Illuminations

Poems and Memoir

by

The Writers of 92nd Street Y
Himan Brown Senior Program

2016

© 2015 92nd Street Y Himan Brown Senior Program. All rights reserved
Introduction

92nd Street Y Himan Brown Senior Program has published an anthology of the writing program’s poems, memoir and essays for the past twenty-six years. Our 2015 poets and writers offer this anthology in the same tradition of fine writing, community and championing each others work.

We chose the name, *Illuminations*, for our 2011 Anthology for its meaning vis-à-vis the poetry, memoir and essay selections: “spiritual or intellectual enlightenment; clarification of a subject; a display of lights on a building or structure.” Our 2015 *Illuminations* is rich in language, humor, attention to craft, and deep personal explorations. Some topics seem perennial: Family, diverse and particular perspectives on life and writing, the New York poems, elegies. And every year new topics emerge, unexpected, surprising and brilliant. This year we are delighted to include the following new sections: *Spiritual in Nature, There Was Music, L’Chaim and An Ant, A Rose, A Star*.

This year we were deeply saddened at the passing of two beloved friends and poets: Barbara Schacter and David Cohen. This anthology is dedicated to Barbara and David with affection and admiration for their work and their very particular voices. We are so happy to share a selection of their poems in the Dedications section at the end of this anthology.

The teachers and authors of Himan Brown Senior Writing Program wish to express their gratitude to Julie DeLaurier who so beautifully transcribed and copy-edited this manuscript, Judith Adler, who provided the cover art, Ellen Diamond and Dorothy Furman, who typed handwritten memoir and essays, and Samantha Donoso without whom this anthology would never have come into being.

Finally, we want to join Sally Bliumis-Dunn and Theresa Burns in thanking all the poets, memoirists and essayists for permission to publish their work in the 2015 *Illuminations*, and you, the reader, who give these pieces their place in the world.

Jo Frances Brown
Director, Himan Brown Senior Program

Frances Richey
Editor of Annual Review
Himan Brown Senior Program Faculty
# Table of Contents

I PERSPECTIVES......................................................................................................................... 1

IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS, BEGIN ................................................................. 2
   Eileen Brilliant
UNTITLED ....................................................................................................................... 2
   Eileen Brilliant
AT THE LAKE ................................................................................................................. 3
   Nicole Andonov
REACHING DOWN .......................................................................................................... 3
   Eileen Brilliant
BIG DECISIONS .............................................................................................................. 4
   Judith S. Adler
OUT OF IT ....................................................................................................................... 5
   Stanley Margolies
VOLTAGE ......................................................................................................................... 6
   Stanley Margolies
UNTITLED ....................................................................................................................... 7
   Phyllis Brusiloff
THE SYCAMORE .......................................................................................................... 7
   Phyllis Brusiloff
UNTITLED ....................................................................................................................... 7
   Phyllis Brusiloff
UNTITLED ....................................................................................................................... 8
   Phyllis Brusiloff
PILL TALK ......................................................................................................................... 8
   Lois Frankenberger
RECIPE FOR OLD AGE ............................................................................................. 8
   Lois Frankenberger
THE BALLAD OF THE BUNION ............................................................................. 9
   Gloria Ann Katz
I TOOK OUT ALL THAT ................................................................................................. 9
   Gloria Ann Katz
HARD TO REPLACE ....................................................................................................... 10
   Ellen Diamond
INSIDE OUT .................................................................................................................... 10
   Ellen Diamond
MY PAST’S ....................................................................................................................... 11
   Barbara Oken
THRIFT IS DEAR .......................................................................................................... 11
   Nicole Andonov
THE GNATS .................................................................................................................. 12
   Nicole Andonov
NOW ................................................................................................................................. 13
   Dorothy Furman
SUNDAY NIGHTS.................................................................................................................. 13
  Dorothy Furman
THE MYTH GOES ON ......................................................................................................... 14
  Dorothy Furman
FOG ..................................................................................................................................... 15
  Stanley Margolies
UNTITLED ...................................................................................................................... 16
  Eileen Brilliant

II FATHERS AND MOTHERS.............................................................................................. 17

SAN RAFAEL, 1984 .............................................................................................................. 18
  Heinz Wipfler
MOTHER, OR WHAT’S IN A NAME .................................................................................... 18
  Eileen Brilliant
SING TO ME, MOTHER ....................................................................................................... 20
  Julia Krushenick
UP ........................................................................................................................................ 21
  Gloria Ann Katz
LEAVING THE OLD HOMESTEAD .................................................................................... 21
  Harold Siegel
DESPITE IT ALL ................................................................................................................ 22
  Judith Korotkin Mende
BONDING ........................................................................................................................... 22
  Lois Frankenberger
SEPTEMBER, 1999 ........................................................................................................... 23
  Louise Meyerson
DEMENTIA AND DEPRESSION ....................................................................................... 25
  Susan Colton
GOING TO THE CITY ......................................................................................................... 26
  Shirley M. Henshel
UNTITLED ...................................................................................................................... 28
  Muriel Hubsher

III HOME ........................................................................................................................... 29

  I. EASTON, PA, 640 WALNUT STREET ........................................................................... 30
  II. SCRANTON, PA, 326 MONROE AVENUE 
      Lois Frankenberger
UNTITLED ...................................................................................................................... 30
  Phyllis Brusiloff
THE LONG TRIP HOME .................................................................................................... 31
  Marcia Budd
GROWING UP IN CENTRAL PARK .................................................................................... 32
  Anne Taub
CHANGE – LEGACY – LOVE ............................................................................................. 33
  Norma Berke
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE CHINATOWN MARKET</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria Katz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV SPIRITUAL IN NATURE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOST SOUL</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Scheuerman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE KAUFMAN HOUSE ON FALLING WATERS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith S. Adler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIRN</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith S. Adler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT THE LAKE</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Andonov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRIVING</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis Brusiloff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOEPPINGEN GERMANY 1956</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis Brusiloff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECTIONS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Krushenick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPLANATION</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Korotkin Mende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVOCATION</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Wipfler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSE</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Wipfler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JANUARY</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Wipfler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATE</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Wipfler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAVING ARIZONA 1964</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Wipfler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARKNESS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Wipfler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PLACE FOR SOULS</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Diamond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOORED</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Diamond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAY OUT</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Furman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHEMISTRY LESSON</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Scheuerman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT LINGERS, STILL</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Scheuerman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN OLD MAN PAINTS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Scheuerman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNFLOWERS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Siegel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DECEMBER .................................................................................................................49

Elizabeth Scheuerman

A FRIEND ONCE TOLD ME.........................................................................................50

Elizabeth Scheuerman

V L’CHAIM ..................................................................................................................51

L’CHAIM – To LIFE ......................................................................................................52

Gloria Ann Katz

THEY GET BETTER WITH AGE .................................................................................53

Judith S. Adler

L’CHAIM! ......................................................................................................................53

Barbara Oken

GLAD TO BE AT A DOWNER .....................................................................................54

Harold Siegel

AN EYE OPENER .........................................................................................................55

Judith S. Adler

OK, WINTER 2014, YOU WIN .....................................................................................55

Harold Siegel

SO HERE I AM .............................................................................................................56

Harold Siegel

LARA, MY FABIAN ........................................................................................................57

Harold Siegel

1954 ............................................................................................................................57

Harold Siegel

HOLDING ON ..............................................................................................................58

Dorothy Furman

IN PANAMA’S NATURE PRESERVE ..........................................................................58

Gloria Ann Katz

IN MY JOURNAL ..........................................................................................................59

Eileen Brilliant

2015 ..............................................................................................................................60

Dorothy Furman

NEXT SCENE ..............................................................................................................60

Judith Korotkin Mende

WALK THE WALK ....................................................................................................61

Harold Siegel

OF PROZAC AND PAPER PRODUCTS .....................................................................62

Joanna Garfield

I AM THE STRANGER .................................................................................................63

Zeke Alpern

TWO BASEBALLS .........................................................................................................64

Zeke Alpern

ALMOST FAMOUS .......................................................................................................64

Rochelle Hershowitz
VI AN ANT, A ROSE, A STAR.............................................................66

AN ANT, A ROSE, A STAR.............................................................67
Elizabeth Scheuerman

WITH A SLIGHT SHIFT OF FOCUS................................................67
Ellen Diamond

NOW AND THEN...........................................................................68
Phyllis Brusiloff

TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER HAZEL..................................................69
Judith S. Adler

TOURIST.......................................................................................70
Judith Korotkin Mende

CANE AND ABLE...........................................................................70
Lois Frankenberger

THE UNVEILING...........................................................................71
Judith Korotkin Mende

THE FACT REMAINS.....................................................................71
Nicole Andonov

GLENDA'S LION............................................................................72
Stanley Margolies

GRANDMA AT HER WITS END.....................................................74
Nicole Andonov

THERE, BUT NOT QUITE...............................................................74
Nicole Andonov

VII ILLUMINATIONS....................................................................76

WINTER DREAM...........................................................................77
Heinz Wipfler

LUNAR ECLIPSE..........................................................................77
Ellen Diamond

HALF APRIL..................................................................................78
Gloria Ann Katz

WRONG-WAY WIND....................................................................78
Ellen Diamond

PALINODE.....................................................................................79
Dorothy Furman

TABLEAU......................................................................................79
Barbara Oken

ODE TO THE OLIVE.....................................................................80
Gloria Ann Katz

INTERRUPT....................................................................................81
Dorothy Furman

A 1 IN A 100 MILLION SHOT.......................................................81
Harold Siegel

UNTITLED.....................................................................................82
Phyllis Brusiloff
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STARLIGHT</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois Frankenberger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERMONT BOOTS</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Biller-Berkson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANKA</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Biller-Berkson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT AND MOUSE</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Krushenick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A DIFFERENT DRUMMER</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Krushenick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T LOOK AWAY, NOW</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Krushenick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THAT TIME</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Korotkin Mende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THAT LOOK</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Korotkin Mende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUCTIONS</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Korotkin Mende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL SHIRLEY TEMPLE LIVES HERE.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Summers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL SHIRLEY TEMPLE LIVES HERE.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Summers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SKY</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lottie Katz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT WAS ADLAI</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine M. Kahn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIG MAMA’S KITCHEN</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Sullivan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATURE AND ME</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel Brey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOU CAN PUT PARIS IN A BOTTLE</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Andonov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN THE SHADOW OF DAWN</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Andonov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN THE GREEN CAME</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Andonov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII THERE WAS MUSIC</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUARTET FOR THE END OF TIME</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Furman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSIC</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois Frankenberger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISTENING TO JAZZ</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Andonov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CLOSET</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis Brusiloff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
**IX THE NEW YORK POEMS** ........................................................................................................ 107

The Journey ........................................................................................................................................ 108
Lois Frankenberger

Coney Island Avenue ......................................................................................................................... 108
Stanley Margolies

Cold Snap ........................................................................................................................................... 109
Lois Frankenberger

ODE: THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING .............................................................................................. 109
Irene Biller-Berkson

My Brooklyn Man ............................................................................................................................. 110
Irene Biller-Berkson

Rats Are Running Wild ..................................................................................................................... 111
Julia Krushenick

That Summer in the Bronx .................................................................................................................. 111
Julia Krushenick

Love and New York ........................................................................................................................... 112
Harold Siegel

New Yorker ........................................................................................................................................ 113
Barbara Oken

I'm Stopping Here .............................................................................................................................. 114
Nicole Andonov

Bougainville ....................................................................................................................................... 115
Lottie Katz

**X THE WRITING LIFE** .................................................................................................................. 116

Let Me Introduce .............................................................................................................................. 117
Harold Siegel

On Poetry ............................................................................................................................................ 117
Judith S. Adler

Writer's Block ..................................................................................................................................... 118
Judith Korotkin Mende

I Can't Remember the Poem .............................................................................................................. 119
Julia Krushenick

Lost ..................................................................................................................................................... 119
Dorothy Furman

Homage To Macbeth .......................................................................................................................... 120
Irene Biller-Berkson

Untitled .............................................................................................................................................. 120
Lois Frankenberger
XI PORTRAITS .................................................................................................................. 125

UNTITLED ......................................................................................................................... 126
Phyllis Brusiloff
FLETCHER ......................................................................................................................... 126
Stanley Margolies
COUNSELING .................................................................................................................. 128
Barbara Oken
ELI ..................................................................................................................................... 128
Irene Biller-Birksen
1942: TWELVE YEARS OLD .......................................................................................... 130
Stanley Margolies
DAD’S LAWN ..................................................................................................................... 131
Rochelle Hershowitz
GRANDPA’S STILL ........................................................................................................... 133
Herb Porter
ALFRED ............................................................................................................................. 134
Dorothy Stracher
BIKE ONE ......................................................................................................................... 136
Dennis Sullivan

XII ELEGIES ........................................................................................................................ 139

INVISIBLE ......................................................................................................................... 140
Eileen Brilliant
ANNA, REMEMBER .......................................................................................................... 140
Julia Krushenick
MARCH 17 ........................................................................................................................ 141
Elizabeth Scheuerman
LET’S BEGIN AGAIN ....................................................................................................... 142
Judith S. Adler
INVITATION TO SHIRLEY .............................................................................................. 143
Judith S. Adler
CHESS ............................................................................................................................... 144
Stanley Margolies
XIII DEDICATIONS ........................................................................................................................................... 146

FOR DAVID COHEN ........................................................................................................................................ 147

SEARCHING FOR SERENITY ............................................................................................................................ 148
  David Cohen
DANGEROUS DANCING ................................................................................................................................... 148
  David Cohen
MEMOIR WRITING .......................................................................................................................................... 149
  David Cohen
EQUITY ........................................................................................................................................................... 149
  David Cohen
ADVENTURER ............................................................................................................................................... 149
  David Cohen
PROBLEM SOLVING ....................................................................................................................................... 150
  David Cohen
LOOKING FOR LIFE IN CENTRAL PARK IN FEBRUARY .................................................................................... 150
  David Cohen
A VISIT TO THE BRONX ................................................................................................................................ 151
  David Cohen

FOR BARBARA SCHACTER ................................................................................................................................. 152

ODE TO POETRY ............................................................................................................................................... 153
  Barbara Douglas Schacter
AWESOME COOKIES ..................................................................................................................................... 153
  Barbara Douglas Schacter
DREAMS ............................................................................................................................................................ 154
  Barbara Douglas Schacter
UNTITLED ........................................................................................................................................................ 154
  Barbara Douglas Schacter
WE WERE BOTH EARLY TO CLASS .................................................................................................................. 155
  Nicole Andonov
IN MEMORIAM ............................................................................................................................................... 155
  Barbara Oken
REMEMBERING BARBARA ............................................................................................................................... 156
  Lois Frankenberger
BARBARA ......................................................................................................................................................... 157
  Ellen Diamond
BARBARA’S FEZ ................................................................................................................................................. 157
  Stanley Margolies
ROUGH DRAFT: BARBARA ................................................................................................................................. 158
  Judith Korotkin Mende
A LIST OF RULES FOR SPRING ......................................................................................................................... 159
  Judith S. Adler
THE 71ST STREET RAMP ................................................................................................................................ 159
  Barbara Douglas Schacter

x
I

Perspectives
In the Middle of Things, Begin

Just begin. In the middle of the end, begin. Unknowable ending as yet, yet begin. Begin where you must, where you can.

Pierce the marble ledge, seek a crevice, crawl through. On your knees, sniff the strange air, the emerald moss. Move the tongue from the mother silence.

Stifle all excess, pare the pandemonium to some select tunes. Discover meaning in the few, not the many.

Begin. Begin where you are. Begin in this moment. In the middle of things.

Untitled

The deep shores of the painting pour into the paintbrush, the colors wet with touch, each stroke an effort to portray what isn’t seen, or what is, but newly.

We mean language never to fail, but mostly it does. Then the senses must be summoned as we learn to live in the living seasons, as we learn to succumb to the infinite beauty that abounds, as we grow silent in wonder at the expanse of sky or the newly-formed leaf, and are content to be part of this breathing world, content to grasp it close.
At the Lake

Nicole Andonov

I don’t go deep into things.

Am more like a flat stone that ducks and drakes
the surface of the water

in a splash or two
of transparent droplets.

Sometimes, the droplets mirror the scenery;
sometimes, they clash and burst;

and sometimes,

they dissolve in the calm
of a quiet afternoon.

Reaching Down

Eileen Brilliant

to seek stillness
such as it is
to allow stillness
to arch its liquid back.
slip through the narrow window
summon me near

to hear the self-sounds
as they emerge
through the thicket
of stimuli uniform
in their distraction

such distraction
that trumpets
its triumph

its mastery
of concealment
of the heart’s matter
however the heart's matter
matters more than mastery
more than concealment

it stands on its own
half-shade
half-light

**Big Decisions**

Judith S. Adler

We visit the doctor
discover what stage we're at
Then to the noodle shop, big decision
to order small
or large rice noodles
Biopsy later
followed by a Jewish Deli in the Bronx
Big decision ...
to have pastrami
or corned beef on rye
or rye with seeds
Radiologist plans scans, we
learn about radiation seeds
followed by Vietnamese soup
Big decision ...
to have pork, veal or duck with coriander and sprouts

Rest a few days
meet with the surgeon
Talk of the cancer
the size
the shape
followed by a Korean soup kitchen
folks slurp down hot soup
Big decision ...
to have meat or chicken dumplings
Egg on top
or not at all??
You know how half the people in the world
Live in the moment,
Like the Bangladeshi woman,
Smashed into an escape ship,
Adrift, in some South Asian sea,
Starving, throwing her infant son,
Gone now,
Into wild, white topped waves,
Birds screeching above.
And the other half,
Out of it, the moment,
As the four of them, leaving a movie,
On East 86th Street.
Four of them, walking home, talking, he, one of them.
Why’d you get on the boat, he asks her?
Why do you think?
My guess? You were hopeless, scared, trapped.
Faced with murder. You and your son.
Worth any risk.
Yes, something like that.
And you, how was the movie, she asks.
Which one, The Dead Poets Society?
Where Robin Williams
Tells his students to make their lives extraordinary,
To tear up the old poetry ratings,
How the kids hesitated,
Before they got into it.
No. The dead poets’ movie was long ago.
I mean the one now.
The one where you and I are here,
And I’m watching you,
And I’m hearing you,
And I’m in Southeast Asia, at sea.
And I’m on East 86th Street,
And you’re asking me questions,
Knowing the answers, as you ask them.
Yes, and you’re watching me watching you.
And our son,
Was he still breathing,
Even as I hurled him?
Who knows?
Well good luck. Hope you make it, he says.
You too, she answers.
So what did you think of the movie, one of the four asks him,
Her voice high pitched, as a bird screeching.

Voltage

Stanley Margolies

During the summer rain the infant screams, Demanding dinner.
The mother rushes, unbuttons her blouse,
Gives what she has.

A cement truck stops traffic,
Heated cars, horns honking,
The truck's chute shakes, preparing to pour
Its miraculously solidifying
White powder
Into a demanding ditch.

Electricity seizes the infant's screams,
The child silences. Convulses.
Lightning shears the cement chute.
The cars' horns hush.

The mother screams into the child's silence.
The cement truck driver hollers, “Holy God.”

The mother hardens, holds her child.
The driver starts to drain the chute's remains.

The mother feels the child's face,
Smells her skin, senses her calming.

The driver smoothes his saved cement,
Inhales its consistency.

The rain past,
The mother carries her child
Into the summer air,
Past the cement truck.

“Cute kid,” the driver says. “Wish I had one.”
“Would that I had your magic,” the mother answers.
Untitled
Phyllis Brusiloff

Will you ever make a doll
using a hollyhock bloom as the face
setting a stem into the blossom
using sturdy grass as arms and legs
or will you only have Barbie and Ken
suffering the-deprivation of affluence.

The Sycamore
Phyllis Brusiloff

it must be fourscore and ten,
it’s balding now,
in lush spring
spare leaves foretell
the nearing end
*Take it down, it will*
take down wires ... crash the house.
He looks at me aghast,
and I know too well
how useless is my living will.

Untitled
Phyllis Brusiloff

Insure for breakage
the toddler gazes bereft at the broken toy
years later displays a casted foot with pride,
not yet knowing the heart can break,
and for that there is no insurance.
Untitled
Phyllis Brusiloff

I grated five pounds of potatoes forty five years ago and then lots of onions. I ate them all every single potato pancake, never to crave again, not even in the next pregnancy. I can still taste the crunchy crisp edges, just so salty, warm, light, satiating. Now I wish I were pregnant again.

Pill Talk
Lois Frankenberger

Pill-taking is a daily ritual I enjoy—
I table a collection of them
In a small oval cut-glass
Vintage salt cellar,
Select them one-by-one,
Swallow each in a swirl of water
And talk about our life together:

Celexa and anxiety
Ativan and depression
Motrin and pain
Align and intestines
Crestor and arteries.

I say:
you tell me your secrets and
I’ll tell you mine.

Recipe for Old Age
Lois Frankenberger

one part lonely
one part happy
one part sad
one part anxious
one part calm
one part fear
mix together
serve warm
The Ballad of the Bunion

Gloria Ann Katz

My foot had a deviation
That caused me pain and frustration.
I had a bump on my big toe
That had an unhealthy red glow.
Sometimes I had a problem walking.
The acute distress was shocking.
I tried reflexology technique.
Result of this massage was bleak.
I went to a podiatrist
Hoping his knowledge could assist.
He said wearing shoes with a point
Had pushed my big toe out of joint
Or it could have been genetic
That made my toe unaesthetic.
His advice was no mystery.
The choice was to have surgery.
In a week he operated.
Then my foot became infected.
I had to swallow many pills
To overcome resulting ills.
Forced to walk in a heavy boot,
My incapacity was absolute.
I also hobble with a cane.
Will I ever be whole again?

I Took Out All That

Inspired by Jessica Greenbaum “I Took Out a Part”

Gloria Ann Katz

I took out the letter,
plucked out her words.
Too much, superfluous.
Ravelling steadily,
ravelling calmly.
I took out pressure,
age, forgetful mind,
riding a bicycle to the moon,
stars calling my name.
I took out all that.
Hard to Replace
Ellen Diamond

I had hoped not to outlive
my old refrigerator,
my no-lace granny gown,
the fading eyesight that I need
to breathe, the long-life
lightbulbs I installed sometime ago.
I had hoped to leave
before the temptations of inertia
grew too powerful.
But some hopes lack feathers
and remain earthbound.

Inside Out
Ellen Diamond

Have you ever put a sock on
inside-out
And it feels familiar
but funny, and
a little painful.

When you pull it off
the seams are odd
cross-threaded hills

or like when you were kids
and played “tunnel”
under the covers.

Really the sock is not recognizable!
Impossible to
orient yourself!

But once you’ve worn a sock that way
you may not want to
turn it right-side in.

Once you’ve seen a sock
with all its seamy faults exposed

You may prefer it
to the way things should be.
My Past’s

Barbara Oken

perhaps a scroll unrolled,
neglected in an attic, nibbled
by six generations of gray mice –

or a faded cloth fallen
from a window to an airshaft’s
floor, pissed upon by feral cats.

Some words persist, designs exist,
their meaning and their color paled,
their outlines faded.
No passion vibrates
through the ancient images.

I know I wept and giggled
in a parked car’s darkness,
clinging to Bob,
but unwilling to wed.
I no longer feel that loss,
nor the silliness of sobbing
for a choice that seemed ordained.

I’ve lost the giddy ecstasy
of blending with high, endless azure
on a bloom-strewn, hilltop meadow
where I spun on limber toes.

I feel no ardor for tomorrow.

Thrift is Dear

Nicole Andonov

While waiting for the B-63 bus after missing one, I entered the
corner Salvation Army store renamed: Collectibles.

At the entrance, a bone china set for 3, enhanced with garlands
of lavender, and two extra saucers which survived time; no soup
terrine; one oval serving dish (Tag: $60). In a yard sale, it
would’ve fetched ten/eleven dollars by the piece; and in the 60s,
a mere five.
It was winter outside. Hail was tap-dancing on the store-front glass-panes, but sitting on a beach-chair, a mannequin was wearing crisp ecru Bermuda shorts (tagged $45) and cotton fedora a tone lighter than his tan, tipped à la Bing Crosby (tagged $79).

Isn’t there a quote about the price of a fish that would take down the Roman Empire? I was reminded of it then—and how rarely I can purchase salmon, caught in the wild.

**The Gnats**

Nicole Andonov

And yes, they came surreptitiously like the birds in the Hitchcock film,

or the invasion of the body snatchers, then by swarms that surge, dart, flutter and bite.

They arabesque our monitors, dot our poems, egg our hair.

They hide in our socks, between our toes, itch our ankles,

nest in our banana peels, our African violets, on the rims of our “plastic” buckets.

We spray nook and cranny, fill tubs of vinegar, decorate our ceilings with garlands of glue.

Some get stuck in the goo; Most, on us like glue.

I can see us dropping like flies one by one on our kitchen floors.
I can see new gnats being born
knowing instantly
to be gnats,

swarming, darting, fluttering,
devouring our dead bodies—not
their fellow gnats.

Now

The intersection of alone and lonely
Came up so quickly
Hard to read road signs
Right arrow — climb the incline
Left — coast downhill
And, in tiny, faded letters
Stay, there is room

The intersection of alone and lonely
Make today’s decisions
With a mind asleep in yesterdays
With a mind numbed in the past
Cannot shift into drive
Cannot shift into reverse
I’m in neutral
I’m stuck in neutral

I’ll wait till the warm air comes
It will bring the thaw

Sunday Nights

We ate at home
It was a simple meal
I’d start by cutting the onions
Vidalias when in season
Place them in the wooden bowl
where tuna fish patiently waited
Could feel Don's hands circle my waist
Added a dash of his favorite sweet relish
His fingers began massaging my back
When I began chopping
His head nestled in the nape of my neck
We ate together

Time changes everything
The other evening
In the kitchen of my small apartment
I started cutting onions
Put them in the bowl
Where the tuna fish waited
Began to chop when
I felt the hands of someone
I knew was not there

The Myth Goes On

The stars knew before the earth
Not before the sun
She knew everything
She was always so bright

When the moon appeared
Looking so full of himself
Stars glistened, giggled
guided him gently as he

Float to his beloved
Her rays signaled her acceptance
For the proposal
She knew awaited

Earth was chosen to officiate
Heaven hummed happily
As Stars lit the aisle
That led to the altar
It was a glorious night
They were joined together
In a love affair they knew

Would keep them apart

Fog

Remember that movie?
The one where, at the end
The butler
Doesn’t,
Can’t, maybe just can’t,
Get on the bus,
With her on it.

So he chooses
To stay.
Serve drinks to tuxedoed drunks,
Chardonnay in a mansion, a chalet.

She tells him she’s leaving,
Leaving him.
The kids, the years.

And he,
A good guy.
Solid. No drinking, no screwing around.

But only that, she says.

Choosing.
Choosing.
Feeling the fog.
Fog.

And you?
Stay, serve sangria?
Board the bus?

Despite the fog.
The blessed fog.
It takes courage to continue, not to hang yourself from the nearest hook, as some do, as one did, recently, one I know.

It takes courage to continue, to go on despite the mistakes, the errant ways, the shame that lingers.

It takes courage to need, and to continue needing.

It takes time to see that all beauty is divisible, that the thing most beautiful is most nearly itself.

It takes time to ascend, like the clematis in spring, leaning against the garage wall.

It takes time to see that honesty in desire, is a food that must be fed.

It takes time to see the inevitable wish to go back, go back, go back, as a way to postpone the forward step.

It takes time to notice that in our abundance, we are always at another's mercy.
II

Fathers and Mothers
San Rafael, 1984

My father was eighty-five when he told me he loved me. For the first time. I had just turned away after saying goodbye, and I stopped to look back. The sun was waiting to burn through the morning fog and the bay in the distance behind him was shrouded in mist.

Spanish missionaries had plotted their way up the California coast in the 18th century, selecting names for their missions from Scripture. San Rafael was named after a healer, and when I thought about it later it was not an incongruous setting considering the circumstances. I stared back at my father, my thoughts rushing much too quickly to look surprised. Our eyes met and I told him I loved him too.

My mind ran an obvious course: why hadn’t he told me this earlier? During my childhood, for example, when his silence stood as a reprimand to my existence? I had long suspected that his youth in a brutalized world had taught him to repress emotion, but I had no recourse to introspection in my youth, and accepted his distant manner as normal.

The town he lived in was on a large peninsula, the tip of which held the fog-bound prison community of San Quentin, named after a relatively obscure saint depicted, appropriately enough, as a captive. I doubted if the inmates knew or cared. I knew that they lived constricted lives and I couldn’t begin to imagine anything beyond that fact. I wondered if the inmates waited, as I did whenever I was in California, for the sun to burn through and the fog to lift. I never saw my father again.

Mother, Or What’s In A Name

Born of a mother who is
mother to none,
A girl becomes
mother to sons.

The task lies tri-fold
in its delicacy,
For how to care for the sons without
stealing the Queen’s role.
The mother mare was Queen indeed,
   her children her servants
      (she especially liked to eat girls)

Who themselves needed serving,
   save one, and one was.

That rings false, truer to say
   that the three
      were saved, saved themselves,
   each in his and her way.

The Queen still rules from the grave,
Dead or alive and this is fact,
Though I’d be proven so gladly wrong.

The decrees handed down in tone and deed,
Rather, misdeed, carry far beyond the flesh,
And leave their mark in a child’s future,
Unknown and unknowable.

Though this can be said of most of us, our
Future far and unknowable,

I mean to say the grave where some lie still,
In stillness around, are sounds so shrill
From some that do abound.

These unsorry ghosts reach far in their reach,
Offer no comfort to those who from them sprang

Both bloody and bare with more to come,
So listen with care.

A mother who was mother to none,
   though seemed to love all,
      all outside her, we mean, it seems

And so it is, or was – for was becomes is
There is only one tense in despair.

She truly loved no one,
   not a one.
So mother who screamed you
Would curse me from the grave,
Know this, though I always was
Your subject, only now my own,

Though I could not, then stand up
then through now, but now, know this
My truth to your force,
    know this:

I will have the last word,
The very final word,
Not yet, but soon, soon, soon,
To be followed by a long-lasting period.

Written in stone.

Sing To Me, Mother

Julia Krushenick

Dead fish floating
in the goldfish bowl;
broken doll
against the wall.
It’s all right, mommy

You were
a young girl always
looking for
the next party.

I was
that glass of milk, left
on the table,
drowning.
Up

Gloria Ann Katz

Mother takes me
to Kleins on Union Square
for a High Holiday hat
rushes up streets to the elevated train
clutches her purse, but not my hand,
steps on the creaking wooden escalator, rises to the platform.

sees me at the bottom
does not come to help
waves and shouts for me to ride,
waits,
not accepting my fear as I slowly ascend the staircase.

Leaving the Old Homestead

Harold Siegel

1919 World War 1 – over
Russian revolution – over
Pogroms – over
Taking a fatal toll on my grandparents.

My father, studious, thoughtful
Chose to leave his familiar world
And undertake the laborious trek
To the new world.

Armed with limited hard earned rubles
He knew he would have to bribe
Every low leveled uniformed
Russian, Polish, German
To continuously rebuy his freedom
Along the way.

With a good memory, pencil and paper
And many months in transit
He made it to Boston.
Searching for normalcy
Like marriage and family
His pages, like his desire to teach,
Were put on a back burner.

Now his 150 page saga
Lives only in my computer
And on yellow sheets
In an old box.
Doubtful of its resurrection.

Despite It All
Judith Korotkin Mende

Guilt sits upon me like a cross
It waits for unplanned moments to appear
and then invades me and I cannot toss
away the questions posed when you are near

like did you hate me when I made you floss
or said pierced ears were out until next year?
Did you resent the fact that I was “boss”
or that divorcing dad was too severe

for you to cope or even comprehend?
How much did choices that I made for me
affect your life, or do you just pretend
that you understand and clearly see?

I know, despite it all, you care for me,
which proves, without a doubt, that I’m guilt free?

Bonding
Lois Frankenberger

My daughter cried as she told me her story of falling on the tile bathroom floor
late one night, crawling to call 911 and waiting for the EMT to take her to the
nearby hospital ER. I met her there, held her hand while they tested her broken
two front teeth, mended the back of her head with three staples, stitched her lip
with hair-thin thread, and moved her into a hospital room. For the next three
nights and days I nourished her with liquid food they made for me at a
restaurant across the street. From hospital to her apartment, I lived with her for
two weeks, supported her as she walked room-by-room, soothed her fear of
darkness and of falling. She returned to work feeling at-home with her newly-
bonded teeth and staple-free head. She was ready to smile.

September, 1999

Louise Meyerson

The package arrived Yom Kippur morning, three days after the hurricane
warnings began.

It was not the worst of times for me, but neither was it the best. My health
had deteriorated; my vision and balance were poor, and I could no longer drive.
It had become painfully clear that I would have to move from idyllic Princeton, to
God knows where. My children lived far away, and both were struggling with
work and family stresses. There was no reasonable chance of moving closer to
them, and, to add vinegar to the wounds, I would be spending another holiday
alone.

My parents had been agnostics, so we didn't observe the holidays, but, over
the years, I had created my own rituals and traditions. It was my own private
attempt to honor my cultural legacy. Usually, on Yom Kippur, I managed to get to
a friend's home to share her family's "breaking of the fast", but, this year, the
ritual had been cancelled. I would have to atone alone in the middle of a
hurricane.

The rains came before dawn the morning of Yom Kippur eve. When I woke,
my eyes were red and swollen, my vision blurred, but I had tasks to complete, so
I tossed my laundry in a basket, and went to the laundry room next door, a
poncho over my head. As I left the steaming room, I called the ophthalmologist.

"Come right over; we're going to close early." I left my laundry whirling, and
walked the three blocks to his office, soaking, cursing.

"This is an allergy," he said. "It's the gloop in the air, but you have to see a
neurologist about the other stuff. Nothing more that I can do."

Sent on again, into the deluge; my heart falling faster than the rain.

I moved my soggy sheets to the dryer, and went back to my apartment.
Someone had fastened a paper to the door, but I was too tired to read anything. I
had some water from the tap, and lay down until it was time to pick up my
laundry. This time, I stopped to read the paper on my door. “Warning, reservoir contaminated by flood waters. Boil all water before drinking, washing.”

Laugh? Cry? I called the E R. “Call our internist.” I called and got her answering service. Out of town, will call back. She called from a dinner party, testy as hell. “Call the ER if you’re worried.” Been there, done that. I was too exhausted to put away the laundry, fell asleep, half dressed.

The pounding rains woke me; it was Yom Kippur morning. Something banged against the door, a package on the floor, no return address. I opened the envelope; it was a typed manuscript, pages of poetry with my grandmother's name on top, Rita Stein Newman, June-1885 – June, 1933, the month she’d killed herself, the month my parents had planned to wed.

I read, “There are roses on my table, but my heart is a dead, dumb thing.”

NO! I threw the manuscript down. Don’t oppress me with your despair. It’s Yom Kippur, and I may have swallowed poisoned water, and I can’t find a doctor, and my eyes are stinging, but, goddamn, there are roses in my heart, and I’m going to find a way to bring them into the world.

I remembered walking with my father when I was sixteen, the evening he told me how she had died. I remembered his quiet, measured voice as he explained, “I’ve come to the conclusion she had no choice, no other way.”

I remembered his valiant struggle to overcome his own depression, an inspiration to me in the moments when my heart fell. I remembered too that he had said she was gracious and kind, just as I had known him to be.

In the late afternoon, toward the end of the holiday, I picked up the poems and read them through. Some were sorrowful, in a ladylike, genteel, Tennysonian manner. Several expressed regret about the fading of passion over time, but there was also pungent wit, and there were five delightful feminist nursery rhymes. There was a leftist battle cry, a gentle reverie on a child's dressing table, and a playful recollection of her three children running across the lawn of a Scottish castle they’d visited on holiday. All were carefully crafted.

I remembered my father telling me that she’d kept a pad and pencil in her apron pocket, as she cleaned house. I recalled a photo I’d seen, a tall, slender, elegant lady in Edwardian dress. Reading the manuscript, I felt I was walking down a mirrored gallery with her; in each poem, I saw her reflection at a different angle. She was welcoming me into her being, this grandmother I had never known. The dusk came; the holiday was ending. I felt replenished by her presence.

I never found out who sent the poems, an angel, perhaps, but I had found a new companion for the new year.
It was December 1993 when I arrived in Florida to take care of my parents. My father had been looking after my mother as her dementia increased. My visits had tapered off as I was dealing with my life in Boston. I had stopped working, was preparing to leave my marriage, and for weeks kept vigil with my family as my father-in-law was dying. The day after his funeral, my father called my brother Clark in a terribly anxious state, and I was on a plane.

My mother was still in fair condition with her dementia. She had lost much of her appetite, which put my father into an agitated state. We knew his situation could escalate, and it did. For the next six months I cared for my parents, making infrequent trips to Boston. My dad was despondent as his depression overcame his waking hours. We tried more medications.

My mother’s behaviors indicated what was going on in her mind. I watched as she turned a light switch on and looked at the light, turned the light switch off and looked at the unlit light, as if trying to remember what had just happened. An intense sadness enveloped me.

I remember so vividly walking down the corridor to the Memory Loss Clinic with my parents. Mom read the sign posted in the hallways and asked, “Which one of us has memory loss?” I smiled at her and answered, “You do mommy.” She smiled back and said, “Okay.”

The tests were completed, and the doctor explained to us how my mother would continue to go down the learning curve she had once climbed as a child. Nothing surprised me at this point... I had cried months before. For years my mother had laughed at jokes about memory loss and sent me poems in the mail about forgetting to send the mail. She knew then what was happening.

My parents’ doctor advised putting my mother in a home. Looking at Clark and me in his office one day, he said, “You can save your father. You cannot save your mother.” It was said so coldly, yet we listened. Clark took my father to Boston, where he entered a psychiatric hospital. He took over the care to "save our father," while I stayed with my mom.

Jane, who had already started helping my mom, was willing to work part time. Looking for someone else to take care of my mom was so much harder than finding nannies for my children when I needed them. My children could talk and let me know what was going on in the house. My mother would not remember!

When I thought it was hopeless, I called Clark crying and said, “I need Mary Poppins for the demented!” That same day I had two interviews. I asked the first
woman, “Have you worked with anyone who had dementia?” She looked at me and said, “I can turn them.” The interview ended quickly, and I sat with my mother awaiting the next one.

A smiling, well-groomed woman named Phyllis entered. I repeated my question, and she began talking about the people with dementia she had cared for. She named them and spoke kindly of them and their families. She talked directly to my mother, engaging her.

Phyllis really was “Mary Poppins for the demented.” She dressed my mother nicely, did her hair, took her for walks outside, and prepared meals that looked beautiful. One day as I was about to go to the post office, Phyllis said, “No, I will take your mom to the post office.” As she dressed her, she asked me to find a purse, put in some money for the stamps, a lipstick and comb. I knew then that my mother was going to be okay. She had lost enough memory not to miss my father, but she had enough to understand what was going on. She was going to have care as well as respect.

My father eventually left the hospital and moved in with Clark. After numerous shock treatments and new medications, he had improved. We worried, though, about his going home. We told him he would have to accept Phyllis and Jane as the full-time caregivers. He also had to leave the house for some social activity... tennis, cards, dances and shows.

On Mother’s Day, 1994, my father returned to his home and started the adjustment period. Jane and Phyllis were there to take care of him, too. It worked and it was good... for a long time.

**Going to the City**

Shirley M. Henschel

When I was a little girl during World War II my Mother would take me with her on Saturdays when she went shopping in “the city”. We lived in Forest Hills — also the city — but going to “the city” meant taking the subway into Manhattan.

The reason we went on Saturdays was that my Father was home to look after my brothers. The reason my Mother took me was that my brother had grown too old to be allowed to use the women’s rest room.

It only took one such trip for me to learn that I did not want to go on them. At Macy’s, which is where we invariably went, my Mother would dart hither and yon and I could not always see where she had gone. Alternately, she would park me in a chair and tell me that she would be back in a minute and then not come back for the longest time.
Once we stepped off the escalators whose wide slats would often grab her heels—occasioning some mild curses—she would dart off as if by herself. I would try to follow her beaver coat with its balding patches but she was too fast for me and there were other balding beavers.

I had nothing but fear on these shopping trips. My worst fear was that she would not come back for me, that I would wait hopelessly and helplessly until the store closed. Then the mannequins would come alive, a truly menacing thought, or I would be found by the security guards with their snarling dogs.

On the way home after one such ordeal, I asked my Mother for our address.

“Why do you need to know your address,” she said “you know where you live!”

How could I tell her! I knew the security guards would call the police who would ask me where I lived and I could not tell them.

So I would try to follow her beaver coat as she got off the escalator and then scurried this way or that. It was a losing battle.

“Take Leonard”, I said, when she told me once again that I was going with her on Saturday. “I don’t want to go.”

“Leonard is too old and Herbert is a baby. You can help me carry the packages.”

Sometimes, as a treat, after shopping for what seemed hours, we would go to the Nedick’s on Macy’s corner and she would buy me an orange drink or a hot dog. I did not ask for both as my Father always complained about her spending too much money. If it was summer, we might go to the Woolworth’s across 34th Street where we would each have a frozen chocolate drink. I loved those drinks.

One day on the subway on the way home after one of these outings, the car we were in was empty but for two men who sat across from us. One was elderly and the other was a Naval officer wearing a formal white uniform that was crisply pressed. He was reading a newspaper.

The wicker subway seats were hot and I stuck to them. My mother was reading her Saturday Evening Post magazine. I had exhausted all the subway ads when suddenly, the old man gasped and blood started gushing out of his mouth and his nose.

The officer immediately went to help him. I remember him trying to wipe the blood off his uniform with the newspaper. The elderly man kept gasping and bleeding.
When the train pulled in to the station the officer half-carried the old man off the train. The floor was covered with blood and the smell in the car was of burnt liver.

We got off at the next stop. It was during the war and everything in the world was ominous.

Untitled

Muriel Hubsher

It was Sunday, and on Sundays my father came to visit me, his daughter, and my son, his first and only grandchild, a toddler, who is now sixty years old. Before he arrived, he made sure to stroll by the antique stores on Coney Island Avenue, in Brooklyn that was the Mecca for furniture, lamps, bowls, anything that was old and salable. My father was not really a connoisseur but he loved pretty objects and he loved me, so each Sunday he would arrive at my home with a present. He’d have this wonderful smile on his face, his eyes crinkly and shining, and each and every time he’d say, “Princess, I have a little something for you.”

One particular Sunday the "little something" was a drinking glass in the most unusual shade of green with delicate gold leaves embossed around its base.

“The light caught it in the window of Shapiro’s store and I couldn’t walk by without getting it for you,” he said.

It was beautiful and I loved it.

My father passed away a few years ago. The glass has been sitting on my night table all of these years and I looked at it each morning and evening. It was my connection with him.

Last month I was doing some cleaning and I put my glass in a bowl of suds. When I lifted it out of the water, the sunlight coming in through my kitchen window turned the soapy glass into a brilliant jewel. I closed my eyes and saw my father’s smile when he gave it to me that Sunday afternoon.

The soapy green glass slipped out of my hand and crashed into a million green shards.

I could not move. I could hardly breathe. The glass is gone, and all I have left is the memory of my father’s smile and his voice, letting me know how much I was loved.
III

Home
I. Easton, PA
   640 Walnut Street

   In the city where I was born
   Grandpa Goldstein
   Lived with us
   In a tall stucco house
   Edged in steep
   Stone steps.

   In the city where I was born
   I listened to my grandpa
   Recite the alphabet
   Backwards, watched him
   Twiddle his thumbs.

   In the city where I was born
   My grandpa chewed
   Uncle Sam Chewing Tobacco.
   Each pack was embedded
   With a tiny tin red white and
   Blue face he’d clamp onto the
   Kitchen door frame.

   He was my grandfather and
   I was young and I adored him.

II. Scranton, PA
    326 Monroe Avenue

    In the city where I grew up
    My father was a traveling
    Salesman. Every Monday
    Morning he’d pack his
    Suitcase and leave our
    Apartment.

    In the city where I grew up
    He’d get into his bright blue
    Buick and enter the lives of
    His plumbing supply
    Customers.

    In the city where I grew up
    I prayed and prayed
    From Tuesday through
    Thursday he’d come home.
    Sure enough on Friday
    He and the Sabbath arrived at
    Sundown.

    He was my father and
    I worshipped him.

---

Untitled

Phyllis Brusiloff

As the sun begins to light the sky, I look around. Eight cartons have been
unpacked and all the others wait impatiently.
My friends say, with a bit of envy, no repairs to worry you, no garden to fuss
over, no snow to shovel.
I think back to the house I’ve left.
My miniature tulips, so carefully nurtured, and the dogwood cutting my mother-
in-law gave me so many years ago.
I think of wet snow that muscled my arms and the light dusting snow that I
swept for fear it would ice over in the night.
I dream sometimes of the road home from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv to the Coast Road home to my kibbutz. It’s only a dream; I haven’t gone that way in 46 years. But sometimes, in my daydreams and my hopes, I do just that. With my diagnosis now of stage four ovarian cancer, I doubt this dream will ever come true. It’s too late, I think. But in my mind’s eye, I take that ride.

I board the Jerusalem – Tel Aviv bus early on a Sunday morning and arrive in Tel Aviv at around 9:30 a.m., and wait around for the Tel Aviv-Haifa bus due to depart in twenty minutes. I eye the other passengers, not for safety sake, but for plain old curiosity. Some Arabs who live in the small towns along the coast; some kibbutzniks like me, going home after a Shabbat away. In those days, not many Americans, but many survivors. You can tell by their accents, the numbers on their arms and their food.

I take a seat mid-bus next to the window, after telling the driver that I would get off at Kibbutz Maagan. I love it when we leave Tel Aviv. I never did like that city – even in my day it was too American, too, too, much. Funny to say this, because even in my twenties, I considered myself the quintessential New Yorker, so why wouldn’t I like this cosmopolitan city? But after four years living on a kibbutz, I guess I had changed.

Tel Aviv is actually built on sand dunes and to this day has beautiful beaches. The Mediterranean looks blue and calm. We are driving closer to my home, passing Sdot Yam (the home of Hannah Senesh), the small town of Binyamina, where you could get a “bifstek im chips” (beefsteak with chips) and a “beera chakorah” (black beer), which was the closest thing we could get to Coca Cola or Pepsi pre-1967 Israel. Finally, the bus pulls off the road and drives to the small (now a pretty large city) of Hadera. We wait about five minutes for passengers, and then pull out.

Ten more minutes and the driver yells “chavera me Kibbutz Maagan”. I love that. It literally means “Comrade from Maagan”. It means to me he sees me as a member of the kibbutz, not just a visitor. I get off and start my favorite part of the trip. From the Coast Road to the main part of the Kibbutz is about three quarters of a mile, passing through banana fields, cotton fields, and the tomato and cucumber fields where I work, and then to the dining hall, the homes and the children’s houses.

Sometimes, I keep walking right past my room straight out to the road down to the beach. That road goes right through the fish ponds to the most beautiful beach in Israel. Part of it even then, was a nature preserve. I stand in the middle of the road and look to my right and see the gentle rolling of the Carmel Hills and to my left, the Mediterranean Sea.
I am home in a place I love and where I was loved. It’s all still there, but I am not and will probably never be again.

Growing Up in Central Park

Anne Taub

Not long ago, I saw a film on Central Park presented by the Central Park Conservancy. Until then, I had no idea what a big part Central Park played in my life and the lives of my children. Among the slides shown were ones of the playground in the North Meadow and the Conservancy Gardens. My son played in that playground, met a Mt. Sinai medical student in the North Meadow, and we all had pictures taken in the Conservancy Gardens the day he was married to her.

I don’t know where to begin, because so much of our lives was spent in Central Park. While my children were pre-school age, we spent every day, except blizzard days, in the park. I have a daughter only because my first child was a boy and I wanted my second one to be a girl, and I’d heard a theory about when to conceive each sex. With my son in his baby carriage, I toured the park, testing out the theory on every baby-carriage mother I met. When I was pretty positive I had the key, I put it into practice and so now have a daughter.

In that very playground, my 15-month old daughter once fell off the highest slide onto the ground. In a panic, I took her to the Mt. Sinai emergency room, where they told me she was fine. Every time I pass that playground, I think of that day.

I took my children to the Children’s Zoo to feed and pet the animals, to the tennis courts to learn tennis, to the handball court to learn handball, and to the Metropolitan Museum to infuse a little culture into them. They loved the Met for one reason—they loved going up and down the escalator.

I was mugged twice in Central Park. Once while I was walking with my daughter in her stroller, an adolescent boy pointed a wooden stick towards her head and said “Give me a quarter.” I said I had none. Then he asked for a cigarette and I said I didn’t smoke. He left in disgust.

Another time, my husband and my children were on bikes ahead of me while I was walking. I had a small red purse with my bicycle key and $1.00 for ice cream for the kids in it. Two boys came up on either side of me and put a knife on my wrist and asked for money. It is insanity, but all I could think of at the time was that the knife was rusty and I would get infected. I gave them the purse. I could sense that in their heightened state of fear they had to win, but as they were walking away I asked for my bicycle key, and they threw it at me.
My husband and I each rode bikes around Central Park every week with a child sitting in a seat on each bike. When they got old enough to have their own bikes, I would put my dog, Tidbits, a little Sheltie, on the back seat and ride her around the park. She loved it. Unfortunately, I once took the bike to the Met without her and locked it up as I went in. It was about 10 feet behind the back of a policeman on a motorcycle who was talking with a pretty girl. When I returned, the lock had been broken and the bike was gone, and the policeman was still talking to the pretty girl.

I can’t imagine what my children’s lives in Manhattan would have been like without Central Park.

Change – Legacy – Love

Norma Berke

Now that age has lined my face, spotted my body, crippled my hands, slowed my step, I ponder the possibility of an Assisted Living Residence. I wonder where it might be. In Delaware near my devoted Nephew? In Bucks County, close to my hometown where I have studied and have ties to my University in Philadelphia? Definitely not Florida where my sister lived for over twenty years, where I visited and once the strawberry farms became strip malls, hated.

The financial crash of ’29, the depression, the dust bowl, sent our family roaming, a different reality. Our ideal image, a moving image. That was our family, a mobile, nuclear family. Schools changed with each move. I wonder if it started with my grandparents themselves or was it the changing America to which they emigrated that made me the nomad I became? Now, eighty or more years later, though the site has changed, our “family” home has been restored. Our line depleted, all deceased, the final five: daughter, nephew, niece, grandnephew and me. I move but always return to my Island home. “Don’t move”, my nephew advises, “This is where you are happy, this is where you belong”. He is right.

When I cross the bridge to my Island, I anticipate the happiness in store for me. I beam when the sun rises in the east or sets in the west. I am not alone on the Island I call home. Many families live all around me. My home overlooks the river that passes my Island. On quiet, balmy afternoons, I walk along my river, sometimes stopping to read my current book or magazine. It is quiet, it is peaceful, it is rejuvenating and it is beautiful.

Spring and summer are the best times of all at my home. It is the time when my family and friends visit. We have an expected ritual that we follow. My family arrives late, most times after one p.m. Following my mother’s example, I have their favorite appetizers ready, crudité, and dip, of course, deviled eggs, my
grandnephew’s favorite, skewered broiled jumbo shrimp with dipping sauce, for my nephew and brandied chicken liver paté, everyone’s favorite! There is always a cheese board and lots of crackers and chips, rice crackers for my gluten free friend, with grapes and strawberries draped around each platter. There is sangria, iced peach tea and bubbly cider to drink, all peppered with talk of heavy traffic delays, mini gossip, politics, bless them, they are all big business right wing proponents – keep the government out of my pockets! But this idealistic, ivory tower dweller, liberal, my nephew’s description, manages to hold her own. Disagreements – polite and civil.

Then, a long walk along the river. In twos and threes, we amble to our favorite restaurant for more talk, jesting and toasting. Back home for dessert, coffee and an aperitif for all but the designated driver. I love my small family, my friends and my Island, my family home.

Wherever I have lived, about twenty-five different residences, lake houses, vacation retreats, ski lodges, home has always been where I am surrounded by memories. Photographs of family and friends some long gone on one side of the table, the living on the other. Masks from South America, baskets and pottery from Navaho and Hopi reservations, artifacts, my paintings, pottery, photos from my trips to four continents. With all that stuff around, my home is not cluttered. There is space enough for most, maybe not so much for my buff, over six foot nephew or his son. On peaceful, tranquil nights, I am surrounded by familiars. My home embraces me. All that I delight in, admire, enjoy, covet, especially my jewelry collection from all over the world.

I fell in love with Manhattan Island when I came to study at Columbia University over sixty years ago.

“I let others stay here, but it is my Island.”

The Chinatown Market

Gloria Katz

Chinatown in Oahu is the gathering place for people of all ethnic backgrounds. Walking through this neighborhood, I feel immersed in the history of Hawaii. The buildings are low and more than a century old. The narrow streets are busy from early morning until evening with those who come to work, market, and eat. Even casual visitors are aware that it is no longer an exclusive Chinese enclave. The storekeepers, vendors and restaurant owners are recent immigrants from Southeast Asia.

Hawaii has the most unusual mix of people in our country. The old timers are native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, but many Chinese, Japanese, and
Portuguese residents are descendants of individuals who came as indentured servants to work on the sugar plantations in the nineteenth century. Whites, referred to as haoles or foreigners, are less than a quarter of the population.

Haoles usually do not shop in Chinatown, perhaps because the streets are congested and the market is not well-organized. One must visit many stores and stalls to make needed purchases, but when I am in Honolulu I dislike supermarkets. Such stores make me feel as if I did not leave New York. A trip to Chinatown is my favorite activity.

The major part of the food market is covered. The entrepreneurs speak little English, but they work hard to serve their customers. Making a living must be difficult, because there is a great deal of competition. Fish, shrimp, fruits, and vegetables are displayed by rival vendors. Boxes of vegetables and fruits are piled on the mall outside the market building.

A small but busy food court has communal tables where on Saturday mornings, I eat breakfast. Two eggs over easy, spicy Portuguese sausage, and a large scoop of rice, are prepared by an efficient elderly Chinese couple. I carry my plate to a table where my fellow diners look different from me, but I feel at home in surroundings where food is the major concern. After breakfast I rush to a Chinese bakery next to the food court for a dozen custard tarts, their centers glistening bright yellow. These goodies sell out early and the proprietor is able to close her shop before noon.

Then I buy produce: tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, onions, scallions, mushrooms, lemons, and bananas from various stands. In the beginning I noticed unfamiliar vegetables. Sellers do not have the time or words to explain their uses, but friends from work tell me about these items. With time I became savvy enough to buy purple Okinawa sweet potatoes, lemon grass, ginger, and coriander.

Two Vietnamese sisters have a stall with trays of shrimp in various sizes. I ask for a half pound of the expensive jumbo ones. They say “You want more.” These persuasive ladies always convince me to buy a larger amount than I need. My final food purchase is a bronze roast duck. I choose one from several hanging in the window of the store. Then I say, “Chop! Chop!” and make hand motions to tell the butcher to render the bird into bits. He places the pieces in a Styrofoam container, adding a cup of duck blood to be used for reheating.

I go home laden with parcels from the Oahu market, happy and confident that I am part of the uniqueness of Hawaii.
IV

*Spiritual in Nature*
Lost Soul

Elizabeth Scheuerman

Can a soul be lost?
Left, say, in a taxi cab,
the way I once lost a laptop.
Or maybe it’s more like a diamond
that slips out of its setting into the garbage,
which of course you throw out before you notice
what’s missing.

I never saw my laptop again.
Someone took it, claimed it as his own.
The diamond, though, is buried in a dump.
It still exists, but won’t be found by anyone.

I picture a box overflowing with lost souls
like a jumble of grade school leavings—
mittens, coats, sweaters, scarves—
waiting to be found, rejoined with rightful owners,
unclaimed items discarded or donated
at the end of the school year.

Do souls have owners?

Maybe a soul is like a sliver of God, inside everyone.
(Even a torturer? Even the teacher who was mean to my child?)
Can a soul shrink and die for want of care,
the way my houseplants do, when I forget to water them?

Is a soul like yeast, leavening the bread?
Like the scent of a rose?
Is a soul like a shadow—
sometimes visible, sometimes not,
but always un-losable?

Where is my soul?
Why do I feel so lost?
The Kaufman House on Falling Waters

_In response to Mary Oliver_

Judith S. Adler

This house has a soul
You feel it
as you stroll from outside in
Holding on to the long horizontal slabs,
the same granite slabs you just left
Outside.

Sounds of water penetrate
Spilling, splashing from high up
Higher than the house
The house in the forest
Of dark green spruces
As Sun glistens through the trees.

Wright brought the outside in
Ignored the family’s wishes
When he placed the house over
The falling waters.
How fortunate the house still stands
Amidst the forest greens

This house has a soul.
You have to move in close
To fully see its ochre shape
showing through the mist.

Cairn

Judith S. Adler

Where were you when we needed you?
No answers
the sky darkened
no path in sight
no lights
no other people.

It was getting cold
colder now
darker
plenty of rocks around
we tripped on
slipped on
tall trees all around.

You couldn’t have been there
you would have been distinct
high up
visible.

I spotted a light
in the distance
between the trees
we walked towards it
stumbling
as darkness fell.

At the Lake

I don’t go deep into things.

Am more like a flat stone that ducks and drakes
the surface of the water

in a splash or two
of transparent droplets.

Sometimes, the droplets mirror the scenery;
sometimes, they clash and burst;

and sometimes,

they dissolve in the calm
of a quiet afternoon.
Driving
Phyllis Brusiloff

There were high wires, criss-crossed, parallel along the roadside starlings perched in perfect lines waiting for a signal to swoop and glean fields of fallen corn in unison clouds of wings settled on graying ground.

Goeppingen Germany 1956
Phyllis Brusiloff

She had sparse grey hair. Her English was surprisingly good. She was thin, I was heavy... before... she said. The room we rented in her apartment was stuffed with furniture and a coal burning stove. I wondered about being Jewish. Was it awful for her to rent a room to the victorious, to have Jews under her roof? It was months before the war entered our conversations. I had a friend... they took her. Her voice broke, she turned and left the room... She came back. My father, she said, he went to the railroad station, he shouted, VERRUCKT {crazy}. We thought they would put him in the cattle cars, but because he was old and fought in World War One, the soldiers brought him home. Go, she said, walk in the Schwartwald, It is beautiful. Take Ari.
The big German Shepherd and I walked from Goeppingen to Eislingen. It was beautiful and I thought... “the horror was then, this is now,” and bent to pet the dog.
Connections

Julia Krushenick

I looked into a pigeon’s eyes today
She flew onto the rail
along the river in Schurtz Park
White, except for one feather, grey,
touched by a cloud rolled off the surface of the sea

She flinched, startled, as I looked into her eyes.
Deep amber, the color of fossilized resin
drawn from ancient forests.
A moment of recognition, a connection
to a wild bird.

Amid seagulls, a woman
hunched against the cold
scatters crumbs as if planting seeds
I walk through a cleared path as they fly
spread winged above me and
meld into the snow laden sky

Seated on a bench, a young girl
watches. Our eyes meet,
A glance turns into a voice.
She wants to feed the world.
I assure her, we can only do what we can do.
She smiles, comforted and continues
to watch seagulls being fed.

Along the water,
I dream of ancient forests
as snowflakes begin to fall.

Explanation

Judith Korotkin Mende

Not another word about the ocean.
Don’t try again to find the words to explain
how it bandaids the bleeding world
and places you in your place in the universe -
how it makes you aware of the universe
until you are floating
in the wave of it - the rhythm of it—
like a child in a rocking chair
and how it hushes you
and lets you breathe in
the in and out of life
without choking.

**Invocation**

Heinz Wipfler

Come as you are
and bring some wine
No need for
tablets on a mount
or immaculate conception
or stealth
like Zeus in his guises

The landscape is barren
my sky opaque
Let clarity blossom
and serenity take root
in memory’s pastures

**muse**

Heinz Wipfler

your voice
guides me
past shards
of grey and shadow
your words
mingle with echos
of days departed
our secret garden
a refuge
of green and gold
january

Heinz Wipfler

stones in layered rows
   powdered by snow
a black cedar house squats
   in the stillness
   oak floors creak
gray light slants through panes
   fogged by coffee and bacon

the cracking of ice
   like a hunter's shot
   echoes over a barren field
   hemmed by wind
no birds witness the sound

late

Heinz Wipfler

I walk down a hallway
past classrooms and offices
   peripheral figures coming and going
   faces purposeful
the sound of books snapping open
doors closing around me

am I a student or instructor?
rushing past an empty room
   I meet myself
   coming around a corner
lost and empty-handed
my work unfinished
leaving Arizona 1964

driving into the rose of dawn
early cold fills our bones
pottery shards
lie on the desert floor
giant cacti stand sentinel
as rising light drives
snakes and scorpions into lairs
a dust cloud trails our jeep
where have all the Apache gone?
distant cliffs house their spirits
circling hawks and canyon winds
carry their song

darkness

There is a darkness
that comes in winter
when light recedes
and stars appear
Night sleeps
spreading cold and flat

Dawn renews the cycle
Long shadows appear
listening for sound
confident of movement
Darkness retreats
and day begins

The darkness within
knows no boundaries
No moonlight cloaks the heart
No song of morning
greets the host
No clockwork wakes the night
The Place for Souls

Not heaven — somebody's in charge there
and souls are passionate about their freedom.
Also, heaven is permanent; souls are interim things,
even when time's no longer here.

I'd like there to be signage, indicating where
and how to start the journey. Some suggestions, if I may:
'Former folk who lived too near the sea,
dry off here first.' 'Landlocked souls, line up
here for your key.' 'Gourmet chefs may follow
the bouquet; time for recipes provided.'

'Dogs who still act like frisky pups, here;
sadder but wiser dogs go over there.'
'Souls who prefer their own company,
form your own line here, here and here.'

Wrought-iron gates, rusty from wear, will say:
'Ready for parts unknown? There is your way.'

Moored

Through grime-sprayed windows
I see a tantalizing, lake-like sky
with soft clouds at noon rest.
Buildings stand like moored boats
waiting for a liberating breeze.
Tamed pigeons circle, first deflecting,
then in lift and bank, releasing sunlight.
A quarter planet-turn later, the sky livens
from lake to choppy ocean. Roused,
the white-cap clouds out-race each other east.
I am the moored boat now, leaning out
to snare a broad-reach wind and sail away.
Way Out

When the dusk of day approaches
Carrying its curtain of darkness
The lamppost outside my window
Flashes its do not enter sign
I live in the company of
My poetry books
My favorite composers
Photos of the meaning of life

It is I
Who bring the dark

It is I
Who want to touch
But cannot reach

It is I
Who want to see
But cannot focus

Can I trust the light
Shining in
To help me?

Chemistry Lesson

what I learned is this
particles skid
crash merge
break
the chair I sit in
is not solid
bits escape
becoming
not-chair? air? me?
while pieces of me
flee even my hand
shifts crazily
disintegrating re-forming
each moment different
and at the boundaries
there are no boundaries
in the endless dance of change
of becoming and decaying
nothing ever is

what I don’t know is this
how to function in flux
I want to pin down
the now
like a butterfly
mounted
I want something fixed
to hold onto
even you
even you
but the you
I knew
the I
who knew
you flew
bit by bit
in the endless dance of change
of becoming and decaying
nothing ever is

It Lingers, Still

Elizabeth Scheuerman

This whistle in the distance—a freight train
passing through on its journey from somewhere
to somewhere else—and I shiver in
mournful pleasure, tingle with strange yearnings.

This whistle, and I am a child again,
visiting grandparents in northwestern
Kansas. It is August. A hot dry wind
gives no relief from the sun; pickup trucks
speeding on straightaways kick up dust and
gravel clouds. My brother and I seek shade
under the viaduct, waiting for the
Rock Island Express. It will come, this we know.

The conductor, seeing us, will smile and
wave and toot the train's horn in honor of
our presence. Helloooo, so nice to meet you,
goodbyyyyye. Such economy in this brief
encounter! Life's trajectory laid bare
on the plains: the long-awaited coming,
 fleeting acknowledgment, and then it is
 over, though the sound of the horn lingers.]

**an old man paints ...**

Elizabeth Scheuerman

almost no foreground
no horizon
nothing to hold onto

water
you infer
from the green pads
of water lilies

just the beauty of
now
floating

this pool holds within it not only water
but sky trees
unrooted roots of water lilies
and shadows
even the shadow of death

but yes it is so I see this now
death is no more solid than the reflection of clouds
eyesight  even life    dissolving
Monet returns to that moment
before separation          not the end but the beginning
when the breath of God hovers over the face of the deep
careses what is
what has been    what will be

an old man paints a few water lilies floating on the pond of his creation

such tenderness
such love abides

Sunflowers

Harold Siegel

Have you ever seen a field of sunflowers?
A field without end
their faces
Turning to follow the sun
An arc from dawn to dusk
All the same, all different
A symphonic orchestra
Responding as one.

They wither at dawn
as though exhausted
Covered with dew

December

Elizabeth Scheuerman

Even this late it happens:
gratitude wells up. Though
you can’t see the sun and
darkness comes too soon, though
your bones creak when you move, though
the city is heavy with anger and grief you feel
light, so buoyant with happiness
you could float away.
Even this late you feel a hard seed within, cracking open. Green shoots rise from your heart; you smell the fragrance of roses in bloom.

A Friend Once Told Me

A friend once told me
   her brother had told her

if you shine a flashlight
   into the night sky

the light never stops
   billions of years from now

the beam will still be traveling
   past planets stars galaxies

if her brother was wrong
   I don’t want to know

I have spent too many nights
   shining my light into darkness

Elizabeth Scheuerman
V

L’Chaim
I remember the Friday afternoons when mother made gribenes. Pieces of chicken skin were fried crisp with onions in the fat cut from the Sabbath pullet. My brother and I would sit at the kitchen table eating pieces of rye bread slathered with delicious greasy cracklings. We watched while mother poured the remains of the flavorful renderings into a jar. In the refrigerator this would congeal into a yellow solid, a substitute for cooking oil.

In Yiddish the precious grease is called schmaltz. Mother used it in her meat-based recipes. She prepared savory poultry stuffing from schmaltz, eggs, onions, seasonings, and stale bread. She made an appetizer combining liver, chopped eggs, and onions fried in schmaltz. Before adding liquid to goulash stew, beef chunks, onions, garlic, and paprika were browned in schmaltz until they almost turned black.

Although she had a kitchen with modern appliances, mother often used labor intensive methods to recreate the kosher delicacies of the shtetl where she spent her first twenty-two years. She had apprenticed to her mother, older sister, and mother-in-law, experts from the old country. From these elders she learned to make substantial dinners of poultry or religiously acceptable cuts of beef and lamb. Kosher meat cannot be cut from the hindquarters of farm animals and has to be soaked in a basin and salted to remove blood.

Each week when we lived in the Bronx, a butcher delivered a chicken and kosher meat to our apartment on Thursday evenings. Benny Dubbs was fellow countryman from my father's home town in Romania. My parents referred to him as a landsman; for them this was a close relationship that guaranteed honesty and good quality food. Mother marketed for the potatoes, vegetables, and other ingredients that complimented our meals, but she did not need to make purchases from the local butcher shop.

Our family usually ate at home, but occasionally father treated us to a meal at a kosher delicatessen a few blocks west of our apartment house. At Witkin's Deli we ordered at the counter: kosher hot dogs with mustard and sauerkraut, French fries, potato knishes, salami, fat veined corned beef or pastrami on rye bread, and bottles of Dr. Brown's sodas. We sat at a Formica topped table enjoying the novel experience of dining out on exotic kosher cuisine that could not be prepared at home.

In those early years my parents and their children never doubted our health and good fortune. Then in the last decades of the twentieth century, mother learned from our family doctor about the relationship between illness and unhealthy foods. She understood that we would suffer negative consequences, if we continued to eat as we did. She acted quickly for our salvation in order to give us long life.
Schmaltz disappeared from her food preparation and she never let father take us out to eat at Witkin's Deli again.

**They Get Better with Age**

Judith S. Adler

Wine  
Cheese  
Sailors  
Pianos  
Shoes  
Lovers  
Gloves  
Friends  
Stews  
Colds  
Mince pie  
Scotch  
Paintings  
Books  
Children  
Wisdom  
Poems  
Songs  
Memories  
Salami

*Have some Madeira m’dear...*

**L’Chaim!**

Barbara Oken

Let’s lift a glass and raise a toast  
to scattered friends, both near and far,  
to those who’ve given up the ghost  
and those still waddling to the bar.

We’ve gathered here to share fair words  
and usher in a fledgling year,
with knowledge that, like startled birds, each may take wing and disappear.

To you, senescent girl and boy, I wish a twelvemonth of great mirth, and energy to search out joy in any corner of the earth.

Let’s vow to meet a year from now, brimming with abundant cheer, however wrinkled each old brow. As spirit – or in flesh – APPEAR!

**Glad To Be At a Downer**

Harold Siegel

It’s become an annual affair On a comfortable Sunday in September With charter dental class 1960 Eight of forty eager graduates Some lost interest Some died Some live too far So here we are eight, with wives Animated, but walking slower

With a captive audience I read some of my poems Wives appreciating them More than the men Then reminiscing New stuff, old stuff Good lunch, nice drinks Minds shutting down Interests focused Still glad to see them Can’t wait till next year.
An Eye Opener

Judith S. Adler

I'd been anxious before the surgery
the nurse had said, “very human,”
to be afraid...
“Blood pressure higher than usual,”
Fear had raised the numbers
but now I was relaxed and cozy
warm white blankets thrown over me.

They call it cataract surgery
but it felt more like
I was at an art opening
a dealer showed me paintings
abstract/ blue and gold
squares with small red flecks
here and there
bright orange and yellow streaks
briefly shared
when a new canvas appeared
before me
glared at me
like fireworks
the images came and went
I lay still,
sedated,
enjoying the changing art scene.

I fantasized I was elsewhere
and then ...
It was over
before I had time to choose a favorite canvas
a favorite color/shape combo
Like LIFE!

Ok, Winter 2014, You Win

Harold Siegel

You are as worthy of
Criticism and plaudits
As your neighboring seasons
You stand up well to complaints
Although, damn it
You aren’t really that smart
What the hell
Does 2014 mean to you
I cannot imagine

In the past
I was always with you
When we were both younger
Predictable, even-tempered

But I can no longer
Maintain the lie
You with your “change of seasons”
Your pushing physical stimulus
And idyllic photos

I shall remember you, 2014
With a snowball in my freezer.

So Here I Am

Walking the halls of my building
[Much like a second story man]
[Looking for an open door]
But no, that’s not what’s happening
The doctor, my son, says...
You have to walk and hydrate
Walk, walk, walk
And indeed I do
At 10 p.m. my mind is asleep
But I’m walking the halls
A stranger has me excusing
My lonely trek
I’m waiting patiently
For the next few months
To see if the numbers work.
Lara, my Fabian

... so I put the music on
Lately it’s been Lara Fabian
What, you haven’t heard of her yet?
She’s my latest obsession
And if these few words go over with you
Then I’ve succeeded

It’s easy to love her
Her voice, her manner
Her movement, her face
Makes me young again
Get her on “You Tube”
Then tell me if I’m crazy
I’ll be waiting right here.

1954

We were not prisoners
Rather, we were part of the celebrants
Here in East Pakistan
To perform medical and political miracles.
Having come thousands of miles
To counter communists and save lives
With anti-cholera vaccine
And sari cloth as a lure

In preparation there-of
Pashtun soldiers slaughtered
Many goats in our honor
Feted us, as in a Bollywood set
Knowing, today we eat
But tomorrow we work.
Holding On
Dorothy Furman

The pumpkin sits
On the white porch
Where the man
Of many autumns
Rocks back and forth
Puffing on his worn, brown pipe

Satchmo’s Wonderful World
Charms night’s silence
Light of the moon
Denies day’s end
Leaves trumpet their last hurrah
In vibrant orange and gold

The path to winter looms
The man keeps rocking
He is not ready
To close the door
Climb the stairs
And go to sleep.

In Panama’s Nature Preserve
Gloria Ann Katz

In Panama’s nature preserve,
I sat. Monkeys came to join me.
Little creatures with no reserve.

Fed bananas as an hors d’oeuvre,
they greedily nibbled for free,
in Panama’s nature preserve.

I gave them more than they deserve,
now wanted them to let me be.
Little creatures with no reserve.

One had such incredible nerve,
grabbed my backpack like a bully,
in Panama’s nature preserve.
But I threw those monkeys a curve,
My thermos held a martini.
Little creatures with no reserve

Shared drink with unstoppable verve,
got drunk – couldn’t reclimb their tree,
in Panama’s nature preserve.
Little creatures with no reserve!

In My Journal

The red in the geranium the crimson red
is only in summer. In summer the green
accompanies the stem as it leans towards
the sun. Or because it is tired. Being tired
is a state less of fatigue than of fervor.
Fervor is a place I would like to live, even if
It’s a one-bedroom or a sublet. Sublets may
be found online but people are missing there.
Yet we go here to locate our missing. Such is
my middle-aged cousin who has decided
to study archaeology at Stanford University.
He must be quite lost. Stanford’s a good place.
Their diplomas impress the impressed. It’s useful
to make a good first impression. So says the life
coach. So cross your legs and hold your mmmms.
Look, a squirrel just scurried by. Unkind to lift it by
the tail. Better to do that to chatty narcissists, who
suck the air out of a room, as they rattle on about
themselves to all comers. Who quickly become leavers
once they put the period on the page. But not everyone
sees. Or can act upon their sight. But I shall, if I may.
Try me. Everybody keeps saying how the others are
all so nice. Obviously they haven’t read Freud. There’s
a quote I forget, which makes it hard to quote. It’s
about how, if each person could see the truth about
her life, she would ... I guess eat more chocolate and
go for a swim. For what’s to do when there’s nothing
to do. Do that. Do nothing. Do.
The large minute hand
Is making its way
The ballroom is filled
They're drinking dancing
Talking so loud
The small hour hand
Waits patiently

The ball begins
Its graceful decline
At its last tick
The minute hand
Joins the hour
intertwines
As couples embrace
Sing Auld Lang Syne

I shut the tv
Climb into bed
Hear The quiet
Echo words once said

Next Scene

I wasn't feeling well and suddenly
my mind leaped to a deathbed scene
with my daughters at my side.
I was obviously on my way out
but peaceful and accepting,
even relieved, because I was tired
and wanted to sleep, but I felt
I had a duty to leave them
with a few choice words.
“Don’t cry for me,” I told them with a smile, 
“just remember me when I was 
young and beautiful.” They assured me 
that I’d always be young to them. 
But not beautiful? They couldn’t remember 
I’d been beautiful?

I was so annoyed, I recovered.

Walk the Walk

My son the doctor, says, 
Walk and hydrate. 
To begin with I can’t believe 
My little “schmigege”, my son 
Dispensing health 
I never heard medical words 
Emanating from his mouth. 
Does he really know 
What has to be known? 
But proud, you bet I am 
For a kid who fainted 
At the sight of blood.

So, I found a female fellow walker 
And so we push each other 
Walking the hallway of our building 
Feeling guilty if either of us skips out 
We are not running out of talking material 
I know there’s more 
’cause we’re only on the second day 
Of creation 
And there’s no end till 
Results and rest come on the seventh day.
The minute I walked into my psychopharmacologist’s office I knew something was wrong. “Where are they?” I asked, even before I sat down. Until then, I hadn’t realized how much my positive feelings for Dr. Garvey had to do with the iris-covered Kleenex boxes that were always at either end of his bookshelf, and not with his prescriptions for Prozac.

The matching boxes had been there for two years. Assuming some of his patients cried on a regular basis, I’d deduced that he must have been buying the same pattern all that time on purpose. And those unchanging irises had convinced me that in Dr. Garvey I’d found a soulmate. Because I, too, cared about the design on my tissue boxes.

But now a pair of blah grey boxes with barely discernible white flowers replaced the purple blooms. “Where are they?” I repeated, as soon as we were seated. I could tell he knew what I meant right away. “I couldn’t find them anymore,” he said apologetically. “I thought these were a suitable alternative.”

I didn’t think so. But I didn’t tell him that. I didn’t want to hurt his feelings. Anyway, what really mattered was that my hunch was right. He cared. And for the next twenty of my thirty minute session we animatedly discussed our personal preferences, and people who, remarkably, don’t care about their paper goods designs.

For instance, when we go to The Food Emporium and my husband offers to put tissues on his list, I adamantly refuse. “You get the eggs and milk,” I say sternly. These are areas in which he can be trusted. Left on his own, he’s liable to come back with boxes covered in butterflies or bunnies. The point is, he just doesn’t care.

Once he’s out of sight, I head to the paper goods aisle. If I find a design I like, I buy as many boxes as I can. As Dr. Garvey had just discovered, no sooner do you get hooked on a certain pattern than the company stops making it.

I told Dr. Garvey that my all-time favorite came out around 2003: pink and yellow flowers against a rich turquoise background. Scotties, I think. They matched our bathroom wallpaper, and I became inordinately fond of them. So much so that when they were empty, and the store no longer carried them, I refilled them with tissues from less attractive boxes.

When the cardboard began to collapse under the stress of constant refilling, I considered laminating them. This never happened thanks to a combination of inertia (I hadn’t started the Prozac yet) and a fear that the laminate would change the colors. My husband and children thought me quite mad, but I never
did throw them out. In fact, they’re sitting in a chest in my bedroom awaiting the tissue box equivalent of cryogenics.

After this confession, we moved on to confidences about paper towels. To my surprise, Dr. Garvey preferred plain white. I gently explained that if he was going to stick with plain white, both Brawny and Bounty now made rolls with “pick-a-size” sheets, a fact that, amazingly, he didn’t know.

This made me wonder if I’d been wrong to think his strong interest in Kleenex designs might mean he was gay. After all, he lived way west near Greenwich Village, was slim and very good-looking, wore sandals without socks, and didn’t wear a wedding ring. Maybe I’d discovered a new criterion for male gay-ness. But not being aware of the paper towel choices made me wonder...

Now it was my turn again. What towel patterns did I like? I told him how I hate the cutesy ones but love those with simple grapevine or daisy borders. He nodded approvingly, and I warmed to him again. How simpatico he was.

Suddenly Dr. Garvey looked at his watch, and with ten minutes left, we finally got to the Prozac. Was it still doing the job? We agreed that it must be. Otherwise, how could I have engaged in our paper goods conversation so enthusiastically? He hurriedly wrote out a new prescription.

A week later my husband and I stopped at a new grocery store to buy some supplies. As I turned the aisle I saw them—two boxes of tissues with purple irises.

I can’t wait for my next appointment to surprise Dr. Garvey.

Besides, we haven’t even touched on paper plates.

I Am the Stranger

Zeke Alpern

About twenty years ago I’m driving down 2nd Avenue in my new Toyota Camry. I see a very tall man standing on the corner hailing a cab – with no success. I pull over and I say, “can I give you a lift?” He says, “I’ve got to get to the General Motors Building for a meeting”. I come back with, “Hop in – I’ll drive you there.” He gets in and says, “Do I know you?” “No you don’t. I’m a complete stranger to you. But I know you! You are Arthur Miller. Thank you for all you’ve given to the world with your plays and your movies. It’s an honor to have you in my car.”
Two Baseballs
Zeke Alpern

On my bookshelves are two baseballs, real Major League balls. I love them. I would never get rid of them. Let me explain. To me baseball is a religion. My favorite sport. My father also loved the game and taught me how to keep a box score. I keep box scores to this day. I watch a game on TV and box score it. I taught my kids how and they taught their kids. Once in a while I take the balls off the shelf, put them in my hands and hold one for a curve. Then I rearrange my fingers for my fast ball. My fast ball was beautiful. It came to the plate like a white streak. Nobody could touch it. I played high school baseball with a guy who became the N.Y. Giants shortstop during World War II, Buddy Kerr. I played college, semi-pro and had a two week tryout in 1946 with the Yankees. After two weeks, Paul Kritchell, the Yankee scout calls me to the bench. This is the very same guy who signed up Lou Gehrig and Joe DiMaggio for the Yankees. He says to me, “good field, no hit, go home and get a job”. I look at it this way. Everybody is entitled to one mistake, even Paul Kritchell.

Almost Famous
Rochelle Herschowitz

My second job after high school was working at Macy’s Herald Square. At 17 I was thrilled to be working in “the largest department store in the world.” It was 1954, and the store was known everywhere. The movie Miracle on 34th Street had made Macy’s and Christmas synonymous. The Thanksgiving Day Parade was another tradition linking the store to one of the most beloved holidays of the year. Every employee had the opportunity to take part in the parade, and so my sister, who also worked in the store, and I volunteered to march on Thanksgiving Day.

At that time, the Macy’s parade not only celebrated Thanksgiving; it also ushered in the Christmas Season. Once Santa Claus rolled into view at the end of the parade, all the department stores in the city unveiled their spectacular Christmas windows. It was exciting to be a part of it.

The theme for the parade that year was Africa because the guest star was Jon Hall, a former Hollywood heartthrob who starred in the popular TV series Ramar of the Jungle. There were elephants, bands, floats enacting adventures in Africa, and balloons of all shapes and sizes. As part of the Africa theme, the employees were to wear papier maché heads depicting giraffes, antelope, monkeys, and more.
Linda and I got to the store about 6:00 a.m., so excited we almost jumped out of our skins. We were going to be on TV! We were going to be famous! We were going nuts! The veteran employees calmed us down and managed to get us to eat some food the store provided. There were bagels, cream cheese, lox, donuts and coffee in huge urns. Once fed, we went to the dressing rooms to put on our costumes. Because it was a frigid day, we kept on our slacks and sweaters underneath. The costumes were flimsy affairs, in bright colors of yellow and blue. With all the clothes we wore, we resembled stuffed toys brought to life.

As the time approached to leave for the parade’s starting point, the noise level in the dressing room peaked, resembling a flight of geese honking their way back to Canada. Clothes were tossed everywhere—worse than any teenager’s bedroom. I wondered if I would ever find my things under the piles of garments lying all over the floor. Finally, the call for the busses sounded, and I ran out to join the parade.

At 72nd street we were given our heads. Linda’s was a giraffe. Mine was an antelope. As we started walking downtown, the organizers realized the giraffe heads were too heavy to walk in without falling over. This meant all the giraffe heads had to ride the floats while the other animal heads walked the 40 blocks to the store. So Linda rode and I walked. When you are 17 and part of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, walking that distance is not hard. Even with the head of an antelope.

The parade finally started out, Jon Hall in the front, we animal heads toward the end. As we walked along, we discovered the schedulers made a major error in putting the parade together. They slotted a precision roller skating troupe directly behind the elephants. Needless to say, the precision routines did not last very long. The skaters had to swoop one way, then another, constantly, to avoid disaster. In most cases, they couldn’t.

We walked behind the skaters. In addition to keeping our equilibrium, we had to peer out of the bottom of our heads to avoid elephant turds. It made for quite a balancing act. Still, we managed to stay out of trouble and reach the end of the parade route without difficulty. Even through the soundproofing of heads, the noise of the crowd was deafening.

Back at the store, Linda and I picked through the clothes lying all over the floor, chairs, tables, and finally found our own. We hopped on the subway for the ride back to Brooklyn. Our parents, who had watched the entire event on TV, wanted to know which part of the parade we were in. That’s when it dawned on us. Yes, we had been seen by millions of people that day.... As a giraffe and an antelope!
VI

An Ant, a Rose, a Star
An Ant, A Rose, A Star

Elizabeth Scheuerman

August in Kansas. Do I need to tell you a hot wind was blowing, baking the earth and us? We were at the tiny house of my great-grandmother; I was seven, maybe eight. She was aged, wizened as a dried apple; her features sharp and angular as those of a witch, a witch with no teeth and a strong German accent, hunched over a walker. I couldn’t make out what she said.

I fled her presence, escaped her home reeking of decrepitude. Outside, I idly fiddled with a stick in the bone-dry ground, poked at ants scurrying. They were red. One bit my big toe. That’s my only memory of her, she whom I was named after; she’s in the background, behind my stung and swollen toe.

Three Augusts later, we were again in Kansas (again the hot wind blew) when she died (my great-grandmother I mean) at eighty-three. My first funeral: I felt solemn in the presence of Death, important in my role as mourner. I was given a white rose from a bouquet. I told myself I would save it, in memory of her. I didn’t.

But there is one story I should tell you. When my great-grandmother was sixty-eight, her husband died. ("No great loss," my mother said; "that patriarchal German; not nice.") Nonetheless, great-grandmama, depressed, determined to die. Before she did, though, she set herself a task: making a quilt for each of her grandchildren. She was a practical woman: her quilts machine-stitched, not works of beauty; even the pieces sometimes pieced. By the time she’d sewn her six quilts, she no longer wanted to die. For years the star quilt she gave my father lay on my bed, warming me at night. That quilt grew ragged beyond repair. Discarded, it lives on: a guide when I have lost my way.

With a Slight Shift of Focus

Ellen Diamond

-1-

Through the grey turmoil of the East River, I see my first lake, jewels of blue water and white sun, madly blinking among dark and light leaves and branches. I smell the fresh waters of Lake Mahopac, hear my first screams of children splashing at the shore.
The family members of my childhood left on tiptoe,
the way my sister left the upstairs bedroom where I napped
first placing cookies in a paper napkin, on the dresser.

After they died, I heard all about their sad affairs,
ventures doomed to failure, hidden illness, broken promises.
But with a slight shift of focus, I can see them at their brightest:
my aunt laughing when she sang Plaisir d'Amour;
my other uncle at the piano; grandma cutting apples into buttered flour,
my grandpa, a wisp in cigarettes, teaching me cat’s cradle.

When it’s time, the women will be rosy-lipped, redolent
of fine perfume, the men will be in jackets, ice-cubes clinking
in their stubby glasses. Someone will open up the door;
smiles, sounds of warm delight will greet me.

**Now and Then**

Phyllis Brusiloff

As my son tries to fly the kite
his grandfather moves his arms
the paper bird catches a drifting wind
swooping in circles
his grandmother sugars down a ham
my infant woke making sucking nursing sounds
and I smile, then
   close my eyes
   wishing my childhood held a different warmth
   a warmth of chicken soup and Sabbath candles
To my granddaughter Hazel

Judith S. Adler

Hits the stacks
Of denims
Picks out a short top
Strolls to find pants
tight white
Perfect purchase for
recently turned eight year old
Sebastopol gal
Laughs as the rain
Pelts us in Carl Shurz Park
Gasps at the splendor
of the Lion King
Gulps down
hot chocolate
at Juniors
Next year we’ll walk the
Brooklyn Bridge
she announces as she
stands
straight
in front
of the Met’s Egyptian pyramid.

Response from 8 yr old Hazel

We go from the entrance of Central Park
To the Alice in Wonderland statue,
talking all along
the sun is shining in the sky
the trees are gleaming by and by
from the alice in wonderland statue
we go to the strawberry fields
the sun coming from the sky
we love it so much you and I.
Tourist
Judith Korotkin Mende

She’s looking toward her future;  
I’m looking at our past.  
Past each other we try to decide  
what to do today together.

*What about the Met where*  
we’d seen the knights in armor  
and the Egyptian mummies  
when she was five—or  
Orchard Street and Katz’s Deli  
or the Christmas Windows on Fifth  
or the ferry to Williamsburg?

Then, when we couldn’t decide,  
*Why don’t you take off by yourself?*  
*We’ll get together for dinner.*  
She smiled as we landed on the present  
and off she went to find her New York.

Cane and Able
Lois Frankenberger

I took out the part where  
My daughter moved away from her marriage

I took out the part where my son exchanged  
Wall Street for the life of a professional poker player

I took out the part where I  
Fractured my shoulder in a clean break

I took out the part where I left  
Anxiety and depression behind me.

Now I can walk on my own  
Without fear of dependency  
Knowing I am loved.
The UnVeiling

Judith Korotkin Mende

My brother Kenneth grabbed my hand when the rabbi instructed the immediate family to sit in the front row for the unveiling of his wife Anita’s tombstone.

It was as if he was once again my 12-year old kid brother who had just fallen from his bike and reached for my hand to pull him up and comfort him.

The fact that we two were in our eighties didn’t seem to matter. I was seated next to my brother who was hurting and I held his hand and cried.

The Fact Remains

Nicole Andonov

The fact: I hate that my grandchildren fight and whine;

that one grabs the toy the other just picked from a full bin as if it were the one and only manna falling from the blue into a bare desert.

Perhaps, I should set rules forbidding fights and whines.

But perhaps, it’s the smaller one’s coming of age—challenging a leadership outgrown.
I may adjust the perspective
amend the prospect,
modify, console, absolve;
I can not alter the fact: I hate
that my grandchildren fight and whine.
I hate to settle their battles.

Glenda’s Lion

Stanley Margolies

I. Brother

My sister Glenda,
Diagnosed with dementia.
Seventy-five now.

Just a year ago.
Maybe it was psychosis,
Maybe dementia.

You think it matters?
Dementia or psychosis.
I mean, who would care?

She has this lion.
It’s a god-damned stuffed lion.
She feeds it ice cream.

Look, some dementees,
Maybe all the dementees,
They have teddy bears.

Who knows what the other dementees have?
Who cares what the other dementees have?

It’s like I just said.
Glenda feeds this stuffed lion.
Vanilla ice cream.

I mean, who the hell cares if she has a teddy bear
or a god damned stuffed lion?
II. The Lion

Hey, wise ass. I care.
Look she feeds me nice ice cream.
I love vanilla.

Then she wipes my face,
Her sleeve filled with vanilla.
Then she sings to me.

Sure, I’m a lion,
But Glenda loves this lion.
And yes, I love her.

III. Glenda

I care too, wise ass.
My lion’s no teddy bear.
Bears hate vanilla.

And don't think I don't know what you're thinking.
You think I’m an old lady-wacko, a dementee.
I mean, how I feed my lion vanilla ice cream, how I sing
to him and all.

My lion helps me.
He doesn't hurt anyone.
My lion loves me.

Anyway, why would I care what you think?
I mean, what standing do you have?
What right do you have to pass judgment on me?

IV. The Brother

Glen,
Was I ever there for you?
Was I ever there for you?
Let me wipe his face.

Let me help you wipe his face.
Grandma at Her Wits End

Nicole Andonov

The older is nine, past Pooh and Christopher Robin; past Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. She devours Harry Potter—and fancies her will upon the younger.

*Let’s make a mess!,* she used to say and the younger instantly threw a pillow. Now, the younger is his own man: *This is my helicopter.* *And, I don’t want to go horseback riding.*

The older glues the wheels of the younger’s plane; throws his Lego creations into the wastebasket. Hands, feet, objects fly, hair gets pulled, torsos punched—and the cries! the tears!

The poem may adjust the perspective, absolve, modify, console; it cannot alter the fact: *I do hate* that my grandchildren fight and whine.

There, But Not Quite

Nicole Andonov

Your grown children haven’t yet become your full-fledged parents, but the authority has definitely changed hands.

Now you know how it feels. You want to amend for time-gone, but you only have time-coming. You mean, time-present—the grandkids—

and that, also, has its limits. (They’re not supposed to snack between meals; not supposed to run back and forth in the hallway, nor barefoot in the playroom. . . .)

You get a big smile, a bear hug, and you’re asked to walk on a sort
of tightrope, laid flat on the floor
for fear you might fall

or go astray—they want you to live
in perfect health for a long time.
So you eat what you're supposed
to eat; lift, pedal, and stretch.

You try to be useful—
careful
not to step on anyone's foot,
or too far from the rope.

But sometimes, you still abuse
your grandparent privilege
and let the kids have fun past bedtime.
VII

Illuminations
winter dream
Heinz Wipfler

I never go back
to where streets and houses
remember me
and speak as I pass
I never ask for directions
from passersby
or listen for their voices
or follow footprints in the snow
In my sleep I am a passenger
seeking the polar star

Lunar Eclipse
Ellen Diamond

I’d given up;
I’d seen it full,
that was enough.

Clouds in the way
and it was cold
and very late.

Just one last look
and there it was,
a huge, blue globe

hushed as all space.
If I had missed it,
no crime—but still,

because the moon
tries hard to speak,
I try to listen.
Half April

The urge for spring cleaning
came late this year
postponed by a treacherous winter
that bleached my soul colorless

Amy Lowell’s fresh-washed sunlight
shone on the day I walked
along Park Avenue head down
chanced to see red tulips blooming
like blood coursing through
the new season

I must again live a colorful life
scour off self-pity
toss away depressive thoughts
polish tarnished hopes
cover over the dirty secret of
winter’s inevitable return

Wrong-Way Wind

Ah, that’s a lovely head of wind
galloping into my east-facing window,
as I fuss with breakfast dishes.

I wonder if it’s by way of the East River,
carrying tools of working-class essentials
to help heave me out of my inertia.
In fact, it’s a sign of weather gone wrong
— the sun is up there, bright as a new penny.
There’s no nor’easter forcing an about-face
of the weather’s course across the country.

As to me, I’m a soldier in the moment,
skirmishing with things I rarely overcome.
How will it help the battle if I turn my back
on a wind’s neighborly nuzzle at my arm?

**Palinode**

Dorothy Furman

I have written about how I miss ‘us’. There were times when I didn’t.
Early in our marriage I wondered if the adult clothes we put on would ever fit our nineteen and twenty one year old bodies You had pursued me when I couldn’t remember your name and, when I finally took yours, reneged on promises. Like the night we went to the party — you spent the whole evening laughing, engaging, charming someone, not me.
Or when we had to fly. Knowing how fearful I was didn’t stop the insistence for me to look out the window, share your joy, as I sat handcuffed to my seat.
I so admired your fearlessness but hated your void of empathy.
We should have met in the beginning of our middle when our roads converged.
You became successful, acknowledged in books but reveled so in my success.
I once told you I felt I was married to my second husband and you kept signing love notes and cards TTDUP(till death do us part).

**Tableau**

Barbara Oken

My neighbors’ boy is now a man,
coltish, tall, with buzz-cut hair,
and puppy-softness in his eye.
Today, the elevator came, 
and there he was, within its frame. 
The single object of his gaze:

a pretty girl, about his age, 
as slim and lithe as he, 
with long hair, dark and thick.

Oblivious of all the world, 
the yin and yang of them drew close, 
each curving to the other's form.

No breathless passion on display. 
With magnetism holding sway, 
two pairs of lips, two pairs of arms, 
intended by some ancient gods 
to meet, had joined as one.

Rapt, and blessed 
by tenderness, 
I made no sound.

Ode to the Olive

Gloria Ann Katz

Olive
Mediterranean
offspring of sere
Spain, Italy, North Africa

Colors, shapes, textures
confound and delight
anticipation of
biting, chewing, tasting
black, brown, green
oval, round,
tiny, large,
wrinkled or firm flesh,
soft and gently yielding,
or solid and hard to the core,
salty as the sea.
Olive
I dream of you anointing me,
oil slathered over my body,
massaged into my hair,
and to linger peacefully
in a bath
being washed
with soap of Castile,
to heal the dryness
of a long winter.

Interrupt

Dorothy Furman

The lamppost outside my window
Flashes a *do not enter* sign
Forbidding dusks shadow to enter
As it streams light through my window
Where I live in the company of
Gershwi, Beethoven, ‘Papa Haydn’
Who share shelf space with
Dickinson, Amichal, Frost
Surrounded by热水 of
Tess, Rikki, Allison and Fred

Dark appears when I do
Wanting to touch
What I cannot reach
Wanting to hold
What is not there

A 1 in a 100 million shot

Harold Siegel

Truth be told , this is
A 1 in a 100 million happening.

1945, allies winning
Murray, my air force brother
Training on a B-29 preparing
To bomb Japan.

Based in Lowry field, Colorado
On a training mission
Plane malfunctions, breaks apart
Crashes next to a house
Occupied by a couple
With a 5 year old daughter.
All on plane hospitalized.

2010, 65 years later
At a Los Angeles yacht club
Murray, sitting with another member
At the bar
Engaged in conversation
“So Murray, what did you do in the war”
“Bla, bla bla and we crashed.”

A female, sitting nearby
Overhearing the conversation
“were you in that crash in ’45 in Colorado”
“I was the little 5 year old girl
In the house you avoided”

---

**Untitled**

Phyllis Brusiloff

*It’s gone,* they said,
*It’s rotten, it’s leaning, it’s going to fall.*
They came,
chain saws ratcheting,
men swinging ropes,
gently cradling huge limbs
to the grinding chipper.
So it’s gone,
the canopy of leaves
that brushed my window.
Starlight
—after Philip Levine
Lois Frankenberger

It begins in darkness when
the voice asks Are you happy?

The child likes the sound of happy but has no meaning
for the word. What the child does know is it wants
to be happy among the stars.

When the child grows tired of not
finding blinking starlights to turn off

The search ends
where it began—
in darkness.

Vermont Boots
Irene Biller-Berkson

I slide my heavy Vermont boots
through the melted snow water.
The fun of walking and not
getting wet.
The next best thing to splashing
water or like
a Gene Kelly.

In the classroom, my heavy boots
encase my feet and make them
sweat.
Next time a change of shoes.
But wait: Change the clock.
Vermont boots to the back
of the closet
Sneaker redux.
**Tanka**

Irene Biller-Berkson

Hair on top of head  
Not going to a wedding  
Her everyday up-due  
Mother’s long black hair in braids  
A daily ritual.

Bags brought on the bus  
Walking down a narrow space  
Hitting my shoulder  
Leaning my body away  
Get a wheelie bag.

Let me count the ways  
I like the 92nd St Y  
Small and old people  
New people and pool people  
New and old classes.

**Cat and Mouse**

Julia Krushenick

This was the time when winter, like a spoiled child,  
played a game of cat and mouse,  
forecasts become proclamations, each day  
unpredictable demands on my psyche,  
pace indoors like some tethered animal or  
face the vengeful winter storm.

Twister, the cat, sat curled in his favorite well worn chair,  
like a fluffed up pillow, content to share my company.  
We watched winter paint hazardous beauty  
on the grey canvas outside my window.

All at once, we were joined by a parade of mice.  
Ghostly scratches under the stove  
announced their invasion.
First mouse dropped at my feet. a wet furry rag
Twister wore a cheshire smile,
like a virgin after his first time.
Second mouse drowned in the cat’s water bowl.

Mornings, I climbed from my warm cocoon
in dread of nightly victories and watched mice
struggle in entrapments.
I was a killer, icy cold passionless, I killed.

By the fifth episode, I broke down in tears
I knew I had to regain my territory,
more mice to catch, nine in all.

Spring is here and Twister,
no longer a mouse virgin,
cozies up to me,
like a warrior on leave,
looks into my eyes as if recalling the battle.
‘Do you remember?’, he seems to ask
At night, I still listen for ghostly scratches under the stove.

**a different drummer**

In Washington Square Park,
he beats his drum, says
he’s looking for Jesus.
Birds, nesting in gnarled, life-worn trees
respond with uneven trills;
gum popping kids cry in gated playgrounds.

Circle the perimeter and remember
the flowerless winter here, when
I began my journey alone.
I mourn again

for my faithful cat.
Ashes. Do you want his ashes, she had asked me
I wanted to yell to tell her I see, I see
his mischievous ghost
come to stay, moving
among the familiar.
No, my tears whispered no.

How many more goodbyes?
no echo will answer;
truth beats down like the sun;
paints time passing in light and shadow.

Uptown,
a train ride away, a world away,
a place where I’ve drifted to
as if in banishment.

The train doors open, a man
enters wrapped in
rainbows and diamonds from another world.
Me llamo Jesus, he says

as he passes his begging cup for all to see.
I tell him they are looking for him.
Just follow the drums, as I did,
to Washington Square Park.

**Don't Look Away, Now**

Julia Krushenick

Can we have a rehearsal, a script, please?

A memory; fragments;
attach to time;
dissolve in tears;
a memory wears through
in unexpected places.

TV silently spews images; a diversion
from surrounding whiteness;
white sheets, white blinds open at the window.
So why is this sunlit room filled with darkness?
Laughter in the next room.
Silence echoes in ours.
Why didn't I stay?

I returned; you were gone.
Wait, I’m coming.
I thought I could keep you alive with love;
too late,
not enough.

And what if I had stayed;
a last kiss
a word
what words did we miss?

Can we have a rehearsal, a script please?

Don't look away now.
Don't rewrite regrets.
There is no rehearsal; no script for a life lived.

**That Time**

I love that time, between sleep and waking, when the
sounds that mumble beneath your ear have no specific
identity—

That time when you are floating free—not asleep, not
awake, not aware—

That time a dream is escaping, before you can grab it into
memory—

That time when morning enters slowly, and, like an
inspired painter, decides what color to paint the day.
That Look

Judith Korotkin Mende

The ache arrived like an uninvited guest
that expected to be catered to.

I couldn't trace the why now? of this mood
that had pushed its way into this quiet Sunday –

the kind of alone-with-myself Sunday that haunted
my youth and pushed me to the telephone

or onto long walks through bustling streets where
men and women held hands and smiled

the way Peter had smiled at me years ago with
that look that was a possessive kiss.

That morning at the bus stop on my corner
a young man took the hand of a young woman,

put her on the bus, and smiled her a kiss
just as I was on my way to shop for bread at Key Food.

Instructions

Judith Korotkin Mende

When my due date arrives
I would rather you laugh
at me than cry for me.

Make sure there’s lemon meringue
and coffee cake with almonds and
chocolate and butter pecan ice cream
on the table and make sure there’s
that photo of the three of us we all love.

Gift all visitors with my poetry collection
since I’ve always been looking for
a captive audience, and throw
in a biography so they don’t lose
sight of who they’re losing.
Tell everyone how much I loved you and loved being a mother and grandmother and how I wish I was leaving a husband behind who was devastated.

And know also that I had a meaningful life because I brought you into this world.

Excerpt from the novel *Shirley Temple Lives Here*.

Chapter 13

Ellen Summers

As hard as I tried that August, when I had little else to do but wonder and worry, I couldn’t get it out of my head that Momma’s family in Poland was suffering something awful. I had heard on Edward R. Murrow’s broadcast that the Nazis were rounding up Jews all over the place, like cowboys rounding up cattle. I wanted so badly to do something, anything. The more I thought about it, the more I kept picturing Shirley Temple, asking myself what she would do. And then I figured something out.

In the movies beautiful blond actresses like Alice Faye and Betty Grable always get their way. It’s because they’re so gorgeous that people, especially men, give in to them. I mean, they see a ruby ring in the window of a jewelry store, and they bat their eyes at the guy and say, “Honey, I would just love to have a ring like that to go with my new red dress.” Then the man gets a sappy smile on his face, and in the next scene the girl is wearing the ring and looking at it from all angles, making sure her friends notice it.

Shirley Temple never relies on being adorable to solve problems. She uses her noodle. That’s a slang word for brains. Sure, Shirley is pretty, but more important, she’s a smart cookie.

Now let’s be realistic: girls have to be smart to get what they want because most of them are not that good looking. Men have bigger muscles, so they’re stronger. Like in the movies, Tarzan can swing from tree to tree and even have the strength to yell his yodel call. And men kick doors down and give upper cuts to the villain’s jaw. And even if the good guy has been beaten to a pulp and is half dead, he always wins the fight. If a woman tried any of that, she’d end up in the hospital with a busted face or shoulder. And she’d be all scratched up and black and blue, so no man would even look at her.
So I guess it all comes down to power. Men have muscle power, but women have to use brain power. Especially if they're not what men call a looker.

Another word for power is influence. If anyone has that, it would be Shirley Temple. With her influence, she could march right up to The White House, get to see President Roosevelt, and tell him to find a way to get the Jews out of Europe.

But then I wonder: would that be possible? It would take a miracle, I guess.

Sometimes lately, I stare into the bathroom mirror. And while I’m staring, I try to imagine how I’d look if I were prettier than I am, which is not pretty at all. Maybe a little cute ’cause I do make a lot of people smile. When I become a woman, when my periods start, I know I’ll be taller. When I stare at my nose, I imagine it a little shorter and turned up at the tip. If only my eyes were larger and wider apart, and they had that Shirley Temple twinkle. And if I had a dimple, that wouldn’t hurt. I’ve been working on getting one. If I poke my finger in my cheek and keep it there as long and as hard as I can, it should become a hole, which is, after all, what a dimple is. Then, as they say, the world would be my oyster.

But so far, there’s nothing but a red mark where I pressed my finger.

Excerpt from the novel *Shirley Temple Lives Here.*

*Chapter 14*

Ellen Summers

Recently, my brother Howie’s had his eye on my movie magazines, the ones I buy with money people give me for watching their kids while they shop. The movie magazines are great, and sometimes I tear out the full-page pictures of my favorite stars: Gene Tierney, Deanna Durbin, Shirley, of course, Robert Taylor, Cary Grant, the ones I really think about. But a lot of the magazines are taken up by advertisements. Some of them show pretty ladies in underwear.

Now I’ve seen Howie looking very long at those particular pictures. He’s at the age where the opposite sex interests him a lot. So one rainy afternoon, he says to me, “Sandra,” pronouncing it the swanky ‘ondra’ way, “how would you like to really get a look at Shirley?”

“You mean, in person?”

“Of course,” he says like a smoothie. “How else?”
He knows the answer; it’s like asking a person who’s drowning if they want a life preserver. And he’s heard me carrying on, wishing for every birthday and holiday that Shirley will finally come outside, so I can see her and die happy.

“I’ll make you a deal. Richie Rosenthal, you know, Walter Raskin’s cousin with the allergies, he lives right on the corner of 24th Street and Surf. And he looks out his bedroom window right next to you-know-who’s building.” And here he pauses, and his eyes are absolutely twinkling like fireworks falling on the ocean at night. “And he’s seen the great Miss Temple step out a few times. Very recently.”

I am too thunderstruck to speak.

“And he has a pair of high powered binoculars, so he can watch and see if it’s her coming out. You get it?”

Do horses have flies?

“So it’s like this,” he goes on. “Richie will watch, and if he does see her coming, he’ll run over here and tell me, and then you ...”

“But by the time he runs here, she’ll be gone to wherever she’s going, won’t she?”

Howie looks surprised, then confused. He rubs his thick hair with a fist until a small smile lights up his face. “You’re too smart for us, Sandra. Tell you what. Leave it to Richie to figure out when she’s coming outside. He may not be the brain of brains, but he is related to the Albert Einstein of Coney Island. When he finds out, I find out, and when I find out ...”

“I find out!” I shout triumphantly.

“You got it, sister. Nobody can fool you.”

“Wait a minute,” I say in a quiet voice, “what do I have to do for this, ’cause I know you want something. You always do.”

First Howie bugs his eyes in shock, then grins. Then he looks me square in the face.

“Oh, nothing compared to what I’m doing for you. Just loan me your Modern Screen and Silver Screen magazines for a couple of weeks. That’s all.”

There’s an expression that Momma uses sometimes—Oi gevalt. She says it when she’s shocked, relieved, anytime when she’s at a loss for words. And right now I sure am at a loss for words. But I don’t want to let Howie see how anxious I am, so all I say is “Okay.”
But inside I’m screaming and yelling, singing and dancing, walking on Cloud Nine, thrilled to pieces, and any other expression there is for just plain ecstatic.

**The Sky**

Lottie Katz

My most memorable trips have been those I made to the sky.

People have always looked to the sky for omens, hope, help, direction. Since antiquity, when Icarus fashioned wings of wax to fly close to the sun, Leonardo imagined human flying machines, balloons, gliders, planes and rockets. We have always wanted to fly above the earth, perhaps because of the thrill of discovery or a desire to surpass ourselves and leave our mortal selves behind as we climb into space. We remember Superman could fly like a bird when we think back to our childhood: “Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it’s Superman!”

Artists too have looked to the skies for inspiration: 17th century Dutch masters whose landscapes are two-thirds sky, Constable, who loved to follow cloud formations above the English countryside and, in particular, Turner, whose magnificent skies of swirling colors seem to forecast the nuanced washes of color merging into unexpected contours by artists like Rothko and Richter.

I have traveled on foot, by boat, by train and plane, but for me, I like looking at the sky the most when I am seated in the front of a car, next to the driver, looking up through the windshield, or am lying flat on my back in the grass looking through the trees, losing myself as I look up at the sky and follow the changing shapes of the clouds, adrift in the ethereal quality of what I imagine is another world that shimmers softly through the sunlight.

**It Was Adlai**

Maxine M. Kahn

Seems to me that everyone in my circle of friends and colleagues had a collection of something or another. Maybe even two or three Maybe it was suburbia, lots of living space, too much time on one’s hands and boredom. I never gave it much thought. What would I want to really collect?

I had an ah-ha moment about how I would enter the field of “things”. I would collect presidential campaign buttons. They are small and the process would need to happen over time. The buttons needed to be originals. I didn’t want reproductions used for the actual campaigns.
Telling my son about this new proposed adventure of mine I mentioned the indomitable Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and her political colleague and good friend Adlai Stevenson. Twice Mrs. Roosevelt had supported Governor Stevenson vigorously in his quest to be President of the United States. *(One famous interview between Mrs. Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson had the TV camera pan down to Governor Stevenson’s shoes — there was a hole in the bottom of Governor Stevenson’s shoe which was then published cross the country—this was considered an iconic moment and it was thought he was too busy to be bothered with the mundane.)*

It was my birthday a number of months later. My son gave me an original Adlai Stevenson campaign button. So began what would become my collection of a part of the political process. I was in my element.

Knowing my predisposition for putting things in safe places that I often cannot find, I put the button in a labeled envelope in my “very special place” leaving notes in a variety of locales to remind me where to look.

Over time, over years and over countless trips to flea markets, garage sales and pawn shops, I slowly but surely bought buttons that I wanted to add to my fledgling collection of “one”. In Washington, D.C., I found a “very hard to locate” button for Harry S Truman. *(President Truman did not have a middle name, but used the letter S which represented a middle initial – for that reason there was never a period after the S.)* Because of World War II and the death of President Roosevelt, not many buttons were available. It would become the most expensive and treasured button that I would acquire.

Eventually, my drawer with my specially marked envelope needed to be replaced. There were so many buttons that I had acquired and it was not time to display them. I had a large hanging display case made. When all was said and done, I had collected well over 100 buttons. I never tired of looking at them.

I am glad to report that the buttons didn’t take over my entire household. Just the second floor. They would hang there for many years. Sometimes I would rearrange them, sometimes I provided explanation to friends who wanted to view them and sometimes I thought about the Office of the President and my feeling for some of the past presidents who I had studied and had the privilege of voting for. *(The button that always evoked strong emotion was that of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy who was assassinated on November 23rd, 1963 in Dallas, Texas. He served as president for slightly over one thousand days. It will be left to future historians to assess his short-lived presidency.)*

Another ah-ha moment was when retirement beckoned. I would sell my home and move to New York City. After a long and complicated discussion with my realtor, she agreed that I could leave my collection on display. They would not offend anyone. I had created an historical display of the United States presidential elections inclusive of winners and losers.
Retiring and downsizing, I removed the buttons that had inhabited the second floor of my home for more than 25 years. Packing them up I started to dream of that day I happened to be in Kennebunkport, Maine one summer enjoying lunch by the river. I suddenly heard, “The president is here!” I jumped up and went into the bar area where President George H.W. Bush was surrounded by Secret Service. I went over to him with pen in hand and a piece of paper for his signature. My dream of many years to say, “Hello, Mr. President,” came true. I shook the hands of the president and shall never forget that moment in time. It was mine to cherish.

Big Mama’s Kitchen
Excerpt from the memoir Holy Mary

When I lived in Mexico in the early 70s, I went native. I wore the traditional guayabera, a pleated shirt traditional to Mexico, the Caribbean and the Philippines. I also affected an elegant sombrero, while on my feet were rubber-tire-soled huaraches, the sandals favored by Mexican campesinos. And although I might have felt muy mexicano, the fact is, even with my long mustache, I was, at six-foot five, with red hair and pale Irish complexion, less authentic than comical.

I had Mexican friends, notably my roommate Alejandro Sanchez. I had studied Spanish for three months and traveled throughout South America, so I could speak the language pretty well. I also took pride in eating local. This meant ignoring the universal counsel of seasoned travelers and every guidebook by eating lettuce grown in Mexico’s contaminated fields.

And, sure enough, Montezuma took his revenge. Lomotil, the hugely popular anti-diarrhea medicine, became a permanent feature of my pharmaceutical armamentarium.

There was an outdoor cafeteria under an authentic thatched roof at the school where I worked in Cuernavaca. The cafeteria sold Mexican food to the students, almost all of whom came from North American colleges. I also ate at the two or three decent restaurants downtown.

I had a fair number of girlfriends during three years in Cuernavaca, all of them North Americans. I somehow never felt comfortable enough to date Mexican girls. My Spanish wasn’t capable of that much subtlety and, besides, the locals were just about 100% virgins. The gringas were not.

The American students found an exotic eatery on the street not far from the city center. Or more specifically, on the sidewalk. There, sitting on a cushion, and dressed in a white embroidered peasant blouse, long flowing skirt, huaraches on
her weathered feet, silver jewelry on her neck and wrists and in her hair, was a corpulent woman moving her hands quickly back and forth shaping masa — dough made from corn — into tortillas. In front of her folded knees was a metal bowl filled with bubbling vegetable oil where she fried fajitas, chilaquiles, tortas, chimichangas and quesadillas over a charcoal fire. A pan over the fire heated up tortillas for tacos.

We called her Mama La Gorda and her stand became a major destination for the gringo community of Cuernavaca. I squired various young women to front row seating on the sidewalk.

Surrounding the squatting chef were the many ingredients of Mexican cuisine: lettuce (the dreaded lettuce) and tomatoes, green tomatillos, rice and beans (arroz y frijoles, backbone of the Mexican diet). Chicken pulled off the bone, strip steak for carne asada. Fish, cheese. Avocado. Ancho chiles and Mexicans’ favorite chile, the jalapeno, which was always too hot for me. And an array of spices — cilantro, achiote seed, basil, cumin. Off to the side, a mound of brown paste that when cooked became the chocolate sauce which, when mixed with turkey meat, became the wonderfully unique mole poblano.

Each visit to the sidewalk establishment meant a different combination from the vast array of ingredients. There was no treat like an evening at Mama La Gorda.

But there was a price to pay. This time, however, it wasn’t Montezuma who took his revenge. It was the Yellow Menace of Hepatitis A. Besides the jaundice, I was drastically weakened. Luckily there was a nurse living in an apartment right next door to mine, and she gave me a daily IV drip. Even luckier, my girlfriend of the moment moved in, fed me, and cared for me during the weeks I spent in bed. Meanwhile, every day a red envelope arrived in the mail from Arlington Heights, Illinois. There, another former girlfriend lay in bed, also with Hepatitis. Before leaving Cuernavaca, she had gone with me to Mama La Gorda. And she carried the virus to her parents.

She later also became my wife.

Nature and Me

Mel Brey

When I wake up each day, I say good morning to my plants. Not just a casual hello, mind you, but an individual greeting to each one. Here a tender pat to the drooping single leaf on the geranium which I had repotted, hoping it would grow to a new plant once again. There a salute to the bright red cheer of the poinsettia, still thriving, almost into March. And, too, the bristly little pine trees, less than a
foot tall, remnants of the holiday season. The ivy, dangling from its pot on the wall, eternally amazes me with its latest attempt to curl a leaf around the wooden blinds on the door to the balcony. I release the leaf and tell it to behave itself. The sunshiny yellow tulips in a vase, a much appreciated gift from a friend, just receive a smile, as they are only passing through.

During the winter, aside from the dormant ivy in large pots waiting to receive spring flowers, the only plant on the balcony is a small hybrid apple tree. It especially delights me as a perch for the birds, who on cold days do not hesitate to speak up if I am late in distributing bread crumbs. The delicate finches with their rosy heads and lovely songs are one of my favorites, as are the eternally charming black-capped chickadees and the quick little sparrows. When the bossy blue jays and flocks of starlings with their iridescent bronze backs arrive, I have to remind myself they get hungry, too. Once in a long while a cardinal swoops in and deigns to try one of my bread crumbs.

Why does all this mean so much to me? Probably growing up on a farm made me very aware of the outdoors. It was not only where we worked, but where we played. A favorite pastime was to simply take a walk down a dirt lane, or to ramble at leisure across the fields. When I was little I saw a newly-cut field with rabbits running back and forth. They were so cute! I told my busy father that I wanted my own rabbit as a pet. He made a cage and promised to catch one for me. Later that day I checked and there was my very own little rabbit. My father had given him food and water. To tell the truth, he did not look very happy, but I was sure we would get to know each other. First thing the next morning, I went out, full of excitement, to see him. Where was the rabbit? I could not believe he was not there. I looked all around, but no rabbit. How could that be? The cage was still closed. I ran to my father. He came with me to search through the stubble; he could not find any trace of him either. He explained that little animals can get through the smallest opening, and that must have been what happened. It was several years before I realized that my kind hearted father purposely let him go.

A high point of a house in the country was the adventure of raising orphaned baby raccoons on our screened porch. They loved oatmeal and bananas. Our house on an island off the Gulf Coast of Florida meant growing a glorious riot of bougainvillea up the screened porch and finding out that the bamboo grown as a fence was more like a rampant weed and had no intention of politely staying in one place. The wildlife even included a bobcat, as well as sea turtles and pelicans and a wondrous variety of seabirds. I often think of one old tattered gull, standing calmly on the beach looking out at the waves coming in. I didn't see him then the next day; whether he was dinner for the bobcat, I don't know.

So here I am, finding nature in the city, with a new creature to observe closely: the individual human of all ages and conditions. From the panhandler in rags, without hope, to the assured super sophisticate, I marvel at them: the pampered babies, the wandering toddlers, the teens exploding with energy, the
lovers, the business man or woman with purposeful stride, the determined elderly shuffling along, sometimes with tapping canes or walkers—all part of the street theater, observable at all times, everywhere. What could be better?

You Can Put Paris in a Bottle

Nicole Andonov

Let’s say
you receive a basket of autumn leaves,
nuts, and ripe fruit
the gold, the ruby, the green—
the arrangement near-perfect.

You won’t refrigerate it
but watch for soft spots as they appear.

You’ll core them carefully.

Flesh near the rotting spot
is always sweet.

In the Shadow of Dawn

Nicole Andonov

I am in the shadow of light
like a penguin chick, crouched in the down of her mother,
away from the cold and glare of snow.

No. I'm wrapped in a magician's cape.
I share her secret of change, of metamorphosis—
one reality into another.

She stuffs papers, scribbling, erasures
and pulls out an elegant bouquet of arranged flowers—
one reality into another.

I am in the comfort of her garment.
I am as I am, as I was, as I wish to have been—
ashamed
of having been happy
and not thankful of the light hatching in aquamarine,
ashamed

of the anemone’s insouciance,
the perplexity of coral,
the ethereal farandole of angels and demons.

Today, wrapped in a magician’s cape, I cry
for all the stuffed paper subtilized
into flowers.

---

**When the Green Came**

Nicole Andonov

*Yet I say boldly that I know that if nothing passed away, time passed were not.*
*And if nothing were coming, time future were not.*
*And if nothing were, time present were not.*

*St. Augustine*

But in the field,
when spring came in from the cold
with a tinge of twilight—you were no angel.
Your arms, your legs, your—you were no angel—
on the grass you once possessed.

How do grapes grow without water?
And where do mosquitoes breed?
I twirled a Japanese parasol;
you wore a huge pagoda hat, beads dangling around its rim.

For two months you carried your life away
item by item, wood, metal, memories, affliction,
whatever you had shrouded in secrecy
clearing yourself into yourself.

You whispered. I barely made out your words
but I knew, I knew all there was to know, and more.
The air rarefied as I tried to breathe
my tongue caught in suspension.

You wore sandals. I wish I could have kept your feet
—tiny for your height—
rubbing against mine, playing Dvorak on my ankles.

The calla lilies were in bloom—
or was it the blades of wheat turning circle into spiral,
overlapping the present that was and the one that was not,
and the past that was, and was not, and the future that never was.
VIII

There Was Music
Quartet for the End of Time

Composed by Olivier Messiaen
While a prisoner of war

Dorothy Furman

Eyes closed I see four musicians
Clothes tattered sitting on boxes
Playing less than perfect instruments

Piano softly welcomes the first sliver of sun
Violin strings strum early morning bird songs
The cello carries the mood
Beckons clarinet to join
They play the same notes
Suffer the same abuse
Breathe the same air

The last movement
The Piano hammers their frustration
The Cello bow speeds brutally
The Clarinet wails for help
the violin, the violin
begins to cry then sobs

I open my eyes
Audience on their feet
Tuxedoed musicians bow

Music

Lois Frankenberger

On days like this I long for
A little jazz to liven up my life.
Too much watching
My step so as not to fall.

There are places where
I do not go – still remembering
Where and when I fell.
I lied when I said
I like to dance.
I love to dance.
I’m afraid to dance.

I wish I knew
Who would save the
Last dance for me.

**Listening to Jazz**

Nicole Andonov

I’m sitting in front of a bowl of crab legs
in New Orleans

There are places I will not visit again
but find myself
returning to ———————————

—— blowing, blurring, blasting the unpleasant,
  whatever it was at the time,
  striking it out
  point-blank,

like my father to an ugly woman
  wearing a yellow dress:

*Ah! ———
  *Here comes the sun!*

My father loved women — Women loved him.

Mother loved him —————
  despite his faults ————

I recall her answer to my aunt:

*Enough about Maurice!*
*I wouldn’t give away one Maurice for 20 perfect Pauls.*
The closet

Phyllis Brusiloff

The closet
bulges with seven violins
three little ones
an eighth, a half and the three-quarter one
with a crack across the birch top.

Grandfather Joseph’s with the mended finger board
Uncle Nat’s whose strings have popped like his fame
Cousin Laurie’s waits for a child to hold it gently
tucking it between shoulder and neck
with wrist flexed in classic posture
while the tuneless walnut fiddle
sits only as a show piece of art.

My Forte

Lois Ross

I have been very fortunate to be a pianist. Number one I have been told that I possess talent, but also I practice and persevere. Since the age of eight I have been taking piano lessons and only stopping for a short time when my children were born.

So you can imagine that I have learned a lot of pieces. I have two file drawers filled with works by practically all the composers who ever wrote for piano. My greatest joy is just to sit down and work out whatever piece that I am presently working on.

There have been books written on “The Joy of Cooking” and “The Joy of Sex.” Well perhaps there should be a book called “The Joy of Playing the Piano.”

For many years I wanted to buy a new piano because mine was in bad condition. I could never afford to buy a new one until recently when I retired. I then decided that I would give myself a present and bought a brand new Steinway. It was a good decision because I am really enjoying the wonderful tone it produces.

At the age of eight my father got a piano teacher to come to my house for one dollar a lesson. She was a very good choice. My first piece was “Airy Fairies.” It was really hard for a beginner. It was a waltz and had to be played with two
hands together, but I did it and continued to accomplish playing many more very attractive pieces with this teacher.

After a while this teacher stopped giving lessons and I had to get other teachers. Some were good and some were not so good. But I progressed enough to be recognized in school and by my neighbors who wanted to play duets with me. I started to do ensemble playing at the age of fifteen.

Now in addition to playing piano literature I am seriously involved in playing the chamber music literature. I am a pretty good sight-reader but I am not a good memorizer.

Some people say, "Why do you continue to take lessons? You already know how to play." My answer is that if I don't take lessons, I won't practice. I want someone to listen to me and give me pointers on how to improve my playing; I'm always learning.

People ask me if I perform for others. I have in the past, but never in Carnegie Hall. At the Turtle Bay Music School I gave an informal concert for friends and family and played several pieces by heart. This was most difficult for me because of my memorization problem. But I did it.

When I lived in Brooklyn, I belonged to Brooklyn Ethical Culture and played several times for their Sunday service. I also played at the Community Church for their service in March, but only the prelude and postlude. I played two Gershwin pieces that I was studying. It went over well, I thought. Very often the piano teachers that I studied with had recitals and I performed at these events, as well.

Since I retired I am devoting much more time to my playing than before. I taught music in public school for about twenty-one years and so I devoted most of my time to developing lessons in singing holiday songs and music games. But now it's a time to really devote myself to improving my own playing, and playing with others.

And so I must say that there is a great joy in playing the piano and I'm grateful to all the great composers who wrote such beautiful music and to the teachers who have helped me develop as a musician.
Josef Lhevinne

Carnegie Hall was my Mecca. I managed to attend many concerts of the great pianists like Josef Hoffman, Rachmaninoff, and Josef Lhevinne, even though it was during the Depression, and I certainly had no money to purchase tickets. But I had made a few friends who worked as ushers who would sneak me in. They always seemed to find me a seat in the orchestra.

On one occasion I got in to hear the incomparable Josef Lhevinne. I found myself swept away by his unbelievable technique, his pearls-and-velvet tonal quality and poetic interpretation. I was about 14 or 15 years old, and each note took my breath away. I seem to remember he did all of the Chopin Preludes. Each work he played felt like a great treasure being bestowed upon me. At the end of the concert, I rushed backstage to meet this musical god. I was young and cocky, and already thought of myself as a young pianist with great promise.

Backstage, I found him surrounded by gushing fans, most of whom looked like old ladies—socially important people and well known music critics. He seemed a little tired and bored. His eyes caught mine, and he walked slowly away from the crowd towards me. At that stage of my life, I was a pretty young girl with long red hair, wearing a black velvet beret and reflecting what I believed was a true artist’s style! He was already in my eyes an old man, but his eyes sparkled when I told him how wonderful his performance had been to me.

“You know, Mr. Lhevinne,” I said, “I am a pianist too, and I’d like to play for you!”

He smiled and said, “Of course, that would be fine. Why don’t you come to Juilliard on Thursday at 3 and play for me.”

On that Thursday I appeared at Juilliard, in a very confident mood. He greeted me warmly. I played a little Chopin and Liszt, and “Jeux D’eau” by Ravel. When I finished, he was very enthusiastic, but said: “Why do you paint your pictures so large?”

I had been studying until then with a great pianist of the Romantic school, Richard Singer. He was a pupil of the legendary Theobore Leschetitsky and had even been fortunate enough to have had Master classes with Brahms. Singer always reminded me that I should never forget that I was a musical great, great grandchild of Beethoven, since Beethoven taught Czerny, who taught Leschetitsky, who taught Singer, who eventually taught me! So this romantic style became my natural style. The variation in tone colors, making the piano sing with lyrical, poetic phrasing, graduating to a powerful and dramatically dynamic resolution—this was deeply engrained in me.
But when I heard Lhevinne’s exquisite, velvety tone and smooth technical command, I wanted so much to be able to achieve that as well! I felt a little guilty even thinking of leaving Singer, who had been so wonderful to me. (He had given me a scholarship for years since my parents could not afford his fee of $10 a lesson.) My desire to develop and understand different concepts of approaching the piano was stronger than my loyalty, and so here I was, playing for Lhevinne with the wish that he might accept me as a pupil.

“I believe in miniatures, rather than the grand Lisztian approach,” Lhevinne continued. “The most valuable paintings in museums are often not the largest and boldest, but the little miniatures.”

I then drew on all my chutzpa and said, “Mr. Lhevinne I would love to study with you!”

He looked at me in an amused way and said, “My dear, do you know what my fee is? It is $40 a lesson.”

“Oh, I could never afford that.”

“Well, can’t you get someone to dig it up for you?”

“Oh no, I don’t know anyone who could do that. But Mr. Lhevinne, don’t you give scholarships to students you find especially talented? I teach (and that was true: I taught young children after school for $1 a lesson) and when I find a special talent who can’t afford to pay me, I give them a scholarship!”

He laughed and came towards me to try to kiss me. I must have amused him.

“Do you have any idea of my expenses? Since I’ve achieved some success, all the Levines in Russia write to me for money. At Juilliard, Ernest Hutchinson (then Juilliard President and a competing famous pianist) arrives every day in his limousine with his chauffeur and footman. I have to do the same to keep up my image.”

He was quiet but finally said, “I’ll talk to Rosinna (his wife and business manager).

Eventually, Lhevinne and Rosinna decided to give me a scholarship. And so began a whole new world of technical analysis, quite different from what I had previously known—special Lhevinne exercises to build more muscular strength in the weaker 4th and 5th fingers, and a consciousness of relaxed strength from the shoulders. It was a difficult period of unlearning and relearning each movement of fingers and body. Singer’s romantic influence was deeply engrained, but now I added to it my new Lhevinne technique. My relationship with the piano grew even fuller.
IX

The New York Poems
The Journey

Lois Frankenberger

They live scattered all over town
share the same mailing address
make the journey to the city’s main
post office every morning where they
wait in line outside the back door
until 10 a.m. when it unlocks and
the people move straight to the
general delivery window
to claim their mail
homeless men and women
hungry for word from
mothers and sisters
birthday cards and checks
mostly they leave empty-handed.

Coney Island Avenue

Stanley Margolies

Molly’s had the best egg creams,
U-Bet syrup, live seltzer.
Superman, Captain Marvel.
We’d squeeze in a booth
Squeezed against a wall.
Holler, laugh, fight,
The Dodgers – Hodges, Durocher.

Then Gutterman’s opened.
A funeral parlor.

On Coney Island Avenue,
Across the street from Molly’s.

The street’s tracks separated them.
You could take the trolley
All the way to the beach.
The waves.

Gutterman’s would soon close,
I thought then,
Didn’t fit the neighborhood.
I went home seventy years later.

Gutterman’s still there.
A white-gloved welcoming man
At the door.

Molly’s long gone.

So, too, the trolley tracks,
The trolleys.

---

Cold Snap
Lois Frankenberger

A blast of air
attacks the shore.
Who will offer a shawl
to our Lady of Liberty?

ODE: The Empire State Building
Irene Biller-Berkson

Waiting at the 23rd street express bus stop to
Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, I noticed you.
The green trees in the foreground
Framed your right and left sides.
Your silver shaft glowed in the evening light.

A plane hit you years ago.
No need to replicate your image.
No need for walls of glass.
You, Empire State, tall in place while
Buildings of 40-70 stories cast
Shadows over Central Park.

I remember carving 6 feet feminine shapes
Out of wood at 41 Union Square. The large
Loft room with four spaces looked out at
You during all kinds of weather.
At night your colored lights lit up the sky.

During “Open Studio Days”, crowds admired
And bought work from artists.
One summer, a so-called friend sublet
And stole my lease. It was the summer my
Husband died. I lost your view Empire State,
I lost my loving husband

My Brooklyn Man

Irene Biller-Berkson

Two left feet
Walk down the street
He’s my man.

His hair is white
Never looks for a fight.
My man.

A chockaholic
Not an alcoholic
He’s my man.

He draws like a dream
He doesn’t skeem
My man.

He’s a night owl
I’m a dove
We’re in love.

My man tries to cook
Not always by the book
He’s my man.

My man finds treasures
He gives me pleasure
My man

He makes me laugh
We have fun
No need to constantly run.
When he holds me tight
Everything’s alright
My Brooklyn man.

Rats are Running Wild
Julia Krushenick

They came to tear the building down
brick by brick
Rats are running wild.

Is there anyone anywhere
who’ll shed a tear
for the deli on the corner?
One hundred years
gone
in five days.

Machines pound and
pound the ground

What lost voices echo?

That Summer in the Bronx
Julia Krushenick

Up five flights
In our narrow bed
promises mingled with rumpled sheets

Street lights shifted shadows
across our small
faded blue room
as we spoke about forever,
ever really knowing
what forever would mean.
Outside the curtained window
neighbors voices grated
against brick walls,
music pounded
the windless air

as night dissolved
that summer in the Bronx

**Love and New York**

Harold Siegel

I’m having an affair
It’s been going on for decades
Me and this hermaphrodite New York
My wife doesn’t seem to mind
She’s liberal that way

Even now when showing my age
And cannot even perform fully
As in the old days
With youthful vigor crowding my days
From morning to night
Doing, seeing
Broadening me in every direction

I am more tolerant of people and things
My routine may be more predictable
But my provincial surroundings
Seem to change day by day
New stores with new colors
New buildings with new shapes
Exciting, yes
But with a small hurrah.
They demolished the site of my birth in short order. A century has flipped. A new millennium’s ho-hum. The city stays restless, shaking us up.

Small, I played amid goldenrod, milkweed, and yarrow. Realtors gobbled up vacant lots. Citizens have preserved a few. One stretches a mile, thirty feet high, treasured.

A modern Moses had great power, but try as he might, he could not part the waters. Instead, he built bridges, slickly modern, self-supporting, with toll booths to pay for additional projects.

Queens was accessible, after the war. A bumper crop of babies was born there, cradled under saplings on look-alike streets.

Down came the Third Avenue El, exposing the squalor of pawn shops’ mystique. No longer did brass vessels in every dusty window hint that they harbored genies as antsy as the city, so restless they’d do my bidding in payment for freedom.

The Upper East Side became a stylish milieu, where tenements endured cosmetic surgery and elevator implants. Hi-rise buildings sink their teeth into the sky. Sunlight makes restricted visits, and the skyline changes daily.

My native borough burst into flame, roasting game cocks and fighting dogs, with crime so rampant as in the Wild West. Fort Apache, the Bronx.

Like an ousted Mafioso, Manhattan’s foot was sunk in concrete. The borough grew in water: costly new housing, marinas and yachts, cultural sites, Towers of Trade. The Battery was electric. Did it all stink of hubris? My city was invaded like an ordinary place on some ordinary continent, whose citizens deserved to die.
Soho’s the in-place for art.
Brooklyn keeps gaining cachet.
New Towers have sprouted downtown,
thumbing their high noses at terror.

My renovated tenement on the Upper East Side
is showing its age. Ancient pipes burst,
and windows pop out of their frames.
I stay indoors when snow slicks the sidewalks,
hobble out when the pavement warms.

No need to fear sunburn. Hoardings
bloom in spring. The few remaining
lo-rise buildings face demise.
Boom! They’re gone. My favored
restaurants and stores dissolve.
New structures scrabble to obscure the light.

Today, I cannot use the sidewalk at my corner.
“MEN AT WORK ABOVE” cast me off balance
in my old age. I’m flung aslant
to the narrow curb between sapling
and parked car, too timid to stride into traffic.
A new patisserie is expected to open next month.

I’m stopping here

Not another word about the tree
the City planted on my sidewalk; the young small-rounded-leaves-vibrating-in-the-breeze Locust; just about 12 feet tall; who grew to be my tormentor.

Not another word about that Locust tree
who sucked my water main; pierced my foundation; dug wrinkles on my facade;
and grew four-stories high to be my tormentor.

Not another word about that tall, slim, awkward Locust tree
who whirls and rocks at every storm; sheds dead branches on passing cars;
menaces my parapet; and threatens to,

one day,
under one of those change-of-climate storms we are having lately, to un-root;
tear down in its fall my neighbor’s facade across the street;
or mine; crush every parked car on the curb; and kill any delayed passer-by.

Not another word about the destructive Locust tree the City refuses to remove, because it is alive; because it is alive; and growing.

**Bougainville**

Lottie Katz

Every time I leave my apartment to go out on the street, I feel like Louis de Bougainville, the first Frenchman to navigate the globe, who in 1767, together with a botanist, went on an expedition sponsored by the Paris Museum of Natural History, to discover and document unknown specimens of flora, and who brought back with them a collection of Chilean flowers, among them the bougainvillea.

I compare my sorties to Bougainville’s trip because, like he must have felt, I am struck by the variety and originality of what I see.

The people that pass me by are each wrapped in the appearance they have fashioned for themselves consciously and unconsciously to show to the public.

Some are in conservative garb, some in outrageous costumes assembled from bits and pieces that do not blend. There’s every type of hairdo: long hair, hair cropped close, black, brown, blond or gray hair, but red, green or purple too. There’s skin of different colors and skin all covered in tattoos. There are people of all shapes and sizes, sauntering, running, limping.

They hardly look at each other. Nothing seems to faze them, for New Yorkers are philosophers, accustomed to the unexpected. They live at ease with the flux of change and look at the scene around them with a jaundiced eye, very hard to surprise. In the interest of a peaceful, harmonious existence, they tolerate diversity.

They are the living exemplars of the changes brought about by explorers like Bougainville. Democracy did not only arrive in books, but also in the holds of ships that carried back with them to an astonished world the many species of flora and fauna Mother Nature saw fit to endow with life.
X

The Writing Life
Let Me Introduce

Let me introduce myself
I am a poem
Albeit a service poem
That should, by mandate
Be placed at the beginning
Of this, your chapbook
Purpose — To shout and rise up
To go from strength to strength

Your font, size and intent
Could easily fit
Into the rest of your poems

You, the poet, exceed the number
Of writers by many fold
Your pride gets its necessary boost
When you display
Your well-honed thoughts

So, widen your spine edge
So you’ll not be discarded
To the dust bin of a shelf
Wedged between
Two wider spined books
{Unless they are poets}

On Poetry

Some days the words pour out
Not stopping for anything
Flowing fast
and furious
No dam could hold
Them back
Feelings gush
From behind the boulders
Stark
Naked
Terrifying
Truths
About Life
and Death
averted
Once more.

Finally the falls become a
Trickle
From what they’d been
At the start
Subdued
Spent
Quiet
For now.

Writer’s Block
Judith Korotkin Mende

I have got to stop reading the N.Y. Times.
Is it necessary to learn, over juice and coffee,
that the world is exploding?
While I butter my English muffin
do I have to know that Syria,
like Rome before it, is burning
and that families are again being exterminated by poison gas?

Why can’t I at least wait for the six-o’clock news
to be informed that I should be ready,
at all times, for another 9/11 disaster,
and while I’m relishing my low-fat dessert
to be told that children are starving in Africa?
No, I must, bright and early, be informed,
so that I know beyond a doubt, who to hate,
who to trust and who to blame.

By occupying myself with this problem
I can avoid going to my desk to write
about such inconsequential subjects
as the people I love, the trees of autumn,
the beauty I’ve seen, and explore how to remain human and emotionally survive in this ugly, beautiful and frightening world.
I can't remember the poem

I can't remember the poem. It was by Emily Dickinson
She lay down on the grass and
looked up at the sky.

I could smell the green new born air mixed with dew and
saw grey clouds dissolve in the summer breeze
to make room for the slow rising sun
She lay there, wishing to be one with the earth.

But when the sun appeared, her heart beat strong,
as if it could open the flowering buds and
birds would hear the beating and
wake sleepily from their nests to sing
a special morning song

I can’t remember the poem. It was by Emily Dickinson

Lost

On my white bedside table
Glasses rest next to an
Anthology of poetry

Century old words
Share the binding
With modern verse

Same story same twenty-six wheels
Transport letters to the page
Connect the reader to the writer’s words

One poet spoke of how lucky he was
How he had been given everything,
Loving family including aunts, uncle, cousins

A scrubbed, handsome face
Gloves to keep him warm
Clothes to wear, good teachers
He wrote how he knew
He had everything.
It was then

I lost the connection

Homage To Macbeth
Irene Biller-Berkson

Guts. hope, wreck, no ruin
Band aids, hank of hair
A bone.

A summer’s night, light
A rundown stoop
Loop-de-loop.

A will of the wisp, a roan
Of an eye,
A move to the left
And then to the right.

A rush of wine, a trip of twine
A cascade bright, a brave
Goodnight.

Untitled
Lois Frankenberger

Empty-headed she’s not
there’s always a poem
wanting to get out.

You must hurry—
fetch paper and pen
before you lose
your words and me.
Samaras

The maple’s winged fruit takes flight
in its maturity, to find a proper site
to set down roots and reach great height.

But city pavements do not welcome seeds.
As the homeless man or woman bleeds
unseen in winter, so few saplings may succeed
in finding welcome in the drab and narrow wells
that buildings hide, where ailanthus and catalpa dwell,
hogging sunlight, casting angry, jealous spells.

Samaras float through a window in my bedroom.
They’re swept from floor and sill by rag and broom,
desiccating, helpless, facing doom.

And so the poet’s winged words may fly
in hope of landing where the wonders they imply
prove fertile, burgeon, multiply.

The world has fewer trees than once arose.
Its range of words and wonders grows
like mankind’s will to conquer and impose.

Yet, new saplings sprout in fecund ground,
and a poet’s thoughts and images resound
where they are welcomed as profound.

Gusts

What sent the wind into a tizzy,
shooing off the heat of summer
and the weight of autumn leaves?

I pause in packing up the flimsy
garments of last season to observe

* A poet, Nicholas Samaras
the winged fruits of such trees as ash, elm, and maple.
degrees of passion that I’ve tamed
to near-extinction, and I envy
all that acting out. I would ape it,
drop my chores, and stomp and shout.

I’d whirl about, proclaiming what I feel.
I’d reel and crash and tear my hair
without a care of what the neighbors hear.

But silently, instead of that,
I lift a pad and write a line
of careful diction and off-rhyme.

**Hommage à Claire Messud**

Barbara Oken

I’ve read a novel whose protagonist,
though half my age, and in another place,
is ME (with here and there, creative twists).

Do all who read it feel that they exist,
though at a different weight, with altered face,
in a book where I know I’m protagonist?

At first, I doubted that it would persist:
my haunting of each paragraph, each space.
It’s ME (with here and there, creative twists).

I want to grab the author by her wrist,
and shout I’ve never suffered such disgrace
as in her book, where I’m protagonist.

Just half my life ago, with hard-clenched fists,
I chose to change the job, the thoughts, the pace
she cites (with here and there, creative twists).

It’s less the writer’s life she’s used as grist,
than readers’ pain she’s chosen to embrace,
so I have read a novel whose protagonist
is ME (with here and there, creative twists).
The Planet In The Pen

These poems once written do not stray
from folders where they lay,
stunned at their intense enclosure,
this blocking away.

Flat words fasten to level paper, yet
an alphabet longs to blaze with their tale,

So arch your liquid letters,
hum your salubrious sounds,
do not fade away.

Be glad for the words made,
the words played,
For they are surely part
of the whole business:
The earth, sun and moon.

Sunday Quiet

It’s Sunday quiet
so quiet that
the clock is
ticking solo

a pointed
reminder that life is
moving on and on
and in and out

and all I’m doing is
listening to its tick
instead of
running to its beat

The question is why
run today when
I can contemplate
running as an option and
where to run
and why on this
gray and neutral day that
doesn’t feel at all gloomy

when the house is
comfortably quiet and
I find myself reaching for
buried thoughts and feelings

The minute
I pick up my pen
the sun comes out.
XI

Portraits
**Untitled**

Phyllis Brusiloff

Perfume of strawberries
reminds me of her smile,
baby hands and face
stained red with juice
little fingers feel a breeze
riffling the grass and leaves
*it's wind it's wind it's winding my hair*

**Fletcher**

Stanley Margolies

Eudora Fletcher.
Woody Allen knew.*
Remember Zelig?†

Roosevelt's service.
His memorial.

P.S. 99.
White shirts with green ties.
Auditorium.

Fletcher makes us stand.
"Up, up, green and white."

She wants dead silence.
A full five minutes.

Remember Howie?
Look, how could you not?
He sits next to me.

He stands next to me
When she mutes us.

---

*I mean he knew Eudora Fletcher, the principal of P.S.99. So I went to public school in Brooklyn with Woody Allen. So, in the scheme of things, how much does that matter, that I went to public school with Woody Allen? And if it doesn't matter, why do I mention it? Come, let's talk about it. Maybe over drinks.*

†*Remember the shrink in Allen's movie? How could you not? I mean, it was only 31 years ago. Anyway, the shrink's name was Eudora Fletcher. A full theater. Only I laughed.*
His roar bursts through first.  
I begin to burst.

Eudora spies us.  
Hears Howie's howling.  
Sees Stan's tears teeth bound

Then she fletcherized.  
Just masticated.*  
Right there. Chewed Chiclets.

She morphs as she chews.  
She's Horace Fletcher.†

Chewing as she screams  
"To my office. Now."

She spits out her gum.  
Post mastication.

She broadcasts our names  
Over the P.A.

"They desecrated  
Our great president  
And our green and white."

Horace counts her chews.  
FDR just smiles.

And Howie and me?  
And the green and white?  
What happened to them?

---

* Masticate: "To grind or chew. It sounds like masturbate so dumb fucks who are too lazy to figure out its real definition assume it means masturbate. It's a funny word and has power." Urban Dictionary.

† I mean, look it up. In about 1912, Horace Fletcher convinced millions in America and Europe to chew their food until it became almost liquid, which usually involved hundreds of “mastications” per bite. Generals and presidents took up ‘Fletcherizing,’ as did Henry James and Franz Kafka. In 1912, Oklahoma Senator Robert L. Owen drafted a proclamation declaring that excessive chewing was a ‘national asset’ worthy of compulsory teaching in schools.
Counseling
Barbara Oken

Rough sketch of a castle, with a path to the paper’s edge.  
No life in sight: no leaf, nor twig, nor creatures’ bones.  
A fearsome place, scratched out in pencil,  
bare of verbal clues.

But words were not his thing. They give bad news,  
say that his mother’s home had burnt to cinders.  
(I wondered if they’d lied to evict him, to shed  
the nodding prostitutes he insisted on sheltering.)

His crude depiction told the story well,  
but my head was fogged with fairy tales.  
I failed him that day. Accustomed to failure,  
he patiently waited for me to sketch answers.

I peered and peered at his thin paper,  
drew a frantic princess at the battlements.  
She waved a scarf, and soon enough, a prince  
in armor spurred a white steed up the path.

Decades past his trial, I can’t recall his name.  
I never knew what crimes they’d charged him with.  
Did a jury find him innocent? Is he still upstate?  
One thing is sure: no knight has rescued him or me.

Eli
Irene Biller-Birksen

In a small room with a radio  
and heater in winter  
Eli in an orange hat and  
flannel shirt waits for his customers.  
$2 for a small bag and $4  
for a large bag of garbage.
Twenty eight years on the job.
Two weekend days in winter
Two week days in the summer
Eli looks over people’s junk
and recycles old tools and toys.

Like a circus ringmaster,
Eli directs paper into a dumpster,
plastics and bottles into a barrel
and wet garbage to a closed shed.

He feeds stray cats and in the course
of chit-chatting with neighbors, runs
a free match-making service.
I am told people would rather go to
Eli’s dump than church on Sunday.

Fate has led me to a conclusion
that we are here for awhile,
but we don’t know how long it
will be.

We must make the most of our time.
I’m not like that. I go on and on as
if the days will never end and I will
wake up happy each day.

The first thing I heard was my cousin
who was a sister to me was sick and
then died very quickly.

If only I could have talked to her before.
But I have reached the point that it doesn’t
matter. Mostly, there’s too much to see
or do in a short or long
period of time.
Deep in a Paris night,
He turns,
Behind, left, right,

Yanks off his starred-sleeved coat,
Dumps it in a wired corner can.

He slithers past slicked cobble-stoned streets.

Patrols pass,
Helmeted troops hunting,
Staring from open trucks,
Searchlights, sirens, pierce the rain.

A door creaks open.
He lunges through.

A street rat follows him in.

An old man steers him to a table.
They sit silently.

The rat runs wildly.
The man opens the door.
The rat turns, runs out.

The night passes.
A weak sun breaks through.
The man leads him to the door,
Opens it to the drying street.

“God be with you,” the man says.
“God?”
Dad’s Lawn
Rochelle Hershowitz

My father loved his lawn almost as much as his family. He nurtured and cherished it and couldn’t bear to be away from it for more than a few days. It was a passion shared by many men on Long Island who competed ferociously for the title of “Best Lawn in the Neighborhood.”

Dad was raised on Lake Huntington, New York, where he had unlimited outdoor space to play in. When he was 10, his father got a job in Manhattan, and the family moved to an apartment in Brooklyn. It was a culture shock for a family used to having bathroom facilities in the backyard. They all thought having indoor bathrooms was a health hazard and feared the results of this strange device. But the indoor plumbing was the least of my father’s distresses. It was the cement everywhere that drove him crazy. There was very little greenery in East New York, and he missed the open spaces of the home they’d left.

After marriage and a few years in another apartment in Brooklyn, Dad, Mom, my sister Linda, and I moved out to Hicksville in Nassau County. It was a three bedroom split, with lawn front and back. Dad had a new love, a replacement for the outdoors he had lost years before.

A new lawnmower, fertilizer, and a shiny green hose with a sprinkler attached all took up residence in the garage, leaving barely enough room for Dad’s car. Since he worked nights, he was able to tend his lawn during the day as well as on weekends. Mom wasn’t especially thrilled with this arrangement.

“Dave, let’s go away for a vacation. The girls are old enough to be on their own.”

“We can go up to Lake George for the weekend.”

“Why not a week?”

“Who’ll take care of the lawn?”

“Linda and Rochelle can water the lawn.”

“No, they won’t do it right.”

And so it went.

One Saturday Linda’s boyfriend, Bill, was invited over for a barbecue. In the summertime we ate out on the patio, which was a hot, unshaded slab of cement. It was even hotter when Dad barbecued because it was small, and the cooking
area was close to where we sat. While Dad went up to the kitchen for supplies, Bill took a chair, carried it across the lawn, and sat under a tree, where it was cooler. Dad saw this from the kitchen window.

“Get that son-of-bitch off my lawn. The chair is leaving grooves in my grass.”

Dad had a really loud voice, and Bill almost went into orbit. We managed to smooth things over and enjoy our lunch. Amazingly, Linda and Bill got married a few years later.

One night my father woke up with chest pains. Convinced he was having a heart attack, he went downstairs to call 911. The volunteer fire department arrived and hooked Dad up to a monitor. Awakened by all this, Mom and I got dressed and ready to go to the hospital. As the EMT guys carried Dad across the snow-covered ground toward the ambulance, he leaned over the gurney and yelled, “Not on my lawn!”

They almost dropped him off the gurney.

When Dad was 80, he was admitted to Sloan Kettering and, after three weeks, passed away. Mom, Linda and I were getting things ready in the house because everyone would be coming back after the funeral and we would be sitting Shiva. We looked out at Dad’s lawn. It had been a very rainy three weeks, and the lawn could not be mowed. It looked unkempt, overgrown, unloved. We looked at each other in dismay.

“What will they think?” Mom said.

“Maybe we can keep the blinds down and they won’t see it?” offered Linda.

“No, they’ll see it when they drive up,” I said.

“You know, it’s only a lawn,” Mom said. “If only dad had realized that.”

Sure enough, all the family could talk about was how bad Dad’s lawn looked and what he would think. Finally, Mom had enough.

“It’s been raining, and we couldn’t mow. Get over it.”

There was silence for a moment, and then we all looked at each other and started to laugh. Dad had brainwashed everyone into obsessing about his lawn. It was hard to realize it didn’t matter any more.
Grandpa’s Still
Excerpt from Memoir for My Children
Herb Porter

Grandpa O. used to go from one grocery store to another and buy their rotten fruit, or fruit that wasn’t selling for some other reason. He paid just a few cents for a bagful and was careful not to buy too much from one store for fear that he might be asked, “What are you going to do with all this stuff?”

After collecting a sufficient amount, he placed his cache in a large, tin-lined container in the basement. I think he may have added water and a live yeast culture. The latter can still be bought in some stores as a wedge-shaped white cake, wrapped and refrigerated. His mixture was covered with a tight-fitting lid and placed in the locked cabinet under the cellar stairs that led from the first floor to the cellar below. He would inspect this mash daily and very carefully, sniffing the air to determine the first odor signifying that fermentation and alcohol production had begun. Clotheslines would be strung the length of the cellar and hung with old cotton bed sheets. These were wet down daily with a hose from the deep sink. Grandpa thought that the wet sheets would absorb the odor of the fermenting mash. Thus, visitors at our home would be none the wiser about his intentions.

It should be noted that this took place during Prohibition in the U.S. After repeal of that act in the early 1930s, however, anyone was permitted to make a certain amount of whiskey, as long as it was for home consumption and not for sale.

At about thirty days, I think, the mash was ready for distillation. For this event, a glass distillation apparatus was attached to the cold-water outlet of the deep sink. Anyone who has taken high school chemistry would be familiar with this type of device.

The mash was then placed on a two-burner stove adjacent to the sink and heated. As the vapor rose and went into the condensation tube, a clear liquid would begin to drip into a glass container that was about twenty inches tall and twelve inches in diameter. At first it went drip, drip, drip; slowly it gained momentum and became a steady stream. It half-filled the container and then slowed to a stop. The process of whiskey making was almost over.

A wooden stick about one-half inch square and six inches long that was weighted at one end was placed into the fluid. It floated upright, and when the air-alcohol interface met, Grandpa could determine, by a mark on the stick, the proof (alcohol concentration) of his solution. If it did not meet his satisfaction, the liquid could be distilled a second time. All that was left in this process was to color the alcohol brown to resemble whiskey.
For that purpose, he put prunes in a mortar and added a bit of the alcohol, and ground the prunes with a pestle until a dark brown liquefied mass was produced.

This was then filtered through a special pleated paper and a funnel into the large glass container, and voila! There was a brew powerful enough to float the Queen Mary. All that remained was to fill clean pint glass bottles, cap them, and stow each one in places he chose in our house. These might be behind the doors of the Emerson radio, in the bathroom medicine cabinet, or other readily accessible places.

It was one of these bottles that I stole and thus had my first taste of whiskey he called Slivovitz.

Alfred

Dorothy Stracher

The first picture you need to see is of a little boy, approximately age eight or nine. It’s a black and white, taken in 1938 or ’39. There’s the face of a youngster who appears shy; he looks up at you but his eyes only surreptitiously glance your way, probably because he’s been told to face the camera but he’s not sure that he should pose for some stranger. His complexion is pale; his face is framed with dark curly hair. He is wearing a white shirt and a tie; his picture is a close-up.

That was Alfred, who had just moved to a small town in Illinois, right near the Mississippi River. He had spent his entire prior life in Albany, New York surrounded by his aunts, uncle and cousins. But the recession had changed their lives. Alfred’s father, who had come from Russia, had lost his tailoring job; he couldn’t find any other employment. They lived on the goodness of their aunts for a year; then Alfred’s father, David, went to Illinois because a cousin promised him a job. It took David a year to find a factory job and to be able to send for his wife and two sons.

Alfred remembered the two day train ride to this new world. His mother who was frightened of all new places and new sounds led her two young ones. Alfred’s older brother, Sam, who was then eleven or twelve was a “real American boy;” he adored baseball and tolerated school. His shyer, younger brother found his place in books and science. Alfred spent the next several years concentrating on school, especially the laboratory in the school. His IQ was recorded as the highest they had ever had in that little town; his shyness was exaggerated as he headed back home every afternoon, followed by the town’s bullies who called him “Dirty Jew.” When Sam came straight home and refused invitations to play ball, the school’s toughs began to keep their distance from Alfred.
And then World War II began. Suddenly, jobs became plentiful and the family headed back to Albany where David found a factory job and then a tailor’s position in the local men’s clothing store. But David never made his way into the union; the unmarried uncle, who owned a tailor shop, gave his sister’s husband hours in his store to help make ends meet.

The next snapshot is that of a young man who is about to be graduated from college. His large eyes are still noticeable, but the shyness is given over to a serene confidence that permeates his thin face and carefully combed-back hair. He is wearing a white shirt, tie and jacket.

Alfred spent his high school years ensconced in science laboratories though he helped with the finances by delivering the neighborhood newspapers in the morning and working in the local pharmacy afternoons, week-ends and holidays. He was accepted into the local college that had a national reputation as an outstanding science center. He received a scholarship but it did not pay for all the costs. And so Alfred spent more time helping in the pharmacy. Every Christmas, he would work as many hours as he could. At the end of every holiday, Alfred would have come down with pneumonia and every January, he would arrive back at school a week or two later because he was recuperating.

Alfred lived at home and brought lunch from home but he looked to the local fraternities with longing. He didn’t have the funds to join one but a new fraternity wanted a start at the college. If Alfred and a couple of other honor students would sponsor this venture, they would be founding members who would never have to pay to belong. And so Alfred became a charter member of Alpha Epsilon Pi.

One January Saturday evening, AEPi had a party to which the freshman girls at the local colleges were invited. The DJ was playing a Charleston, the rage at that time. A young woman, who had been invited by one of the other fraternity boys, noticed this tall, thin, handsome young man enter the room to the welcome of all the other males in the room. Of course this female did not know that Alfred had just returned from his latest bout with pneumonia. She tried to be in his path so that he would be forced to say hello and introduce himself. But that did not happen; his shyness was manifesting itself once again.

The young woman, a resourceful creature who grew up in Brooklyn, knew that she wanted to meet this man. She positioned herself in front of Alfred, started to do the Charleston in time to the music and, lo and behold, she “accidentally” kicked him.

And so they met and spent much time together. When he wanted to “pin” her (a fraternity custom to establish that the couple were “going together”), she asked him why since he had never floated endearments her way. “Because I like you better than any girl I know,” and she accepted him. When she called her
immigrant mother in Brooklyn at about midnight to inform her, her mother’s answer was, “How nice. What does a pin mean?”

For the next three years, they were “dating.” Alfred finished his degree at Columbia to be close to “his girl” whose father had had a massive coronary at the end of her freshman year. She transferred and completed her undergraduate degree at Brooklyn College.

The next picture is of the two as bride and bridegroom. Alfred was told that he was to be taken into the army; the government did not allow young men to finish their schooling. The couple made plans that she would visit him at his bases and they would marry when he had completed his army commitment. However, the girl’s father adamantly protested that no daughter of his would visit a soldier if she were not married to him. And so they married. For the first time in their lives, they got on a plane and headed to their honeymoon destination. They had spent all their wedding gift money.

When they arrived home, they were greeted with the news that the government had changed its preferences; students who were working towards their Ph.D. in Science would be permitted to finish their degrees. So, they found a small studio apartment; she worked for two pediatricians part-time while she finished her undergraduate degree; his major professor managed to get Alfred another small scholarship.

The next picture is of a smiling, joyous Alfred. This was the welcoming picture that greeted all his guests invited to the State University’s labeling him a Distinguished Professor of Biochemistry. He had a long career and was noted for his research and his care for his students and his younger faculty.

And the last picture – of Alfred and his family. The smiles of all are warm and loving and caring. And there the story ends!

Bike One

Dennis Sullivan

In late August of 1999, my brother Paul woke up in his tiny Brooklyn apartment, and died.

Paul Sullivan was a wonderful man. For many years, Paul ran the 5 Boro Bike Tour, a major New York event, which began with 200 riders in 1977 and is today kept to a limit of 32,000. It was Paul who made the 40-mile bike ride a big deal. He’s the one who worked with the NYPD to open the roads, bridges and tunnels along the way. He was the one who addressed the wind-up rally on Staten Island. And he was the one who rode at the front, known to all as Bike One — a legend.
I have a black and white photo of him on my dresser. Paul, standing astride his bike in helmet and bike clothes, his arms spread wide, his boy-like smile seeming to welcome the world.

My brother was 14 years younger than I, and seven years younger than my sister Mary. I call it Catholic birth control. The hit and miss method. I was born nine months after Mom and Dad got married, almost to the day; Mary came after a couple of miscarriages; and Paul was a “mistake”.

All three of us looked like my Dad. Three redheads, easily sunburned. Tall. Me, really tall, Mary tall for a girl. Paul was about six foot. And skinny. Asked to describe him, you would say, “Oh, that skinny red headed kid.”

Look at a picture of us and you see how, in a family, the kids can look very much the same, yet completely different. Paul looked all his life like a boy not a man. His face was not marked by care, even though he had many cares. He didn’t look like he suffered yet he suffered mightily.

Paul was a square, to use an old expression. He was decidedly un-hip. I doubt he ever smoked a joint, and he listened to Irish folk music instead of rock ‘n’ roll. He was a determined anti-smoking crusader, especially directed at his parents.

He wasn’t much of a student. In high school, most of his energies were directed toward the New York Junior Academy of Science. I never got much of a clue as to how much he cared about science, but he cared deeply about the kids of the Academy, and those kids would become the core of the Bike Tour. Paul always had loads of friends, and he was the leader, to whom they expressed fervent loyalty.

So much older, I wasn’t really that close to my younger brother. Also, I went off to college, and to the seminary in Rome. Then I lived in Mexico and London for over ten years. We went down to Florida to visit my parents in retirement. He came over for dinner. He came up to my country house. I met his girlfriends. He had great girlfriends, but never married any of them. I became a big shot in television; he worked for the parks department. My son was born. My dad died and my mom began her long decline. During her 12 years in a nursing home, Paul and I finally became close, especially on the long rides to visit her.

It was on one of those drives that Paul told me he had been diagnosed with diabetes. He suffered a lot. He had that rotten smell that diabetics have. His legs were infected. He also lost his job at the Parks Department and a cool job with a start-up event planning outfit that also didn’t last. I lent him money, but not enough. In his little apartment, he was broke, always behind in the rent.

My brother Paul died when he was just 43 years old. He was very bad at taking care of himself, at least when it came to keeping up with his insulin shots. I was on vacation on Block Island when my sister called to tell me. When dad died, I took it very hard, but when Paul died, I was devastated. Losing a brother
is very very hard, but Paul was also an angel. I went to the morgue, but there was no point in seeing the body. The coroner showed Mary and me a Polaroid of a gnarled yellow and black mass that was completely unrecognizable. I couldn’t identify it, but I knew it was Paul, and I said so. He had been dead for days before he was discovered. I drove up to the nursing home to tell mom. For a while she had been a greatly diminished person, but she spoke from the well of her being when she muttered, “My baby.”

The funeral was in the big Catholic church across from where he lived in Brooklyn. The cops sent along their pipe band to play the processional — Amazing Grace. Paul was tight with the cops.

The church was packed. Paul’s people. All ages and from all parts of his life. My mom, her brothers, nephews and nieces. One of his pals spoke and told us not to feel guilty, that Paul had lived the life he wanted to live. I spoke, and compared Paul to Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up. Looking out at the congregation, I felt so proud of my kid brother.

Months later, they held a memorial service at the youth hostel where the bike tour was first conceived. It was not sad. A bunch of straight kids with sentiments of joy. I read a note from mom, bawling as I said the words: “Paul always signed his letters to me with ‘Smile, God loves you,’ so I am determined to smile if my heart is breaking.”

Paul biked between San Francisco and Los Angeles, Manhattan and Montauk, all over New England, Japan, Europe — including the Alps. The skinny redhead whose hair stayed bright red had calves of steel and a heart of gold. I was never a bike rider, and Paul and I lived in different worlds. But I loved him immensely, and I feel strongly that he is the best person I have ever met.
XII

Elegies
Invisible
Eileen Brilliant

I bring a plant
a purple violet
to your bed,

(Do not overwater,
the instructions say)

Place it at
the edge of
a gray metal tray,

You smile
place French-manicured
fingers to your lips,

Die
anyway

Anna, Remember
Julia Krushenick

You sat to pose for your son
an apron of flowers
hair in a bun
signs of grey, your face still young

Anna, remember,
I listened to your voice,
soft inflections
of the old country,
little Anna, four years old,
slept on the stove
hungry and cold

Anna, remember,
your final bedroom?
where your grandchildren played,
a garden
lilies, hyacinth red, sunlight on its lips;
in a cage by the window
a canary sang

You painted
a girl on a horse,
long hair flowing
seeking worlds beyond your world.

Anna, remember
we talked and talked
one winter’s afternoon
Dear Anna, remember?

**March 17**

Elizabeth Scheuerman

No
this is not what you think
not about St. Patrick
but about Lucy a dying cat
and it is to St. Francis
patron saint of animals
I pray grasping
at unreasoning hope

I’m not ready
though I see that in the week past
Lucy has traveled farther than Ireland
aging into newbornness
she shrinks as she lies
on the cusp of life and not-life
unable to stand drink or
clean her body

I’ve refused to bring her in
for a quick shot in an antiseptic office
but the boundary between life
and death is vaguer than I’d thought
a soiled blanket
congealed eyes
an extraordinary limpness
a lightness that astonishes
I scrub her roughly
as if I can rouse her
as if I can erase the odor of waste
death stinks I have discovered and
closing her lids I find
it’s true what I’ve read
they resist
require pressure

I curl her body
stroke her softness
and wait
wait for the warmth to leave
wait for the hardening to come
wait for the weight of death

Let’s begin again
After Philip Levine

It’s the simple truth
We start at the bottom
what did you do before?
Teacher, doctor, lawyer?
We come to the Y
stripped of laurels
begin again
as potters, painters, poets
some with walkers
others walk alone.

We use old skills, learn new
you don’t have to look far to find
a partner
for bridge and piano
just enter the Main hall
look around
under the heavy coats
thinning hair
folks are ready to engage
to listen to your tales
someone shouts “hey brother.”
And then we notice a sign
in the corner of the room
and learn that Miriam is not coming
to Improv
anymore.

**Invitation to Shirley**

Judith S. Adler

Please come play with me,
Come down
from behind the clouds
wherever you are
Come make music
hitting the keys in time
forte
piano.

It’s been too long since
you’ve played with me
no one else can do
The things we did together
You composed, we played
Joy – four hands one piano
Sometimes you put an ice tray into the harp
of the piano / new sounds emerged

Sometimes you sat on the right
sometimes on the left
the keys flowed under our fingers,
arms touched, fingers brushed
as we played Barber’s Sonata in D.

Please come play with me
in schools
concert halls
let’s shock again with dissonant sounds of your music
Make the place rock again with
Poulenc and Hindemith,
your choice!!

Just come.
Evan called on Monday.
He left a voice message.

He needs a notary.

Months ago I notarized
A form for his wife, Sue.

She died three days later.

When I got home
I called him back.

His aide said he was sleeping,
That he’d found a notary.

No need for me.

I asked that he call me back,
That we’d planned to play some chess.

Evan died on Wednesday.

I’d saved his notary message.
Listened to it, his voice clear, strong.

From a Serbian poem:

“How strange will be my death, of which I’ve been thinking since childhood.”

My things.

Dad’s fez, the clarinet, the paintings, the Paris, Jerusalem stuff, Mom’s furniture,
the menorah.

The snippets, stories, poems.
The daily entries, scrapbooks.
All the legal work.

The conversations, the parties, the ...
The people. For God’s sake, the people.
Will I die at home?
Linda, the kids, my people there.
Will the dog next door be barking?

Sue serves us drinks.
I play chess with Evan.
XIII

Dedications
For David Cohen
Searching for Serenity

This morning I went for a walk in my Yorkville neighborhood.

A terrible din painful to my ears came from all directions:

the sound of jackhammers tearing up streets, car horns blaring their right-of-way, loud music fouling the air with noise.

To escape, I turned to the park. As soon as I entered I was assaulted by the sounds of:

children screaming, birds screeching, dogs barking.

Where to next?

Dangerous Dancing

In an aerobics class at the 92nd Street Y:

The music starts. I recognize it from my youth. It flows down to my feet. I dance like a dervish. I stumble. I fall.

What am I doing?
Memoir Writing

David Cohen

I dwell on my past
I write what I remember
I read what I wrote
I can’t tell if it is a
true picture, or a satire.

Equity

David Cohen

As the autumn days grow shorter,
and shorter, and the nights longer,
and longer, the light in my life
each day turns darker and darker.

Though this same season shall return,
with each new autumn,
I will one day run out of autumns
and enter eternal winter.

Is that fair?

Adventurer

David Cohen

When I was young,
I was told of many
wondrous places:

of magic kingdoms
where dreams
are fulfilled.

of Earthly delights
of paradise.

When I grew up,
I went there.

I returned home
I locked my door.
Problem Solving  
David Cohen

I live alone.  
My only companion is old age.  
My worries are legion.  

When I become feeble  
who will take me in?  

When I die, what will  
happen to my body?  

A comforting thought just came to me,  
a grave will welcome me with open arms.

Looking for Life in Central Park in February  
David Cohen

One winter morning, I walk  
into Central Park.  

Everywhere I look, everything is covered  
by a canopy of snow and ice.  

Nothing could possibly live  
in this white mausoleum!  

Then I see a bush covered with snow  
with clusters of red buds at the tips.  

I take in a deep breath of frigid air  
and contentedly breathe out warm air.  

I turn around  
and walk out of the park.
A Visit to the Bronx

David Cohen

I return from a trip to Woodlawn grateful for the warmth of the Lexington Avenue Subway after my walk in the cold cemetery.

The train’s surprisingly crowded for a Sunday morning.

There are several young families with chortling children in their laps.

The parents pleasantly pass the time talking to each other in Spanish.

I don’t understand what they say but their love-filled looks fall on their young.

The train reaches my 86th Street stop. I make my way home.

In the bedroom I look on my wife’s side of the bed covered with books. I draw in a deep breath slowly exhale.
For Barbara Schacter
Ode to Poetry

Barbara Douglas Schacter

4AM, almost dawn.
I’ve just written a poem
for Tuesday’s workshop;
I’ll read mine and hear yours.

What words you weave
week to week,
what stories you tell:
peaches ripe with bursting
juices dripping sweet and tangy.

Awesome Cookies

Barbara Douglas Schacter

Delicious smells, and
miniature chocolate muffins
are baked, packed and
on their way to my grandkids.

They are happy to receive them;
almost as happy as I, to have made
and sent them.

Not quite eighty is a daunting age
but I didn't expect to laugh so much.
(I didn't laugh so much as a kid.)

Much older than my sister and brother,
I filled the role of second mother
that precluded friendship.

Three sons, five grandkids and friends,
baking, poetry, painting and piano
keep me busy all the time, and laughing.

(I won’t talk about my health or
widowhood
but that’s private and do-able.)
Dreams
Barbara Douglas Schacter

I dreamt of you again last night
as so many nights before.
I toss and turn in my new
bed that I thought would
allow me to start over.

Not so.
Missing you takes over
and leaves little room for
anything else.

You’d think that fifty years
together was enough,
but no; I want more, much more.

Untitled
Barbara Douglas Schacter

I watch my favorite East River
most nights after I’ve started to bed.
It’s dark, the wind blows hard and loud
against the windows.
Few boats are on the river, but
I hear her call and I am not alone.

The current sounds are familiar: first
North, then South and then back again.
Splashing white caps sometimes sound
like “B-A-R-B-A-R-A” late at night while I
stand and watch.

Too soon, I’m told, a new forty six story
building will be built across the street
facing my current building.

Goodbye river!
We Were Both Early to Class

*For Barbara*

Nicole Andonov

She said *Let’s go to the piano room. I’ll play you some music.*

She sat on the bench. I pulled up a chair.

Her hands ran through the notes as if she had let two mice dance on the keys—pianissimo—forte—pianissimo.

When we were leaving I asked what piece she was playing.

*Oh, Nicole. I was improvising for you.*

And she wrapped her arm around my shoulder.

In Memoriam

*For Barbara Schacter*

Barbara Oken

Life force embodied in a slender frame, vivid and emphatic to the end, she permanently marked the sites and moments of her presence.

Bleak prognosis by the experts fanned the fires of her vigor, spurred her fingers at the piano, turned her mind to further arts.

She plowed the past for themes of verse, and mined the riches of subduing pain, of cookery and baking for an ebbing appetite.
Those she loved: her parents
and her soulmate gone, her sons
and grandkids, friends—a river!
joining creatures of her fancy

sprang to life while doctors marveled
that her heartbeat and her breath persisted.
Fresh imagery took form on paper,
with new water color brushes and bright paint.

Her blood pressure and weight declined.
Her spirit was the substance
that drove agendas of abundance.
Can you feel that essence still among us?

Remembering Barbara

She was my dear friend.
I'm lost in memories of her.

I want to erase the memories.
They carry such sadness.

I feel so alone I want to cry.
Don't ask me to explain why.

I don't like the idea of crying.
I'm happy she was my friend.

The time to begin again is now.
I'll never forget the sadness.

Without sadness
there would be no joy.
**Barbara**

Ellen Diamond

Now I see your wide smile settling in; elfin smile, childlike against fine lines of an aging backcloth.
Your eyes are bright, full of truths about the good fight, dimmed only a little by late surrenders.
Their color is the river you love: untamed estuary with currents pulled in opposed directions — remaining always one body, true to itself.

**Barbara's Fez**

Stanley Margolies

The day he died mom asked me to bury dad's fez with him.
No. Why not? I'm just not comfortable. But why, wouldn't he have wanted—
Please, mom,
Why not,
Not now. Not now.

The Hayden Planetarium, the earth a dot from a zillion miles.
The fez, gray-red, maroon,
It's dust, earth's remains,
Holding its red dot in its centered star.
At Barbara’s river,
From her weighted terrace,
The woman in red.

Herb, listen. The Sloan piano.
The Man I Love.
Barbara, now.
Hold him.
Now.

Rough Draft: Barbara

Judith Korotkin Mende

I.
If this were a poem I would want to include the following words and phrases so I could make them into a whole:

– Gutsy
– tongue in cheek
– ironic
– quick to judge but never ashamed to admit she was wrong
– She battled her illness with a determination to ignore it and fully occupy today
– She was one of the lucky ones who loved and was loved
– Whenever she said goodbye to a friend or family member she said “I love you.”
What a wonderful way to end a conversation.

II.
It’s hard when you are old(er)
to make a new friend;
I got lucky when I met Barbara.
We were both seeking the words in our 92nd Street Y senior poetry class to express where we were, where we’d been and what we’d learned in our journey and in that room of seekers we glided on wavelength and landed on friendship. Lucky me.
A List of Rules for Spring

dedicated to Barbara Schacter

Judith S. Adler

My love, no worry
I won't let people place
drinks on top of you
I won't allow toys with
sharp edges to scratch your
silky black sides
Pencils might slip and stick
between your hammers
I'll not allow marbles to
spill and spoil your silky sounds
nor papers slip into what
I cannot touch
no ice cubes
to melt and rust your harp.

You, my love, are my universe,
I will protect you

The 71st Street Ramp

Barbara Douglas Schacter

I am in my wheelchair being pushed
along the river by my aide who
knows how much I love this river and
need to be here among the bikers, boats,
joggers, strollers and benchers.

I live just one street
from this lovely river
as well as a couple
from the hospitals where I get chemo,
see doctors, and have other treatments.

All conspire to keep me alive
which is why I moved here from Queens
after my husband passed away.
Fifty years of marriage was hard to give up
but I keep busy and am surprisingly happy here.