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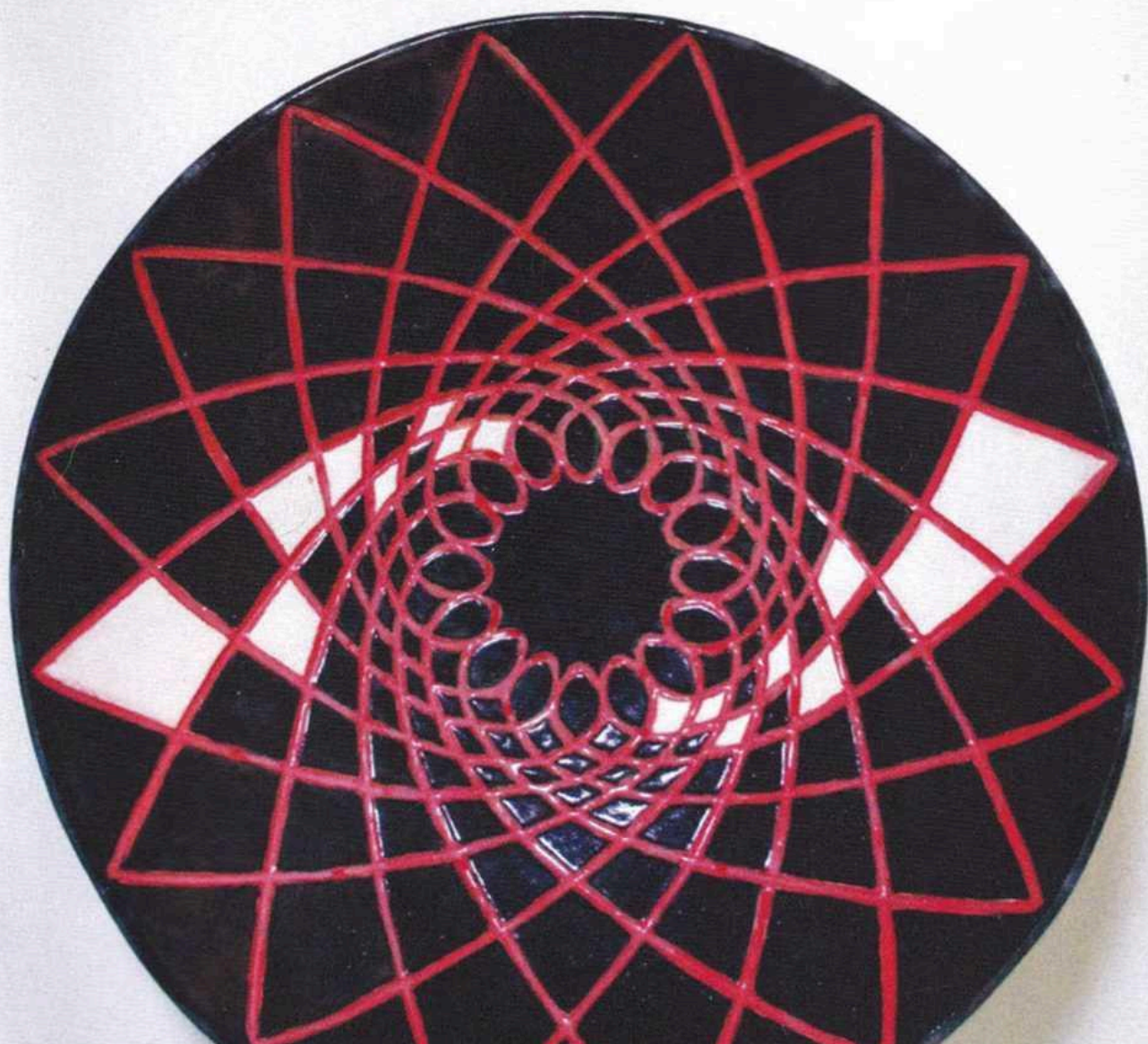
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ALCHEMY

By Isaac Reher

When I consider the many Halloweens I've
skylarked in—dressed like a red-nosed clown
floppy steamboat shoes, mustaches of burnt cork
face of evil under a leering kingly crown

When I watch children soaring like birds airborne
on skateboards over bumpy urban ground
then suddenly transformed to bony frames with fangs
to frighten spirits with devilish look and sound

And when, despite my serious adult woes
I still can hear the clarion call resound
of reveille for saints in ghoulish graves
my pulses leap and my heart begins to pound

Such is the alchemy of this holiday of joy
that transmutes a somber older man into a fun-filled boy

PENOBSCOT BAY

By Maggie Babb

the rain sings of rivers
of Orion riding outgoing

lies between islands down east
sliding under storms

cormorants winging overhead

remember the tiny galley
that temperamental gas stove

where I cooked supper
lemons swinging
in their tiny hammocks

my life jacket stowed under
the galley stove alongside the
beer

to keep it chilled
snug
against the deep Atlantic

I hated braving
the slippery side deck
to manage
the forward anchor

you never forgave
the time I tipped it
off the rod and down

I slept wrapped
in your dark beard mistaking
its weight for
warmth

only now
can I begin to see
that high Nova Scotia bow

did not protect me from
drowning

SHOW ME

By Maggie Babb

Show me your heart and
I'll show you mine. That's
how we'll get through
these shattered times.

Show me your fear
and I'll show you mine.
Let's name the unrest
our world defines.

Show me your courage
and I'll show you mine.
Together we'll root out
the racial grime.

Show me your determination
and I'll show you mine.
We'll make a new place to
stand aligned.

*(Written in response to a
Writers Group challenge
to write on the word
"show" for five 5 minutes.)*

HOME COMING

By Maggie Babb

soft graphite spreads across paper
a hand follows
soft focus eyes watch
mind observes it all from a safe
distance
tiny teeth grasp the silky blackness
precision maps dark shadows
where there was blankness something
clings
attention energizes, lubricates the
weightless arm
focus consumes everything
other students dissolve
conversations disperse on a vapor
a form pours across the papery surface
a quiet balm fills me
the farther I travel away, the closer
I am transported home

PUFFS

By Jane Elkinton (Sings to the Moon)

It is a summer of clouds,
Nuages, great frolicking elephants,
Fish, fat lizards harrumphing around
The blue, even the barest wisps sprinkling
Hope and memories and ties to the
Wondrous stuff out there.

AMERICA REDUX

By Maggie Babb

My country, t'is of thee
Land of diversity
For thee I weep;
Land where so many died
Of widespread genocide,
From every city side
Let us Justice reap.

My native country, thee,
Land of evil decree,
Thy name I call;
I call out all thy ills,
Thy vile and wretched bills,
My heart with anguish chills
As bodies fall.

Let Justice swell the breeze
And ring from sea to sea
Oppressions cease;
Let every tongue proclaim
Atonement is the aim
Our hearts burst into flame
We insist on peace.

Let us stand and agree
Together is the key
Begin anew.
Long may our voices leap
Unity to upkeep
May we no longer walk in sleep
Now our dream pursue.

WHALE WATCHING, CAPE BRETON

By Libby Champney

Shana, our cute girl guide, welcomes us in rapid French
and Scots-accented English, commanding us
to look for shag roosts on the rocks.

Solemnly we nod, and begin to scan the horizon.

The elderly Scandinavians in the bow,
one with a livid scar on his tanned leg,
peak globally.

The young parents of two active children in life jackets
remain extremely vigilant, fearing
their falling, or jumping, overboard.

Two fathers who have each brought an adolescent son
are equally enthusiastic, equally laden with video cams and other
expensive equipment,
while the boys compete to be the most bored.

The one who continually adjusts the waist of the voluminous ice
blue shorts that, tent-like, drape his skinny body from groin to calf,
knows he is much cooler than the fat freckled one in coveralls —
though none of us is literally cool,
as from the northern sun, confusingly as strong in Cheticamp
as it is in Chattanooga,
streams heat and light that strikes the blue Atlantic swells
and brings them to a boil.

The woman in the orange halter top that reveals her swelling breasts
courts third-degree burns as she avoids the shade.

The newlyweds from Pennsylvania
gaze out to sea in a damp trance.

Now glistening black shapes emerge
and disappear, arching slowly
above and below the water's surface.
Silent and composed,
they rise, breach, blow, turn flukes up,
granting us a moment here, a moment there.

Our little boat churns the water; engines throb
in lumbering pursuit,
while we thunder from port to starboard,
pointing, clicking, groaning as we just miss

the perfect shot.
Even the teens cast furtive, curious looks,
and the toddlers cry to be held aloft.
And then, it's over. The vision, brief.
We've gaped, squawked, recorded,
had our day, our money's worth.

As we chug back to port, Shana again directs our attention to the rocks,
instructing us now on how to tell the shine of trickling waterfalls
from that of bird shit.

Eyes glaze.
Diesel fumes, sea air, the thrill of the chase
have worn us out.
The toddlers sleep and swelter, swathed in kapok;
the honeymooners remain entranced, smiling slightly;
the fat boy in coveralls sleeps with his mouth agape,
his rounded body curving toward his father,
who also sleeps.
Camera-draped, sweat-soaked,
together they form a large ovoid mass.

Later, driving back slowly along the cliffs,
we pull off at a memorial cairn to "Les Vieux."
The sky and sea are full of light and grace.
In the shining middle distance,
a multitude of dark leviathan shapes is silently at play.

SPRING HAIKU

By Libby Champney

Peepers sing at night,
while dark clouds gather
on the horizon.

Under desert skies,
soldiers with guns wear gas masks.
Still the ancient peepers sing.

Rain blesses our fields.
Under burning skies, no breath.
And peepers sing.

Clear light follows rain.
The emperor makes war.
Still, winter turns to spring.

BLUE SPRUCE

By Libby Champney

On the upstairs porch, staring
into the branches of the old blue
spruce that fills the gray sky,
I want to leap across with
my blood-red pruning shears
and clip off all the naked branches
swaying like bony hands,
reaching for me.

My thoughts drift down then
to all the fat green seeds
juicy and swelling in the damp below,
beginning to uncurl into twin maple leaves.
I think, Let them grow. Let them all grow,
and cover me with green.

GIRL SCOUT CAMP

By Libby Champney

Cornered, the copperhead throws
its thick, mottled body round the
cabin, hitting the walls, hard.

Hollow booms —
screams of
frightened teenage girls,
one waving a hoe.

Crack! the hoe comes down.

More shrieks, and

now a stumble, an awkward swing and chop and
the leaping snake falters in mid-air and
falls, as the voices rise — a fury of
snake-girl-hoe, a blindness of blood.

The executioner runs from the cabin
down the wooded hill to the lakeshore,
where she crouches, retching, thunder in her ears.
The others stand, stunned and silent, clutching
each other, transfixed and staring.

Snake slime is not mentioned in the handbook.
The world will never be the same.

A WINTER MEMORY

By Suzanne Crowder

This morning the sky is very gray,
the tree limbs and branches bare;
Across this cold winter scene
flies a brilliant cardinal.
The winding mountain road on which we live
leads one very close to a narrow brook
which rushes water noisily along.
Bright red and orange berries cling
to brittle-looking branches there.
The snow has come. One can smell it,
and it crunches underfoot.
Our new house with its dark stain and deep
gold door is nestled into the mountain-side,
and we are settled in it very happily.
There is a view of a low mountain range
from our back windows.
The sun sets there.

WHEN THE GEESE DON'T GET THE POINT

By Aggie Merrick

Yesterday morning
I heard the plaintive cry
of the wonderfully reliable geese.
I looked up
expecting to see
an undulating “V”
moving across the gloomy grey sky.
Instead,
I saw a bunch of black birds in disarray.
Something was wrong.
Where was that reassuring “V”?
I waited and waited for them to return
to their predictable pattern; but they continued their loud lament in
uncharacteristically disconcerting disorder.
I stayed as long as I could, hoping they would regroup.
I craned my neck to see them through the trees.
Were they coming together yet?
I couldn't see.
I had to leave,
not knowing
if they ever regained
their definitive formation.
What's the world coming to
if the geese don't fly in a “V”?

UNDER MOSES

By Gay Block

Under Moses Israel kept the law
Their loyalty to show
But when Jesus came He filled that law
With grace and love you know.

The Sabbath was given to Israel
To keep God's people near
But the Lord's own day was held most dear
Out of love, not fear!

He put that law on flesh, not stone
His great love to imply
And to argue over Sabbath's day
Is to Jesus's truth deny.

Now Jesus resurrected
Early Sunday morn
Nor did He choose a Saturday
To see His church be born.

To speak forth new covenant
And peoples' motives test -
It is not about a legal day
But about His Sabbath rest.

MEDITATING

By Gay Block

What a funny cup we are
Full of wounds and holes.
We ask for God to fill us up
But leak and dive like moles!
We moan, we cry
And whine and gripe,
We seek and then can't find
Fix this stuff please fill me up
I'm sick of being blind!
Skin holds me in. Heart lifts me up
On feet that just don't stand...
Tears leak out, anger fires -
Now ain't this scene just grand?
I need a fix, A MAJOR job,
A new heart just like Yours.
Got a spare? I've got a prayer.
Please open up some doors. I'll pray
You do an overhaul
Give me the mind of Christ.
Here's my stuff, it's all I've got.
Yep, I've tried once or twice. I'll practice hard -
I'll give my all. I know You'll do your part.
You promise, God, to make me look
Just like Your own heart.

REFLECTIONS

By Lily Kouo

In recent years I have observed,
Great changes in our environment.
At times a dark smoke hides the sky.
Filthy air often embraces our bodies.
Trash fills cover the land.
The globe is warmer,
The weather unpredictable.
Heavy rain and flood are frequent visitors.
Beautiful landscapes and rain forests
Have gone before my eyes.
Coronavirus spread like a bushfire,
Carrying strong winds, through empty fields.
Killing people by the millions,
Destroying the strongest economic systems.
And spelling poverty for many.
A sick man needs a doctor to cure,
And a family to care.
We need scientists, governments and industry to cure,
And citizens to care,
In order to restore our homes.
My father, a philosopher, once told me:
Life is full of Ups and Downs.
In between is room for you to learn.
To tap my inner strength to cope with:
Fear; pain; loneliness; uncertainty; and more.
To wrap my love and care around a broken heart.
To bring hope and positive thoughts to lift my wearied spirit.
We need great thinkers to clarify our false dilemma.
Does mankind want quality of life or personal riches?
I think and hope that we are ready,
To take a final, thoughtful step,
Into the world of Enlightenment,
While time is still available.

DROUGHT

By Janice Dycacz

Mother earth cries out,
Her throat is parched and dry.
The roots of the big trees seek out any water
left deep in the earth.
Branches may be sacrificed so that
the core survives.
Is it like the Star Trek episode,
where Jean Luc Picard
is taken prisoner
so that he may tell
the story of a dying planet.
Drop by drop water vanishes
leaving a desert wasteland.
The rain that was so plentiful in the fall,
bringing the big snowstorms of winter
has disappeared.
When will it return?

PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE

By Flo Dunlop

Lord, cease the busy humming, drumming of the turning world. Gather again to each of us
those bits of self,
Fractured and spun out by anxiety and stress.
The efforts of being and doing.
Quiet our relentless, restless thinking.

Slow the pulsing in our veins.
Calm our unsteady breath.
Bring it to your rhythm.
Until, in that still small point of light within,
We find you and peace.
And love enough to be our better selves.

BROADMEAD BENCH WALK: THE MAGIC CIRCLE

By Isaac Rehert

Broadmead's campus is full of benches. The edges of the Perimeter road are freckled with them. But to this Broadmead resident four certain benches are special. I don't know that these special benches have special names. (Perhaps my readers will help me with that.) But, I can tell you where they are located. Feel free to use them, as much as I do. You just need to know where to look. And be in need of a bench.

I reside in B-cluster, and my all-time favorite walk—I took a lot of little walks during our Corona Virus shutdown—begins at the foot of Cluster B. Walk uphill to where Walkway B joins with C, turn left onto C and then proceed further along C. It is an uphill hike, and believe me, after a few minutes—especially on a warm afternoon—you are ready for a pause. And, guess what, just there stands a beautiful bench, new unweathered wooden planks, just right for a walker—even one not in lockdown, like you.

So much for Bench (unnamed) Number One. Rest here as long as you please. What's to see here? Some pictures hanging on display across the way. Some free books looking for a home. A stone turtle half-buried in lawn mulch (owner's name unknown). Time to move on. Toward Bench No. 2. it's pretty steep going along the same direction until the path joins the entrance to the Community Center building. By then, you are ready for another pause, and guess what? There is a bench—a bit fancier than the previous one. By now you're ready. And here, for your entertainment, you're surrounded by activity. Yellow carts, electrically powered, pulling one or maybe two rubber-tired wagons. Masked men driving or standing behind wagons loaded with bagged meals or other good stuff for residents like me. Activity. Men working at real tasks. if you feel up to it, walk in to where some yellow carts stand parked in front of a large glass window. All over the window are white papers bearing the word "Thanks." No explanations. Seem to mean "Thanks for your cooperation in dealing with the Shutdown."

After a short rest on the friendly bench, time to head for Bench No.3. To reach there, you need to descend from your elevated position and follow the downward path which winds around the lower level of the community building and then emerges on the sidewalk near the old pre-virus entrance to the building. The path here is across the street from the new construction. Huge multi-story buildings going up. Heavy earth-moving equipment. Men in hard hats. Much noise— heavy hammers resounding steel plates, gasoline engines groaning. After a short walk, there stands Bench No. 3, at the junction of the main street and a crosswalk to the left. By now you are ready to sit. Stop here. Several views are available from here. If you look ahead, you see a neat green grassy expanse. Turn your head slightly, you see the main old Broadmead entrance. Turn a little further and you are face to face with new construction. Enjoy. I have found this to be a magic corner. In good weather (when there is no Corona virus plaguing us), sit on this bench and you will be greeted by just about everyone

you know at Broadmead, out for a stroll.

Rest for a few minutes, then proceed ahead between two brick buildings—residences, I believe. And now you emerge into an open grassy area whose edges are occupied by Cluster A. Neat, many apartments in pleasant rows. And a bench? No, not exactly. But half a dozen lawn chairs strewn about over the grass, their owners equally strewn about, being hospitable, happy to have you to sit and enjoy, as good as any bench.

You have now completed the Broadmead Benchwalk. I call it the “magic circle.” You are back to where you started from. Relax. Enjoy. The magic? Make yourself aware of the transformation these few minutes of walking and benching have made in you. If you still have energy, take the same walk again, this time reversing, beginning with A Cluster.

HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE

By Sue Baker

Our bus from Kathmandu arrived outside Pokhara, Nepal on a hot June morning. At 4,500 feet this was the jumping-off place for our 100-mile trek to Manang, a small village at 12,000 feet. There, 20 American medical students would learn about health problems and the difficulties of health care delivery in a remote mountain area. Along the way we would all learn the meaning of “remote.”

My husband, a specialist in international health, had been asked to go as the physician-instructor. In lieu of his compensation, the sponsors offered to pay my travel expenses.

We shouldered our canteens and day packs filled with a few necessities and dry clothes, grateful that porters would carry our tents, sleeping bags and food. Soon a dilemma was obvious: there would be no rest rooms. I explained to the other two females the reason they had been told to wear full hiking skirts: in the absence of bushes to hide behind, we would just ‘crouch and go.’ “Oh, I couldn’t possibly do that!” moaned Diane, but I assured her that she would soon be able to ignore any males within sight.

The trek would take ten days of climbing, then losing precious altitude, then climbing again. In each late afternoon we would find that the porters had set up our two-person tents and prepared supper, usually of rehydrated food that we ate without complaint — at least not much. Chill mornings sometimes brought a clear view of Annapurna.

After a few days blisters became a problem, and one student could not keep up. Rather than slowing everyone down, someone (usually myself) and one porter would keep him company as he trudged behind the group.

Aching joints and sore muscles were common, and I was glad I had prepared for the trip by walking to a tall building near my Baltimore office and climbing the stairs to the 12th floor. I was 51 but in better shape than the med students, who had been studying for exams

rather than exercising. An occasional stream and a memorable waterfall provided a welcome respite from the heat.

Finally, finally, after ten days we arrived in Manang, a mudbrick village of some 700 hundred smiling, good-natured Nepalese, many of whom had been looking forward to doctors who would surely cure their ills. Both they and the students were disappointed to learn that was not always the case. Treatment ranged from M&M placebos to a stretcher trip to Pokhara, required for a man who had fallen from a tree. Such falls were not uncommon because foraging for leaves for their water buffalo was requiring them to go farther afield each day and to climb higher in the trees.

While clinic was in session, I roamed the village making note of hazards. Since animals occupied the ground floor, ladders led to the windowless second floor, where cooking took place over small smoky fires that caused respiratory problems. At night, babies swaddled in blankets were placed not far from the embers and one was burned while we were there. There was a lot of activity on the porch. About ten feet above the ground with no railing; to my surprise, children seemed always to keep a safe distance from the edge. A well with no surrounding barrier was located in the middle of the village; one child had fallen in and drowned the previous year.

Toward the end of our two-week stay in Manang, some of us hiked up to a lovely valley at 15,000 feet, partly for a better view of Annapurna, partly to experience the higher altitude. What a difference that extra 3,000 feet made to our partly acclimatized lungs. Panting, hardly able to take the next step, we finally headed down. We saw plenty of shaggy yaks who seemed not to mind the altitude at all. On our return, we discovered that two students who stayed behind had taken advantage of the absence of leaders and filled a large plastic bag with marijuana. To their dismay, it was discovered, and they were not allowed to keep it.

As “the doctor’s wife” on this rare educational trip, I had no responsibilities but was the self-appointed vice president for morale. Toward that end, I had taken along a bit of equipment and a few ideas. The most popular item in my bag of tricks was a pair of water pistols that inspired many duels. One evening when spirits seemed to be a bit low, we held an auction. Payment was to be non-monetary and ranged from foot rubs to promises of photos from to-be-developed film. The auctioned items were things we had brought along and did not wish to carry on the return trip - everything from an extra T-shirt to extra rations. That was the start of some spirited bargaining as we later traded unwanted items with one another.

The hike back was mostly downhill and therefore hard on the knees. We made it in seven days, our spirits lightened by thoughts of showers, real meat, fresh vegetables and memories of distant peaks.

THE CELTIC CHURCH IN SCOTLAND AND THE WEST (PART 2)

By Richard Goody

I described Iona, an island on the West coast of Scotland, as the seat of an ancient monastery in Part 1. It was founded in 560 (all dates are from the Christian Era) by the Irish monk Colombo, who followed the partially independent Celtic branch of the faith.

At that time, the Roman branch had been nearly wiped out in the rest of Britain by pagan invaders. My story concerns the events that led to the reuniting of these two branches of the faith. During this period the Celtic Church spread all over Scotland and the north-eastern counties of England.

My daughter Brigid and I were traveling in Scotland, and got lost in a tangle of minor roads just south of Berwick-on-Tweed. The river Tweed is the traditional border between England and Scotland on the east coast. The location of this border has been contested for centuries.

We were looking for a tidal causeway, covered by the North Sea for half of the day: this is the road that leads eastward to Lindisfarne, the Holy Island, three miles long by three and a half miles wide, Lindisfarne is by far the largest of this island group. When we came to the village of Lindisfarne we were struck by the contrast with Iona.

A picture-perfect English village spread out before us, with a Main Street, a village green, probably also serving as the cricket pitch, the village church and a pub. On the northern side of the village, on a narrow peninsula, was a steep plug of granite topped by a small Tudor castle.

The sun was shining and the sea unruffled. Lindisfarne was beautiful. The first hint of more serious matters came from the ruined walls of an ancient monastery and a priory. In early days Lindisfarne was the seat of a Bishop, a Prior and an Abbott. Lindisfarne started its ecclesiastical history when King Oswald of Northumbria, fearing the spread of barbarian doctrines, founded the Priory in 593 and asked Iona to send a monk, as Bishop of Lindisfarne. Iona sent Aidan, who was hugely successful, and established the Lindisfarne Priory.

Lindisfarne is therefore a daughter house to Iona, and many monks from Iona came there. It was also a Celtic foundation.

When Aidan died in 651 a miraculous event was recorded whereby a young man, who we might now call a Scotsman, saw a vision that convinced him to become a monk. His name

was Cuthbert and eventually he became known as the patron saint of Northumbria. He is credited with the conversion of northern England and south-east Scotland to Celtic Christianity, and he gained a reputation for piety, diligence and obedience. A cult has grown around him. In 684 he was elevated to Bishop of Lindisfarne, but resigned two years later.

Twenty years earlier, under Cuthbert's influence, the Roman and Celtic churches were brought together at a Synod in the English coastal town of Whitby, convened to discuss their differences.

The issues to be settled between the two churches were extraordinarily trivial by modern standards. First was the date of Easter, and the second was the shape of a monk's tonsure.

At the Synod the differences were settled in favor of Rome. Cuthbert and most northern prelates accepted this decision. For practical purposes this meant the end of the independent Celtic church, but our story is not quite finished.

When Cuthbert retired in 686 he became a hermit, living in a cell on Inner Farne Island, receiving visitors but no longer travelling himself. In 687 he died and was buried on the spot. His body did not rest in peace. After repeated Viking raids the monks abandoned Lindisfarne in 875 taking Cuthbert's body with them. After more than 300 years, and many adventures, St. Cuthbert's body ended up in The White Church, built on a peninsula in the River Wear at a place where the town of Durham is now situated.

I came to Durham for a professional purpose. I was invited by the Royal Astronomical Society to attend one of its meetings. The purpose was to clarify the rotation rate of Uranus, a matter which my friend Bob Brown and I had recently investigated.

After the meeting, an old friend from London invited me to be his guest at the R.A.S Dining Club which was to convene that evening in Durham Castle. We had an excellent dinner, but my interest was focused on the scene outside. Across the courtyard was a magnificent building, Durham Cathedral, the shrine of St. Cuthbert, one of the most beautiful ecclesiastical structures in Europe. This was my target for the next day.

The Durham Cathedral site is spectacular, built on a high, wooded escarpment in a sharp bend of the River Wear. A bridge over the river leads to the Cathedral. On it Walter Scott's words are inscribed: Half Church of God, half fortress against the Scot.

This Church of God was founded in part to house St. Cuthbert's remains, which lie in the aisle under a plain stone slab. Cuthbert is memorialized in a side-chapel in the form of a statue built from driftwood and other naturally-occurring materials. He is depicted in the company of many birds and small animals. This similarity to St. Francis of Assisi forms part of the Cuthbert myth, but I have not been able to find whence it comes.

SHARLACH

By Bernie Anderson

It was sometime around the middle of January, 1965, when I moved my family from Maryland to Bedford Village, NY. At that time my wife was in early pregnancy with our fifth child. Our other four (three boys and one girl) ranged in age from 2 to 9 years old. The reason for our move was my transfer by IBM from the Baltimore office to one of their headquarters locations in Harrison, NY.

Moving day was cold and dreary. Our new home was located on Appleby Drive, about two miles from the Bedford Village Green, which was one of four small villages located in the town of Bedford, about 44 miles northeast of New York city. Bedford Village was a quaint New England style village, with its “downtown” area consisting of

a triangular common where three roads met. One of those was “Pound Ridge Rd.” or Route 22. Appleby Drive was off that road.

Our car was a station wagon, typical for large families of that day. As I turned off Pound Ridge Road onto Appleby Drive the car went into a skid on what was a dirt road at the time and had an icy surface. We landed in a small ditch off the road. Our moving van was already at our new home just a few yards on our right from where the car skidded. I pondered what to do to get my car back on solid road.

Miraculously, a milk truck pulled onto Appleby Drive almost at the same time our car skidded. The driver was named Eric and by his kindness we were pulled back onto solid surface. Eric instantly became our new milk man, providing milk deliveries to us in our home for years to come.

Eric was only one of several memorable people we met early in our stay (a total of 28 years) in Bedford Village. An even more memorable person who came into our lives in the town was Mr. Sharlach. (I don’t remember his first name.) Mr. Sharlach owned and ran the only hardware store located on the Bedford Village Green. It became one of the most used stores for us as we settled into our new home. Eventually, as our family aged, two of sons worked there after school. I was a frequent customer of Sharlach’s Hardware Store, being a do-it-yourself father. Many was the time when I sought Mr. Sharlach’s knowledge and advice in building or repairing things around our home.

One example of how he helped me was when I wanted to put a vegetable garden in our yard, which was about one acre in size and had a large area on one side that seemed ideal for the garden. I was challenged by an encounter with a large rock in the area where I began to dig. The more I dug the bigger the rock became. I went to Sharlach’s to seek my friend’s advice. He counselled that I should try what the Indians once did in similar circumstance. “What was that?” I asked. His reply was to make a large fire over the area where I was digging and once the fire got very hot douse it with a bucket of cold water, then hit the rock with a sledgehammer. That is precisely what I did, and to my great amazement the rock shattered into many pieces, small enough for me to remove by hand. From there, digging my garden became a much easier task and I went on to planting a host of vegetables and some strawberries. Mr.

Sharlach was a genius in my mind.

I frequently would stop in his store to chat with him and his wife who worked there. On one occasion I asked if he was ever going to retire and sell the store. I don't recall his answer, but I remember saying to him I might be interested in buying him out. I don't think I was serious - probably just making conversation. Several years after that conversation, Mr. Sharlach did decide to retire. He called me one day and asked if I would come to see him in the store on a Sunday. (The store was never opened on Sundays.) I said I would and we met on a Sunday afternoon. He told me that he was going to retire and would sell the store. He wanted to give me the first chance to buy from him. I was quite flattered, but my IBM career was going well, and I didn't think I should make a change at this time. He did retire, and eventually sold the store. It became something other than a hardware store.

One final story about Mr. Sharlach. He and his wife eventually moved to a retirement community in Maryland near where one of their sons lived. Sometime after I retired we moved from Bedford to a small town in western Maryland. I discovered that the retirement home where the Sharlachs lived was within driving distance of my new home. I decided one day to go to see them. It had been several years since I last saw them. My wife and I drove to their new home for a visit. I remember entering the lobby and was greeted by a voice from across the lobby calling out my name. It was Mr. Sharlach. We had a memorable visit. We also saw his wife, but sadly she had dementia and did not know us.

I never saw them again, but I have never forgotten. Mr. Sharlach was a wonderful man and good friend.

BOOMERANG

By Aggie Merrick

"It was a dark and stormy night. . ." No—really, it was! It was 8:30 in the evening. I was driving out of the university campus garage when I saw a young male student walking toward the entrance. Ten seconds in this heavy downpour, I thought, and he'll be soaked to the skin.

I pushed the button to lower the passenger-side window. "Hop in" I said. "I'll drive you as close to your building as I can." He looked at the rain, looked back at me, and said thanks, and climbed into the back seat.

I drove him as near as I could, but he'd still have maybe 30 seconds in that deluge. I felt around on the floor of the passenger side for my small Tote umbrella.

"Here," I said, "take this." "Oh no—really—I couldn't—no thank you. I'll be fine," he stammered. "Please," I said, "I've got lots of these." He didn't protest and took the umbrella, thanked me and trotted off to class.

The next evening I attended a Nursing Home Volunteer Dinner. After we received our certificates of appreciation, we could choose a prize from the gift table. I chose the small Tote umbrella.

HAVE YOU CAUGHT AN EARWORM LATELY?

By David Diorio

One morning a few weeks ago I woke up with a catchy tune running through my head. I thought nothing of it as these tunes usually fade away. But this one didn't.

Unbidden, it came to stay for days and days, constantly running there. It was there whether I was doing a mindless task, working an intricate computer problem, or strolling outside in the fresh air. After a while, it became annoying as I had no control over it, and I didn't know the name of the song.

It was an earworm, and I knew I had to find out the name of the song to get rid of it. I asked a few friends if they recognized it when I hummed it. No one did and I was disappointed and a little frantic.

I knew earworms are a common phenomenon. Last July the famous Danish pianist, Brent Fabric, died, who wrote music for movies, and the theater. But the Times obit ignored all that, and said, he was perhaps best known for "Alley Cat," a piano tune that took the world by storm in 1962 and became an earworm for the ages. A simple tune it could embed itself in the listener's ear as if on a continuous loop. It seemed to me a dubious lifetime distinction to be remembered chiefly for creating "an earworm for the ages."

And then there is Mark Twain's famous short story, "Brothers, Punch!" Twain is reading a newspaper when his eye falls upon a catchy jingle. It begins:

"Will the reader please to cast his eye over the following lines, and see if he can discover anything harmful in them?

Conductor, when you receive a fare,
Punch in the presence of the passenjare!
A blue trip slip for an eight-cent fare,
A buff trip slip for a six-cent fare,
A pink trip slip for a three-cent fare,
Punch in the presence of the passenjare!

"All through breakfast these lines went waltzing through my brain. and when, at last, I rolled up my napkin, I could not tell whether I had eaten anything or not. I had carefully laid out my day's work the day before—thrilling tragedy in the novel which I am writing. I went to my den to begin my deed of blood. I took up my pen, but all I could get it to say was, "Punch in the presence of the passenjare." I fought hard for an hour, but it was useless. I returned home, and suffered all the afternoon; suffered all through an unconscious and unrefreshing dinner; suffered, and cried, and jingled all through the evening; went to bed and rolled, tossed, and jingled right along... By sunrise I was out of my mind."

Mark Twain may have exaggerated a bit, but he obviously was afflicted by a jingle, a non-musical earworm.

Oliver Sacks, the brain neurologist, wrote extensively about the science of earworms in his book, "Musicophilia." He tells us earworms are far from new but are much more prevalent in the last few decades because of the availability of music everywhere from theater and

movies. He adds the term earworm was first used in the 1980's as a literal translation of the German word Ohrwurm, but he prefers the term "brainworm," since they are really caused by some dysfunction in the brain's neural circuits. He, himself, has been the victim of many "brainworms."

I had to find the song that was plaguing me. I probably heard it recently and remembered that over the past weeks I had watched several musicals on TCM and I decided to search each musical for a list of all its song titles and held my breath. One popped up, and I knew instantly that was it, though the lyrics and dances seemed unrelated to the tune. Blessed relief. I now had control of it.

Perhaps you may want to listen to it on You Tube, dear reader, but you do so at your peril. It is... "Life Upon the Wicked Stage," from Showboat.

MY MOTHER'S ENCOUNTER WITH A PIRATE ON THE HIGH SEAS

By Anne Allen Dandy

On January 22, 1961, my mother, Caroline Ellicott Boyce, was on board the Santa Maria, a Portuguese cruise ship. Age 60, she was returning from a well-earned three-week holiday on Madeira Island.

A novice star gazer, she watched through her porthole each night for the familiar constellations. On this particular evening she noticed that the ship had changed course and was bypassing the USA and heading due south to South America. Upon opening her door to check with a cabin boy she heard gun shots and saw a crew member fall down with a bloody head wound.

The loudspeaker began to implore the passengers to join the rebel pirate, Henrique Galvao, who had just hijacked the ship. Since mother was the only American traveler and she was fluent in French as well as English she soon found herself at the conference table translating for the Captain and Galvao as they negotiated in their different languages. Galvao spoke French and the Captain English.

Their negotiations were closely covered by Time magazine and the NY Times and went on for days.

I did not know what happened until my brother phoned and told me our mother was in a crisis aboard a hijacked ship. We quickly turned on the television news.

Walter and I and our four children, ages two to twelve years old, were totally mesmerized watching Gambi on TV, as our grandchildren nicknamed her, as she translated between the Captain and rebel pirate, Galvao. We were nervous and fearful of what the outcome might be.

After many days a U.S.Naval ship escorted the cruiser to Recife,, Brazil. Her passport had been confiscated and she carried only a wooden bird cage, a present for me, as she walked down the gangplank. Months after her safe return we learned that Galvao, with other rebels, had boarded the ship disguised as passengers with weapons in their suitcases. He claimed to be championing the cause of the

Portuguese downtrodden and had planned to overthrow the dictatorship of Salazar. During negotiations he was granted asylum and lived in exile in Brazil.

On February 3rd, 44 days and 15,000 circuitous miles after leaving the boat mother was safely ensconced in her Monkton abode. Her progeny never tired of hearing Gambi's tales of the scary pirate she had worked with aboard that hijacked ship.

NIGHT BUS TO BAURU: A MEMOIR

By Bob Fetter

I was once asked to write about a Challenge I have experienced. A lot of what passes as Challenge for me has fallen into the realm of actively sought Adventure and Opportunity. During my travels there have been interesting “ultimate destinations” (along with some remarkable “unplanned side-trips”).. none falling into the really dangerous or outstanding categories. Here is one adventure, about which I am still here to report:

“Night Bus To Bauru.” In the late spring of 2000, just before Susie’s and my 40th Anniversary, we headed off for our first Brazil visit to see our son Allen and daughter-in-law Danielle and Not-Yet-Two Isabel. They had been living almost a year, as they would for four more years, in Rio Claro, a small city featuring railroad repair shops and a state university (where Allen was on the staff) 160-some miles northwest of the big Sao Paulo Metropolis.

One day, I took the bus into Sao Paulo.. a comfortable trip. I went to see the museum exhibits featuring the 500th anniversary of the Europeans’ first arrival in Brazil in 1500. After arriving at the huge “Tiete Rodoviaria” bus station, I was able to get around the bustling city by the Metro subway and buses and taxi, as well as on foot. I carried a large map and a small phrase book of Brazilian Portuguese, and thought I could ask for and understand directions. There in “Parque do Ibirapuera” the special exhibits about Brazilian life and culture and history in five different museums included European, African, Asian, and indigenous influences and milestones. I was so absorbed that the hour soon grew late. Dark came early at this tropical latitude by the time I headed out to catch a city bus back towards Tiete. “Praca do Se” was the terminus for many city bus routes, so I blithely boarded a bus with such a destination sign. However, the ride seemed to take a long time. Then, I looked out the window and saw we were crossing Rio Tiete. but at an unfamiliar place as this river runs around the metropolis on three sides. Here I was, a tourist, with only a huge map of the city to unfold and study. Fortunately, the passenger next to me explained where we were, and the fact that the bus listed “Praca do Se” as the Origin in large letters, with the destination in much smaller letters. We were on the far southwest corner of the metropolis. The helpful Brazilian explained I needed to get off at the next stop and catch a taxi back to the Metro terminus at the far south end of Ligna Azul. This I did, with the taxi fare using a noticeable portion of my Brazilian currency. Further calculations made clear I would be unable to catch the Last Bus from Tiete Back to Rio Claro around 9:30 pm.

My next thought: Perhaps I could catch a train to Bauru and then double back to Rio Claro

the next morning by bus? I got off the Metro at “Estacion do Luz” (once a major intercity rail station). I emerged onto a street scene drawn straight from Dickens, with a heavy flavor from the Brazilian favelas. People were huddled over small fires in the gutters, cooking meals and/or reheating food retrieved from trash cans and dumpsters. The police were frisking the usual suspects. Once inside the train station, when I asked how to find the train for Bauru, I learned that only commuter trains operated any more. The last train to Bauru had departed two years ago.

Two railway police found two more police to stay with me until they helped me board a commuter train, thereby whisking me away from their domain of responsibility before they needed to fill out any papers about “my case.” They seemed quite worried about my safety, although I attempted to explain in Portuguese that “at age 68 I had lived a good life.”

It was a short ride to “Barra Funda”.. .site of another Sao Paulo intercity bus terminal. There I found that a bus would be leaving soon for Bauru, which I assumed would be an overnight trip. I called our daughter-in-law Danielle to let the family know “my plan”.. .about which they were hardly reassured. And for good reason, as the bus proved to be a non-stop express. We arrived in Bauru at 2:30 am. There I remained in the large open-sided bus station the rest of the night, sipping hot chocolate and watching three Brazilian movies on television until dawn. At that point I ventured out into the immediate neighborhood and found I could have stayed quite reasonably in a nearby Best Western Hotel. My final bus ride brought me back to Rio Claro by mid-morning, passing through beautiful agricultural lands enroute.

Before we left Brazil about two weeks later, I took Susie (and our son Allen, too) back to see these remarkable 500th anniversary exhibits in Sao Paulo. Four years later, on our fifth Brazil trip, I made three solo trips into Sao Paulo, which in January 2004 was celebrating the 450th anniversary of the Jesuits’ arrival to set up their first mission there.

Sao Paulo with over 17 million population remains a fascinating city in that large melting-pot nation, filled with friendly, helpful people.. .including many mired in desperate poverty. The favela dwellers are the ones who could write or speak most convincingly on the subject of Challenge.

THE MITTENS

By Susan Saunders

Any parent who primarily cares for children and a home can feel frustration at the repetitive nature of the job. Everything that is done to keep a house or a child in good shape must be done again and again. Employment outside the home offers much more possibility for completing a project or achieving a goal that stays completely achieved.

The hunger to complete a project has led many mothers to stay very late finishing some creation. Exhaustion is a small price to pay for the satisfaction of doing something that stays done. That is why I was determined to rescue Seth's mitten.

On an icy day I drove my son Dave and our friend Seth to Brown Memorial Weekday School where they were in Kindergarten. Steve, our infant son, was sleeping in his car seat. I drove to the rear parking lot which was almost empty. I parked the car and we got out. Dave got out on my side of the car and Seth got out on the other side.

Seth had no sooner left the car when a large black dog bounded up, snatched a brown mitten that hung on a string from his coat sleeve and took off across the broad back lawn, the mitten dangling from his mouth.

Seth wailed. "My mother will be so mad! She stayed up all night knitting me those mittens!!!" It was as if the Bat Signal had been flashed across the sky. I was transformed into a superhero with only one goal—Rescue that Mitten!

I told Dave and Seth to go to their classroom and I set out to separate the dog from the mitten. The dog was almost across the icy lawn, but I found a large stick and hurled it just over his head, yelling "Fetch!" The dog came to a halt, looked back at me, the mitten still dangling rakishly from his mouth, then turned, picked up the stick and galloped back to me. I thought I could swap the stick for the mitten, but the mitten was snagged on the dog's tooth. I had to find a way to continue the game so the dog would come near me and I could work the mitten loose, hopefully without destroying it. We played a few rounds of fetch but each time the dog brought me the stick I could not free the mitten. Finally, I decided the only way to free the mitten was to play tug of war. The next time the dog brought the stick I grabbed one end and tugged. Yes! The Mitten Thief was into this game. I kept him close enough to work at the mitten until it was finally free.

I put it in my pocket and hurled the stick as far as I could. While the dog chased it, I caught my breath, checked on my sleeping baby, and went to deliver the mitten to a very happy and relieved Seth. Seth was worried about losing the mitten, now disconnected from its string, at school. So, I put both mittens in the trunk of the car and promised to give them to him when I took him home.

That should have been the happy ending. But sadly, it was not. About a week later, while getting things out of the trunk of the car, I found the mittens. Seth and I had both forgotten all about them when I took him home that day.

I went into the house and called Seth's mother. I said, "Ann do you remember the brown mittens you knitted for Seth?" She replied, "I certainly do! I stayed up all night making those mittens and he lost them the very next day. And that isn't the worst thing. You would Never Believe the whopper he told me about what happened to them! His story even featured you!! No matter what I said to him about lying he stuck to his tale. I'm worried about him!"

With a heap of chagrin, I verified poor Seth's story. It almost matched the chagrin with which Ann received it. One thing that surprised us both is that Seth never once asked me to speak up for him or to find the mittens. It made me wonder if it is possible for adults, speaking from a voice of authority, to make a child forget, mistrust, or deny what they know to be true.

MY NAME IS ACE

By Sidney Levy

I was thinking of writing a story for both children and adults recently. Here's my story:

My name is Ace and I have a brother, Jack. One of my ears is floppy and the other is somewhat upright. Oh, by the way, I am a Jack Russell Terrier and we both are about 4 weeks old. When I nurse at my mother's side, she tells me that that left ear will flop down just like a terrier's should- just give it time..

We live in a townhouse in Baltimore with a big fenced in back yard and when I finally get my sea legs back, Jack and I will have lots of fun chasing birds and squirrels.

My mom said that our Owners are planning to move to Boston in about three months and since they are going into an apartment, they won't be able to take Jack and me with them- but not to worry she has heard them talking about finding good homes for both of us and she says she trusts that they will do just that. And by the time the Owners move, Jack and I will be ready to go out on our own.

Well, just about on schedule a real nice couple came in to look at Jack and me and they giggled about my left ear that really was starting to look like a terrier's should. They picked me up and the lady smelled so sweet, just like a lambchop bone, and I gave her a little kiss and looked into her eyes. She hugged me and cradled me in her arms while her husband pulled out some money and we all headed to the car. It seemed like we drove for a long time until we pulled up to a farmhouse. I thought we'd see some children but I guess not. Without her coat,

my new Owner had a big belly. Once in the house they put some delicious food in a dish for me and after I ate and drank, they took me outside and I saw the biggest thing I ever saw in my whole life! It was some kind of animal, had four legs like me, was colored black and white and made a noise that sounded like the train that used to pass behind our house in Baltimore.

I wanted to get closer so I could sniff this creature, but I was picked up and with a finger wagging at me told, "No!"

From afar I saw other big animals like that and they didn't seem to mind me running around. They just kept eating grass.

I settled in on the farm and I guess it was a couple of weeks later that I heard a baby cry and I was allowed to sniff this little pink thing wrapped in a blanket. I guess I was going to have a playmate for life. Lucky me!

THREE FAMILY ADVENTURES

By Frank Iber

CAMPING IN HURRICANE SEASON:

I and my three sons liked the activity of camping in an uncrowded wooded region with lots of empty hiking trails to elevated vistas. The Skyline Drive in Virginia was a popular destination. One year while my wife was to be away on a four-day trip, I and my 3 sons age 6, 10 and 12 planned an outing on the Skyline Drive in her absence. The prediction of heavy rains from a hurricane moving up the East Coast did not discourage our outing for we had appropriate gear. We arrived at the nearly empty camping ground and chose an appropriate site to erect our pop-up tent camper, ate lunch and embarked on a five-hour walk. Though we encountered intermittent showers we were appropriately dressed for the weather we found the views were limited by the wet atmosphere, the trails very muddy, but largely free of hikers. We returned to our campsite and cooked our evening meal using dry wood we carried for such a wet occasion. After our meal we decided to turn into our sleeping bags in anticipation of a very busy set of hikes in the morning.

During the night we were battered by high winds and continual deluge such that the inside of our tent and sleeping bags were thoroughly soaked as were we. We had no alternative but to throw everything into the camper and return to Baltimore. Upon arrival I placed each sleeping bag separately in the washer then the dryer. When this was completed, I placed several portions of the tent in the dryer and managed to make our camping gear usable, though muddy. The next day was delightfully sunny and the weather report free of rain, the winds and rain were over. We returned to the Skyline Drive. We were the only ones in the campground, the air was crystal clear, the sky was cloudless and blue, and the hiking trails were free of all other

hikers. This was the only time we could see the Atlantic Ocean from the high vistas because the hurricane had so totally cleaned the air of dust. We failed to see another person on our next two days of hiking.

When we returned to Baltimore my wife's cleaning lady had already discovered the muddy mess we had created in the laundry room and the washer and dryer and threatened to leave her job. In the end we all pitched in for several hours to clear up the problem. When this was over, we agreed that this was one of the most satisfying camping trips we have ever experienced.

FISHING MADE EASY:

My father, a near stranger after the divorce when I was four, spent a few days with me every three or four years. He was a devoted fisherman in the many lakes near his home in Wisconsin. He patiently pursued trophy fish contentedly spending hours in a boat with no success in catching anything. He tried over almost two decades to interest me and later my sons in this activity, but we were impatient for action but timid about complaining. Over time, he fully understood that this activity was not pleasing us. On one weekend he had carefully planned an alternative activity which he felt would be acceptable. After spending three hours sitting in a boat with absolutely no fish we broke off for lunch.

He then led me and two sons with fishing gear to a fish hatchery where he had gained permission for us to fish in the pool where large fish were kept prior to release. Masses of large fish surrounded our boat and within one minute of dangling a baited hook we had a large fish on our line. It took us far longer to remove the caught fish and re-bait than to have another fish on the line. We found we could slow the process slightly by not baiting the hooks. After we had booted up about 30 large fish we were saturated by this frantic activity and decided to quit.

After returning home, we decided we liked this form of fishing even less than patiently waiting in a boat armed at least with hope. Needless to say, none of us became fishermen in our later lives.

THE INVINCIBLE JEEP:

Our 14-year-old son was obsessed with off-road vehicles and eagerly anticipated reaching age 16. He discovered an abandoned Jeep for sale because its engine was destroyed from repeated freezing. He badgered his parents to allow him to purchase it. He gained reluctant approval with the clear statement that it would take him at least two years to restore this Jeep to use. The availability of reconditioned engines from the internet allowed the restoration to be

completed in 4 months. In about 3 weeks the carefully packed newly delivered engine arrived and was unloaded on our driveway. Ingenuity and about six high school friends unpacked the engine and maneuvered it into the garage where pulleys attached to overhead beams could lift it up for insertion into the chassis. Fortunately, the garage roof did not leak although it sagged a bit. My son had broken his leg a few weeks before but, even hampered by the plaster cast he got the new engine in place and functioning within three weeks. It was then towed to off-road sites where unlicensed vehicles could be driven.

Our son delighted in driving over bumps, rocks and through puddles throwing dust, water, and mud over all riders. On one occasion he was delivered to a new off-road site alongside the Gunpowder River and the MD and PA abandoned railroad. There had been a heavy rainfall and the puddles were overflowing. He was gleefully driving through puddles splashing mud all over the place but was shocked when one of the puddles was three feet deep and flooded out the engine. To keep his cast dry he climbed out onto the hood awaiting the engine drying out.

Meanwhile a few hundred yards away the County Police were investigating a body found in the Gunpowder River and were attracted to interview this young man perched on the hood of a Jeep in the middle of a puddle. They interviewed him from dry land and concluded he had nothing to do with their problem and instructed him and his Jeep to leave at once. Frustrating his efforts, the wet engine refused to start; but, when placed in gear, the battery moved the Jeep to the puddle's edge from where it could be towed home.

The engine had to be taken apart and cleaned of all mud and then reassembled. This took until his 16th birthday when our son continued to prove that his Jeep is invincible.

CONVERSATION WITH MYSELF

By Joe Nietubicz

“Huh??? Whaa???”

“The alarm clock”

“Turn it off before it wakes Francine ”

Oh yes

“come on — get up”

I don't wanna get up it's warm and cozy and snuggly

“come on - get up”

what's the weather like outside? Maybe it's too bad

53 degrees "-no wind

clouds - stars out

looks like a beautiful day “come on —get up”`

Getting dressed

“good thing I put my clothes out last night. I don't hafta waken the boss digging in the closet and drawers”

Filling the thermos, a cup. Grabbing my stuff and heading out- Getting in the car

“do I wanna light up now?”

short ride

“yea — I know. I still wanna light up”

I can go for that”

Match flares - get in - the car - drive off

Anthony said he'd leave the gate open for us"

yes there it is. The out-lane

Good ole Anthony! Both gates are open. I don't even hafta to get out of the car. I owe him one parking lot is empty. I'm the only one here I'll park over by the fire lane — under the light”

Unloading the car - Filling up the can - Starting up the dune

made it to the top. I'm getting too old for this.

Take a breather

this is the easy part. It's all hard packed.

Wait 'til we get to the soft sand doesn't that air smell

GREAT! Listen to the waves on the beach.

Beauteous! the dawn chorus is tuning up

Out onto the beach in the soft sand - Puff puff puff

we havin fun yet?

have another cigar

stuff it!

Almost there. The tide is not yet in

glad we put sand tires on the cart. makes life easier

I'll set up at the high water mark

Unpacking - Silver streak spreading across the horizon

day break. Good timing!!

Sit in the deck chair — start putting the rods together - Grabbing the bag of clams

what the hell are you doing?

baiting up. Gonna put a line in the water

Why don't you wait for some light?

Sun will be up before long

I got enough light. can see what I am doing

yes — right! - don't cut yourself asshole.

last thing I wanna do is schlep all this stuff.

Shuck the clam - Cut it in half- Bait the hook *Back to the car, on the run, bleeding!*

OUCH!

what was that!?

hook — no blood — don't wanna suck my
finger — too much clam crap!"

good thinking — where's the rag?

Re-light my cigar - Match flare - Open the thermos - Snicker— snicker

"what's so funny?"

Just thinking of that stupid thermos joke

The thermos is the smartest thing in the

world. Keeps hot things hot and cold

How does it know? Ha Ha. Cracks me up.

Take a sip of coffee — drag off the cigar

Stupid joke."

ahhhh! That tastes good. Peaceful serene —

like I am the only one in the world. No crime—

no war— no fighting - no tourists

The silver line across the horizon starts to spread and change color, crimson, red, orange as the sun pops its head above the horizon. The clouds near the water reflect the colors, a veritable kaleidoscope of colors and hues. The water joins in on the reflections blue, greens, purple — dancing - moving. The sun is half a ball now, colors moving, changing, a swirl of ever changing color. growing brighter and brighter. The brilliance starts to fade as the sun grows larger, climbs higher. Another day is born.

a feeling that everything is right with the world

and everything is as it should be"

I love the beauty of Thy house and

the place that Thy glory dwelleth

serene — calm — peaceful

—joyous heaven on earth

Bravo!!! Bravo! Author! Author!

What a show! What a show!

Splash

what the hell was that???

Splash. Splash, Chirp, splash, chirp

*Dolphins! Look at them all
ooooohhh mmmmyyy GOD! Look at them all*

Thousands — as far as can see — up the beach —
down the beach — out to sea — dolphins!!!!

“wall-to-wall dolphins literally”

“I have never seen so many dolphins in my life”

“nobody is gonna believe this” “WOOOOOWWWWW ! ! ! ! “woooooowwww!!!!”

I think of this experience often. I can’t say whether there is a God or not. I think there is. All I can say is that whoever or whatever was/is responsible for getting me there in that spot at that time and to see this - THANK YOU!

MOZART AND STELLA

By Maggie Babb

The following is a first draft excerpt from a novel in process:

It is a time teeming with innovation and discovery on both sides of the Atlantic. The American Revolution is over; Great Britain recognizes the independence of the United States. Beethoven’s first works are being printed. The Brothers Grimm are infants. Uranus is discovered by Herschel. The Versailles Diamond Necklace Affair in France and the dollar currency in the young United States have yet to arrive on the scene. In spite of pressure from Pope Pius VI to rescind, Joseph II had granted a patent of religious tolerance and freedom of the press in Austria, while also enforcing the German language on the Czech people. Now Leopold II rules the Holy Roman Empire. In Bohemia he endorses the Masonic Czech Brotherhood of Scholars, renaming them the Royal Czech Brotherhood. But in a few years Francis II will turn it upside down, declaring Freemasonry an enemy of the crown, and anyone who is associated with it risks losing his life.

Mozart is up early. Still in his dressing gown, he steps onto his balcony overlooking Rytirska Street. This is the time of day he relishes, before the city awakens. He breathes in the

scents of the city of a hundred spires, the smoky fires starting up, fragrances of baking. He arrived two days ago and is just now settling into a productive routine. He looks forward to his visit later in the day to the palace in Karmelitska Street, but before that he will be called upon by the Archbishop of Prague, Giusto Fontanini, His Eminence, Cardinal Ottaviani's right hand man. But he is determined not to let that engagement and what it portends to distract him from his morning ritual. He sips his coffee and lets himself slip into a state of daydreaming. He imagines the magnificent Estates Theater where his opera, The Magic Flute, is scheduled to open in one week.

He lets his musical score play in his head as he reviews the drawings for the scenery in his imagination. Oh, he muses, I should be sure to check that the serpent is large, but not too large. He hums the aria for the Queen of the Night. As he sits in his reverie, he hears Papageno's song coming from the salon behind him. He is startled, but only for an instant. He laughs a hearty laugh and rises to go uncover the cage where Stella has spent the night.

A starling, a common bird across Europe. The day Mozart arrived at Rytirska Street one footman, whom Mozart had waved away from the cage he held, turned to another and mumbled, "Just a common starling, a ridiculous indulgence." Mozart knew this. Let them think that, thought the composer. All the better if they think she is just a pet, an unimportant frivolity. No one, except perhaps his wife, knows the deep connection Mozart has with his starling. His muse.

His confidant. Stella had given Mozart the tune for Papageno's theme. She had given him a lot more than that. But that was their secret. Mozart uncovers the cage and lets out the starling. Stella steps onto his hand and gently beaks a finger. Ok, my dear, what shall we do first today, mmm? He strokes her head with one forefinger.

Later today we will go to the west gallery of the Church of the Assumption to play the organ there. But for now? Let's review our notes for The Magic Flute. Mozart goes into his bedroom and Stella flies to a perch above Mozart's desk. They stay there for two and a half hours while the composer listens to the starling, taking notes, asking questions, making final preparations for the dress rehearsal in two days.

Just as Mozart is about to step away from his desk to break his fast, the door from the adjacent apartment flies open. Luca, his young Viennese assistant stands in the open door, half dressed, looking miserable. "Your Eminence, we've just received a message." Mozart stands, his hand goes to his chest, "Yes? What is it?" The first thought that comes to his mind is his

family he left behind in Vienna. “There has been a disruption at the theater, several costumes and the serpent are missing. It’s chaos.”

(Maggie Babb chairs the Broadmead Writers Group)

THE OPERA LUISA AND BROADMEAD

By Janice

Dykacz If I were to write an opera, this would be it!

Plot: Luisa is visiting her mother at Broadmead. She is trim and fit after running up and down the mountains of South Africa. She arrives at Broadmead when the trees are in stress. Many large and once-powerful trees at the entrance have been reduced to mere stumps. They must make way for the new plan!

That and Baltimore’s severe drought have taken their toll on the beautiful red maple trees - there is not one to be found! Luisa searches for red maple trees, but finds none.

Duet for two altos: *Que Lastima Arbores*. Luisa goes on a nature walk with friends; they see sparrows, cardinals, and hawks. Suddenly a bright red cardinal falls from the sky, pivoting round and round. Luisa finds the cardinal lying on the bank of the Western Run Stream. Next to it is a red maple seedling, which the drought has saved from drowning in the stream. The cardinal has pointed the way to the red maple! Duet for two altos: *Bellissima Red Maple*.

Luisa carefully scoops up the red maple seedling with a trowel and plants it in her mother's yard. It lives to be 100 years, and its curved branches see many changes and embrace many people. The tree stands proudly, a warrior impervious to destruction, casting a red glow over Broadmead.

The Broadmead Journal of Poetry and Prose is produced by the Writers Group of the Broadmead Residents Association. It consists of writings submitted by Broadmead Residents and associate members of the Writers Group. Residents who wish to submit poems and articles should email them to broadmeadjournal@gmail.com as well as to dvdd322@gmail.com and also submit a typewritten copy where possible.



Saint Cuthbert Praying
Wood Carving by Aidan Hart, used with permission

(see P.22)

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