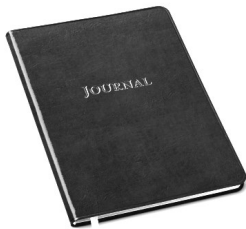


SENIOR STORIES WEHO



A collection of writings by Seniors



sponsored by the
City of West Hollywood
Senior Advisory Board

In commemoration of
Senior Month

May 2019

SENIOR STORIES WEHO

is a project of the City of West Hollywood's Senior Advisory Board,
published in commemoration of Senior Month, May 2019.



CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD

8300 Santa Monica Blvd.

West Hollywood, CA 90069

(323) 848-6400

www.weho.org

TTY Line (for hearing impaired) = (323) 848-6496

WEST HOLLYWOOD CITY COUNCIL

Mayor John D'Amico

Mayor Pro Tempore Lindsey Horvath

Councilmember John Duran

Councilmember John Heilman

Councilmember Lauren Meister

SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD

Joy Nuell, Chair

John Allendorfer, Vice-Chair

Esther Baum

Pat Dixon

Sofia Gelman

Michael Hollingsworth

Bernice Levin

William McNeeley

A. Lee Walkup

*For additional copies of this publication and information about writing classes
available in the community, please call (323) 848-6510*

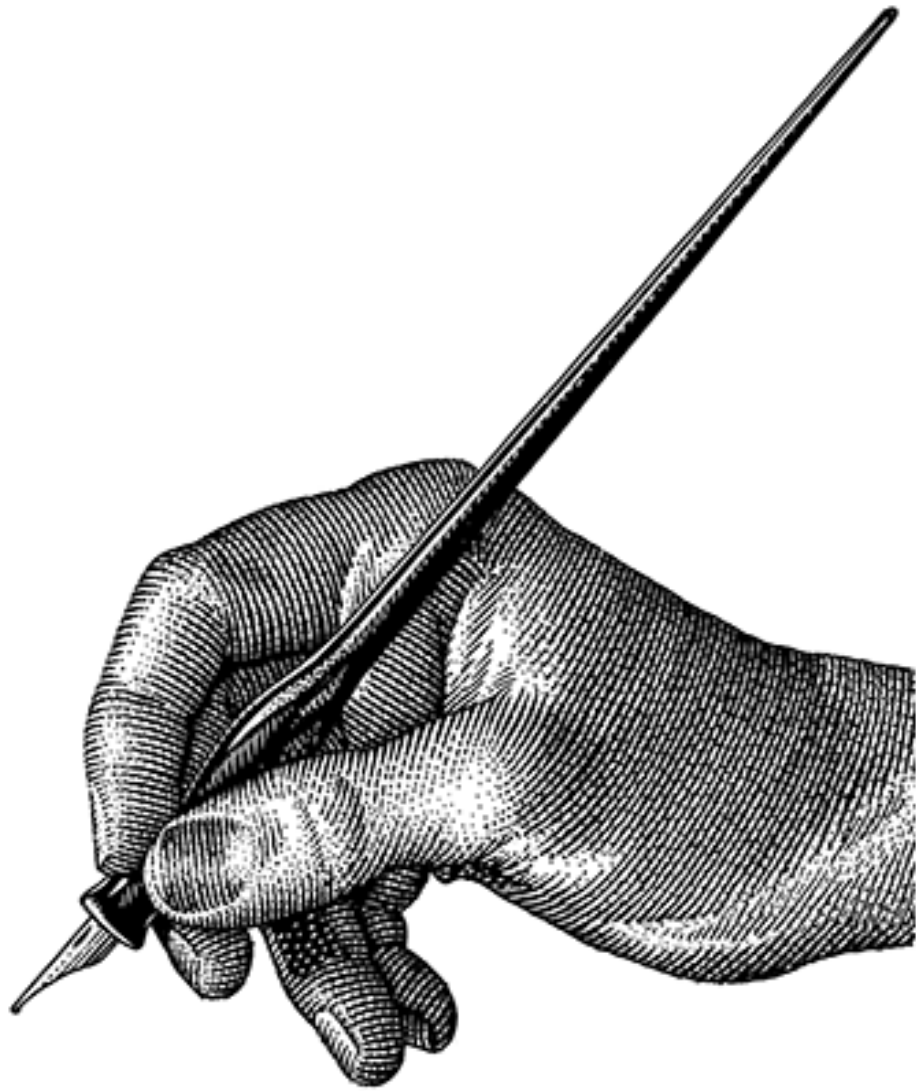


TABLE OF CONTENTS

SENIOR STORIES WEHO: AN INTRODUCTION <i>Charles Flowers - City Poet Laureate of West Hollywood</i>	6
THE INEVITABLE <i>Michael Baroto</i>	8
WALKING IN WEHO <i>Charlie Becker</i>	9
SHIRTLESS <i>Gordon Blitz</i>	10-11
DREAMS OF BOYHOOD - THEY NEVER STOP... <i>Carleton Cronin</i>	12-13
LOOKING BACK <i>Pat Dixon</i>	14-15
332 BED A <i>Myra ("Mikie") Friedman</i>	16-17
BEYOND AND BEHIND and MY EXTREME LINE OF CONDUCT <i>Sofia Gelman</i>	18-19
РАЗГОВОР С ИГРАЛЬНЫМ "АВТОМАТОМ" <i>Nina Geshel</i>	20-21
CONTEMPLATION OF THE SERENITY PRAYER <i>Tamara Gurevich</i>	22-23
BUGS OF INTEREST <i>P. M. Komac</i>	24-26

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IMPROVISATION CAN DELIGHT....AND SET YOU FREE <i>Barbara Meltzer</i>	27-28
WHY DO WE LAUGH? <i>Muriel N. Mines</i>	29-30
UNTITLED <i>Rita Mojica</i>	31
SCORPIO'S SERENADE <i>Scorpio J. Pecorino</i>	32
THE STORY OF SCHUBERT AND STEWART <i>Stewart Prosis</i>	33
GET OUT THE VOTE! <i>Sue Tanner</i>	34



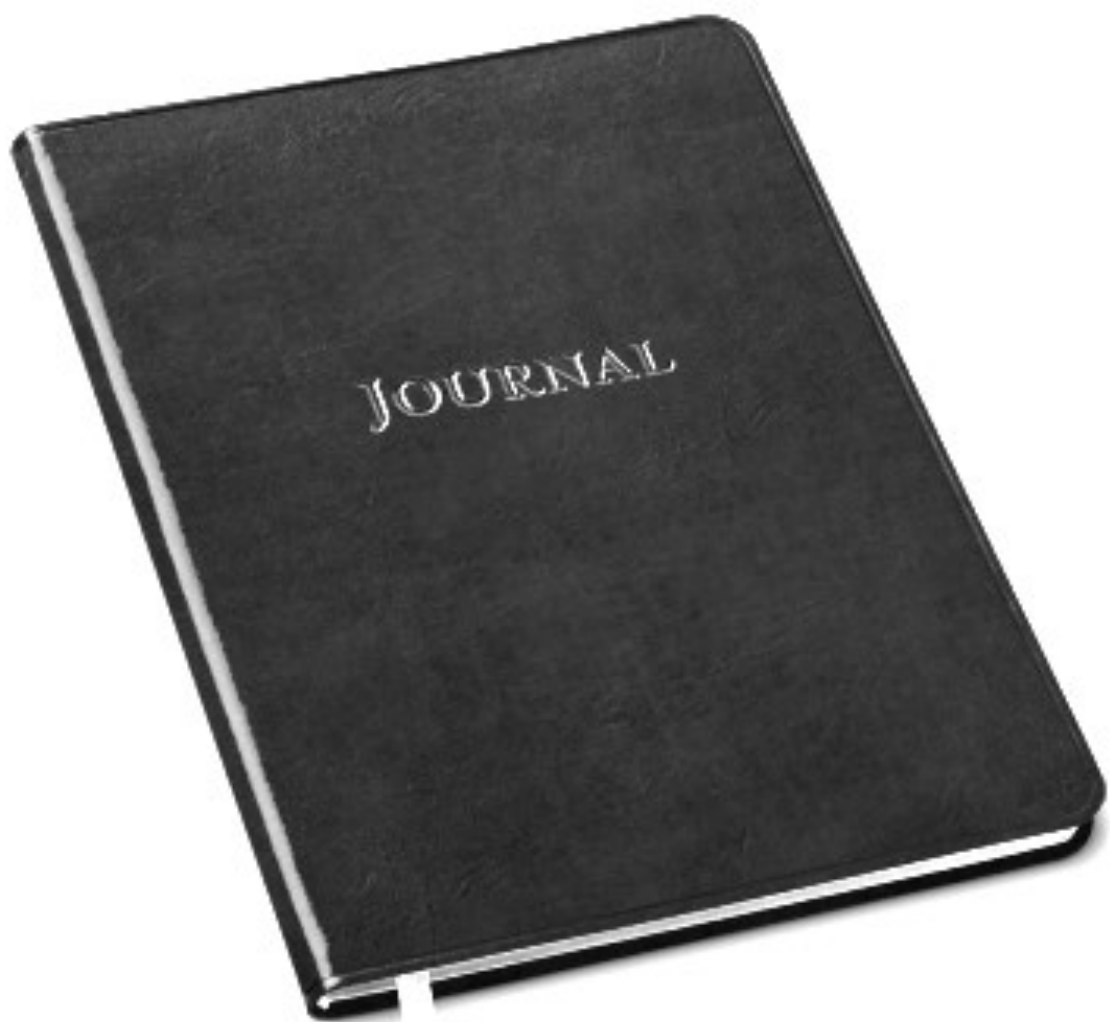
SENIOR STORIES WEHO: AN INTRODUCTION

by

Charles Flowers

City Poet Laureate of West Hollywood





THE INEVITABLE

by
Michael Baroto

It's difficult,
The inevitable.
It's difficult
But not impossible.
Impossible would be,
Never having cared
In the first place.
And of course, we both know,
That's just not true.

It's inevitable,
I guess...
And as natural
As the break of day.
The sound of spring rain.
The soft petals of a kiss.
Or the leaves that fall
Upon a heart that stills.

You will leave me soon.
I will miss you...
With all my heart.

It's inevitable,
I know...
But I will never forget,
The gentleness
Of your sighs,
The loneliness of letting go
And the promises,
We made together.



Michael Baroto made his writing debut with the first public reading of his play 'The Waiting Room' at the Davidson/Valentini Theatre in 2010. He is a member of The Dramatists Guild of America, and has taken courses on Writing for Animation; Screenplay and Introduction to the Art; Writing for the Stage; Playwriting 101; and is currently in his 4th year with Steven Reigns' 'My Life is Poetry' workshop.

WALKING IN WEHO

by
Charlie Becker

Where do homeless people go
when it's raining,
the night catches them
staring ahead
but nowhere to go,
sleeping in their gasless cars
or doorways on the boulevard,
under awnings
wrapped in stiff, blue tarps,
nodding off on bus benches
and the library cushioned chairs,
where, searching hungrily through abandoned trash,
where, their eyes cold and glazed over
feeling the chill's cough deep inside shallowed chests,
where, if they have no shoes and their fingertips go numb,
where, when the sidewalks of their tents push hard against naked backs,
where, when they think they're all alone
and loneliness stings like an ongoing slap,
where, when they can't remember,
where, when poverty crushes the person
they were meant to become,
where, when they don't believe in themselves
because of limiting lies others told,
where, when these storms,
where, when hunger and thirst,
where, when the police,
where, when sticks and stones,
where, in the darkness of after-hours,
where
where do homeless people go
when it stops raining?



Charlie Becker has been living in West Hollywood for more than 25 years now. He is a retired speech and language therapist who enjoys studying and writing poetry. He also likes to draw using colored pencils. Charlie's first book of poems and drawings, "Friends My Poems Gave Me", was published in 2016 by World Stage Press in Los Angeles. Charlie finds inspiration each morning when he goes walking in West Hollywood.

SHIRTLESS
by
Gordon Blitz



The wind whipped around my head as I climbed Crescent Heights. The ski wool cap tried to protect my leaking nose. Each step found a rigid palm tree branch blocking my path. Empty Christmas streets refreshed the walk. The tornado winds stop as the dark quietness makes Los Angeles into a barren post nuclear wasteland. The Christmas greeting spewing all day brought smiles. My destination is the Director's Guild for a screening of *A Star Is Born*. WEHO is being reborn.

As I straddle along Sunset, my mystic walk dissolves. The line at the Laugh Factory comes into my view. The memory of my standup comedy endeavor is glowing. Creativity peaked when I wrote my comedy set. The showcase at the GLBT Village surrounded me with supportive amateurs. The crowd of thirty black box theater watchers was starved for comedy and we delivered.

As my sightlines leave the Laugh Factory, I hear a scream.

“Get out of here. Leave us alone.” is bellowing across the street. A shirtless boy is thrown into the on-going Sunset traffic. The honking begins. A CBS mobile news van is perched on the corner. Are they filming the fight or covering Christmas Day at the Laugh Factory? Another boy pushes shirtless to the ground. Two girls wave their hands as they squeal. The louder shouts make my hearing aid buzz.

My ecstatic mystical walk is impeded even though I am on the south side of Sunset. Each time shirtless tries to rebound to his feet, he is thrown down by a different boy. The looky loos expose their I-phones and capture the drama.

The blaring horns form a nightmare rhythm. Where are the police? The pitchy screams keep repeating “Leave us alone. Get away”. Shirtless is running across Sunset. Shirtless flies and is knocked to the ground. I am frozen.

Shirtless is being pulled off the street and boys are plunging their fists into his naked stomach. He doesn't shriek. He looks untouched. Am I imagining this?

“Stay away from the club. You tried to grab my spot on the line.”

Is this an act to get attention on CBS news? Who would start a fight over where you stood in line?

I hear snickering laughter. The boys are hugging each other.

“Hey what’s going on?” I asked

Shirtless tells me “This was an act. I’m trying to get some traction for my Laugh Factory debut.”

“Where’s your shirt?”

“Being shirtless is part of my performance. On Christmas I assumed drivers are on their best behavior. I was in a trusting mode. Are you ok?”

“Just scared shitless from your act. I’m just starting to learn standup.”

“Wow. Come to the club tonight. I’ll treat.”

“Thanks, but I have a rendezvous with my husband at the movies.”

“Cool, here’s my card. Let me know where you are performing.”

His hugging squeeze calms my nerves. When I see my husband in line for the film I smile.

“I have a tale. This Christmas will be an indelible day.”

Gordon Blitz had a story just published in Emeritus Chronicles. He’s done comedy stand up at The Ruby, Tao, and The GLBT Village. He’s performed stories at Silverlake’s AKBAR in Silverlake and recorded the Queer Slam podcast on I-tunes. He participated in “Hear My Story” on KPFK’s IMRU.

DREAMS OF BOYHOOD - THEY NEVER STOP...

by
Carleton Cronin

“When you come to the end of a perfect day and you sit alone with your thoughts...” goes the old song as a reminder that the dreams of our youth are still with us in our twilight years.

Just about every human has a dream - that is, an ideal to realize, a dreamy comprehension of what you will make of your life. A beginning dream is always a fantasy, but many people are able to run with the dream and make it become reality. *“I have a dream,”* said Martin Luther King, a phrase every American knows and most understand. Dreams have ever been the theme of poets, songwriters and novelists, taking flight into the ethereal realm and inhabiting it and extending the dream so that it has shape and substance, allowing others to share it. The least complicated among us can understand dreams which are hopes. Bloody Mary, the wonderful character from the musical play *South Pacific* summed up her knowledge about the importance of having a dream in these vibrant verses of the song *Happy Talk*: *“Keep talkin’ happy talk. Talk about things you’d like to do. You gotta have dream cuz if you don’t have a dream how you gonna have a dream come true?”*

“Dreams of glory” was the theme of such 19th century British writers as G.A. Henty and Rudyard Kipling with their adventure tales of young soldiers during the heydays of the British Empire, as they strode across much of Asia Minor, conquering “fuzzy-wuzzies” and “thugees” to bring ‘civilization’ to every corner of its far flung realm. Empire building has never been a pretty business and these novels certainly over-romanticized the process. We had our own American writers such as James Fennimore Cooper, Zane Grey, Owen Wister and Kenneth Roberts. They all presented the basic dreams upon which our country built its democracy. Of course, these were exploitative tales of dreams to expand the frontier (while decimating the native population), of opening the West and inventing that most durable character, the American cowboy - out of the writers’ dreams of course, the man, resilient, courageous, hardy, inventive and monosyllabic. The character lives on not much changed from the pages of *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Virginian*, *Riders of the Purple Sage* and *Northwest Passage*.

That these stories have lasting power to invigorate imagination and further dreams is the fact that each has been made into a movie at least once. That we moderns now understand the world differently does not diminish the value of those dreamers' tales. Life is an expanding dream and it feeds from every possible trough of thought or knowledge. I read these books as a youth when only radio invaded one's composure or interrupted a train of thought. That is what made them so entrenched in my memory.

My dream? Was to become a writer, a storyteller. Regardless of any commercial success, my dream continues - and now gives impetus to my desire to resurrect from my files of 2007, my folk opera, *Simon*, based on the builder of the Watts Towers. Will I ever finish it? Who knows - but my dream is to do so.



LOOKING BACK

by
Pat Dixon

For years, during the 60's, I wore a long braid down my back. When I married, I had the braid. My hair was very long and if I say so myself, very beautiful, silky and lustrous. When we got married, I wore my hair loose for a while and then I wore the braid; he loved my hair; he loved me.

It was in San Francisco, the 60's were going strong. We lived in Potrero Hills with our son. We spent the weekend sitting in golden Gate Park with a group of friends, listening to the Grateful Dead and putting anti-war signs in our window. We joined the Peace and Freedom Party and felt we had a purpose.

I didn't drive, in fact I was terrified of driving, so most mornings, if I was ready with our son, he would drive us down the hill and drop us off at the park on his way to work. I stayed in the park most of the day with our son, packing up our snacks, drinks and lunch, and lots of books to read. At some point he would pick us up. But the braid stayed, as did the long dresses, the macrobiotic diet and the basic idealism. Peace, yes. Freedom, even more so.

One day he was late in getting us. When he finally picked us up he told me that he was kept at work because of a meeting

Again, a week later when I did not go to the park he came home very late, well past 8:00. It was before cell phones, and I was frantic until he walked in and told me he had been delayed at the library. I just sat and brushed my long hair and braided it. It was my anchor for some reason. It felt like part of my identity, the way he was, the way our lifestyle was.

Eventually, I felt something was wrong but I couldn't put my finger on it. We were the bright couple in our group of friends. We had dinner parties every weekend at one or another's house. We went camping together, we celebrated birthdays. I didn't think anything could change.

But of course it could, and did. Nights out without an excuse, and I never asked for an explanation. I don't think I wanted one. My braid grew longer, my skirts shorter, the Peace and Freedom Party meetings held at someone's house disappeared.

As did the macrobiotic diet, the camping out on weekends. Long stretches in Golden Gate Park when we would be stoned out on some psychedelic drug became the norm.

We really didn't talk about his late nights out, my sudden interest in a local acting group, my frequent trips to NYC to see my family.

One day as I was walking down the street with my son in the rain, I looked up at a car that was waiting for a light. The license plate and the car looked familiar; it was a plymouth valiant, the same make of our car. But a woman was behind the wheel, and I looked at her and then again at the license plate, the numbers of which matched our license.

How could this be, I thought? What is a woman doing driving our car? I thought it was at the shop, or so he said, but no, here it is, parked at a light while I trudge up the hill holding my son's hand and the groceries while rain poured down.

I don't know how long it took me, not that long, really.

I went home, undid my braid, took a scissor out and cut my hair. I then packed up a suitcase, put his clothes in it and place it outside the front door. I then turned off the lights, read my son a story, one with a happy ending, and went to bed.

And that was when I decided to keep my hair short, my spirits and dreams high and hope for the best in the future.



332 BED A
by
Myra (“Mikie”) Friedman



This year marks the 25th anniversary of my becoming an amputee. One month after my 50th birthday, I was diagnosed with a rare and deadly cancer, a mixoid chondro sarcoma. In order to save my life my left (dominant) arm and shoulder were amputated on July 27, 1994.

I was kept at USC University Hospital for one month to heal and to receive therapy. The first thing they did was put a clipboard and a pen on my bed. They told me to write, because I was now going to have to write with my right hand. For some reason all I could write were poems.

The following poem started out in my mind to be humorous, but I found that by the end of it I was sobbing (I still cry when I read it). 18 years after I lost my arm, the tumor traveled to my lungs, and I had a lobectomy of the lower lobe of my right lung. I wrote another poem about that experience. A happy ending to the story is that 25 years later, I'm still here and trying to give back.

The PT's here
To walk with me
She says to start my day
The chart says
Work on exercise
With 332 bed A

The OT helps me
Wash my clothes
Then fold and put them away
The chart says
Help with life skills
For 332 Bed A

Two speech folks come
With Wechsler tests
They rate each word I say.
The chart says
Grade the mental skills
Of 332 Bed A

Nutritionists are next in line
They ask how much I weigh
The chart says
Count the calories
Of 332 Bed A

The RT wants
To play a game
I tell him, "not today."
The chart says
Check the attitude
Of 332 Bed A

This long parade
Of therapists,
Who'll never know the way
It feels to live
Without an arm
In 332 Bed A

*Myra "Mikie" Friedman
1994*

Mikie Friedman was born two days before D-Day in Chicago and has lived in West Hollywood for 39 years. A performer of one sort or another all her life, she received her BA in speech and theater with a minor in English Lit. and history.

For 25 years Mikie tended bar and was the first woman bartender at the famed Pump Room in Chicago. After losing her arm and shoulder to cancer at 50, she received her teaching credential and taught ESL for 17 years at Los Angeles Community Adult School.

Two years ago Mikie joined the West Hollywood Disabilities Advisory Board. In her free time she likes to play scrabble, sing, write personalized nursery rhymes, rail about politics, and cook. She is a lifelong Cubs fan, and also spends too much time playing on her iPad.

BEYOND AND BEHIND

by
Sofia Gelman

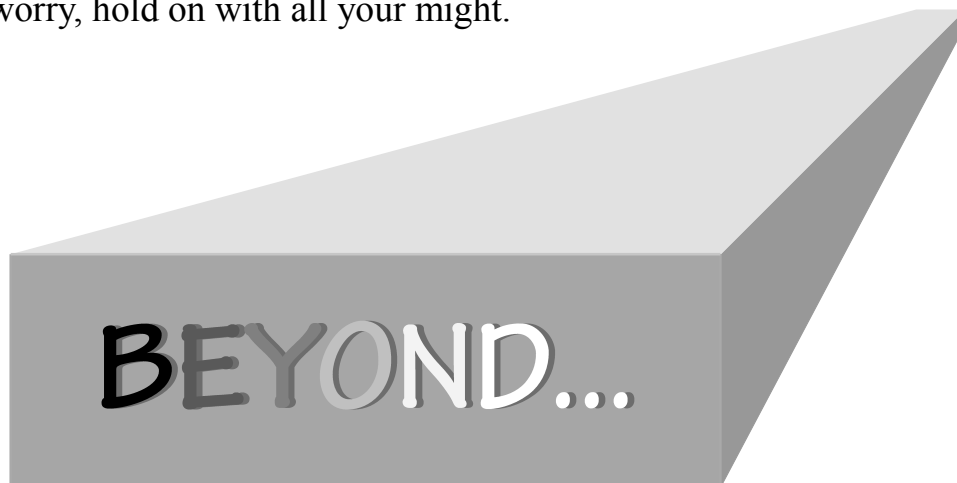
“Beyond” is always searching for everything new;
It is curious, but has its point of view.
“Behind” criticizes it, tries to pursue,
And even takes it to the court and sues.

To say something unusual ”Beyond” is not ashamed;
Its mind works constantly to avoid doing the same.
“Beyond” is an inventor, a hero, a pioneer;
“Behind” is a coward who frightened if nobody is near.

When “Behind” asks tiredly: “Let us stop and rest”;
“Beyond” considers wisely-only a strong effort does the best.
While “Behind” is walking in the East, “Beyond” is running to the West:
It is digging deep or flying high to find a scientific zest.

“Beyond’s” ideas are intelligent and bright,
They deserve to win because they are right,
Although they seem unreal, insoluble, assigned to be thrown,
Miraculously, their importance has grown.

“Beyond”, you are my leader, my spirit, my light,
I am proud of you; I’ll follow you blindly and even fight;
You can count on me; I am on your side,
So, don’t worry, hold on with all your might.



MY EXTREME LINE OF CONDUCT

by
Sofia Gelman

It was the beginning of a new century when our City of West Hollywood organized a meeting for discussing who would be the future presidents for serving our West Hollywood. For that they used the empty building of the previous Trader Joe's store that stayed empty for years. For that they installed many very nicely prepared posters about every candidate with their outlook for the future of our city.

As you can understand, there were many people from our Boards and supporters. There was very nice entertainment and good food.

As we were excited with our discussions and friendly relationships, suddenly appeared at the Movietown Plaza a huge truck full with protesters. In a minute we could see all of them trying to go inside and the head of the protesters stayed on the truck with a loudspeaker blaming our candidates with dirty words.

All of us were shocked. I couldn't believe myself, how I opened the door and appeared in front of the huge can asked the person on the truck, "To whom are you speaking? It seems that you are speaking to the wall and no one is listening to you. I'm a Senior Advisory Board member. Please come to our meeting, explain your thoughts and our Board members will discuss with you how to improve our city." He thanked me and immediately gathered his people and then disappeared.

When I came back everyone applauded and asked me, "What did you tell them?" I responded, "I'm a neurologist and hypnotized them." All of us laughed and continued our job.



РАЗГОВОР С ИГРАЛЬНЫМ “АВТОМАТОМ”

by

Nina Geshel

Подошла я к “автомату “,
Говорю: “ Ну как дружок”?!
“Ну не будь же ты нахалом”!-
Дай же выиграть разок.

Да что б в тебе замкнуло.
Чтоб ты перегорел,
Разок бы долбануло,
Небось бы подобрел

Сколько лет к тебе мы ездим,
В рот тебе бросаем деньги,
Все равно ты смотришь зверем-
Отдохни ты хоть маленько.

Две жизни ты не проживешь,
И от жадности умрешь,
Как сыч глядишь ты на людей,
И ты становишься все злей.

Посмотри, как ты раздулся-
Развалишься от жадности,
Уже под тяжестью согнулся,
Унялся бы хоть к старости.

Ах, однурукий ты – бандит!
Куда полиция глядит?
Ты в драке руку потерял...
И кто тебе гражданство дал?

Мы же все пенсионеры,
Получаем “эс-эс-ай”,
В казино теряем веру,
Ты о нас не забывай.

Кому-то, видно, в лапу положил?
Сертификат себе купил,
“Язык” не знаешь: “бэ” да “мэ”,-
Одни лишь доллары в уме.

Что-то рано ты зазнался!
Для кого ты все копишь?
Для начальства что ль стараешься?-
Зря! От них получишь шиш.

Пристроился на бойком месте,
Нет у тебя ни совести, ни чести.
Дождешься – ревизор придет,
Тебя он в чувство приведет.

Душа твоя бумажная,
А сердце из железа,
Стоишь почти раздетый...
Чтоб ты ослеп за это.

Что? Задрожал? Задергался?
И сразу потускнел,
Ох, знаешь ты, безбожник!-
Чужие деньги ел.

Аппендикс воспалился? -
Да чтоб ты развалился!
Вон посмотри твой Босс идет,
Сейчас порядок наведет!

Что взяточник, дождался? -
Уже и обмарался?!
Не ел бы чужой пищи... -
Ну вот и стал ты нищий!
Не оберешься сраму –
Свалили тебя в яму.

А мы играем честно и получаем удовольствие,
Живем по средствам и с чистой совестью.
Поиграли, посмеялись, пошутили,
И восвоеси возвратились,
А завтра?!
Будет день и будет пища!
А мы? - Другое казино отыщем!

Нина Гешел
Апрель, 1999г.



CONTEMPLATION OF THE SERENITY PRAYER

by
Tamara Gurevich

“God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.”

Reinhold Niebuhr (1934)

I read this wise statement many years ago, somewhere on a poster. I didn't know who the author was or where it was from, but after reading it, I have been keeping it in mind because of the great impression I got from the statement. I decided to find out where it is from. I went to the library and with the librarian's assistance, looking over many books, I found it!

The statement was written by the famous American theologian Reinhold Neibuhr. He taught at New York's Union Theological Seminary and was an associate professor of the philosophy or religion. He was also a guest lecturer at Oxford, Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and other American and British universities. He wrote many historical and religious works.

He wrote, “if faith produces fanatic fury rather than charity, it becomes as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” His realistic view of man once led him to remark, “Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.” These statements are important and timely in our cruel century when terrorists commit cruel crimes based on religious reasons.

The Serenity Prayer was written in 1934 in the work, *Reflection on the End of an Era*. I was impressed by the Serenity Prayer that I take it as a rule in my life. This wise quotation not only interests me but gives me a way to act according to circumstances of life. Life is a complicated thing. Sometimes it brings us joy and satisfaction; sometimes it brings us sorrow and dissatisfaction. People try to get more success and happiness, but are not always successful. Some people are passive and some are active. Passive people accept all good and bad things that happen in their lives like fate. They don't try to change something to the best; they are submissive to their fate. In contrast to these people, active people are used to acting in all cases. They try to reach what they intend to get. They don't believe in fate and consider that all things could be changed to their satisfaction. Of course, these people are disappointed or even depressed if they don't get what they want. I think that activeness is better than passiveness. But activeness has to have limits defined by possibilities.

I know many people in my community, who are used to making decisions and to get satisfactory results in difficult and seemingly insoluble cases. But now their circumstances have changed. Because of their age and insufficient knowledge of the language and the lifestyle in the United States, they have lost many of their skills. They are not satisfied with life and sometimes are depressed. I always tell them, "look and see the difference between what you can change and what you cannot."

I often repeat the Serenity Prayer for myself too. The prayer encourages me to accept life with serenity and to find joy and pleasure in life despite age and status.



BUGS OF INTEREST

**by
P. M. Komac**

Snails have a special place in my heart. Perhaps it's because of the 'blue ribbon' I won in third grade for 'most unusual pet' at the school's animal show.

By that time we'd settled in our new house, 818 South Susanna, West Covina. It was another Suburban tract home but this one in California.

My mother and her sister Merle each spent a large part of their days cleaning. It sometimes seemed they were in competition as to who could get a better grip on the germ situation.

Interestingly, when I developed a skin rash on my hands--the palms would peel and bleed--no one gave thought to any of the many chemicals my mother had begun incorporating into her battle.

Instead a doctor, whom I suspect had been prejudiced, decided my allergy was due to animal fur. Supposedly Poodles have fur much like human hair so mom allowed us to get 'Max'.

I remember our Dad was so excited. He found the little miniature puppy advertised in the newspaper. After buying Max for fifty dollars, quite a bundle in those days, Dad bought the clippers and learned how to do the grooming himself. And he had great plans for getting 'pick of the litter' when Max would be sired out during his adulthood.

But Max never made it to adulthood. He swallowed a marble and died. He'd been sick a few days before being taken to the vet. The first question I asked my mother when she picked me up from school was "How's Max?" His death shook me to my core and I was satisfied to do without furred pets for sometime.

Bugs became my creatures of choice.

Our back yard seemed one giant research facility. I would set up pencils and paper on the patio table so that people could come and after viewing insects in their natural settings, write notes. It greatly puzzled me that no one ever visited my 'bug zoo'.

But I spent day after day crawling and peeking about.

Once I found a snail with a hole in the shell. I took a piece of scotch tape and some black finger paint to patch her up. After setting her loose I found her again, in what seemed to my kid mind, a long time later. She didn't win me a blue ribbon, but I did get a great sense of accomplishment from having saved her.

So I moved on to rescue other species.

We had a woodpile against the fence. Sometimes Dad brought pieces in to burn in the living room fireplace. It was a good house and our father worked very hard to make it nice for us. He even bought some special powder that he'd sprinkle on the fire to make it sparkle in colors.

Anyway, in my bug investigations I noticed that there were sacks of spider eggs stuck to many of the logs. Naturally I didn't want them to get burned up so I set about in a plan to relocate.

I'd take a pencil and carefully lift the sacks, carrying them to the fort Dad had built for Lonnie and me on the side of the house. There I would stick them to a 'safe' wooden sideboard. The fort was kind of dark and seldom used so it made a quiet, easy place for the eggs to hatch.

Each sack had a red dot on the bottom. The adult spiders each had a red dot on their stomachs.

As the eggs hatched with hundreds of spiders coming forth in each batch, I got the idea that the dot on the sacks was chemically matched to the dot on the moms and that the babies and mothers could recognize each other.

Maybe that was so, maybe not. But one thing for sure is that soon there were thousands of Black Widow spiders marching about.

How my Dad found out, I don't know; but he had a fit. My mother was practically apoplectic. And they didn't even realize the whole truth; that I'd been sitting day after day with deadly spiders walking all over me.

I don't know what happened to my spiders. It probably wasn't good. But between then and now, almost fifty years, I've crawled thru attics, basements and many areas teeming with all types of them. And I've never once been bitten. I believe they know somehow that I was a champion for their kind.

As to my 'fur' allergy; it grew quite tiresome. Kids didn't want to touch my hands. No one would choose me as a square dancing partner in school. And the worst—one day I walked into the classroom to overhear the teacher telling the other students not to pick on me because it wasn't my fault.

I'd had it with bleeding hands and I'd had it with God. I put on my fathers golf glove (this was before wearing a black glove had become popular) and shook my little fist up at the sky. I was so angry I just yelled and yelled, threatening the Heavens.

My allergy disappeared. My world was broadened and brightened.



P.M. Komac loves animals, children, teenagers and seniors ~ Plants too! The photo is of her dog Oso and pigeon Claude. She tried to find a picture of 'Hilda' (a great big spider) but it seems the computer hid her. Oh well, what can you do?

IMPROVISATION CAN DELIGHT....AND SET YOU FREE

**by
Barbara Meltzer**

I have never wanted to be an entertainer and still get nervous when I speak to groups. Appearing “foolish” is one of my greatest fears. But I have always believed that somewhere inside of me, the little girl who was shy, quiet and not very playful was longing to be set free.

In a moment of vulnerability, I revealed this to my friend Paul Sand, who happens to be an original member of Chicago’s The Second City improvisational comedy group. He suggested that I take an improv class and recommended Aretha Sills, the daughter of Second City founder Paul Sills and granddaughter of Viola Spolin, the originator of Theater Games.

And so there I was in a studio, on what started out as an average Saturday morning, walking around flapping my arms and cooing as I gamely tried to transform myself into a mourning dove. I had decided to take Aretha Sills’ weekend intensive improvisation workshop, and was playing a “game” called “Animal Images.” Why am I here, I wondered, as I flapped and cooed? And that was before I started conversing in gibberish.

So many opportunities to look foolish, I thought, but with trepidation and a dose of courage, I jumped feet first (literally) into Aretha’s class. We were a multigenerational group of 15 people called “players” in improv lingo. I was the oldest and the only first-timer.

Improvisation is all about spontaneity and being in the moment. There’s no script and nothing to memorize. As an example, in one game, Aretha directed three players to be seated in the middle of the room. Two would speak in gibberish. The third person had the difficult job of translating. It was very funny, and while the words meant nothing, it was fascinating to see how much body language and tone suggested a story.

While trying not to compare myself to others—one of my greatest skills—I participated in everything. In improv there is no right or wrong, no good or bad. Soon one begins to feel safe. By the second day of the weekend workshop, I sensed the little box opening and before I knew it, freedom flew out and “foolish” had transformed into “playful.” Spolin said that playing these games is a sort of vacation from one’s everyday self and the routine of everyday living. She’s right about that, but it’s so much more. Though exhausted after six hours a day (one for lunch) of playing, I felt myself swelling with pride and eager to share my story with others. I was already thinking about starting an improv group in my city.

Many of the players knew each other and had formed a community. I could feel myself being drawn into it and it was a lovely feeling. One player said, “improv opens your child mind. It’s like recess.” Also, the spontaneity of improv somehow enables folks to be less fearful of the unknown and to more readily see solutions for real life experiences.

I will be taking more improv classes. Though the fear still lingers, the “new” Barbara is eager to “play.” Or as Spolin has said, “Get out of your head, into the space and await the invisible stranger.” Thanks to Aretha Sills’ class, I found the stranger—and she happens to be me.

A long time resident of West Hollywood, Barbara Meltzer is the founder of Barbara Meltzer & Associates Public Relations. She serves on the West Hollywood Human Services Commission and is Vice President of the Friends of the West Hollywood Library Board. Barbara also serves as a commissioner on the LA County Commission for Older Adults.



WHY DO WE LAUGH?

by
Muriel N. Mines



I recall a time when I wanted to be a “stand-up-comic”. I dreamt of hosting a T.V. show called, “Kibbitzing with Mindy”.

When I lived in New York, I spent the summer months in the “Jewish Alps” - - - or “The Catskills”!

Most families went and rented a bungalow called “A Kuch-a-Laine” (kitchen of your own).

A Kuch-a-Laine is a bungalow that a family could rent for the whole summer, where you shared a communal kitchen with other renters. What it would cost to spend for two weeks at a fancy hotel (for the same price) you could bring with you, your mother-in-law, aunt & uncle, and six kids and rent the bungalow until September. Then after Labor Day everyone left to return to the Big City, to wait for another year. In keeping with the tradition of those great humorists, I will share a joke I remember from those days.

Joke: A new waiter asks a guest sitting in the dining room what would he like for lunch? The guest answers, “What do you have?” The waiter says, “We have chicken or pea soup.” The guest then says, “I’ll have the chicken.” The waiter calls out to the cook or chef, “One chicken coming up!” Suddenly the guest says, “Wait, I changed my mind. I will have the pea soup instead.” The waiter in a panic hollers over the loudspeaker, “Hold the chicken and make it pee.”

The story of Jewish comedians is one of triumph and success. Their stage smile is tinged however with some sadness. It is haunted by the Jewish past, by the deep strains of American Jewish life, by the desire to be accepted and the concern for a culture slowly changing by the centuries of Jewish life, too frequently interrupted by hate and the knowledge that too often for Jewish audiences, although masked by a deep shudder of fear, for what may be misunderstood. Many bus boys who started their careers in the mountains later became song and dance men in theaters and rose to fame. Some of them are Danny Kaye, whose real name was David Kaminsky or Milton Berlinger who was Milton Berle. Others are Red Buttons, Tony Curtis, Jan Murray, Sid Caesar, Jerry Lewis, Joey Bishop, Mel Brooks, Jack Benny, Jerry Seinfeld and Woody Allen.

Muriel Mines doesn't try to hide her age. She proudly boasts that she's 98! Muriel starts each day by expressing her creative side through writing, which she believes is more than just words and ideas...it's the physical act of putting pen to paper. Muriel shuns a computer or even a typewriter in favor of writing everything in long hand. The act of writing is so important to her that she even dabbles in calligraphy when she can.



UNTITLED
by
Rita Mojica

Mask-mirrored image that I see

Flippant smile
Turn of head

coy
delightful

Sophisticated
Even the aristocrat

Blind in glittering glass
Never to see the self that is me

groping --- groping
groping in glass

Endlessly groping in glass



SCORPIO'S SERENADE

by
Scorpio J. Pecorino

Does today's thought descend
yesterdays? A little voice
separates reality...a shaft of light
explodes light and sound...Grasp any
leaf from the never ending branches
of life.

Shine and sing beauty...shot with
light that screams the blaze of
sunrise...unsung melodies perform...
above and beyond the ultimate
range of reality.

Don't punish yourself...abort|
your time. Don't waste
any more time...use yourself to
control yourself.

What does it say about a Doctor who
never returned my three calls?
Right! Get a new Doctor...
and I did...

How didja get so impotent in your
mind? Try reality. The sun could
scream it into your mind...
No cellphones here!

Thank you ROGET! Writers and thinkers
have a comprehensive GRIP!

WOMEN are harbingers or reality...
truth...compromise...perspective.
Someya boneheads take note.

EMSER...your light blossoms in
the darkness and inspired the
light on the horizon....

A CREATIVE MESS
is better than
TIDY IDLENESS



THE STORY OF SCHUBERT AND STEWART

by
Stewart Prosis

Schubert and I were gay partners who lived together for 29 years from January 1982 until January 2011 when he died. We met on December 31st of 1981 at Studio One in what later was part of West Hollywood.

Studio One was the big gay disco at the time and people enjoyed going there to dance, possibly drink, and to meet new people. I went there alone and Schubert went there with a friend to dance that night. Less than 2 hours before the new year of 1982 began Schubert happened to look my way. He then asked me to dance and I went home with him when the place closed for the night. After going to his home for several nights, one night he asked me if I wanted to “get involved” and move in with him. He also analyzed me and said he believed I was a “home builder” rather than an “excitement seeker”. I am basically a cautious person and had never lived with another man in a gay relationship despite being “out” for a few years.

We had a good relationship for 29 years. We just had each other (no kids or pets). Our backgrounds were totally different. He was an Armenian from Iran who came to this country long before the revolution (his mother named him Schubert after the composer upon hearing Ava María). I come from an Anglo Saxon type of background and had lived in a number of places in the eastern part of the United States prior to coming to California in 1980.

We were registered with the state as “Domestic Partners” since gay marriage was not allowed then. I never figured he would go before me because prior to his illness he never acted like an “old man” and had such a good attitude regarding AGE (he said it was just a number while I have never fully accepted growing old). Since he died of lung cancer I still think about him every day 8 years later and compare many other men to him. Nothing lasts forever!



GET OUT THE VOTE!

by
Sue Tanner

They came running! From far distant valleys, from gorgeous mountains, from parkways and winding streams, from the depths of cities, from open country and from their mothers' kitchens.

They ran to school. They ran to work. They ran to the store. They ran for less. They ran for more.

Running down the sidewalk. Running down the path. Running down the hills, running with a gaffe. Running for the right.

Running to be noticed. Running to be still. Running into a cop. Running with their picks, running with a pot. Running by the pool.

Running with a pal. Running with a friend. Running to begin their day. Running for the day to end.

Running with a neighbor. Running for fun. Running to be happier. Running to figure it out. Running to do more.

All together. All sigh. All for you. All for me.

Running to be thoughtful. Running scared. Running to be hopeful. Running to sweat.

Running everywhere. Running now. Running then.

Running to get home.

Let's get out the vote!!!



As a military brat, Sue used books to create a theme in her life, as she moved from place to place. This led to an interest in scribbling little impressions, some longer than others, and a joy in being read, and reading to others.



City of West Hollywood
Social Services Division
8300 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood, CA 90069
(323) 848-6510



Jewish Family Services
West Hollywood Comprehensive
Services Center
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.