

but we just talked, then dressed with the others  
hiding behind towels, dabbing Blue Waltz toilet water  
behind our ears (that's how our mothers taught us)  
we covered our wet pony tails in identical white scarves  
applied more Flame-Glo pale pink lipstick  
over the darkening reddish-blue it had become  
saved our bus fare so we could walk to Woolworth  
and cram ourselves into the hollow box and pose  
for the photo flash, pucker, stick out our tongues  
slide on the tiny plastic seat, fall upon each other  
giddy, crazy, laughing, crying, almost peeing our pants

well, more than almost, but that was many lives ago  
many girlhoods ago, today we dribble with each cough  
or sneeze or unexpected spurt of laughter  
husbands dead, children gone, hardly any of us left  
we find each other, try to resume where we left off

it seems we have learned much too competently  
much to acutely, how to live alone, how to measure  
how to avoid other people's hells, save a buck, do without  
the kind of friends you just goof around with, can't  
remember the last time we caught an old Esther Williams  
movie on television; the vanilla scent of cheap toilet water  
in heart shaped bottles; the way our dreams swam in sync

oh, we try, but to the whiff of chlorine that comes like  
the phantom aroma of snuffed candles one can sense emitting  
from a cassette tape of monks chanting just finished and turned  
off

finally one of us becomes sensible about underwater somersaults  
and how they come up from under to go over, and over  
until they are definitely over, one of us honors the pragmatic  
and politely, firmly, asks about grandchildren.

## *Generations*

*brenda wise byrd*

I glanced into the mirror  
And saw my daddy's face.  
I looked again, but he was gone,  
And I stood in his place.

The gleam that twinkled in his eye,  
Now sparkles from my own.  
I don't know how it got there,  
For I'm standing here alone.

His salt and pepper wavy hair  
Now sits upon my head.  
It's curled and rumped everywhere,  
Like he just got out of bed.

His laughter bubbles in my throat,  
And gurgles from my mouth.  
My accent when I speak, like his,  
Is clearly from the South.

He's dead now, but he isn't gone.  
I sense him everywhere.  
The things he taught still guide my life.  
I am his grateful heir.

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*"How can I die? I'm booked." George Burns ~§~ "Freckles can be*

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## *My Apologies, Sisters*

*Frances Hern*

My ability to fix things extends as far as strips of duct tape or a squirt of WD-40. This is why the sentence, “The front door knob feels loose,” recently uttered by my daughter, was enough to spoil my breakfast. I quickly confirmed that the knob was no longer attached to the springy-turny thing and mentally slotted into my day a visit to our local hardware store.

There, I found a handleset on display that was similar to our broken one, but this model was mounted on a left-hinged door. I tried to visualize whether the catch mechanism might be turned around to fit a right-hinged door and, at risk of appearing stereotypically dumb, went in search of a salesman. After a lengthy discussion with a second salesman, the first one told me that it probably could and, if not, I could return the item.

Returns have to be in the original packaging and it took me ten minutes to coax the box open without destroying it. Cheered by this small achievement and the unexpected appearance of my husband, I convinced him that dinner would be half an hour earlier if he took over. I had barely put the saucepans on the stove before he called that the screw hole in the handle was in the wrong place and wanted to know why I had bought an entire new handleset when all we needed was one knob.

“Because you can’t buy a knob with a handle,” I said. “You have to buy either two knobs or a set like this with knob, handle and a lock too.”

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*explained away by medicine, but I prefer the explanation that they are*

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“Then buy two knobs and you’ll have a spare,” he said, in a tone that implied obvious logic.

“But the knobs might not fit onto our handle.

“Well this one looks as though it will.”

The next morning I returned the handleset and bought a set of knobs of the same make. I attached one knob to the old handle and tentatively turned it. The door opened. I turned the knob again at regular speed but as I pulled to open the door the catch slipped back into the jamb. I had to leave for an appointment so warned my son that he would have to open the door slowly and it might take him several attempts, knowing he would need ten seconds, instead of the usual five, to run to his bus stop, several slices of toast in hand. I didn’t leave my husband a note. I thought that the slipping catch would be more eloquent.

To my great disappointment, his meeting went on much longer than expected and I tried to install the new catch in a hole that was half an inch too far from the edge of the door. I was repackaging the new knobs and asking anyone who might be listening why such items couldn’t be made in one universal size, when he returned.

“But why didn’t you buy the same make as our old one?” he asked.

I bit back a retort that this was the make he said would fit, and that this handle screwed on the inside of the door which seemed more burglar proof than our old one with the screw on the outside. Instead I went with the argument that would most appeal to him.

“The old one was the most expensive brand,” I said. “If the new one is only going to last three years anyway then I might as well buy the cheaper house brand.”

He looked at me as though I had spoken a foreign language. I chose my next words carefully.

“If you came to the store with me you could help me make a more suitable choice.”

While I queued to return the knobs, he immediately found a salesman who helped him find an exact replacement of our old handset, pointed out that it had a lifetime warranty and gave him the phone number so we could claim our refund.

“If you don’t know,” said my husband on our quiet drive home, “why don’t you ask for help?”

He installed the new knob and gave me the job of obtaining a refund.

“Our policy is repair and replacement,” the lady said when I phoned the next day.

“But we’ve already bought a replacement.”

I explained that without it we would either be living with a round hole in our front door large enough for someone to insert a bent coat hanger and unlock it, not to mention the brisk flow of frosty October air whistling through our open-plan house, or living with a front door we couldn’t open from the inside.

She sighed her disbelief that we couldn’t manage such petty problems and told me to mail the receipt and the entire old set to their office. This meant that I would have to have the new lock re-keyed to match our house keys and then install it, or install it as it was and have several new keys cut and distributed before I could package up the heavy hardware and pay the postage to British Columbia. Accurately gauging my frustration level, my husband decided that he would phone the refund department. It was a new day for the warranty representative, or perhaps it was a new representative. When my husband told her that all he really needed was a new knob, a fact I had mentioned when I phoned, she said, “No problem, I’ll have one in the mail for you today.”

I’ve thought about why my husband always finds knowledgeable salespeople. I’ve studied what he says to elicit

a response of “yes sir, no problem sir.” Even so, my positive response rate is only a quarter of his, though we live in these days of supposed equality. Perhaps I’m conditioned to expect problems and somehow signal to others that refusing to do what I request would be more fun. To counteract this I shall think positively about the outcome of this repair job. Our replacement knob will arrive in time for me to return the purchased set to the store and the staff will have forgotten I have already returned two sets of hardware and will not suspect me of fraudulent behaviour and give me the third degree.

## *Bridging a Woman’s Life*

*SuzAnne C. Cole*

To her husband at first her body is a  
bridge of gold drawn up against the hordes.  
For her children later, a bridge to the world,  
their guide from familiar to foreign,  
her strength a footbridge across chaos.

Later, her body-bridge stretched thin  
sags as grown children march on. On the other  
side the youngest waves, kneels, flares a match.  
Weary cross-beams, trusses blaze.

## *Connie Sue's Concerns*

*R. Scott Comegys*

Connie Sue gets upset if she does not have Chapstick readily available, but crossword puzzles have a calming effect on her. She always keeps a stack of puzzle books in her nightstand, along with a drawer full of brand-name lip balm.

That's because she has numerous stressors, her husband being paramount among them. He says cooking is risky behavior, so he forbids her to do it. He worries she may have a seizure and fall onto the stove. He fears that fire will start in the cat litter box. He is angry about Red Goose shoes. ("They are not half the fun of having feet," he cries.)

"Quit obsessing," Connie Sue has told him, over and over. But he won't seek counseling, and she has grown tired of cold food. She told her new therapist she felt wrung out.

The therapist looked at Connie Sue intently. "What would relax you now?" she asked.

"A new crossword puzzle. Or some doughnuts."

"But the doughnuts would hype you up, wouldn't they? All that sugar?"

"No, sugar calms me down," Connie Sue said. "There's nothing like doughnuts at bedtime. Just boom, puts out my lights."

The therapist frowned and scribbled some notes on a yellow legal pad. "Sounds like you may be hyperactive then. That's

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*action you can discover for yourself; just rub them on dirty skin.*

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why we give Ritalin to kids; it's a stimulant, but it slows them down because of their biochemistry."

"I don't believe in that hyperactivity stuff." Connie Sue folded her arms and rested them on her protuberant abdomen. "My first grade teacher always said I was just 'busy,' and she was right. She made me run around the flag pole every morning with a boy named Billy Fowler. We only had 48 states then. I remember because we would stop and help a Cub Scout put up the flag."

"You may well have been living undiagnosed for years," the therapist said. "Adult hyperactivity, it's a cutting-edge diagnosis. Maybe we should medicate you."

Connie Sue shrugged and began to hum "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Suddenly she sat erect on the sofa and dropped her arms to her sides, the palms of her hands meeting red leatherette. "Judy Garland had problems, and pills just made them worse."

The therapist nodded. "What do you know about her?"

"A lot. *Bonanza* beat her show in the ratings, so she got cancelled."

"Networks were different then."

"And I know about Hayley Mills. I used to collect her pictures."

"Did you see *Pollyanna*?"

"I did. Read the book, too."

"Did you learn anything from it?"

"No. I bet she never walked again."

"She did in the book."

"I know, but get real. She was paralyzed from the waist down, and it was like 1910 or something. Aunt Polly probably just packed her off to Hot Springs every summer for 'the treatment' with the TB people and the polio victims. Can you imagine all of that clanking and crap? And nobody ever got



well. Doctors just made up stuff and pretended they were doing something. They still do. You see doctors on billboards now – it’s just a big profit scam.”

The therapist shifted uncomfortably and glanced at her framed diplomas. “Do you believe that is the general intent of medical practice?” she asked.

“Well, sure. And now that we’re on the subject, you remember in the movie, Agnes Moorehead played cranky old Mrs. Snow. She was supposed to be an invalid. The Ladies’ Aiders sent Pollyanna over with some calf’s-foot jelly, and Mrs. Snow fussed about the doctor.”

Connie Sue recalled Mrs. Snow’s lines: “All he gives you is pills – just pills and bills, that’s all.”

“That’s a good imitation.”

“Yeah, thanks. I’m like an African Grey parrot. I’m a mimic.”

“Some might call you a pessimist.”

“I wish they’d call me a fatality.” Connie Sue reached for her Chapstick. She smeared her lips like Minnie Mouse applying lipstick in a cartoon, with big swipes all over her mouth. “And you know what else? I look younger than I am.”

The therapist checked her notes. “Yes, you do look younger than your stated age.”

“That’s because time is going backwards for me. It’s cosmic punishment. I have to live longer than everybody else.”

With a glance at her watch, the therapist closed her legal pad in a file folder and clipped her ball point pen to the edge. She smiled. “I believe our time is up.”

“No, it isn’t.” Connie Sue squinted and smacked her lips. “We’ve only just begun.”

## *Considering Nanny's Cookie Jar* *Becky Haigler*

It is  
a funny little jug:  
a squatty globe whose only ornamentation is  
high-placed curlicue handles and a similar twist of clay  
on the lid. The simplicity of form and the age  
apparent from the crazed lines of its odd green glaze  
are reminiscent of an artifact recovered from the ruins of  
some ancient city. And in fact, this jar once cached strange  
old treasures. Nanny's cookies were large, soft, formless, and  
never-the-same-twice. She didn't put much stock in recipes.  
If the cookie jar were found empty by a grandchild's groping  
hand, Nanny might be inspired to bake. An invitation to pull  
a chair to the kitchen counter and help was even better than  
the finished product, and often what I really sought. I don't  
keep cookies in the jar now (they're fresher in an airtight  
tin) but I love its serene presence in my kitchen.  
Smooth and simple, the stolid lines are  
timeless as a grandmother's love.

## *The Red Tide*

*Anthony J. Mohr*

On a warm July day in 1964, Big Louie yelled as he pointed out to sea. “Outside! My God, outside! It’s so big. Look at that thing form.” Big Louie’s eyes had never been so open. The wave built silently and then piped, emitting a throaty rumble lasting almost fifteen seconds before expiring in foam on the beach. “Outside!” referred to waves we could bodysurf. You paced the cresting water, then held yourself rigid, arms straight ahead or at your side. A breathless ride became your reward, uniting you with the inbound tide.

Soupy Sales called us teeners. We were the products of a golden time, the Southern California of 1964. That summer, Gary, Brian, Joe, Eric, Big Louie, Rich and I gave ourselves up to the water. Six weeks from the start of our senior year, we seven were poised to run our high school and finally have some dates before heading east to college. We deserved these dreamy days on the sand. Lying on our blankets, talking about student government and the Johnson-Goldwater match-up as if they were equally important (which they were), we were stoked on teenage success and knew the future lay open, boundless and bright.

A wave was about to break. Joe caught it. I missed and dove under it. When I surfaced and looked back, Joe was rollicking through the foam to the shoreline. In control to the end, he let

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*adolescent.” Wendy Cope ~§~ “He is so old that his blood type was*

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out a victory yell – “Team!” is what he hollered – as he flailed his arms and raced to our beach blankets.

We’d fall asleep until the late afternoon marine layer turned the air moist. Then we scrunched through the sand to our car. The radio blasted all the way to our houses, where we ran upstairs to shower before dinner.

The nights were like velvet. Our bodies became little ovens, giving off the heat we absorbed without sunscreen. We saw *Viva Las Vegas* at a drive-in. The Beatles made us smile and groove. “A Hard Day’s Night” reached Number One on the KFWB Fabulous Forty Survey. Their first movie by the same name was due out on August 11. We worried about nothing. Our grades were high. The Democrats were the party of peace and paychecks. Our swimming pools were heated so we could play in them until bedtime.

The red tide arrived in August. Most likely it was an algae bloom, probably nontoxic because none of us got sick. The diatoms made the water glow whenever something – like a swimmer or a wave – stirred them. And since breaking waves stirred them plenty, the surf line became a band of light.

Surfing that band of light sounded like a grand adventure, and on the night of August 4, we decided to try. Everyone gathered at my house. We had just finished piling blankets and snacks in the car when my parents said the President was about to give a speech. At 8:36 Pacific Daylight Time, Lyndon Johnson’s face appeared on the television.

He opened with the phrase, “As President and Commander-in-Chief...” The group stiffened. Most of us took civics in summer school. We knew that when the President used those words, military action was coming.

Johnson continued: “[R]enewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have

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*discontinued.” Bill Dana ~§~ “A man loves the meat in his youth*

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today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply.”

“It’s about time,” someone muttered, I think my dad.

“That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations.”

We were bombing North Vietnam. Everyone in my den supported this long overdue move. So did LBJ’s opponent. Looking straight into the TV camera, the President informed us, “I was able to reach Senator Goldwater and I am glad to say that he has expressed his support of the statement that I am making to you tonight.”

Certain moments rate as a steeple in your life, the apex of a season. Tuesday night, August 4, 1964, presented such a moment. We whooped through the twenty-minute drive from my house to the Pacific Ocean. The DJ on KRLA said it best: *finally we’re showing those Communists what for*. He sounded as ebullient as we felt, racing west toward the red tide. Even better, President Johnson promised that he would get Congress “to pass a resolution making it clear that our Government is united in its determination to take all necessary measures in support of freedom and in defense of peace in Southeast Asia.”

Brian was the first to frolic among the phosphorus diatoms. Gary joined him and they swam toward an oncoming shadow, the top of which was a ribbon of lit algae. Before diving under the wave, I saw Brian’s head sticking out of the vertical water, his mouth an oval, eyes glaring ahead. For an instant a corona surrounded Brian; then the wave crashed. Brian scored a perfect ride to the beach. So did Gary. Emerging from the glowing froth with his arms in the air and head thrown back, Gary reached for the most awesome syllables at his command to communicate his ecstasy: “Hey, Bamboola!”

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*that he cannot endure in his age.” William Shakespeare ~§~ “Middle*

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Eric voiced an idea for Student Council as we drove home at midnight. Gary invited us to a swimming party on Saturday. And I decided to ask out Margie. Braving the red tide gave me the courage to do it. The fall dance was set for September 26. If I called her tomorrow, Margie would have enough notice. It was going to be a sensational senior year.

## *Legacy*

*Becky Haigler*

“Becky is a mule’s name!” my grandmother said.  
 She died when I was three.  
 My “memories” are only photographs.  
 But I remember what people said about her:  
 “A saint!”  
 We have her quilting and embroidery  
 and her name. But I didn’t really know  
 Mary Elizabeth, my grandmother.  
   Mary Ruthe, my mother.  
     Mary Rebecca, me.  
       Mary Rachel, my daughter.  
         Mary Elizabeth, my granddaughter.  
 There is a strong stubborn streak here.  
 Are you sure mules don’t reproduce?

## *The Pump Room*

*Heather Haldeman*

“I wonder if the Pump Room’s still there?” was the first thing my 79-year-old mother asked. Mom and I were flying to Chicago for a weekend, where we planned to meet my daughter, Hilary, on her college break.

“It was the first fancy bar and restaurant I’d ever been to,” she said, reminiscing. “The very first. The night was magic.”

“How old were you?” I asked, assuming that she was probably in her twenties.

I should have known better than to assume anything with Mom. “Thirteen,” she replied.

Up until my stepfather’s death a year and a half ago, my mother traveled extensively. Since then, she hadn’t gone anywhere, and the trip to Chicago was a big deal for her. She was so excited, she even renewed her passport. “Mom, Chicago’s in the United States. Not to worry.”

“But, my husbands always did everything,” she replied, referring to her three spouses. “I’m just making sure that I have what I need to get there.”

We arrived with plans to visit The Art Institute, take a city tour in a trolley car and see Chicago’s magnificent architecture on a river cruise. But, all of this paled in comparison when Mom found that the Pump Room still existed in the Ambassador East Hotel. On top of that, Chicago still allowed smoking in bars.

“Hot damn!” she exclaimed, being a true lover of nightlife.

“My god, there it is,” my mother shrieked as soon as the cab turned onto North State Parkway. She acted as if this were her greatest thrill ever.

As our cab pulled up, the doorman leapt to attention and greeted us with a cheery smile. He welcomed us and extended a gloved hand to help Mom out of the cab.

My mother, the consummate flirt, peered up at his nametag as soon as she got out. “Don,” she said, “I’m Marilyn.” Then motioning to my daughter and me, she continued, “This is my kid and her daughter. They’re taking me here for dinner. I’m from California. You know, the land of fruits and nuts.”

Bubbling from all the excitement, Mom was in rare form. Hilary and I exchanged glances, and Don was fascinated.

“Can you believe that I haven’t been back here in 61 years!” she said to Don, who was obviously impressed.

Digging into my evening bag, I pulled out my camera and asked Don to take a group shot of the three of us with the hotel name prominently featured in the background. “Well, Marilyn, it took you long enough to get back here,” he joked, handing back the camera. “We’ve been waiting.”

Don ushered us through the door into the stately old-world elegance of the Ambassador East lobby with its thick marble floors, brilliant chandeliers and ornate high ceiling. Wide-eyed, Mom said dreamily, “Just like I remembered it.”

The Pump Room’s to your left,” Don said, taking Mom’s arm like a pro. “But, I’m going to escort THIS piece of history with me.” Her blue eyes sparkled and her false eyelashes fluttered.

“Did you know that Chicago’s the city of Big Shoulders?” Mom asked, as soon as we were seated at a small table in the bar area. “It’s true.” She plopped her gold lamé handbag on the tiny table lit by a votive candle. “Carl Sandburg called it that in one of his poems.”



Impressed that my mother had read any poetry given the stack of hand-me-down tabloids she passed on to me each week, I nodded. “Really? Gosh, Mom, how’d you remember that?”

“Oh, all the movie stars back in the ’50s loved Carl Sandburg.”

“Angel,” the bartender, quickly appeared and took our drink order. Before my mother could strike the match, he whipped out a lighter and gallantly lit the end of her slim cigarette. Mom was in heaven.

Hilary asked if the bar area looked the same. “Did all these photographs of famous people line the walls back then?”

“I don’t remember that,” Mom tasted the wine. “Ahhh, the first sip. Always the best. Sorry, excuzy.” She loved using her bastardized Italian.

“The restaurant part of the Pump Room seems smaller,” she said, surveying the area adjacent to the bar. “Like when you go back to your grammar school and the desks look all tiny. But, you remembered them looking big.”

After Mom finished her cigarette, we stepped down into the restaurant and snapped a few photos of her in Booth One, where many of the restaurant’s famous took up residence. Then, we were seated at a larger table which was more accommodating for the three of us.

“So, Nana,” Hilary said, opening her menu. “You were only thirteen? Why were you here?”

“It was the Republican Convention,” she mused. “Papa was a delegate and he took me along with him. He was really excited about Wendell Wilke running for President.”

A bus boy appeared with water and a basket of bread. Mom strained her eyes to read his nametag in the darkened room. “Ahdbjul?” she asked. Now it was her broken Spanish. “Is that the way you pronounce your name?”

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*hippies don't die, they just lie low until the laughter stops and their*

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Abdul obliged, saying his name. “Hmmm. Don’t recognize that language.” Mom shook her head, her frosted bob never moving an inch. “Where’re you from?”

“Af-han-ni-stan,” he replied, using his native tongue.

Oh dear, I thought, here we go again. Mom is always trying to make a connection wherever she goes.

“Wild,” Mom exclaimed. “I’ve never met anyone from Afghanistan.”

Abdul was taken in. “Would you like two pieces of the bread?” he asked her, smiling wide.

Our waiter stood at attention. His nametag read “Joe.” Thank goodness. There’d be no new accent from Mom, but she did find out that he was a native Chicagoan.

After ordering, Mom continued her story. “Papa and I sat over there in one of those tables where you sit side-by-side.” She gestured to the tables along the wall. “I was wearing a lavender dress with this big purple sash at the waist. It had a puffy slip and I felt beautiful.”

Dropping ice cubes into her wine, she continued. “Over there,” she pointed to the steps leading back up to the bar, “I’ll never forget, two waiters came down carrying flaming skewers of shish kabob. In those days, flaming food was a big deal – cherries jubilee, baked Alaska, that sort of thing. I was hooked. What could be better than this!”

Although there were no flaming dishes on this visit, we all enjoyed our dinners. On the way out, Mom took in the celebrity photos, stretching out the evening as long as she could.

Don waved a cab as soon as he saw us coming. “Marilyn,” he called over to Mom, “how was the Pump Room?”

“Marvelous!” Her blue eyes sparkled. Her false eyelashes fluttered.

Helping her into the cab, Don leaned down so that she could hear him. "Now, just make sure that you don't wait another 61 years to come back."

"Not to worry!" she said, as our cab sped away.

## *Father Lied*

*Michael Neal Morris*

My father lied.

He didn't mean to, I suppose,  
but now that he's dead  
I have to live with it.

He said, "When you are an adult  
living in your own place  
with your own children  
then you will be the boss."

He said it as if it meant  
I'd be in charge, have my way,  
run my course  
or at least have control of the TV

But when I see his eyes  
in my memory they reveal  
a pillar of firm despair  
going before the ark of hope.

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*for the day when I feel as old as I really am." Dwight D. Eisenhower*

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## *Thinking About Red*

Janet McCann

The girl's coat in *Schindler's List*  
is the first red I remember, and of course  
it isn't red, it is just the faintest  
suggestion of red, as she is being led  
off to be killed, in her absolute innocence,  
in her red coat, and why is that  
the first red to come to mind, brighter in fact  
than all the rest? And then there was  
a red dress I had not the nerve to buy  
in young womanhood, not wanting  
the "wrong kind" of attention, but it was lovely,  
the shimmery red fabric under my fingers.  
Red blood drops of geranium petals  
fell on my front stoop, a middle-class plant  
but you saw it; there was a bright red car we hit  
because it was hidden in bushes, and you couldn't see it,  
it looked like flowers. There was so much blood  
when I found a razor blade at three years old  
and sliced my fingertip – I shook it,  
it rained red over the wallpaper of horses  
and carriages – not till then did I scream.  
When they said, what is black-and-white  
and red all over, I didn't get it;  
I thought newspapers had to have red print

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~\$~ "If youth knew; if age could." Henri Estienne ~\$~ "We do not

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hidden away in the middle. There was red  
calligraphy on my ankle when I tried  
to save the feral cats; I tried to read it.  
It healed into a mark my Chinese colleague  
said looked something like the word for friend.  
Last may be the red of my prom roses.  
I had a wrist bouquet. My escort died  
years ago, of alcohol and life,  
but here's the bouquet, shriveled, in a box  
with yearbooks, high school photographs – still red.

## *Grandma Sult*

*Michael Lee Johnson*

I remember Grandma Salt, or was it Sult,  
for her golden silver hair, long  
and strung out like a mop.  
On mild days tidy and tossed back in a bundle  
like twined rope.  
If it was Salt it was her hair; if it was Sult  
it was German and I know now  
where my temper came from.  
Standing erect, for her age, 95,  
structured posture upright  
with a broad smile half the width  
of the mouth of the St. Joe River.  
She wrote her own history with 11 children.

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*count a man's years until he has nothing else to count." Ralph Waldo*

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Little did she know 8 of them would  
outlive her. 1 touched the century  
mark with a golden pen and added 1 year.  
Numbers are important in family histories.  
Good genes, then genealogy, grew in fertile ground.  
No one knew, hand on the Bible I swear,  
where the planting of the seeds originally sprouted.  
There was a sense of sternness, and a masculinity  
hard to decipher with long dresses on.  
They plowed the fields, spanked the butts  
of dirty street children; they worked hard  
4 the corn they grew and found in their  
children's cereal bowl meals.  
It is hard to discern all the features  
in 1 black and white photograph;  
hard to tell what is real and what is  
coal smoke tossed, gray from the ears,  
to furnaces in the air.  
How do you end a poem like this 1?  
I guess I found the answer when my  
mother passed away at 98½, a fraction.  
#'s are important in genealogies these days.

## *Just Push Play*

*Ginger B. Collins*

Sylvie wasn't on the porch. It was Helen's first clue that something was wrong. Her sister usually paced on the porch or stood in the driveway poised like a sprinter waiting for the starting gun.

Helen rolled to the curb and honked. No response. "Probably dropped dead from a heart attack," she mumbled.

She swung the Buick into the driveway, rocking to a halt just short of Sylvie's garage. She threw the strap of the oxygen tank over her shoulder and using the fender for support, teetered around the car and up the sidewalk.

A blend of Aqua Net and Shalimar sifted through the screen door. Sylvie stood inside, her Clairol blonde in a crisp updo and her lime-green polyester pants suit barely camouflaging her pear shape. She was preaching to the TV, wagging her finger for emphasis. The shiny red of a fresh manicure added fire to her brimstone.

"They'll put you in the home for yapping to the TV like that."

Sylvie waved her sister inside with the other manicured hand, never taking her eyes from the screen. "Look who's talking. You hardly get around on those gimpy legs. If anyone's bound for the home, it's you."

"I'd rather be crippled than crazy."

Helen laughed at her own joke, bringing on the deep, raspy cough of a cat with a hairball. Sylvie stepped forward, but Helen's hand went up like a stop sign. After a few steady draws of oxygen, the cough subsided.

"Don't say a word," Helen said, dropping her hand. "I loved every one of those cigarettes."

She walked to Sylvie's side. "What in the hell are you doing?"

Sylvie turned back to the television, hitting buttons on the remote in a random sequence that brought gray fuzz, charts with arrows, and finally a black screen. "Rita bought me a VCR." Each frustrated word was followed by a stab at the buttons with her red fingernail. "And I want to tape my soaps before we leave for bingo."

Helen rolled her eyes. "Are you still watching that trash? Forget it and let's get out of here. We won't get a good seat if we don't leave now." She grabbed at the remote. "You know it's hard to hear the numbers if we don't sit up front."

Sylvie gave a quick tug. "I've watched *Guiding Light* for over thirty years. I don't want to miss it. That's why Rita bought me this thing. 'So you can get out more, and not miss your programs,' she told me. She promised to get me started. But what happened? She plugged in a few wires, said it was ready, and didn't stay to show me what to do next. Now all I'm left with is a stupid contraption that doesn't work, the rings from her coffee mug on my tabletop, and cookie crumbs on the carpet."

Sylvie went back to pushing buttons. "Don't you have one of these VCR's?"

"I have one but the kids put it together. I just put in tapes and press PLAY."

The words hung in the air. Ernie would have put that VCR together in seconds. But the love of Sylvie's life had been dead

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*deeply never grow old; they may die of old age, but they die young." Sir*

---



for ten years. Rita, their only daughter, rarely called or visited. Other than Helen and their youngest sister, Vernie, Sylvie was alone.

Helen fiddled with her oxygen hose. “Oh, damn the front row.” She unstrapped the portable tank and peeled off her coat. “If my big sister wants those stupid soap operas, we’ll put a VCR together.”

“Really?”

“Absulootly! Get the instruction book. I’ll call Vernie. She’ll hold our places. We’ll figure this out in no time.”

Sylvie was halfway down the hall before Helen finished the sentence. Helen looked at the black plastic hodgepodge of buttons and arrows. It still held the oily warmth of Sylvie’s hand. “It’s just you and me kid.” Helen reached up under the cuff of her blouse for a hanky to wipe Sylvie’s hand cream from the crevices. “Make this easy, okay?”

Sylvie returned before Helen got the hanky tucked back up her sleeve. Her face had turned to sunshine and she waved the instruction book like unearthed treasure when she handed it to Helen. “You get started. I’ll make coffee.”

Helen sat, remote in one hand, instruction book in the other. “Pushy broad.” She took a couple of deep drags of oxygen and started reading. From the kitchen she caught the first whiff of fresh coffee. Sylvie was humming “Tennessee Waltz.”

In a few minutes Sylvie returned with coffee. It was perfect – that caramel color you get with just a touch of cream. The saucer held two freshly-baked sugar cookies on a folded linen napkin. Helen smiled at the irony. Coffee at her house was “serve yourself” from an old Mr. Coffee – fresh in the morning and bitter by afternoon. And baking? Once Entenmanns’s perfected their chocolate chip, Helen stashed away her cookie sheets.

“Any progress?”

“Who writes these books?” Helen asked. “No one our age, that’s for damn sure. I look at the diagrams ’cause the words make no sense.” She took a bite of cookie and flipped the page. “There’s one thing I learned at Theo’s hardware store. If you fit the male end of one into the female end of the other, something always happens.”

She congratulated herself on the pun, then refocused and rotated the book ninety degrees. “Okay, here we go.”

“You’ve figured it out?”

Helen took a few more deep hits of oxygen and slid off of the chair. She got on all fours and crawled across to the set. She motioned to Sylvie. “Push the thing away from the wall so I can get back there and undo what’s been done. We’ll start from scratch.”

Sylvie scrambled to the television and put her weight behind the corner. After a few strained heave-ho’s, the casters of the metal TV stand rolled across the carpet, exposing a web of black wires that connected the VCR into the back side of the television.

“Where’s that fancy magnifying glass of yours? I need to see close up.”

Sylvie pulled the pearl handled magnifying glass off the table beside her chair. “Another helping hand from Rita,” she announced, handing it to Helen.

“She means well, Sis.” Helen inspected the silver carving on the band. “Nice. Looks antique.”

Sylvie puckered her mouth and turned to walk away.

“Where do you think you’re going? Get your butt down here.”

Sylvie fussed over the potential for wrinkles in her pantsuit as she got to her knees and landed with a thud. There was a symbolic rolling up of sleeves, and work began. They looked at the set and studied the diagram. No kibitzing, no wisecracks,

just thirty minutes of concentration as they battled the wires to match up the ins and outs on the two pieces of equipment.

“I think this might be it.” Helen’s voice had cautious enthusiasm. “Go around front and turn her on.”

Sylvie scooped up lint and cookie crumbs from the carpet as she crawled around front. She eased her finger down on the remote’s power button as if the level of pressure made a difference between success and failure. The television came alive.

“Okay,” Helen called. “Push MENU.”

Sylvie gave a gentle push to the button marked MENU and was rewarded with a color grid for “clock set” and “timer set.”

Helen peeked around the corner of the set. “What do you see?”

“I think you did it. Come look.” Sylvie started to giggle like a kid at Christmas.

Helen huffed and puffed to the front. “Grab my tank, would you, Sis.” Her volume was down to a shallow whisper. “I need air.”

Sylvie snapped to attention and helped Helen adjust the tank’s transparent tubes into her nostrils. The static of the television buzzed as Helen pulled in cool, fresh air. They sat with their backs against the sofa and legs stretched out in front like two teenagers waiting to see Elvis on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. When Sylvie completed the final ENTER, they squealed – then laughed – then cried.

“You did it.” She gave Helen a hug. “Thanks, sis.”

“Thanks, schmanks. Don’t get any bright ideas. I’m not going into TV repair as a sideline.” Helen reached for a piece of furniture, starting the long haul to an upright position. “It would cut into Bingo time. Speaking of...let’s get going. If Vernie sees a couple of eligible widowers she’ll give them our seats and toss us to the back of the room.”

Helen grunted and Sylvie groaned as they struggled to standing. After a quick scan of hair and lipstick, they were off. As Sylvie locked the door, Helen saw her sneak one last look at the VCR remote on the coffee table.

Sylvie got settled as Helen cranked up the Buick. "Let's go for the jackpot today," she said, reaching over to pat Helen on the arm. "I'm feeling lucky."

## *Free Flow*

*Larry Lefkowitz*

When lads, in summer, we swam in the Delaware river  
 The last generation before the advent of the swimming pool  
 Delighting in the river's flow  
 And moving upstream from King's Rock to Queen's Rock  
 The water swirling about our waists as we bucked the current  
 Before the measured pool came to hold sway  
 With tiled bottom in place of time-smoothed rocks.

Are we different because of it  
 From the youthful generation that followed?

I leave it to the sociologists or anthropologists  
 Searching its banks for evidence of the Indians Delaware  
 Who also tested the the river's flow before the Europeans  
     came  
 Bringing currents of change and rocks no longer named  
 For the sun and the moon.

## *The Last Thing I Do*

*Mary Deal*

Passing of the clouds is barely perceptible, unless the boat rocks and disturbs their reflection before the water returns to glass. The landscape is completely calm, not a tree branch bending. Sunlight beats down, felt, and seems the only thing moving.

I sit endlessly, caught up in the serenity of the lake. I think long about the last thing that I must do, but haven't been out on the water since you left. Left, but not quite gone. And this is not the place. I will know when I find the spot, where you and I used to sit and pass the hours as precious time together waned.

I row. We used to take turns rowing. Our favorite game was to try to find the exact mid-point between opposite shores. I never knew where that was but I remember your words: "...just about where the church steeple on the hill comes into view."

Your presence as always, goes with me, even after there is no bringing you back. You can no longer speak to me, but our playful bantering haunts my memories, as does our laughter.

I wait till the water has smoothed again. Then, slowly, I open the urn and set you free from a mind that held you captive and kept us apart yet together for years; set you free to be the liberated soul that you are.

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*thought freckles looked like lentils; anything freckled or speckled was*

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## *Druid Hill Drive*

*Terrí Kirby Erickson*

On Druid Hill Drive,  
we were laughing, wiggling  
flashes  
of mismatched clothes  
and spindly limbs,  
who spun our parents  
in circles as we dashed  
in and out of assorted kitchens,  
the sound of banging  
screen doors loud  
as cannon fire, family dogs  
barking like mad  
from the porch. With bikes  
to ride and trees  
to climb, forts to build  
and bugs  
to catch, there were  
barely enough hours  
in the day for all the things  
we wanted to do before  
bedtime, when sleep

grabbed us like an undertow,  
dragging tired children

to their weary rest  
and back again,  
for another round  
of summer.

## *Tip Boxes*

*Karen Neuberg*

Betty taught me  
to open one more button and bend  
while serving men  
hot turkey dinners and foamy Coke floats.  
She had beautiful, pale breasts  
which she lifted and pressed  
with her upper arms  
as she leaned.

Elsie glided slowly in gum-soled shoes,  
plates above her head.  
She was a white-haired, red-lipped, powdered twig  
who belonged in a room with doilies.  
Annie, an apple-cheeked dumpling,  
had hands capable of serving  
a scoop of ice cream so perfectly placed  
it hid the moldy crust on the last piece of pie.

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*“Nature gives you the face you had at twenty; it is up to you to merit*

---

They instructed me to clean the grill  
with seltzer and pumice stone;  
to shine the counter and chrome  
endlessly with a tired rag.

I opened my second button and let my pale hair fall  
across my eye, Veronica Lake-ish.

I put all my tips into the grey metal box with my name  
that took its place among the others under the counter.

That summer,  
between the end of high school  
and the beginning of college,  
I read my Suggested Reading,  
counted my change, and waited.

## *Happiness*

*SuzAnne C. Cole*

It didn't take much today  
to flood me with joy —  
succulent oranges glowing  
on a blue pottery plate,  
scarlet velvet tulips drooping  
over an alabaster vase,  
the busy beaks of robins poking  
through the debris of winter,  
an unsought smile brightening  
a familiar face —  
may it always be so.

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*the face you have at fifty." Coco Chanel ~\$~ "You're only young once,*

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## *Through Eyes of Love*

*Elizabeth Simpson*

I was nine years old and sweltering in the heat of a Canadian prairie summer when the postman came up our steps on Clifton Street. My father had replaced our storm doors and windows with screens, and I was inside looking out when the postman knocked. His face brightened as my mother moved toward us, and I assumed his smile was in response to her beauty. I'd not yet learned that love has ways of magnifying pleasure in a child's eyes.

My father, whom I looked up to in the physical and metaphorical sense, stood five foot ten, but seemed a giant to me with his curly silvering hair. Neighboring women whispered that he was handsome, but I'd learned to see through his eyes when he praised my mother's porcelain skin and her smiling eyes. As she came toward the door on that hot summer morning, the postman stooped down to tell me my freckles came from catching sunbeams through our screen door. *You've been sprayed with beauty marks*, he laughed, and I believed him.

I was the middle child, padded on each side by a sister who also had freckles, though our parents had none. My mother complained that all her daughters looked like our father. My older sister said it was proof that we were adopted. I told my mother to stand behind the screen door and let the sun freckle her face to match ours. My younger sister toddled away when we stared at her freckled nose and knees.

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*but you can be immature forever." John Greier ~S~ "An old young*

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Though our freckles made clear we were sisters, our coloring differed. My older sister's hair was auburn, and reddish-brown freckles speckled her nose. My hair was dark brown, my cheeks criss-crossed by light brown freckles. My blond younger sister wore pale orange freckles that encouraged the boys to tease her. In grade three she came home in tears. My older sister and I checked our knees before breathing a sigh of relief.

Mother caught rain water to wash the thick curls that rested on our shoulders and then trimmed the bangs over our three broad foreheads. I was in my teens by the time I realized that her complaint about caring for our hair was a mask she wore to cover her pride. *Except for your freckles, you're all like your father*, she would say, a touch of sadness in her voice. It was then I realized the hair surrounding her delicate face was thinner and less buoyant than ours.

Our mother took us to a photographer when each of us reached our ninth birthday. He turned out airbrushed pictures that modified a portion of our freckles. As young adults, we hung these photographs in our separate bedrooms and wondered why our mother allowed him to tamper with reality. By then we had lost our preoccupation with freckles and talked instead of dancing, swimming, and homework.

I was seventeen when I learned that not everyone was as forgiving about freckles as my boyfriend was, this boy I'd met at fifteen and would marry at nineteen. That summer I got a job as a typist for the Provincial Health Services. When a senior official expressed his pleasure in hiring me, I thought he was referring to my typing speed. Instead, he asked me to pose for a poster that would advertise the link between drinking milk and healthy teeth. I walked the hour to and from the office thinking perhaps I might become a Hollywood star. The morning the photographer arrived, I brushed my teeth twice and worked hard

to keep my lips from trembling as I smiled into the bright lights from one angle and then another.

My photograph was blown up the size of a kitchen table. Smiling back was the person I saw every morning in the mirror – a girl with perfect teeth. What I didn't know was that I was about to learn the truth in the expression that pride cometh before a fall. *Who would have guessed your freckles would stand out like that?* Mother asked, powdering my face before I left home. *I hadn't realized how many freckles you had,* the senior official confessed. *That's what you get for going to the beach with your boyfriend,* my older sister huffed. *The only beauty that counts is the one that comes from your heart,* my father said. *I love every freckle,* my boyfriend said, kissing my cheeks.

Having failed to be beautiful, I decided to make my mark saving lives. I applied to enter nursing in a city where no one knew me, and was accepted in Manitoba at the hospital where I'd been born before my father was transferred to Saskatchewan. A month before my eighteenth birthday, I arrived back at Misericordia, the hospital I'd left when I was five days old. There, I slept on a cot in a room I shared with two strangers. We each had a locker similar to the ones in high school and were expected to store all our belongings in it. The bathroom in the hall had no lock and was shared by all the girls on our second floor.

In two weeks I came to hear the word “misery” whenever anyone said the word Misericordia. In the late fifties, nursing students worked the wards immediately after their arrival, changing beds and bathing patients. I had no brothers and had never seen my parents or sisters naked. I ran away the morning I was scheduled to bathe a man, and returned to be reprimanded when darkness fell and I had nowhere else to go. The next day I was put on the terminal ward to bathe an old woman. She whimpered when I touched her with my soapy cloth. I promised

myself that I would not allow a stranger to bathe my grandma when she was dying.

On secret ballots, the girls in my class voted me their Freshie Queen. I was expected to compete with other girls from other careers for the crown awarded to the most beautiful student. I woke up from nightmares of bright lights shining on my freckled face. I felt ashamed for pretending to be someone I wasn't. I made an appointment with Mother Superior, the woman none of us had seen. In her dimly lit office, she reminded me that my classmates were depending on me to prove myself a worthy candidate. I phoned home to ask my mother why she had given birth in a Catholic hospital when we were Presbyterians. She said she trusted nuns not to think about their boyfriends while she was in labor, and remained deaf to my plea to return home.

In spite of her, I got on a train for the twelve hour ride back to Saskatchewan. My father and grandmother stood on the platform, their arms open to welcome me. Mother's absence was her way of saying she was ashamed of me. I steeled myself against her attempts to make me right my wrong by returning to the hospital.

Years later, living alone on my thirtieth birthday, I enrolled at university to finish the degree I'd been laboring over at night classes for years while I spent my daylight hours as a secretary. In autumn, I moved to Vancouver and at age thirty-five graduated with a Master's degree from the University of British Columbia. When I was given a sessional position at the university, my mother expressed her pride in my accomplishment. Just as my heart began to swell, she asked if I'd ever believed I'd graduate and teach at a big university with spectacular rose gardens. Her face crumpled when I told her my achievement had become possible only after I'd escaped her disappointment.

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*and Driving Miss Daisy." Goldie Hawn ~§~ "As you get older it is*

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Now, having reached my sixty-sixth birthday and retired from my career, I realize that only in the end do we see the beginning with clarity. Cancer has taken the lives of both my mother and sister. Later, I survived my own cancer and comforted my husband through his. I have seen what a difference devoted nurses make to our well-being. Still, I have not forgotten the disappointment on my mother's face when I came home. Nor have I forgiven myself for the harsh words I used to defend my decision.

As age spots multiply on the backs of my hands, I've come to realize we understand the workings of a mother's heart only after we mature. My mother had grown up on a Canadian homestead where medical help was too far away to contemplate. Now, I take flowers to her grave and whisper how grateful I am that she was finally proud of me. I have learned that affection within families surpasses understanding. I am reminded that I'm beautiful in the only way I can be – in the eyes of those who love themselves enough to love me too. Perhaps our sole responsibility to parents is to be grateful they blessed us with life in all its imperfections.

## *Vocations Club*

*Paula Sergi*

We met on Tuesdays, after school  
with Sister Mary Agnes,  
the two Mary Lous, Julie, Kay and me  
to learn about being nuns.

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*harder to have heroes, but it is sort of necessary." Ernest Hemingway*

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The convent sounded good to me —  
a room of my own, a single bed,  
time to think and pray, no arguments  
over what we'd watch – *Bonanza* versus *Dragnet*,  
or who would get the couch.  
I dug those crazy nun outfits, and hated hand-me-downs  
with too-long sleeves and too-tight waists.  
I'd take the smell of polished wood and incense  
over burnt grilled cheese and sour milk.  
I'd have a good job, teaching kids  
and all the chalk I'd want,  
long, unbroken pieces that echoed off the board,  
all eyes on me as I'd tap directions,  
conducting my classroom all day.  
People, I'd begin, today we're talking about. . .  
whatever I want to!  
Nuns got great rosaries with fancy beads  
and lots of gifts at Christmas.  
And the solitude of celibacy sounded pretty good,  
better than worrying about French kissing  
like my sister, better than pining for men,  
like Mom, whose men left anyway.

## *Peek-a-Boo Freckles*

*Linda O'Connell*

Freckles, did you slide through my wrinkles and splatter in a  
splotch on my hand?

Please, please, help me understand.

When I was young, I pancake-make-uped you away,  
but I wouldn't dare apply that stuff to my face today.

Facial sludge makes wrinkles more pronounced  
and so, heavy makeup I've denounced.

I smear slippery night-time cream onto my face and hands  
as though I am greasing crevices of crinkled Bundt cake pans.

I wonder freckles, yes I do,  
how on earth did you squeeze through?

I tug my face upwards at either side—  
Oh, that's where the rest of you freckles hide!

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*a child. They were exposed to all these crazy things going on." Nancy*

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## *As She Ages*

*Kerín Riley-Bishop*

Her skin is slightly weathered now  
leathered now  
I do not know when she got older  
I still see myself so young

It is odd how time passes  
how age skips one while settling on another  
like a fickle tornado – this house, this house  
skip this one

When lines show on my face  
I consider them treasures  
trophies of laughter and tears  
My years  
accumulated; good and bad.

Her skin is weathered now  
leathered now  
I do not ponder long on how  
but, when?



## *Hold That Thought*

*Gail Denham*

There's a moment.  
It includes laughter.  
A dance anoints the time  
into a sponge that bounces  
and jiggles until tears of mirth  
make the occasion so juicy,  
it nearly slips away, but we  
clutch the event hard, close  
to our hearts, as if it were  
the keys to eternity,

which, of course, it is.

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*than the cake." Bob Hope ~§~ "Forty is the old age of youth, fifty is*

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*...To Wrinkles*

*Steve Cartwright*



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*the youth of old age." Victor Hugo ~§~ "A stockbroker urged me to buy*

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## *About the Authors*

**Carol Ayer** was born in Berkeley, California, in the early 1960s. She grew up in Orinda, California, and graduated from UC Berkeley. Her publication credits include *Woman's World* magazine, two Chicken Soup series books, *The Prairie Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *flashquake*. She has won awards from WOW-Women on Writing, *Artella Magazine*, and *Brady Magazine*.

**Roy A. Barnes** writes from southeastern Wyoming. His poetry and prose have appeared at *The Goblin Reader*, *Swimming Kangaroo*, *Heritage Writer*, *C/Oasis*, *Literary Liftoff*, *Poesia*, *The First Line*, and *Skive Magazine*. Roy's favorite baseball player is Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson, and his favorite team has always been the New York Yankees.

**Glenda Beall** reinvented herself in her late fifties, and followed her life-long passion. From writing as a child sitting high in a chinaberry tree, she came full circle and began publishing her work in 1995. She presently serves as Program Coordinator for the North Carolina Writers' Network West. Glenda is on faculty at the John C. Campbell Folk School. She also teaches at a junior college and in a church adult education program. Her classes are for senior adults who want to write about their lives for their children and grandchildren. She is a multi-genre writer, having published poetry in literary magazines, essays in anthologies and slick magazines. One of her stories will appear in *Cup of Comfort for Horse Lovers*. In her "spare" time, Glenda writes articles for the Valley River Humane Society

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*a stock that would triple its value every year. I told him, at my age, I*

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newsletter and for local newspapers. She also maintains a blog for her writers' group: [www.netwestwriters.blogspot.com](http://www.netwestwriters.blogspot.com) .

**Betty Wilson Beamguard** writes full-time, specializing in magazine features, short fiction, and humorous essays. She has received over 30 honors for her writing, and her work has appeared in *Women in the Outdoors*, *South Carolina*, *Sasee*, *ByLine*, *The Writer* and more. In her humorous novel, *Weej and Johnnie Hit Florida*, two middle-age women spend a week in Florida trying to lose the jerk who is following them. Her most recent book is the biography of a woman who drives a draft horse with her feet – *How Many Angels Does It Take: The Remarkable Life of Heather Rose Brooks*. [www.home.earthlink.net/~bbeamguard](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~bbeamguard)

**Renie Burghardt**, who was born in Hungary, is a freelance writer with many credits. Her writing has appeared in 60 anthologies, like the Chicken Soup series, *Chocolate for Women*, Cup of Comfort series, Guideposts Books, *God Allows U-Turns*, God's Way Books, and many others. She has also been published in magazines like *Mature Living*, *Mature Years*, *Midwest Living*, *Missouri Life*, *Cat Fancy*, *Angels on Earth*, and others. She lives in a beautiful rural area and loves nature, animals, reading, writing, hiking, gardening, nature photography, and spending time with her friends and family, especially her three granddaughters. You can visit her blog here: [www.renieburghardtsworld.blogspot.com](http://www.renieburghardtsworld.blogspot.com).

**brenda wise byrd** is a grandmother who still lives in the Alabama town where she was born. She began journaling as a young teen and her joy in writing developed from that early beginning. Widowed at 26, she has seen life from a perspective none of us would choose, but one that has given her a greater appreciation of life and everyday pleasures. Much of her writing comes from observing the people and nature around her and transforming those "snapshots" into life lessons and inspirational moments. She has been locally published and is now seeking a broader audience.

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*don't even buy green bananas." Claude D. Pepper ~\$~ "Live your life*

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**Steve Cartwright** (artist) bio needed

**Al Carty** is a Californian retired to the high plains of New Mexico. He grows garlic and chilis and roams the piñon-juniper hills and writes about the thoughts he finds there. He has been romancing the Muse for a long time. Sometimes she dances for him and sometimes she hides among his thoughts. Since he discovered that re-writing makes her smile, his stories and poems have been accepted by *Menda City Review*, *5th Story Review*, *Written Word*, *Anthology Builder*, *Sage of Consciousness*, and *Cause and Effect Magazine*.

**Sally Clark** lives in Fredericksburg, Texas, with her husband, their children, and their grandchildren. Sally has practiced for retirement her entire life. When she finally achieved her goal in 2001, Sally began writing stories and poetry for children and adults. Her work has been published in the Chicken Soup series, the Cup of Comfort series, and several of June Cotner's gift books. Her poetry for children appears in Blooming Tree Press' *Summer Shorts* and *Sweet Dreams*. In the Christian field, Howard Books, Integrity Publishers, and Tyndale House have published her stories and poems.

**Suzanne C. Cole** writes from a studio in the woods in the Texas Hill Country. She's published more than 350 poems, essays, short stories and articles in commercial and literary magazines, anthologies, and newspapers. She's been both a juried and featured poet at the Houston Poetry Fest and once won a haiku festival in Japan.

**TJ Coles** was raised and lived most of his life in the Pacific Northwest, in a large town that preferred to think of itself as a small town. He spent most of his summers on his grandmother's ranch and has worked as a logger, in mining, as a forest fire fighter, and as a security guard. TJ has been telling stories since he was eight years old. Some of them have even been

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*and forget your age." Norman Vincent Peale ~\$~ "My generation,*

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true. A number of magazines and dozens of online publications have published Coles' work. His day job is in civil engineering.

**Ginger B. Collins'** sailing tales have appeared in *Cruising World* and *Living Aboard Magazine*. Both *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* and *The Cincinnati Inquirer* have published her articles in their Sunday Travel Sections. She has two pieces of short fiction scheduled this summer in *Pig Iron Press*, a flash fiction story this winter in *LunchHour Stories*, and a story in "Voices of..." anthology, coming early in 2009 from LaChance Publishing. Recently retired from Atlanta to Canada's Cape Breton Island, Ginger and husband, Melvin, plan a retirement of sailing local and distant shorelines. Her web site is [www.GingerBCollins.com](http://www.GingerBCollins.com).

**R. Scott Comegys** lives in Shreveport, Louisiana, where she is a late-bloomer Boomer. Vintage 1952, she is a single mom with one daughter in college and a son in high school. She toils by day as a civil servant, fondly recollecting manual typewriters with tri-carbon inserts. And, although life is good with digital cable, she dearly misses the Indian Head TV test pattern.

**Carole Creekmore**, a Baby Boomer who grew up in rural eastern North Carolina, is a widow with two adult children, two lovely granddaughters, and an English Bulldog, Okie. With degrees in English from Wake Forest University, she teaches composition, literature, creative writing, and humanities at an Atlanta area college, writes prose and poetry whenever inspired, and enjoys traveling, genealogy, and photography. She has had several articles and poems published over the years, as well as the essay "Holiday Expectations – Then and Now" recently published in *Silver Boomers*.

**Barbara Crooker** has been writing poetry for more than 30 years, with credits in magazines such as *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Margie*, *Poetry East*, *Smartish Pace*, *Nimrod*, *River City*, *Yankee*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry International*, *The Denver Quarterly*, *America*, *Highlights for Children*, and anthologies such as

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*faced as it grew with a choice between religious belief and existential*

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*Good Poems For Hard Times* (Viking, edited by Garrison Keillor), *Sweeping Beauty: Contemporary Women Poets Do Housework* (University of Iowa Press), and *Boomer Girls* (University of Iowa Press). She has two full-length books, *Radiance* and *Line Dance*, both from Word Press. She grew up in the mid-Hudson Valley in the fifties, went to college in New Jersey in the sixties, and now lives and writes in rural northeastern Pennsylvania.

**Barbara Darnall**, the daughter of a high school English teacher and a West Texas lawyer and rancher, has been surrounded by words all her life and grew up telling stories and writing scripts for her playmates to perform. She graduated from Baylor University with B.A. and M.A. degrees in drama, and taught at the college level for several years. She writes poetry, articles, and personal narratives, and has written and directed numerous short dramas for her church. She has copyedited one book and several manuscripts, and, as a tax consultant for more than thirty years, she particularly enjoys the letter-writing contests she occasionally gets into with the IRS!

**Mary Deal**, a native of Walnut Grove, California, in the Sacramento River Delta, has lived in England, the Caribbean, and now resides in Kapaa, Hawaii. She has published three novels: *The Tropics: Child of a Storm-Caught in a Rip-Hurricane Secret*, an adventure trilogy; *The Ka*, a paranormal Egyptian fantasy; and *River Bones*, her first thriller which is set in her childhood hometown area. *Down to the Needle* will be her next thriller due out early 2010 and set along the California coastline. Learn more about Mary, read short stories, novel excerpts, and writing tips on her web site: [www.writeanygenre.com](http://www.writeanygenre.com).

**Gail Denham**, a native Oregonian, has showcased her state with poetry, short stories, and photography for over 30 years. Her work has been published in national and international magazines. In addition, she enjoys leading writing workshops. Married, with four sons and (almost) 13 grandchildren, plus two great-grands, she and

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*despair, chose marijuana. Now we are in our Cabernet stage." Peggy*

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her husband now live in central Oregon where Denham was raised. Life was quieter and slower when Denham grew up in Redmond and even in the years they brought up their family. She definitely appreciates the simple life best.

**Terrí Kirby Erickson** of Lewisville, North Carolina, is the author of a book of poetry entitled, *Thread Count*. Her work has been published or accepted by *The Broad River Review*, *The Dead Mule*, *Pisgah Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Paris Voice*, *Old Mountain Press*, *Thieves Jargon*, *Forsyth Woman*, and the Hickory Women's Resource Center anthology *Voices and Vision: A Collection of Writings By and About Empowered Women*. The Northwest Cultural Council also selected her work in 2006 and 2007 for an international juried poetry exhibit.

**Joanne Faries**, originally from the Philadelphia area, lives in Texas with her husband Ray. She considers herself fortunate to be able to pursue a writing career after eons in the business world. Published previously in *Doorknobs & Bodypaint*, Joanne writes short stories, flash fiction, and poetry. She has works on ALongStory Short.com, Associatedcontent.com, in *Shine* magazine, *Chicken Soup for the Soul Kids in the Kitchen*, and has started a novel. Joanne enjoys reading and movies, and is the film critic for the *Little Paper of San Saba*. She is a member of Trinity Writer's Workshop in Bedford, Texas.

**Margaret Fieland**, born and raised in New York City, has been around art and music all her life. Her poems, articles and children's stories have appeared in, among others, *Main Channel Voices*, *Echolocation*, and *Stories for Children Magazine*. You may visit her web site, [www.margaretfieland.com](http://www.margaretfieland.com).

**Betty Jo Goddard** traveled a packed road since her birth in Windsor, Illinois. While on that road, she acquired a BS from Illinois State, an MA from University of Colorado, and twenty-five years of teaching's bruises, successes, smiles, and love. Betty Jo



retired from teaching in 1983, and now lives on a ridge top in Alaska with her three errant huskies. Since retiring from teaching, she's taken up writing as a hobby. This hobby gives her fun, and, when she tosses her lines in the publishing world's waters, enough bites to keep her dogs well fed.

**Ginny Greene** likely arrived on Planet Earth with a bluepencil clutched in her fist. Past president of Abilene Writers Guild, her writing life includes years of newspaper lifestyle features, a newspaper column, and a handful of newsletters, including seven years editing the Guild's newsletter. For fun, Ginny writes poems and works crossword puzzles. She edits everything, even street signage, especially yard sale signs, even in her sleep. She's happiest seeing her love of words spilled over to her children and grandchildren, including daughter, Karen, also a Silver Boomer Books editor. While still loving her Northwest hometown, Ginny is at home with Larry near Abilene, Texas and her grown family. Ginny's book *Song of County Roads* is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2008.

**Rhoda Greenstone**, for the past two decades, has instructed Southern California college students in the joys of language arts and humanities. In a former life, she served as editor, feature writer, critic, and photo-journalist for many publications, including *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Malibu Times*, and *Classics West Magazine*. A chapter she wrote deconstructing her poem "A Letter From L.A." will appear in *Poem, Revised* (Marion Street Press) in 2008. Her poetry, short stories and essays have appeared in various journals. Currently she is arbitrating with a muse who insists on dictating – at the least convenient times – a novel about a family of artists set to self destruct, called *Lost Paradise*.

**Jane Gwaltney** was born on Travis Air Base near San Francisco, but has resided in St. Louis, Missouri, most of her life. A member of Midwestern Writers of Horror and Writers Under the Arch, she has twice received Honorable Mention in The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror. Her poetry, fiction, and art appear in *Dreams and*

*Nightmares, Mothering Magazine, Yellow Bat Review, Spinning Whorl, Redsine, The Blue Lady, Breath and Shadow, Champagne Shivers, Simulacrum, Aoife's Kiss, and more.* Her novella *Darkness, Darkness* is available in trade paperback.

**Becky Haigler** is retired after 24 years of teaching Spanish and reading in Texas public secondary schools. Her poetry has appeared in national and regional periodicals. Her short stories for adolescents have been published by several denominational publishing houses. Two of her magic realism stories are included in the anthology *Able to...* (NeoNuma Arts Press, 2006.) Becky currently resides in Shreveport, Louisiana, with her husband Dave Haigler. She is the mother of two daughters and grandmother of three granddaughters. Becky is currently working on a collection of magic realism stories. More of her poetry appears on her family blog, [www.xanga.com/anchorpoet](http://www.xanga.com/anchorpoet).

**Heather Haldeman** lives in Pasadena, California and began writing nine years ago after her oldest son left for college. She has been married to her husband, Hank, for 29 years and has three children. She has published several personal essays and is currently writing a book.

**Joy Harold Helsing** is an ex-salesclerk, ex-secretary, ex-textbook editor, ex-psychologist, ex-college instructor, ex-New Englander, ex-San Franciscan who now lives in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Northern California. Her work has appeared in *Bellowing Ark, Brevities, Byline, California Quarterly, Centrifugal Eye, Leading Edge, The Mid-America Poetry Review, Möbius, Poetalk, Poetry Depth Quarterly, The Raintown Review, Rattlesnake Review, Writers' Journal*, and elsewhere. She has published three chapbooks and one book, *Confessions of the Hare* (PWJ Publishing).

**Frances Hern** splits her time between Calgary, Alberta, and Golden, British Columbia, both in Canada, where she writes poetry, non-fiction and children's fiction. Her books include *Norman*

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*Bethune* (James Lorimer), *Arctic Explorers* (Heritage House) and *Aunt Maud's Mittens* (Scholastic Canada). She has also recently published poetry and prose in *Silver Boomers* and *Poetry for Big Kids* (Neil Harding McAlister).

*Linda Oatman High* is the author of 21 books, as well as a journalist/poet/songwriter. Linda's newest book is *The Hip Grandma's Handbook*, and Linda blogs regularly on [www.hipgrandma.com](http://www.hipgrandma.com), a site for (cool) Boomer grandmothers. Earning her MFA at Vermont College, she will graduate the same year that her grandson graduates from kindergarten! A frequent presenter at conferences, libraries, and schools, Linda may be contacted at [lohigh@frontiernet.net](mailto:lohigh@frontiernet.net).

*Jeanne Holtzman* is an aging hippie, writer and women's health care practitioner, not necessarily in that order. Born in the Bronx, she prolonged her adolescence as long as possible in Vermont and currently lives with her husband and daughter in Massachusetts. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in such publications as *The Providence Journal*, *Writer's Digest*, *The First Line*, *Twilight Times*, *Chick Flicks*, *flashquake*, *Salome*, *Hobart Pulp online*, *Hip Mama*, *EveryDay Fiction* and *The Iconoclast*. You may reach Jeanne at [J.holtzman@comcast.net](mailto:J.holtzman@comcast.net).

*Jo Anne Horn-Burks* is a self-proclaimed dabbler. She dabbles in writing, oil painting, playing piano and says she has just enough talent to keep herself amused. She worked as a secretary in various fields before remarrying in 1975. She attended The University of Texas at San Antonio for two years before relocating to Lake Brownwood, Texas. For twelve years, she worked, along with her husband, as an EMT with their volunteer fire department.

*Juleigh Howard-Hobson's* work has recently appeared in *Lucid Rhythms*, *The Barefoot Muse*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Umbrella*, *The Chimaera*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Every Day Stories*,

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*would be a subject of dread to me." Thomas Jefferson ~S~ "I'm like*

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*Shatter Colors Literary Review, The Raintown Review, Mobius, Fourteen Magazine, Perspectives* and... *Silver Boomers*. She is a tail-end member of the Baby Boom generation, a bit more punk rock than Woodstock.

**Michael Lee Johnson**, a poet and freelance writer, is self-employed in advertising and selling custom promotional products. He's author of *The Lost American: From Exile to Freedom*, has published two chapbooks of poetry, is nominated for the James B. Baker Award in poetry, Sam's Dot Publishing, and contributed poetry to *Silver Boomers*. Currently living in Itasca, Illinois, U.S.A., he lived in Canada during the Vietnam era and will be published (early 2008) in the anthology *Crossing Lines: Poets Who Came to Canada in the Vietnam War Era*. His web sites include [poetryman.mysite.com](http://poetryman.mysite.com) where his other sites are linked.

**Karen Karlitz** grew up in Forest Hills, New York, during the 1960s. (What she remembers, she thoroughly enjoyed.) She worked as an associate editor and writer for *Pharmacy Times* magazine before relocating to California. For several years she was a regular contributor to the *Los Angeles Times*, and also worked as a writer and editor for *Beverly Hills 90210* and the *Brentwood News*, and *Santa Monica Sun*. Her work has appeared in these publications, as well as in the *Miranda Literary Magazine* and the *Foliage Oak Literary Magazine*. Currently, she lives and writes short stories in south Florida.

**James Keane** resides in northern New Jersey with his wife and son and a menagerie of merry pets. He has been writing and revising his poetry over the course of the hundred years since he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English Literature at Georgetown University. He has been privileged to have his poems appear, most recently, in *The Houston Literary Review*, the *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Chimaera*, the *Taj Mahal Review*, and

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*old wine. They don't bring me out very often, but I'm well preserved."*

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*Contemporary American Voices*, where he was the Featured Poet of the August 2007 issue.

**Helga Kidder** has lived in the Tennessee hills for 30 years, raised two daughters, half a dozen cats, and a few dogs. She received her BA in English from the University of Tennessee, and MFA in Writing from Vermont College. She is co-founder of the Chattanooga Writers Guild and leads their poetry group.

Her poetry and translations have appeared in *The Louisville Review*, *The Southern Indiana Review*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Eleventh Muse*, *Snake Nation Review*, *Voices International*, *Moebius*, *Free Focus*, *Phoenix*, *Chug*, and others, and three anthologies.

**Blanche L. Ledford** is a native of Hayesville, North Carolina. She grew up during the Great Depression in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina and often writes about this time. Her work has appeared in *Blue Ridge Guide*; *Lights in the Mountains*; *Looking Back*; *Sand, Sea & Sail*; *Night Whispers*, and other journals. She's an avid reader and member of Georgia Mountain Writer's Club.

**Larry Lefkowitz'** stories, poems, and humor have been published in literary reviews and magazines in the U.S., England, and Israel where he lives. He has self-published humor books, and is currently trying to find a publisher for his novel *Lieberman*. It concerns the assistant to a literary critic who is asked by the critic's wife following the latter's death to complete his unfinished novel. Though set in Israel, the novel is universal in theme and is replete with literary allusions. Larry is also trying to find a publisher for his detective novel, *Trouble in Jades* about a series of murders in a jades museum.

**Denton Loving** makes his home in Speedwell, Tennessee. He works in the advancement offices at Lincoln Memorial

University, where he also assists directing the Mountain Heritage Literary Festival. His short story, "Authentically Weathered Lumber," was chosen in 2007 as the first winner of the Gurney Norman Prize for Short Fiction, a contest judged by Mr. Norman through the literary journal *Kudzu*. Loving's poetry has also appeared in *The Birmingham Arts Journal*.

**Eileen Malone** lives in the coastal fog of the San Francisco Bay Area where she directs the Soul-Making Literary Competition, which she founded in 1994, and hosts/produces "Pen Women Presents," interviews with creative people on Access San Francisco Channel 29. She is widely published, and last year two of her poems were nominated for Pushcart prizes.

**Arlene Mason** is an author and freelance technical writer who lives with her husband, a miniature poodle and a calico cat outside of Dallas, Texas. She writes on a variety topics, drawing from her diverse experience. She has contributed articles to a varied collection of online and print magazines. She says that writing keeps her sane; most people agree.

**Janet McCann** has poetry in journals such as *Kansas Quarterly*, *Parnassus*, *Nimrod*, *Sou'wester*, *Christian Century*, *Christianity and Literature*, *New York Quarterly*, *Tendrill*, *Poetry Australia*, and *McCall's*, among many others.

**Lyn Messersmith** is a third generation rancher, a freelance writer, newspaper columnist, and purveyor of horse sense, nonsense, and occasional wisdom. She is affiliated with Nebraska and South Dakota Humanities Councils and, with a friend, offers writing workshops and historical programs of original music and poetry based on the lives of people who helped open the West.

Lyn has published two books of poetry. *Ground Tied* won a 2004 Will Rogers Medallion Award from the Academy of Western Artists. Her book of daily reflections is titled *My Sister Mariah; the Journal of a Windwalker*.

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*what is important." Martin Luther King, Jr. ~\$~ "It is a sobering*

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**Anthony J. Mohr** writes from his home in southern California. His essays, memoirs, and short stories have appeared in *Bibliophilos*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Circle Magazine*, *Currents*, *Literary House Review*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *Skyline Magazine*, and *Word Riot*. Two of his works have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. His hobbies include hiking, travel, horseback riding, and improv theater.

**Michael Neal Morris** has published online and in print in *Borderlands*, *Lynx Eye*, *The Concho River Review*, *Illya's Honey*, *The Distillery*, *Dogwood Tales Magazine*, *The GW Review*, *Liberty Hill Poetry Review*, *The Mid-South Review*, *Chronogram*, *Contemporary Rhyme*, *Haruah*, *T-Zone*, *Flash-Flooding*, *Glassfire Magazine*, and *Mouth Full of Bullets*. He lives with his wife and children just outside the Dallas area, and teaches at Eastfield College. He is seeking publication of his first collection of stories, *The End of the Argument*, and his collection of poems, *Wrestling Light*.

**Sheryl L. Nelms**, Kansas native, graduated from South Dakota State University in Family Relations and Child Development. Her poems, stories and articles have appeared in periodicals and anthologies including *Readers' Digest*, *Modern Maturity*, *Copper's*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Grit*, *Cricket*, over 4,500 times. Twelve collections of her poetry have been published.

Sheryl has taught writing and poetry at conferences, colleges and schools. She was a Bread Loaf Contributor at the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, Middlebury, Vermont. She has served as editor for many journals, including her current post as essay editor of *The Pen Woman Magazine*, the membership magazine of the National League of American Pen Women. She holds membership in The Society of Southwestern Authors, Abilene Writers Guild, and Trinity Arts Writers Association.

**Karen Neuberg** is retired after 40 years working as an information specialist, public librarian, marketing researcher, and social worker. Her work has appeared or is pending in literary journals

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*thought, that when Mozart was my age he had been dead for two*

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and anthologies including *Phoebe*, *Poems Niederngasse*, *42Opus*, *Louisville Review*, and *Riverine*, *An Anthology of Hudson Valley Writers*. She's a Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, holds an MFA from the New School, and lives in Brooklyn, New York, and West Hurley, New York, with her husband. They are about to become grandparents for the second time.

*Linda O'Connell's* work has appeared in several Chicken Soup series books, numerous anthologies, periodicals and literary magazines. Linda is a seasoned early childhood teacher in St. Louis, Missouri. She also teaches a senior citizen memoir writing class.

She and her husband, Bill, have a blended family of four adult children, and nine grandchildren who tickle their fancy.

*Quannah Parker*, Kansas-born in 1946, is a distant cousin of his Indian Chief namesake. His family moved to Abilene, Texas, then Norman, Oklahoma, returning to Abilene so Quannah and older brother Quay could attend Abilene Christian University, "getting them away from Philistine OU women." Both brothers sold Bibles to put themselves through college and law school. After University of Texas Law, Lt. Parker led an Army MP Platoon from 1971 to 1972 and was a Captain in the Reserves from 1974 to 1982. An Abilene resident, he's practiced law for 35 years. His daughter Padgett and son Paden live in Austin, and son, Pride, daughter-in-law Allison, and granddaughter Pressley in Houston.

*Meg Pearce* lives in northern Ontario with her retired military firefighter husband and is surrounded by most of her family. Some of her short stories can be found in the anthology *Confabulation* published by Winterblue Publishing in June, 2008.

*Yvonne Pearson* is a writer and clinical social worker who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her poetry and essays have appeared in a variety of publications, including *Sing, Heavenly Muse!*,

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*years." Tom Lehrer ~S~ "Getting older is no problem. You just have*

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*Transformations*, *Wolf Head Quarterly*, *Poetry Calendar 2000*, and *Studio One*. She is the recipient of a Loft Creative Non-Fiction Award, has participated in readings at The Loft, the University of Minnesota, and the American Association of University Women, St. Paul branch, and is the co-author of several books.

**James Penha**, a native New Yorker, has lived for the past sixteen years in Indonesia. *No Bones to Carry*, Penha's most recent volume of poetry, is available from New Sins Press at [www.newsinspress.com](http://www.newsinspress.com). Among the most recent of his many other published works are articles in the NCTE's *Classroom Notes Plus*; fiction at *East of the Web*, *BigPulp*, and *Ignavia*; and poems in *THEMA* and in the anthologies *Queer Collection* (Fabulist Flash Publishing), *Only the Sea Keeps: Poetry of the Tsunami* (Bayeux Press), and *Silver Boomers*. Penha edits a web site for current-events poetry at [www.newversenews.com](http://www.newversenews.com).

**Diana M. Raab**, M.F.A., essayist, memoirist and poet, teaches at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program and the Santa Barbara Writers Conference. A columnist for InkByte.com, she writes and lectures on journaling. Her memoir *Regina's Closet: Finding My Grandmother's Secret Journal* is a finalist for Best Book of the Year by *ForeWord Magazine*. She has two poetry collections, *My Muse Undresses Me* and *Dear Anais: My Life in Poems for You*. Her writing has appeared *The Writer*, *Writers Journal*, *Skylight Review*, *Rosebud*, *The Louisville Review*, *Palo Alto Review*, *Oracle*, *The Binnacle*, *Homestead*, and *Red River Review*. She's the recipient of the Benjamin Franklin Book award for *Getting Pregnant and Staying Pregnant: Overcoming Infertility and High Risk Pregnancy*. Visit her web site: [www.dianaraab.com](http://www.dianaraab.com).

**Kerín Riley-Bishop** is an editor and partner of Silver Boomer Books. She is a poet, photographer and casual painter. A deep spirituality and love of nature provides ample fuel for her writing endeavors. She is a member of local writing and critique groups, and currently has several writing and photography projects

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*to live long enough." Groucho Marx ~§~ "The older I grow the more*

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pending. She lives in West Texas with her partner, Mason, and their two children.

**Barbara B. Rollins** lives in Abilene, Texas, a judge who writes while waiting for lawyers. A member of SCBWI, her children's books include the novel *Syncopated Summer* and a forensic series *Fingerprint Evidence*, *Ballistics*, *Cause of Death*, and *Blood Evidence*. Her work has appeared in *Byline*, *Kidz Ch@t*, *R\*A\*D\*A\*R*, and *Off the Record*, an anthology of poetry by lawyers. The past president of Abilene Writers Guild maintains the group's web site as well as those of other nonprofits besides her [www.SharpWriters.com](http://www.SharpWriters.com). Like many Baby Boomers, she shares her husband with two dogs while worrying about aging parents, two sons, and daughters-in-law. She is a principal in Silver Boomer Books.

**Ruth Sellers**, 83 years old and a retired teacher, lives with her husband, Doug, on a farm in Runnels County, Texas. She has written for publication since the early 1990s. Her credits include publication in *Crafts 'n' Things*, *World and I*, *History Magazine*, newspaper articles in *Abilene Reporter-News*, *Winters Enterprise*, *Ballinger Ledger*, and prizes in many writers' contests. She taught school at primary level and at the Reading Center in Abilene, Texas. She has done freelance writing since her retirement from teaching in 1980, and is a past president of Abilene Writers Guild.

**Doug Sellers**, a lifetime manic-depressive, encourages others dealing with the condition. Now age 77, he retired from school teaching in 1979. He lives simply and writes about good times from his past. He keeps membership in Abilene Writers Guild current (1992 to present), and wins awards in their contests. Doug lives with his wife of 37 years, Ruth, on a farm in Runnels County where he stores his collection of antique farm machinery. He graduated from Hardin-Simmons University, 1970, with a Master's Degree in Administrative Education. He is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, 1952 to 1956.

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*I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom." H. L.*

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**Paula Sergi** is the author of *Family Business*, a collection of poems from Finishing Line Press, May, 2005, and co-editor of *Boomer Girls: Poems by Women from the Baby Boom Generation*, University of Iowa Press, 1999. She received a Wisconsin Arts Board Artist Fellowship in 2001. Her poetry is published regularly in such journals as *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Primavera*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review* and *The American Journal of Nursing*. She holds an MFA in creative writing from Vermont College and a BSN from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

**Elizabeth Simpson** was a college instructor and continues to run an Author-Reading Series. She has published two nonfiction books: *The Perfection of Hope: Journey Back to Health* (1997), nominated for the B.C.Book Prize and VanCity Award and translated into Spanish; and *One Man at a Time: Confessions of a Serial Monogomist* (2000), nominated for the B.C.Book Prize. She has also published short stories: *Slipping the Noose* (Seal Press 2004). Two of her short stories were broadcast on CBC radio: “Dressed for Suicide” (April 2002) and “Puppy Love” (October 2003). Currently she is working on a novel, *The Marmalade Moon*.

**J. J. Steinfeld**, fiction writer, poet, and playwright, lives in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. He has published a novel, *Our Hero in the Cradle of Confederation* (Pottersfield Press), nine short story collections, three by Gaspereau Press – *Should the Word Hell Be Capitalized?*, *Anton Chekhov Was Never in Charlottetown*, and *Would You Hide Me?* – and a poetry collection, *An Affection for Precipices* (Serengeti Press). His short stories and poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and periodicals internationally, and over thirty of his one-act and full-length plays have been performed in Canada and the United States.

**Judith Strasser** has published two poetry collections, *Sand Island Succession: Poems of the Apostles* and *The Reason/Unreason Project*, and a memoir, *Black Eye: Escaping a*

*Marriage, Writing a Life*. Her work has appeared widely in literary journals, including *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Witness*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Her blog, *In Lieu of Speech*, reflects on her life as a survivor of metastatic stomach cancer. ([www.inlieuofspeech.blogspot.com](http://www.inlieuofspeech.blogspot.com))

**Kathie Sutherland** is a Canadian poet, essayist and workshop facilitator. Her journaling workshops promote awareness and personal growth, and empower others to find meaning and purpose in their everyday experiences. She is passionate about journaling for self-discovery. Her prose was recently published in *Silver Boomers; Outside of Ordinary: Women's Stories of Transformation; WestWord*, membership magazine of the Alberta Writers Guild; in *Canadian Grandparent; The Toronto Globe & Mail;* and *The Edmonton Journal*. Her poetry appears on the following web sites [www.women-at-heart.com](http://www.women-at-heart.com); [www.blueskiespoetry.ca](http://www.blueskiespoetry.ca); and [www.leafpress.ca](http://www.leafpress.ca).

**Andrea Zamarrípa Theisen** was born and raised in Uvalde Texas. At age 13, she dropped out of 7<sup>th</sup> grade to begin working full time. She started writing in her late 40s, contributing to the newspaper *La Voz de Uvalde*, *Catholic Digest*, and South West Texas Junior College's *The Palm Leaf*.

**Lisa Timpf** lives near Everett, Ontario, where she enjoys walking in the woods, observing nature, and organic gardening. Her poetry and creative non-fiction have appeared in a variety of venues, including *The Country Connection*, *Canadian Stories*, *the Creemore Echo*, and *Horizon Magazine*. Her writing credits include one non-fiction book, entitled *St. George's Lawn Tennis Club: The First Hundred Years*.

**Suellen Wedmore**, Poet Laureate *emerita* for the small seaside town of Rockport, Massachusetts, has been awarded first place in the *Writer's Digest* rhyming poem contest and was selected as an international winner in the *Atlanta Review* annual contest. Recently her chapbook *Deployed* was selected as winner of

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are?" Leroy (Satchel) Paige ~S~ "You're getting old when all the names

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the Grayson Press chapbook contest and she was selected for a writing residency at Devil's Tower, Wyoming. After 24 years working as a speech and language therapist in the public schools, she retired to enter the MFA Program in Poetry at New England College, graduating in 2004.

*Jim Wilson* is a veterinarian in private practice for 31 years who seven years ago began treating his poetry seriously and saving it. He now has four published books: *Distillations of a Life Just Lived*, 2002; *Coal to Diamonds*, 2003; *Taking a Peek*, 2004; and *Down to Earth Poetry*, 2006. He's been published recently in *Border Senses*, U.T. El Paso; *Concho River Review*, Angelo State University; *The Desert Candle*, Sul Ross State University; and *Spiky Palm* Texas A & M University at Galveston, and won sweepstakes in the Cisco Writer's Club annual contest for 2007. He says, "I write about everyday events every day."

*Thelma Zirkelbach*, aka Lorna Michaels, has published thirteen romance novels. Recent widowhood has shifted her focus from romance to personal essay. She enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her granddaughter, who also likes to write.

## *Attributions*

Melmac, over 350 manufacturers of melamine dinnerware between 1945 and 1965 ~\$~ Necco ® wafers, oldest continuous candy, 8 flavors, by Oliver Chase, English immigrant, Chase & Company first, 1847, then New England Confectionary Co (Necco), went with Arctic expedition in 1913, Adm. Byrd took 2-1/2 tons to South Pole in the '30s ~\$~ polyester – 1941 ~\$~ Sam I Am – from *Green Eggs & Ham*, Dr. Seuss, 1960 & 1988 ~\$~ “Yakity Yak – Don’t Talk Back” – Coasters, 1958 ~\$~ Sears catalogs – limited catalog begun in 1888 by Richard Sears evolved into varied product catalog starting with 1894 issue ~\$~ Crayons – first by Binney & Smith, Crayola, in 1903. Crayon is a color stick for drawing, writing ~\$~ Bonomo’s Turkish Taffy, by Victor Bonomo (Coney Island candy-making family, with Turkish roots) began as a nickel bar after WWII, not a taffy, but a short nougat, distributed by Woolworth candy counters, bought by Tootsie Roll Industries of Chicago 1980, ceased 1989 ~\$~ Oklahoma dustbowl – 1930-1936, over 100 million acres in Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas ~\$~ Ford’s Model A – from October 1927 through 1931, after the Model T ~\$~ “Ring of Fire” – Johnny Cash, 1963, Columbia Records ~\$~ *Field of Dreams* – released 1989 ~\$~ Saran Wrap – polyvinylidene, accidental discovery in 1933 by Ralph Wiley of Dow Chemical, used industrially until it became a food wrap in 1953, now by S.C. Johnson ~\$~ *I Love Lucy* – situation comedy 1951-1957, Lucy & Desi Arnaz, Vivian Vance, William Frawley ~\$~ Band-Aids ® – Johnson & Johnson, from 1920s, invented by Earle Dickson, produced in New Jersey plant since 1957 ~\$~ Chiclets ® – peppermint gum, first by Frank H. Fleeer in 1906, then Warner-Lambert, Pfiser, then Cadbury Adams. Fleeer joined the 1899 gum manufacturer’s merger, American Chicle Co., in 1914. ~\$~ Fluoride treatments – 1955 FDA approved stannous fluoride for toothpaste ~\$~ Jujubes – candy by German immigrant, Henry Heide, Heide Company, before 1920 ~\$~ Junior Mints – 1949 Welch’s, now Tootsie Roll Industries ~\$~ Goobers ® – from 1925 Blumenthal Chocolate Co., in 1984 Nestlé ~\$~ PEZ – 1927, Austrian mint, with the dispenser, PEZ Candy, Inc. ~\$~ Sno-Caps ® – a Blumenthal product, from 1920s, now Nestlé ® ~\$~ Wax bottles – juice filled, chewable wax ~\$~ WD-40 – 1953, Rocket Chemical Company began research, settled on the 40th formula, still used today. Used on Atlas Missile first, then appeared on San Diego store shelves 1958. Renamed to WD-40 Company Inc in 1969 ~\$~ Beech Nut Gum – one product of the Beech-Nut Packing Co. ~\$~ Woolworth’s – Founded by Frank Winfield Woolworth in 1879, popularity declined in 1980s, now only overseas ~\$~ Breck hairspray – Breck shampoo (1930) one

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*takes a long time to become young.” Pablo Picasso ~\$~ Grandmother*

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of the first liquid shampoos in the U.S., products rebranded in the '70s ~\$~ Erace – concealer by Max Factor 1954, Proctor & Gamble Co., 1991 ~\$~ box of Keks – German biscuit (cookie) produced by Bahlsen Food Co. since 1891 ~\$~ Mackey's Sport Shop – sport and athletic supplier for Abilene, Texas, area from at least the '40s, closed its North 1st and Willis store in the '70s or '80s ~\$~ Depends ® – Invented 1980, Bob Beaudrie (The Bear) – Kimberly Clark ~\$~ Oreck – founded in 1963 in Cookeville, Tennessee by David Oreck, entrepreneur, age 84 ~\$~ Coke ® – soda fountain drink concocted by Dr. John Pemberton, 1886. Coca Cola ® ~\$~ Tonka Toys ® – begun in 1947, Minnesota, Hasbro uses 119,000 lbs yellow paint annually ~\$~ “Moon River” – Andy Williams, Lyrics by Johnny Mercer, Music Henry Mancini 1961 ~\$~ “Tequila” (song) – instrumental by the band Champs 1958 ~\$~ Cole Haan shoes – Nike's fashion shoes division, founded 1928 by Trafton Cole and Eddie Haan ~\$~ Laundromat – coin operated since 1950s ~\$~ Pillsbury Doughboy ® – Poppin Fresh, mascot of Pillsbury Company since 1965 ~\$~ The *Brady Bunch* – TV show 1969-1974 ~\$~ Hostess ® cupcake – 1919, D.R. “Doc” Rice added seven squiggles and filling 1950 ~\$~ *Farmer's Almanac (The Old Farmer's Almanac)* – forecasts determined by a secret formula by founder Robert B. Thomas, since 1792 ~\$~ Insert tobacco – Insert Smoking Tobacco, an economic pouch or envelope of loose tobacco that fit into fancy tobacco tins, found now in collectibles and antiques ~\$~ Blue Waltz toilet water – popular scent from the '50s ~\$~ Flame-Glo lipstick – 1967, later Flame Glow, Del Laboratories, Inc. ~\$~ Esther Williams movie – teen swim champ, headed for Olympics until WWII canceled her opportunity, became Hollywood star, swimming in movies, born 8/8/21 in Los Angeles, died 5/25/92 ~\$~ Chapstick ® – invented 1880s, now mfg. Wyeth Corporation ~\$~ Red Goose shoes – 1869, sold in St. Louis, Missouri, to pioneers moving west, Red Goose Shoes trademarked 1906 ~\$~ Ritalin – methylphenidate, synthesized 1944, 1954 patent by Ciba Pharmaceutical Co. ~\$~ Cub Scout – officially begun 1930 for younger siblings of Scouts, 20 years after Boy Scouts of America formed in U.S. 1910 ~\$~ “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” – Judy Garland, music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by E.Y. Harburg 1939 ~\$~ *Bonanza* – Cartwright family spent 14 TV seasons on Ponderosa Ranch 1959-1973. Ben Cartwright and sons Adam, Hoss, Little Joe ~\$~ *Pollyanna* – novel by Eleanor H. Porter, 1913 ~\$~ Tretinoin – acne treatment ~\$~ Miss Clairol – products brought from Europe by chemist Larry Gelb in the Depression years, Miss Clairol created 1950, now Worldwide Beauty Care Group, Proctor & Gamble Co. ~\$~ Nutrasweet ® – FDA approved sweetener 1981, NutraSweet Company, now Monsanto ~\$~ Aqua Net ® – hairspray, since the '50s, Lornamead ~\$~ Shalimar – perfume by Guerlain, 1925 ~\$~ “Tennessee Waltz” – by Redd Stewart and PeeWee King 1947, popularized by Patti Page 1950 ~\$~ Mr. Coffee – 1972 by North American Systems, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio ~\$~ Entenmann's chocolate chips – bakery of German immigrant William Entenmann in NY 1898, best seller chocolate chips since 1974 ~\$~ Wiffleball ® – 1953 by Grandfather Mullany, found out eight oblong perforations works best, no one knows why.

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to teased child: “I love your freckles. Freckles are beautiful.” Child:

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Tradition, begun with *Silver Boomers*, bids us reveal our  
cyber editing problems, and so here—

## *I'm Coming Down with Something the Quartet*

Toboggan...  
Isn't that a sled?

usage these days is common,  
beanie, skullcap, tam, toboggan

so new it's not even in the dictionary  
though accepted widely

maybe substitute another word,  
a proper dictionary definition

is it regional? a Southern expression?  
our book is for a wider market

we could do a starred footnote,  
you know – a star and a definition

like this —

\* a cap, tam, beanie, skullcap

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*“Really?” “Of course. Just name one thing prettier than freckles.”*

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Oh. No. Not finished with this —  
I can't stop myself, can't let it go yet,  
till I spill the silly thought —  
\* this toboggan's for your noggin'!

What are we going to do with all this candy?!  
It IS a trademarked product.  
AUGGHH! (Is that how Charlie Brown spells it?)  
Maybe AARRGGHH! for ®

The inconsistency in capitals and punctuation  
is making me crazy!

What did we do with dates?  
Dates? I thought they were plums.  
1960's, 1950s, '60's, '70s?  
Oh, those dates – lived them large!  
Put on your red hat, Mama.

Who voted a five for this piece?  
Not me! I'll trade you —  
one childhood fantasy  
for one teen romance.  
Throw in one Alzheimers essay  
and it's a deal.

Comma, colon, hyphen, dash,  
dingbats, quotes and other hash —  
my eyes are crossed, I have a rash —  
I'm sure it's Editors' Balderdash.

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*Child, peering intensely into grandmother's face whispered, "Wrinkles."*

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