually simple connector is omnipresent. Walk into your home, peer into your refrigerator and pull out a beer, open your kitchen cabinet and grab a glass, then sit down in your favorite recliner and put your feet up. You have used a dozen hinges.

Hinges are so much a part of our lives that we hardly notice them until one malfunctions. Then we have a problem, because hinges are not so easy to repair. Even hanging a door properly requires skill, and if a refrigerator door hinge fails – well, they never do, because, being simple, hinges are also reliable – aside from a tendency for some to squeak. The idea of a hinge failing is so appalling that we use it as an extreme metaphor for insanity. When we say that someone is “unhinged,” we not only declare them insane, we add a whiff of threat to the accusation: better stay away. I, on the other hand, am hinged. The pin is in place. There is no danger. I can be counted on to perform predictably, reliably, without a squeak or squeal. Or this is how I was.

Momentous changes can start slowly, creakingly, before they overwhelm you. Does a tree cracking, breaking, smashing, pounding down in a forest make a sound if there’s no one there to hear? You bet it does! You just don’t know it until the tree from which it rebounds takes out your house. The changes in my life began when my

can opener fell apart in my hand as I tried to open a can. Strange. I opened a pop-top soup instead.

The next day, at work, I went to get my coffee mug from the cupboard and the cabinet door came off in my grasp, gashing my arm as it swung to the floor. The surprise and the sudden weight overpowered my attempt to halt its fall. A colleague and a first aid kit stanching the blood and we commiserated about the unpredictability of life while examining the door. One of the hinges had sheared straight through and the sudden weight and torque on the other hinge had pulled its screws right out of the wood. Freak accident. They don't make them like they used to. Coming home, I made dinner and went to bed early. I opened and closed my cabinet doors gingerly. I was really spooked, and my arm hurt like hell.

The next day, as I left for work, I opened my apartment door and it fell in toward me. By a miracle I twisted away in time and was unhurt, but I had to call in to explain that I would be late and get the super to repair it – you can't leave your front door wide open in New York and expect to return to an untouched apartment. Guy, the super, got it up pretty quickly, exclaiming about the lousy screws that were supplied with hardware these days. I went to get him a beer and the refrigerator door fell off, landing on my toe. He got both doors back up and I went to the ER.

My ordered, humdrum life had changed, and the common denominator was hinges. I tried to avoid them, but it was impossible. Where I could, I left doors ajar, open just enough for me to slip through. I left cabinets open. From a store with automatic sliding doors, I

bought steel-capped shoes. I never closed the toilet lid. I washed my dishes by hand. After it tried to eat me, I sold my recliner and bought a chair with an ottoman. But I found hinges to be relentless and sly. I bought an electric can opener and the device used to penetrate the can fell off on the first use and cut my hand. I stopped using traditional cans. My laptop stopped working, a lot of connections feed through the hinge. At work, IT supplied me with a desk-mounted monitor after the wall-mounted one's pivot failed. I tried to tell them about my problem and just convinced them I was weird. After I refused to enter a meeting room through a door I could *see* was about to fail, I was sent to a counselor. The meeting room door held for everyone else and I refused to enter the counselor's office through her door. I was fired.

It was crushing. Why was this happening to me? What had I done? I decided to go to the cathedral a block away from my apartment. As I climbed the stone stairs, composing a prayer, I looked up at the vast oak doors. They must have weighed a thousand pounds. The matte-black, wrought-iron strap hinges were ancient. I began to tremble. I hurried back to my apartment.

And here I stay, waiting for my money to run out. I have the groceries delivered. All of my doors are open, all of the time. Today my left knee collapsed.

Bob Edelson

THE ESSENCE OF SPRING

Up and down the slide
Spring brushing little boy's face
Smiling for his audience

Paula Susan



WAR AND PEACE – LIFE ON THE PORCH

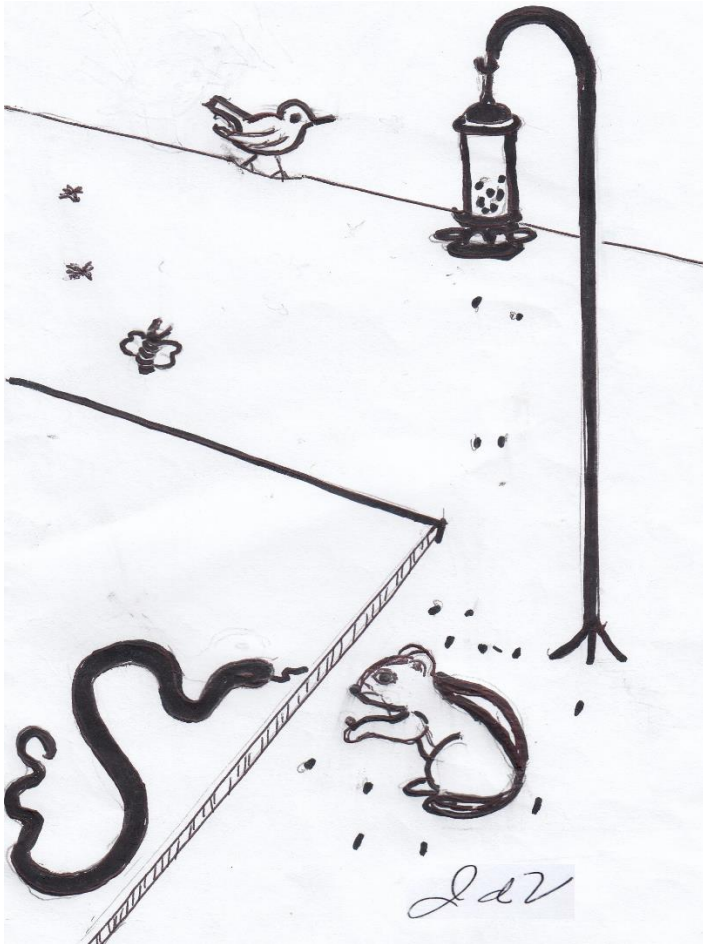
I am sitting on our porch, hard cold cement beneath me and hard plastic roofing above. It is teeming with life.

An old bumble bee flops down in front of me, his huge triangular eyes almost as large as his short gossamer wings. He walks a bit, then stops, walks a bit, then stops. There is damage to his back, a rough concavity. Was he attacked by our beloved Jenny Wren? I slip a brittle oak leaf under him and transfer him to a branch of the flowering hedge. Perhaps he sits there still. I'll remember him when the scent of the hedge comes wafting across the porch.

Jenny Wren sits on the long electric wire connecting the shed to the house. Ch-ch-ch-ch-ch. She's angry. Her baby is in the little painted birdhouse not six feet away from me. She and her mate work so hard. Heard only rarely are the fluting calls of spring when I am overwhelmed by the loveliness of her voice. How could one small bird sing with such a rich clear song? Her mate and she make the air joyful with their music. And who is this little monster they are raising? I do so hope he is not a transplant. There's an ugly chru, chru, chru coming from the birdhouse whenever he is fed – no gentle fluting thank yous. They are enslaved by the brat, but still have their moments of happiness.

And Chippy, he too has a place in this history of war and peace. He is keeping himself to reasonable numbers these days. At the time when I feed the birds

throughout the summer, nature beneath the feeder abounded. My chipmunk, with all his uncles and aunts and second and third cousins, had subdivided into twenty and was on the verge of becoming a very undesirable rodent. Still more distant cousins, the voles, provided an escape route through their tunnels. Finally, our ally, the northern black racer slithers across the porch and into our lives.



Mr. Black Snake is longer than I am tall. He glis-
tens like polished ebony. There is no sound as he ess es-
ses across our porch from the large hole by the path to
the trash can area diagonally across the cement. Slowly
our chipmunk reduces himself to more manageable
numbers. Nature needs her controls.

I too enter into the balance. I need the wooden
barrel one day and lift it from its corner near the picnic
table. Underneath is a swarm of angry red ants. They are
in a tight circle the same size as the bottom of the barrel.
Orangey brown and lethal, they start to break from their
protective pattern. Stamp, stamp, stamp – I dance some
mad war dance. I stamp for my little Alice whom their
ferocious African cousins once stung – her little leg
swelling to three times its normal proportion. I stamp
for lurking angers. I stamp for the survival of our species
against evil predators. Stamp, stamp, stamp. Not one ant
remains.

And still nature encroaches on this well swept
porch. Daddy longlegs lurk under the cushions. A wasp's
nest hangs over the door. The spiders weave their web in
our lamp. No amount of work can ever completely clean
the cement. There are remnants of working projects,
crumbs from picnics, and the stray leavings of Mother
Nature, who never rests. The air as it drifts across the
porch is pungent with the rich smells of green grass,
moist earth, and memory.

Edith Roberts

AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

A commotion in the middle of the night woke us up. Someone was shouting and banging on our outside door, the entry to our garden and house.

Briseida, our live-in maid, came running to our bedroom and excitedly got the message across to us that we needed to come with her. Not knowing what was happening, Joe told me to stay with our children while he quickly threw on some clothes and followed Briseida. Hurriedly I dressed, worried what could possibly be happening.

It is 1965 and Joe and I are in our mid-twenties with two children and one on the way. I can still see us on that Sunday afternoon reading the New York Times and Joe scanning the classifieds. He says, "Listen to this, the Agency for International Development (US/AID) is looking for overseas auditors." He proceeded looking at other job opportunities. It took me only a few minutes, but I found myself saying, "Wait, read that AID job opportunity again." Within a few weeks Joe was having interviews and filling out papers. He passed an FBI security check and was hired.

Our two-year assignment was to Bogotá, Colombia. We were excited but also apprehensive in that we knew so little about that country, its culture, or the language, although Joe had taken Spanish in college.

It was the beginning of a new family adventure. We found ourselves saying goodbye to our family and

friends, knowing we probably would not see them for two years, and with our two- and four-year-old children boarded the plane for Colombia. This was my first time ever on an airplane.

We had been settled in our rented house in Bogota for three months when the commotion at our door occurred.....

Joe and Briseida came back to our house in a hurry to get me, and I gathered, from attempts to understand the Spanish explanations of the crisis, that a woman next door was having a baby. My training as a nurse kicked in, and I recall going to my sewing basket and grabbing a pair of scissors and something to tie the cord and had Joe look for some alcohol. Joe stayed behind to be with our children and Briseida and I ran next door.

We entered the huge empty mansion of our neighbors. The owners had temporarily moved out while major renovations were in progress. Briseida, leading the way, took me to an empty room where I found a woman on a mattress on the floor in active labor, with her excited husband nearby.

Checking her, I saw the baby's head already and within minutes she gave birth to a good-sized baby boy who cried immediately and turned a healthy pink, much to my relief and the joy of the parents. I was able to cut and tie the cord, and made sure the afterbirth was delivered, and checked that there was no evidence of significant bleeding. I remember feeling so relieved there were no obvious complications. With the help of Briseida, I tried to convey the need for the mother and

baby to be checked by a doctor at a clinic as soon as possible. Then I went home to get some needed items like clothes for the newborn and towels, and sheets for the mother since they had nothing with them. I had baby clothes to share since in anticipation of having a baby soon myself, I had packed these supplies in our luggage not knowing what was available in Colombia. After checking that everything seemed all right with mother and child, we went home to try to get a little sleep after all the excitement.

So who were these people living in this empty mansion? Evidently the husband was the night watchman hired by the owners to live in the empty house to deter thieves while the house was unoccupied. This was a common practice in Bogotá.

The next morning, I went with Briseida to check on the new mother and baby but there was no trace of the family or their belongings. That is when I found out from Briseida that this was their eleventh child.

I was due to deliver our baby in three months. I had found a European-trained obstetrician and was under his prenatal care. I had also registered at a nearby hospital for my expected delivery date and would have a private suite so I could have family and friends visit during my hospital stay. The contrast of the conditions of my prenatal care and anticipated delivery and what I had just experienced overwhelmed me for the next few days and is something I have never forgotten.

Sometimes I still find myself wondering what happened to the family and that baby boy. I'm sure he did not have the same opportunities that my son and our family were blessed with.

Willy Wallendal

REPAIRS

Repairs? This is a Pandora's box of a topic. Open the lid, and unhappy things fly out. Largest and most troubling for me today is automotive repairs. Having recently helped my neighbor to get her ancient Volvo to the repair shop, I am in there-but-for-the-grace-of-God-go-I mode. Like other single Lumberton residents, for the first time I will need to carefully schedule routine check-ups and be prepared to rent loaner cars as necessary. I foresee 3 AM worrying about this.

Next out of the box is general repairs for 88 Woodside Drive. As a pessimist, I tend to dwell on the past glitches: the rogue thermostats that refused to turn off even when instructed to do so by Shamrock repairmen who pronounced the problem solved, leaving me at a too-warm 77 degrees. The anemic fireplace occupied Medford Leas Maintenance, Shamrock, and PSE&G from July through October. And there was the weekend my brother-in-law and family came to visit. On Saturday, the garage door refused to open, and on Sunday, a stove burner failed to light. Weekend crises add a dimension of no immediate service call and response.

Periodically the powder room toilet starts dripping, the paint on the ceiling of the shower decides to bubble, or an inaccessible fluorescent light bulb goes dark. After the initial distress, I am learning to recover fairly well, swatting away these smaller demons with the help of Debbie Farley and her minions.

Information Technology slouches out of the box, an unending source of anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. Telephone: the landline is pretty straightforward, but the answering machine sometimes does not report when there are messages. The cellphone seems jittery and abruptly closes down just when I'm searching for something important. Google Maps keeps manically directing me long after I've reached my destination or goes away just when I need to double check a route. The Verizon store employees explain, recalibrate, clean up my machine, and then it misbehaves again. ROKU tells me I have limited bandwidth, I can't successfully arrange appointments with the Apple store, and I have yet to get the Geek Squad to my house.

Like Pandora, I peek into the seemingly empty box, looking for a bit of hope left behind as all those pestilences exit. Memory supplies stuffed animals darned and patched. Children's books taped back together, antique teacups glued so that hardly a crack shows, chairs reupholstered, reinforced wooden picture frames – all these were done by my parents and grandparents, sometimes as I looked on. There were joyful moments when something precious was salvaged and great satisfaction with a job well done. Many things I cannot fix on my own, but I can try my hand at others. Gluing, mending, turning screws, pounding nails, patching in various ways are not beyond me. I do not always need the experts for small things. Spirits lifted, I am ready to take on present repair tasks with humor and resignation.

Kathy Riley

OBEDIENCE

My mother had always been a cleanliness fanatic who refused to allow anything in our house that might leave behind dust, dirt, fur, feathers, or puddles. She told me that when I was married and mistress of my own home, I could harbor a menagerie of my own choosing, but how I longed to have a dog! And when I asked my ever-generous and good-natured husband-to-be at the moment he proposed – “If I say yes, would you allow me to have a dog?” – he acquiesced without a question, and assured me that I would finally have one. And so, the deal was sealed.

Years later, when we left the modest apartment of our early matrimony and moved into more spacious accommodations, I was ready to graduate from the five-pound Yorkshire, which we had cherished throughout her fourteen and a half years, to my sweet 135-pound furry buddy. Although my husband, who was six-foot-six always felt awkward walking alongside the little pip-squeak, he wondered why I would want to have a pet that outweighed me. In the end, he was always a man of his word.

My rather large puppy and I wound up in obedience school after the breeder assured me that with obedience training my puppy would be sweet and eager to please. I was also warned that, without this training, she could easily become a loaded revolver. Of course, it is almost always the owner who really needs to be trained, rather than the dog. Most dogs are smart enough to understand just what they need to do as soon as the owner

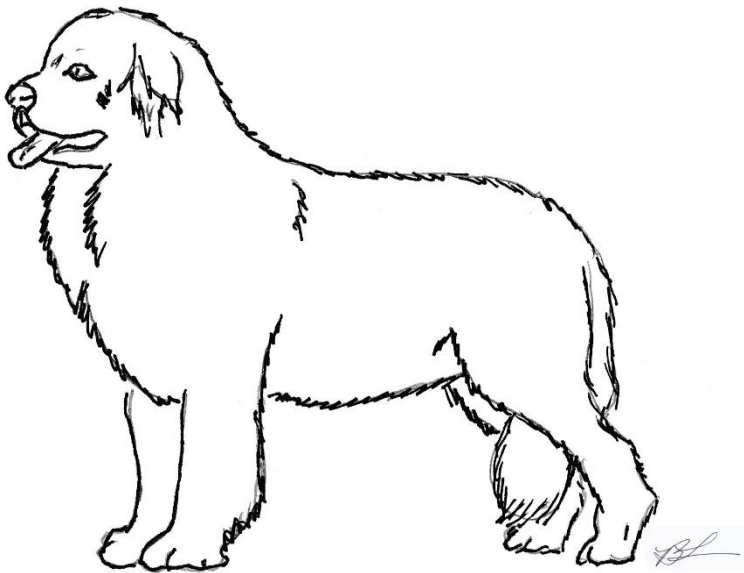
is trained to effectively communicate just what it is that HE wants. I had my big sweetie sitting, standing, and lying down on command by the end of the first session.

Late into the second session, there was a great rush of air as an enormous Newfoundland puppy bounded through the door and into the middle of the polished arena floor. At first it seemed that the dog was alone, but he was soon joined by a fragile young man who was just about airborne at the other end of a long leash. It turned out that an exception had been made to allow the unruly pair to join us at this time – this was obviously an emergency! The class paused, and everyone was introduced to Samson and Todd.

Todd's aunt had recently died unexpectedly, and in her will, Todd had been designated as Samson's new guardian. This didn't seem like a good pairing. Most of us feared for Todd's safety. We were afraid that this rambunctious puppy would carelessly knock him down, run across his face, and break all his ribs. But the trainer was compassionate enough to assure everyone that Samson seemed promising, and that she expected him to clean up his act before long. We noticed that there was no mention at all of Todd being promising. Most of us quietly added him to our prayer lists.

Todd was so shy that he stood with his thin frame kind of crumpled, just as if he wanted to hide his head in his trouser pocket. His clothes were crumpled too, and he spoke in a whisper. Since Todd didn't seem too well coordinated and was sadly lacking in self-confidence, a few unkind people started to refer to him as "Toad," but each and every time that his dog did something right, our

kind trainer praised Todd (not Samson) profusely. Only after lavishing Todd with compliments and words of encouragement would she reward his dog. By the end of that session, the odd couple managed to depart in some semblance of a heel.



Between that session and the next, Todd and Samson had evidently practiced the things that they had learned. Although Samson was still somewhat unruly on the leash, we could see that some bonding had taken place. Samson was smart enough to try to emulate the other dogs' behavior, and Todd was a bit more relaxed. It seemed as if both man and dog sensed that we were all

rooting for them, and that they had become the center of both our attention and our affection.

Over the next six sessions, as the big Newf puppy continued to grow, their progress exceeded everyone's wildest dreams. Of course, the dog learned to heel, sit, lie down, and stay – Samson was a sweet and intelligent creature who yearned to please and be cuddled. No surprise there. But let me tell you about Todd. At the last session, as Todd came forward to accept his “Most Improved” award, for the first time I noticed how tall he was. Todd now bore very little resemblance to the timid person who had appeared just weeks ago.

There had been a complete change in Todd's demeanor. He now stood straight, tall, and proud – head held high! It was a stunning metamorphosis – even his attire was different – a lot closer to GQ than when he had first appeared. We all watched in amazement as Todd and Samson strutted out of the auditorium in perfect synchrony, totally ready to greet the world and have a bit of fun.

Cecelia Lane

A YOUNG TEENAGER LOOKS AT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

It was a hot, sticky night in late June. I was in the old pier auditorium on the Cape May, New Jersey boardwalk. The year was 1958. I was thirteen years old.

My mother always took me and my two younger brothers to the Friends General Conference in Cape May, held every other summer. My father was busy working and usually didn't attend.

I always looked forward to the event – seeing old FGC friends and making new ones – morning workshops on all kinds of social topics for all ages, and beach time in the afternoons. We had special speakers and music in the evenings. Younger children stayed with their parents, but older ones congregated in the beautiful old Congress Hall hotel.

FGC had record attendance in 1958: 3,200 including 1,000 children.

Key speakers: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Norman Cousins. I distinctly remember M.L. King but can't even picture Norman Cousins or what he had to say though since then, I've read many more of his books, than I have of those of Dr. King. The crowd was enthusiastic and gave King a standing ovation.

I was sitting on the floor in an aisle, as were most of the kids, because the auditorium was packed. Dr. King was introduced by Clarence Pickett as “a man who speaks with a voice ‘heard round the world.’” The speech was about a year and a half after the Montgomery

bus boycott, which I remembered. I knew King's speech would be well attended, but I was still enormously impressed with the number of people and their overwhelming enthusiasm. I was aware of the Civil Rights Movement and supported what I understood of it, as did my parents and our Friends Meeting.

In 1960 when I was in high school, I remember hearing and reading about the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina, and a six-year-old little black girl being escorted by armed guards into a formerly all-white elementary school in New Orleans. Some of my sources, beside friends, family, the Meeting, and the Friends School were our new (1957) black and white TV, *Look*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazines which lay around our house.

Throughout 1961, Black and White activists known as Freedom Riders took bus trips through the American South to protest segregated bus terminals and attempted to use "whites-only" restrooms and lunch counters. The Freedom Rides were marked by horrific violence from white protestors; the riders drew international attention to their cause.

My future brother-in-law, between being a postman and other jobs, participated during the Freedom Rides by visiting a friend in 1962 who had become an editor of a Southern Black newspaper. One emphasis of the paper was voter registration. The paper and its reporters were accused of Communism and worse. Now, almost 80 years old, Robert is still a practicing emergency room physician. Speaking with him recently, I noted the importance for all of us to write down some memories, even if only for our families. He noted: "Old memories

are fascinating and a happy distraction, but each generation has its own ideals with which it has to deal.” Yes, something to think about.

I can remember one of the things Dr. King said that evening, “You don’t necessarily have to like your neighbor, but you do have to love him.” What did that mean? I think liking someone is a choice but loving everyone means that we all have to have respect for each and every human being, even those very different from ourselves and even those with whom we disagree.

John Lewis, long-time civil rights worker and congressman, who died recently, said, among many of his positive, pacifist aphorisms, “Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.”

If Dr. King were alive today, what would he be thinking, preaching, and doing about our racism, police brutality, gun violence, never-ending wars, climate change, income inequality, polarization, immigration issues, poor resource management and sharing, intolerance for all who are different from us...*more importantly, what are WE doing to “make some noise and get in good trouble” here and now?*

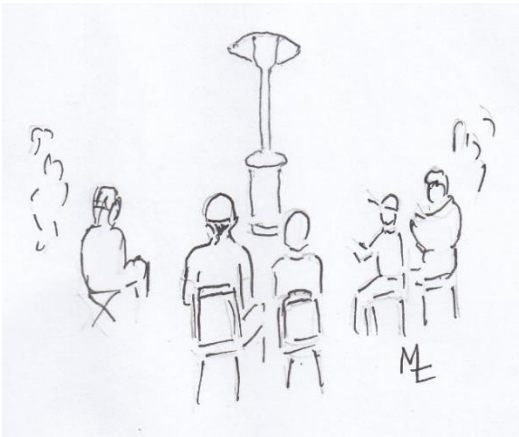
Louisa Khanlian

RENEWAL

My world has contracted during this pandemic. A lantern whose light is diffused broadly exposes a widely seen orbit, while a flashlight's limited beam brings into sharper focus a much smaller circle. In a similar way, the pandemic's restraints have narrowed my formerly widely cast in-person contacts of family, friends, and neighbors to narrow, infrequent social gatherings. With the constriction of this new reality has come my enhanced appreciation for the few in-person contacts I do still have.

One Saturday, bundled up, masked, and distanced, I sat under one of the three propane heaters on the patio next to the Linden Room along with 16 Bridlington neighbors. This weekly gathering, which we call our Happy Hour, began last summer behind Susan's house and then moved to a cul-de-sac in our community. As temperatures dipped, we resorted to the (minimal) warmth being offered by these strange pole-borne

heaters that Medford Leas provides.



Sometimes the conversation will be group-wide; often it is easier to engage in smaller side conversations. At one point that Saturday, Jane, sitting near me, observed that this group has gotten to know and appreciate each other in a deeper way than we ever would have before Covid's mandated lockdowns. The truth of that struck me then and has stayed with me in the days since. Whereas before this time last year we might have recognized each other by name as we met emptying our recycling and trash or out walking the dog, we would probably know little else about each other.

Now I am eager to catch up and learn more. How severe was Edie's daughter's reaction to her second vaccination? Imagine, Bob and Nancy had brought their rabbit into Mike's veterinary clinic decades ago; little did anyone imagine then they'd be neighbors years later. Steve grew up in Brooklyn on Myrtle Avenue, the same street our grandson and his husband now live on – but their addresses are miles apart (it is a very long street). Holly comes with a quaint, furry muff that keeps her hands warm; we're delighted and envious. A laughter-filled discussion ensues on our different approaches to saving things from yesteryear, or not. Imagine, Dave and Jane between them have fifteen grandchildren; how do they keep all the names and ages straight wonder I, who have difficulty with seven, plus three spouses. We hear about Tom's most recent biking adventure. At 90-plus, Helen is still giving organ lessons. Susan describes how she needs to pet her feral cat in order to entice him to eat; who ever heard of a picky feral cat?!

The best part of all this is the laughter. Among our group are some very talented story tellers. Add to that those of us with hearing issues, so that hilarious misunderstandings on details crop up. Our hour together passes all too quickly, and I go home renewed.

During the past year that we've been getting together, almost half the group are newly arrived to Medford Leas. Without this connection, theirs would have been a lonelier entrance into what is usually a warm, welcoming community. Holly, new this year, confirms this when she shares that this connection has meant everything to her and Joe. I truly believe (and hope) most of us will want to continue our neighborhood Happy Hour weekly tradition, even after the isolation rules are relaxed. I know I will; it is about my favorite activity of the week!

Ruth Podolin

WRITING FOR LEAS LIT

Residents of both campuses, as well as staff, are encouraged to submit original manuscripts for publication in Leas Lit Literary Journal, which is published in June and December. Twice a year, a flyer soliciting submissions is distributed to all residents and staff department heads. It contains instructions for submitting work, a deadline, and contact information for questions. Manuscripts received after the deadline will be considered for the next issue.

Authors' names are removed on receipt of the manuscripts so that the editors do not know whose work they are reviewing. This system ensures that personal feelings about individual authors do not influence the evaluation of their work.

There is no limit to the number of pieces an author may submit. However, the same author may have no more than two pieces – one prose and one poetry – in each issue. Additional works by that author that are judged acceptable will be held over for the next issue.

The following policies apply to submissions. The piece should be in English, original and not have been published previously. Book reviews will not be accepted. Each piece should be no longer than 1600 words.

If you have a story to tell – true or fictional – or feelings to share, let us hear from you!

