Life's Lessons Learned
This book is dedicated to one of our own: **Kay Cashman**

Kay was a “Lifescaper” for six years – we dedicate this book to her memory.

Kay might have scoffed at being called a mentor, but she certainly was one. When sitting next to Kay in Lifescapes or waiting for an OLLI program to begin, many of us were fortunate to have Kay share things with us: her interest in photography, not only in the art of picture taking, but also the process of developing and printing the pictures she took; the joy she felt in raising her children in Rhode Island, relating many stories about their upbringing.

Kay seemed to have a personal tale of experience for almost every part of life. Her determination at accomplishing things was contagious. The spirit of “sure you can” was always on the surface, and if doubt ever crept in, she could share a story to alleviate that doubt.

Tall, thin and stately, Kay enjoyed everything OLLI had to offer: Lifescapes, Watercolors, the picnics, and particularly Eric Rasmussen’s Shakespeare classes. In Lifescapes, Kay was the first to laugh at the humorous stories and the first to empathize with the painful ones. She would offer help in the Watercolor classes to the point that her classmates would show her their efforts, wanting to enlist her approval, to wrap themselves in the warmth of her words of encouragement, just as she did in Lifescapes.

Kay, at 96, reminded us that age is nothing more than a number, and not a reason to stop doing the things that bring pleasure and enjoyment. Life is too short to be hobbled by things that really don’t matter.

Kay Cashman will always be remembered for her generous spirit and kind words, and she will be missed for a long, long time.

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**Kay Moran Cashman**

*May 19, 1914 – November 26, 2010*
This book was created in Lifescapes, a cooperative project of the Washoe County Library System, the University of Nevada, Reno English Department and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Nevada, Reno

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Members of the OLLI Memoir Writing Classes

The Lifescapes classes are both honored and grateful to Steve Anderson for the original watercolors that adorn our front and back covers

The stick figures throughout the book are drawings made by
Kay Cashman

The tribute to Kay Cashman was written by fellow classmate in Lifescapes and Watercolors, Steve Anderson

Editorial Committee:
Margo Daniels
Joyce Starling
Judi Whiting
Pat Zimmerman

OLLI Lifescapes Facilitators:
Margo Daniels
Sherl Landers-Thorman
Joyce Starling
# Table of Contents

Dedication .......................................................... Page 3  
Acknowledgements ................................................. Page 4  
**Summer of Surprise**, Deanna Yardic Jackson .......... Page 7  
**Reflections**, Beverly Harvey ................................. Page 13  
**Leg Break in Burma**, Helaine Greenberg ............... Page 15  
**The Teacher’s Teacher**, Bob Eaton ......................... Page 19  
**As Time Passes**, Popi Garos Anastassatos ............... Page 25  
**Differentiated Cells**, Sue Kennedy ......................... Page 31  
**Surprises: Four Short Stories**, Richard Knapp ......... Page 35  
**The Box on the Wall**, Bette Jensen ....................... Page 39  
**Voyage of Surprises Journal**, Margo Spears ........... Page 41  
**Never Judge a Book by its Cover**, Margo Daniels .... Page 47  
**Renaissance**, Jackie Hogan ................................. Page 53  
**Small Lessons Along the Highway of Life**, Wm. J. Metscher Page 57  
**Confession: I Did It and I’m Glad**, Beth Miramon .... Page 63  
**Mother and Me**, Joyce Starling ............................ Page 67  
**Marcy’s Musings**, Marcy Welch ............................ Page 71  
**Dear Mrs. Kennedy**, Penny Goni Cooper ................ Page 77  
**Millie**, Mary Chandler ....................................... Page 81
Spring Break, Judi Whiting  
Gypsy from Missouri, Kathryn McKee  
The Road Not Taken, Susan H. Hoover  
Some of Chester’s Stories, Marge Blockley  
The Minnesota Farm, Karolyn Bader  
Taming the Wide Missouri, Barbara Cotter  
Remember – Laughter is the Best Medicine, Lynn Mahannah  
The Injury, Ina Krapp  
Fifty Years and Still Counting, Steve Anderson  
Other Perspectives, Janice Corbelli  
Permutations, Barbara Weiss  
New Beginnings with Surprises, Jacqueline Bordoli  
Strike Force, Patricia J. Zimmerman  
Rose Cottage, Joy Macfarlane  
The Silent Movie: A Short in Black and White, Beverly Hall  
Wim, Julia Oversloot-Berg  
A Charmed Life, Sherl Landers-Thorman  
Before, During and After, Carole Slater  
God’s Gift, Barbara Frolich  
Lessons Learned, Mary Kelso  
The First Day of Class, Floyd Whiting
SUMMER OF SURPRISE

Deanna YARDIC JACKSON

Not many people found their way to my family’s front door. If they did come down the long unpaved driveway winding around Grandma Beckett’s house, they found a small garage. Or so it seemed. Now the garage was where I lived with my mother, two brothers and stepfather. Answering a rare knock on that door I saw two men, a “Mutt and Jeff” sort of pair. “You must be Deanna,” the tall one said. The short one added, “I’m your Uncle Dana. He’s your Uncle Bill. We’re your Daddy’s brothers.” I hadn’t seen my Daddy since I was four. Now I was twelve.

Mom came rushing to the door. “Well now that you’re here you might as well come in.” I could tell she was not happy to see them. “What do you want?” “You know we’ve come to take Deanna for the summer,” Uncle Dana said. There must be some mistake I thought. She’d never talked about anything like that. Without a word she turned away, went to the storage shed, returning with a battered leather suitcase. “Hurry and pack your clothes. They want to get back on the road.”

There was just a drape covering the opening to my curtained-off section of the garage. I put the suitcase on the bed, filled it with my few summer clothes and my most treasured books while I tried to make some sense of what was happening. I could hear Mom and the men talking, making their plans I supposed. I sat on the bed beside the filled suitcase, not wanting to go back through the drape into the uncertainty waiting for me on the other side. “What’s taking you so long?” Mom said, pulling aside the drape. “Come on out of there. They’ll bring you home at the end of the summer.” Uncle Bill picked up the suitcase, said “Thank you Lorrie” to my mother motioning to me to follow him and Uncle Dana to their car. I trailed along behind looking over my shoulder at my two little brothers wondering if I’d ever see them again. I was so stunned I didn’t even say goodbye.

The uncles seemed to be nice enough men. But what was my mother thinking sending me off with two men I didn’t know with no warning such a thing might ever happen? The apprehension I felt was overwhelming. The whole thing seemed like a page from one of my beloved fairy tale books, bad child banished from home -- though I didn’t think I’d been bad. During the long day’s drive the uncles explained they’d written several letters to my mother asking her to let me spend the summer with Grandpa and Grandma Boord. When she didn’t answer they decided to make the drive from southern to northern Ohio in hopes she’d let me return with them. Grandma and Grandpa Boord and all my aunts and uncles loved me very much, they said, even though they hadn’t seen me since I was a very little girl. They all wanted to see me again. I thought it must have just been easier for Mom to send me away with them than to argue against it.
As we drove along the uncles told me all about my Grandpa and Grandma, my Uncle Delbert and my Aunt Sylvia. They didn’t talk about my Daddy. I wondered if that was because they thought I knew all about him. The only thing I did know about him was he’d sent a small package for my tenth birthday. It was filled with ten silver dollars and a note that said “from Daddy.” Mom had seemed angry about the package. She’d said she’d keep the silver dollars for me until I was older. I didn’t know what that meant because I still didn’t have them.

It was just before dark when we got to Grandpa and Grandma’s house. As we parked on the front edge of the lawn, I saw my new grandparents waiting for us on the front porch of their run down farm house. He was on the porch swing, she in a little low rocking chair. He was tall and broad with a thick fringe of white hair surrounding a large bald spot. He had the bluest eyes I’d ever seen and a tobacco stained moustache that almost hid his big smile. He was wearing blue and white striped bib overalls, a much mended work shirt and brown leather Romeo slippers. Grandma was very short, her greying brown hair pulled back into a bun. I could tell her faded house dress and apron had been made from feed sacks. Nothing hid her smile. Creases of joy fanned out around her eyes, eyes as dark as Grandpa’s were blue. She set the bowl of peas she’d been shelling on the porch floor, rushed toward the car, her arms wide open in anticipation of a hug.

Uncle Dana soon left to go to his own house. Uncle Bill lived with Grandma and Grandpa when he wasn’t on the road as a traveling salesman. As soon as it was dark Grandpa said “Time for bed.” There were a few electric lights in the house but Grandma said she still liked the soft light from her kerosene lamps better. She gave a lamp to Uncle Bill to take to his attic bedroom then took me to my room. The bed in my room looked like a bed from a story book. The head and foot board were a very dark wood deeply carved with roses and vines. I needed a little stool to climb into it. I let my head sink into a fat feather pillow and pulled the patchwork quilt up under my chin. It didn’t take long to fall asleep at the end of what had been a very baffling day. Even though I still didn’t know what to expect, the idea of a summer away from home no longer seemed so frightening.

It was barely light outside when I woke up to the mouth-watering aromas of pancakes, bacon and eggs and strong coffee. I quickly dressed and found my way to the kitchen. There Grandpa sat at the oil cloth covered table drinking coffee from a funny looking cup. The cup had a little shelf around one edge to keep his moustache out of the coffee. Grandma darted back and forth between the big wood burning cook stove carrying plates piled high with all the things I’d been smelling. There was a cherry pie in the middle of the table. Grandma poured another cup of coffee for Grandpa. He added cream to it, cream so thick it had to be dished with a spoon.

Other smells on the farm were not so pleasant. When Grandpa mucked out the cow lot and horse stalls building a big manure pile I was glad I wouldn’t be there when he was spreading his “free fertilizer” on the fields. Blackie and Brownie, the two biggest horses I’d ever seen, pulled all Grandpa’s farm machinery. He didn’t have a tractor.
could choose to distance myself from the manure pile but not the privy. Grandma had planted hollyhocks all around that little building so it looked pretty but it sure didn’t smell pretty. I worried about running into a snake every time I made my way down the narrow path to the privy. I had to share the small space inside with bees and giant flies. Since bees were high on my list of world’s scariest creatures, I didn’t waste much time in there thinking how strange it was to use pages torn from old catalogs instead of toilet paper.

When Uncle Bill was home he’d tell me I was “the bees knees.” I didn’t know much about bees knees but he made them sound like something mighty fine. He’d make soapy water and let me blow bubbles with one of the little corncob pipes he smoked every day. One day when he was gone I made my own soapy water. When I looked for a pipe I found one much better than the corncob pipes. The bowl was carved in the shape of a man’s head. When Grandpa saw me blowing bubbles with that pipe, he told me I’d ruined Uncle Bill’s good pipe. Uncle Bill didn’t get mad. He laughed when Grandpa told him what I’d done. That was the start of my being treated like a little princess all summer long.

Grandma and Grandpa took a nap every day right after the noon meal. They didn’t make me take a nap, just told me not to go outside while they were sleeping. It was during nap time I’d found Uncle Bill’s special pipe. Usually I spent that time exploring the attic storage area. Time flew by while I tried on old fashioned clothes, looked at old photographs and read old copies of Country Gentleman magazines and the Grit newspaper. My other favorite pastime had to wait for evening. While Grandma and Grandpa sat on the front porch I’d settle down in the dimly lit parlor preparing to play the pump organ by twirling the faded red velvet stool up and down making tiny adjustments as though the success of my unskilled performance depended on having my feet perfectly positioned on the pedals. Grandma liked to sing. Some nights I’d forgo the organ and sit on the front porch to sing with Grandma. She taught me songs I’d never heard before. Old fashioned songs like “Just A Song At Twilight” and “Beautiful Dreamer.”

I didn’t spend the whole summer with Grandpa and Grandma. Every uncle and aunt wanted me to visit them too. It was wonderful to feel like a highly sought after prize. Before the summer was over I stayed with Uncle Dana and Aunt Ruth and her parents, the Thornberrys, Uncle Delbert and Aunt Frances and Aunt Sylvia and Uncle George. At each place my adventures were different but I was always treated like a cherished child. I had no chores, no responsibilities. I could help do things if I wanted and I often did but only if I chose to. It was so different from when I was at home. There I was expected to do most of the housework and take care of my little brothers too.

First I went to Uncle Dana’s and Aunt Ruth’s. They were a young couple with a baby girl, Sandy, living across the road from the farm where Aunt Ruth grew up. They didn’t farm. They went to work in a factory every day. Sandy and I spent the day on the Thornberry farm. There were still three teenagers on the farm, Aunt Ruth’s sisters and brother. I tagged after the teens most days helping them do their chores while Grandma Thornberry took care of Sandy. When Uncle Dan and Aunt Ruth came back from work
we’d all eat in the Thornberry kitchen before going back to their house. After supper one of the teens would bring the cows in from the pasture to be milked, dropping one off for Uncle Dana to milk so there’d be fresh milk for Sandy. He’d stake the cow on the end of a long rope so she could graze on their lawn after being milked. That’s why I stepped barefoot in a still warm cow pie while chasing fireflies. I knew I’d never forget the disgusting way it squished between my toes and oozed up to cover my foot.

I wavered from day to day while at the Thornberry’s, some days a little girl, some days an almost teen. So I rode Peaches, a fat old Shetland pony dragged out of retirement for my pleasure. That is when I could stay on her. Peaches was not happy about being put back to work. Sometimes she’d inflate her belly while I saddled up then dump me a few minutes later when she let out a big breath, the now loose saddle sliding to one side or she’d run under a low hanging tree limb and scrape me off her back. I had my first crush while there, certain I was in love with Aunt Ruth’s fifteen year old brother. When he was off working in the fields, I’d sneak into his room, lay on his unmade bed daydreaming romantic scenarios starring Paul and me.

All that ended when it was time to move on to stay with Uncle Delbert and Aunt Frances. They were older, had longed for a child but not been able to have one. Uncle Delbert was a giant of a man, strong enough to carry a twelve year old girl on his shoulders. Aunt Frances, plump and comfortable looking, cherished her small home, her gardens and the woods surrounding their house. Uncle Delbert was the source of trips into the nearby little town and pocket money to spend while we were there. I was his excuse to have a chocolate milkshake. “I can’t let you drink alone,” he’d say. Aunt Frances shied away from worldly things. She told me she’d been saved when she was sixteen. She worshiped her God not only in church but during the long walks we’d take through the woods each day. Her church was strictly against things like popular music and dancing. Uncle Delbert’s windup Victrola and records had been stored in the attic ever since they got married. Still, she let me wind up the Victrola and dance alone to my heart’s content. From her I learned to hook rugs and to marvel at the beauty of wild flowers and the many bird friends that flocked to her feeders. After two weeks they reluctantly drove me to the town of Stockport to spend time with Aunt Sylvia, Uncle George and my cousin James.

Their life was very different. They were town people. Uncle George had been janitor at the high school longer than most people could remember. Except when he was at work, he wore sharply creased trousers and crisply ironed shirts. Aunt Sylvia wanted him to look presentable. James too. James was ten years older than I was, more handsome than any movie star photo I’d ever seen. He drove a red Ford convertible. Aunt Sylvia and Uncle George had to wait a long time for a baby. Then Aunt Sylvia, a tiny woman, had ten-pound James. The doctor said she would never be able to have another baby. So her spotless house with lace curtains and blooming African violets on every window sill revolved around James with Uncle George’s full consent. Even though Uncle George didn’t work in the summer he still had a key to the gymnasium. There he taught me to shoot baskets. “As good as any boy,” he’d say. With Aunt Sylvia, cleaning house seemed like fun. We’d polish the furniture with lemon scented oil, dust her
knickknacks, each with their own story, and beat the carpets she threw over the clothes line. Stopping, of course, in time to cook supper for James and Uncle George. James took me to see my first grown up movie, “Showboat.” We rode in his convertible with the top down. I couldn’t imagine being happier. I’d transferred my crush from Paul to James. It didn’t matter that he was ten years older than both my cousin and me.

Then back to Grandpa and Grandma’s farm where I learned there was another big surprise in store for me. The uncles weren’t going to take me home. Instead my Daddy and his wife were coming to spend a week on the farm; then they’d take me home. What should have been happy anticipation about seeing my Daddy again was overshadowed by my dread of meeting his wife. For she was my stepmother. I didn’t know any stepmothers but I’d read about plenty of them. Stepmothers -- the only word I’d ever seen to describe them was wicked, “wicked stepmothers,” that’s what all the books said. The night they were to arrive, late, I was moved out to sleep on the sofa so they could have my bedroom. “I’ll never be able to sleep,” I told myself, “I’ll have to stay awake so I’ll know when she comes.” But, I did fall asleep. In the morning I vaguely remembered being awakened in the middle of the night. “Here’s your Daddy and Margaret,” I thought someone had said. All I could remember about her was she’d been wearing high heeled red shoes.

They did stay on the farm for a week. All the aunts and uncles came to visit. Margaret was nice to me. “Deanna needs new clothes,” Grandma said. I’d grown so much nothing I’d brought with me still fit right. Everything was too short or too tight or both. Margaret took me shopping for school clothes. We bought things more grown up looking than the plaid dresses with sashes that tied in the back I’d worn the year before. She even let me buy a halter top though she told me I could not wear that to school. At the end of the week they drove me home. Mom and Daddy spoke only a few words to each other. Margaret stayed in the car. Mom had never mentioned Margaret before that day and she never mentioned her afterwards with anything but scorn, but I liked her. That summer was the beginning of an ongoing, from time to time, relationship with my Daddy and Margaret.

I learned a lot of things that summer. Two of the most important were not all unexpected events in life will be unhappy and not all stepmothers are wicked.

Deanna Yardic Jackson had an unsettled childhood moving often with her mother from house to house and state to state. She finally settled in Reno. After six years as an independent widow, she recently married Bill Jackson. They plan to live happily ever after.
REFLECTIONS

Beverly Harvey

My life as a child was defined by going to church each Sunday, Saturday matinees, the public library, the public swimming pool and walking two streets over to Grandma’s house to visit her and my father, who had a print shop in their basement. My father was in the Masons, and my mother was in the Eastern Star. The two lodges combined to have a picnic in the summer where we ate all the junk food we could hold (contrary to popular belief, we never got sick) and a Christmas party where we were treated to gifts that went under the tree.

We rode our trikes and clamped our roller skates on over our shoes, tightening them with a skate key. The best place to skate was the asphalt street surrounding the park at the end of the street. Alternately, we climbed atop the walls and pretended we were circus performers as we walked along them. Later we rode bikes, feeling very grown up. And every Saturday we cried for Bambi and at Lassie pictures, laughed and thrilled at hayseed classics like Scudda Hoo, Scudda Hay and The Egg and I. Tarzan was a great favorite.

I found great comfort in the many books from the library. Grandma had a large volume of Mother Goose tales, and I memorized most of them, loving the cadences of the rhymes. Fairy tales and Brownie books enchanted me. Reading stories of that exotic land, China, I could picture the Yellow River with cormorants fishing, little boys carrying lanterns down dark streets at night, and people living on boats full of their wares. Next, dog stories caught my imagination. Faithful brave dogs, ready to die for their masters. On to Black Beauty, which made me weep for the abused horse, and feel relieved when he was rescued. Because I had an older brother, I read Tom Swift books, King Arthur, and Little Men.

There was an undercurrent of expectation those days, causing me to wonder what life would hold for me. Dreaming of the future, I planned I would go to college, travel, and meet the handsome prince who would worship me and lay the world at my feet. No matter that I was shy and awkward, tongue-tied in the presence of boys and unsure of my place in the world with girls. I would live the fairy tale life I had read about some day.

There was just one little problem with my grand plan. Life doesn’t always follow one’s wishes.

It was many years before I was able to go to the University, which then was a different experience than it would have been had I gone there from high school. Still, I loved it and “found” myself there. I realized, like the Scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz, that I had a brain. Although my daughter resented having to go to a friend’s house for lunch, she later told me she was glad I stood firm and kept going to school so she didn’t have to
feel guilty about making me stop. Now she has a Master’s degree and is becoming an accomplished writer. My son says I inspired him to persevere getting his degree while he had a wife and four children to care for because he remembers the hours I spent studying each night.

In retrospect, I have had a good life. I’ve traveled and met interesting people. I’ve been blessed with good friends who nurture and sustain me. My prince? Alas and alack. There aren’t many of them around. And watching the Royals doesn’t make that seem like such a thrilling proposition, anyway. But I’ve had some pretty interesting men in my life.

I regret that the excitement and expectation I felt as a child is gone. Now life is more like the old Peggy Lee song “Is That All There Is?” What stretched in front of me as a child now seems to have gone by all too quickly. The “oohs” and “aahs” have been replaced by ouches and groans. Old friends are dying, a sobering fact that makes one reflect more on the past.

A task I have set myself now is to put down some of my thoughts and understanding of things for my children. I realize there are questions I would like to have asked my family, but now there is no one to answer them. I hope that they will ask their own questions of my generation before we’re gone. I’d like them to know there is a compensation that comes with age. We get more comfortable with ourselves as the angst of younger years is replaced by a more realistic view of the world. I take comfort that my children are less influenced by the bigotry I learned from my parents and family. My grandchildren are even less inclined to judge others.

Life really is good!

_Beverly is practically a native, having lived in Reno since 1978. She enjoys OLLI programs, especially the Lifescapes program. The greatest thing about OLLI is the friendships we find. She has three children and is now married to Warren Harding._
On December 24, 2010 at about 10:30am, I was with my Overseas Adventure Travel pre-trip group (a total of eight seniors and our tour leader Johnny) outside Mandalay, Myanmar in Ava looking at architectural ruins. We arrived via horse drawn carts (2 people and a driver per cart). We off loaded at stop #1 (a tower) and were met by several young girls (about age 15 or so) selling souvenirs (small wooden Buddha sculptures, etc.). I took a few photographs of the tower, didn’t buy or promise to buy anything and got back in the cart with the other single woman, Alice. We left right after everyone else with our older, slower driver and did not delay leaving. When we got to the road access for stop #2, everyone else was already gone. I am very angry because our soft-spoken tour leader Johnny didn’t wait for us all to be together (the 3 couples and Alice and I) before he started walking the treacherous 1-2 foot wide slippery dirt path; that he didn’t place me and the other single older American female behind him as we walked (as we were the likely targets for the aggressive souvenir sellers); that he didn’t scare off or discourage the souvenir sellers at all; that he didn’t find an easier ingress to the ruin off the road (Wendell Robinson said there was one); or that we didn’t go there at all because with a zoom camera you could photograph the ruin from the road. Jan from Washington voiced concern about the path but Johnny encouraged her to go on.

Though the group was well ahead of me on the path (about 200 feet according to Wendell), I began walking on the path with Alice behind me. As an athletic (yoga, weights) outdoor person (weekly hikes), I felt I could navigate the path with my rubber soled, strapped hiking sandals. A cane or walking sticks wouldn’t have helped as the path was too narrow.

After I had walked about 30 feet, several of the souvenir sellers suddenly caught up with us. I had no idea they were continuing to follow us. One or more was standing in front of me, in my face, which put me off balance and I felt my right foot slip over the edge. Being further behind me, Alice saw the scene setting up and decided to walk back to the road. Had I seen what was happening, being older and cautious, I would have gone back as well.

Wearing a fanny pack and a loaded back pack (we had to carry all of our things with us for the day), I used my straightened leg to keep me upright and slow my downward progress to the bottom of the 6-foot ditch (clay with long wet grasses) until I heard a horrible snap of my two lower leg bones (tibia and fibula). Lying on my back, in shock, I looked in horror at my dislocated left foot that was positioned at a 45 degree angle. I waited for help to be carried to the road and car transport to a clinic 45 minutes away. At the road, the souvenir sellers were still trying to sell their products until my tour group (but not our leader) yelled at them and chased them off. Nobody ever bought any souvenirs.
My dislocated foot, which was turning blue due to a compromised blood supply, was very painful and needed to be straightened via a closed reduction. This was done within two hours at a clinic by an orthopedic surgeon under a spinal given by an anesthesiologist. They did not want to do surgery but thought it would be necessary when I got home.

I spent that night (12/24) in the clinic and the following night (12/25) in the hotel where our OAT group was staying before I went back to the United States. I never got fed by the clinic, nor did I get pain pills, access to a wheelchair or crutches, etc. I got pain medications from the pre-trip participants so I could make the long trip home -- 2 travel days and 5 airplanes, including one where I had to board outside stairs on my knees.

I needed to get home as quickly as possible -- treatment is best 48-72 hours after a leg break. I had paid the OAT trip insurance. I had the Myanmar orthopedic doctor’s okay that I was “fit to travel without a nurse.” I had to leave Myanmar for several reasons:

1) The group had left Mandalay for Yangon (and then Bangkok) and I was being moved to another hotel, I knew not where. Thant Saw (the OAT connection in Mandalay, my savior), who was our communications link to everywhere including the U.S., was going back because of other tour company demands. I was alone. I had no phone, computer or fax access. I didn’t speak the language. I didn’t know how long my pain medications would last. I could only hop on one leg.

2) My daughters, both doctors, and my son-in-law, a sports medicine doctor, felt I needed to come home right away since a foot that swells too much, or especially if fracture blisters form, can prevent surgery from being performed for many days or even weeks. It turns out the Myanmar orthopedic surgeon entrapped a nerve in his casting that could have caused a permanent condition, i.e., a dropped foot. Besides broken bones, I have nerve, cartilage and ligament damage in my foot/leg.
3) Having surgery in the United States, not Bangkok, means you have access to extended follow-up care and the support of family and friends who know and love you. Two orthopedic doctors have told me that my break was very serious and I came close to losing my foot/leg midcalf.

I needed to book my own flights through OAT because Richard and Nelly from “On Call” in New Hampshire kept saying they were putting my file (22 pages of documents) together and that “we’ll decide what she needs and how and when she’ll get it” (said to domestic partner Larry Hardy on the phone). They refused to authorize my flights because they couldn’t get clearance from their one and only medical director who was on vacation and unreachable??!!! I needed to fly business class to keep my casted leg straight and elevated, as the doctors directed, to keep the swelling down because accumulated fluids can break through the skin and become infected. Ankle skin is so thin that skin grafts there aren’t always possible.

Recovery: STAGE 1 – I cannot put ANY weight on my leg for 6 weeks post op (12/29), while fighting fracture blisters and suture infections with Beta dine wound care and antibiotics. I am totally confined to a wheelchair. STAGE 2 – I can begin physical therapy with ankle and foot exercises for range of motion and strength and I can put toe weight on the ground with a walker for the next six weeks. STAGE 3 – I haven’t gotten to this point yet but it involves major physical therapy to begin to walk in earnest with the walker and a cane. I hopefully will be back to full feeling and function within six months to a year. My progress has been slowed by the removal of a precancerous kidney tumor on February 21 and possibly a foot infection and removal of the plate and screws (but I don’t know yet about this).

Because of this accident that didn’t have to happen, we had to cancel my domestic partner’s family Christmas trip and our two winter Road Scholar/Elderhostel trips.

It has been the worst time in my life. My advice to others:

1) buy trip insurance but don’t go on a trip at Christmas time
2) beware of souvenir sellers
3) be aware of your environment
4) travel with a man

After living through this nightmare, I have discovered that you certainly find out who your friends are and how much your mental stamina and your patience will be tested.

Helaine Greenberg, mother, grandmother, volunteer, former teacher and journalist, hopes to be back traveling very soon.
College gave me methods of teaching elementary school, but my dad gave me the most important qualities needed to be a good teacher.

One of my earliest memories is Dad down on his knees nearly to the ground, talking with me face to face. His words might have gone something like this: “Bobby, you are sure growing up. At work last night Jim Sabin told me he saw you over by the post office yesterday and might not have recognized you if you hadn't waved at him. Do you notice how men wave? Usually it's just a quick hand up in the air like this.” Then he demonstrated for me how men waved. “Now you try it, Bobby. That's it.” Then Dad was on his way, and I practiced waving, thinking I was like Dad, but in the back of my mind I realized I had been waving my fingers up and down, like my sister. Dad was trying to save me being teased by other kids. Because Dad's voice was nonjudgmental, and he made sure he was at my eye level, used kind words, and took the time to show me, I learned to wave in a socially acceptable way.

I have Dad's name, Bob. People would call us Big Bob and Little Bob. I rode around town with him. I chased after pieces of trash that blew in the wind when he lifted those heavy oil drums and dumped them into our old garbage truck. At the dump he used a pitch fork to empty the truck. He would pull out books or other items that might be of use. I would climb up on the side of the truck and try to grab a marble or a toy and he would pretend to try to poke me with the pitchfork. I loved this until I approached junior high; then the fact that he hauled garbage kind of embarrassed me. I knew I was wrong to feel this way, especially since Dad had explained to me when I was younger how taking the garbage out of the town kept Sinclair beautiful. I quit going with him to pick up trash and wanted nothing to do with the treasures he found. He didn't say anything, didn't reprimand me for my teenage pretentiousness, but just let me learn on my own. I came around in time.

An elementary classroom is a miniature community, and a teacher often encounters problems of a social nature - bullying, prejudice, ranking done by children and sometimes their parents. It takes patience and kindness to help children develop respect for everyone in the room. I think I was able to deal with this fairly well because of the example Dad set for me.

In Boy Scouts we had to build a model ship, but it couldn't be from a kit. I told Dad about the project. He was sitting at the dining room table and didn't say anything for awhile. Then he asked me what my ship would look like. I muttered, “I don't know.” Dad sat quietly again for awhile until I said, “Maybe I'll make an old-time sailing ship.” Dad smiled to let me know I had a good idea. After awhile he asked me what materials I would use to make the ship. I shrugged my shoulders.

Then he rose from his chair, “Let's go look in the garage.” Out there we searched through mountains of junk Dad always planned to do something with. I found a piece of plywood that had some grease stains, but it didn't look too bad. “Dad, maybe you could saw this into the shape of a ship and then we could add sides to make it three dimensional.” “I don't see how I could do that, Robertybob, because I don't know what the ship is going to look like.” “You know, Dad, one of those old time ships like Columbus had.”

“You better draw me a picture.” So I drew a quick side view of what I imagined the ship would look like. “Do you want to use the saw to cut out the shape of the ship? You could draw the shape on the wood, and then you could saw around it.” “Do you think I could do that, Dad?” “I guess you could give it a try.”

It took several pieces of plywood to finally cut a shape that didn't break during the cutting. Dad patiently found more plywood and would occasionally saw for me if I got in a
particularly tough angle. As Dad and I worked together, I remembered the thick masking tape I had seen hanging on a nail. “Dad, I'll bet that thick tape would make sides for the ship if I could glue pieces of wood to this cut out to make it three dimensional.”

“Sounds good to me, Bobby, let's do it.” The next day we did the intricate work of making a tape body for our ship. We gave it several coats of tape. It was kind of solid now, kind of sticky, but it almost looked like boards curved to form the sides of the ship. I loved every time Dad would say, “I can almost see your ship sailing on waves in the ocean. Someday Bob, you will get to see the real ocean.”

“Could we make sails for it Dad, and make those rope things?” We happened to have a complete set of encyclopedias that Dad had picked up from the trash one day so I looked up ships and showed Dad the pictures. I learned words like riggings, hull, crow’s nest, and even about how difficult it had been in early days to get wood to conform to the curve of the ship frame. I asked Mom if she had any old cloth I could use for sails. She helped me by sewing little hems in the sails so they didn't have frayed edges. Dad and I looked for black paint for the body of the ship, but couldn't find any. We decided to try black shoe polish. It took several coats. When we painted the ropes and the sides, it seemed it all fit together better. We waited until the polish was dry and then attached the sails with Mom's nimble fingers tying them against the dowel sticks now painted black. The ship was so beautiful. We put it on top of the cup and saucer cabinet in the dining room to keep it safe from my two wild little brothers. That night I dreamed about being on my ship in a terrible storm, climbing up to the crow's nest searching for pirates.

At Boy Scouts I placed my ship on the table with the others. Dad was there with a few other fathers. Mine stuck out because it was big and bumpy and from the past. It was the only one that didn't look like a modern aircraft carrier or submarine or gunner boat. I was starting to be a little unsure until I felt Dad's hand on my shoulder, and I thought of how much fun we had while making the ship. I thought that my ship showed more work than any of the others except maybe the one that looked like it was metal, but it wasn't homemade. It was a kit you got at Woolworths, which we weren't supposed to do. A few boys had just done two dimensional ships and one was just a drawing on paper, a last minute attempt to get the assignment done. I carried the ship proudly home walking beside Dad talking about our ship. At home Mom told me I better put the ship back on top of the cup and saucer cabinet because my shirt was turning black from the polish on the tape. Dad smiled at that.

As a teacher I knew that some children were going to get help at home for school work, some weren't and some would have the work done for them. I also knew the best way to get a child to invent, discover or create, was to ask them questions and let them figure out ideas and provide them lots of materials. You could tell a child that 3 times 8 is twenty-four and tell him to memorize this fact, or you can give him objects so he can lay the objects out in arrays. Soon he will figure out 3 times 8 and remember it, and he will also figure out 4 times 6, 2 times 12 and 1 times 24. He will discover on his own what an amazingly flexible number 24 is. I learned from Dad to give the child time, let him make mistakes and smile at the child when he figures out a solution to his problem and marvel with the child when he reaches that glorious moment of knowledge.

I got my driver's license and within a month I had three fairly minor accidents. We lived in Sinclair six miles away from Rawlins where the high school was. The third accident was when I backed away from Jay's Drive In without looking behind me very well. I smacked right into the side of Margaret Morrison's parents' car that she was driving around Jay's. She was also a junior. She jumped out of her car yelling, “What kind of an idiot are you, Bobby Eaton? Look at my car door.” I was afraid she would smack me. My buddy Larry was in the car covering his laughter with his hand. When I was taking Larry home he said he was sorry he laughed and I told him he would be twice as sorry when we could no longer cruise Main Street because there was no way my parents would let me have the car after so many accidents. Margaret came to our house the next day with her father who looked just as mean as she was. We sat in the living room.
Mom served Margaret's dad coffee and he complained about teenage drivers, meaning me. Margaret sat there showing agreement by shaking her head up and down, her arms crossed like a reprimanding adult. I doubted she was such a great driver herself. Mr. Morrison gave his speech and got the name of our insurance. Mom and Dad and especially I stayed quiet while they were there. I wondered what would happen to me. Mom shook her head and went into the kitchen to take back the coffee cups. Dad waited awhile, studied my face and then in a simple tone stated, “I don't know what to do, Bob. You really need to drive if you are going to take part in activities at the high school.” That's all he said. I waited and waited, then realized he was waiting for me to say something. “I'll do better, Dad. I'll watch what I'm doing more.” “That should do the trick, Bob” and that was the last accident I had for many years.

So I learned that giving the child a chance to tell you what he did wrong and a chance to change his behavior himself is much more effective than lecturing him or punishing him.

After my first year of college, I should have worked at the refinery for the summer like the other Sinclair kids who were in college. I wanted adventure and chose to work as a waiter at a cheap little resort outside Holland, Michigan. We served the guests family style and the work was overwhelming and the weather was hot and humid. After just a few days I was exhausted and hated the place. I hurried cleaning and setting up my section for the next day so I could go to my room and rest. As I was leaving, one of the other college summer workers yelled at me, “Hey, where you going? No one leaves until we are all done. If you finish early you got to help the others until we are finished.” That seemed totally unfair because those other guys just dawdled. I lasted a couple of weeks, but just couldn't stand it anymore. I told the owner I wanted to quit. He told me to give it a little more time. Without formally quitting, that night I called a taxi and snuck off to Holland, Michigan where I caught the bus to Chicago. I figured I couldn't go home, though, because I needed to earn money for college next year like the kids who worked at the refinery. I would get a job in Chicago. I got off the bus and started walking down the street with my heavy suitcase. The place was huge, noisy, busy, and terrifying. I didn't have a clue how to find a job or get a place to stay. I gave up and went back to the bus station and called home. Mom said to get on the next bus for Wyoming. I had just enough money for the ticket. I sat on that bus all day going back to Wyoming trying to convince myself that I hadn't done a bad thing, but I knew I had. My family couldn't afford to send me to Denver University in the first place. The least I could have done is work at the refinery in the summer where I could have contributed to the next year's expense.

Now I want to tell you about one of Dad's greatest lessons: how to pick yourself up and get back into the wonders of life after making a mess of things. I had two months of summer left. All the jobs were gone, I had nothing to do. I started getting kind of bitter. I rode my old bike out on the golf course road toward the river either in the morning or the late afternoon when the desert sun wasn't beating down on me. I had never had so much time to think. During the day I would read, play the accordion, stare at TV and gloomily drag myself through the day. Now and then Dad would yell at me from outside my bedroom window, “Let's go see what your Mom is up to.” We would go to the town coffee shop at the Sinclair Hotel and have coffee and pie. Mom would wait on us, usually the only customers. My summer adventure failure made me act just a little surly with Dad. He started talking about life more, about trying new things, adventures, and my future. I just mumbled simple replies. One day we were eating lemon meringue pie which was wonderful and was taking my mind off my misery. The coffee shop was so yellow and so clean and bright and Mom was so sweet in her waitress uniform and Dad so gentle in spite of his calloused, worn hands and stained work clothes. “I've got an idea for you, Bob Why don't you ride back to college on your bike?”

“You've got to be kidding, Dad. That's about two hundred and fifty miles away and I'm not in good shape and think of all those cars on that highway. Why would I want to do that Dad?” “Well, Robertybob an adventure might perk you up. Speaking of perk, Lalene, can I have a little more coffee?” When Mom was pouring more coffee for him he told her, “Bob doesn't
think much of my idea.” Mom said it would be too dangerous. Dad smiled, knowing that Mom’s words would get me thinking about the adventure. A few days later when we were in Dad’s garbage truck I brought up the subject again, “About that bike trip...” We spent the next few weeks planning my trip. Dad helped me get together supplies and attach them to the bike. We studied maps to choose the best way through the mountains, off the main roads. Dad gave me a few dollars every time he found an excuse for why he needed my help so I would have a little money.

Mom and Dad would be coming to Denver in a few weeks to bring me my stuff for school. Mom said, “I hope you know what you are doing, Bob” and she wasn’t speaking to me but to Big Bob. Dad drove me twenty miles along the interstate to the turnoff for the town of Saratoga. He lifted the bike out of the back of the garbage truck for me and the sound of his horn faded as I rode off toward Denver. I rode all day, going through Saratoga, bypassing Encampment and wearily pulling into Riverside. I was too exhausted to even think of finding a camp site, making a fire and blowing up the air mattress. My legs were aching and I noticed those little tourist cabins right on the road. They couldn't be very expensive so I got one and fell on the bed knowing I had pushed too hard that first day. The next morning I hurt so bad, I couldn't even get on the bike, but I could walk slowly and push the bike so that's what I did for several days, leaving Wyoming and walking into Colorado. It was slow but I was too sore to ride and I had no intention of giving up, even though I was tired, scared and discouraged. I kicked rocks, even kicked the bike over a few times, and swore at the never ending road.

After spending my second night in my sleeping bag behind a little hill, I wearily started trudging down the road again pushing my bike at a dreary pace, feeling that this would go on for eternity. I could barely see a herd of cows in the distance. As I trudged forward, after about an hour, I got to where I could make out their faces better. Every one of their heads, twenty in all, was aimed at me. The morning slowly passed and I gradually got nearer to them. They watched me steadily. I yelled at them and talked to them and even tried to scare them with a little Indian war dance. They just stared. I came even with them and tried calling them to me, but they stayed like statues. I yelled, “Stop staring,” but really I liked their attention. I thought when I headed down the road they would finally mind their own business, but after about fifteen minutes I turned my head back toward them. Their eyes were still focused on me. And on and on it went, clear to the horizon and I could no longer distinguish them. I kept wishing Dad were with me to see this. I now knew that adventure wasn't always necessarily excitement; it could also be discovering something simple and new -- like how twenty cows were steadily staring at you for six hours. I loved those cows and I loved the long, long time they watched me.

No longer did I mind the road ahead. I walked into the mountains and saw storm clouds and refused a ride from a rancher who told me I might get caught in a storm. I tried walking at night realizing a fast moving car could come around a corner at any moment and then imagining a mountain lion lunging down on me from a nearby cliff. I lay in my sleeping bag under pine trees feeling some of the rain drip down to my sleeping bag. The next day I hung the bag over the bike to dry it in the sun as I walked along, preferring to walk because the time went slower and I liked that. The fourth night I got to walk a little in the moonlight. The forest on both sides of the road provided comfort, sort of like a barrier from the wild world. I seemed to be following the moon and felt like singing. I was ecstatic until a car came zipping by. I barely had time to move over to the barrow pit. The car screeched to a halt and backed up, coming close to me. A couple of teenage boys who thought they would give me a scare made a few wisecracks and derogatory statements about my bike and about me. I stood quietly, like those cows I had watched. I just stared at those boys. Suddenly they got quiet and one said softly to the other, “Man, he's either really weird or dumb. Let's get out of here,” and they tore out.

I came to a tiny town early the next morning and sat in front of the little store drinking chocolate milk and eating a whole pack of donuts for about an hour watching the town awake. The few people that came to the store smiled approvingly at me. That day I got a terrible
sunburn. I had to climb into higher mountains. As the day ended I could see lights down from the mountains. It had to be Grandby. I was able to coast there, get a room in a little yellow hotel and call home. Mom told me I had gone far enough and I realized I was satisfied with the adventure. My thoughts were now joyful and my body was stronger. No longer did the gloom of my misspent summer surround me. When I saw Dad he smiled and said, “Bob, you went two hundred miles through desert and mountains. I’m so proud of you. Just look at you.”

I have so many lessons I learned from Dad, so many I unknowingly used as a teacher of elementary school children, lessons in developing self confidence, pride, taking chances, caring about others.

The last year and a half of his life Dad lived at Park Manor, a nursing home in Rawlins, Wyoming. Mom and I would visit him most afternoons at about four when I got through teaching for the day. He would ask me how school was that day. I would start telling them about the day, what this kid or that had done, what lesson I had taught well, which one had bombed, etc. Dad would listen closely and smile or frown at all the right times, reliving the day with me. His face would light up if I had a tale of a child suddenly catching on to some subject. Maybe he was recalling how he had taught me. Maybe he was seeing that my teaching skills came from him.

Bob Eaton grew up in a small Wyoming town and taught there for many years at the same elementary school he attended. Bob’s father, Big Bob, took his own long bike ride about twenty years later.
AS TIME PASSES

Popi Garos Anastassatos

It has been thirteen years since my mother’s passing. It was a hot afternoon in mid July, 1998 when I came home from work. We had heard that day the results from my mom’s CAT scan examination a few days before. Her doctor had talked to me that day and also to her. The prognosis was bad. She had lung cancer that had spread to her liver and her spine. They had no way to tell where the primary cancer was and how long it had been in her system.

I walked into the family room and from the sliding door I could see her sitting in a lawn chair on the balcony. She had moved in with us a few days before when she had felt excruciating pain in her lower back and she was unable to get up and move around. Up until then she had lived alone in her own home.

I saw her there on the balcony, sitting alone, and her posture was one of a defeated soldier having come home from a deadly battle. I was overcome by sadness to think of this previously healthy woman becoming so vulnerable within a few days. I walked out on the balcony, sat beside her on a chair, looked at her and the tears started running down my face.

It was unusual for me to show any strong emotion to my mom. I always thought she would take advantage of that and get the upper hand as she did most of the time. However, this time was different. This time she was the vulnerable one and I was the one who had to be strong. I did not know exactly what to say to her. The sudden reversal of our roles was shocking.

She looked at me and in a soft but firm voice she said: “Popi, don’t cry. We all have to die from something. This is what happens to be for me. I had a long life. You and your sister are grown up now. You are doing fine. You have your husbands, your families and you are well. I am not afraid to die. I just hope I do not suffer until I close my eyes. That’s how life is. We come and we go.” I could not believe the calmness of her voice. I knew she had honestly meant every word she had said.

“But we do not know yet what your doctor will say about your treatment,” I replied. “Popi, I do not want any treatment. This is my time and I am ready to go. I do not want chemotherapy, radiation therapy or anything else they might recommend. This is my time and I am ready to go.”

My heart was beating fast in my chest and my ears were burning hearing her decisive words. I, for the first time in my life, felt tender feelings toward her. I had never seen her in a vulnerable, truly vulnerable place before. I had seen her scared, yes, but always she managed to mask her fears with threatening anger. I suppose that was her way of coping with her weak moments. I had seen that a lot in our family. I had seen storms of
her anger. Her sharp tongue and heavy hand had hurt me a lot. I resented her relentless criticism and continuous negativity. Every time I was around her I was grossly uptight not knowing what might be coming my way. This time, however, I felt fear of pending abandonment. Strange, I had never felt emotionally connected to my mom, but the truth be told she had never left us physically from her side, ever. She might not have been emotionally present, but she was always strong and determined and there.

However, all of a sudden I realized she might be gone forever. That was slowly becoming reality and the pending void of her presence was feeling like a black celestial hole. I was amazed at the new, unfamiliar feelings that were surfacing. She had always been a strong influence in my life. She had not been a loving or nurturing presence that I drew comfort from, but I knew she had been there making sure there was safety around us, however suffocating it was.

Talking with her doctor we were advised to get “Hospice” to help with her care. We interviewed three such organizations that were part of our community. Finally, we decided on the private local one. There was a lot of paper work and plenty of good information about what they could offer in caring well for my mom’s final weeks of her life. They could not tell us exactly how long she would be around, but it could be as soon as six weeks up to six months.

I was still working at my regular job and so was my husband. My only sister who lived in Los Angeles would come during the weekends to be with Mom and give me a break. Mom was pleased to be with her daughters and my family around her most of the time.

As time was marching on we could see changes in her appearance. She would look more fragile and she would fall asleep sitting in her wheel chair. I do not ever remember seeing her fall asleep before, sitting down in front of the television or reading. She was awake and alert until bed time.

One day when I came home from work she told me that she was napping in the afternoon. When she woke up to go to the bathroom, she got up, looked around her and she could not figure out where she was. She felt scared and confused until finally she figured it out. Before I left every morning, I would give her breakfast and have her lunch ready for her to eat at lunch time. The plan was going well until the day she told me about her confusion of not knowing where she was. I discussed that with my sister who decided to take time off from her job in Los Angeles and come to Reno to help with the daily chore of caring with Mom. That gave everybody a sense of relief. My mom was happier to know someone was there all the time. The “Hospice” people would come only certain days a week and only for one hour or two. My sister would go home during the weekend to be with her husband and come back on Monday to be with Mom. The caring for her was going well. Daily we could see the subtle changes in her appearance and level of energy.
My deceased older sister’s children, who had spent a lot of time with our mom when they were young, decided to come and visit with her before it would be too late. My three sons also made the same decision. One of my sons was living in Arizona, the other in Utah and the third in Los Angeles. They all decided to make the trip to Reno at the same time. It was heartwarming to see them all there for the same reason. Every one of them wanted to visit with their grandmother before she was gone.

My older sister’s two daughters from Maryland arrived and my sons with their wives. Some of her great grandchildren came too. We all decided to go to Mom’s bedroom one at the time and spend time with her visiting or just sitting with her. It was sweet to observe the different personalities and watch how each one of them had a different way of being with their ailing grandmother. At one point my youngest son had gone in the bedroom when I realized he was in there for a long time. He was there a lot longer than any of the rest of her visitors had been with her. I decided to go to the door, open it up slightly in order to find out if everything was fine. I was in tears when I saw my youngest son holding Mom’s upper body in his chest with both of his arms. He wasn’t talking to her as far as I could tell. He was just holding her being as close to her as he could be. I closed the door behind me and left them alone.

At that time we had a male, very loving, outdoors cat who was quite the hunter of mice. He had six toes in each front leg. We gave him the name “Hexy” for his six toes from the Greek word six. We were all gathered in the family room visiting and taking turns to be with Mom, when someone opened the front door. “Hexy” decided to run in the house carrying a live mouse in his mouth. The cat would drop the mouse on the ground and let him think he was free to go. When the mouse would try to run to escape, the cat would jump on him and would play with him, until the mouse would play dead again, hoping to find the opportunity one time to escape for good. Well, the cat came in, dropped the mouse on the carpet in the middle of the room and sat down a little ways from the mouse to get it to move and start his usual game.

Well, none of the female guests knew the mouse was alive and the cat’s game with it. Everybody’s attention was on the motionless mouse when suddenly the mouse decided to run for his life and hide. The family room all of a sudden became an arena of people jumping all over furniture to perch themselves on high places to escape the mouse that was ever more terrified by everyone’s screams and running. It was pandemonium for a few minutes until someone got an empty waste basket to push the mouse in and empty him outside the house. The mixed noise of screams, laughter and running in the house...
caught Mom’s attention. We had to explain to her the unexpected event, which made her smile as well. It is ironic how life can be sometime. It can be a package of joy, sadness and comedy all at once as it was for us that day.

Mom experienced the rest of her days as they presented themselves to her. She would sleep longer periods of time, eat less and have less energy. She never complained or felt sorry for herself as far as I could tell. Family friends would come to pay a short visit almost every day. Some of the visits were comforting and good for her and some of them were tiring and hard. She had a smile on her face at all times and she was happy to be with her children. We did the best we could to keep her comfortable and interested in whatever was going on around her.

A week prior to her passing, she asked my sister to take her to her duplex where she used to live. Her place was exactly the way she had left it. She had a lovely little garden in her back yard where she had planted tomatoes, a few other easy growing vegetables and herbs. She loved to work with the soil and get fresh vegetables to eat and aromatic herbs to add to her cooking. She was a great cook. She had a lot of parsley left in her garden at that time. When my sister took her to her place, the one thing she was determined to do was to cut the parsley, all of it, and bring it to my house to dry it and use it as I needed it, so it would not go to waste. She was that kind of a person. She was resourceful and never ever wasteful.

A week later she had not been able to eat or drink very much. She slept most of the time and finally that Saturday afternoon she very peacefully took her last breath. My sister and I were sleeping on the floor next to her bed, exhausted physically and emotionally. The “Hospice” people had informed us that it was a matter of hours before she would take her last breath. That Saturday afternoon, we were both suddenly awakened by the telephone ringing in the next bedroom. My sister went to answer the telephone and I approached Mom’s bed to see how she was doing. I could not hear her breath or see her chest moving. At that point I called my sister to come back, because I thought she had stopped breathing. My sister stopped her conversation with one of her friends who had called to find out how my sister was doing. She walked into the room and both of us leaned close to our mom’s face to try and hear her breath. Right at that moment, Mom took a very deep breath and when she exhaled she never inhaled again. My sister and I were stunned. The timing of her friend’s call was an incredibly time-appropriate happening. It felt like a Universal intervention. Had the friend not called when she did, we would have been sleeping while Mom took her last breath.

The time was 3:16 in the afternoon. I had an appointment to go to at 3:30, but of course that was the last thing on my mind. About 3:40 the person who I was to see called me to remind me of our meeting. I explained the events of the few previous moments and a very low apologetic voice came through the wires not knowing exactly what to say.

The family gathered again for a very solemn funeral of the ninety year old mother, grandmother and great grandmother. All of her friends were pretty much gone by then. Her grandchildren carried her casket into the church for the funeral service and
family friends were mostly the rest of the attendants. We were all sad to see her go forever. The family members were proud of her as she faced bravely the end of her life with dignity and amazing acceptance. For about five years before she died, she was cleaning her place of items she would not use anymore. She said she did not want to have us, her children, deal with all of that. She gave her wedding ring set to one of her granddaughters, because she felt she would have been the one to appreciate it the most. She gave lots of last minute gifts to the rest of us in the form of smiles and blessings.

I did learn a lot from my mom. A lot of those teachings were not what I would have chosen to learn. I picked up on her fears. I learned to be angry. I learned how to isolate myself when I was feeling bad about myself from her overwhelming criticisms. I learned not to trust people or life’s future. At the same time, however, I learned a lot of surviving skills from her. I learned about commitment and accountability. I learned a lot about bravery and decency. I learned to never give up and to maintain my dignity under the worst circumstances in life. I learned about the strength and value of family and about compassion for the less fortunate in life. I learned how to be resourceful and how to appreciate the earth and nature which can offer all we need to survive at a time of need. I learned the love and art of cooking and healthy eating.

Most of my feelings for my mom were not favorable for most of my life. I did not feel she loved me. Whatever she did to take care of me, I thought it was part of her sense of duty. I did not see in her eyes an image of me that I could be proud of. I did not feel I could go to her for comfort and understanding ever. She never held me tenderly close to her or kissed me to show me her love that way. She never gave me any praise to feel worthy of appreciation. It was tough, but now that she has not been around for thirteen years to demonstrate pieces of her harsh toughness, I realize that was her style. That was what she had learned from difficult treatments she had received and from the harsh circumstances in her life. Her behavior toward me had nothing to do with who I was. I did deserve unconditional love and joy from her, but then when is it we get everything we deserve and want from life and people in it? She did the best she could under the circumstances of her life and time. I am happy I realize now I had a Mom who never left our side no matter what.

Popi is now a widow. She lives in Reno with her youngest son, his wife and their two sons. She is doing well and enjoying life and relationships to the best of her ability.
DIFFERENTIATED CELLS

Sue Kennedy

I love OLLI. I go to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, drawn by class titles that promise to tell me more of what I want to know. On April 7, 2011 the lure was a class by Dr. Victoria Hines called “The Stem Cell Research Controversy.” I had heard several sides of this controversy (scientific, religious, and political) and found myself very conflicted. There are marvelous scientific possibilities for healing and scary possibilities for redefining life and the sanctity of an individual. What would Victoria, a pharmaceutical management consultant in this field, be able to tell me to help me decide my stance on this issue? She did a great job making the facts interesting for the people gathered to hear her. But it wasn’t her facts that give me pause to reflect, it was their very personal implication for me at this time in my life.

When my son’s wife became pregnant, I was thrilled. Even more than wanting a grandchild, I wanted them to experience parenthood. I believe that it is one of the most profound life experiences one can have. In my own case, I didn’t become an adult until I became a parent. But when I wrote to them about this marvelous new chapter in their lives, I found myself using words like “miracle,” “blessing,” “mystery,” and “gift.”

Think about it! How does loving intention in a male and female result in babies? No, I don’t mean think about HOW it is done, but how it happens. Single cells from each loving participant in a sexual act find each other in some mysterious way dictated by their genetic messages, and these cells join together to form a unique human being, who somehow encompasses the combined genetic coding of his/her parents.

It is mysterious how a man and woman decide they are in love to start with. Pheromones, sexual attractiveness, emotional synchronicity, the lure of something forbidden… Who knows? I like to call them primal urges, because sometimes logic and reason cannot explain who is attracted to whom. In marriage, at least in my generation’s tradition, a man and a woman leave their roots (family, childhood home, identification as someone’s “son” or “daughter”) and join together at the altar. They leave part of their identity behind and become something together, a couple, now identified as “husband” and “wife.” Now they make their own way in life (ideally).

EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS
At the micro level there are parallels. These two little cells somehow find each other, driven by primal urges. Each gives up half their DNA strands and then wraps around the other like a loving couple on a cold winter night. But then something magical happens. Not content to just be a new cell hanging out in a warm comfortable place, this new coupling begins to increase and multiply, thus insuring that he/she/they (Little X, let’s say) won’t be able to sponge off Mom forever, though the arrangement is great for about seven months. By nine months, if all goes well, Mom has had it with all the kicking and Little X is ready to leave those cramped quarters for new quarters, places unknown. That would require a lot of courage if voluntary, but by some mysterious signal causing expansions and contractions, Little X is thrust out into a little-suspecting world, kicking and screaming.

But, here is the amazing part: Little X is no longer a blob of cells which all look alike, like something you saw in a Petri dish in high school biology. No, X is DIFFERENTIATED! At just a few days old, X’s original cell produced about 50 stem cells (undifferentiated) with the ability to become whatever they are called to be: arm, leg, heart, kidney, brain, nerve. The list is very much longer, but you get the picture. How is it decided which cell becomes what and how many clones it makes to aid in its life-long calling? Who makes sure every vital function of the body is covered in the process? You see why words like miracle, blessing, mystery and gift become essential to explaining the process. Sometimes things run amok, and X doesn’t turn out according to expectation, but the amazing thing is that usually everything does turn out well.

Now the great fun of parenting and grand parenting begins. Little X, in my case Sydney Rose Kennedy, continues to grow, change, thrill and astound us all. Did I mention that when a man and a woman get married, their families get married also? So we are sharing the joys of Sydney’s being with another set of grandparents. With four of us adoring her, Sydney has every likelihood of becoming over-indulged. I think that’s why God invented poopy diapers. They periodically dampen the urge to hold this precious child close to our bosoms.

Sydney didn’t stop at this already amazing feat of being born beautiful and healthy, with all body parts intact and in the right location. No, she continues to grow and change. All those little differentiated cells are doing what they do. Just this week some teeth cells made their appearance in her upper gum. Wow! Where were they the first eight months after birth? Were they hanging around looking like gum cells? How did they know it was time to make their appearance? And where are the cells in the brain
that will give her a clue about how to crawl? And how many cells have to cooperate in order to master that task? Brain, nerve, muscle, tendon…

Watching this new little addition to our family is awesome, but I suspect it takes many decades and several children before someone like me knows enough about how things work to be totally amazed by it all. The body is marvelously intricate and complex, and is all the proof I need that there is a Divine Planner. Even so it was not designed to last forever. That is the other reason Victoria’s talk made an impact on me.

She talked about the fascinating research being done to use stem cells to rebuild and repair malfunctioning body parts. Good news for all of us with things not working as well as they used to. It brings a vision to my mind of going in for an annual tune-up (instead of the old physical) and getting some stem cells here, some stem cells there, here cells, there cells, everywhere some stem cells. Wonderful, huh? Well, maybe not. Live forever? I don’t know about that either. Inserting the DNA of other organisms into ours may be well intentioned, but doesn’t that change who we are fundamentally? Where are the moral and ethical lines? A heart transplant specialist in Hawaii reported that more than one of his patients receiving the hearts of others, also inexplicably got some of their memories. How can we explain that with what we know medically now? There is much we don’t know, and there might be unintended consequences from the medical breakthroughs coming out of stem cell research.

Dr. Hines did not answer all my qualms or my questions; however she certainly sparked my thinking. She also gave me a fresh appreciation for the marvelous way humans come to be. And among all my differentiated cells are those of my immune system, working alongside their cousin cells in the stomach, colon, skin, thyroid, etc. They are all doing their best to keep me healthy even after nearly seventy years of constant use. That miracle (is it any less?) gives me quality time with my granddaughter. A true gift! For that I am grateful to each and every one of them.

*Sue Kennedy is enjoying the thrill of her first grandchild, born July 2010. When not attending OLLI classes, she participates in the Lifescapes writing group and facilitates the Metaphysics Class. She believes she will never run out of questions to be answered.*
THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE MEAL I NEVER ATE

I spent most of the summer of 1944 with my mother visiting my aunt and uncle in Chicago. For me, a 10 year old, this was a great adventure. For my mother, it was an opportunity to visit one of her older sisters, who was quite ill. Southern California was a great distance from Chicago, especially so in 1944, so therefore my mother and aunt had not been able to be together for several years. My brother was in the Navy stationed at the University of Notre Dame, only ninety miles from Chicago, so this was also an opportunity to visit my brother.

One Saturday my mother and I took a boat trip from Chicago across Lake Michigan to Benton Harbor, Michigan, where my brother met us and returned to Chicago with us on his weekend leave. The three of us went to the cafeteria on the boat for dinner, and upon standing in line long enough to finally reach the trays and silverware bins, we found only one fork remaining, and it had a chunk of food stuck between two tines. My mother showed it to the attendant and asked if there were any clean forks. The man took the fork, used his fingernail to knock out the food chunk, then blew on the fork, dried it on his dirty apron, and offered it back to my mother. It should be no surprise that at that instant all three of us decided to wait until we returned to Chicago to eat.

MARINES TO THE RESCUE

As a preteenager during World War II, I was fascinated by all aspects of the war and read daily newspaper accounts of the success, or lack thereof, from the previous day. But other than being interested there wasn't anything I could really do about it. But I did love to see the military uniforms, and I finally talked my mother into buying me a kid’s version of the Marine dress uniform, which I proudly wore on many occasions.

One day my mother gave me some money and asked me to go to the grocery store and get some items she needed. At this time I spent a considerable amount of my play time on roller skates - the old fashioned kind with steel wheels that clamped onto the bottom of your shoes. So, I put on my skates and left for the grocery store which was about three blocks away. All went well as I picked up the needed items, paid for them and started toward home, all the time dressed in my Marine uniform. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, my feet rolled out from under me and I crashed on my behind. Before I could even start to think about getting up, I was surprised to feel myself being lifted back to my feet. I looked up to see two uniformed U.S. Marines, one on each side of me. After they put me back on my wheels and gave me my grocery sack, they said for me to
keep on rolling, and then they gave me a snappy military salute. I was thrilled, embarrassed, and proud all at the same time!

"BIG SHOT" FALLS FLAT

I had it made! My first college summer job. 1952. I had been selected as one of twelve college students to work as an Engineering Aid for the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (now NASA) at their flight test center at Edwards Air Force Base. All kinds of experimental aircraft were being flown there by the cream of the crop of military and civilian test pilots, including Chuck Yeager in the Bell X-1, and Neil Armstrong, long before becoming the first man to walk on the moon, as a junior pilot assigned to a variety of test planes. I was extremely happy to be making some "real" money for the first time, which was necessary for me to continue in college at the end of summer. I was also very proud and excited to be associated with these pilots and their highly secret research missions.

After clearing security and getting the normal first day introductions and instructions, the twelve of us were shown to a room with twelve small desks. We each picked out our own favorite desk, and I picked a nice corner location. Wow, my very own desk and chair! I felt like a big shot and I tried to act like one by putting my feet on the desk and rocking back in the chair. Surprise, surprise, surprise!!! In my eagerness I had failed to notice that the chair was on wheels, and in rocking back, the chair rolled out from under me and I landed flat on my bottom on the floor much to the amusement of the other eleven new big shots.

IN HARM'S WAY

New airplanes must be flight tested before they can be certified safe for either commercial or military use. The engines that power these aircraft must also be flight tested and certified safe. Obviously, the normal procedure is to test a new airframe with a known safe engine, and vice versa. In the mid 1950's General Electric Company produced a new jet aircraft engine, the J-79, that was intended to be used in the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter. But the F-104 was a new and yet untested airframe. Therefore we had a situation in which any failed test of the airframe was blamed on the J-79 engine, and engine failures were blamed on the F-104 airframe. This resulted in obvious heated clashes between the G. E. engineers and the Lockheed engineers.

After I graduated from U. C. Berkeley I was offered a job with the G. E. Flight Test division at Edwards AFB, which was responsible for the J-79 testing. My brother
was an engineer at Lockheed leading many of the F-104 testing procedures. This made for some very interesting family discussions about why there were so many F-104 / J-79 combinations that had crashed or had had so many close calls.

One of the ground tests conducted on the engine involved running the engine from idle to full afterburner power in measured increments and obtaining a set of engine parameter test results at each increment. To obtain these measurements required placement of the recording device to be in one precise location and the only way to place it there was for somebody to hold it there by hand. The only place to stand to hold this location was right outside the airframe but beside the engine, and at this location was a red painted line around the airframe and the warning to not stand there when the engine was running. Who would be selected to stand in this hazardous location and hold the test instrument in place? I'm sure you are not surprised to hear that it was me!

I was given every noise abatement ear protection device known. I assumed the necessary place, the test began, the noise level increased with each movement from one engine speed to the next. Nothing but trying to resist the increasing roaring noise consumed my every thought. There is no way I can describe the intensity of the noise at full afterburner power - but at that point it seemed more physical than mere noise. Obviously the test went OK or I wouldn't be here telling you this story. But I hope I never have to bear the pain and vibration of that intense sound ever again.

Richard Knapp is a retired architect, originally from Southern California. He worked in Los Angeles before moving his family to Reno in 1972. He and his wife, Barbara, have been married 52 years and have two children and four grandchildren, all living in Reno.
THE BOX ON THE WALL

Bette Jensen

He hung them there, the man I hired to hang my pictures. There they are displayed on a small section of the wall opposite the head of my bed. Two 16" square frames, rough in texture, sprayed in a light green color that is enhanced with a touch of gold in all the right places. The frames include a wide, tan, weathered looking mounting, and placed in the center of each mounting is a seven inch square picture.

The higher frame on the left, presents two beautiful white roses in full bloom with dangling twin buds hanging at their left. A larger firstborn bud is nestled at the bottom in an arc formed by the placement of the two dominant flowers in the picture. In contrast, the lower picture on the right displays one large, pink rose sitting on a bed of leaves. There is a folded petal in the center of this loner that resembles a half open, or perhaps half closed eyelid. Whichever it is, this folded leaf seems to dominate the two pictures I keep looking at as I lie in bed beyond get up time. Yes, the leaf dominates the two pictures, dominates them until the box begins to take shape.

As I lay a yardstick on top of the higher picture, the one on the left, and draw a straight line across the empty space above the lower picture to a point that will be at its right corner, I have one side of a box. Then if I draw a vertical line down that right side, I have the pictures encased in half a box. Conversely, to close the box, I draw a straight line across the bottom from right to left. The last line is down the left side of the two pictures from top to bottom. That's when I run into a problem. There's a double light switch at that corner. Now I have a box on the wall with a hole in the bottom left hand corner.

The end is in sight. Air is seeping into my box. The flowers are starting to wilt. Now they are drying up and crumbling into small bits. In the wink of my eye, the pictures are folding and decomposing into themselves and all is falling out of the hole onto the floor. Then voila, as if by magic, there's potpourri in a light green bowl that is enhanced with a touch of gold in all the right places and the box on the wall with a hole in the bottom left hand corner is no more.

Bette Jensen will be finalizing her Nevada/OLLI experience with this issue as she moves to Texas for a new adventure in living. "I'm already missing you and I haven't left yet."
VOYAGE OF SURPRISES JOURNAL

Margo Spears

“How about going around the world on a freighter – reminds me of my Navy days” my husband Joe queried one afternoon in the summer of 1997. I was completely surprised since he’d had major heart surgeries four years before and had been recuperating very slowly ever since. Previously we had traveled the world extensively and I was sure our travel days were over. After checking with the heart doctors and getting approval, we booked a “77-Day Cruise Around the World” from Long Beach to Long Beach on the German flagged Washington Senator, a 708’ freighter. Reading travel books we learned that unlike cruise ships, freighters had no shows, no musicians, no deck games, no gambling and no doctors. The only promises we received were dining with the officers and transportation around the world, stopping at 15 ports.

In Long Beach, on Thursday, October 9, 1997, we finally boarded the Senator, going up the 53 gangplank stairs to the Main Deck, then up one flight to Deck One where the dining room (called the mess) and the lounge were located. There we met the Captain, an East German, and First Officer Dieter, Second Officer Michael and Chief Engineer, called Chief, all West Germans. The rest of the 23 people on board were two Spanish mechanics, ten Filipino crew, including a young and eager Evan (the passengers’ waiter, house cleaner and helper) and the five other fairly congenial passengers. Passengers were really incidental to the important ship inhabitants – the cargo containers. The Senator could handle 1,750 40’ containers but was never completely full. The 7 passengers met each day for 3 meals and teatime, and some socializing and visiting but otherwise Joe and I mostly amused ourselves by reading, writing and each day strolling and exploring.

Our prior knowledge that there was no elevator on the ship had prepared us to some extent but we had not realized that some days we would be trekking up, or down, at least 1,000 steps. The inside and outside stairs felt very safe in a rolling ocean. Our fifth deck 550 square foot cabin consisted of a 12’x20’ living room with six windows, sofa, loveseat, desk, chairs, refrigerator, cocktail table and lamps, and a large bedroom, smallish bathroom and a foyer. After unpacking, a first priority was decorating our cabin by covering the living room walls with detailed large maps of the world.

Finally at 6pm on DAY 2, October 10, 1997 the ship was fully loaded with containers and the Senator was underway. Watching out the cabin windows we recognized most of the California coastline as we sailed north. Next day at 2:30pm we neared the Golden Gate Bridge. Through the windows we spied the famed Blue Angels flying toward us out of a brilliant blue sky, performing a show right over the Golden Gate and us! What perfect timing! San Francisco Bay was full of sailboats for a festive Fleet Week celebration. It took us a spectacular hour to cruise the sparkling blue bay to the Port of Oakland. It all seemed a great omen for an exciting trip. Leaving San Francisco early the next morning we started on the Great Circle Route through the Aleutians.

DAY 6 was a Tuesday – passengers’ day for laundry. After taking our clothes down 8 flights of stairs we found one small washer allotted to “Personal” and the only dryer was broken so we hung our clothes on lines in the “Hot Room” next door. We often chatted with the crew and that day one crewman saw the broken dryer and explained that the Captain had complete control of the ship’s finances. The rumors were
the Captain was skimming money from the food and repair budgets, and other scrimping to keep the money for himself!

The Bridge was the ship’s Control Room, 80’ wide, with full 180º windows. Everything was computerized – the whole voyage was planned in Germany and programmed for autopilot! The officers could take control at any time (and must in port) but only one man was required to be on the Bridge otherwise. We spent many hours talking to the officer on duty. The view was always fascinating.

Margo on the Bridge

DAY 10 – In the Aleutians the weather was foggy and rainy so we just saw pieces of rocky islands as we sailed between them. The sea looked white with whitecaps and heavy swells and I finally had my “sea legs.” When we were out of the Bering Sea it was smooth enough to safely walk 1½ miles in five times around the main deck. The first sign of civilization in days were contrails. After tea the Chief (Engineer) asked all the passengers to the lounge where he helpfully, and on his own time, gave us extremely useful information about transportation and sightseeing in Pusan, Korea, the first port. Without a tour director and with regulations different at each port, we would have been lost on even how to get from the docked ship to a taxi if not for the help of Chief! Chief and Dieter, the First Mate, became our closest friends on the trip. Chief took the two of us several times below decks, meeting his small crew and showing us all the mighty motors and engineering necessary for our huge vessel, from desalination to lighting to heating to air conditioning (including keeping all the container refrigerated units cold). Amazingly complex. Dieter was in charge of everything above deck, plus the mind-boggling logistics of the container world! He was invaluable explaining the complicated worldwide transportation of goods, maritime laws, personnel and union problems, and vagaries of each port’s use of gantries, cranes and other equipment needed to expeditiously load and unload hundreds of containers, each costing about $350 per container per transfer to or from the ship! Really, really BIG business. Chief and Dieter visited our cabin many evenings, but never together since they were not on good terms and spoke only when necessary. Today I’m still in touch with both.

DAY 15 – In the Sea of Japan the sea and sky were the identical gray color and we could not see a horizon. It felt as if we were floating in a huge bubble. A peculiar feeling. Then, rising out of the haze we saw miles of gigantic skyscrapers belonging to
the city of Pusan, South Korea. We climbed up to Monkey Island – the very tiptop of the ship, really the roof of the bridge but with a railing, radar equipment and seating, discovering a very special place with a 360º view. The cranes started working immediately. The next day we got a taxi to the colorful Pusan International Market. It was our first time on land in 12 days. The lovely buffet lunch at the Chief “recommended” Commodore Hotel was a highlight for us. At each port we made a ritual of phoning our daughters back home to assure them we were fine. Then back to our ship by 3:30pm with snacks – food onboard was still just average. Later we learned our Filipino cook was to quit in Singapore because he did not have enough supplies!

DAY 18 – The East China Sea is one of the world’s richest for fishing. While watching the fishermen, we sighted Kaohsiung, Taiwan. On Monkey Island we were amazed to see the world’s 8th tallest building, the T and C Tower rising unexpectedly through the mist. Time in port was very short so we only got ashore to call our daughters.

DAY 20 – Sailing into Hong Kong harbor we were astounded to see all the new buildings since we’d been there twelve years before. After docking offshore in the Bay, the floating cranes came out to the ship and started working. Five of us caught a water taxi for a bouncy 20-minute ride into Hong Kong. We spent much of our time at the new Museum of Fine Art, especially enjoying the Chinese Art. The exhibit that lingers most in my mind was of the tiny, tiny slippers some Chinese ladies had to wear after having their feet bound so they could not grow. I felt so sad. Another water taxi took us back to the ship where we found that seven “Suzy Wongs” had come to stay the night on our floating brothel. Large flocks of seabirds swooped in a dance nearby. Luckily one of the passengers was an avid “birder” and told us the names of most of the birds we enjoyed seeing during the whole trip.

DAY 23 – Enroute to Singapore. The ship was really rolling and the containers were groaning. The temperature was finally warm, 82º degrees and humid – it was nice to feel the tropics. Walking past the Engine Control Room, we heard Chief explaining to his crew what to do if pirates were sighted since there had been two nearby pirate attacks in the past week. When we asked the First Mate about going for our usual walk around the ship, he said not to worry. Upon returning we found that all the doors were locked and no pounding helped! So we climbed the eight flights of outside stairs to the Bridge and knocked on the window – really scaring the captain and First Mate who shook his head when he saw us and apologized “Mea Culpa.” He had not known earlier that the Captain had ordered the ship securely locked because of possible pirates!

DAY 25 – After taking a shuttle into Singapore we walked around seeing some colorful temples and ending up at the famed Raffles Hotel. We also went to the Raffles City four-story mall with a wonderful grocery store where we bought snacks and the peanut butter I’d been craving.

DAY 28 – The sun was rising as we docked in Columbia, Sri Lanka which turned out to be our favorite port of the trip. A friendly cab driver, Edward, gave us a tour seeing the Hindu Section with the women in their lovely saris, the Moslem Section and Mosque, and the Buddhist Section where we watched saffron-garbed monks washing and brushing their favorite old elephant. At the old British Galle Face Hotel an elderly fellow with maharajah-type clothing gave us a tour of the hotel, seeing the elegant rooms with high sculpted ceilings, ending at a wonderful veranda overlooking the deep blue ocean. We had a “proper” English tea before heading back to the ship. On the drive we saw
hundreds of olive-dressed soldiers with rifles and machine guns everywhere due to the heavy security since the recent Tamil hotel bombings.

DAY 30 – Going through the Arabian Sea we finally saw many ten inch flying fish skimming just inches above the water, often gliding 200 feet and traveling about the speed of the ship. Those fish were always a delight to watch. The next day we were exactly halfway around the world from Reno and to celebrate we had a small party for the passengers with the goodies we’d bought in Singapore. Rounding the Horn of Africa we entered the Red Sea, which was really a beautiful blue color and a continuation of the Great Rift Valley. The food on board was getting worse daily – the eggs were all gone so no pancakes and juice served just twice a week. We had to pick the bugs out of our Muesli cereal. At day’s end we anchored at Suez City, Egypt for our turn to enter the Suez Canal.

DAY 37 – As we watched the sunrise, the First Mate phoned us: “We’re going in.” Hurrying up to Monkey Island we found we were #7 in the northbound convoy of 22 ships. The many small Egyptian villages surrounded by palm trees and sand looked as they must have 2000 years ago. There is always a wait in the Great Bitter Lake for the south-bound convoy to pass. It is a narrow canal. An orange full moon came up as we neared the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean countries slipped gently past us on our way to the rough Atlantic where the ship pitched and tossed violently for three days. The clouds and sea were both black. A cargo ship ahead of us lost 26 containers holding French wine.

DAY 44 – Crossing over the Channel we saw the White Cliffs of Dover. After dinner we started seeing a fairyland of white lights – a fantastic sight for three hours going slowly up the Rhine to the German port of Rotterdam, largest in the world. Everything, apartment buildings to oil refineries to factories had designs of white light. The next morning the Captain took the passengers to a Duty Free Shop where we did a bit of shopping. I had a terrible time because my legs were extremely rubbery after 17 days at sea! The land seemed to be moving! Next stop was the ship’s home port, Bremerhaven, Germany, very cold and wintry. The good part was finally getting food provisions and a commissary on board. The food had been barely acceptable for a long time. Two of our passenger friends left the cruise at Bremerhaven, as planned, to see more of Europe.

DAY 47 – I was surprised to see the dirty, yellowish-green color of the foggy North Sea. After stopping briefly at Felixstowe, England we sailed on to Le Havre, France to pick up final containers before crossing the Atlantic. It was Thanksgiving Day but the Germans had never heard of it, so no special dinner.

DAY 52 – Sailing back into the Atlantic, we experienced a very tempestuous sea. Then we got news of a huge storm in our path – could not go around. I spent five miserable days in bed, very seasick. The ocean kept body slamming us, and every few minutes it felt like an 8+ earthquake. I watched Joe enviously as he grinned and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and strength of the storm, reminding him of his World War II Navy days. The ship slowed to 13 knots instead of the usual 20 knots.

DAY 57 – I started feeling better and ate a tiny bit since I’d been existing only on tonic water. The storm’s wave power alone dented and pushed in nine of our containers. Even the heavy metal around our anchor chains was bent so the anchors were inoperable.
DAY 59 – Land Ho! Long Island and the good old USA. Wind chill was -2º F. At 10:00am we thrilled to see the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty. We only got off the ship to make phone calls. At dinner we met the new Captain – so happy to see the old one go since he was responsible for our lack of proper food. The next day we followed the Jersey coast passing Atlantic City, and docking at Norfolk where the bay was that awful yellow-green color. Two more days brought us to warm Savannah, Georgia. We quickly found a tour of the historic mansions of Savannah, a really charming city. Heading for Panama we enjoyed our usual walks and sitting on the main deck benches where the view felt “up close and personal.” Our usual occupation was spending hours admiring the water that had turned a gorgeous indigo, with some white caps. Beautiful lacy foam formed as the ship cut through the sea and we wondered why the background color of the foam was always pale green, regardless of the surrounding ocean color. Temperature was 81º and there was a gentle breeze. That evening a brilliant full moon rose over the southern edge of Cuba.

DAY 67 – Docking at Manzanillo, Panama woke us up. The trip had become much pleasanter with the new Captain. He had the dryer fixed, the food was better and we actually had juice again in the mornings. Some ports, like Rotterdam, were state-of-the-art, while Panama’s dock area seemed more manual. However, it was the only place we saw “sniffer dogs” inspecting each container. Dieter called us early next morning as we started for the Canal. Up in Monkey Island we saw the Bay of Limon and the three levels of the Gatun Locks. Sunrise came as we entered the first lock. Panama ships like the Senator fit in the locks with just 25” clearance on each side. The Senator was so big we felt very little rising in the three locks, going up a total of 85 feet. Sailing slowly through 21-mile-long Lake Gatun, the islands with lush green foliage were a delight to see. The ship was then lowered down the last two Miraflores locks and sailed past Panama City under the PanAmerican Bridge and finally out into the Gulf of Panama by 5:30pm. That was certainly a highlight day of our cruise.

DAYS 69/75 – The sea was actually calm -- smoothest since the Arabian Sea. Costa Rica’s mountains were outside our windows when we awoke. We continued our daily “walkabouts” while sailing past El Salvador and Guatemala and through the Gulf of California. The nights were moonless and the stars the brightest of the whole trip. The officers and we five passengers had an End of Cruise party in the Chief’s cabin on our 71st day at sea. The Captain told us that the final mileage of the trip, Long Beach to Long Beach, was 31, 935 statute miles!

DAY 74 – December 21, 1997. We were excited to dock in Long Beach but stayed on the ship overnight before flying home to Reno and family – an unforgettable, wonderful 78 days away from home.

In retrospect, my fondest memories are unexpectedly of the ocean itself – of the vastness and the emptiness, the sameness yet the constant change. I treasure the memories of the many peaceful hours I spent mesmerized by the lacy foam, the circling birds, the jumping fish. It takes hours and days to ponder, to absorb the ocean’s importance and enormity, to really see the beauty of our ocean, three quarters of our world.

Margo Spears enjoys sharing some of her life with the special people in her Lifescapes memoir writing class. Life continues to teach her the wonders of the world. She feels most fortunate.
NEVER JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Margo Daniels

Approaching the limestone and brick building with its copper-plated double doors flanked by flower bedecked urns, I felt anticipation and excitement. On the interior marble floor my footsteps seemed to echo off the high-ceilinged, beautifully wainscotted rotunda at the top of the twelve steps I had ascended. Even though I was tall at the age of ten, the walnut-fortressed desk before me was too high for me to see anything but the top of Miss Marcelle Foote’s head. The cool, musty, quiet sense of the place, broken only by the whispers of turning pages, never failed to heighten my reverence for what I was about to explore. If it wasn’t exactly a spiritual experience, it was at least somewhat similar to entering the hushed atmosphere of a great cathedral.

Peering over her half glasses with just a smidgen of a smile playing around her thin lips, Miss Foote, the Head Librarian, would greet me with a hand out for the books I was returning and ask what it was I wished to read next. Unfailingly polite but stern and very cognizant of the rules governing closed-stacks libraries, she had for the last two or three years given up trying to coax me into the children’s room. “I’ve already read all those,” I had the precociousness to say to her when I was eight. Off the rotunda to the left was the adult reading room, decorated with comfortable chairs, newspaper racks and several shelves of journals and periodicals. To the right was a brightly decorated room with picture books and all the children’s classics.

But I was looking for the “good stuff” that lived behind her mammoth desk flanked by two beautifully carved wooden gates. That’s where the secrets of the universe lay and only the librarian could go there. By the time I was about 15, I had successfully read all the fiction books – alphabetically by author – behind those wooden gates.

As much as I loved that library, I was not overly impressed with the librarians: really there was only Miss Foote who had a degree in Librarianship. She ruled the roost, however, and was quite efficient managing the other employees who basically kept the shelves in order and the newspapers current. Marcelle Foote was a high school classmate of my father’s and she was in every way the prototype librarian of the early 20th century: her voice was mellifluous but whispery; her hair was worn in a bun at the back of her head; she wore laced, black shoes with a small blocked heel; she dressed only in black, dark brown or in the wintertime a dark crimson sweater. She was in her early forties when I knew her and she lived with her mother and father three blocks from the library. She never married and in the early 1960’s, after both her parents had died, went to work for the State Library in Indianapolis.

Now I had all sorts of career dreams for myself but they never included librarianship, maybe because of my image of Miss Foote, even though I loved to read books of adventure, romance, friendship, foreign lands, etc., etc. When I was five, I told everyone when I grew up I intended to be “Daddy’s Little Girl” because I was and I liked it! And then there were years of wanting to be an actress or a great musician (I played
the piano, the violin and the French horn -- just mediocre at all three). I also sang in the church choir and glee clubs and that I truly loved but does one make a living doing that?

By the time I got to college I had decided I’d write the great American novel or perhaps a brilliant Broadway play. After all, I was too tall to make it on the stage, my musical talent was a thing of the past and all I could truthfully say was that I loved to read and sing. So naturally, with all that going for me, I went to graduate school to study more Literature.

And then the Peace Corps came along and I met the love of my life and then we had three wonderful children and I decided I loved being a Mom but didn’t care over much for the housecleaning and cooking that went along with it – but of course I did it and did it and did it and did it!!!!

One day while attending a Peace Corps gathering in Washington, DC, my friend Ann said to me, “Margo – why aren’t you a librarian? You love to read and you’d be great at that.” Me? Me turn into Miss Marcelle Foote? You’ve got to be kidding!

I truly have no idea what kind of a rewarding life Miss Foote had in her tenure as Connersville’s head librarian, but when I completed my Master’s in Library and Information Science in my mid-forties and entered the field I discovered that I was surrounded daily by folks who read for the joy of reading, were well-informed and dedicated public servants and who knew how to party better than any group I’ve ever known before or since! Of course by the mid-1970s, closed public library stacks were a thing of the past and not one person that I ever worked with had her hair in a bun and wore those awful black, laced shoes! Silent, high-ceilinged libraries gave way to bright, open buildings with computers beeping and pinging and coffee and donut shops in one corner with storytelling pits for children in the other.

As a Children’s Librarian in the Fairfax County Public Library System in northern Virginia, one of my responsibilities was to set up and present Story Time for children, ages 2 through 5. Leading 35 toddlers on a journey to meet amazing animals and princesses and fairies and monsters is a truly rewarding venture. And for many years, I organized “The Wedding Procession of the Rag Doll and the Broom Handle and Who Was in It” based on Carl Sandburg’s book for children. Yes, we did have the procession all around the library, featuring the chocolate chins, the spoon lickers, the tin pan bangers, the easy ticklers and all the rest. Now that was fun!

Visiting elementary schools to tell stories was a great experience. The most memorable story-telling occasion occurred when our son Michael was in the fourth grade. His class was studying medieval times and their teacher asked me to come and tell stories “in the town square.” After I had agreed to do this, Michael came home from school one day and asked me not to come. I told him I’d already made the commitment and I would do my best not to embarrass him. When I arrived that day, I was greeted by little girls in lovely gowns and the boys in brown robes – “They’re all monks,” one of the girls told me. The classroom had been transformed with hanging banners advertising the
various trades. I started my story, “Where Arthur Sleeps” – King Arthur of Round Table fame -- with all the girls right in front of me as close as they could get and all the monks in the back of the room. Michael was as far away from me as he could get. As I told this very engaging and exciting story, I noticed several monks creeping up into the front row. By the time I finished, the girls were squished together in the middle and the monks hemmed them in on both sides. Michael was right up front, too, with a relieved smile on his face.

Leaving “on-the-floor” library work for management positions, I found myself getting increasingly involved with both the Virginia Library Association and the American Library Association, serving on many committees and attending conferences. One great advantage to that was visiting cities like New York, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans and San Francisco and discovering “Librarians on the Loose.” Although even the modern concept of a librarian is one who “shushes people,” this is an easy-to-debunk myth. With nearly 20,000 librarians and booksellers and book and library vendors attending these meetings, these wonderful cities saw a side of librarians they never knew existed. Neither did I until I joined in on some fairly wild times.

The 1989 Newbery Committee at the award banquet in San Francisco. I am second to left in the back row

I was elected in 1989 to the Newbery Award Committee and then I was appointed to the 1997 Committee. The Newbery Award is given to a resident American author for the most distinguished contribution to children’s literature in that year. The Committee of 15 persons – 7 elected, 7 appointed, and the Chair elected separately – works in great secrecy as this prestigious award guarantees enormous sales of the winning book, as well as the honorable mentions. Every book publisher in the USA is quite anxious to send copies of the books they’re bringing out that year to committee members to be considered for this award. I believe I received about 500 books both years and I spent literally
hundreds of hours reading and evaluating each one. Award committees are always wined and dined by the publishing houses but most of us took this in stride and were never “unduly influenced” by being taken to tea at the St. Francis in San Francisco, or dinner at the “Top of the Sixes” in New York City. Seriously, we worked as hard as we played and could barely manage to attend all the “light hors d’oeuvres and drinks” parties to which we were invited. I wonder if Miss Foote ever lived it up like I did.

There were other public library responsibilities, of course, that were not quite so much fun. For example, scheduling skeleton staffs to accommodate 65 hours a week (we had most all the libraries open seven days a week) was a tremendous challenge. Hours in a public library are long and include all weekend days. On the other hand, librarians can be guaranteed flexible hours and many employees liked that flexibility.

I almost always felt my stomach flip flop when someone walked into my office and said, “Margo, a patron wants to talk to you.” Some of the questions I remember were things like: “How dare you have a gay newspaper in your library where my 3-year-old can see it?” “If you’re going to have a Hanukkah exhibit in your library, when will you put up the Ramadan exhibit?” “What do you mean I have to pick up my 7-year-old by 9:00? Do you close then or something?” “I don’t care what your automated system says, I never would check out a book like that!” “Are you the person in charge here? My little boy is stuck between that pillar and the circulation desk and I can’t get him out!” (Would you believe that cat litter did the job in sliding him to safety?) “Do you have a dress code in the library? Your reference librarians should be wearing skirts, not pants!” There were also the “downsizing” crises every few years and the staff complaints, both perceived and real, and late-night Library Board meetings that seemed never to accomplish anything. As technology was just beginning to impact all we did in the library world, training and retraining became our mantra.

But there were also all those folks who worked for and with me that I could mentor, persuading them to get a further degree, to apply for a specific job, to try something they’d never done before. In one library branch, we even decided to devote half of our staff meeting time to discussing books – what a bizarre idea for librarians! And so many funny times -- when the reference librarians accidentally discarded a navigation book that was part of a series, into the dumpster I went and pulled it out, both the book and I dripping with spaghetti and other unspeakable treasures. And the evening a young book shelver was on her way home and came running back into my office – “You’ve got to come now! Somebody’s doing something behind the dumpster!” Yes, they were “doing” something all right – love in all the wrong places. It was the better part of valor not to disturb them, so I didn’t.

I served on the Board of the Reston Town Council for several years and of course agreed to have the Reston Regional Library participate in their Town Holiday Parade held the day after Thanksgiving every year. So we formed the “Book Cart Precision Drill Team.” Using the book carts from the library, and as many staff members as would agree, we designed various formations including weaving in and out and criss-crossing our lines. Those high school marching band days really came in handy for this project!
We practiced determinedly in the parking lot, usually before the library opened, so that we could be a true precision drill team. And we were the hit of the parade!

1997 Reston Regional Library Book Cart Drill Team
I am at the head of the far left column, hoping we all go in the same direction!

It never ceases to amaze me now to watch the reaction of folks when told what my line of work was. Where they might query my husband about the federal government job he had, or several teacher friends about grade levels and “children today,” when I would answer “Librarian in a public library,” there was generally a blank stare, a “How nice,” and the end to that conversation. Now I just smile – they have no idea what a wonderful place libraries are to spend a good portion of your life.

I never dreamed I’d become a librarian but I’m glad I did when I did. It was an intellectually challenging career with many more wonderful experiences than bad ones. Today’s public libraries are literally facing possible extinction unless they are able to continue providing services their populations truly need. I wish them success.

I feel my “working days” were blessed, offering me the best opportunities I could imagine. I like to think I took advantage of most of them. I also learned a valuable life lesson: “Never Judge a Book By Its Cover!”

Margo and her husband Pera have lived in Reno since 1998. They love it all – the music, the theatre, the University, the mountains, OLLI and the libraries.
1952: “You don’t have to do that anymore.” “What?” I asked. “Be so polite. We’re married now.” I was stunned! It was a few days after the wedding, and I had asked him to please pass the potatoes. Before long I realized that much of what he had told me before marriage was what he thought I wanted to hear. As a good Catholic I believed I was married for life; but this was not starting out as the “happily ever after” I had dreamed of. At nineteen, I was naive, and had little self-confidence.

Other shocks occurred over the following months and years. He gradually showed himself to be possessive, immature, fiscally irresponsible, emotionally abusive, and an alcoholic. His wants came before family needs: beer before necessities, a hi-fi system before a badly needed washing machine. I longed for a way out but felt trapped. My mother had sickened and died during the early years of my marriage and my father had remarried about a year later. There seemed to be nowhere to turn.

1956: Pregnant with my third child and desperate to escape, I checked into the possibility of getting state aid long enough to train for a job with a livable salary, but found that there was a year’s waiting period after leaving a marriage. I was told that the Department’s goal was to keep families from breaking up.

1964: Agonizing over bills with only enough money to pay a portion, I was nearly hysterical. This had been going on way too long. It was obvious that no miracle was going to occur. With six children now I had to find a way to have more control over our situation. Although the Church and society in general believed strongly that mothers should stay home to take care of their children and that working mothers were a major cause of juvenile delinquency, I decided that I would have to go to work.

With a high school education and few job skills, prospects were limited. Three weeks of practice brought my skills to a high enough level to pass a typing test. Gathering all my courage, I began work as a clerk-typist. Marriage to someone who flaunted his near-genius I.Q. and put everyone else down had left me feeling very inadequate. Despite my initial trepidation and my guilt feelings for “neglecting” my children, learning that I was considered smart and dependable and a desirable employee began to build my confidence. Taking every civil service exam for which I qualified, and placing in the top ranks, I started up the promotional ladder. Still, it took years to gather enough strength and courage to leave.
1973: After 21 years of marriage, with the $2000 I had surreptitiously saved as a cushion, in great fear, I finally took the big step. What if we couldn’t make it on my legal secretary’s salary? There was little likelihood of actually collecting any child support. With four children still at home, it was going to be a rocky road. Money was very tight, but I was now in control of it; and we lived very frugally. The children accepted the hardships with little complaining. (Was I ever lucky there!) When I was really down I reminded myself that, despite the hardships and worry, we were better off than so many people in the world: I had a job, a car, a place to live, and was able to put food on the table and pay the bills, but many nights I cried myself to sleep with worry. Though there would be many tough times to come, we would make it. We had to make it! I was now building a new life for myself and my children.

2005: “Look what I found!” My long time companion John was emerging from my bedroom carrying a large sheet of cardboard he had found behind a bookcase. “I had forgotten all about this,” he said. “Look, everything on it has come true.” It was a treasure map of goals in picture form that I had made while living in San Francisco long before buying the house that I had just now sold, and long before there had seemed any possibility that I would ever be able to buy a house. On the map were pictures that stood for a house, a new car, a better career, a college education, travel, and money, among other desired goals.

At age 59 I had found a way to buy the house I thought I would never have, and had moved across the Bay to Contra Costa County. The car in my driveway was not the Mercedes whose picture I had pasted to the poster, but was the same color and a similar shape. I had retired with an adequate income, though not the fortune pictured. The camper van I had purchased after retiring ten years earlier had been replaced by a larger, more luxurious motorhome. I had traveled to Great Britain twice and had traveled extensively by RV throughout the United States.

Through the years I had taken every promotion available to me, and had built quite a resume -- clerk typist -- secretary -- senior legal secretary -- para-legal -- office administrator -- personnel analyst. Finally, due to a State hiring freeze, I was appointed
to a temporary assignment as an environmental planner which turned into a permanent appointment when I showed I could do the job even without the required degree. And after retirement I had finally earned my BA degree from U.C.

“Wow!!!” I said, as I looked at the poster and realized that I really had achieved all those goals. It felt good!

As for my family, my children did not become delinquents because of my working, but became responsible, self-sufficient adults with families of their own. I am so proud of them! As a great-grandmother, I am still healthy and enjoying life. There have been tragedies and sorrows through the years, which touched all of us deeply, but in so many ways life has been better since I took control of my own destiny those many years ago.

My life lesson: When you take responsibility for your own life and your own actions you can accomplish wonders.

Raised in Wisconsin, Jackie spent her late teen and most adult years in California. She hit the road in her RV full time in 2005 and moved to Reno in 2007 to care for her disabled brother. She loves Lifescapes.

Jackie and her RV
SMALL LESSONS ALONG THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE
or
Bits and pieces that didn’t make it into my published memories Growing up in
Central Nevada, 1941-1959

Wm. J. Metscher

Rock Men

One of the earliest recollections of our childhood forays into the outlying areas of
central Nevada were the Rock Men. We would be driving along when Philip or I would
spot one in the distance - on the crest of a hill, near a long abandoned mining operation,
in a wash or near a rock outcrop. “Look, a man standing there,” one of us would yell.
Dad would smile and reply, “Yeah, another Rock Man.” It didn’t take long to realize
they were only piles of stone that looked like a man from a distance but why were they
there? Dad’s answer, “They’re old location monuments.”

During the turn-of-the-century mining booms thousands of mining claims were
located across the desert. The claims were 600’ x 1500’ and the law required that they be
marked at each corner and in the center of the sidelines by a stone monument or 4” x 4”
post at least three feet high.

Wood was usually non-existent and if it was available it was expensive so the
early prospectors used the next best thing -- stacks of rocks. The vast majority of the
mining claims turned out to be worthless and most of the markers had degraded so the
Rock Men that remained stood out.

And, it didn’t take us long to learn many of the men carried tobacco tins bearing
names such as Edgeworth, Old English, Dills Cut Plug or Lucky Strike Cigarettes. In the
later monuments we found Velvet or Prince Albert cans. Most tins were barely readable,
but contained what we considered treasure - early mining location notices. Reading the
notices was an adventure. They stated the name of the claim, the mining district, the
name of the locator and best of all, the date.

After reading the notices we placed them back in the cans and put them back in
the men’s “pockets,” happy that they carried them long enough to give us the chance to
examine them. The Rock Men couldn’t wave or talk but they sure communicated
through their tobacco cans. Lesson learned: A man doesn’t have to be of skin and bone
to teach you something.

The Nancy Donaldson Hoist

A favorite destination when we were exploring the desert was the northeast end of
the Goldfield mining district. The area was isolated behind a range of mountains and was
only accessible by circling through a portion of the old Tonopah Army Air Field’s
bombing and gunnery range (presently the Nellis Air Force Base bombing range). The
area had its share of rock men and it was a great place to hunt old bottles, many of which
had turned “purple” (amethyst) from the sun. There were numerous mine sites, and one,
the Nancy Donaldson, still had the old mine hoist in place. The hoist dated back to
around the turn of the century and came to mind years later when we were setting up the
Central Nevada Historical Society and Museum in Tonopah. We went back to check it out and it was still there, a silent sentinel guarding the area’s mining past. After researching the claim’s title, we were able to contact the owner, who donated it to the Historical Society. Lesson learned: Nothing is too old to be of use.

The Nancy Donaldson mine hoist c1965. In 1972, Phil and I moved it to Tonopah where it is presently a museum display piece recounting central Nevada’s mining history.

The Great Tonopah Uranium Rush

In 1953, our area experienced what we came to call the great Tonopah uranium rush. The United States was deeply involved in the Cold War with the Soviet Union and in order to build and test as many bombs as possible they needed every source of uranium they could find. Prospectors with Geiger counters began crisscrossing the desert checking every nook and cranny. Tonopah had produced silver and gold so why not uranium? It wasn’t long before high grade was found below the Lambertucci farm north of town and the rush was on. Further prospecting revealed the desert between Tonopah and Millers, nine miles north on US-6 US-95, was a radioactive bonanza and it was soon covered with hundreds of mining claims.
Along with the claims came the “assessment holes.” In order to hold the claims the locators were required to perform a minimum amount of work each year, most of which they accomplished using Caterpillar dozers. The result was piles of dirt from the holes covering the desert as far as the eye could see. Mining companies were formed, stock was sold and a new set of holes excavated every year. Trouble was, there was no uranium. Fallout from the above ground nuclear bomb tests at the Nevada Test Site (known as the Nevada Proving Grounds at the time) had polluted the soil. The rush was over.

Only the piles of dirt, resembling giant gopher mounds, remained. When I was pumping gas at the Mizpah Garage during my high school years the first question tourists traveling into town from the north would ask was, “What are all those piles of dirt on the desert below town?” Depending on how one felt, the answer was anything from “mining claims” to “giant ant hills.” The mounds are still there, but it takes a bit of effort to pick them out. They are covered with brush and are slowly eroding away.

Unfortunately, the 126 above ground nuclear tests that took place between 1951 and 1962 left another legacy -- cancer. At first it was the children with thyroid problems and leukemia; then came the other cancers that took longer to mature, the effects of which are still being felt today.

For the first few years whenever a test was announced, we would get up early to watch the flash and wait for any sound or ground movement we could detect. Most of the radioactive fallout from the tests was blown east into Utah, but we received our share. On one occasion, in 1952 if I remember right, the fallout cloud was so heavy we were told to remain in our school classrooms through recess and lunch. Mom worked at the courthouse and Dad was with the county road crew and both were issued dosimeter badges that were collected periodically by a government “Rad Man” (radiation monitor). This infuriated Mom. She insisted from the start that we were being used as guinea pigs, something time would eventually bear out. Funny thing too, if you asked the rad men for the results from the badges, nothing was forthcoming and it appears no records exist tying anyone’s name to a badge number. Now, my brother Philip and I, along with hundreds of other Central Nevada “downwinders” are the subjects of periodical check-ups related to our exposure. I guess we are OK though. At least we don’t glow in the dark -- not yet anyway, but then again, who knows what might be glowing inside us! Lesson learned: Always be skeptical of what the government tells you.

Model T Ford Coils, A Shocking Revelation

Long before Phil and I began building up Model T Fords, we learned the T’s ignition coils were a great source of entertainment. The Fords had four coils that sat in a box attached to the firewall, one for each cylinder. As the engine turned over, a roller attached to the camshaft would ground the coils and fire the spark plugs. The coils were about 4” x 2” x 1 1/2” and could be removed from the coil box, thus they were easily adapted to uses that required a spark, something that made them great for practical jokes. It didn’t take us long to figure out how to wire one to a lantern battery or electric train transformer with a doorbell button to ground it. They delivered a potent shock -- lots of voltage but no amperage so they weren’t really dangerous.
We had heard of them being wired to doorknobs and seat cushions and there were stories circulating that the toilet seats in the firehouse and the Elks lodge in Goldfield were “hooked up” to surprise unsuspecting visitors.

Naturally, we had to experiment with them and we became pretty good at finding situations where they could be used. In 6th grade I came up with a “shocking” demonstration of electric current when, as a science project, I had everyone in class form a horseshoe and hold hands. One person at each end held a wire and I pushed the button. A few of the kids still remember the results. I guess I shouldn’t have held the button down so long! On another occasion I adapted one to a science project in 8th grade to demonstrate lightning by fabricating a small paper house with a pin for a lightning arrestor and demonstrating how lightning could burn the house down. I still have a couple of the coils lying around. Maybe someday I can show the grandkids how to use them. Lesson learned: Always think before you “push the button.”

Where the Storks Landed

When Phil and I were young we asked Mom the age-old question most kids eventually get around to, “Where did we come from?” Without hesitation she answered, “Why the stork brought you.” We were skeptical at first, but she insisted she could show us where we were delivered.

The next time we were downtown, she drove up to the Miner’s Hospital on South Street, stopped and pointed to the cupola on the roof. “See that little house on top of the building, that’s where the stork leaves off babies for the mothers inside.” Of course it sounded good to us, so from then on the cupola was “The little house on top of the hospital where the stork delivers the babies.” Lesson Learned: Don’t believe everything you are told.
Edison Light Bulbs

When we were kids, we had to make the most of what was available in the way of entertainment and the old Edison light bulbs fit the bill. There were still plenty of them around, especially in the “old” dumps west of town and in the rafters of the mine buildings. The ones at the dumps were “burned out” but no matter. We would bring them home and fill them with water -- or actually, let them fill themselves with water. We had learned that if the bulb was held under water, tip down and the tip pinched off with a pair of pliers, the bulb would fill itself about half full of water. The bulbs were manufactured with a vacuum inside and removing the tip allowed the water to be sucked in. Of course, this was the “fun” part of the process. The water-filled bulbs then became “hand grenades” for our “war games” or just something to smash against the nearest rock. Lesson learned: Nature abhors a vacuum.

William Metscher, a Tonopah native and central Nevada historian, reveals more “shocking” details of his early life.
CONFESSION: I DID IT AND I’M GLAD

Beth Miramon

I was eight years old when my family of three, Mother, little sister, and I, came to Reno, Nevada for a divorce. We found a community of individualists in which people mesh only to the extent necessary in order to be a community.

To quote a San Francisco Examiner reporter, “If Las Vegas is the place to check reality at the door, then Reno -- earthy, unpretentious and friendly -- is the place to find it.”

Our life, indeed Reno’s life, revolved around east-west Fourth Street. Even the train, which took us to Mother’s first Nevada teaching job in a railroad-town, and then the Hiskey Stage, which took us to her next job in Ely, began the journey along Reno’s Fourth Street. When I left Reno thirty-six years later, it was with my husband, a graduate of UNR’s Civil engineering school who had work overseas.

Now and then we visited our folks in Reno and did notice changes, but a living community does not stagnate.

In mid-1994, when I returned to make my home in Reno again and found a giant flying nautilus proposed to be suspended above the Sierra Street exit from I-80, and skywalks evolving into sky buildings above the streets, I was appalled.

Determined to find out how it had come to pass that only one industry was calling the shots for Reno’s new projected image and to write about Reno’s struggle to regain its many-faceted character, I wrote and in 2002 self-published an up-to-date, nonfiction narrative titled Reno’s Axle, Historic 4th Street.

RENO’S AXLE
HISTORIC 4th STREET

AN UP-TO-DATE NON-FICTION NARRATIVE

BY BETH MIRAMON

ISBN: 0-596075-63-3
$14.95
A telephone call from Sundance Book Store informed me that a sealed letter addressed to me had been left with their cashier.

January 9, 2011

Dear Beth Miramor,

I just finished reading your book “Reno’s Aisle Historic 4th Street.” I enjoyed the read, it is a delightful addition to local history.

However I think I discovered a minor error. In the last paragraph on page 82 you state “The Mapes Money Tree Annex opened on West Second, where the Tower Theatre and Wigwam Coffee Shop had been.” I believe that was the Great Theater, the Tower Theatre had been on South Virginia between Pine and Ryland Streets near the Reno Bowl.

While I prefer older history, prior to my own lifetime, I appreciate your documentation of the destruction of the downtown. Although I’m a life long Sparks resident I miss that Reno with theaters, stores, coffee shops and reasons for locals to go there.

Thank you for the book.
Postscript to the reader: I have just scouted out the exact location of The Tower theater when it shared a two-story building on the east side of South Virginia Street. It was just where there is now a tall Wells Fargo Bank, the second block north of Ryland Street.

Beth Miramon did her best to compile what has befallen/is befalling Reno, Nevada and is pleased to be now honing that writing skill through what started as a contribution to Reno from gambling’s Warren Nelson and his Elder Learning School.
MOTHER AND ME

Joyce Starling

Mother when I’m eight years old.

She isn’t like other mothers. She doesn’t hug me when I come home from school. She doesn’t have a nickname for me and doesn’t allow anyone else to call me anything but Joyce Anne. I have to call her Mother, never mom or mama or, heaven forbid, ma. She doesn’t compliment me. She praises my good grades and my singing to other people, but all I get are negative comments. “Those colors don’t go together.” “Don’t put your hair behind your ears.” “Those big ears come from your father.” She complains about the things she has to do for me but won’t teach me how to do them. The implication is that I’m incapable of polishing my own shoes, folding my own clothes, or learning to cook.

She does make special treats for after school -- graham crackers with lemon icing, green apple slices with cinnamon and sugar. She designs and sews pretty dresses for me. Still, I’m not sure she likes me.

Mother when I’m fourteen years old.

My mother was never a teenager! She simply doesn’t understand the importance of clothes and boys and having fun with your friends. I get good grades, I’m neat, I don’t get in trouble. What does she want from me? She watches me all the time. She listens to my end of phone conversations and invents the other half which usually means I am in trouble for something I hadn’t even thought of doing. Sometimes I wish I HAD done whatever she thinks I’m guilty of. Daddy just listens to what she says. Just once I’d like to hear him say, “That doesn’t sound like something Joyce Anne would do.”

After never letting me participate in anything athletic when I was younger because “You might get hurt and we can’t afford any doctor’s bills,” she now wants me to excel at sports. Why? Well, now I don’t want to because I don’t know how and I’ll look stupid.

Mr. Goodwin suggested I take his trig class next year. I am ecstatic (I like him), but when I tell my mother she says, “Boys take trigonometry.” Earlier, when I began talking about college she actually asked me, “What do you want to be a nurse or a teacher?”

I guess I shouldn’t complain. My sister Judi has it much worse as Mother holds me up as a role model for her because of my good grades. I think I’m lucky that I don’t have an older brother or sister to be compared with.
Still, she takes me to get my hair cut and styled. She buys me a special outfit for a summer camp play that I’m acting in. She is much nicer when we are camping. I wish I knew how to make this version of mother the standard version.

Mother when I’m sixteen years old.

I have a driver’s license! Mother doesn’t drive, so today I drove her to the store for the weekly grocery shopping. It’s Saturday so Daddy stayed home and waved to us from the door. He has spent most every Saturday morning of his married life taking Mother to the store. When we got home he was beaming and proudly pointed out that he had washed the breakfast dishes since he was no longer needed for the shopping. Mother sniffed and pointed out that he hadn’t put things away in their proper places. Daddy never did the dishes again.

Mother waits up for me when I go out. I can tell she wants to chat and hear about my evening, but we’ve never been close; I just can’t get over the huge space between us.

Mother when I’m twenty-two years old.

I’m getting married and Mother is actively involved in the planning. I did not expect this. We shop for my wedding dress together and I can see that she is touched when she sees me in the first dress. She doesn’t really say anything but I can see that she is moved. I remember that she didn’t have a formal wedding. Mother and Daddy were married during the Depression by a justice of the peace in a small town in Kansas. I’m sure they didn’t have a honeymoon or probably a celebration of any kind. Although I begin to feel that she’s taking over “my day,” I let her have her way on some things that I would like to change. I think that this celebration is for her as well as me. We shop for her “mother of the bride” dress—a beautiful blue lace with shoes dyed to match. She wears heels which make her legs look lovely.

John and I are back from our honeymoon. I call my mother to say we’re coming over. When we get there she throws open the front door and gives me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. I am furious inside. Where were the hugs and kisses when I needed
them? I think that I don’t need affection from her now that I’m married. I am wrong, of course, having made a bad choice in marrying John. I will need her often in the coming years.

Mother when I’m twenty-six years old.

My mother is a really great grandmother! I don’t understand what has changed her so. It makes me see her in a new light. She’s patient and thoughtful, taking two preschool age little girls shopping nearly every week. No small feat since as a non-driver the trip to the nearest mall involves two bus routes. She saves pennies which the children use to feed the mechanical horse when Mother and Daddy take them to the local pizza place. One or two of our children sleep over at their house at least once a month. This gives me a welcome break and a chance to interact with my children one-on-one.

I think I’ve figured out some of the things that shaped Mother’s personality. She was the oldest of ten children. The first two were girls so her mother helped her father with the farm work while my mother took over much of the housekeeping and tending of the younger children. Those little brothers and sisters were constantly messing up the farm house she was trying to keep clean for her mother. She probably didn’t have any skills to keep those children in line so she ruled with an iron hand. She probably thought, “When I grow up my house will be clean and my children will not mess it up. They will be quiet and obedient children.” The reason she was fun on camping trips is probably because there was no danger of our messing up “her” house.

The only job Mother held outside our home was in the shipyard during the war. After that, caring for her home and family were her profession. Mother was known for her spotless house -- you can eat off Nellie’s floor. Her cooking was legendary in the family. Candy making was her specialty. Without a candy thermometer she made the most delicious divinity and penuche. Her home-making abilities defined her. Looking at it that way, I can see why none of us could do things to satisfy her. If we could do things as well as she could, where would that leave her?

I wish I had been wise enough as a girl to see that Mother really did love me. What a lot of time I wasted nursing my grievances.

Joyce Starling loves her family, her dog Angus, Reno, Lifescapes and OLLI.
Over the last few years I have written my first memoir which took me from birth to my wedding day, and almost completed a second effort, taking me from that wedding day, on through the years of raising Bill’s and my children. There have been moments I have wanted to record that didn’t seem to fit with the other stories and I’ve decided to publish four of them here. Each deals with memories that have moved me and I don’t want to let them slip away. Perhaps they will one day find their way into a book I might call “Marcy’s Musings.”
THE BLANKET

My mom’s last years were spent in the pain of struggling for breath, under the diagnosis of emphysema. She lay mostly in the living room on the comfortable couch, unable to climb the stairs to the room she had shared with my father. She lost her appetite and so much weight, with only skin left to cushion her bones. There was very little she needed at this stage of her life and so for her birthday, I bought the softest blanket I could find. She had only three months more to enjoy it.

On the morning of September 12 our phone rang in Reno. The chief of police in the little borough of Allenhurst, New Jersey told me that Mom had died. He would stay a while to help comfort Edith, who had been caring for Mom. Edith had been with our family for more years than either my sister or I had lived at home.

My father and my sister were on a business trip in Europe when Mom died; I was in Reno caring for my own family of six at the start of their school year. We all made plans to fly home immediately. I was the first to arrive.

After spending some time with Edith, I walked down the hall with its creaking floor boards, into the living room. I sat in Mom’s seat on the couch. On the other end I saw the newly cleaned and folded blanket.

Years ago I had read that some people believe that the soul does not necessarily leave this earth immediately but might hover, perhaps saying its goodbyes. Just in case, I spoke to Mom, told her how sad I was not to have been with her at the end. I reached down the couch and pulled the blanket around my shoulders. In that moment I felt that my mom’s arms were caressing me one last time.

I brought the blanket home with me and keep it on a shelf in my closet. It is still soft and fresh looking. I have told my kids that if I should be ill near the end of my days, I want that blanket to cover me. I do believe in an afterlife and it is my mother I most look forward to leading me there.
IN THE STILLNESS

Reading the word “stillness” produces a feeling inside me that is hard to describe. Many days I searched for its roots to no avail. The closest I could come was the memory of the 14 years I worked for the church, having my own key and the ability to go in when it was darkened and empty. There, I found stillness. I spoke with God with no people, no rules, nothing between us and I would feel, deep inside, his response.

A hymn comes to mind, “My Soul in Stillness Waits.” Reviewing the words, the last verse stands out:

“Here we shall meet the Maker of the heavens,  
Creator of the mountains and the seas,  
Lord of the stars, present to us now.”

This week I was immersed in the television production on the nation’s parks. Time and time again John Muir’s words describing nature spoke to that place I call my soul. In the majesty of God’s creations, the mountains, the seas, the forests, the canyons, and the deserts, I find that wonderful stillness, leading back to that hymn’s refrain:

“For you o Lord, my soul in stillness waits,  
Truly my hope is in you.”

Our national parks are like cathedrals of God’s creations. Have you ever stood in the center of a circle of redwood trees looking skyward, or on Yosemite’s floor looking up to the rock formations known as Cathedral spires? Or walked in the bottom of Echo canyon in Zion’s park where the canyon walls reveal just a slot of sky above? Or in Yellowstone stood beside Old Faithful with your eyes led by the spouting water up away from the earth and from the crowds of people sharing those moments with you? Or taken in the immenseness of the Grand Canyon in the light of the setting sun?

John Muir said, “By going out in the natural world, I’m really going in.” In all those moments of stillness in nature, my soul gives thanks and I am blessed with hope for the future.
MEMORIES FROM MUSIC

On Saturday mornings I gather with some seniors in assisted living for tea. We pass cookies and napkins and share stories. When everyone’s hands are finally free, we give each resident one of our songbooks, filled with the words to songs everyone used to sing, long ago, riding down the road in the family car or at home next to the upright piano.

We sing the very same songs every week in the very same order. What makes the mornings always special is the mix of voices and individual stories that change as the singers come and go. Many a song becomes associated with those for whom it was a favorite and over the years I have been doing this I can recapture their smiling faces as I unexpectedly hear a line from their song.

For Betty we’d sing “You Are My Sunshine.” She was such a cheerleader, always telling anyone who would listen how lovely her room was, how good the food was, how happy she was to be with everyone on such a beautiful morning. For Margo it was “We Were Sailing Along, On Moonlight Bay.” Margo came from Germany and shared memories of the war, living under Hitler, coming to the United States, burying two husbands, and living with macular degeneration. She was “once, twice, three times a lady.”

For John Paul we’d sing “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad,” which he did for many years. He was another cheerleader with an unfailing instinct for giving companionship and a kind word to someone who was feeling low. For Lucille we sing about riding “In my merry Oldsmobile.” She can no longer see the words, but she remembers every one.

The songs take us all back in time, bring smiles and a touch of youth to worn faces; and the songs and the memories go on.
THUMBS UP

The call came to the church office late in the day. “Please send a priest.” A man lay dying in his home.

Father and I drove to the house on that oppressively hot July afternoon in the priest’s air conditioned car. A gentleman met us at the door, led us down a darkened hall, opened the door to an even darker room, and flipped on the light switch. There was no response to the sudden explosion of light. The window behind the room darkening shade was open but not a breath of air stirred in the room. On one of the twin beds lay motionless a man whose eyes were closed. A white sheet partially covered his unclothed body. He made no response to the caregiver’s announcement of our arrival and there was no way to tell if he even heard. Often families waited too long to call for the prayers of the church.

The priest began the anointing with holy oil and prayed for the soul of this man whom neither of us knew. Still, nothing happened. The priest repacked the oil, the holy water and his book of prayers in his bag and turned away from the bed to leave. As I stood, still watching the body on the bed, the man’s hand seemed to move. I called the priest’s attention back to where the man, still lying on his back, slowly raised his thumb.

The thumbs up sign told us that somehow this man had received what he needed and that he was grateful. The caregiver adjusted the sheet, extinguished the light and we left, filled with our own gratitude for having been called in time to make a difference in the last moments of someone’s life.

Marcy Welch is finding that retirement is so much busier than there seems to be time for. She would like to make more time for writing, but writing doesn’t seem to speak up as loudly as spending time with her husband and being a part of OLLI!
DEAR MRS. KENNEDY

Penny Goni Cooper

Ask anyone over 50 where they were on NOVEMBER 22, 1963, the day President Kennedy was assassinated with his lovely wife, Jacqueline, by his side in the open motorcade in Dallas, Texas, and each of us remembers. It was a day that changed the AMERICA we had known.

Mother Delorosa yelled throughout our elementary school hallway, "The President has been shot." Sister Miriam Claire had us close our books and clear our desks to begin to pray for our fallen president, Jackie and their children, Caroline and Jon Jon. Soon after Mother Delerosa announced Kennedy’s death, Father Moss had us come to Mass immediately.

Four days of mourning followed; newsmen cried as they announced the President was dead. I remember as a nation how we watched Oswald, the President's assassin, shot as well by Jack Ruby as the police transported him.....all of us feeling such a loss of innocence--such a horrific awakening of the evil that exists in the world.

I was 12 years old, and the sadness I felt for our president and his family was unsurpassed by anything I had ever felt in my young life. I was so concerned about the welfare of Jackie and her children. I decided to write her a letter of sympathy.
"Dear Mrs. Kennedy,

What a horrible tragedy for our nation, but more so for you and your children. I am a 12 year old girl living in a very small town in California. I have been praying the rosary for you and your family on my walk home from school daily. I have written a song which I play on my piano, as my friend, Lisa, recites this poem; the writer is unknown. I wanted to share this with you.

"SORRY I HAD TO LEAVE RIGHT AWAY. I LOOK DOWN AND SMILE AT YOU EVERY DAY. LITTLE PATRICK ASKS TO SAY HI, I LOVE YOU, I'M HAPPY SO PLEASE DON'T CRY.

CAROLINE -- YOU WERE SO STRONG. I APPRECIATE THE FLOWERS YOU PLACED ON THE GROUND.

JON JON -- NOW YOU’RE THE BIG MAN, SO TAKE CARE OF MOMMY THE BEST YOU CAN.
YOU WERE JUST LIKE A SOLDIER THAT SALUTE WAS SO BRAVE.
THANKS FOR THE FLAG YOU PLACED BY MY GRAVE.

AND JACKIE, THERE WAS NO TIME FOR GOOD BYE--- BUT I’M SURE YOU COULD SEE THE FAREWELL IN MY EYES.
WATCH OVER OUR CHILDREN AND LOVE THEM FOR ME.
OUR LOVE WILL BE TREASURED TO ETERNITY.

SO PLEASE CARRY ON THE WAY WE DID BEFORE ‘TIL ALL OF US MEET ON HEAVEN’S BRIGHT SHORE.
REMEMBER I LOVE YOU, REMEMBER I CARE.
I WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU THOUGH YOU WON'T SEE ME THERE."
I hope this gives you some solace during your grave time of loss. Mrs. Kennedy, I have been so worried about you and your children. I ask my father who will take care of all of you, to make sure you have shelter and food, and clothing? He has assured me not to worry, that the government will make sure you have what you need.

I also wanted to request if at all possible, a mass card from the funeral. God Bless you!

With sincere sympathy,

Penny Goni"

Her secretary replied, sending the mass card and the picture of Mrs. Kennedy and the children. I was thrilled to receive the letter from the White House, February 25, 1964.

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Mrs. John F. Kennedy

Dear Friend:

Mrs. Kennedy wishes to thank you for your thoughtful message of sympathy, which was a great source of comfort to her. She is only sorry that the tremendous volume of mail prevents her from personally responding to each letter she has received.

It is Mrs. Kennedy's wish that your Mass card request be filled. However, we hope you will understand our inability to send you any additional cards because of the number of requests from other people, which must be honored as well.

Sincerely,

Nancy Tuckerman
Secretary to Mrs. Kennedy
Both sides of John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s Mass card

Penny Cooper grew up in Rodeo, California. The assassination of John F. Kennedy shook her small community. For a small town girl to receive a reply from the White House was just thrilling to her at the age of 12. Penny and her husband moved to Reno in 2010. Penny is enjoying making new friends and is pleasantly surprised with OLLI. She appreciates the opportunity to continue learning.
One of my first memories of my sister, Millie (who was 14 when I was born), was watching her get ready for a date. She’d wash and curl her hair, carefully apply her makeup, and then add lipstick, blotting it on toilet paper. Then she’d hike her legs, one at a time, of course, onto the edge of the bathtub and smooth on some tan liquid to make it look like she was wearing nylons—impossible to get during the start of WWII—and wait for her special guy, Leonard, to show up. I was 6 years old. During these preparations, Millie chuckled and dabbed my face and legs, too. “Now you look just like me,” she said. I remember her braiding my long hair or curling it in ringlets, and one special Christmas (I discovered later), she added freckles to a doll that Santa left for me and fixed the doll’s red hair to look exactly like mine. I treasured that porcelain doll. It’s been with me for nearly 70 years.

When Millie needed a ride home from the Dinette Inn, where she worked after school, Dad would sometimes take me with him. It was at the Dinette Inn that Millie met Leonard Heaston. He delivered the ice cream.

Millie graduated from Carbon Junior College and “for three semesters” attended Utah State Agricultural College in Logan, where she stayed with Aunt Berniece and Uncle Vernon Cook and their baby boy, Quentin. From there, Millie moved to an apartment in Salt Lake. Leonard was working as a foreman at Remington Arms in Salt Lake. Millie applied for a job with the same company, and she and Leonard made bullets and tracer bullets for the war effort.

They decided to get married. That happened on 5/28/42 in the Salt Lake Temple. Millie and Leonard came back to Price for a wedding reception and then returned to Salt Lake, where they continued working for Remington Arms until Leonard was drafted into the Army and sent to Cheyenne, Wyoming. In Cheyenne, Millie sold office supplies and made thousands of copies for the government. Because of his experience, Leonard was sent to St. Louis, Missouri, where he was assigned as supervisor for making 105 mm shells. At this time, Millie was five months pregnant with Dave (born 7/26/45). When Dave was a month or so old, Leonard was transferred to Camp Lee, Virginia, where he was promoted to Staff Sergeant, before being honorably discharged with 2 1/2 years total Army service.

While Leonard was in Virginia, Millie took the baby and went to live with her sister, Lora, and Lora’s daughter, Sue. (Farney, Lora’s husband, was also in the service, awaiting his discharge.) One day Millie was nursing the baby when a neighbor visited, her little boy in tow. “What’s the baby doing?” the little boy asked. “He’s having his dinner,” Millie said, smiling. The little guy’s eyes widened. “Is he having soup?”

After Millie moved away from Price, she always remembered her brothers and sisters living at home. Every Valentine’s Day, she sent us a box of funny valentines with an all-day sucker attached to each one and candy hearts in multiple colors, with different sayings on them. I remember watching and waiting for the mailman to deliver that special box, and I was never disappointed.

Millie’s sense of humor was infectious. She never missed my birthday, and with every card, she’d include a long letter and numerous clippings—cartoons, funny sayings, quotes, short
newspaper articles—whatever she thought would bring a smile to my face. I still have those cards, and all of her letters.

Her humor spilled over into her personal life, too. I remember when Millie, then 80, and Lora, 84, reminisced on a trip from Utah to Wyoming to celebrate Charlene and Ed’s 50th anniversary. Another sister, Carolyn, drove, and she and I watched, listened, and laughed.

“I always packed Leonard’s lunch at night,” Millie said, as the SUV rumbled along the highway.

“Didn’t you even get up and wave to him when he left for work?” Lora teased, a wide grin spreading across her face.

“No way was I going to get out of those cozy quilts at 4:00 a.m. to see his smiling face.”

“Me, neither.” Lora rolled her eyes. “My Farney didn’t like sandwiches. Did Leonard?”

“I’ll say. He ate them for 25 years. You’d think he’d get tired of them. He never did.” Millie adjusted her glasses. “Did I tell you about the soap sandwich?”

Lora squealed. “Oh, no! Don’t tell me you…”

“I did,” Millie interrupted. “On April Fool’s Day, I put Ivory soap shavings in his sandwich. I could hardly hold a straight face as he bit into it. So much for his sense of humor! He was really mad at me!”

“He got his, after all the pranks Len played on everyone else,” Lora said.

Millie’s eyes widened. “That wasn’t the worst.” She raised her eyebrows. “One day I baked a batch of cupcakes and put a piece of string in his.”

“You didn’t!” Lora said.

Millie chortled. “I did! Off he went to work, never suspecting a thing. At lunch, he gave that yummy chocolate cupcake to a friend.” Millie shook with laughter. “Leonard was so mad at me. He came home all blustery, his face the same color as his red hair. How was I supposed to know he’d give it away? Leonard said the string kept on coming. His friend’s eyes nearly popped out of his head. Wish I’d been there to see it.”

“Me, too!” Lora said, tears of laughter streaming down her cheeks.

(“And,” Millie told me later, “I short-sheeted his bed one night. I also sewed up his pajama sleeves and legs and pretended I was asleep, while he said a few choice words!”)

“How about a lunch stop?” I suggested.

“Suits me,” Lora said. “I won’t have to pray so long over fresh food.”

“What?”

“I always say a long prayer before I eat the old, old food—you know, the stuff that’s as old as my fridge that I can’t stand to throw away.”
“Hope I can taste my food,” Millie said. She blew her nose. “My allergies are giving me fits.”

“No eggs for me,” Lora said, as Carolyn and I helped her out of the SUV. “I’m allergic. Maybe I’ll have a grilled cheese sandwich.”

Millie winked. “With soap chips?”

Millie and Leonard had five sons: Dave, Dennis, Gary, Greg, and Pat. “I’d try for a girl,” she said, after Pat was born, “but I think I’d end up with a baseball team of boys. Thanks, but no thanks. I’m happy with my five boys!” Instead, Millie devoted her time and energy to scouting and became a Den Mother and a Blazer Leader to her sons and their friends. “I learned to tie knots, start a fire from flint, cook outdoors, and to do all kinds of things,” she told me. “Both Leonard and I loved scouting. He got his Silver Beaver in 1971, you know, and I got my Silver Fawn in 1973.” Through their service to others, they taught their boys to be helpful, compassionate, and caring.

Millie also served in numerous church positions in her L.D.S. wards, including Relief Society counselor (twice), Gospel Doctrine and Sunday School teacher, and doing Spanish extraction work. She and Leonard served a 20-month couples mission for the church in St. George, Utah at the Temple Visitor’s Center, Tabernacle, and the Brigham Young Winter Home; in Santa Clara at the Jacob Hamblin Home; and at the Pine Valley Chapel in Pine Valley, Utah. “With my asthma and Leonard’s heart,” Millie wrote, “we needed a place where he could get a blood check periodically and I could breathe in the winter. I have a struggle when it gets too cold.”

Whenever Millie came to visit the folks, she’d always bring Dad tomatoes and jars of pickles. Leonard loved to garden, and Millie’s specialty were her pickles—especially dills, bread-and-butter, and Danish and mustard pickles. “Leonard also loved sweet pickles,” Millie said. “He ate jars of them, leaving only the juice.” After a visit at Millie’s, she’d always send Don and me home with a smile and jars of pickles! I can’t eat a pickle without thinking of my sister, Millie! Hers were the best!

“Leonard said he was a share cropper,” Millie said. “He grew the crops, and everyone shared them!” While Leonard tended his garden, Millie planted and cared for her flowers. Colorful blooms grew close to the house, and pots of orchids caught the sun from her kitchen windows. Sometimes, Millie brought one of her spectacular flowers to the family reunion to share with us. Awesome!

When I wanted to please Millie for a birthday or at Christmas, I’d get her something purple—her favorite color! Over the years I sent her a purple pantsuit, a purple robe, a purple necklace, a purple pin, and purple earrings. I even found some purple stationery, which Millie said she loved! One time I sent her an amethyst-jeweled tree. “You’re too good to me,” she wrote. “Leonard says I’d have purple kids if I had my way! Just name it -- If it’s purple, I like it.”

During my visits, Millie would take me through her home, showing me her special gifts from family and friends and telling me the stories that went with them. One year I gave her two oriental pictures to add to her décor. “Thank you!!! I love anything that looks oriental!” Millie wrote. Another time I gave her a Lladro Japanese figurine. “Leonard made a special corner shelf for it, out of the reach of our grandchildren, since it’s much too nice to put on my shelves with the other oriental things,” she wrote.
Downstairs, Millie always kept a supply of goodies. Whenever I’d visit, she’d load me up with candy bars, licorice, or chocolate. One day Millie found a salt shaker in Leonard’s toolbox downstairs. “Leonard doesn’t like the salt substitutes his doctor recommended. He hides salt shakers all over the house—underneath the couch cushions, in his sock drawer, among his tools—wherever he thinks I won’t look,” Millie said, rolling her eyes. “Never a dull moment!”

Millie delighted in giving all her sisters a cook book compiled by ladies in her L.D.S. ward, which contained several of Millie’s recipes. Because of allergies, Millie could taste or smell only “sweet” or “sour” for years so I’m sure we benefited more than she did from those luscious recipes! Millie also kept a year’s supply of food storage downstairs, which she bought on sale and rotated. I adopted her system for my family. “I don’t cook anymore,” she told me on the phone last year. “The other day I put 7 eggs in a pan to boil and fell asleep. The eggs exploded! They were everywhere—on the blinds, the ceiling, you name it. The kids unplugged my stove. Heavenly days!”

The kitchen table became a repository for newspapers, magazines, and articles. Never once did I see the bare table top! Millie won’t throw anything away without reading it—but she always falls asleep at the table late at night, and, of course, the next day always brings more paper to go through. My sister has always been a night owl. In one letter, she wrote: “Well, must close and get to bed—before Leonard gets up! (So who ever said I was normal? I did have my ‘usual’ nap here at the table.)” In another letter, she wrote: “My downfall is trying to write in my journal in the wee morning hours! Have fallen asleep over it more times than I care to mention. One night I awoke hours later with the imprint of my pen on my forehead! Didn’t go away for hours. And I s’pose you’ve heard that sometimes I have newsprint on my nose!” These days, because of poor vision, Millie’s in her favorite chair watching TV, where she also falls asleep.

Millie filled her letters to me with news of the family, including Leonard’s job at Hill Air Force Base (where he was a well-loved foreman) and his volunteer work at the Fire Department. “For a year, Leonard was Fire Chief. The department honored him years later, saying that he had done more for the City of Kaysville than any other fireman. He couldn’t bear to retire, so they made him a lifetime member. He was the oldest fireman in Utah. He particularly loved taking children through the fire station for a tour.” One of Leonard’s hobbies was woodcarving. “An elementary school had him sit in the hall all day long to demonstrate how to carve,” Millie said.

Millie wrote to me about what was going on with her boys at every stage of their lives; what was happening in the lives of all our brothers and sisters; Millie and Leonard’s 50th wedding anniversary; news about the grandchildren, etc. Her letters covered everything. Millie never wrote less than 2 pages (usually, the 6 x 9 sheets ran from 8 to 14 pages, front and back), and, with few exceptions, all of her letters were written by hand. Even when she sent a birthday card, she filled in all the empty space and then attached more pages! I treasured every word! When life got in a twist, she’d tell me about it and add, “Happy day!” or “Never a dull moment!” or “Heavenly days!”

Whenever I sent Millie some of my published stories, she would always thank me and tell me how much she enjoyed them. She especially treasured the “family” stories about the people she knew and loved. “Loved your stories, Mary!” she wrote at Christmas time, 1997. “‘A Christmas Memory’ certainly brought back old times. I could just see those bulging nylon stockings and hear Dad saying, ‘Old St. Nick has been here!’” On 5/11/00, Millie wrote: “By the way, I really liked the story about the violin, which made me shed a few tears.” On 2/13/04, she wrote: “Can’t even remember if I’ve thanked you for the books, let alone all of the neat
stories you’ve sent. Some I shed a few tears over—like the one about the beaded bag and the one about Kaye and the attic.”

Following a lengthy illness, Leonard died on 10/2/00 of congestive heart failure and silicosis (black lung disease) “caused by working in the coal mines to help his parents when he was younger.” All of the Heaston sons spoke at his funeral.

Throughout the years, Millie has had a myriad of health problems—asthma, phlebitis, ulcers on her legs and ankles, hiatal hernia, macular degeneration, herniated disks, and extreme spinal scoliosis. Whenever she travels, her pills go with her—in a 1950’s cosmetic case! In her 2/13/04 letter, Millie wrote about how difficult it was to have some of her medical work done. “Word of advice—don’t get old! Or if you do, don’t get crooked.” And on 5/12/05, she wrote: “Hope this is still readable. Don’t always connect my a’s and o’s, among other things. I check my writing with a magnifying glass before I put the letter out for the mailman. I’m legally blind and have another ulcer on my ankle. Fell asleep twice standing up. No permanent injuries.”

Last year (2010), Millie sent me another beautiful birthday card, with a sweet note inside, thanking me for “everything you’ve done for me over the years.”

Millie doesn’t write those long, newsy letters anymore; instead, we have long talks on the phone. She is especially proud of her five sons and all their accomplishments. They have all held church positions, and all of them have successful careers. They have blessed her with 26 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren. Millie now lives with her son, Dave, and his wife, Lenda for a month, alternating with her son, Pat, and his wife, Sondra.

My sister, Millie, still has that infectious sense of humor. Whenever we talk, we giggle. A lot! She’s 90 this year (3/14/11)—and she’s a treasure!

Mary Chandler loves visiting with, and writing about, her wonderful family!
SPRING BREAK

Judi Whiting

We checked in at the Lighthouse Inn a little after noon on a beautiful April Good Friday. It was just the right place for starting my spring break from teaching at TMCC. Our room had a great view of surf pounding the rocks and the small town of Pacifica appeared to have some restaurants worth trying. On the trip over we had left drab Reno behind and had enjoyed California’s green hills and brilliant flowers. Three days on the ocean in sunshine and a “green fix” to boot! This would be a wonderful vacation.

I took a short nap then felt ready to explore my surroundings. Floyd was sound asleep in the sun by the sliding glass door, so I quietly left the room to walk to the ocean. In front of the motel there was a steep drop off with no path to get down and no beach, so I turned south and found a paved path that headed towards a tall dune. I thought I could go to the top of the dune for a panoramic view, but halfway up the paved path turned away from the ocean. However, there was a path made by foot traffic that appeared to go to the top, so I started off on it ignoring the hiker’s code: “Stay on the Path.” The ersatz path was nearly overgrown at times and the deep trench down the middle made running off made footing difficult. Nevertheless, I reached the top of the dune and reaped the reward of a fantastic view of ocean, rocks, and breakers.

There were a few other people at the top and I wondered how they had got there. Probably from the other direction, I decided, although I did not see a real trail anywhere. My only option for going down seemed to be the way I’d come up. As I’d suspected, this was even more difficult than climbing. Sand over the dirt made the steep trail slippery. I cautiously picked my way through a rough patch then said to myself, “Being so slow and careful is probably more dangerous than just taking it in long strides like Floyd would do.” So I began attacking the slope more confidently. Suddenly, my right foot slipped and I slid down. I could tell I’d turned my ankle.

When I looked down at my foot I saw that it was turned 90 degrees and it didn’t look like a good idea to try to stand on it. I remembered hearing a snap as I fell and considered the probability that something was broken. This would no doubt cause some delay in my dinner plans, but maybe we could get it taped up quickly and still have some good seafood.

I could see the motel—in fact the window of our room—far below. However, getting there was going to be a problem. I moved myself down the path using my left foot and my two hands doing what we used to call the “crab walk.” It took about 15 minutes to get to where the paved path was visible and I could see people walking on it. “Help!” I yelled. Finally I got the attention of a woman who came over to me. I asked if she had a cell phone. She didn’t, but she called to two other women and they came over. They had no phone, but they wanted to help when they saw my foot. I suggested they go to the
motel and call the room to tell Floyd of my plight. While they were gone on this mission,
I inched on down the path until I reached the paved one. I figured from there it would be
easy for Floyd to help me down to the parking lot.

After a while I saw the red Honda coming out of the motel and driving towards
the parking lot. Ahh! Now it wouldn’t be long until I got to the car, had my ankle treated,
and we could go to dinner (it was now about 5:30).

A new couple stopped to see about me and stayed by while Floyd made his way to
us. They wanted to call 911, but I protested. I knew an ambulance would be expensive
and I really didn’t think I needed one. But when Floyd looked at my sideways foot he
agreed. Luckily the couple was local so they knew how to give directions to where we
were.

Within about ten minutes, an ambulance and a fire engine pulled into the parking
lot. Five men came up the hill with a stretcher. They assessed my condition and wanted to
cut my shoe off, but I unlaced it and took it off my swollen foot not seeing a reason to
destroy it. Finally, they picked me up and loaded me onto the stretcher, then rolled me
down the paved trail to the ambulance. The nearest hospital was not taking patients, so
they gave us a choice of two others. I opted for South San Francisco Kaiser and they gave
Floyd directions so he could follow us there.

At the hospital they rolled me into an ER exam room, took my temperature and
blood pressure then rolled me to X-ray. The X-ray tech speculated about a dislocated
ankle — that seemed fairly obvious — but after looking at the pictures announced that it
was a “tib-fib.” Once I was back in the exam room, a doctor shot me with Novocain then
twisted my foot back into place. Now it looked fine and felt much better. I thought maybe
I’d be getting out to have dinner soon.

But after another long wait, the doctor came in to say that I’d need surgery and it
would be best to wait until tomorrow morning considering I’d had lunch about 5 hours
ago. Now there were more X-rays then wrapping my leg and waiting on a gurney in the
hallway until they finally found a room for me at about 9:30. There would be no dinner
tonight.

I arrived at the room on a gurney, my leg obviously splinted, and the nurse said,
“We have to weigh you. Can you get up and stand on the scale?” I said, “I don’t think so.
I’m not supposed to put weight on my leg.” At this point I wasn’t feeling like I could sit
up, much less stand. The alternative to standing on the scale was using a large canvas
sling apparatus to lift my body up and weigh it. Neither the nurse nor the helper she
summoned knew how to operate it, so there were several unsuccessful attempts that
nearly dumped me on the floor. Eventually, a more experienced nurse came and they
were able to lift me off the bed and record a weight on my chart.

Once I was settled in bed, Floyd went back to the ocean view motel. My view was
of the white ceiling, and my stomach was crying for food. I was allowed to suck some
frozen sponges on a stick. I slept off and on and then was awakened Saturday morning at 5:45 for vitals. I could hear breakfast trays being delivered, but there was none for me. They finally rolled me to surgery about 10:00, and the procedure went smoothly. By now I knew I had five breaks in the two lower leg bones and repair would require insertion of plates and screws.

When I’d been back in the room for some time, Floyd arrived limping badly. He had gone ahead with his plan to run a race at Lake Merced and he’d hurt his hip. “Great,” I thought “Here I am totally helpless and he’s not going to be able to support me.”

Lunch finally came, but I found I had little appetite. Besides being hooked up to an IV, I also had a morphine drip. “Just push the button whenever you feel pain,” the nurse said. Supposedly I could shoot myself every seven minutes without overdosing, but I was determined to use it only when I really needed it. On Easter Sunday morning the nurse said, “Physical Therapy will be coming today to get you up on crutches, so you’d better take as much morphine as possible.” I followed her advice and pushed the button every ten minutes. By the time the PT came, I was looped! My speech was slurred and I fell asleep in the middle of my sentences. I was in no condition to learn how to use crutches, so my training was postponed until afternoon. Even then I felt very insecure on crutches and preferred hopping on one foot with the walker. At least I could get to the bathroom on my own.

It was now two days since my vacation had begun, and I no longer had dreams of sleeping by the ocean and eating delicious seafood. My only desire was to be home. The next morning, I was fitted with a bright pink cast. I put on the clothes I’d come in and prepared to be discharged. While Floyd went to bring the car up front, a young girl was sent to wheel me out. She parked me ten feet behind the glass front door and we waited to see the red Honda, but none appeared. Finally I had her move me closer to the door where I could see the car parked a ways down the driveway. So my escort wheeled me out, but she apparently expected me to get out of the chair and walk once we got to the car. Instead, she had to wait impatiently while Floyd cleared a space in the backseat for me and together they boosted me in.

We left the city behind and I dozed most of the way to Reno. Floyd’s hip was still hurting, but at least he was able to drive. I wasn’t sure how I was going to get up the stairs from the garage to the main floor once we got to the house, and I considered living in the basement for the next six weeks. I managed to get across the rec room on crutches, but I was not going to hazard using them on the stairs. So I went up on my bottom in much the same fashion I’d used to get off the dune. This method served me well for several days. I could scoot from the sofa to the bathroom and get myself up to the toilet or to my desk chair in the office. By Friday we’d managed to get the insurance to okay a walker and I progressed to hopping.

Spring Break was over, and my first class was on Tuesday. We borrowed a wheel chair from friends and Floyd took off the week so that he could transport me and nurse his hip. I met my classes for the remaining three weeks of the semester in a wheel chair.
and received bounteous sympathy from the students. Floyd’s workmates kept us supplied with casseroles and I figured out how to take a shower by sitting on the floor with my cast out the door. Eventually, I could accomplish most household tasks including cooking by hopping on the walker from one strategically placed stool to another. The most difficult chore was carrying a full coffee cup while hopping.

The cast did not come off in six weeks as predicted. The anticipated moment was put off until nine and then twelve weeks. During this time, my granddaughter Jenna was born. I could hold her or watch her sleep in her car seat beside my spot on the sofa while Marci ran errands. In June when I was still unable to walk or drive, Floyd suffered kidney failure while trying to run a 100 mile race and spent a week in the hospital. It was probably just as well that I couldn’t visit him because I was a bit mad about him running the race in the first place.

It was mid July when the Reno doctor pronounced my bones healed and removed the screw that would break if I put weight on it. Now I could hobble on two feet using the walker for balance and I could drive. My journal entry for July 28 says, “This morning I took a shower standing up and carried a letter down the stairs to the mailbox. Yesterday I drove to Raley’s and spent an hour walking down every aisle to collect groceries. These are all things I couldn’t do two weeks ago!”

Three weeks later Floyd and I celebrated our return to health with an Alaska cruise. There was a three hour wait to board the ship in Vancouver, so I used the wheelchair we’d brought along. As I waited in line, I chatted with another lady in a wheelchair. She was younger than I, but she was permanently confined to the chair. I was grateful that once aboard I could walk along the buffet line (seafood at last!) and even dance a little. I had a new appreciation of having two legs that worked and indelible memories of my spring break.

Eight years later, Judi still has some pain and weakness in her ankle; however, she feels fortunate to be able to travel, walk, hike, dance and play with her grandchildren.
GYPSY FROM MISSOURI

Kathryn McKee

I was a product of a small town which proudly opened a small public library that afforded hours of pleasure to a seven-year-old girl after she had triumphantly signed her name for her first library card! With this discovery, I found there were multitudes of interesting places and people outside the minute speck on the planet that I called home.

The first country I discovered was Holland. And it was so far away. I couldn’t imagine a country with windmills and canals for highways and I was entranced by the pictures of the Dutch girl in a long dress and apron with a cute cap that curled over her ears. But most astonishing was that her shoes were carved out of wood! Holland was the first introduction to the fact that all the people in the world didn’t look like I did or dress as I did but had customs and houses and food and clothes that were different but suited them. All of this I decided to see for myself when I was old enough to travel.

I continued my schooling, graduated from high school and went off to college. I would live in a dormitory with 98 other young women which was quite an eye opener for me! I’d come from a home with five people and my high school class was only 45 students. It was a mob scene to my untutored eyes. I soon adjusted to the constant activity and the lights being turned out at 10pm. But 1945 proved to be a splendid year to enter college because the war ended and in January of 1946, the campus was brimming with GIs returning to school. I believe the ratio was 10 males for every female! Party Time – and my grades did drop a bit.

By mid-sophomore year, I was engaged to a World War II pilot who would graduate in May. My parents agreed to the marriage, provided I completed my degree. We all agreed, the marriage took place and three months later I traded morning classes for morning sickness. Unfortunately, there were too many Education Degrees and not enough jobs for coaches and history teachers so after graduation, my husband accepted a regular Army commission as a Captain. I would be an Army wife and – Army Wives got to TRAVEL!!!!!!

The other Army wives I knew would moan “not again” when their husbands received orders for a change of station, but I glowed when told we would be moving again. More places to see! More people to meet! I was awaiting my port call to join my husband in Japan when the Korean War began. He went to Korea and I stayed in Missouri. How I would have loved to have seen Japan (as of this date, I’ve only seen the airport there). Several more stateside assignments before the big one – Germany – and all of Europe at my doorstep! I loved my first transatlantic flight, even with my traveling companions aged 2, 4 and 6. And to live in Europe for three years was a dream come true.
Jean 6, Keith 2, David 4, and Kathryn – 1954 passport picture

No book can ever convey the “feel” of a country – the language, customs, food, architecture, clothing, trains, cars – it was all overwhelming at first. I did admire the German work ethic and their will to rebuild their war-torn country. This was 1954 and there were still many blocks of vacant lots piled with rubble from the fierce bombing the city had undergone. I particularly enjoyed the trained, full-time maid, even if we had to pay her $35 per month, as it gave me the freedom to explore my new surroundings. The added bonus was we all learned German quickly, as she spoke no English.

I did get to Holland and sure enough, one island had locals dressed in the attire I’d seen when I was seven. Probably for the tourists to see and photograph. I did take my 5 and 7 year old children to Holland so we could see the flower market and the cheese market and windmills and all the other sights that are such a part of Holland. Probably the most exciting thing for them was to choose their own wooden shoes which they really wore until outgrown. In deference to the downstairs neighbors, the klompen were left in the hall and only slippers allowed inside the apartment.
So our travels continued. I did get my degree and earned my Master’s as well and we had twelve more moves before we said adieu to military life. I loved all those moves as any curious individual is always wanting to see what is “just around the corner.” Both my boys tell me they loved the adventurous life we led but my daughter told me just before she passed away last October that she always felt like a gypsy. So, for my late daughter, Jean, I’m calling myself a Missouri Gypsy and I’m sorry she didn’t have wanderlust as my Mother, two sons and I have. She was happiest growing roots in Missouri while I’m happiest traveling with a tether to Reno. Nevada is now my home base.

BUT

That was just my first forty years!

That isn’t the end of my travels! There were still hundreds of places I wanted to see – and did see!

Cruises, river boats, trains, planes, buses and automobiles have all been well used over the last 40 years as I’ve “gypsyed” around and I hope to squeeze in many more nooks and crannies of the world before I have my last passport stamped at the pearly gates.

Kathryn McKee obviously has a severe case of wanderlust, inherited from her mother. She’s concentrating on seeing North America this year. Airline fares are becoming too expensive and the flight to Australia is so long. She just hopes her traveling companions are still willing and able at some future date.
THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Susan H. Hoover

The road not taken. Where would this road have led? With whom? To whom? Or what? When did it fork?

There are several important places in my life when this fork in the road appeared.

What if I had gotten my degree in education and gone on to teach, as my dad insisted I should do. “It’s your insurance policy in case you ever have to work for a living,” he said. He didn’t object to my English Lit major, and he was even okay with a second major in Sociology. I had never really defied my dad, but I knew even then that I would be a lousy teacher and that I would have little patience with recalcitrant students.

So my early jobs were secretarial jobs that were easy enough to get since I was a good typist and they guessed that with a degree in English I could write their letters.

If I had become a teacher, I would never have worked in business, nor would I have met either of my husbands – although in the case of one of them that would have been okay, too.

However, I did marry him while living in Chicago. Within a couple of years we had a baby and moved to Atlanta. What if I’d never had that baby? I wouldn’t have the loving daughter I enjoy so much, and I wouldn’t be grandmother to precious little Ellen. A couple of years later we divorced. What if I’d stayed with him? I would have been a widow at 37.

My divorce drove me to another very significant fork in the road. Life is full of choices and this one was a biggie.

When we divorced, I moved from Atlanta thinking I couldn’t afford to live there. But perhaps I could have. What if I had stayed? What would my work have been? Would I have married again? Probably. What might he have been like?

What if I’d moved back to my home state of Illinois? Back to Chicago? Or to the farm town where I grew up?

I’ll never know the answers to those questions.

I chose to move to Hampton, Virginia where I had friends. While doing temporary work, I received some job offers but declined them because it was important for me to work where the salary and benefits were good (after all, I had a daughter to support). By now it was the mid 1970s and suddenly businesses wanted to hire women who were promotable to meet their Affirmative Action goals. Ah, opportunities! What if
I’d gone to work for that law firm? Or the real estate developer? Or the catalog mailing house?

As luck would have it, I had a three-day temp assignment at a manufacturing company where the Personnel Director offered me a job at a good salary with good benefits and the opportunity for advancement. I didn’t hesitate and have always been happy I made that choice. Finally I could write my own letters and sign my own name.

Certainly the most important consequence of this decision is that my husband also worked at this company. He had been one of the managers chosen to move when the company made the decision to relocate from the Rustbelt of Michigan to the Sunbelt of Virginia. He and his former wife had come to a major fork in their own lives, and she had chosen not to accompany him. I’m sure she paid a high price, but her decision offered me an opportunity to know and marry a wonderful man.

After that, the “what ifs” became our decisions “and that has made all the difference.”

Susan Hoover often recalls her mother’s words: “Life is full of choices and every choice has its price.” As she has since learned, each choice also presents opportunities.
SOME OF CHESTER’S STORIES

Marge Blockley

I remember Kitty, my mother’s carriage horse. She was big (when I was four) and strong. Kitty pulled a phaeton (a small carriage) that my mother and father used to ride in. Everyone loved Kitty, who was black and shiny. When I was too young for school, my nurse maid Ellen would feed her an apple for a treat while I stayed out of the way and held a hose to water the flower garden. San Jose could be hot in the summer, and we usually went into the garden early in the day while it was still cool.

Often Mother would drive Kitty to go visit her friends in the afternoon and play cards, visit and drink tea. If Mother went too far from home, Kitty would “go lame” and they would have to turn around and go home, but before arriving home Kitty seemed to get over her lameness…maybe she’d just been pretending?

My grandparents, Arabella and Jared B. Wing, lived with us and when I was seven or eight we all moved into a new home with more rooms. Ellen lived with us there and helped me with my school work. When I was sick or had asthma she would try to make me comfortable and amuse me.

My grandmother knew how to cook and would make sure the cooking was done to the tastes and needs of the family. One time she taught our Chinese cook, Peter, to make angel food cake. He put the egg whites into one bowl and started beating. As the egg whites expanded, he needed a larger bowl. After changing to a larger bowl twice, and adding the other ingredients, the batter went into a pan and was baked. It must have been...
tasty and ever afterwards Peter used the same sequence of bowls, maybe because it worked better, but also that was the way he’d learned.

My grandmother, whom I called “Bana,” liked traveling, and in 1913 after I finished high school, she and I went to Europe, by train to New York and then by steamer to Germany. We stayed in Berlin several of the winter months while I studied piano and harmony with a music teacher. For entertainment we walked or rode to see the sights of Berlin, and listened to music at plays, operas and concerts.

After that we spent time in Switzerland and Italy and I gathered many picture postcards to show the family and friends at home.

My parents, Albert M. and Minnie W. Barker, had busy lives: Albert practiced dentistry and kept up on new developments in the field; he also attended ball games, played some golf, went fishing at times, and regularly went duck hunting, in season of course. Some of the ducks were put into cold storage until the end of the year, when they were the feature of a dinner he hosted for members and their wives of the Dental Association which he’d helped establish. He also was a member of the Elks Lodge. He was active in trap or skeet shooting, and entered various tournaments, and won many prizes and trophies.

Minnie was also socially active, entertaining friends and attending functions with Papa. They took trips...sailing to Honolulu, Hawaii in 1891, where they took in the local sights before sailing back. In the 1930's they and another couple went by ship to Alaska, and again looked at all they could manage there. Other times they went to the world fairs in Chicago and San Francisco. They also attended professional conferences.

Going off to Stanford I studied English literature and drama. After my freshman year I worked at Roble Hall (a women’s dorm) as a “hasher” or server, and that’s how I met my future bride, Katherine. Noel Stearn was my roommate at Encina Hall, the men’s dorm, and he became a lifelong friend, as did several others at Stanford then. World War I commenced during that time and I learned to knit squares for the Red Cross to make afghans.

After Stanford I went back to New York City to attend classes in writing, and then back to the San Francisco Bay Area and the love of my life, Kay. We married and lived in different places where I worked, but illness struck me, and after surgery and recovery, we settled in Palo Alto, where we had the first house of our own. Meanwhile my grandfather became an invalid and was cared for at home until his death in 1925. My grandmother lived until after our first daughter, Jean, was born in 1926; our second daughter, Margery, was born in 1928. And then the Great Depression came! I went from place to place as jobs came,
and then disappeared. We ended up in Palo Alto with a job at Stanford, in the Speech and Drama Department, where I worked till I retired in 1965. Then we were free to travel as often and for as long as we could. I was born on a Thursday, and the saying is “a Thursday’s child has far to go,” and going by sea was my idea of a good trip.

Before I was born, Mother had studied china painting, and many pieces of her work have survived with family members and others as well. Mother was an only child, as I was, but Papa had a sister Emily – Mrs. Fred Fellows -- who lived, married, and raised a daughter in southern California. Emily had artistic talent, and produced many and various gifts for all, some of decorated leather, some of an embossed copper sheet which was attached to a wooden cover for a photo album, or the top of a box with a shallow drawer. While her husband was fishing, she produced watercolor paintings of the wild flowers at hand or nearby. She put many of these into a leather portfolio and sent it to her brother one year. These are now divided among family. Emily’s love and creativity were well spread. She also made some small watercolor paintings for Jean and Margery, and some cross-stitch pictures, one in particular is in black and white and shows a child at a piano:

“I cannot play, I cannot sing
But I can try like anything.”

L to R on the running board:
Doris F. Brandon, Emily B. Fellows, Chester W. Barker
In the car: Fred Fellows

Writing in her father’s voice, Marge Blockley hopes to share the stories of his life with the younger members of her family. She especially wants to connect them with the hand-painted china, the prizes, trophies and watercolors belonging to the family so they might realize the talent and skills in their heritage.
THE MINNESOTA FARM

Karolyn Bader

As I edged closer to the swamp, I felt a slick cool sensation under my feet, sending goose bumps up my legs. The black pudding squished through my toes as I was about to experience my first “mud bath.” Not knowing what lay beneath the cool inky water, worry settled in. I noted the barbed wire at the far end of the pond that my Aunt DeLoris had warned us about. I would not go there, for I did not care to mix red blood with black goo. As my sister Gloria and Aunt DeLoris excitedly entered the mud swamp on the Minnesota farm, I followed close behind. I soon warmed to the idea that cooling off in this swimming hole, escaping the hot humid weather, and washing off the stickiness into the dark muddy liquid was great fun.

We laughed and splashed, feeling the companionship of spirited adventure. I admitted it was not as clean and safe as the swimming pool back in Sioux Falls, but it was surrounded by natural grass lands, wide open spaces, and the freedom of the country life. For now, this was our pond. The milk cows were fenced in another field and couldn’t reach the pond; and the black birds gave up their shrieking, deciding we were not a threat to their nesting area. Little did I know that such delights at a young age could be enjoyed later in life. Ah, this was my “Calistoga.”

We lived in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and every summer in the 1950’s my mother would send one or two of us kids to the Minnesota farm, where my Aunt Deloris and Uncle Gordon lived in their two-story country home. We helped with the chores, and it gave my mother a breather so she could attend summer school to update her teaching degree.

Sometimes, if I was sent there by myself without a brother or sister, I felt lonely. I missed the family picnics, craft days at the park, and riding my bike. But soon, I got into everything…from that mud swamp…to cows…to pigs…to chickens…to baby birds…and trees. There was a whole world out there for me to explore!

Wandering off by myself one day, I decided to explore the small forest of trees west of the farm house. I was a quiet kid and loved to retreat into nature. I secretly created an artistic rock circle and pretended I was in a magical forest. My brother Russell, and the neighbor boy, Jimmy, were at the farm one day and I decided to reveal my secret hideout, but required that they bring matches. Jimmy got them from his mother, saying that Aunt DeLoris needed matches for a summer barbecue. We filled the fire ring with twigs and leaves.

After lighting the fire, magically, an apparition appeared…to our dismay, it was my Aunt DeLoris with a huge frown upon her face. Apparently Jimmy’s mother had called Aunt DeLoris to ask if she needed anything else besides the matches for our barbecue. The boys were in big trouble! Of course it was their fault. A girl like me could never think of such a plot (hah!).
My aunt reamed the boys out…saying they could have started all the trees on fire. I felt guilty, and learned a lesson that day. I never played with matches again until I was grown up and became responsible.

But soon Jimmy forgave me and I got my first kiss, under the watchful eye of my Uncle, of course.

I redeemed myself soon with the arrival of the baby chicks. My uncle brought boxes of yellow fuzzy chicks to the farm. When released, they scattered all over the chicken yard, pecking at everything and sounding like a peeping chorus of unending flute tones. I would watch them and bring them fresh water and feed.

But soon I realized with horror what was happening. A group of them had ganged up on one little chick, pecking and pecking, and it was bleeding badly. I feared it would die. I ran to the farm house and got Aunt DeLoris, crying out the story. We rescued that little yellow chick. I placed her in a cardboard box, which was kept in the corner of the closed-in front porch. I talked to her constantly, giving her feed and clean water.

I nursed that little chick back to health and it grew from a yellow chick to a little red hen. I called her “Lucy.” I took her for rides all over the farm yard in my red wagon, along with my doll Susie. She was my best friend. I would hold her in my arms and she thought I was her mother. I had definitely redeemed myself from the former bad deed regarding the matches. When I left the farm, I had to leave Lucy to go back to school. But Aunt DeLoris watched over her.
She soon became a mother hen with little chicks. Lucy would bring her chicks to the front door and expect to come in. My Aunt DeLoris, bless her heart, would let her in with her brood following behind. They would wander around like they owned the place. That summer spent with Lucy is a warm fuzzy memory I will never forget.

Besides my chicken Lucy, I made friends with “Mama Milk Cow.” She was a gentle white and black Holstein. She would stand next to the fence, and I would climb on her back and take a slow ride around the barnyard. She was so big and I was so little; my feet would stick straight out because she had such a big belly. Somehow she knew when I was ready to get off, because she would sidle up to the fence and I would climb off. This was a lesson I learned all by myself.

The milk cows were always kept in a faraway field until it was time to milk them. One of my chores was to bring the cows in for milking. I would walk about a quarter mile down the road. When they saw me coming, they would quickly come to the gate and head down the road all by themselves, knowing where to go and where to turn into the driveway. They would race faster as they got close because they knew they could drink from the water trough. Then my Uncle Gordon would herd them into the barn to be milked.

But my lesson in milking was hopeless. My Uncle Gordon gave me the easiest cow to milk. My hands weren’t strong enough. That old milk cow didn’t budge a drop of milk into the bucket. The task came so easily to Uncle Gordon, as he held the pail between his legs. He filled pail after pail. In the end I was able to help him with the separation of milk and cream with a contraption called a “Separator,” with spouts coming out each side, one for milk and one for cream.

The un-pasteurized milk tasted real different than store bought milk, but I soon got used to it and liked it. After all the milking chores, my Uncle would pop open a beer. He always offered me a sip. I didn’t like the bitter taste, but I gulped it down, just because he offered. It was his way of ending the work day. So I celebrated with him. A good lesson learned; always reward yourself for a job well done.

Capturing and training baby birds to fly was a lesson I was determined to master. My brother Russell and I would climb a tree and carefully take the baby birds from the nest. They were so cute and we wanted them for our own pets. We made a cage of wire and boards.

During the day we would take them out of the cage and try to teach them to fly; but in a day or two the parents would come to their rescue and we would discover they had escaped, flying clumsily in the trees above us.

I am so thankful today that the baby birds did not get hurt and lived through it. A lesson I learned, and in retribution, I now regularly feed the back yard birds and their babies, making sure the seeds are under cover, just in case the hawk appears in the field behind our yard.
Going to the bathroom was a venture into the wild. Since there were no indoor bathroom facilities, a two-seater outhouse was located out in the back away from the house.

First, I had to dodge the yellow jackets hovering around the door, and then address my fear of spiders lurking in the shadows inside, and hope nothing got me coming up one of the two-seater holes while I sat. My usual routine would be to slowly open the door, glance around, observe any cobwebs that appeared overnight, then settle on one of the “holes,” distracting myself by looking at the clothes in the Sears Catalog, which doubled its usefulness as toilet paper. My Aunt DeLoris would throw bleach in the outhouse once in awhile, making the wooden seats spic and span (if that was possible).

During the night we were not required to go to the outhouse in the dark. My aunt put a pail in the hallway and I was always thankful that was not one of my chores.

Helping in the garden was getting into the dirt, tasting everything, and collecting vegetables for cleaning and canning. I could always get a fresh snack from the garden, pulling up a carrot, wiping off the dirt with my hand, and chewing it contentedly; or eat the sweet peas out of a pod. Sweet corn would be plucked from the tall stalks, where my sister Gloria and I would play hide and seek, and make corn dolls, with the tassels for the hair.

I usually stayed at the Minnesota farm for several weeks, and each week on Saturday it was time for a bath because we had to be clean for Sunday church. Their farm house had a number of bedrooms upstairs, all prettily wall papered in the latest style. One of the upstairs bedrooms had a big old tub close to the window.

To take a bath it was necessary for my aunt to heat the water from the rain barrels in a pot on the stove. When it rained, the water would collect in the eaves above and drain into the rain barrels below. I would watch as my Aunt DeLoris poured heated rain water into the big white bath tub. The dead bugs floating in the one inch of water freaked me out, but I never said anything. And since the water cooled quickly, I figured I was clean enough. I would pull the rubber stopper out of the drain, and the dirty water would run out the pipe that extended out the window, draining into the yard. Thankfully I only had to take a bath once a week; the rest of the time we cleaned up with a wash cloth and dish pan on the front porch.

The water tasted different than city water, but I learned to like its bold mineral taste. A huge wind mill provided the water, and it was pumped up from the well, and fed into the water trough. The old tin cup hanging from the wire by the well was my favorite place to get a cool drink in the summer. We all drank from the old tin cup. It was a bit rusty, but it was a part of life on the farm.

In the absence of wind or well water, the rain barrels would be the backup water supply. Thankfully, my aunt strained the bugs from the drinking water.

There were so many good times on the farm. My brother and I loved playing in the pig pens, heckling the roosters in the hen house, hitting rotten eggs against the walls in the hay loft, and looking under boards for baby mice.
One summer, at the age of 12, I learned to drive. Not a car, but a tractor. My uncle taught me how to plow furrows for planting seed for corn and wheat. Turning the tractor at the end of each row was tricky, but I soon got the hang of it. My uncle would sit beside me, and we would spend the day out in the fields. At lunch time (they called it dinner in those days), my aunt would drive up in the car with sandwiches, Kool-Aid and chocolate cake. It was a welcome reward for this lesson learned.

When my parents came to Minnesota to take us back home to Sioux Falls, we all sat around to celebrate our family kinship. My Aunt DeLoris would get out a beer and pour a small portion into each of her favorite petite glasses, around 1 ounce each, and serve us our beverages, coming around to each of us with the tray of glasses. As she came around the circle, the glasses would clink together, making a sound like melodic ringing bells… almost like we were attending a communion in church. But, it wasn’t Mogen David wine, it was beer, and I had to face the taste test again. My parents and siblings seemed to like the beer, and I didn’t want to be teased, so I would drink it anyway. I would squeeze my nose down and purse my lips together as it eased its way down my throat, to keep from inhaling the bitter taste.

Those were the ways and lessons on the farm. Some of the best times ever. I had my first driving lesson, my first kiss, my first drink of beer, my first mud bath, and many lessons in the care and feeding of barnyard animals. The best lesson I learned was how precious life was on the Minnesota farm. Those memories will stay with me forever.

Karolyn Bader left the midwest when she was 20 years old...to explore the West. She loves the mountains and the great outdoors. She settled in Reno and has been here ever since. She will always remember her great midwest upbringing and the Minnesota farm. Uncle Gordon and Aunt DeLoris are gone now, but their memory lives on.
TAMING THE WIDE MISSOURI

Barbara Cotter

The nearest high school was in the small town of Brockton, situated on an Indian reservation, across the Missouri River from where we lived. My sister and I had a rented room where we stayed during the week and went home on the weekends. The town had a store, where you could get anything from a sack of flour to a pair of shoes, a post office, a filling station, and the grain elevator where the farmers took their wheat to sell. The school was small -- there were 15 of us in my graduating class, but we had a great boys’ basketball team! We never missed a home game and yelled until we were hoarse. And we had quite an array of trophies lined up on the shelf.

Going back and forth across the river on weekends could be quite a daunting experience. There lived a man near the river who furnished the needed transportation. When the weather was fairly warm, the mode of transportation was either a rowboat or ferry, operated by Mr. Larsen, who was blind in one eye. My brother says that he also was missing one hand, but I don’t recall that about him. All I remember is that he was an expert at his job no matter what the conditions of the river were. If there were only three or four people, he would take us in the rowboat. The ferry was used for transporting horse-drawn wagons or an occasional car.

In the winter the river would freeze over, and we could drive across. When spring came, the ice began to melt and soon it would break up. The break-up of the ice could be heard for miles, like thunder. Then the only means of crossing the river was by rowboat. We sat huddled in the boat, not making a sound, while Mr. Larsen plied his way between the huge chunks of ice. Another man sat in the front of the boat with a pole and pushed aside the ice chunks as we slowly made our way. When we finally landed on the opposite shore, it was at least two miles downstream. I was never really scared; I had great faith in Mr. Larsen’s ability to get us there. Besides, that’s just the way things were.

The Missouri River served many of the needs of the community. For many people, it was the prime source of water, especially drinking water. To get the water from the river we used what was called a “stone boat.” It was a wooden platform mounted on two heavy wooden rails. A barrel, holding at least 50 gallons, was placed on the stone boat. This was pulled to the river’s edge by horsepower, where the barrel was filled and then dragged back. In the winter we would cut chunks of ice, pack them in sawdust in the icehouse, and have ice during most of the summer.

In 1933-40, the great river was somewhat diminished in size. Fort Peck Dam was built which has the distinction of being the largest earth-filled dam in the world. The reservoir created is one of the largest man-made lakes in the world. The purpose of building the dam was for flood control and navigation improvement, and it later was also
used for irrigation and generating electricity. My oldest brother, Julius, worked on the dam during school vacations.

An interesting aside about my brother comes to mind. On some weekends when he wasn’t working at the dam, he would “ride the rails” and come home for a visit. Catching a ride on a freight train was a popular mode of transportation at that time. He never let us know when he was coming -- actually he couldn’t let us know because we had no phone. We did have a cuckoo clock that he had tried to repair previously. The clock still did not work -- except when Julius was coming for a visit. As soon as the clock started ticking, we knew that soon he would be home. It was a strange phenomenon, but true.

Barbara J. Cotter was born and grew up on a farm in eastern Montana. At the request of her children, she is describing events of her early childhood in her memoirs.
If you say it, RLITBM, the text word, out loud, it will crack you up – Relit BM! Don’t try doing it or it (the BM) will explode on you! (;-)) I do have a wickedly funny and bizarre sense of humor! But I’d have to in order to think up starting a LOL (Laughing Out Loud) group for women who love to laugh and have fun! It all started with my thinking about my fibromyalgia pain and realizing as Norman Cousins did in his experiment (read: Anatomy of An Illness) on healing himself of a rare, life-threatening- connective tissue disease by watching The Three Stooges and Laurel and Hardy movies in a hotel, after he’d checked himself out AMA (Against Medical Advice) from the hospital, that you can’t feel pain when you’re belly-laughing-out-loud! (BLOL) So along with this and thinking about how sad and upset a fellow OLLI member was, who had severely injured herself trekking in Burma, I fantasized starting such a group where women who LTL (Love To Laugh) could have a safe and silly place to share their humorous life stories and anecdotes! And so we did on April Fool’s Day, when we met at my home for the First Official Beginning of the Laugh-Out-Loud-Ha-Ha Group! We did laugh ourselves silly with our jokes, stories and shared cartoons! It was supposed to last for only two hours, but we continued until almost 4 p.m., having started @ 12:30p.m. with my world-famous “hoot & toot” chili and home-made bread!

Laughter truly is the best medicine! As Lily Tomlin once said: “Instead of striving for the survival of the fittest, we should be striving for survival of the wittiest … then we can all die laughing!” When the women arrived and proceeded to seat themselves @ my dining room table, they got a goody to laugh about! As we age, we women have challenges controlling our “leaky bladders” so I had encouraged everyone to make/bring a “pee-pad” so there would be no accidents on my furniture! Not knowing whether these Gal-Pals were as zany as me, I bought “P-pads” (extra thick & strong Kotex), decorated them with stickers and put them on the seat of each LOL Lady! That began the “hooting” and it continued the rest of the afternoon!

Another addition to my collection of bizarre and funny home-toys/objects was a new coverlet on my bed! My Florida quilter-friend, who also loves to laugh, especially since she’s almost died twice from cancer, sent me a special gift so I, once again, have “Men-In-My-Bed” (see photo). The gals thought it was “fantabulously” funny too! They especially liked the “guy who was winking” and bare-chested! Come to think of it, they all were bare-chested, wearing tool belts and doing manly-construction-type-jobs! WOW! 😊
How silly can we be? Well here goes! My family has always loved joking around and is often times, risqué in doing so. When I told my son Chris that I was interested in having a “dual-relationship,” once again – as Cher says: “A girl can wait for the right man to come along, but in the meantime that still doesn’t mean she can’t have a wonderful time with all the wrong ones!” – as was the case with Tim, my second soul mate and now dead handyman, for seven short months – with one of the workmen who’s helping make repairs in my severely damaged home (frozen pipes and flooding this winter when temps on the mountain reached below zero degrees), he came unglued and said: “Mom, what are you thinking? You haven’t EABFY (Exchanged Any Bodily Fluids Yet), have you?” When I could control my laughter I said: “No, I don’t plan to at this juncture: I’m just practicing my “Cougar-Woman-in-Training-Skills!”

There must be a “blue-gene” for zaniness in our clan, because my dad used to keep us giggling at the Sunday dinner table with his off-color jokes and limericks, much to my Methodist-minister-daughter Mom’s chagrin! We certainly digested my mom’s delicious food with no problems! This kind of laughter has kept me sane (I know that’s questionable!) throughout this whole home-repair ordeal! The company my son Chris hired (they were recommended by my Farmer’s Insurance Agent -- should be called “Endurance Agent”) has operated in a less-than–professional-manner and we’ve tried to make jokes about their incompetence in order to deal with our frustrations/anger. Life is certainly challenging at times and the only thing you can do is remember: “This too shall pass! Now that would be nice!” (a quote I have hanging over my kitchen sink!). How silly can we be in our daily lives, without offending others! That is the challenge always, as I have found in sharing some of my zany ‘risqué-ness’ with this class! I DO APOLOGIZE IF I HAVE OFFENDED ANYONE WHO IS HERE TODAY OR MAY BE READING THIS PIECE IN OUR UPCOMING SPRING 2011 ANTHOLOGY! I’M SORRY! But not really, because, remember, according to the Bible: “A merry heart
doeth good like a medicine but a broken spirit dries the bones.” (New King James) or “A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.” Proverbs 15:13 (New International Version) or another, referencing the word “merry” talks about the man who decides to “eat, drink and make merry” . . . or is it Mary? (Luke 13:19).

And then there’s the one by Joan Rivers: “A man can sleep around, no questions asked, but if a woman makes nineteen or twenty mistakes, she’s a tramp.” TeeHee!

But what about the “broken toilet” sitting in my backyard? Is it waiting to be used in a skit for my annual HOWL (Halloween) shin-dig where we “break-the-fun-meter” each year? But, that’s a funny story for another telling . . .!? You’ll have to wait to hear or see!

There goes ‘charmingly eccentric’ Lynn Mahannah (or Glam Gram as she’s called by her grandson Zak) doing her favorite thing – telling funny stories and Laughing-Out-Loud (LOL)! She intends to live forever! So far so good! When she’s not making homemade bread, creating Easter mask-art, writing poetry or doing her photography, she’s thinking up new ways to make her LOL, Gal-Pal Group more fun and silly! Her goal is to help plan her own COL (Celebration of Life) event and be alive to attend it! Always keeping in mind, “She who laughs, lasts!”
THE INJURY

Ina Krapp

Snow coned slopes aglow with morning sun surrounded Bob and me. “Cross country skiing on Memorial Day weekend. Can you believe it?” Bob asked. But there we were – two specks zigzagging down sculptured white hills. My blue knickers beside Bob’s gray – his prize green felt Alpine cap covered with patches from a plethora of memories perched on his head. The only people in the world. Then a whimsical breeze whirled Bob’s cap away. His turn, the twist of his arm and the muffled thud as he fell ended in his chilling scream.

“Something snapped. I felt it. Something went loose.” And, “Oh, the pain.” He lay spewed out on the snow. The jumble of his moans mingled with my questions. “Where does it hurt? What should I do? What about ice? Is that good? Or bad?” We couldn’t remember. I needed to do something, so I packed snow around Bob’s leg until he yelled, “Stop! Stop! It’s too painful. Let’s just try to get to the car.”

Using my shoulder and his ski poles, he struggled erect. He didn’t faint. As we slowly began to follow our tracks back to the car, Bob turned. “Can you see my cap?”

“Forget the cap,” I answered.

The slow drive down Lassen’s windy, narrow road, and the fast race to the Red Bluff Hospital Emergency Room gave us our explanation. A detached ham string. Permanently detached.

Fourteen months later, the accident receded into a blurry memory. We even skied again. Until one Sunday, I sat cross legged on the sofa and leafed through the De Anza College catalog. A course labeled “Sports Injury” caught my eye. “Bob,” I said. “We ought to take this. Remember that fall at Lassen?”
“Yeah, of course. We couldn’t decide whether to ice my leg or not. And we were surrounded by snow. Well, the leg’s okay now, except I can’t run. But why don’t we just take Spanish again?”

But two weeks later, Bob and I ambled into our Tuesday night “Sports Injury” class. The instructor, Miss Perkins, glanced at her roster, “I think I went to high school with your son,” she said. “Greg, right?”

Bob and I sat up front surrounded by a sea of young faces and studied the course requirements. Since I worked the front desk at the library, I remembered remarks about “older” students. Terms like: “too studious,” “too enthusiastic,” and “too eager.”

At home the next week, we pored over the text, Modern Principles of Athletic Training. Bob scanned the index and flipped through the pages. “We should have iced,” he said. “Page 295.”

Tuesday, class time. As we entered the room, Miss Perkins handed out rolls of gauze bandages and demonstrated on a volunteer – not Bob nor I -- how to wrap an injured elbow. Then how to wrap an ankle, a knee and various other body parts. Bob and I tried not to snicker as we practiced on each other. We stopped at Rite-Aid on the way home and loaded up on gauze of every width and length. Friends stopping by our house became inured to finding us draped in bandages. Perhaps an arm in a sling or a leg swaddled in gauze, usually sagging around the ankle. We squabbled over who should be the victim and if the bandages were precision perfect.

Next Tuesday: a pop quiz. We scored the highest – disgruntled youthful faces turned our way. “Okay,” Miss Perkins said. “Each of you pick a sport and attend one game or event each week.” She rattled off a list of possibilities. Cycling home from work, Bob spotted the girls’ volley ball practice and became an ardent fan. Walking across campus with him, I counted the waves and “Hello, Bob” greetings from his cute new friends.

I, on the other hand, preferred to drop in at the football team workout room. Miss Perkins demanded active participation, so I began practicing my bandaging skills on players trapped in the spa or immobilized with ice packs. When the football team saw me approaching, one or another would patiently holds up an arm for a wrist wrap. I fetched iced cups, Gatorade and, sometimes, gave motherly advice.

Bob and I studied and wrapped and waited for Tuesdays. We learned CPR, how to recognize a concussion and post-injury treatment. Miss Perkins made an announcement: “I need two of you to sit on the bench with me at Saturday’s football game. Ina and Bob, meet me on the field by 7 p.m. Sharp.”

Thus on a muddy damp Saturday night we joined the other trainers on the players’ bench. I waved to my football team. I wore my wool rust colored trousers and jacket
topped with a coordinated scarf. Bob looked dashing in gray jeans, black jacket and English cap.

And the game began. It was the second quarter when the running back didn’t get up. He lay like a mud lump, face down on the ground. “Let’s go, Bob,” Miss Perkins said and ran onto the field. Of course Bob couldn’t “run” since Lassen, but he managed a shuffle hop toward the motionless player. He was almost there when the running back struggled to his feet and headed to the bench with Miss Perkins. They passed Bob, still approaching, so he maneuvered a U-turn and followed the two off the field. Meanwhile, I stood at the sideline happy to see my young friend on his feet and hopelessly immersed in laughter as Bob shuffle hopped toward me, arriving just before play resumed.

Miss Perkins turned with a steady stare in my direction and gestured toward the bespattered player now settled on a picnic table. “Go stretch him out,” she said.

I thought about my rust colored outfit with coordinated scarf and yelped, “Me?”

“You,” she said.

I tiptoed over to the table. “Uh...I’m supposed to stretch you out.”

He blinked once – I think he recognized me for he automatically placed his arm in the wrist-wrap position – and waved to his buddy. “No thanks,” he said politely. Thankfully, no more injuries occurred.

One Tuesday later, Bob and I took our finals – A+ of course. Shortly after, I heard Bob advising a friend about a sore shoulder although he admitted: “I’ve only been a doctor for a week.”

When Tuesday rolled around again, we fidgeted. What to do? So I studied the spring De Anza catalog. “What about the History of Architecture?” I asked.

But Bob and I both knew nothing would ever, forever match our “Sports Injury” class.

Ina Krapp began her love of learning in Cincinnati, Ohio – studying and then teaching. Four children didn’t deter her commitment to education. Married 56 years, she and her husband Bob have taken classes together regularly. Now OLLI gives them the opportunity to continue this quest.
FIFTY YEARS AND STILL COUNTING

Steve Anderson

There have been several significant periods in my life when the number fifty has appeared. The most important was meeting a beautiful lady that would quickly become my wife. It started out as a “union that would not last.” That was the prediction of those who knew me in 1961. My lifestyle at the time I married Grace was, to say the least, a little wild. But now, 50 years later, the bond and union between the two of us is more solid than it has ever been.

Another significant time was when I turned 50. We had lived in the Reno/Sparks area for 8 years when that happy occasion occurred. With any luck, should I live another 20 years, I will have lived 50 years in the beautiful Truckee Meadows. Our oldest daughter is over 50, our middle daughter will reach that magic number later in the year, and our son, the youngest of the clan, will have that pleasure in just a couple of years. With regard to that number, that pretty much ought to do it, at least with the family.

Some words that rhyme with fifty are drifty, nifty, shifty, thrifty and wifty (a word that came to light around 1979 meaning ditzy). At one time or another, I’m betting we’ve probably experienced some form of those rhyming words, including wifty.

But enough of that, this piece is supposed to be, parenthetically, “about life’s lessons learned.” And just what are those learned lessons? As a child you learned not to play with matches; never tell a lie because you’d have to tell another one to cover the first lie; and most importantly, never swear in front of your grandmother, otherwise your mouth would be washed out with her home-made lye soap. Some lessons are never, ever forgotten.

As an adult the lessons are more subtle. For example I know that with my wife, having a mutual 80-20 giving relationship has been the cornerstone to our fifty years of marriage. That lesson came very easily. The lesson that came a little harder, and not too successfully, was based on the old saying, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink,” and it had to do with getting our children through school, and all the while trying to impress on them the importance of an education. Talk, preach, threaten as we did, our children looked at the outside world and knew in their hearts that they were smarter than their folks; they didn’t have to listen to us. They looked at their dad, working what amounted to 60 hours a week, within 5-1/2 days, and said, that’s not for me, I’ll find another way. Sadly, their genie in the lamp never appeared, so they grew up never quite achieving the lifestyle their parents did. A lasting hard lesson in the reality of how life treats you.

Some lessons learned are so very indirect that they don’t appear until there is a period of reflection, then the light bulb comes on, and realization comes forth; the success that had been achieved over so many years came as a result of honing a particular skill that was, quite frankly, taken for granted.
I spent 31 years in the retail/manufacturing business, frequently being promoted because of my penchant for detail. Some promotions took me totally out of my comfort zone of working knowledge and into areas that required additional learning. With each promotion, there was more responsibility, and certainly more working hours. When we left the retail world and relocated from the Chicago area to Reno, I made a very conscious decision to stay out of management, to put myself in a position of going to work, making enough money to be happy, and working towards retirement. I began by working at an exhaust parts company which sold all of the necessary parts and pieces for a large truck exhaust system. The company also manufactured some of these parts. This process included purchasing parts from other vendors, plus raw materials for our own needs. Within a year I was the warehouse manager, and then a couple of years later, the plant manager. All of this success was built on recognizing a better way to do the same thing, but to be more efficient at it. Those indirect lessons learned found their way into my daily routine, and put me right back into management.

Filled full of myself, I went back into the retail world for a period of 3 years, only to find that the environment that I had once excelled in was now being run by younger people, people that could multi-task and juggle many things at one time. My strengths of mining down into the detail of a problem no longer served me in this alien situation. Thomas Wolfe wrote about not going back to your family, back to your childhood, back to a young man’s dreams of glory and of fame. Well, it’s true, you just can’t go back, it was a true life lesson . . . learned the hard way.

With this realization at hand, it was time to re-invent myself once again, but this time pulling together all of the skills and lessons learned over the thirty plus years that, with some soul-searching reflection, I realized were merely apprenticeship years.

My final working years would be involved with auditing and inventory management, something I was very good at. It didn’t take too long, but once again I moved myself into the world of operational management, but this time never as a manager. The skills and talents that were always there, but had been silently unexploited, now rose to the surface, and I was allowed as wide a berth as any other company employee, regardless of position, because I was very good at what I did. I dug down deep, I found out why our systems failed, who caused them to fail, and offered workable solutions to make sure that situation could be avoided in the future.

I’m retired now and ruminating over the past 50 years, there are a few things that bring a smile to my face. Thoughts that are so obvious today, that I wonder why I didn’t see them as clearly before:

- **Patience is not as difficult as once thought.** Getting wild-eyed and crazy over something that didn’t quite work as expected or hoped for, will not change the landscape of the issue. Calm and patience is a great conveyor. Certainly there were many occasions when I could have used both with more enthusiasm.

- **Rushing is not always the quickest way to get somewhere.** Most of the time the hurried actions that were employed needed to be either redone or changed in such a way that time was truly lost in the mix.
Nothing really seems to change, only the faces and names. Too often human nature controls what action is going to be taken on most issues, and it really doesn’t matter who the players are, because in most cases the scenario has been played out time after time; only the names and faces seem to change, never the problem.

Today I have found the usefulness of patience and taking my time in a new found joy, that of painting with watercolors. Some thirty-five plus years ago I painted with oils, and could get through a painting in an evening, or a couple of days at the very least. But now, with watercolor, the process is much more deliberate, and nuanced. A painting becomes layer upon layer of thoughtful application. The painting begins to take form, and soon comes to life; just as a piece of marble might be sculpted, slowly with deliberation, until the full form of the statue finally presents itself. I have found that measured process to be very relaxing, and the results of the paintings to be very fulfilling. My approach to painting has once again called upon the experiences of my past, another one of life’s lessons learned.

Steve Anderson and Grace, his wife of fifty years, have lived in the Reno/Sparks area since 1981. Their oldest daughter lives in Pennsylvania, their two other children live in the Truckee Meadows along with two of their granddaughters. Their grandson is attending school in Oakland, California.
OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Janice Corbelli

“Other perspectives” have long been a deeply motivating interest of mine. Maybe the seeds were planted early in my life where in the one-room schoolhouse the study of geography was especially fascinating. Coloring maps and filling in the mountains, lakes and rivers, and learning names of other countries peopled with a diversity of races, lifestyles and belief systems.

Little did I imagine that one day the interest would magnify and lead me to make choices for educational travel to immerse myself in multiple cultures around the world. I was expecting to find differences but amazingly what I found were more similarities -- our common humanity.

Continuing this exploration, I determined to find a way to live and work in other countries. Completing my studies at the University of Nevada, Reno to get a bachelor’s degree, and additionally taking a TESL course to become certified to teach English as a second language, I was armed with qualifications to do just that.

Many life lessons were to be learned through these experiences but the strongest motivating force that propelled me to have the courage to explore the unknown, and the bittersweet consequences of these decisions, was an unlikely relationship.

In retrospect, it seems almost pathologically obsessive -- a form of madness which I transformed in my mind to think of as “love.” Some strong force of need that empowered me to seek to do the impossible, and at the very least expend a lot of time and energy, was driving me. Capable of delusion and a strong belief in the Science of Mind principles that I could create my reality -- anything is possible -- I set out to prove it. And in many ways it proved to be true.

I intended to find a place where he could legally live and work so that we could eventually be together -- a goal narrowly focused but encompassing the world. Why? We Americans are privileged to travel without many restrictions. But that isn’t true for people from many other countries. Even a visitor’s visa is denied when officials question the applicant’s likely intention to stay in this country.

My search took me to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Vancouver, Canada and Thailand. Along the way, I taught English, made friends, expanded my knowledge, discovered new aspects of myself, and became comfortable with unpredictable outcomes. Tolerance and patience, blending and understanding were part of it. It didn’t always have to be my way.
Meanwhile, he kept going around the world on a ship -- a Filipino man working at a demanding job with little free time and few choices. Our meetings in various ports were brief and the communication limited to phone calls from Kenya, Cape Town, India, Malaysia, Brazil, Venezuela, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Morocco, Florida, and the Bahamas.

Needless to say, we (I, not we, was the one doing all the work) didn’t accomplish the original unrealistic goal. But what an immeasurable, overflowing bounty of experiences were the result. I’m especially grateful for the continuing pathways of the teaching career which led to a few years in Florence, Italy and Prague, Czech Republic, as well as the Dominican College in San Rafael, California.

It was a wonderful, life-enriching journey and I wouldn’t have missed it for anything.

Jan Corbelli is currently living in Reno near her family and friends, and is actively involved in lifelong learning, health and fitness -- happily singing, dancing and telling her stories.
PERMUTATIONS

Barbara Weiss

Viewed objectively, my childhood was nearly ideal. The first of three children in a traditional nuclear family, I never faced any real problems or need. Dad worked, Mama stayed home. We were well fed, sheltered, clothed and educated. Handicaps, emotional tension, family chores, occasional scoldings or spankings, parental expectations for excellence in behavior and education: none of these or all together constitute abuse or hardship. Being smart, and small, and physically inept (couldn’t run, throw, kick or catch – the klutz always chosen last) was unpleasant but not dangerous. For me it was just the way things were. Day by day I plodded on. There were love, fun, tears, frustration, anger, angst and praise, i.e., normal human experience. Usually I knew how fortunate I was and tried to do my best. In retrospect I would call the first twenty years simply existing.

Then I met a boy. It got ugly. Bad marriage, ugly divorce. Constant verbal and emotional abuse of me and our daughters, and occasional episodes that were worse. A congenitally deformed baby – anencephalic (fully formed but no brain development) -- that died at birth was perhaps the worst. It lasted seven years, and then I packed up my two young daughters, the pets that could fall victim to my husband’s rage, everything else I could get in the car, and ran. Mama’s elderly aunt gave us shelter at her home near Anacostia, Maryland, diametrically across the city of Washington, D.C. We were the only Caucasians for blocks.

For a year I slept on her couch while I worked various low-level jobs, often two at a time. I fought off my soon-to-be ex’s attempt to claim my girls (we had been in counseling for some time and the clinic warned him off very effectively). I fought pinworms and won, lost one cat and saved the other and my dog, and successfully fought off the school system’s attempt to put the girls into the very poor Prince George’s County, MD schools. Their father lived in Montgomery County, MD which had the best schools in the nation; I worked in Montgomery County, went to church, shopped, and found child care there. I won that fight too – that’s where the girls went to school.

After the divorce, while I was awarded full custody of my girls and quite generous support and alimony (in 1970, $450.00 a month was generous), he won limited closely supervised visitation.

He walked away from a U.S. Government job at the National Bureau of Standards, the house we were buying, and everything we owned, to avoid paying a penny. I wasn’t a bit surprised. It took the state 5 years to trace him to Chicago, where they still had a work farm system, which scared him. He paid only half what was promised until my big girl was 16 and her sister 14. He called to inform me that he had moved to Texas, which then did not enforce out-of-state deadbeat dads’ collection efforts. He had conned me out of a good car and my share of our last joint tax return. Good riddance!

Somehow we managed. His family wouldn’t help; mine couldn’t. But we never had to go on any type of public support. The older girl went to MIT on a full ride scholarship, grant and work programs; the younger to the University of Maryland with my father’s help (financial situation changed). He also bailed me out of credit debt,
finagled a deal for a reliable car, and made it possible for me to move west. Both girls were safe in school and I was sick of the climate back east, and the politics. Life was not working. Friends in Reno had said they’d help me get settled. Yes, I was unhappy again, and I ran again, and all my troubles came along. I got a job and got settled. It took two more years to hit bottom hard enough to get my attention. In 1986 I began the long, long climb to “normal.”

I had three great grandmothers who lived past 100. When my father died in 1996 at the age of 80, it hit me hard. I was 55, and the concept of another 25 years of struggle, frustration, pain and failure was too much. I had defeated alcohol dependency, and was making progress on lack of self-esteem, confidence, etc., which had dogged me all my life. But I gave up. I didn’t quit, didn’t relapse. Day by day dogged plodding had brought me a long way, but I was tired, I hurt, I was miserable. I essentially abdicated control or aspiration in my life, and basically starting marking time until I wouldn’t have to do it anymore.

At this point my perception was not just that I was a loser, but that I had never been in the game. There were times I tried for a while, like a fish out of water flopping around, but it never seemed worth the pain and fatigue for long.

I tell you that I am free and I am not! I want to tell you about the horrors and the hell that I am going through, but I can’t let you know, you can’t see my secrets or my pain, because then I will have to own it. Instead I will keep it locked up deep inside the chasms of my fortitude, and I will throw away the key. Never to reveal my true self, the one that hurts and is in pain and cries out for understanding but knows that no one understands, because she doesn’t understand it herself, but she cries anyway.

Did you know that I have performed many an Oscar Winning Performance, sometimes on a daily basis, sometimes with strangers, sometimes with those that I love? The reason being that I am scared, scared of not measuring up, even to my own expectations, let alone those of others. Maybe that is why I live in my Ivory Tower, away from the world so that they don’t have to suffer my insufferable incompetence, so that they don’t have to suffer my award-winning performance. I don’t what to use this as a way to live, but it has become a way to survive. I survive only because I can act.

This is not my poem. The writer is unknown. But she truly knew me.
I wrote these two. Only recently have I dared to share any of my poetry, and these two very rarely.

LOST

There are monsters in my closet,
There’s a monkey on my back,
I don’t know what I’m seeking,
I don’t know what I lack.
I only know I’m terrified:
My life is way off track.
Is anybody listening?
Can you somehow lead me back?

Is anybody out there?
The walls have grown so high
I can’t reach out to anyone,
I cannot see the sky.
I don’t know what pursues me,
Can’t reason why I cry.
It really seems if this keeps on
I’m surely going to die.

The walls have grown so strong & tight,
The door is barred by fear.
Is anybody out there?
Can’t anybody hear?
There’s got to be some way out
From all these pains and tears
Please, can’t someone help me?
Is any comfort near?

This was probably written in 1987 or 1988 when things were the worst. Later I found more balance, much more understanding and control.

INVENTORY

I keep my tears in the closet
Locked fast and I hide the key,
For should they break loose
They’d inundate the earth and
Wash away what’s left of me.

My fears are locked in the attic
And I certainly never go there
For facing them down
Is something to dread;  
A task far too bitter to bear.

I buried my rage in the basement,  
Tamped down, covered over and sealed,  
It’s feral and cruel  
And too much to cope with;  
Foul fury I daren’t reveal.

My pain I poured in a bottle  
And pounded the cork in so tight!  
The glass is clear so I see it  
Seething and testing its bonds,  
And it moans in my sleep at night.

My Dreams got lost in the meadow;  
With Joy and with Hope went astray:  
So I walk a tremulous tightrope,  
Composed…empty….and gray.  
How are you!? . . . oh fine, have a nice day . . .

Obviously, functional but hardly happy or fulfilled. But today everything has changed. I remember those events and feelings, but they are gone, irrelevant, dust. So how have I been granted joy, for that is what I now feel?

It’s been a process over three or four years, and I’ve been aware and amazed as each step unfolded. Sequence may be muddled, but I remember and treasure it all.

First, a friend urged that I try a short writing course being offered by a UNR graduate student as part of her thesis. I objected because I’d never tried anything but poetry. My friend was more stubborn than I, and I was intrigued by something different.

It only lasted six weeks, but it was a spark. A wonderful spark that glowed and grew. Our teacher was marvelous. We were an odd group but she managed to draw each of us out to a remarkable degree. With her help and encouragement I started to believe in myself, just a little bit. Praise is a heady dose for a self-convinced loser. I wanted more.

Someone told me about ElderCollege, which became OLLI. It was scary, facing all those mature, poised, cultured people, but they were so gracious and encouraging I began to feel more secure, more capable. I tried Watercolors but found I had no skill except in structured abstract, but even that was new and good. I had taken classes previously at the YWCA (now Evelyn Mount Community Center), and discovered I could draw a little, which I had always thought impossible.

I had learned basic skills in calligraphy and beadwork, among others. I kept experimenting; oil pastel-abstract, not bad; chalk pastel – yes!, etc. My mainstays were Lifescapes and singing in my church choir.

A couple of years ago I received a wedding invitation (my brother’s youngest girl). I thought “No – too expensive, too much trouble.” But I was talked into it. The wedding was beautiful. The trip was horrible. But I saw most of the family for the first time in ten years, and it was a revelation. I had been comparing myself very unfavorably
with all these wonderful, successful people for decades. Suddenly I realized that I wasn’t really doing all that badly when I took a fresh look.

One night a couple of years ago there was nothing on TV but *Men in Black*. In the scene where Will Smith is holding the newborn alien baby and she spits in his face, I suddenly laughed – and startled myself. I heard and felt the free clear laughter of a child! I couldn’t believe it! Over the next four to six weeks I clutched at that new feeling, nursed and treasured it. Then one night I was musing about this and that. A strange idea started developing itself and I slowly realize that the mishaps and miseries of Charlie Brown and Snoopy from the comic strip “Peanuts” were strangely similar to my perception of my life experience. Hopes, aspirations, ambitions that failed or were thwarted, “loving” friends that teased and taunted; the tree always snatching Charlie’s kite, Snoopy falling off his doghouse when he was about to save the world from the Red Baron . . . it suddenly made sense. Since a major tenet of psychology is that identifying and naming the problem enables one to deal with it and move on, I suddenly felt that the weight of all the loss, failure and pain of my previous life had suddenly vanished. Gone! I know it happened, can remember and describe it, but blessedly I am free of it.

Last summer the emotional support group I had attended for years became increasingly uncomfortable until I said no more! Afterwards I realized these women I had known and listened to for years were caught in an endless cycle of emotional illness and futility. They were habitually focused on being sick, but I have turned a corner and plan to be well and happy, and creative, and productive and -- and it’s a beautiful world and a wonderful life. Every sense is clear and alive. I’m ready to live another fifty years, and nurture this new me every minute.

Permutations: existence, struggle, joy. I feel very blessed.

*Barbara was born in Hartford, CT, grew up in State College (Penn State), PA. After a long struggle in Maryland to raise her girls, she followed a dream to Reno. The struggle continued with a diagnosis of low-level bipolar disorder, but now she is free. And very happy.*
NEW BEGINNINGS WITH SURPRISES

Jacqueline Bordoli

It was October 1973. I was preparing for the birth of my child. I had recovered from a miscarriage 18 months earlier. I had washed every item of clothing and bedding given as a gift so every germ was gone. The room was all ready for its new occupant. Books on baby care had been read. I had attended Lamaze classes learning how to breathe through and during labor. I had been to marital counseling trying to salvage a failing marriage. I had calculated the date of birth as October 12 based on some formula I found in a book. The doctor computed October 10 from information on his chart. I had concluded I was ready.

Well, October 10 passed - no baby. October 11 came and went, and no baby. I was ready. On October 12 in the morning my water broke. I called the doctor. What? My doctor was on vacation, but in case I was not in labor by early afternoon, I was to go to the doctor’s office and see my doctor’s partner. In early afternoon I met with the doctor to see that everything was all right. I was not to worry. The baby would be born that night. But, just in case that did not happen, I was to go to the hospital at 8:00 am and let them know I was there to be admitted to maternity.

On October 13, I arrived at the hospital to let them know I was there per the doctor’s orders to be admitted to maternity. The first question was, Are you in labor?” I was not having any of the experiences I had read about, so the answer was “No.” I did however fail to tell them I had a terrible backache. Contractions, I thought would be something like menstrual cramps.

They could not admit me since I was not in labor. I questioned why not since my water had broken almost 24 hours ago. In that case I needed to be admitted immediately. Thank goodness I had completed all the necessary paperwork earlier. And, by the way Dr. Bennett was on call for my doctor and his partner.

Shortly after being rolled into my little waiting space I was given an IV that was to include something to begin contractions. I asked when the birth might take place and was told probably around 6:00 p.m. After that, someone would stick their head in and see how I was dilating and feeling. Backache increased. Around noon, they brought me lunch. I really did not feel like eating. I finally called the nurse and told her I did not think I would endure the pain until 6:00 p.m. She checked at the next contraction and “Oh My God the baby was coming!” I had to get to delivery. And, they would have to find the doctor immediately. Was he still in the hospital? Had he gone to lunch or his office? All I know was I hurt.
Whoa. I was in the delivery room, the doctor had arrived just in time, and I was ready to deliver. No time for anything. I am being told there is no time to numb anything. I am hurting and the next thing I hear is they needed forceps. I was now remembering something I had read in my preparation for this day that forceps were not necessarily a good thing. Now I was scared. Was something wrong? No, he just had to lift the head. Nothing was making a lot of sense. Shortly, I heard, “It’s a girl.” (Remember this was 1973 when knowing the sex of the baby before birth was not common.) I then heard crying. Although still in a daze, I thought she was beautiful. It was then off to some kind of recovery and then to my room.

Even though I was excited and tired, I called for help because I had to go to the bathroom. An aide showed up and off to the bathroom the two of us went. I was obviously weak, because the next thing I knew I was lying on the bathroom floor hearing they had to get me back to bed and someone was to go get some ice. At that point I could only think I had hurt my head. Once in bed the nurse was putting the ice on my foot. What was going on? I soon learned I had fainted in the bathroom; the aide ran for help and left me on the floor where my foot was against a steam heater. I had burned the top of my foot and my big toe badly along with additional burns on a couple of other toes. I had to be seen by another doctor who knew about burns. What was happening to my baby? A quick summary of the day would be: My life had changed. I became a mother, and I had to have skin grafts which required donor skin taken from my buttock. I continued to be housed in the maternity wing so my daughter and I could be together. During this stay, Dr Bennett visited me every day.

After 12 days in the hospital to make sure the skin grafts took, we went home. A new mom who was leaving behind 12 days of infant care, I was home alone during the day on crutches caring for my baby. I could not carry her since the crutches posed a problem. Thank goodness I had a bassinet with wheels so I could push as I went from room to room. I was thankful for the neighbor who checked on us when he came home each day for lunch. I am even more grateful for his wife who shared their dinner with us and was there to bathe my infant. She became known as my daughter’s Nana.

I could never have imagined what becoming a new mother would have entailed. It was a new beginning with lots of new challenges. I learned: Just because I thought I was prepared for my daughter’s birth, things can and do happen despite all the preparation.
A postscript: Shortly after my daughter had given birth to my granddaughter I called Nana to let her know my granddaughter was born in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. Since she was not home I left a message. After being off to see the new baby, I came home to find the red light on the telephone indicating I had a message. The familiar voice on the message told me how thrilled she was to hear that I was now a Nonna. In August she traveled to Reno from Oregon to see my daughter and her baby. What a blessing for her visit since she died in October.
STRIKE FORCE

Patricia J. Zimmerman

March 1968: “Here’s your headset. When the operators walk out at 2:00, you put it on, walk in and sit down at a board where there are cords up.” That was my strike training. I was a Business Office Training Supervisor for Illinois Bell Telephone Company and had been in management for a total of four months…I was 22 years old. They did walk out at 2:00, some of them waving to us, as we traipsed in with our clunky old headsets balancing precariously on our heads. Traffic Department (later to become Operator Services) managers did not want to give us the good equipment. We got the stuff that was ready for the round file. I dutifully sat down at a place where cords were plugged in, just as instructed. I didn’t have a clue what to do from there. Luckily I sat next to Shirley Nethery, who had been a telephone operator before moving to the Business Office. She showed me how to plug in the back cord to a lighted hole, answer the call with, “We are experiencing a work stoppage, please bear with me.” To that the customers said, “What does that mean?” I said, “We are on strike.”

The next many months would be a blur in my life. Nothing would be normal again. We worked twelve hour days for fourteen days before we got a much needed day off. We never knew when our schedules would be rearranged since the needs of the business were changing on a minute to minute basis. Little by little I learned how to use the cords to place long distance calls for customers. My personal challenge was to see if I could get all my cords up at the same time before customers would hang up. Later the supervisor would put me on the special board where I answered the Business Office switchboard, dispensed operator codes (another fun thing to do…I memorized codes all across the United States), I handled calls coming automatically on an ONI (Operator Number Identification) board (this was used by small communities that did not have DDD -- direct distance dialing) and anything else they could stick us with. Most of these procedures are automatic in today’s world, but they were not in 1968. The work was fun for a while, but it quickly lost its charm after I mastered it.

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) were on strike against the Bell System (the entire country) for the first time since 1947. I was working in Rockford, Illinois for Illinois Bell Telephone Company. All management employees were sent immediately to man the switchboards. Soon the Plant foremen were reassigned to Plant duties as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) honored the operators’ picket lines and did not report for work. Their contract would soon expire and they too would go on strike. My department, Commercial Business Office, had a relatively weak union, Telephone Commercial Employees Union (TCEU). The Rockford Commercial department did not honor the picket lines; all of our people remained on the job. Some of the TCEU employees around the state did honor the picket lines and their positions had to be staffed -- more on that later.

The public soon got the word that the telephone company was on strike. When they heard my feminine voice pick up their call they’d say, “Oh good. The operators are
back.” I said, “Sorry, I don’t know any more than the guy sitting next to me.” Those old headsets caused a world of hurt for the bald men among us. Soon they were putting their handkerchiefs over their heads to try to pad them where the heavy headsets poked into the skin. All of the people working the boards were management people used to supervising a staff. Most of them outranked the Traffic supervisors who were trying to run the business as they always had…including putting up a sign when we needed to be excused for a bathroom break. Resentments ran high as this strike droned on. One operator put all his cords up so it looked like he had a board full of calls. Then he put up his break request sign. When the supervisor saw him, he said, “I’m going on break.” He pulled out all of the cords (as if he were disconnecting customers who were on long distance calls) and walked off. The supervisor stood there with her mouth open.

In the 1960s Illinois Bell used a commercial describing the telephone operator as the voice with the smile. It did not take long for the disgruntled management forces to paraphrase that to, “The voice with the smile is gone for a while. The boys with the balls are taking the calls.” Long hair with elaborate upsweep hairdos were all the rage in the 1960s. The care and feeding of the hairdos required a weekly visit to the hairdresser. Unfortunately, the traffic supervisors were making out the schedules by hand and did not consider we needed time off to get our hair done. After a few weeks of never knowing what our hours would be so we could not schedule a hair appointment, the women got to looking like sad little puppies. We persevered, however.

The Hairdo!

The world was swirling around us; people were marching in protest to the war in Vietnam, for Civil Rights, equal rights for women and many other things. There was a lot of unrest in the nation. In March, President Lyndon Johnson announced, “I shall not seek, nor will I accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.”
Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Riots broke out in cities across the country, including Illinois. The cry was, “Burn baby, burn.” Luckily, a decent respect between black and white leaders helped keep the lid on in Rockford. No riots there. In Joliet, where I ended my strike duty, city officials had to open the draw bridges across the canal to keep the rioters on one side of town. We continued to work the switchboards while Bobby Kennedy sent a private plane to fly King’s body back to Georgia.

Mother’s Day has traditionally been the busiest day of the year for long distance calling. It is Mother’s Day in Mexico as well as the USA I learned. None of us got that day off. I went to the cafeteria on break and ran into our general manager, working in our area from Joliet, having a cup of coffee. I said, “Why are you working on Mother’s Day? At least you could be with your mother today.” He looked at me with tired eyes and said, “A 900 pair cable was cut.” The naïve 22 year old girl said “Oh I’m sure that was an accident.” He said, “The axe was still in it.” So much for an accident; this thing was getting serious now. I lost my naiveté that day.

The strike droned on. Many of the companies were back at work, but the president of Illinois Bell, Charles Brown, was trying to break the Chicago Plant union so the company and the union could not come to a settlement. The strike went on for many more months. By the way, he never was able to break the union.

Mayor Daley of Chicago, one of the last big machine bosses, wanted to arbitrate the contract between the union and the telephone company. He had brought the Democratic Party to Chicago for the 1968 Convention and they needed telephones. Under no circumstances did the officials at Illinois Bell want Mayor Daley to arbitrate; he would give the union anything they wanted. After much discussion, the union agreed to install the telephones for the convention, but the wages the workers would receive would go to the Union Strike Fund, not directly to the employees. Daley got his telephones and a lot more too:

Chicago's mayor, Richard J. Daley, intended to showcase his and the city's achievements to national Democrats and the news media. Instead, the proceedings became notorious for the large number of demonstrators and the use of force by the Chicago police during what was supposed to be, in the words of the Yippie activist organizers, “A Festival of Life.” Rioting took place between demonstrators and the Chicago Police Department, who were assisted by the Illinois National Guard. The disturbances were well publicized by the mass media, with some journalists and reporters being caught up in the violence. Network newsmen Mike Wallace and Dan Rather were both roughed up by the Chicago police while inside the halls of the Democratic Convention.

I finally got a break from strike duty to have a pre-scheduled operation—a tonsillectomy. My throat became infected and I was flat on my back for a week. Finally I recovered and when I returned to work, the company decided I probably should save my throat so I got to leave the traffic department and they sent me to Moline, Illinois to work in the Business Office as an order writer, a job I held earlier in my career. My friend and mentor Sal Bissell was going too, to work as a service representative in Moline. One morning as we were getting ready to go to the office, Sal came in our adjoining room and said, “They’ve killed Bobby Kennedy.” The world around us was falling apart. We sat glued to the television set until we had to leave for work. It seemed the whole world was going mad. And still our strike went on.

Moline was a much stronger union town than Rockford and crossing the picket lines was scarier. Of course we also did not know the picketers in Moline so they really considered us scabs. We, of course, just felt we had no choice and were doing our job. Luckily we were not crossing the picket lines when they were throwing eggs and other disgusting things. We spent several weeks there until our division office in Joliet decided it was time for someone to work on the special service bills that had been sitting around for many months. Sal and I were single women with Business Office experience, so we were sent to work in Joliet.

Joliet was one of the towns that had rioting and burning with the death of Dr. King. They had strong unions there and it was scary too. We worked in Joliet through the summer until the union employees started coming back to work. By September we were finally sent home and back to our offices. The strike finally petered out in early fall.

The world continued in turmoil, but we finally went back to our regular jobs, exhausted but wiser. Besides the important changes, higher wages and better benefits, the company changed the name of Information to Directory Assistance. Managers manning the Information boards during the strike were tired of kids calling and asking for help on their homework, women asking how long to leave a roast in the oven and lots more non telephone company questions. Traffic changed its name to Operator Services, better describing the work in that department. I am sure the Bell Labs scientists designed lightweight headsets as a result of the strike.

Over my career I worked many more strikes, some even nationwide, but none lasted as long as the strike of 1968. As my career expanded to include the Plant department, I became more valuable in an emergency. I got called back from a temporary assignment at AT&T in New Jersey to work in Kankakee, Illinois Dispatch Center as a Repair/Installation dispatcher -- Roger Samuelson, my boss, was working outside trying to repair telephones. I had the joy of dispatching him on trouble calls. I also got to do some order writing work there. That was a job that many people had never done so I was in demand. After I transferred to AT&T, I spent my strike duty in strike war rooms dispatching management people all over the country to offices that needed employees. Since I had traveled extensively, I would sell the duty assignment like this, “Oh boy, you get to go to Decatur. Be sure to go to the Blue Mill for dinner while you are there. It’s wonderful.” They seemed happy when they left. I failed to tell them that strike
assignment is long and hard and somewhat dull once you figure out what you are doing. After the end of one strike, a man tracked me down to my desk in New Jersey. The call was from a Bell Labs scientist who I had assigned to be a telephone operator in Atlanta. I thought, “Oh no, this guy is going to rip me apart.” Not so, he wanted to thank me and tell me what a great experience he had. Early in another strike, I dispatched one man to an Operator Services office in Boston. He had an emergency call he did not know how to handle so he gave the customer my number in the war room. The man was a world famous doctor trying to reach a hospital in the USSR to advise them how to handle patients injured in the recent Chernobyl nuclear disaster. I was successful in getting his call through and he kept my number on file. He called back several times for that special service. For a while he was my only touch with the outside world.

Working in the communications industry was often exciting. When something as serious as a strike comes along, it is like blowing a fire whistle and people tend to respond and give their all to keep the lines open for the public, especially emergency services, hospitals, police and fire departments. It was my privilege to work with some of the most dedicated people in the country.

Pat Zimmerman worked many other strikes after the nationwide 1968 strike during her 26 year telephone company career. However, the first one left the biggest impression.
When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, my brother and I were living with our parents in London, but it wasn’t until July 1940 that the Blitz began. My brother was five, I was a year younger.

I will never forget the wailing sirens warning of impending air raids that sent us running from classrooms with our teachers to dimly lit shelters where we strapped on gas masks and waited, singing songs and chanting nursery rhymes. It was not long before we heard the inevitable sound of throbbing engines overhead coupled with the whistling screams of the bombs before they found their targets and exploded all around us. At first the attacks were during the day but later the more frightening night bombings began and we were wakened and run downstairs by my mother into a closet under the stairs where we huddled until the “all clear” sirens indicated it was safe to go back to bed.

Because my father was in the Home Guard and on patrol every night he built a shelter for us in the garden and we slept there most nights. He believed it would withstand almost anything other than a direct hit, although once there was a partial collapse and the roof caved in. Our house was not hit but others close by were flattened.

The war was not over, but in 1942 my father applied for and was accepted as a Civil Engineer with the River Ouse Catchment Board in the town of Bedford, 50 miles north of London and we moved.

Seven miles outside Bedford in the heart of the peaceful English countryside was a tiny village called Wilden where we found our new home, a charming, picturesque 350 year old thatched cottage with the surrounding fence covered year round with pink and white rambling roses. It was named appropriately, “Rose Cottage.” The property included a “wishing well” under an old apple tree in the middle of the front lawn, a barn, a babbling brook at the back leading to a lovely meadow fragrant with clover, primroses, buttercups and daisies and a few grazing Hereford cows. To the side of the cottage was an orchard with fruit-bearing apple and pear trees pollinated by half a dozen beehives kept by a bee-keeper friend of the family; at the other end, a vegetable garden.
Joy with her mother and brother in front of Rose Cottage, 1942

Inside, the low, beamed ceilings were a challenge for anyone over five feet ten inches in height and I remember my father having to duck to avoid banging his head as he entered the house through the kitchen door. He learned the hard way!

The kitchen, dining room, living room with a large fireplace were comfortable with low slung furniture complementing the proportions of the rooms and the low ceilings, while upstairs the walls and ceilings were irregular, conforming to the pitch of the thatched roof above.

An impressive staircase led from the center of the cottage up and directly into the right side of the bedroom I shared with my brother. Our beds were placed on directly opposite walls with an open area of about twenty feet in the middle of the room separating us. The window provided a lovely view over the front garden.

A far cry from London.

It was some time after we moved that I remember suddenly being wide awake in the middle of the night. It was very dark and completely silent. I was facing into the center of the bedroom looking across towards my brother when a feint grey mist appeared and began slowly drifting up from the floor gradually revealing the face of an old man with long, white, straggly hair. I was aware of deep sadness in his expression as he looked at me.

It wasn’t until the man in the mist completely disappeared into the ceiling that I broke the silence asking my brother, “Did you see that?”
He answered, “Yes!”

We talked about what we had seen and accepted our perception that the old man was looking at us both, although our views had been from opposite sides of the room. When we told our parents the story, they seemed somewhat bemused and doubtless they thought it a figment of our active imaginations, if they thought about it at all, and the memory lingered, without explanation or conclusion.

In 1946 we left Rose Cottage to join my father who was stationed in Germany with the occupation forces at the end of the war.

It was fifty-five years later in 2001 when my brother and I revisited Rose Cottage together. The new owners had lived there for about ten years and had lovingly maintained and cared for the property. It was much as we remembered with the exception of the old apple tree which was gone, but the wishing well was still there and the roses were in full bloom.

As I walked around taking pictures I came to the side wall where the vegetable garden had been and noticed a sculpture about 15 feet above the ground on the chimney wall. I recognized it immediately as the face of the sad old man I had seen so many years ago rising in the mist from the middle of the bedroom floor. Upon showing my brother, he confirmed without any doubt that it was indeed a replica of the misty vision we remembered from our childhood. What was most significant is that neither of us recalls the sculpture being there before.
Our hosts graciously invited us to tea and we spent the next hour or more telling them about the time we had lived there, exchanging stories and gossip about the village and surrounding area, but they were most interested in what Rose Cottage looked like during the war and any changes that had been made since. When asked how long the “Old Man” had been on the side of the cottage they could only tell us it was there when they bought the property and although they enquired, nobody knew anything about who he was or how long the sculpture had been there.

Logic tells me I am still a sane, intelligent 21st Century woman, but strong and unwavering as my memory is, bolstered by my brother’s equally vivid recollection of the sad old man’s face rising in a mist from the bedroom floor, together with our conviction that the sculpture was not there when we left Rose Cottage in 1946, the question of how, when and why the sculpture manifested itself on the chimney wall remains unanswered. How does one explain the inexplicable?

Joy Macfarlane procrastinated in settling down to record highlights of her life experiences, although being urged by friends and family to do so through the years. There were always reasons to avoid doing so until she discovered OLLI, in particular the Lifescapes Memoir Writing Class which resulted in “Rose Cottage” -- the first and certainly not the last.
THE SILENT MOVIE: A SHORT IN BLACK AND WHITE

Beverly Hall

The drab, thin woman, hair pulled back in a tight bun, moved to the small window located in the one-room apartment. She planted the seed in the small terracotta pot sitting on the sill. A glass of water moistened the soil.

Every day she silently moved to the pot on the sill. Days passed. Then one day a green leafy stem arose from the soil. Her hands clasped each side of her face as her eyes shone with delight.

Each day she tended her plant, her long bony fingers touching the plant with love.

She grew worried as the plant began to outgrow the pot. She began to plan. Then one day she walked to the window, picked up the foot tall tree, walked down the tenement stairs and to the park where she sat in the sun each day.

When no one was near she planted the small tree on the edge of a planting bed near the grass where she knew it would get enough sunshine. Every day she visited the plant. Then, one day, as she was sitting near the little tree pleasantly enjoying the day, a park maintenance man came by with a shrub trimmer and nonchalantly cut down the small tree. The woman sat there, tears rolled down her cheeks, and then she stood and with bent shoulders walked to her apartment building.

The next day saw her again in her room planting a new seed in her little pot on the windowsill. There was a slight smile on her face.

That short silent film has entered my thoughts many times during the years. What a profound picture of life and the strength gained from living through death, loss and renewal.

And to me—how little it takes to gain experience, happiness and love.

Beverly Hall loves geology, paleontology, anthropology, anatomy, psychology and anything else that defines LIFE.
WIM

Julia Oversloot-Berg

I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing an amazing 90-year-old OLLI member. I was expecting a slow talking confused man on the phone. To my surprise, what I found was a bright, alert, and charming man who still exercises, drives long distances and cooks his own meals.

Wim Houwink will challenge your mind. He has lived in the Reno area since 1949, on and off. He lived a few years in New York and some years in China. He is a world traveler who can speak many languages and in his lifetime, he has devoted himself to economic health throughout the world with special links to China. He is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Nevada in Reno and Honorary Professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing. He still is in contact with former students, many of whom have significant careers. “He has shaped many lives and deeply impacted UNR, our state and our world,” according to the biographical note on the invitation to his 90th birthday party at UNR, April 29, 2010.

My interest in interviewing Wim was to seek information about his experiences in the concentration camps as a political prisoner during World War II.

Wim was born in the Netherlands on May 22, 1920. He stated, “My best memory as a youth was playing the youth tennis championship in 1936-1937.” Wim lived with his mother, father and brother in Meppel, Holland. At the age of 21 in 1941, this bright young man was going to school at the Rotterdam Economic School. His Jewish professor, Nico Polak, who was grooming him to be his replacement, asked if he “would be willing to help the Jewish people to keep them away from the Nazis by stealing passports and falsifying papers.” Technically, Wim was very good at this work and he was asked by “Free Netherlands” to come to work for them.

In the beginning of September 1942, Wim knew he was going to be arrested; therefore he gave his forging materials in his apartment to a fellow underground worker. The Gestapo arrested him as he had expected the next day. He was put in solitary confinement in Rotterdam, given a hearing, put back into solitary confinement and then transported to a Dutch Concentration camp, Amersfoort, on December 24, 1942.

At Kamp Amersfoort, he got TB and amazingly got over it. He was transferred to the Dachau Concentration Camp on May 22, 1944. Wim states, “In the summer of 1944,
I got dysentery. I was 88 American pounds (40 kilos) and could only crawl, not walk.” At the hospital, there was no medicine. He saw a German Communist prisoner at the hospital — a very bright man, who Wim had become friends with. He said, “I have medicine for you.” He went back to his barracks and 25 minutes later, he came back with roasted coffee beans. He gave Wim instructions to chew them very slowly, and it apparently saved his life. The interesting question is where did his friend get the roasted coffee beans? You don’t ask.

After talking with Wim about the illnesses he had, I looked up what these illnesses were. TB is what used to be called “Consumption.” It is very infectious and if left untreated, kills more than 50% of its victims. Dysentery is an inflammatory disorder of the intestines because of unsanitary conditions and if left untreated can be fatal. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is most lethal and is a “tick typhus.” Lice, carrying “tick typhus” entered the camp November 1944. Typhus itself is caused by lice, fleas on rats, mites on rodents and ticks. From this information alone, you can get an idea of the type of living conditions in the concentration camp.

Wim’s first job at the camps was walking in shoes. Shoes were stiff and walking on different surfaces without socks was very painful. The best job he had at Kamp Amersfoort was at the post office.

In Dachau, his best job was working at the employment office, as the office was warm. There he and his colleagues had the power to decide which person got which job. He was kicked out because of the composition at the office was social democrats -- Poles at the office were in power. The Poles and Dutch people did not get along for whatever reason. Wim had a difficult time after that. In the fall of 1944, Wim lost his job and when you are unemployed, they send you to another camp where there is work. When you start at another camp in the fall, you don’t have time to make contacts so you may not survive the winter.

He was saved from going to the other camp by a rich Milano industrialist, a prisoner, who must have bribed the Germans left and right. Wim was scheduled to leave at 1:00pm with 1,499 other prisoners. There was a medical exam and the Dutch doctor indicated that Wim had TB. The rule was you could not be transferred to another camp if you had TB. Wim wanted to disappear when he was stopped by a German officer. The officer sent him back to the group because he did not have it in writing that he had had TB. The wealth Milano man saw Wim and said, “Let me see what I can do.” One half-hour before the train left Wim’s name was called out and he was saved.

Wim thinks that what happened is the Milano man asked the Guard, that he had bribed before, for the Dutchman. The German guard said, “I must have 1,500 on the train and I have 1,498; I am short two. If I give you the Dutchman, I will be in trouble.” The Milano man then said, “If I give you 3 people will you give me the Dutchman?” Wim believes the Milano man got three prisoners from the Russian barracks and told them conditions were better at the other camp. The three Russians are dead and Wim is alive. Wim states, “It is difficult to live with this.”
After that, Wim got a very good job, as second secretary of the warehouse for the clothing for the prisoners. They gave the good clothes to the people working in the kitchen, next door, and the hospital. That ensured they were able to get food from the kitchen. It was difficult when you got extra food as to what to do with it. You cannot divide a loaf of bread with 60,000 prisoners. So, you play GOD. You look at people and think, that is a good and decent man, and then you share. However, because of your decision other people don’t get food. Those were hard decisions and you are never sure about your decision.

On April 28, 1945, there was a lot of noise in the camp. Prisoners had escaped and gone through the line to tell the Allies to free Dachau because Germans were taking prisoners out of the camp each day to machine gun them 25 km away.

On the morning of April 29, the prisoners saw the white flag in the camp and that day were not given any food. The Americans came into Dachau to liberate the camp a few minutes after 5 pm — first the motorcycles and then jeeps. The Americans were very angry at the condition of the prisoners in the camp. In their anger, they gave some guns to a few prisoners, who immediately killed the guards in the towers. Wim said, “This was unfair because the guards could not help what their job was, but emotions took control.”

In the evening of liberation, April 29, the Americans gave the prisoners each a loaf of bread and a can of hash. Three hundred people died that night from overeating.

An American doctor walked through the various barracks to show himself to the prisoners that they would know they died after liberation. The next day prisoners were disinfected because of the lice to stop Rocky Mountain Fever from spreading around the camp. Then they were moved to the German soldiers’ barracks. Wim kept his summer prison shirt with the red triangle that signified he was a political prisoner — number 69066.

After liberation, the prisoners were not allowed to leave the camp for very good reasons. Another camp that was liberated before Dachau let the prisoners go and they behaved badly, killing, raping, and stealing in the community.

The Dutch government indicated that the Dutch prisoners could not go home because of the famine at that time in Holland. After about a month, Wim was able to go home to Holland and he stayed at his father’s summer home for a while. He felt uncomfortable there and went back to Rotterdam to finish his education in June 1945.

After he finished his studies, he did research for Jan Timmergen, his economics professor. Professor Timmergen was the first person to get a Nobel Prize in Economics (in 1969) and his brother Nico Timmergen got a Nobel Prize for Physiology (in 1975) — two Nobel Prize winners in one family.
In 1949, Wim was invited to visit Nevada by a friend he had met in India. He was a student under the GI bill in Reno. Since Wim had been a student under Timmergen, he was invited to give a talk to the Economics Department. The mathematics professor was sitting in the audience and invited Wim to do the same talk for his department. As a result, Wim was invited to give guest lecturers at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Wim took a leave of absence from Rotterdam. Since he had no green card, he could not make any money. However, the University gave him money and the students helped him out. As his visa was expiring, he needed to get back to Holland. He traveled to Charleston, West Virginia where he had relatives. He gave a talk at a Lions Club about his espionage and M16 (the British CIA) with which he had worked in 1948 against the Russians in Czechoslovakia.

A Mr. Van Petten was in the audience and later asked Wim to have dinner before he left for Holland. Wim said, "Yes" and Mr. Van Petten said "Black tie," so he borrowed that from his host that was a perfect fit. Mr. Van Petten and Wim were the only people in the dining room. It turned out that Mr. Van Petten was the Executive Vice President of Union Carbide. After talking politics until one in the morning Mr. Van Petten asked, "Would you like to stay in this country? We need people like you." Wim answered, "Yes, because the memories of the concentration camps in Holland were unpleasant for me."

Mr. Van Petten, through his influence with the senator from West Virginia, obtained U.S. Senate bill S501 that would allow Wim to stay in the United States. Wim says, "I am Private Bill S501 of the 87th Congress."

In 1952, Wim got his green card and went to New York to look for a job. He stayed at the Y.M.C.A. and twice had to sell his blood to survive as his papers were too good for an employment office and he had no connections. He had just decided to go back to Holland when a friend of Mr. Van Petten, the President of the Carnegie Foundation, invited him to his office in the Empire State Building. They talked for three hours and at 5 pm he said, "Professor Houwink, it seems to me you need a job." Within two weeks he had three choices. Wim chose to be an economist at Citibank, whose office was on Wall Street.

In 1956, UNR had started its Business School. The new Dean had learned about Wim from old colleagues and tried to get him back to UNR to teach. After a lunch in Philadelphia with the Dean, Wim was offered a job a UNR. He accepted the job even though he had to take it at an enormous cut in salary, but he was remembering that UNR had kept him alive in 1949-1951.

Wim first went to China in 1980, as a guest of the Chinese government, to look at their educational system. He met a lot of people and as a result, four universities set up guest lecturers to tour China in 1982. After that, Wim was invited to teach the free market system to Communists in China. He resigned from UNR and for 25 years since 1983, Wim trained around 500 postgraduates at the University of International Business
and Economics in Beijing (“UIBE”). On May 9, 2010, Willem Houwink Professor Emeritus of UIBE was nominated as one of the top 29 most influential overseas experts.

I asked Wim, “Were you ever married?” Wim’s response was, “When you get out of the concentration camp you become a loner and you learn at the camp you cannot trust your fellow prisoners. And the idea of unconditional love becomes foreign to you.” Wim has done great things with his life but his experiences affected him greatly.

Julia Oversloot-Berg is in the final phase of writing her family’s history, a book called, “So We Don’t Forget – A Dutch Gentile’s Story,” with OLLI members’ encouragement. The book is about the family’s efforts during the war years, 1942-1945, to save a Jewish couple in Holland. Wim Houwink is also a member of OLLI.
A CHARMED LIFE

Sherl Landers-Thorman

On a hot August, 1927 evening, the maternity waiting room at Washington Hospital at the corner of Hope and Washington Streets in Los Angeles was crowded with the family of the young woman nicknamed Tiny who had been in the delivery room for far too many hours for a routine birth. Husband and father-to-be, Bill, Grandmother Caroline, Aunts-to-be Opal and Big Bill, and various friends of the family had been coming and going for some hours. The tedious waiting was punctuated by Grandmother Caroline’s constant dire predictions that her youngest child and grandchild were going to die in any case because they were in the hospital. She had had eleven children and fifty plus grandchildren and they had all been born at home on various farms and none of them had been this much trouble. Dr. Annis came to the door of the delivery room and motioned to Opal and Big Bill. He quietly told them that the baby was not positioned properly and could not be turned. The baby was face first and in danger of being born with a broken neck. He turned back to the delivery room and shortly reappeared with a squirming, yelling baby girl with large bruises under her eyes and around her mouth and chin. He explained he put his thumb in her mouth, his fingers under her chin and under her eyes and as Tiny gave one last push, pulled the head down. The baby would have bruises for some time, but would be fine, and I was.

Shirley Marie is the name I was given. I had smallpox when I was two but recovered with only one small mark on my forehead and one sore on my toe that got infected and had to be treated with unguent, hot soaks, a large bandage and I limped along in my slipper that had the toe cut out for some weeks. By the time I was three I was in the Fanchon and Marco Dancing School and performing in recitals. Childhood illnesses, measles and tonsillitis were accompanied by high fevers, alcohol rubdowns and liberal applications of Mentholatum poultices warmed in the oven. I always recovered and was my usual active self quickly.

When I was fourteen my friend Wanda worked in the Work Permit office at Fremont High School and obtained work permits that said we were sixteen. With these we got jobs as nursing aides at the Los Angeles County Hospital in East Los Angeles. I had the good fortune of being selected to work on 5600 West, the neuro-surgery ward with the head nurse, Mrs. Ruth Magruder. The first day I was given a chart, sat in a small surgery with an iron lung that contained an unconscious young man. I was shown some dials and how to write down the readings every 15 minutes. If the dials dropped below a certain point I was to yell for a doctor. I didn’t have to do that because a doctor or Mrs. Magruder came in every half hour to check and sometimes adjust the dials. I learned that the young man was a high school senior who was driving home from a party where he had been drinking and wrapped his truck around a tree. The truck had to be dismantled to
get him out of it. I soon figured out that dropping readings on the dials were indications of his decreasing ability to breathe and he was slowly dying. The tears of his parents were heart wrenching to me. We often had people on the ward who were victims of their own or someone else’s drunk driving.

I never drank alcohol although it was available at many of the parties I attended, and I would not ride with someone who had been drinking. One night I went to a party with a new friend as the blind date of her boyfriend’s friend. When we got in the car to go home I soon realized that her boyfriend, who was driving, had been drinking. I made him pull over, and to much jeering and snide laughter got out of the car to walk home. I learned the next day that about 20 minutes after I left the car they careened into an abutment and were all killed. I never told anyone that I had been in that car.

When I was nineteen I went to Guam on a naval troop ship refitted as a dependent carrier. A few days out of Honolulu we were hit by a hurricane. Because of the oppressive heat in our stateroom two year old Suzie and I spent the better part of two days and a night on the starboard deck with Suzie tied in the deck chair to sleep. Our only companion was the Commanding Chaplin of the Pacific Fleet. We talked most of the night and found we had attended the same high school though some years apart. The Captain was an excellent seaman and though in the bottom of the trough we saw only a wall of water and at the top we couldn’t see the bottom, he got us though the eye of the storm and safely out the other side. While on the island, another hurricane blew the water horizontally through our Quonset hut and all our furniture had to be replaced by the Navy. We escaped to an Elephant Hut that faced another direction and along with many others rode out the storm safely and even somewhat comfortably.

During our last few months on Guam new neighbors, Chick and Eleanor, their three year old son and their two door sedan green Crosley car joined us. It was quite a spectacle to see two six foot men unfold out of the Crosley along with two tall women and two large for their age three year olds, let alone with packages and stuffed full bags from the Commissary and Post Exchange. One day on the way to the Commissary we were driving along next to a four by four loaded with huge metal pipes. As we approached a curve, Chick dropped back behind the truck. As it moved into the curve, the restraining straps on the huge pipes gave way and with much clanging and bouncing the pipes fell directly in the path of the car and where we would have been had Chick not slowed down and fallen behind the truck. Because of the slow speed he was able to swerve and stop before he hit the pipes. With clearing the road and calming down enough to get back in the car, it took a good long while before we could continue on to the Commissary.

Just a week or two later, a squadron of bombers was doing the afternoon session of touch and go landings as practice for carrier landings. You get used to the sounds of the planes when they take off over the huts and are still pretty low and changes in the sound of the engines are very noticeable. I was finishing my noontime shower and I heard a plane in trouble. As I grabbed my Mu-Mu and ran for the front door, the plane
crashed in the clearing about a city block in front of the semicircle of huts that surrounded the clearing. By a miracle the bomber did not catch on fire and the pilot and all personnel were dragged from the plane by the wives from the huts before the rescue squad arrived. The men on the plane survived with minor injuries, the rescuers had a few scratches and none of the huts were damaged. It took a few days to clear up the wreckage and get to the freezer lockers again.

A couple of years later, I was driving a friend’s car from Portland, Oregon to San Diego for her. Somewhere along the Oregon Coast on a curvy two lane road, I hit a rain slick, spun out and crossed the road where the car was stopped with just the front bumper imbedded in a soft red mud embankment. There was no other traffic and I was able to back out, get turned in the right direction and though more than a bit shaken able to drive to the next roadside restaurant where at least three cups of coffee got me calmed down enough to continue with confidence. Fortunately because of the soft earth no one was injured and car didn’t even get scratched.

I don’t recall the exact year, but in the mid 1960’s Pete and I were driving East on 17th Street in Santa Ana, California in a heavy rain. A speeding Corvette going west lost control, spun across the road and the engine part of the car hit the front of our Volkswagen Bug. As told to me later, I flew through the windshield, came to rest on the broken glass and slid down to the floor. My throat was cut, my jugular vein nicked, my forehead cut deeply, and my left collar bone fractured. The highway patrol officer that was first on the scene came to the hospital to see me and said when they told him I was recovering he couldn’t believe I had even lived to make it to the hospital. The steering wheel bruised Pete’s sternum badly and his right tibia was broken. He went home in a few days and I was in the hospital two weeks. I have a vertical scar on my forehead that has faded over the years and a very small scar under my chin that only children notice.

It was a further miracle that neither of the young men in the Corvette was injured nor the car badly damaged. The young driver called my daughter and asked if she could persuade her parents not to report it to the insurance company, since he had taken the car, his Uncle’s prized possession, after he had been told not to and he was going to be in a lot of trouble. She told him it was out of our hands and he’d have to take it up with the police. She added she didn’t even yell at him.

For a good many years life went along with nothing more dramatic than my marriage to Pete continuing to slowly deteriorate. In June of 1978 I was living in an apartment in Tustin and Pete was living in our home. He was making his living as a potter and all his equipment was in the garage. It seemed to make more sense for him to remain in the house until we sold it. On election day, June 6, I went with him to vote and he said he had to check on something at home and then we could go to dinner at a local restaurant. I agreed and was sitting in an armchair in the living room when I felt a blow to the back of my head. I'll spare the bloody details and suffice it to say that when I finally got to the hospital as I lost consciousness yet again I can remember the doctor’s
discussing whether or not I would survive. I did, returned to work in a month and with many subsequent surgical repairs and six months of intensive psychological therapy my life became better than ever. During the following year I realized that my best friend's son, Doug, was the love of my life and we were married on July 15, 1979 in a small intimate setting with 250 of our closest friends and relatives attending and wishing us well.

The past year 2009 again tested the fates almost to the limit. On April second I had emergency double heart bypass surgery. Complications caused bleeding of my sternum and surgical repair of that. Pneumonia developed and hospital and re-hab stays kept me from home until late August. On a major adventure out for dinner for Doug's birthday, we made a quick stop at the market where, as I was returning to the car, I fell and broke my right femur. During the surgery to repair my femur, my heart stopped and the surgery was interrupted while a pacemaker was inserted. I returned home from yet another re-hab facility on November 2, 2009.

The excellent medical care I have had has been an important element in my charmed life, but I know without a doubt the random kindness of strangers, my family and friends and their caring and support are the real power behind my good fortune.

As I write this it has been eleven months since the last saga began and I am well and happy and blessed with friends and family that add beauty and love to my life. I go to sleep every night and wake up every morning in Doug's arms and know for certain I am the most fortunate of women.

Sherl is a native Los Angeleno and has lived mostly in Orange County California and moved to Reno in 2000. She was lucky enough to find Lifescapes her first year here and continues to participate, write and enjoy.
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

Carole Slater

I love the fact that David, my first husband, had the same family values as I do. He wanted our daughter to have a brother, with me as their mother and he as their father, exclusively. After our first marriage of one year, we were divorced. We married again 2½ years later. We were married a total of 10 years, after an initial courtship of almost three years, beginning when I was 17. We had some interesting journeys together. We moved from Los Angeles to Northern California when our children were 2½ and 8 years old. San Carlos was our first home away from LA. We then moved to Roseville where we bought our first home, and shortly thereafter, moved into a more upscale tract of homes where professionals were choosing to live.

I had fun raising the children in Roseville. I became a natural food connoisseur and a fund-raising activist for the National Council of Jewish Women where I took on numerous leadership roles over several years. Our daughter was in Hebrew school and was on swim team; our son had begun Jewish pre-school and began playing baseball.

Then one night my husband began showing me a different side to his sexual behavior and preferences. I had enjoyed sex immensely, but this was very different. I didn’t know until 2010, while working with my Spiritual Healer, that I had been traumatized. From that moment forward, I began sabotaging our relationship. I loved David immensely, but I was frightened and had no one to talk to about it. I didn’t want to upset his reputation in town, nor did I want my family to judge him. I was confused, and all I knew was something had to change. I tried therapy with him, but he wasn’t willing to follow through with it, so we ended our marriage. It destroyed all my dreams for being “Mother and Wife of the Year.” I wanted to be home for my kids after school, with freshly baked cookies for them and their friends to munch. I wanted them to become Foreign Exchange Students when they reached Senior High School, and I wanted to house a Foreign Exchange student in our own home. I wanted to help my husband to become the man he had always aspired to be.

I enjoyed being David’s wife. He was smart and encouraged me to be more of myself. He found live theatre and concert opportunities for us to enjoy, travel with and without the children, and he enjoyed my dressing well and being pretty for him. He was a good man. He was full of personality and people enjoyed being in his company. His sense of humor was hilarious. I enjoyed preparing meals, entertaining, helping at the kids’ schools in their classrooms and bringing the classmates home at the end of the school year in June for a swim party. It was already hot in Roseville by then. I recall helping the children learn how to make “latkes,” Jewish potato pancakes, (traditional at Hanukkah), enjoyed with sour cream and applesauce. For my son’s class, I recall helping the children learn how to make “Homentaschen” which are little “Pocket” butter cookies filled with delicious fresh jam, especially enjoyed in springtime at the time of another less well-known Jewish holiday, Shavuos. I especially enjoyed reading books and
singing to the kids before they went to sleep. While they were at school, I was often at home drawing special pictures for their rooms or in the kitchen creating some uniquely flavored fruit leather or fresh granola. I loved when my kids had sleepovers with their friends. David and I kept close vigil, while remaining elusive at the same time. I think we had as much fun as the kids did. David annually needed to take continuing education courses to keep his CPA license up to date, so every time he went, we all went and travelled together. He created amazing family vacations for us to the mountains and the coasts of Oregon and California. We all loved the Oregon Coast and always found the time we spent away from home, regardless of where we were, exciting and filled with adventure.

Snuffles was our family dog. We all treasured her, but I was the one who walked or ran her the most. I loved her so much. She would watch over us so lovingly and protectively. She was a Collie-Airedale-German Sheppard combination. When I prepared peanut butter sandwiches for the kids’ lunches, they were peanut butter, honey, banana and sunflower seeds on whole wheat bread. Snuffles got her share of peanut butter, as well. She loved it. It was freshly roasted and ground at the local natural foods store that I travelled two towns away to find. My appreciation for healthy, pure, natural food had begun in San Carlos and continues even more so to this day. Organic was not a common thing back then, but it was beginning, and my love for locally grown, fresh produce had already begun, with me running through the foothills to find the local Northern California growers so I could bring back the very best for my little family.

My involvement in the Sacramento Jewish community began with our membership to the Synagogue, where my daughter was preparing for her Bat Mitzvah, and my son was attending preschool, as previously mentioned. I spent a lot of time on the road going back and forth 30 miles each direction several times a week, sometimes twice on the same day. I began developing some strong friendships with the women members of the Synagogue. As I became more involved, I found myself kicking into gear my fund-raising skills that I had gleaned from my mother. She was an ACE. She would annually gather items in Los Angeles for a huge auction held to benefit the Hadassah Hospital in Israel. Our den in the home where I grew up would be piled practically to the ceiling with toys, blankets, clothing, and what-have-you that she gathered in the wholesale houses downtown. I think she was, if not the most successful, one of the most successful fundraisers for her group. She would take me with her, and I just absorbed her relaxed, compassionate attitude as she spoke to the business owners. I swear, she NEVER left empty handed. I was virtually spoon fed how to do this. When I go out talking to people, it’s like my mother is speaking through me. I don’t even know how to explain it. It’s like the whole of my being. Doing this work gave me a way to gain friends and purpose in my life.

One of the most active women volunteers at the Synagogue became a good friend of mine. She was President of the National Council of Jewish Women in Sacramento and she invited me to join them in their work. After her invitation, what drew me most strongly to this particular organization was that one needn’t be Jewish to belong, nor did one need to be Jewish to benefit from their many community services. I especially liked
the open-minded aspect of this organization. I was raised to believe that we are all one in the world. It is a very community oriented organization. The “CASA” program which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates began as a “Council-initiated” program in Marin County, California in the early 80’s and became so successful that it was taken up as a State Funded program that protects children involved in the court system all the way across the country.

“Ship A Box” was another program of Council that sent clothing, books, toys, etc. to Israel to help families in need there. Additionally there were a wide variety of programs that affected people domestically, as well as internationally. They could be for the benefit of the elderly, children or on behalf of women. In fact, the Assertiveness Training Workshop that we sponsored for women throughout Northern California was huge for me. As Vice-President of Education, I made the arrangements for the event and was very inspired by it. I developed strong skills for leadership in every role I took on as a member of this organization. Ultimately, this was one of the goals of the organization, because they knew we members would use our schools in our community work throughout our lifetimes.

In the Jewish religion, there’s something called “Sedaka.” I believe it’s defined as charity. When I was a little girl in kindergarten, and in the early grammar school years, I went to Sunday school. We were required to take a little tin bank home to gather coins or bills and tuck them into the bank. When it was full, we brought it back to school and bought trees to help Israel. There are gorgeous orchards of trees virtually everywhere in Israel. Those trees began being purchased back when Israel became a state, which was one year after I was born, in 1948.

I’m very tied to the people in Israel. I feel very proud of the State. I’m very proud of what has been accomplished there. I am grateful for the participation my grandparents and my parents gave in helping to build such a strong and safe place for our people. I am more spiritual than religious, but I am very protective of my people, due to all the prejudice in the world. My entire family has fund-raised or donated personally to the growth of Israel. That continues to this day. It’s in my family legacy to give, to raise money and to give some more, whether to our local community or elsewhere around the world where there have been natural disasters or where basic needs exist for the impoverished. My realization of this was indulged by the generosity of David, as well.

I’ve learned that what is important isn’t the money, but the ability to help those less fortunate than ourselves in whatever way we can, and I know that David and I both passed this thinking on to our children. David, a graduate of USC, reached out to fraternity brothers in UC Davis. He offered to speak to the boys, just as alumni businessmen had encouraged him when he was a student. At times in my life I have struggled for funds and would half jokingly call myself the “poor little rich girl.” I had so much to be grateful for, yet I was suddenly struggling. I rarely dwelled long on the poverty mentality. One can be broke today and thriving tomorrow. It’s just attitude. No matter how broke I may be on occasion, I know I will always be able to survive because I have skills--but I had to learn this. Early on, I would just become depressed. Now, I
have learned to be resourceful. I know that God in his generous graces, when asked, will always guide me back to prosperity. Prosperity can come and go and come back, but because a lot of people aren’t armed to understand this, they’re just afraid of scarcity and get immobilized in fear, instead of finding their way to plenty. God would not have put us on this amazing planet without providing plenty for everyone. It is our duty to find our way to it. When I talk with young people, I always encourage them to think about what they love doing most and then set their sights on doing just that for the rest of their lives. If they don’t know how, I encourage them to ask others who are doing it to mentor them a little. I learned there are lots of ways to earn money, but there’s no greater gift than the gift of what we know and sharing it with others. If money is what one has to give, wonderful, but if one doesn’t have money, the gift of love, guidance, or resources may ultimately prove to be even more powerful and important.

As I reflect on my childhood in LA, I didn’t have a lot of friends. Because we lived on a hill, unless they lived in my neighborhood, the only way I could get to other children would be by my mom driving me. She rarely drove me to play with a friend. She very seldom, if ever, arranged play dates. I never learned to ride a bike as a child so I had little independence. I could, and did, walk the hills alone and was able to play with a few friends there, but none of us were very close friends. Because my sister and brother were 5 and 7 years older than I, I didn’t play with them too much unless we were all home sick at the same time. Quite frequently they did somehow arrange that. It didn’t set up a very great respect for education in me, but I sure did learn to play with my siblings and gained a deep love for both of them.

We all liked to play with each other at home. I remember learning to play marbles with my brother upstairs on our uncarpeted floor, and downstairs my sister and I loved to watch the old movie musical extravaganzas. Can you imagine, all of us would sit with TV trays in front of us eating “rib-eye lamb chops and Lipton’s Chicken Noodle Soup” as one of our typical bills of fare for lunch, while we healed from whatever so-called illness we were recuperating from and watched the TV movies. These are such sweet, outrageous memories for me.

Inasmuch as my second marriage, to Ronald, was a ten-year failure of sorts, I am heartened by the fact that my first had been so strong. We can never anticipate how lack of communication and ignorance can impact a person’s life. Clearly, David and I had some concrete values set in place for how we would raise our children and build on our lives. Had our sexual differences been communicated better, we may have held together a truly wonderful family. It was a tragedy that, thankfully, the children weathered, but were clearly colored by. I became a chef and managed to gain enormous personal growth as a result. Instead of depending on my husbands, I learned I could depend upon myself.

Since we cannot live hoping to have hindsight, I think it is awesome that in today’s world so much more is open and is being spoken about. People who may seem “weird” by our own understanding of how things “should be” may be the very people who save our lives or those of our children through their community spirit or neighborly attitude. We are all on the planet together, and I have learned that we must learn to get
along and help one another. Bottom line, I have learned that we are all one, a part of the whole. We are here to play a role in the lives of all on the planet with us. If we can keep our minds open, ask questions and not fear the unknown, we can learn so much more about each other and perhaps save a whole lot of heartbreak. Both David and Ronald, my second husband, have passed. I have the rest of my life to dedicate to learning more about myself and how I can, perhaps, help others from what I have learned. That is my goal.

Carole with her son, Jay Friedman and daughter, Lisa Thorn – about 1973

Carole lives in Reno, Nevada 3 minutes from her daughter and son-in-law. Her son’s family is 2 hours down the mountain in Roseville, California. Carole is currently writing her life story. She hopes to publish it by the end of 2011. It will not have her real name as author, since so much of the information is very personal.
GOD'S GIFT

Barbara Frolich

Mom had learned china painting in the early 70's, when I was married and raising my two boys and the three stepchildren, who were like my own, also. To them, I was Mom whereas their birth mother was “Jane,” when she would come on her yearly trips to visit them -- all the way from Sacramento.

She would never let any of us watch her paint; we just all got the warning to NEVER touch anything sitting around, in case it was still wet, waiting to be fired in the kiln.

China painting is painting on porcelain or chinaware. The paints are a dry powder which is mixed, a small amount at a time, with mineral oil or some other like oil, with a palette knife, mixed and mixed and then put onto the glass on the palette. It will last on the palette for many years without drying out, unlike other paints that have a shelf life of ½ hour to a week, or longer for oil paints if covered and put into the freezer. It takes a great deal of PATIENCE to learn china painting.

When I first began learning to oil paint, my teacher was a china painter with my mother, but also the art teacher for many years at Little Flower School. Leonore was a tiny woman, barely 5’ tall and had a heavy Colombian accent even though she had lived in the states for over 50 years. Since china painting was “my mother's thing,” Leonore made me promise that I would never try to attempt learning that, as IT WAS JUST THAT -- Mother's THING!!!

Each of us ten kids have many pieces of Mom's china painted items. We would try to figure out who was the favorite by how many items they had compared to how many we had. It did not matter that I had gotten a large bedroom lamp, with three globes of glass, each painted with lovely roses -- that was STILL just one piece!!!

Up to the last months of her life, Mom's china painting was her love, her reason for being here -- well, besides us kids, her church, her friends, her bridge, counting the money every Monday after all of the Masses the day before, dinners and lunches out with family or friends, cooking for anyone and everyone who might need, or just want, something special! She would paint clear into the morning hours, finally going to bed when she realized that it might be 4 o'clock in the morning. Oh, MY!!!

Mom has been gone for almost three years now, but a year and a half ago, I decided I wanted to try to learn china painting when I saw it advertised in the classes being offered by the Sparks Recreation Department. I called, signed up and waited to hear from the teacher as to what supplies I would need.

Finally when I called the department I learned that only two of us had signed up so the class would not be given. I had so looked forward to it that I was heartbroken. A
few days later the teacher called and asked if I would like to come to her house for lessons; she was willing to open her house to me and the other lady who had signed up for the classes. Thus started my learning of the word PATIENCE!!!

The first night of class, we were told about the paints, the mixing of them, the palette care and the brushes. She then gave the two of us a porcelain tile, about 10”x10” and a pattern and some tracing paper to put the pattern onto the tile. Then, we mixed two colors we would start with and she showed us how to side load the brush and begin painting -- oh, did I ever learn quickly, it is a VERY LIGHT coat of paint put on at first. With it taking me 45 minutes to paint one petal of the wild rose, I wondered how long it might take me to paint flowers on a plate???

When we finished that evening, Rena, our teacher, put our pieces in the kiln, to be fired at around 2000 degrees Fahrenheit. The next week we would apply another coat, wiping out the lights, and it would be fired again. This would continue to happen until we felt it was finished to our satisfaction -- or that of our teacher.

After painting just a few months I had to take some time off to have surgery on my shoulder and partake of five grueling months of physical therapy. I was so happy after just a few months, though, that I was able to paint, albeit having someone help carry in my supplies.

The first many works were childlike, as far as I was concerned. I got disappointed and wondered if I would ever, in MY LIFETIME, be able to paint like my mother had???

It has now been a year and a half since I began painting, with the time out for surgery, but I love going. I love painting, and although I still get disappointed, and anxious, and still have to use patterns to begin many of my items, I am happy with a lot of my work, and think Mom is in heaven, happy also, that I made the choice to begin learning her love.
When I did begin to learn to oil paint, with Leonore being my teacher, I could not
draw a stick man so that anyone looking at it would know what it was. I had no artistic
ability, at least not any more than drawing and coloring and cutting out paper doll clothes
with my older sister when we were children. I remember the first day at Leonore's studio;
she told me that she had all of the supplies other than a canvas which I should buy until I
realized whether I had the desire and the ability to continue. Being an optimist, the
canvas I bought was a 16 x 20, a good size canvas for even an experienced painter -- let
alone a beginner.

Again, Leonore showed me the paints, explained putting/storing them on a
covered palette, mixing some to make other colors, etc. OK, enough was enough -- let's
get painting!!! When asked, I said I loved the ocean, so she decided my first painting
would be an ocean scene. Leonore explained how the horizon was NEVER in the middle
of the canvas, and she used a piece of charcoal to draw it on. She told me what to start
doing and said she would be inside and be back in a while, for me to just paint -- oh, no --
just paint?? Well, she came back to me in about ½ hour and looked at what I had so far
and said it looked very nice. Was she BLIND? Very Nice?? Come on, she did not have
to patronize me. I was a big girl -- give it to me straight. She handed me a small mirror,
instructing me to turn backwards and look at the painting through the mirror. I did as I
was asked, and in utter amazement had to quickly turn back to MY painting to make sure
she had NOT switched it. I turned back and looked again in the mirror; yes, it still
needed some work, but it was an ocean scene; I could even tell that, and the sand was
there, the waves, it was going to be beautiful. I experienced a joy unlike that of giving
birth to each of my three sons -- I was creating and giving birth to art.

Ocean Oil Painting – my first painting

With the ocean scene finished and framed -- yes, I was working so I went to a
frame shop and paid a LOT of money to have it framed -- I began a landscape painting. I
got to a tree and Leonore asked what color were the leaves on a tree? “Green,” I answered. What did she think? She took me to the studio door, opened it and pointed to the trees across the street and asked me to look and tell her what color I saw in the leaves. I LOOKED at the tree...and again, utter amazement began creeping through my being as I saw light green, yellow green, dark brown green, orange green, so many different shades and hues of green that I had never realized made up the entire substance of a single tree. It was amazing, these colors that God had used to make up His world. What an artist He must be!!

For several years I enjoyed oil painting, but not only with Leonore, I began taking other teachers' classes, classes at the University in drawing, more oil painting. I could not seem to get enough. I even tried watercolor classes, but that left me really unfulfilled, as I could not seem to control the color with the watercolors. I did a piece in chalk which got my hands and clothes very dirty. I joined artists' groups and even helped plan and prepare a portrait seminar. I found through this seminar that I could NOT paint people. I would not want to embarrass myself or my study-person by attempting to paint them.

One day I saw that ceramic classes were offered by the city of Reno. I began going and again after the initial fragile beginning, I grew to love this style and type of art. I found a shop in Sun Valley where I did NOT have to pay for the amount of hours spent painting, I could be there all day and just pay for whatever I bought or had fired in the kiln. I was doing this all the while Mom was china painting.

It got to the point in loving the ceramics and the camaraderie of the others going, that I was spending hours of 6 days a week at the shop, creating some magnificent pieces. It was to our utter dismay when the owner said she was selling the shop; the lifting of the hundred pound molds filled with slip was making her arthritis unbearable. Well, at least someone was in the shop, learning the trade, so all would not be lost -- or so we thought. The new owner did not know anything about ceramics, the glazes, the firing, NOTHING! Within two months of them taking over, barely any of us were going, and there was no other shop in town where we could go and paint and have out pieces fired. The supplies sat idly in a cupboard until I learned of the china painting and my artistic life began again.

Now, not only am I doing and enjoying the china painting, I am also occasionally doing ceramics, but every week I am participating with a few women in oil painting, acrylic painting and pen and ink drawing. I feel that I have come full circle and have learned to enjoy to almost the fullest the wonderful things that God has allowed me to learn.

Barbara Frolich is #2 of 10 children. She raised her two sons and three stepchildren and is now helping to take care of great nephews and nieces as well as participating in OLLI, painting of various mediums three nights a week.
Greetings and Good Things To You, My Readers

Please help yourself to the fresh pineapple and mint water, tea or coffee. The steak and shrimp broiled skewers will be ready to be served in about 10 minutes with pilaf with cilantro and pine nuts. The dessert surprises you brought along with you, I am sure, we should start tasting right away.

For the Anthology subject matter of Life’s Lessons Learned, I thought I would write more an exposure of my collection of sins. However, lessons learned to share would be more an eye-opener if shared.

The latest lesson learned was when becoming a member of OLLI in that I learned I am not alone in my story. The resilience, strength, sense of humor, and giggles related by the Lifescapes members support my belief that kindness goes a long way. The breaking down of barriers from the past to give hope from one day to the next has been the lesson learned here. I feel as if all the paths through trials and triumph do not just belong to me alone. Right off the bat, a few of you acknowledged my outbursts of humor when discussing the place that I currently live. Most of the residents there are bitter and needy, and they don’t groom themselves to a neat and clean appearance.

As I write this piece by hand and then transfer it into a typewritten document, with no printer, the Wine and Cheese Board is busy with clients getting something to go. They are perhaps meeting with friends or are busy on their laptops. How I envy that they can just plug in and put their earphones on and write whatever they want to write as a keepsake perhaps for someone to read and remember them by. A song I hear in the distance is by Prince, who won’t leave without someone’s daughter, then Bob Dylan’s voice sings of one remembered -- buy her a trumpet and salute her when her birthday comes. Would you call the baby boomers now “outlaws” or “heroes?”

My first lesson was not to be the fall guy for someone’s mischievous notions or desire to control. In short, minimize being a target of bullying or being caught off-guard and remember to not respond. In reaching my “golden years”: vulnerability, loneliness, slowing down of physical movement and strength, and slowing down of “recall” scares me. For these reasons, I have made a practice to be aware of incorrect charges; counting my change after purchase against the receipt; telemarketers asking personal and financial information. In this awareness, about $5,000.00 in medical bills have been adjusted to comply with contracted allowable charges versus full expenses charged. Assistance from Consumer Protection and Theft Identity Agencies have helped me to verify and clarify charges from some of the services rendered or not rendered. The No Call Registry was put in place through making the call from my home telephone as well as the opting-out
Lessons learned about dealing with harassment: In situations of group-bullying which is what I call it when two or more persons in isolated circumstances have tried to provoke my peace by filing written complaints of noise and making personal preferential statements or by self-assumed dominant leverage, are best dealt with by making an incident report on paper. I include who, what, when, persons present and my perception. I do not make any report known unless required by court order. However, higher authorities are notified and name and date of person was taken and a report was made to maintain a paper trail. During a convention I attended for non-verbal self-defense, it was suggested to not make any verbal or non-verbal response by voice or gesture. In other words, do not feed negative energy. After learning not to defend or respond, this manner worked the best for me along with researching appropriate rules and regulations of what to do when this occurs. With this restraint, only patience and non-involvement proved that people do trip over their own ropes. I am not the one to teach them or become involved in what they believe to be true.

Lessons Learned As An Elder: Sensitivity when thoughtless remarks or rudeness to my person is presented. It encourages feeling unappreciated and at the same time, in times of not moving around at my best strength; can lend to fake emotional support, to find an advantage of mistaken friendship. I am not a fan of broken promises, nor the no-call/no-show circumstances after an appointment has been made. This Lesson Learned would be: no matter what happens, situations can be amended and one’s potential and belief of finding that diamond in the rough within oneself will lead to fun-filled discoveries. The secret is in not giving up.

I realized in our memoir writing gatherings that although there was applause and approval, it was then that I started to find an inner approval and acceptance coming from myself. It was as if watching myself and being surprised at my responses to myself. I started to like myself without the need for peer approval. In our memoir writing class, we have found a safe place to share our stories of resiliency, compassion, sense of humor and intent to make a difference.

In my belief of leaving a place in a good way -- before leaving my place by the ocean to move to Nevada, I was part of a celebration of the opening of The King Tut Exhibition sponsored by the De Young Museum. Tallulah asked me to pick up her straw basket on the way. Little did I know the basket had her yellow snake with diamond marks on its back! Lesson Learned: Never pick-up someone’s pet without a leash. Could the snake hear my heartbeat?

As someone flipped the tent flap open, the arena was bigger than life; and in looking up, I forgot to look down and stepped in something wet. Hearing from a distance: “It’s only camel pee my dear -- that washes off easy; it’s the sand that will take 3 foot soaks.” Once on stage we finished our hair trance dance and belly dance undulations to the drum solos of the instrumentalist and we raised our arms in the air for
the applause. The audience seemed hypnotized and drew closer as gold leaves started to fall from the ceiling.

As the horns announced our exit, what was not rehearsed or expected were the elephants and camels coming closer to the stage. Without any prompting, one elephant came closer to me and I quickly imagined in my mind what sort of acrobatic feat would get me on top to ride. One, two, three…I was on! Everyone started to depart the tent and the rest of the troupe jumped onto the camels they could reach to follow. The men painted in gold throughout their entire face and body were escorted with the ones wearing Bear or Egyptian masks walking out with their staffs crowned with peacock feathers. My elephant had not realized I was on her so I petted her and called her Butterfly and told her my name. The elephant handler coaxed me to slide down to the elephant’s trunk with the other option being to be cradled at the fold of her arm and then slide off. The least resistance was to slide down her trunk as she looked at me with a stern eye when hanging on to her face bib. We all then headed for the dinner party Cyril Magnum invited us to. When I was greeted with some resistance, being a black tie affair, I was recognized by Cyril as the one who had helped him put his sandals on since he could not move his toes from arthritis; he then introduced us as special guests of the museum. Lesson Learned Upon Entering: “Not Everyone Wears Prada.”

Mary and the tiger at the King Tut Exhibition

As a member of OLLI, Mary Kelso is enjoying Lifescapes. She volunteers as a performer in a Wild West Show, holding targets for the bow and arrow act, to bring in monies for new books for kindergarten schools. Most currently, she volunteers to support senior services and special kids.
THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

Floyd Whiting

My life took a dramatic change early in my sophomore year of high school. All my life I had lived in the rural community of Alturas, California, but in 1956 Dad was offered a new job in the town of Stayton, Oregon. The change of venue was in October which was still early enough in the school year at the high school for me to register for new classes. The student body at Stayton High School was less than 300, so that immediately after enrolling there I began to be noticed. Perhaps the initial source for this was the impression I made on my first day in class.

It was obvious as soon as we arrived in Stayton that it was a more sophisticated region than what we had experienced in Alturas. The latter was an isolated community nestled in juniper forests located 100 miles from the nearest town of any decent size. In contrast, Stayton, surrounded by numerous other small farming communities, was in the rain belt of Western Oregon only 12 miles east of Salem, the capital city of the state. Alturas was in cowboy country and the typical outfit worn by guys at school consisted of blue denim jeans accompanied by some type of work shirt. But on my first day at Stayton I was nervous at being the new kid in town and didn’t want to wear ordinary Levis because it was important to look my very best as I embarked on this new adventure. Fortunately, my more worldly cousin had given me a pair of pink pants that I thought looked really great. As he was a jock in his hometown, I assumed he knew what was appropriate attire for cool kids. How was I to know that the reason he had given the pink pants to me was because they really weren’t cool and he wanted to get rid of them. (In 1956 pink and black combinations were quite the rage for everything from automobiles to household supplies.)

I assumed that wearing the pink pants would look really stylish for my first day of school. But to assist my transition into the new environment Mom took me to a Sears Roebuck store in Salem to buy a matching shirt so that I wouldn’t need to wear a homemade one like those she sewed from the colorful calico flour sacks. It was near Halloween when we arrived at the Sears store and I was immediately impressed with a bright orange model that could have been a substitute for the Great Pumpkin. Mom’s fashion sense was no better than mine so she generously allowed me to buy that resplendent item. Thus, when I arrived at Stayton High School for my first day of classes, I was impressively decked out in bright pink pants accompanied with an even brighter orange shirt. What a colorful combination it was and how fashionable I must have looked!

On that fateful day I nervously primped in front of the mirror and plastered down the stubborn cowlick on my head with gobs of Bryl Creme hair lotion. The resulting sheen atop my head, combined with the black horn rimmed glasses I was wearing, undoubtedly added to my dapper appearance. “Oh boy,” I thought, “I don’t want my
new classmates to suspect that I’m a hick from the sticks. At least with this nifty outfit I should make a real impression on them.” By golly, was that a correct assessment!

Upon arriving at school, I looked at the other kids and noticed that not one of them had on a multicolored outfit like mine. As was the fashion of the day, many of the girls wore voluminous hoop skirts, some with a poodle dog motif. When they passed each other in the hall, the area covered by the width of their skirts made it difficult for the other students to squeeze between a couple of the gals. What the guys really appreciated about that style of dress occurred when the girls tried to sit at their desks. With the hoops pushing their clothing upwards, it was a struggle for the young women to try to modestly keep their bare legs covered. “Oooh La La” was the reaction from the males in the room who were getting an eyeful several years before the introduction of the miniskirt.

In contrast to the pretty skirts worn by the young ladies, nearly all of the guys were more sedately dressed in white corduroy trousers or light khaki style pants. Not only were there no Levis like the fellows in Alturas wore, but neither was there a single pair of pink pants or a bright orange shirt anywhere to be seen -- except on that new kid coming in the door. To add to the impression created by that new kid, the principal of the school asked the student body president to kindly show me to each of the classrooms where I would be doing my new course work. So not only was I dressed like a multi-colored carnival barker, I also had the mortifying experience of being paraded in front of one classroom after another while a large component of the student body stared in disbelief at the new student.

At lunchtime I went to the cafeteria where I grabbed a meal and went to an empty table where the embarrassed blush of my cheeks undoubtedly added to the colorful attire I was wearing. As I sat alone at the table watching the other kids cluster together among their friends, I really began to feel sorry for myself. At any rate I was easy to pick out from among those in the crowded room because no one else was dressed quite like me.

Soon an awkward looking fellow approached my table and said, “Hi, I’m Larry. Do you mind if I sit with you?” Larry had no idea how wonderful it was to finally have someone acknowledge my presence. “Yes,” I quickly replied. As Larry settled down next to me, I decided to break the ice with the inquiry, “Unfortunately, you must have noticed that my outfit is a little different from what the other kids around here are wearing?” “Yeah,” Larry laughed. “I couldn’t help but notice. I’m afraid that you stand out like a turd in a punchbowl. I figured that anyone with as much nerve as you have must be an interesting guy to get to know.” Larry followed that compliment with a pleasant visit and by the time lunch was over I was relieved to have found a friend in my new environment. Larry’s unexpected support gave me sufficient assurance to face the rest of my classmates during the remainder of the afternoon classes. Maybe I wasn’t such a doofus after all, maybe I was just a guy with enough audacity to defy convention and wear whatever I wanted.
Despite the early embarrassment of my faux pas as a fashion plate, my confidence continued to improve as I made additional friends and was more comfortable at school. Larry’s shyness separated him from many of the other students but his initial friendship helped me overcome the awkwardness that had bothered me at first, and during the next few months I found several additional school activities that I enjoyed participating in. Ventures such as Latin Club, being a photographer for the yearbook, and acting in school plays were activities that, while living in Alturas, were either unavailable or were ones where I lacked the confidence to compete against other kids. And after I had learned to dress more like the other boys at Stayton I also began filling out my 100 pound, five foot tall frame so that I didn’t even feel too embarrassed to sometimes ask a girl for a date. In addition, I also gained the respect of the faculty members as my academic subjects surprisingly improved beyond the mediocre level they had been mired in at my former school. By the end of the school year I was even selected to be one of the school’s representatives to the annual Boys State Conference at Oregon State University. Throughout this transformation, Larry remained a shy, klutzy outsider but I never forgot his kindness in going out of his way to make a new kid feel less lonely. It had not been too much earlier that I had also been a shy, gawky kid. Although I was soon becoming friendly with others in my class, Larry and I remained friends until he moved away the following year.

Small acts of kindness such as Larry exhibited toward an awkward newcomer can have surprising long term consequences. He was the only person who made an effort to ease my sense of loneliness on my first day of school. Although some at school might have considered him to be an ungainly nobody, his action in helping me overcome a feeling of isolation was the initial step in my beginning to gain enough confidence to undertake new challenges. One of life’s lessons learned was that although someone may appear to not be among the “cool” members of a group, outward appearances don’t necessarily reflect the absence of inward decency.

Floyd at 15

Floyd Whiting graduated from Stayton High School with honors. Before graduating, he hoped to emulate his friend’s kindness by donating a pair of pink pants and an orange shirt to a homeless person begging on a street corner.