Production of this Newsletter is supported by the Joan Hopper Trust.
Greetings, Readers,
Welcome to the second totally literary Newsletter. In past years there had been no August issue, but we now have one and include just writing, both prose and poetry. Contributions come from both Emeritus College members and students of writing classes of the regular College. In this way we hope to familiarize ourselves with each others' activities and also demonstrate our basic unity.

Special thanks is due Art Ravicz, who is entirely responsible for layout, Paul Gruner, who designed and drew the illustrations, and the Review Committee of Iris Tandler, Alicia Warcholski, and Barbara Tarasoff. We also want to express our gratitude to COM writing instructors Robert-Harry Rovin, Jacqueline Kudler, and Prartho Sereno for making their students' work available to us.

Don Polhemus, Editor (dondorpol@aol.com.)

---

I AM CHANGING
by Michael Benson

I am a writer. There is something in me that needs to be said. But for so long I have told myself that I can't read, I can't write. I don't know if that was me saying it or if it was an easy way out. Am I just lazy or was it those low expectations that others had of me? I am a writer. It frees me and makes me complete. I hope that there is something in my writing that will give someone light, make them see more clearly, give them hope.

I am a stranger in a strange land. When I got to California I thought that everything would be so nice. I came here to be with my mother. And then the other shoe dropped. I met my mother, someone so like me. And then, nothing like me. Her look, her smile, her want for things she can't afford. We both have the thing in our heads that things will make us happy. But now I see that all I need is this pen and this paper. I have come to know myself. I am no longer a stranger.

My friends are word and song. I am a friend to this pen, to this paper, to the music in my heart and the rhythm that sets the tone for the way I lead my life and think about living. Music is more to me than the songs I hear on the radio. It's my heartbeat, my breath. My pen and this paper help me to count the beats. And to see you tap your feet when I sing my song, snap your fingers and hum along lets me know that you are my friend; you have never let me down. And I will never let you go.

[Michael and Sondra are students of Robert-Harry Rovin.]

---

WRITING IS ME
by Sondra Sheiblich

Writing is therapy for the soul; the pen takes it all away. It's a freedom to bring it in, to take it out – it all goes away till I read it again. Writing gives hope where none was seen before – a joy. The pen a wand, the ink the magic solution; it can all go away with a few flicks of the fingers. If only life were as easy as writing; the joy of re-living everything to put it all away. To take the feelings and flatten them out, spread them around, give them away or keep them locked away in a safe forever.

Writing is a wonder, a joy to feel everything that I put down, true or even made up – to feel, not hide it all inside. It all comes out eventually to share... or keep... is up to me. The paper will burn or save for years to come. I want to write about the good times; they just don't seem to come like the others do, so I get it out and save it away. I keep it for myself. Some I share. Most I keep.

When I die, share my life. For now this is mine; my pain, my joy, my release. I give this to me. I want to write about me. This is me, myself. This is my life that I give to me. I keep it for myself to give as I please. My soul I write because I am good at what I do. I make good work. I want to write about me. My children are me. My home is me. My mate is me. I want to write about me, by me, for me and to me just for the sake of me and mine. This is me. Take me or leave me but this is me.
1983. They can’t wait to get off the bus: Danes, Italians, Japanese. The sidewalk vendors are ready with cheap jewelry and a glut of souvenirs. I listen to their speech, observe their shoes—shiny yellow leather, Birkenstock sandals and woolen socks, and marvel at the inevitable gesticulating when first they sight the sea lions on the rocks below. Consulting their watches, caressing their cameras, they line up for Pronto Pups and coffee, examine the grey sky and decide that yes, black and white film is best. The Cliff House, the ruins of the Sutro Baths, the magic of Lands End—is irresistible.

On the dirt ledge, inches beyond the guardrail are chipmunks, blackbirds, and the odd lamenting seagull; all competing for human attention, but mostly for bread. Below, in the abandoned swimming pools algae flourish. Swarming cypress trees, stolid survivors, lean away from the shore, their bright rust limbs to the wind supporting each other. Where is the horizon? The sea and sky blend like a freshly brushed ink wash. When the mist is right, Adolph Sutro, past mayor of San Francisco, nestles in the foliage; his cane and side whiskers intact, he watches over us. Up the hill of Point Lobos Avenue, two British lions, splendidly symmetrical, await him patiently at the gate to his estate. This is the rim of the continent, the wind is constant, and always with the rush and hiss of the waves.

One evening the peace is ruptured by screaming sirens of fire trucks, ambulances, and the whir of distant engines. The cliff! We join our neighbors in a mass descent. The coast guard fleet is in. A red and white helicopter hovers and dips, like a whale aloft with enraged fairy wings. Helmeted firemen stand huddled on the chimpumk ledge: each holds his walky-talky, but there is silence except for the obsessive din of the helicopter. Two trucks move slowly on the narrow uncertain roads. A police patrol commandeers the public sidewalk. The sun is at the horizon, it casts a pale gold glow. The signs on the cliff and rocks below read: Caution! Cliff and Surf Are Extremely Dangerous. Residents here have seen people swept out to sea and drowned.

It is too carefully staged. Hundreds of people rim the great chasm, peering down to the ruins and the churning Pacific. The chaos feels like a scene from Apocalypse Now with the sound of The Ride of the Valkyries. I expect to see director Coppola shouting directions to his actors, and we are all extras in a magnificent film.

A man in yellow boots and slicker walks up the path dragging a striped bass. He reaches our plateau, half-pirouettes and takes up a position at the end of the safety railing. He studies the ocean, his fish at his feet: the gills open and close. The man looks about fifty, he swallows three times, he speaks carefully: "First I see him, then he disappear. I tell him the rock is too narrow. We always fish together."

2013. Thirty years have passed and like a magnet curiosity draws me back to the old neighborhood. Much has changed, much remains the same since 1983. The wind is relentless. The many warning signs are still there: Cold Water and Rip Currents Make Swimming Here Extremely Dangerous! The Monterey cypress trees have been thinned out, so we can see through them to the sea. Now they are called Interlopers, as are the eucalyptus trees from Australia, which pose a fire hazard. Some of the pines are also suspect, as are the purple flowers—all planted here before the current Enlightenment. Thank goodness for our native California poppies! The Cliff House has a new modern addition--a restaurant painted white to match the older building. It has a grand view of the ocean, but now there are no sea lions on the rocks; they moved on to warmer waters at the Fisherman’s Wharf. Louis' Restaurant is still there. Perhaps the most significant change is the new Visitors Center, oddly named, "Lands End Lookout," a new grey concrete building high above the ruins of the Sutro Baths, backed by a new terraced parking lot. Inside the building is a testimonial. "During his eighth decade, the late Richard N. Goldman, who had visited Lands End as a child, embraced the vision to revitalize these parklands, and in 2004 made the first of four major and leg-acy grants toward the restoration." The stone British lions are now resting resplendent at the east entry, but so I thought, until I realized they were facsimiles—the original lions still grace the gates to the Sutro Estate. The building is Contemporary, handsome, restless as the jagged cliffs below, but LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified: solar panels on the roof, recycled redwood facades, LED (Light-Emitting Diode) lighting on the ceilings, and much more that is Green. The main room is transparent, fully glazed to the east and west, and alive with staff and visitors. A large screen shows archival slides and videos simultaneously as we consume our "It's-it" ice cream sandwiches, an early local invention. Souvenir buttons, scarves, T-shirts, books, snacks— all sales support the Center. I love the many exhibits—historic, cultural, scientific, but best of all is the Native American Ohlone song:

"I am dancing, dancing on the edge of the world."

[Len is a Newsletter staff member.]
I grew up in a dark corner booth upholstered in red leather. It was the booth closest to the kitchen, water station and grill. It seated six but we could squeeze in eight and it's a good thing since there were six kids in my family. My parents owned 'the restaurant' as we always called it, in the early years of Hatton's of Hollywood, one might find us there together, tightly packed into that booth, in between lunch and dinner. But as the years flew and my older sisters became teens, that changed and although my father had always worked nights, my mother starting working during the day as we grew up. I suspect that's how their marriage lasted over sixty years.

I was weaned onto milk brought home in a vodka bottle and then introduced to hummus, babaganoush, avocado with garlic, lemon and olive oil and finally to kibbe nahie sprinkled with pine nuts and pomegranate seeds. Kibbe is lamb ground with bulgur - the nahie part meant it was raw. We scooped it up with sweet onion crescents or slathered it onto unleavened bread like lavosh but better because a Lebanese woman baked our bread locally. We called it burnt rag bread since that's what it looked like. And at home we would spread anything onto it - butter, peanut butter or ham, cheese and tomato and stick it under the broiler.

Often a big slab of New York steak made its way from the restaurant into our fridge at home in Westwood. My mother would cut off slices at night and fry them in their own fat and garlic until the garlic was brown and crispy and the steak seared and juicy. She would make salad dressing by crushing more garlic and salt in the bottom of a bowl, add the inevitable lemon and olive oil, more salt and pepper then the lettuce and veggies and toss. Then we would grab the torn pieces of rag bread to wrap around morsels of the succulent NY steak.

Garlic, olive oil, lemon and Hatton's of Hollywood were the mother of us all.

My parents owned this little gem of a restaurant for over thirty-five years. It sat between Sunset and Hollywood Boulevards on Vine Street next to the Brown Derby. It provided food, clothing, housing, college tuitions, friends, family, belly dancers, New Year celebrations and lots of headaches for us all. We all worked there and we all sat in that corner booth with waitresses, their husbands, kids, significant others, the chefs when they could take a break and with my mom. My father was usually walking around watching the bartenders to make sure they weren't on the take.

My mom went to work there when I was about eight years old and my brother was seven. He was the youngest and both my parents would tell friends, family, customers and new acquaintances that, "Little Joe is the cause of it all."

My father was Joseph, Sr. and Lebanese and he wanted that son and he just kept going through all us daughters until he got him.

When my mom went back to work, my sisters were older by degrees and on their way to high school or college or independence. I remember watching my mother leave one day while I played outside our house. She walked down the street to the bus stop since she didn't drive. She had totaled a model T on a country road in Virginia where she was born and never drove after that.

She was dressed for work and I remember thinking how pretty she looked as she left. While she took care of us at home, I never thought about it but she was a lovely looking woman. Very fair, very blue eyes and a sweet loving smile. She also loved to laugh and she loved us - all of us and all of our progeny and all of theirs. But once we grew old enough to be cared for by my big sisters, she was off to work and work it was.

The lunch hour was the busiest and the most hectic. It was packed for three hours with folks that worked in the studios, radio companies and Capitol records. They were all within walking distance at that time and they loved the lamb kafta meatballs and rice pilaf. Many would return after work for happy hour to play with wind-up bar toys before entering the life-blood freeways of Los Angeles.

When I started working at Hatton's, I was in high school and had just gotten my driver's license. I worked during school vacations or I would pick up my mother after the lunch hour and help her cash out. When I'd get there, she'd often put her arm around me and guide me to a table of lingering customers who had become friends. Her
manner was soft and never intrusive.
"I want you to meet my youngest girl, my little one."

In the late 1950's and early 60's Hollywood was past its heyday and was attempting a rebirth. But instead of adorning the streets with palm trees or anything alive, the planners baptized it with new sidewalks embedded with over 2400 brass and pink terrazzo stars within which they placed names from the entertainment industry. Every big cement block you tried to step over so you wouldn't break your mother's back was dug up on Hollywood Blvd. and three blocks of Vine St. When completed, Clark Gable's was right in front of our entry and Frank Sinatra's right near him. I tried hard to step over and not on them as I came and went. Of course there were many unknowns in between but the stars we all know and love, or not, were etched into the sidewalks just as they are into our gray matter. Now millions of tourists walk these blocks despite the city's current reputation as a seedy tourist trap. All over the world, the word 'Hollywood' still carries fantasy, fascination and the faint fanfare of wannabe fame.

We certainly had our share of celebrities grace our door as well. They might easily have gone to the Brown Derby next door but they often sought privacy and the almost impossible anonymity. I met Nat King Cole who was quite the gentleman and my sister tried to peddle Girl Scout cookies to Gary Cooper who by the way wouldn't buy any. But for my parents these were glamorous accents in an otherwise laborious life. My mother, Olive Earl Parsons Hatton, worked the lunch hour and that meant getting there to make sure bread was cut, meat orders were in and prepped, specials were simmering, all the help had reported for duty and finally the cloth napkins were folded and sitting pretty on the Hatton's of Hollywood placemat which depicted a sheik and his woman and their slaves carrying shish kebab.

She worked through the manic lunch hour then she booked the receipts and pocketed some of the to go money that had un-numbered receipts. She was no embezzler - she simply needed money to live on and to give us because my father gave her none. She needed access to funds and access to people and the restaurant needed her grace and special touches. She would customize meals for the bar group of radio and recording guys who loved her - she would even make the specials more special. After she had done her job or as she finished her work, she would join some of the bar crowd in a drink for the road - and because she only took the bus or we picked her up, why not?

At home, my father would often sleep until two in the afternoon and leave around four or five to work through the dinner hour. He often got home around four in the morning since the bar closed at 2 AM. He would stay to count the money and receipts and then re-supply the bar and sometimes funnel cheaper liquor into fancier bottles. When we were really little, my mother was always hushing us because our childhood fun and games might wake my father and if he did wake up there was hell to pay. Of course he was exhausted from the late hours and all those kids so he was usually grumpy when he woke up. He'd yell at us in a unique language that was English with remnants of an Arabic accent.

"Get out-e from here, you monkeys!"

As the years pass, I can chuckle at that memory. My fears of him have faded and I have begun to appreciate the restaurant he created. Hatton's of Hollywood was welcoming, lively, successful and an Arabic oasis in the heart of Los Angeles. Our Lebanese chefs introduced authentic Middle Eastern cuisine before it was trendy, and the American fare was fresh and surprising. My father even put baked Virginia ham on the menu as homage to my mother!

Hatton's of Hollywood was the center of our lives. We all heard if a waitress didn't show or a dishwasher was sick. We all knew when the dreaded health department made a sneak attack visit to see if any four or six legged friends lurked in the storage room or kitchen. We all knew if my mother tried to call after dark from the bus station to catch a ride and couldn't get through because I was on the phone for hours (no call waiting then).

And at special occasions at home or Christmas or Easter, the wait staff (as they're called now) would pop in with their spouses and friends. The chefs would actually sit down for dinner at our table for a meal. And although bartenders rarely got invited, all the restaurant employees felt like family to me. To this day, as I am served line-caught halibut or wild mushroom gnocchi, I sneak peeks at my server, or bus person and I sense the service flow and I see these people as people. And when I walk into a restaurant, I immediately know the best table or booth although I know too it will never again be the big one in the back with the red leather upholstery.

[Ayris is a student of Jacqueline Kudler.]
This trip was to be the last trip together after 10 years of marriage. Not a happy one. They had been married in 1960 at the Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco; a church built in 1895 by a young architect called Bernard Maybeck. She often thought of that perfect day. Shortly after the perfect wedding in the perfect church, they had flown to Paris. Everything had been wonderful for many years. There were parties, trips, success, beautiful apartments, and finally a house of their own on the water in Sausalito with a boat at the end of their dock. Till now, their lives had been a flawless time of love and laughter. Then, a month ago, Hal had told her he was in love with someone else, and he wanted a divorce. It was a death sentence for her. She had made him her whole world. To be without him was unimaginable.

The constant crying had stopped. She woke each morning with a piercing stab of realization after a few moments of consciousness. Much of the time she felt physically sick, aching all over, weak because she couldn't eat, unable to read even a newspaper and incapable of talking about anything but her impending doom. She wished now that she had a good friend, but in her devotion to him, she had made time for no one else. She felt utterly alone. Each morning, she added a snifter of brandy to her coffee to stop the shaking.

When he had told her about his plans to make this trip to get away from everyone and everything, she begged him to take her with him. She could do the driving, cooking, set up camp and make it possible for him to devote all of his time to fly fishing. Finally, he relented, but reminded her that there would be no unpleasant discussions about his future plans. She was used to his silence, and agreed. She hoped he would be kind to her, forget his new infatuation and decide to stay. As sick as she was, she was determined to do this. Perhaps his new love was making demands. She would make none. It was a last chance.

After a week of preparations, they were on their way.

At least the sun was shining. They were flying out of Victoria, Canada. She had arranged to have them picked up at the airport by their pilot, Chris, who was said to be an expert fisherman himself and knew all the great fishing spots. He was on time, put them, along with their gear, in his truck, and they drove to the harbor where he kept his seaplane. The Queen Charlotte archipelago, consisting of 1,844 small islands, is located off Canada’s extreme northwest coast. All of these islands are remote and unpopulated. One of these islands was their destination. Hal had decided he wanted to go there. She didn't ask why.

As the tiny seaplane bobbed in the water, they struggled to throw their gear, including a rifle, into the small luggage area. She sat in a jump seat in the back surrounded by bundles.

When she noticed the lock on the plane door consisted of a rusty screen door hook, she took off her boots so that she would have a better chance of swimming should they crash. But she wasn't afraid. Without Hal, no future would be a blessing.

Chris, their pilot, was nonchalant, said he knew a good spot, which he didn't identify other than to say it was a "good spot," and they took off. Soon they were flying over a mountain range that runs along the center of Graham Island, one of the two large islands which make up the major land mass of the Queen Charlottes. Then, they were high over the Pacific Ocean. Forty five minutes later, they landed in an inlet in one of the hundreds of islands they had flown over. From the plane, they had seen no sign of life on the land, in the water or the sky since they had taken off. As they taxied through the water towards the beach, she wondered if this island even had a name, and how many years it had been since anyone had been there.

They landed near a small white sand beach that they were able to wade to. She immediately identified grizzly bear tracks in the sand. Over many years of travel in bear country, she had become an expert at identifying tracks. They had no tent, but hung a tarp between two tree trunks, collected some wood for fires, and arranged a pulley for hoisting their food into a
nearby pine. She was told to keep the fire burning day and night to keep any predatory animals at bay. Then Hal turned away, inflated the small dinghy they had brought, started the engine, and was off to explore the inlet. She was left to survey their surroundings, the mountain range beyond, some distant waterfalls, the sound of the roaring surf at the inlet's entrance, the brilliant blue water and the miles of evergreen forest that surrounded them. It was good to be alone. She could lie down in the sand and cry if she felt like it. What she did instead was collect wood.

Three days passed uneventfully, except for a hike alongside a nearby stream which ended quickly when they spotted mountain lion tracks. For the two days since they arrived there had been total silence between them except for orders from Hal, which she immediately fulfilled. When she saw the mountain lion tracks on the muddy bank, she said, "mountain lion." The sound of her voice echoed through the wilderness. He said nothing. They turned back through the forest to their beach camp. As she walked out, she picked up wood for the fire along the way.

On the fourth day, Chris was coming to fly them out. Everything was packed. They sat in the sand waiting patiently for the sound of the plane. It would be the first sound they had heard, other than sounds of their own, since they had arrived.

By 3 PM, it was clear Chris wasn't coming. They unpacked everything, started the fire again and looked at the meager food supply that was left, crackers and a couple of dried food packets. Not one fish had been caught, which meant that there probably were no fish, since Hal was an expert fly fisherman.

Even though he was silent, she could see he was not pleased. He wasn't used to not getting what he wanted. He wanted fish, and he wanted the plane to be on time. His teeth were clenched a little more tightly, his eyes more dead and hooded than usual. She opened the box of Kraft macaroni and cheese thinking they would only eat half of it just in case.

Just in case? What happened if Chris didn't come back? Was there any record of his flight? They had told no one, and didn't even know where they were. What if his plane had crashed? What if he was hospitalized? Had had a car wreck? If he didn't come back, survival was unlikely. There was almost no food left, they had only light clothing and bed rolls, and their tiny dinghy would be useless in the ocean. They would need to climb the mountains on this island in order to get to the other side which might, or might not, afford more possibilities. This time, apart from preparations, she had left it entirely to him to make all the decisions. She had always been careful; he was not.

Hal marked the sand with large letters reading "HELP." She said nothing, but the likelihood of anyone seeing this other than the squadrons of geese who flew over every day, was remote.

After their cupfuls of macaroni and cheese were consumed, Hal handed her the rifle, and waded out into the shallow water to set up targets. He said they would both practice. They could survive on goose if they could shoot one down. He waded far away from the beach, placed the six empty beer cans we had on sticks, and drove them into the sand. She lay on her stomach, as she'd been told to do, with the rifle in her hands. She watched him. He was so handsome, so graceful. She loved him so much. To live without him was impossible.

He shouted, "Don't jerk the gun! Rest it on that rock in front of you. Just aim, press the trigger slowly, and try to hit one of these cans."

She thought how easy it would be to shoot him. He would just fall in the water and be swept out with the tide. When the plane came back, if it did, she would just say he had gone out in the dinghy and never returned. Who would investigate in this godforsaken place? It would be perfect. She wouldn't have to spend the rest of her life imagining him with someone else. Hal would be hers forever. Oddly, she thought of Oscar Wilde's, "Each Man Kills the Thing He loves." The rifle was cold against her cheek as she took aim.

"Didn't I tell you to shoot? What are you waiting for? Just shoot, for Christ's sake! " he shouted. And she did.

[Lee is a student of Jacqueline Kudler.]
Rabbi Meyer called Sylvia Stein last week. The adversarial undertone in his voice was obvious. This was no friendly invitation to sit on the bimah (pulpit) on Saturday morning. Would Sylvia come in to see him Thursday afternoon?

"Of course," she replied. Sylvia Stein left for her own job at 5:30 AM, worked until 3:30 PM, then came home and drove her 79 year old husband, David, to synagogue to participate in the evening prayer service. The synagogue was his whole life since his retirement. David had early onset dementia. He had been born in Berlin. He had watched the Nazis kill his father when he was three years old. His mother had managed to escape with her son David to Bolivia which was one of the few countries that would accept refugees.

At age seventeen David was admitted to an American University on a full scholarship in languages (he speaks six) but left because he "realized he would have to make a living" and transferred to the Culinary Institute. He had worked the rest of his life twenty hours a day. David and Sylvia had met and married in 1973. On Thursday afternoon Sylvia Stein turned into the broad double lane road which led to their newly relocated synagogue. The trees were just budding out. The new sanctuary appeared before her, an elegant symphony of steel, stone and glass. Breathtaking in its simplicity, Sylvia caught her breath in awe. The building rested on a low rise in the midst of four acres of prime suburban real estate. In keeping with the surrounding neighborhood the grounds were meticulously manicured. The stained glass windows sent showers of fractured dark and light shadows reflecting the setting sun as Sylvia approached. This was one of the most affluent congregations in St. Louis. When Sylvia and David had both been young and working, they had been large contributors.

Rabbi Meyer met Sylvia at the door. The Rabbi was older than Sylvia. He was facing retirement. He was a kindly man, with a warm sense of humor and a strong sense of humanity. "Nu Sylvia," he said, "How are you, a bit worn, but looking good. How is the job? How is your son? How is the Boss? (David). Not to mince any words," he continued, "I am having a few problems with the "Ladies of the Congregation", ah, yes, always the "Ladies of the Congregation". It has been reported to me that David has been making inappropriate remarks to them during the evening prayer service. I would appreciate it if you would speak with him about this."

"With all due respect, Rabbi", Sylvia Stein replied, "David is a survivor of the Holocaust. He has worked hard all his life. He has early onset dementia. He does not know what he is saying. He does not know what he has said. He means no harm. But I will discuss it with him." And Sylvia Stein returned to her car mentally patting herself on the back, believing that she had handled this matter quite adroitly. "I could have been the Rebbitzen," she thought smugly. And so she believed the matter was settled.

BUT THIS WAS NOT TO BE!! A week later Sylvia Stein received another phone call, this time from the Assistant Rabbi of the Congregation, a charming but inexperienced young man, fresh out of the Yeshiva Institute. He, too, had heard from the "Ladies of the Congregation". But he was definitely more disturbed about the "inappropriate" nature of David’s remarks and he was not as life experienced as the Senior Rabbi. He asked Sylvia to discuss the matter with David, and was not as gentle as Rabbi Meyer - but Sylvia Stein had had her fill!!

"David Stein is a survivor of the Holocaust," she said, "he has spent his life defending our faith. He has early onset dementia. Ask your "Ladies of the Congregation" to practice a little rachmunas (compassion). And I ask the same of you.

On Yom Hashoah, the Day of Remembrance, David was asked to light the first of the six traditional candles commemorating the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

David and Sylvia Stein are my parents. I am so proud of them.

Our family names have been changed in the interest of our privacy.

[Iris is a member of the Newsletter staff.]
TIDES OF MOTHER
I remember lying down
on the warm sand,
in my two-piece neon bathing suit
on Hawaii’s North Shore,
feeling at peace –
the cool mist on my face
a calming contrast to the sand;
the waves’ relaxing melody
during a hard day.
I remember
the warm and caressing feeling
of the ocean on my body
as I swayed in and out
of the ocean waves toward the shore.
I remember the birds
eagerly searching for their next meal,
running to and fro,
begging and searching
happily through the day.
I remember my son, Hayden,
turning his beautiful head
left and then right,
searching for my breast.
I remember the joy and contentment,
the need in my children,
suckling the tide of love,
washing away everything else.

Collective WRITE ON! Poem
at Brown House

LOVES THE MOST
Of what shall I write? Of hot white sands
and a baby girl in my arms, wondrous, me
fighting for breath, the terror of uncertain,
capricious waves that barricade the unwary
swimmer from reaching the shore; the
pounding of black-suited rescue teams,
cutting through waves, punctuated by cries
of frightened onlookers; my husband, tall in
stature, blocking the sun, Scorpionic, aloof,
silent, watchful.

Red-headed stranded swimmer in the dis-
tance, weak arm signaling distress -- only
just. My breath choking me and the baby
squirming under my tightened grip, her ten-
tative smile trying to lull me into bliss,
where she can usually take me. I look at
the evening’s ominous grey clouds lowering
over a strip of bright horizon being slowly eclipsed. Time is running out, I
know.

Blond son, lanky, drifts through thick sand
to stand at my right hand where he be-
longs, his green eyes in opaque profile and
I see his agony trained on the distant red
hair, the arrogant one growing weaker, all
can see, as the troop of black-muscled fig-
ures charge through wave crests throwing
up pure white spray defiantly, nearing the
prone figure drifting in the becalmed hold-
ning sea.

No sharks to be seen, but night is falling
and my heart plummeting, the baby's fist
twisting my hair, yearning for attention. The
black swarm throws out a line triumphantly
-- once, twice. One torpedoes, surfaces,
black gloved hand grips the redhead's deli-
cate white shoulder -- the looping, the pull-
ing. Thank God, it's over, all will be well,
little girl, blond trustworthy son, cautious in
walk,
towering stature, as he turns and
coughs, smiles a half smile down at me his
mother, the one he loves the most.

Lauren Pelletier [student of Robert-Harry
Rovin]

GRANDMOTHER
I remember the cool mist
on my face
A calming contrast to the sand;
The waves' relaxing melody
during a hard day.
I remember
the warm and caressing feeling
of the ocean on my body
as I swayed in and out
of the ocean waves toward the shore.
I remember the birds
eagerly searching for their next meal,
running to and fro,
begging and searching
happily through the day.
I remember my son, Hayden,
turning his beautiful head
left and then right,
searching for my breast.
I remember the joy and contentment,
the need in my children,
suckling the tide of love,
washing away everything else.

Collective WRITE ON! Poem
at Brown House

LOVES THE MOST
Of what shall I write? Of hot white sands
and a baby girl in my arms, wondrous, me
fighting for breath, the terror of uncertain,
capricious waves that barricade the unwary
swimmer from reaching the shore; the
pounding of black-suited rescue teams,
cutting through waves, punctuated by cries
of frightened onlookers; my husband, tall in
stature, blocking the sun, Scorpionic, aloof,
silent, watchful.

Red-headed stranded swimmer in the dis-
tance, weak arm signaling distress -- only
just. My breath choking me and the baby
squirming under my tightened grip, her ten-
tative smile trying to lull me into bliss,
where she can usually take me. I look at
the evening’s ominous grey clouds lowering
over a strip of bright horizon being slowly eclipsed. Time is running out, I
know.

Blond son, lanky, drifts through thick sand
to stand at my right hand where he be-
longs, his green eyes in opaque profile and
I see his agony trained on the distant red
hair, the arrogant one growing weaker, all
can see, as the troop of black-muscled fig-
ures charge through wave crests throwing
up pure white spray defiantly, nearing the
prone figure drifting in the becalmed hold-
ning sea.

No sharks to be seen, but night is falling
and my heart plummeting, the baby's fist
twisting my hair, yearning for attention. The
black swarm throws out a line triumphantly
-- once, twice. One torpedoes, surfaces,
black gloved hand grips the redhead's deli-
cate white shoulder -- the looping, the pull-
ing. Thank God, it's over, all will be well,
little girl, blond trustworthy son, cautious in
walk,
towering stature, as he turns and
coughs, smiles a half smile down at me his
mother, the one he loves the most.

Lauren Pelletier [student of Robert-Harry
Rovin]
LEARNING ON THE JOB
by Alice Webb

I was a sharp-boned, 5 foot 8 inch, 15-year-old girl the summer of 1944, when I got my first real job.

Our neighbor, Mr. Hudson, usually walked past our house fast, shoulders hunched, looking neither right nor left. But this day he stopped. "Can I speak to you a minute?"

I didn't know much about him, although I had baby-sat for his two children a couple of times, and I supposed he needed me to take care of them again.

I jumped from the porch swing to join him on the sidewalk. He asked me if I would like to be one of his fountain clerks in the new drugstore he was starting next to Craycraft's Department Store.

"Tell your parents I certainly could use you. I pay 30 cents an hour, and you can eat all you want."

"Mom will like that. She says it's all she can do to carry in enough groceries to fill me up. I'll have to ask Dad."

I could use the money for evening movies, which cost 25 cents. Burgers were a dime. Kids working for the other drugstores were paid 35 cents an hour but had to pay for all they ate. At 5 cents for a Coke and 15 for a sundae, it could add up.

That evening, I waited until Dad was settled into his favorite chair, chuckling over jokes in Reader's Digest as he filled the air with the aroma of his pipe.

"Dad, Mr. Hudson is going to open a new drugstore, and he asked if I could work there. He said to tell you he really needed me."

Dad rubbed his pipe alongside his nose, the signal he was seriously thinking about my request. He tapped out the ashes into the amber glass tray in the smoking stand. "I'm not sure about you working at a drugstore at 15, even if it is owned by a neighbor."

"Please, Daddy! I don't like baby-sitting. I'll make 30 cents an hour, and Mr. Hudson said I could have all the Cokes and ice cream I want."

"If you promise to put a third in war stamps each week and save a third, I'll let you try it. The rest should be enough spending money, especially if you can snack there too."

Getting permission to work had been easier than I had expected.

The next day, I ran the six blocks from home to the drugstore, bursting through the door, dodging around the piles of merchandise to where Mr. Hudson was busy organizing for the store opening.

"Mr. Hudson, my Dad said it was OK. I can work for you."

"Wonderful. You are 16, aren't you?"

"Not until November."

"Really, I didn't know that. It's going to be a problem. You have to be 16 to work after 6, and I need someone who can work every other day from 6 to 9."

"What can I do?" I asked, my heart sinking. He paused, "Some kids have gotten exceptions by someone at the courthouse. Why don't you go over there and ask?"

I knocked on Judge Gentry's door, to find him sitting behind a huge desk looking more like a crooked old man in a fairy tale than a judge. I told him I needed a work permit because of the hours Mr. Hudson needed me.

"Do I have the authority to do that?"

I took a deep breath, smiled and said, "I think you do."

"Well, if you think so, young lady, I must."

Judge Gentry took a piece of official Hamilton County stationery from his desk, quickly scribbling:

"Alice Arbuckle, age 15, has my permission to work after 6." He signed the paper with a flourish, then embossed it with the county seal. "Good to see such a hard-working young lady. Good luck. Tell Mr. Hudson I said to treat you right."

I took the paper, smiling broadly.

"Thank you, Judge Gentry. Thank you very much."

When the drugstore opened, I used Mr. Hudson's permission to eat all I wanted. I drank doz-
ens, if not hundreds, of five-scoop malts, made endless tin roof sundaes and chocolate phosphates for me and hundreds, if not thousands, for all the customers who sat on the swivel fountain stools or in the four booths. I gave my favorites, like the town watchman and my best friends, especially my current boyfriend, extra scoops and syrups when I thought Mr. Hudson wasn't watching.

The job wasn't all eating and fun. Every Monday evening, the fountain clerk on duty had to clean the Coke machine, then empty and thoroughly wash the heavy china fountain jars. After a few months of spooning the last of the syrups into my mouth from the near-empty containers, and scraping spilled ice cream from the coolers, my interest in all you can eat waned.

I asked Mr. Hudson a lot of questions about the prescriptions he prepared, and about the uses of the many preparations on the shelves. Once I asked: "What are the things in the box used for?" He paused, then said: "I'm not sure you need to know that just yet."

I also found out a lot of people didn't want to ask drugstore questions of a young girl. But I listened and learned anyway.

Mr. Hudson taught me a lot about working in a drugstore. He showed me how to hand-pack quarts of ice cream so the cartons looked full but weren't squished down. The ice cream cartons I took home were heavy and free of air pockets. Mr. Hudson had simple work rules. Open early and close late. He paid the clerks for an extra half-hour, so they wouldn't rush closing and docked a half-hour if they were even a few minutes late.

The other rule was: Always let the customer think he is right. Mr. Hudson usually didn't talk much and remained somewhat mysterious. He reminded me of my favorite movie star, Charles Boyer, the way they both wore belted raincoats and turned down the rims of their hats.

He did have some secrets I knew about, like the risqué cards he sold from a secret drawer to men customers. They seemed to feature jokes that only seventh grade boys would think funny. I listened to him whisper to his favorite customers. "I have some Coty's Emeraude in the back I'm sure your wife would love."

Cologne was scarce in wartime but cigarettes were scarcer. Mr. Hudson was lucky to have a supplier who brought in a limited number of cigarette cartons each Wednesday. No customer got more than two packs and sometimes 50 nervous smokers stood in line for those. He gave his favorite customers the Luckys, Chesterfields and Camels, letting the others be satisfied with Sunshines and other off brands. When the weekly allotment was gone, he kept a bowl of loose cigarettes to offer one or two to anyone who came in. The cigarette bowl tempted me. I desperately wanted to be like the sophisticated teens who smoked. One night shift I took two Lucky Strike cigarettes to smoke as I walked home. I waited until I had gone two blocks to maple-lined Logan Street to light up. No use tempting fate downtown where one of my parents' friends might see me. At first I coughed and choked, but I practiced until I learned how to inhale and not get nauseous. It became a real talent.

I was careful to stub out the evidence before I reached the street light at my corner, popping in a Sen-Sen to cover the odor. Dad smoked a pipe but was a vocal foe of cigarettes, and I knew that mother would not approve.

I also discovered forbidden reading material at the drugstore.

"What is that you are reading?" Dad said, looking up from his newspaper.

"It's 'Une Vie,' a Guy de Maupassant novel."

"Young lady, you take that book back - and never ever bring home such trash again."

It didn't seem like trash to me, just sad. The story reminded me of Indiana farm life, even if it was about Norman peasants. So, I read the forbidden literature at work. My questions never ceased, my vistas ever-widening, including discovering what the things in the boxes were really used for. I was on my way to becoming a well-rounded young lady.

[Alice Webb, retired mother, writer, performer and co-founder of a performance group, Hard-Headed Women, lives in San Rafael.]
I love BOOKS! The look and heft of them, the promise, the surprise and delight of them. I savor the words that pitch you down unaccustomed ways into other hearts and minds, into other worlds, that tell a tale. Histories, mysteries, curiosities, revelations ... yes! BOOKS that keep you reading half the night, that enter the blood stream, that invade your dreams, that tell you about yourself.

I admit I have no patience for pretenders, for the second-rate (even if it is only my opinion). And, despite the lure of new technologies, I can do without books that show up like pallid imposters on a flat screen and disappear into the ether.

And, I'm sure you love BOOKS too! Therefore, we shall henceforth devote some reasonable space to hearing from you, Dear Reader, about BOOKS that you Love. Or, if you are otherwise inclined, BOOKS that you Hate, which may have been unjustly lionized and you wish to warn us off. We will happily reveal your pleasures or your dystopic secrets to our eager little world.

In 1942, which you will remember from your own experience or what you (still in the bloom of your youth) consider "History", was the dark and terrible time of WWII, when the world we had known as a safe and pleasant place was in danger of being consumed in the flames of Armageddon. In that year, Hendrik Willem Van Loon wrote a book titled simply "Van Loon's Lives" which he dedicated to "Juliana, Queen of the Free and Independent Kingdom of the Netherlands and to those valiant souls who fought to preserve Liberty." Now Myneer van Loon had an inventive mind, a vivid imagination and a mischievous sense of humor, and being disinclined to exercise likes nothing better than to sit and talk. And so he creates for us the mythical town of Veere, freed from the encumbrances of modernity where he and his good companion and co-conspirator, Frits, (also mythical), buy a house built in 1572 (but considered a bit too new and not in keeping with the Gothic look of the rest of the town) and being insatiably curious and defying restraints of time and alternate worlds, devises a plan to invite historical folk of particular interest with great stories to tell to come to dinner each week and allow them to talk.

Van Loon invites this fascinating assortment of guests we have likely come upon in the bleak pages of histories: villains and saints, heroes and tyrants, poets and kings who come to Veere to be wined and dined, debate their politics, argue their philosophies, reveal their idiosyncrasies, gossip and lie and along the way reveal the author's own preferences, prejudices and judgments. This he does with easy charm and great wit. They are revealed, not as stone effigies or as plaster saints but as human beings, who lived and loved (wisely or not), fancied veal chops, detested mutton, preferred strong drink or none at all and tried to murder each other over obscure points of theology.

Over the weeks an auspicious assemblage of eminent guests arrive: Mozart and Peter the Great, Dante and Da Vinci, Voltaire and St. Francis, Descartes and Emerson, our own Benjamin Franklin and Jefferson; the choice guided only by their host's curiosity. But we are warned of anachronism. "Well", the author asks, "What can you expect of people dead and buried for over a thousand years?" He entertains as he explains so we may take in great gulps of history with no trouble at all, and somehow feel familiar with those long ago characters who by their actions for good or evil have made our history.

Their first guest is Desiderius Erasmus, (1466 to 1536), the great humanist born in Rotterdam, Van Loon's city. The illegitimate son of a cleric; he grew up in a cloister, an orphan with poor prospects, deprived of the company of women. He becomes a scholar of Latin and Greek, translates the New Testament into Greek. We still read his Magnum Opus, "In Praise of Folly" and "The Adagia," a book of proverbs full of incendiary innuendo and hidden meanings (to avoid the censor, for he detested the excesses of the religion of Rome in the Middle Ages and later breaks with Luther who didn't mind roasting a few heretics to enforce his ideas). He becomes a champion of tolerance and avoids politics; unlike his good friend, Sir Thomas More, author of "Utopia" (still on our Book List) who comes to dinner later, but leaves the world of scholarship for a job with the Good King Hal and
the dangerous world of politics and, in a matter of canonical disagreement, ultimately loses his head. All in all, Van Loon and Frits have a most delightful time with their guest and find him to be a brilliant talker who loves the exchange of ideas, but must also treat him with special care as he is a finicky eater and something of a hypochondriac. Having lived in the U.S., Van Loon particularly admires our great hero and statesman, George Washington, and asks his opinion concerning the propensities of the Colonists "to shoot, destroy, hack and maim every living creature within reach of their guns." The General's theory was that since in the Old World guns were prohibited to the Common Man (poaching being a hanging offense), their new found sense of liberty went to their heads and they indulged in a frenzy of killing which became a serious menace to all wildlife.

Not to slight the ladies, Hendrik and Frits invite two most intriguing women to dine -- the redoubtable Queen of England (Elizabeth I) and the fascinating Empress Theodora of Byzantium. They conclude that each lady behaves like herself with no inhibitions: the streetwalker behaves like a Queen and the Queen like a streetwalker, both exactly as God made them.

Shakespeare, Moliere and Cervantes, always happy to come for good food and good talk, appear more or less on time. But, Van Loon notes, it is the curse and the reward of these artists never to be able to rid themselves of the creatures of their imagination. Thus we find Moliere's Malade Imaginaire and Shakespeare's Hamlet complaining and soliloquizing and lecturing each other, disregarding advice and utterly failing to amuse. Don Quixote nearly causes a riot when he rides in on his ancient nag, Rosinante, pursued by an irate Dutch housewife whose chicken he's snagged on his lance. In the end they do not speak of Wars and Royal Houses, but of remedies for constipation with spirited shop talk about books and publishers...claiming politics is for adolescents.

As a special treat, generations of the immensely talented Bachs of musical fame and Breughels, the enormously endowed artists, get together in the Town Square of Veere and entertain everyone with a glorious Jam Session. Hendrik and Frits provide great quantities of sausage and sauerkraut and many barrels of beer as the Bachs play and the Breughels paint and a marvelous time is had by all.

In fairness, Hendrik and Frits feel it incumbent to have not only the nice guests, but some of the nasty ones, too. Hence an invitation to Robespierre and Torquemada. They find Robespierre to be a self-righteous, fanatical pedant, "with a face that gives you the creeps"...who inspired gangs of assassins and blood-smeared patriots to remove the heads of Kings and Queens and countless others, who instituted the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. He was hanged but incidentally caused labor riots when the new technology of the Guillotine put the ancient and honorable trade of the Hangman out of business.

Torquemada (1420-1498) the Grand Inquisitor; a murderous, tyrannical monster who conspired with the Church and the Spanish monarchs to drive the Moors and then the Jews from Spain with the considerable benefit of plundering their assets. His Reign of Terror lasted fifteen years and caused tens of thousands of deaths. Our hosts find him a dour ascetic who ate carelessly and did not drink, detested all the Arts and derived pleasure in watching his victims in the agony of a fiery death. They find him thoroughly unpleasant and compare him to Hitler, though Torquemada's Inquisition lasted far longer. Hendrik and Frits were not disappointed for these two lived up to their worst expectations and provided an experience their hosts will never forget.

Hoping to erase the bad taste in their mouths, the hosts send an invitation to the Buddha who respectfully declines and sends his regrets in Sanskrit since he left 57 years ago for a century of Meditation.

Napoleon, never one to avoid the limelight, gallops in on horse-back, where he looks much taller, and our hosts wonder why people loved him since he caused more deaths than anyone else (see Battle of Borodino). Van Loon points to his own great-grandfather, who served in the Grenadier Guards and lost his health, his property, two of his sons, three of his fingers and yet worshipped the ground the little Corsican walked on.

Then, one cold winter's night, Emily Dickenson, the shy maid of Amherst, appears bundled up in shawls against the chill weather but shuns the company, as she runs up the stairs declaring she will eat nothing. Until she hears Frederic

(Continued on Page 14)
Chopin play his Mazurka in A Minor she is moved to drop a verse discreetly down through the floor boards... "There's a certain slant of light/On winter afternoons/That oppresses like the weight/Of Cathedral tunes." Then slyly she tiptoes down, the two sit at the piano, they play a duet, they laugh, they dine and she has the time of her life!

Early on Van Loon worked as a journalist, lived through two wars and was a Humanist like his countryman, Erasmus. He worked in liberal causes and published a lifetime of books: the Story of Mankind, of the Arts, of the Bible and many more. He lived in the States and took degrees from Cornell and Harvard and developed his method of writing popular history. I am made to feel like a privileged guest sitting at his table, redolent with roasts and fragrant puddings, warmed by a comfortable blaze from the Dutch hearth decorated with Delft tiles, as he gifts us with his unique and disarming views of history.

Here is how I almost met Myneer van Loon, who lived for a time in Connecticut, where we were shown his house when it came up for sale.

As I remember, it looked like one of his own illustrations of a Seventeenth Century Dutch house: low ceilings, wooden beams, tile fireplace, lots of atmosphere (I could sense him crouching behind a drape) ... but few modern amenities. Faint heart and practical considerations caused me to turn it down...but I was tempted.

It seems appropriate to end with the fateful meeting of Confucius and Plato who go back 25 centuries. They may have seemed strange dinner companions but got along quite nicely. Together, Hendrik tells us, they were familiar with every scheme ever devised to safeguard a nation against tyranny. They discuss Democracy, Dictatorship, Anarchy, Monarchy, Socialism and how to put government in the hands of people best equipped to rule. They speak of the unchanging nature of the human being, how to define good and evil, how to live with each other and how we choose to inhabit this precarious planet. Questions as old as civilization, we ask whether things have changed very much between that time and ours.

[Saundra is a member of the Newsletter Staff.]

---

**THE RELUCTANT ARMY WIFE**

_by Judi Brady_

How does one make the transition from undergraduate student at San Francisco State in the dissident sixties to scripted life as a military wife in the Deep South?

The energy and excitement of those days of "student unrest" left me little prepared for what was to follow in my life. It was 1968 and San Francisco State College, or S.F. State as it was called, was a hotbed of radical student demonstrations and protests. I was a 21 year old senior, engaged to be married and, although fascinated by all that was happening on campus, not really a participant but more of an active onlooker. Is that an oxymoron? The student speaker platform, long gone now, kept lunch hour as a microphone about issues such as Vietnam and the anti-draft movement, the Black Student Union and Ethnic Studies. Someone was always shoving a handout or the "Daily Gator", the campus newspaper, into your hands. In April 1968 Martin Luther King was gunned down in Memphis, TN. The shock and the spiritual blow were crippling. Robert Kennedy's assassination followed in the early hours of June 5th in the Ambassador Hotel in L.A. I was devastated, as a group of us had seen him at the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco hours before.

What a time to marry a young man who had completed college Army ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) a few years earlier and now needed to fulfill his 2 year commitment. I would become an Army wife and would be defined by my husband's military rank of First Lieutenant. It was a hard pill to swallow in a time when the anti-war movement was so vocal and issues of women's rights were coming into focus.

Tom and I married on December 28, 1968. In our new Toyota, we proudly headed off on Route 66 to Fort Polk, Louisiana for his first assignment. The "Japanese Mercedes" had few amenities but it did have that delicious new car smell and this trip, our honeymoon, seemed like
a great adventure. New Orleans, beignets, jazz music and Spanish moss -- that's how I thought of Louisiana, not the drenching mugginess of high humidity, the ugly cockroaches, the annoying 5 party-line telephone that rang at 3 in the morning, the terrifying hurricane warnings or being called "girl." The first time I drove our car on base, the young MP (Military Police) at the gate saluted me. He wasn't really saluting me but the sticker on the car's bumper which indicated the owner was an officer. I saluted him back -- only it involved my thumb, nose and a few twitching fingers. When I laughed as I told Tom the story, he gasped. As the song goes, "You're in the Army now ... " That went for both of us.

I was an officer's wife. I was expected to act like it. After all, there were afternoon sherry parties to attend. "Dry or sweet, darlin'?" the immaculately dressed major's wife purred. "Excuse me?" I replied bewildered.

"Your sherry, dear, do you prefer it dry or sweet?"

I must have made a stupid facial and shoulder gesture and she just ever so politely handed me a miniature wine glass filled with some sticky amber liquid that was cloyingly sweet. I never learned to like it nor the requirement of wearing little white gloves to these and other functions.

S.F. State was a million miles away in distance and in Time.

In Louisiana I learned there really was meaning behind the saying, "the other side of the tracks." Small cabins of weathered unpainted wood languished just off the railroad tracks. There were folks sitting on their front stoops resting and fanning themselves in the Louisiana heat. On an occasional drive, Tom and I would explore Vernon Parish. The locals suggested we drive west about 8 miles to "lovely Lake Vernon." The lake was rimmed with stumps of old, dead trees, poking out of the slimy green water like wooden toy soldiers guarding the rocky shore. "There's good bass fishin' in that water," a local confided to us. We nodded our heads in false admiration. I also heard there were alligators in that lake and to keep a fair distance away. I knew I wasn't in California anymore and I missed crystal blue Tahoe.

Two months after getting married I found out that I had no sense of rhythm! I was twenty-two years old, away from home and family, and pregnant. Just as Tom and I were getting used to the idea of a child and feeling happy about it, fate slapped us in the face with a reality check when my husband got orders deploying him to Vietnam. We packed up our still new wedding gifts and headed back to San Francisco to my parents' home. After a stint in Panama at the Jungle Survival School, he left in August from Travis Air Force base for the warzone. I was six months pregnant and due to deliver in three months. My life was in free-fall and I knew I had better hold on tight. I cried as the huge transport plane took off into endless sky. I was alone and frightened.

Then my sweet baby boy was born on Nov. 19, 1969, just before Thanksgiving, at Letterman General Hospital in the Presidio of San Francisco. The next morning the young mothers in the maternity ward were on the floor doing sit-ups. They treated us like we were the soldiers. There were six patients in the ward. It was easy to bond with the others whose husbands were also in Vietnam. We shared our worst nightmares and our fondest dreams for our babies.

I watched the nightly news with Frank Reynolds, Channel 7's anchor, whose birthday was also on Nov. 29th like mine. I trusted him to be honest with me. All too often there were reports of battles near Qui Nhon, the base where Tom was stationed. They were depressing days and weeks. Either his letters were delayed or he didn't have time to write, but weeks went by when I had to pray that he was alive and would come home to us. At night, I fell asleep hugging a T-shirt he left behind, his smell captured in the soft cotton cloth.

My baby's father was in a faraway country fighting a worthless war with no end in sight. I was furious and sent an emotional letter to President Nixon stating my frustrations. Steam seemed to escape from my ears like a cartoon character when I received a canned letter from some Army departmental head. "The President and the American People thank you for your support."

How did I feel about it all? Confused, sad, angry, scared and worried, sometimes numb. My sanity and balance were saved by watching my beautiful baby boy coo and then chuckle. His first smile melted my anger and reminded me that I had to look deep inside to find the strength and courage to live day by day and hold onto faith and hope. My husband did not get to see our blue-eyed boy with the blonde peach-fuzz hair until Teddy was 9 months old. Did these experiences change me? You betcha. I learned to rely on my own talents and intuition. I became a woman, a mother, and finally, once again, a wife.

[Judi is a student of Jacqueline Kudler.]
"Inca Kola, coffee?" The young flight attendants in tight fitting skirts, with too much make-up and gold jewelry are pushing beverage carts down the aisle.

"Coffee, please, but no cream," I say. Peruvians like sweets and often the coffee is presweetened which I don't like. Inca Kola, the national soft drink, contains even more sugar, almost drowning the lemon verbena flavor of the greenish yellow soft drink. I prefer the coffee, even though it is sweet.

The two-hour flight from Lima to Iquitos in northeastern Peru is the last leg of my trip from San Francisco to the Amazon Rainforest. I am looking forward to spending a couple of days in Iquitos and then going with my friend Eloisa by boat to the Yarapa River where her mother Felicita has spent all her life and still lives.

Our plane has just reached its cruising altitude and I can see the Andes mountain range below us. The plane appears to be barely skimming the snowcapped high peaks, which look majestic, desolate, and untouched by humans. The view makes me feel small and insignificant, like an insect, here today and gone tomorrow in the grand scheme of time.

I have taken this trip many times since I first visited the Amazon Rainforest over 20 years ago, but I always feel the same happy anticipation when I get close to my destination. The plane is filled with tourists and Peruvians. Some of the men are returning home for a vacation from oil exploration jobs, mothers with kids from visiting family and shopping in Lima. Sturdy woven plastic bags containing gifts or used clothes for resale in Iquitos' mercados are peeking out from under seats or have been crammed into the overhead bins. Next to me a mother with a sleeping baby in one arm offers a drink to her toddler son, "Quieres Inca Kola, hijo? Tome!"

A group of American tourists occupies a number of seats in the front. They sound excited and ready for their jungle adventures, wearing the latest outdoor fashions from REI or Banana Republic---bug repelling shirts and hats, lightweight and fast drying pants which can be converted to shorts, hiking boots, and bandanas around their necks. Cameras and binoculars are ready in their fanny packs, guidebook and itinerary information flies back and forth across the aisles. The tourists will spend a few days, just enough to get a taste of the Rainforest, in one of the tourist lodges which offer excellent guides, good food, and accommodations still rustic enough to make the visitors' time in the jungle even more adventurous.

Listening to the tourists' chatter brings back memories when I was a first time tourist to this region. In 1990 I had found out about a 2-week trip to the Amazon Rainforest in Peru and signed up for it although my family and friends reminded me many times that I did not like hot, humid weather, hated mosquitoes and all other bugs, and was terrified of snakes and those infamous piranhas. I agreed with everyone's cautions but went anyway, not admitting how scared I really was. Many years later, I am as passionate about the Rainforest as on my first trip and have learned to put up with mosquito bites and always to be aware of potential dangers. I even think that tarantulas the size of a man's hand are beautiful --- with a bit of distance between us.

Today, unlike some of my fellow passengers, I am not wearing the latest jungle fashions, but well-worn jeans and an old T-shirt with a sparkly design on the front. I plan to leave those clothes as well as other hand-me-downs with my friends in the jungle. My suitcase is bursting at the seams with old as well as new T-shirts, pants, shorts, shoes, and underwear from the clearance racks at Ross and some special treats for my friend Felicita. She is the matriarch of a large family, always ready to take care of grandchildren when their parents are not able to. Often young adults leave the jungle life to look for better opportunities in the cities while their kids stay behind with family members for a while.

On my first trip, Felicita and her son Alejandro were working at the tourist camp on the Yarapa River where my group was staying. She was washing the tourists' laundry and Alejandro was
an assistant guide. They and some of Felicita's other children (she has three sons and five daughters) and their families lived nearby in a small village of about 100 people. The majority of the population living along the river banks are mestizos, called *riberehos*. There are no roads, no electricity, all traffic is by boat. Most jungle families make a living by fishing, working their small *chacras* (farms), and going on hunting trips to remote areas.

On my second trip to this area, a year later with my husband, Felicita and her family quickly became our friends. After a couple of more trips the following year, my husband and I (actually it was mostly my idea) built our own jungle house close to the village. It was a basic hut like all other homes in the village, on stilts, with a palm leaf roof and no walls, except our bedroom was enclosed.

Felicita and her family became our teachers with patience, encouragement, and many giggles as we learned about life in the jungle. After a while, I could cook rice on the wood stove without burning it. I learned how to use a few medicinal plants, dance to crazy Colombian rock music piped at full blast from boom boxes, but Felicita refused to let me clean fish with a machete after a first dismal attempt. She said, "I will clean your fish, you are going to cut off your hand trying to. No mas!"

I check my watch now. In a few minutes, the captain will announce that we are approaching the City of Iquitos. In Lima, I requested a window seat on the right side of the plane because 10 minutes before our arrival I will be able to see my destination, the Yarapa River area near the headwaters of the Amazon, that is, if there is no cloud cover. I must have dozed off a bit but wake up quickly when I hear a voice over the intercom.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we are starting our descent to the City of Iquitos. Please fasten your seatbelts," the captain announces in Spanish and English.

I feel the plane losing altitude; we will land in Iquitos in a few minutes. The flat landscape of the immense river system below looks just as desolate and uninhabited as the high Andes Mountains. I press my face against the window trying to identify the rivers. A few scattered clouds obstruct my view, but I can see the dark expanses of the Rainforests with small rivers slithering through them toward the big river. There are so many of them. I can only guess where the small Yarapa River on the eastern side of the Amazon is. From our altitude, the villages, the small *chakras* (farms) along the riverbanks, or canoes and small boats navigating the rivers are hidden from my view but I know they are there. Right below us is the confluence of the Marañon and Ucayali Rivers forming the Amazon and there is the town of Nauta, a small frontier town perched on the banks of the Marañon. I have visited Nauta often, stocking up on staples like instant coffee, rice, sugar, gasoline, kerosene, and other staples needed in our jungle home.

I can only guess where my final destination is, the village of Jaldar on the Yarapa River where my friend Felicita lives in her blue house. Looking down, I wonder if she is doing her laundry sitting surrounded by plastic pans on her wooden dock by the river right now. She might even see my plane if she looks up. I feel like waving to her. In a couple of days, I will be there and I can already imagine the big smile on Felicita's face when I unpack her presents. I am bringing her a bottle of Kahlua, which she loves. It is the biggest bottle I could find at the Duty Free Shop in Miami. Then there is lots of Icy Hot Cream for her various body aches as she calls her rheumatism. She is probably in her late 70s by now, but she does not really know the year she was born. I have also bought a black bed sheet for her. She claims black brings luck and keeps the bad spirits away. A big bottle of Pepto Bismol completes her stash of gifts. She does not like the pink pills because she thinks they are not as effective as the liquid.

I close my eyes for a moment and can almost smell the musty humidity of the jungle and feel the clean air caressing my face. I see myself going to sleep under a mosquito net, listening to the night noises of the jungle. I imagine hearing the nighthawk crying out from a tall tree, the haunting call of the *panguana* (tinamou) to his mate from the buttress roots of a ficus tree, and the *Tahuayo* bird flying overhead calling, "Come back, come back."

[Christiane is a student of Jacqueline Kudler.]
SEPARATION
When the time comes, you know--
Like in childbirth, when hard labor begins--
There's no mistaking that kind of pain.
The boa constrictor of fear tightens
around your chest and then tightens some more
squeezing all the oxygen out of your body
It's hard to catch a breath
There's no room for lungs inside the chest cavity
as the heart expands, beating faster and faster--
that all-powerful engine banging and clanging
with the anticipation of some sort of climax
some kind of explosion--
Something's about to go off--you want it to be him
evacuating the premises--
but it's you, some weird, unrecognizable self,
bursting out of a too small, too cramped world,
a confinement you've outgrown
(Inside your head it's impossible to listen to reason.)
There's a new you about to be born
into a broad expanse of new, new, new--
it's you, wide-eyed with terror,
crying tears of welcome, tears of joy.
Linda Enders [student of Prartho Sereno]

I AM A CROW
Sometimes I feel like a gerbil, running around
on his wheel!
But I am a big crow.
I was in a movie called The Exorcist.
I suppose I'm spooky and scary,
but not insensitive.
I carry a few diseases;
and you don't want to know
the type of stuff I eat --
pretty ugly stuff,
but no nonsense. When I'm tired of eating ugly stuff,
I steal the un-hatched eggs
of other birds.
I come to scream when you have negative spirits around
and tricky fate waiting for you.
You may think I'm very disgusting, but when I
spread my big, black, shiny wings
I am just as beautiful
as any eagle you worship.
Howard Kinney [student of Robert-Harry Rovin]

TESTAMENT
I don't worry about the world,
it will go on spinning without me.
What I know is that those friends
who clipped papers, paid bills,
took care of business...are gone.
What I know is that the morning sun
drizzles windows with light
spun from the bee's sweet honeycomb.
It is late, and the wind pummels trees,
bows down the cypress, scatters leaves.
There is an opening in the sky
where the howl of midnight
beckons the invisible ones
who wander the Milky Way,
kindle the sun, pour life into oceans...
those waters which someday
may carry me far.
Barbara Welch Brooks [student of Prartho Sereno]

A CHILD'S LIFE IS LIKE A PIECE OF PAPER
A child's life is like a piece of paper - Chinese proverb.
But what of the Japanese?
On that blank sheet of paper
do they see creases already set and wonder,
What kind of origami are you, little one?
Will you take flight like a crane,
hop like a frog, bloom like a lotus
or shine like a lantern?
Whatever you are,
whatever folds you make,
my hand is ready
to lend strength
to your beauty.
Stephanie Noble [student of Prartho Sereno]

I cannot deliver judgment upon any one's manuscript, because an individual's verdict is worthless. It might underrate a work of high merit and lose it to the world, or it might overrate a trashy production and so open the way for its infliction upon the world. The great public is the only tribunal competent to sit in judgment upon a literary effort, and it is best to lay it before that tribunal at the outset, since in the end it must stand or fall by that mighty court's decision anyway.
Mark Twain
ONCE HALLOWED HALLS
On a campus walkabout, bright buildings sprout where once stood my painting studio and classrooms. How many threads of my life began inside those dingy walls?
I peer through a cyclone fence to witness the wreckers claw as it ravages Harlan Center where I spent treasured time in almost every classroom -- all gone or going.
Oh yes, they were awkward icy rooms, but however flawed, that receptacle of rich memories is now a memory itself.
Fusselman Hall still stands, a little oddment, a jewel, where 35 years ago I learned to meditate, the life thread that strengthens all the rest.
Will it too meet the wrecking ball?
Li Po wrote: Here we sit, the mountain and I, till only the mountain remains.
I learned that here, in some room turned rubble. The sight of the mountain steadies me now, and I return to my poetry classroom.
Stephanie Noble [student of Prartho Sereno]

DIVORCE
"Don't do it," my mother said, "it's like a death."
And that was the end of her advice.
Another way to say "Do as I say, not as I do," a family motto.
She was right, of course--divorce is a dreadful way to end a love affair, bust up a family.
But isn't it one of the things that happens while being carried along by the current of life?
One of those things that just happens, like coming down with cancer and you might not survive?
Or jumping into the swiftly-flowing river, forgetting how close to the falls, misjudging the swiftness of the current?
But you jumped.
You felt the exhilaration of the sudden icy cold, the gurgling in your ears as the water closed over your head the refreshment of the breeze that rides above the ripples as you bobbed back to the surface the jostling of pebbles under your feet the slickness of moss And what a ride!
At first you laughed and squealed, giddy with the sheer delight of it.
Crowds lined the river bank, cheering you on, waving handkerchiefs, tossing daisies into the stream. When did they begin to holler warnings--beware the falls!
As the current gained momentum and you were carried beyond them and out of sight, carried toward the inevitable and then falling, falling, falling bumped and bruised by boulders plunging down deep and deeper and then up and up toward the light, opening your eyes in the pool of calm, at the foot of the falls-- a new life.
Linda Enders [student of Prartho Sereno]
“Use what you possess. The woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those which sang best.”

-Henry Van Dyke