

# CreativeVoices

UNIVERSITY OF   
Cincinnati

**Creative works by members of the  
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati**  
*includes the 2012–2013 report to the membership*



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Each year, OLLI at UC invites members to contribute their creative work in the form of short fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and visual art. *Creative Voices* is published by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati.

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**Bridge Rising**  
by Sue Wilke

*The editors of Creative Voices wish to thank all those who submitted stories, poems, and works of art.*

# Let Yourself Go

by Glenn King

A CACOPHONY OF EXCITED PARTY laughter filled the hotel ballroom. Black, helium-filled, “Over the Hill” balloons popped and played tag in the central air conditioning to lively big band music. Mixed drinks were on the house, which encouraged everyone to drink more than usual, and champagne flowed freely into attractive amber crystal, long-stemmed glasses. Giving in to the freedom they all felt, there wasn’t a holdout teetotaler among the attendees. It was a lavish affair.

Women in expensive couturier dresses kicked off their high heels to dance in stocking feet, and men, dressed in what they once called their monkey suits, hung tux jackets on the backs of chairs, loosened their ties, and rolled up the sleeves of their ruffled shirts, looking more like a group of overweight men at a frat party than the professionals they actually were. Most of these older but attractive seniors had known each other for many years and were anxious to let down the last of their inhibitions. They exchanged welcoming hugs, talked among themselves, exhibited genuine interest, and enjoyed cutting in

on the dance floor. None of that phony slap-on-the-back stuff in this group.

Waiters, on the other hand, quietly busied themselves retrieving empty glasses, serving trays of delicious hors d’oeuvres — including Amanda’s favorite, dates wrapped in bacon — and worked at stifling their amused reactions to all this cultural craziness.

Amanda was one of the more popular art critics in town. She was tall, attractive, and intelligent — the poster child for “well turned out” compared with other women in her age group. Men found her irresistible, but she was still madly in love with Martin, her husband of forty years. Not normally a drinker, Amanda was testing her limits tonight.

Carefully fishing with her index finger, she trapped a small piece of black confetti floating in her champagne. Sliding it to the top of the long-stemmed glass, she flicked it and some of her drink as well onto the table while glancing over her shoulder to see if anyone was looking. Confident that no one had noticed,

she finished the glass of bubbly — her sixth at least! She had definitely lost count. Amanda knew she was well past feeling the initial unbalanced rhythm to her step and was now into the spinning room stage, but that didn’t keep her from dancing. She was having a wonderful time until she lost her balance and grabbed for her dance partner’s support to avoid falling.

Whispering into his ear, she said, “Honey, I’m feeling very dizzy. Let’s get the hell out of here and go somewhere quiet.”

Gallantly, he put his arm around her waist while she reached back for her clutch purse on the way out of the ballroom door. He checked to see if their departure would be obvious to anyone since he couldn’t



**Straw Hat with Flowers**  
by Jane Grant Tougas

let go of unsteady Amanda to properly thank the party hosts. It didn't make any difference. He'd call tomorrow. The others were all far too drunk and self-focused to notice.

As the band played Cole Porter's "De-  
lovely," the vocalist's words inspired him.

"I can tell at a glance, what a swell  
night this is for romance,

You can hear dear Mother Nature  
murmuring low . . . let yourself go."

The night was young and he did not  
want it to be wasted.

Waking the following morning,  
Amanda smiled, stretched happily, and  
slowly opened sleepy eyes. The beauti-  
ful morning sun was shining on her face  
through venetian blinds, but her head felt  
like a million fur balls had been substi-  
tuted for her brains. She didn't remember  
much of anything from the previous eve-  
ning; however, she had the most remark-  
able contented feeling.

The bouquet on the entry table to the  
room filled the area with the sweet smell  
of her favorite flower, gardenias. Glancing  
about the room, she thought it odd that  
her lace bra was hanging from the lamp-  
shade, and her dress was a whirlpool of  
emerald green material on the floor with  
a round opening in the middle where her  
silver Manolos had been kicked off. On  
the bed post she saw the new lace pant-  
ies she had bought at Neiman Marcus.  
Fearing to turn her head and closing  
her eyes, she slid her long slender hands  
quietly under the covers and assessed the  
contours of her body. Pulse quickening,  
she discovered that all she had on was  
her jewelry. A chill went up and down  
her spine, and it quickly dawned on her  
befuddled brain that this was neither her  
bed, nor her pillow, nor her comforter.  
Her comforter was maroon not royal  
blue. In fact, she and Martin didn't have  
venetian blinds in their bedroom. Her  
mind silently screamed, "Oh my God.  
What have I done?"

Not wanting to sit up, she walked her  
fingers slowly to the other side of the bed  
to check if she was alone. As her hand  
touched a warm body under the covers,  
there was a man's deep satisfied sigh, a  
slight change of position, and then total  
silence. How will she explain this to her  
husband? Her mind was thinking at  
breakneck speed. Had they done what

she feared they had? Was there truly any  
doubt? Should she roll over, tap him on  
the shoulder, and say, "Excuse me, but  
what is your name?"

As she was trying to decide what to  
do, the man's strong arm swung over.  
His warm hand caressed her breast and  
pulled her in close to him. She didn't dare  
look. What if this was a friend's husband?  
Her reputation was irretrievably ruined.  
How could she ever show her face again?

Time stood still. She could feel the  
heartbeat of her unknown bed compan-  
ion and their breathing in tandem. After  
a few uncomfortable moments, Amanda  
decided it was time to gracefully de-  
tach herself by inching out from under

his arm, swinging her feet to the floor,  
grabbing her dress, and running for the  
bathroom.

She had no sooner begun to activate  
her plan when the silent partner sat up  
next to her and Martin's familiar, deep  
voice said, "That was some night we had,  
sweetheart. Did you enjoy your stay in  
the honeymoon suite?"

### Autumn by Meg Ruwe



### Automne

par Ralph Meyer

L'automne est encore venu  
En feuilles de rouge et d'or.  
Le vent va les disperser  
Quand l'hiver arrive alors.

Bien des gens printemps adorent,  
Et d'autres préfèrent l'été.  
C'est l'automne que j'aime alors,  
Dans un monde si coloré.

### Autumn

by Ralph Meyer

Autumn once again has come,  
In leaves of red and gold.  
The wind will soon disperse them,  
As winter brings the cold.

Many adore the springtime,  
Others summer prefer.  
But me, I love the autumn,  
A world full of color.

# Following My Mom by Randy Hirtzel

**MY NAME IS RAY**, and I am eleven years old. I have two sisters aged twelve and four, and three brothers aged ten, seven, and four. Yes, the four-year-olds are twins.

And we are all brats. We make too much noise and too many messes. We play too wildly, wrestle too roughly, run around the house out of control, and don't come when Mom rings the bell outside to call us in for dinner. And we are never supposed to play beyond the range of that bell — but, stubbornly and like brats, we do. We don't help Mom enough or clean up after ourselves. We eat too fast, giggle at the table, pick bananas out of the fruit salad, and track dirt in the house on our shoes. We are spoiled and ungrateful.

Dad is out of town this weekend working for a cousin four hours away in Kentucky. He is trying to learn a new job before the weaving repair business that he and Mom operate here fails completely. So it's all six kids, all weekend, and Mom by herself.

When times were better, when there were just four kids, there was money for Johnnie, a black maid who helped with housework, meals, and caring for us kids. But then the twins were born, the business began losing customers, and Johnnie was let go.

Mom married at seventeen and spent seven happy years "B.C." (before children, as she says), building a business with Dad. Then came six kids and two miscarriages in eight years

— and now Dad is working more hours away from home.

And she will tell our father, don't think she won't, when he comes home tonight: she will tell him what brats we have been. He will come upstairs to their bedroom, tired from work and the long drive. And my brother Mike and I who share the bedroom next to theirs will lie in bed anxious and listening. We won't be able to hear all the words, but we will be able to tell by the tone and volume that Dad's anger is building.

Then their door will slam, ours will burst open, the light will flash on. With his jaw set rigid, Dad will tear off his belt, rush to my bed, rip back the covers, and lash out, grunting through clenched teeth, "I'll teach you brats a lesson you will never forget." Striking and striking as I scream and whimper and plead pathetically that I am sorry. Then he will move on to Mike's bed.

That is why I am following my Mom. I have been good today — I want to remind her. It is Mike and Brad who have been fighting. She had to break it up and listen to their mutual accusations: "He started it"; "No I didn't — you did." She clenched her fists, threw her head back, and screamed at them to go to their rooms. Then she stormed off to her bedroom.

"Is there anything that I can do for you, Mom?" I ask meekly.

She puts her hands on her dresser and slumps her head and shoulders.

"Thank you, Ray. Don't worry. You've been good today, and I will tell your father that when he comes home tonight. But your

brothers have been fighting all day. And they will be sorry when your father gets home — they will rue this day."

She tosses her head back, sweeping her bangs defiantly with her hand. "They will rue this day," she says again, and I know that "rue" must mean suffering.

She opens her top dresser drawer and takes out a piece of jewelry. She studies the shiny gold necklace, running it slowly through her fingers. She and my father rarely go out anymore.

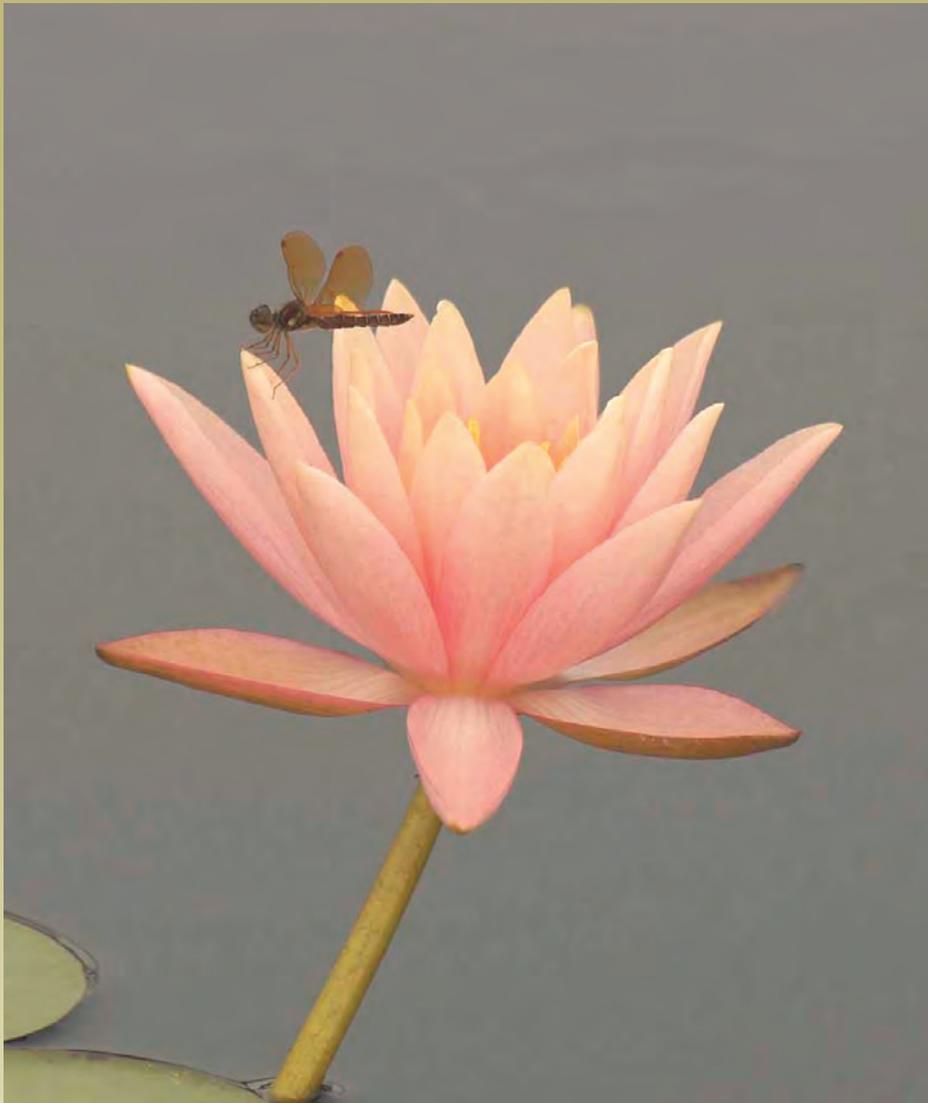
"I want to give you some advice, Ray."

"Yes, Mom."

"When you grow up, don't have kids."



**Haze and Ice on Thicket**  
by Gerald Houchell



*Dragonfly*  
by Virginia Cox

## A Caretaker's Plea

by Barbara Kallmeyer

When we pass, sometimes she smiles. I nod.  
I pass, touch her fingers, and smile.

She nods.  
Her "up" is now "down" and "out" is now "in."  
Her eyes are vague, blurring into nothing,  
Almost deserted, staring into tomorrow or  
Somewhere I cannot see.  
She wanders the rooms of our house,  
Our home, and I . . .  
Just wonder.  
Is this today or someday?  
I'm finished with the "Why?"  
Now in the "How."  
Or the "When."  
She is moving into the "Who are you?"  
Don't take her there. We will both  
be lost.

Don't you understand?  
You can't have her.  
She's mine.  
I can't let her go yet.  
She is my life, my world, my love.  
I'm not ready.  
You are destroying who she is,  
Who I am, and who we are.  
We are falling into the unknown.  
The threshold of "forever," of "gone."  
The glass that's almost empty.

I am tired. Weakening in the heart.  
We are both  
Alone. Lost together.  
Still here but nowhere.

Don't take all of her: leave something  
for me.  
She was the chair of the event, now just  
a decoration,  
A balloon on the floor, a petal on the  
table.  
Can't you be satisfied with less this  
time?  
Don't take all of her: take less; leave  
some for us.  
Leave a stub of the candle for us.  
Damn it.  
Please. Please.

# Living by the River

by Judi Morress

**I USED TO LIVE IN A HOUSE** overlooking the river. The road was between us and the river, and the hill behind was steep and covered with trees. Thirty-two stone steps led up to the house.

When you got to the top and stopped to catch your breath, you could see the whole sweep of the river — upstream and down — until it curved out of sight.

In springtime, the view was obscured by the pink cloud of redbud trees in bloom, and the fragrance of honeysuckle outside my bedroom window pervaded my dreams. There was a row of cedar trees in front of the house, and on summer evenings when the breeze came down the hill to the river, the cedar trees rustled in welcome.

As long as I lived there, I was always conscious of the river. Without my realizing how or why, instinctively it became the focal point of my surroundings. When the Delta Queen went by, we would go outside and wave dishtowels overhead, and they would play the calliope in response. Lying in bed at night, we could hear the lonely train whistle from across the river, and when a towboat and its barges went by, the throbbing engine rattled our old windows in their frames.

This was the house where my children grew up. They followed old paths up the hill to their playmates' houses and built camps and forts in between. They got muddy playing in the creek that flowed down to the river. When I left that house, I missed many things, but none so much as the river. There's something atavistic about the feeling of living near water. It gives you a feeling of comfort. It gives you an anchor.



**Cedarville Sunrise**  
by Tim Langner

# Murder on the California Zephyr

by Roger Johnson

**THE SUPERLINER TRAINS** usually have the same general arrangement of cars. Immediately behind the locomotives is the baggage car, then the crew dorm in which the on-board crew (the car attendants and the dining car staff) sleep at night. Then there are usually three coaches, then the Sightseer Lounge car (which has windows in the ceiling and seats facing outward), then the dining car, then usually three sleeping cars. On the Superliner trains, almost all the coach seats, dining tables, and sleeping rooms are located on the upper level. On the lower level of the coaches and sleeping cars are restrooms, space for handicapped people, and some bag-

gage storage space. On the lower level of the Sightseer Lounge is the snack bar and some tables. On the lower level of the dining car is the kitchen. Passengers board and disembark each car on the lower level, then walk up a stairway to their seats or rooms. Passage from car to car is only on the upper level.

In the sleeping cars, there are two types of accommodations — roomettes and bedrooms. Roomettes are small: they hold one or two people, and when the two beds are folded down for the night (one upper berth and one lower berth), they fill the room. The bedrooms are larger: they can hold up to four people, and they have their own restroom and shower. (The people in

the roomettes have to go downstairs for the restroom.) Each sleeping car has ten roomettes and five bedrooms.

And so it came about that on one particular sunny afternoon (or maybe, depending on your point of view, it was cloudy, since I am using both terms here metaphorically) that as the horde of passengers was making their way along the platform to board the California Zephyr, an astute observer may have noticed some oddities in the group of passengers boarding one of the sleeping cars. First, each of the Roomettes No. 1 through No. 7 was occupied by a single middle-aged lady who appeared to be travelling by herself. (As a rule, about half of the roomettes are

occupied by two people.) The astute observer may also have noticed that although none of the ladies appeared to know any of the other ladies, there appeared to be some similarities among them. They all appeared to be well-educated professional types — teachers, journalists, public relations, etc. And, of course, they were all exceptionally beautiful. What even an astute observer could not have observed at this point, however, was that they all liked to read mys-



**Desert View**  
by Bernadette  
Clemens-Walatka

tery books. Their names, in no particular order, were Kathy, Kathy, Karen, Karen, Jerri, Carol, and Sharon.

Roomette No. 8 was occupied by a single middle-aged man — also a professional type — an engineer. He was a friendly man but also appeared to be a little naïve — and somewhat lacking in social skills. He may have liked to call himself a Renaissance man, but he definitely was not a jet setter. He was known (to his closer associates) as Jolly Roger.

Roomette No. 9 was occupied by an elderly gentleman and his wife. He appeared to be an intellectual type — the type who observes everything happening around him. He could possibly even be an author of mystery books — maybe even a retired detective. His wife appeared to be similarly intellectual — possibly she was also an author of mystery books. Their names were Mr. and Mrs. Martin.

Roomette No. 10 already had its door closed. Was there a passenger already inside, having boarded earlier? Or was the room empty, its passenger having missed the train? Or maybe the room had not been reserved (highly unlikely for a Superliner — their sleeping cars are almost always filled). Or possibly the room may have been reserved by a passenger boarding the train at a stop further down the line. No one knew for sure at this point except the car attendant, but he wouldn't say.

And so, the California Zephyr departed Chicago precisely on time at 2:00 p.m. The conductor made his welcome speech over the loudspeaker and then began his trip through the train to collect the tickets. In the sleeping cars, the car attendants stopped by each room to introduce themselves and familiarize the passengers with their rooms — light switches, temperature controls, storage compartments, etc. Each sleeping room had a copy of the train's route map and schedule and a complimentary bottle of wine.

Shortly after the car attendant had completed his rounds, it was observed that Jolly Roger made several trips up and down the hallway, stopping at each of the ladies' rooms and engaging them in small conversations. None of the la-

dies, however, invited him into her room. Some of the ladies also had conversations with some of the other ladies. Mr. and Mrs. Martin stayed in their room. And the door to No. 10 remained closed.

At 5:00 p.m. came the first call for dinner in the dining car. Dinner in the diner is one of the traditional highlights of travelling by train. It is an opportunity not only to enjoy some good food but also to meet new people and socialize. Jolly Roger had dinner with three of the ladies from the roomettes, and Mr. and Mrs. Martin had dinner with two of them (there being four places at each dining table). The other two ladies sat with two people from another part of the train. The conversation was friendly, and the food was excellent — the favorites being the New York strip steak and the grilled rainbow trout. Shortly after dinner was served, the train crossed a bridge over the Mississippi River at Burlington, Iowa, with excellent views both up and down river.

After dinner was over, the passengers returned to their rooms and either read books or observed the passing scenery through their windows. Soon, the car attendants came through the sleeping cars, asking the passengers when they would like their beds turned down for the night. Some wanted to retire early, having had a long day; others wanted to stay up late, but, of course, after dark there was no more scenery to look at.

And so, with the passengers snugly nestled into their seats in the coaches or their beds in the sleeping cars, the California Zephyr continued its westward journey through the night, traveling through the cornfields of Iowa and Nebraska (and making stops along the way at Omaha, Lincoln, and a few small towns).

Early the next morning, having passed from the central time zone to the mountain time zone, and having gained about a mile of elevation, the California Zephyr was approaching Denver, Colorado. At 6:00 a.m. the first call for breakfast was made, and Jolly Roger and his Motley Crew (as they were now calling themselves) and Mr. and Mrs. Martin all made their way to the dining car. The conversation started off relaxed and friendly, as it

had been at dinner last night, but our astute observer soon began to notice some changes, particularly among the ladies. The ladies' conversation began getting more uneasy, forced, you might say even unfriendly, but their newfound unfriendliness was not directed at each other; it appeared to be directed at someone else. It was almost as if they were comparing notes. Jolly Roger, however, remained his cheerful, friendly self, chirping away as usual. Soon, breakfast was over, and the riders all returned to their rooms.

Shortly after leaving Denver at 8:00 a.m., the California Zephyr began to climb the Rocky Mountains, gaining another four thousand feet of elevation in less than a hundred miles. This is one of the most scenic parts of the trip, and many of the passengers went to the Sight-seer Lounge to look out the windows in the ceiling and see the mountains soaring overhead. However, Jolly Roger and his Motley Crew and Mr. and Mrs. Martin all remained in their rooms.

At the top of the Rocky Mountains, the Zephyr passed through the Moffat Tunnel, which is six miles long and takes about twenty minutes to go through in near total darkness. Emerging from the other end of the tunnel into the daylight, any observer, whether astute or not, could notice a substantial change in the sleeping car. Jolly Roger was no longer chirping; in fact, Jolly Roger was no longer jolly; in fact, Jolly Roger was no longer Roger; for, you see, Jolly Roger was dead. Not only was Jolly Roger dead, he was really dead. Neatly spaced out over his upper torso were seven separate stab wounds. Our astute observer would say that, upon closer observation, the seven stab wounds were so similar that they would have had to have been made by the same weapon.

Evidently, someone was really upset with Jolly Roger.

## 2012-13 *report to the membership*

*Rediscover the joy of learning*

### Letter from the Chair

Dear Members and Friends of OLLI:

Desiderius Erasmus, noted Dutch Renaissance humanist and theologian of the 15th century, once said, “No one respects a talent that is concealed.”

We all possess talents in many areas, but those people who use their talents for the benefit of others are brave and courageous.

*Creative Voices* is designed to showcase the talents of our OLLI members. There is competition for a spot in *Creative Voices* because close to 100 entries are submitted each year. What you see in this edition of *Creative Voices* are the best photographs, stories, art, and poetry that OLLI members submitted this year. Congratulations to all for using your talent for the betterment of OLLI.

OLLI at the University of Cincinnati is continuing to grow, and we are managing our finances well. OLLI now has more than 1,700 members, and revenues are keeping pace with expenses.

It takes a village to make OLLI work, a bevy of more than 200 volunteers who pour countless hours and energy into making OLLI what it is—a thriving community of curious lifelong learners. In particular, I want to thank the chairs and members of the Curriculum, Marketing, Finance, Friends of OLLI, Governance, Special Events, and Wednesday WOWs committees as well as the OLLI Board of Trustees for their dedication to giving us all wonderful classes from which to pursue and quench our thirst for knowledge and opportunities to get to know each other at social events.

We take time regularly to honor those OLLI members who have stood out over the years. At our Holiday Luncheon in December 2012, we honored Ken Schonberg for his longtime dedication to OLLI. Ken was there at the beginning when we struggled in our search for moderators and were barely able to keep our nose above water financially. In June 2013 at our Spring Luncheon, we will honor yet another dedicated volunteer who has given her time and talents to OLLI—Rosemary Deitzer. Please join us in June to honor Rosemary at the Spring Luncheon.

Certainly a huge tip of the hat must go to the more than 200 moderators who throughout our school year teach us in many subjects and help us increase our knowledge and understanding of the world. Moderators volunteer their time too, so next time you take a class please thank them for what they do for OLLI.

We also are grateful to the University of Cincinnati and its staff for the support they provide. Various departments help with fundraising, publicity, and most of all free classroom use at Tangeman University Center on main campus and UC Blue Ash College.

Finally, thank you all for being members of OLLI. We value your continued support.

Jim Goyette  
Chair, Board of Trustees

#### Volunteer Contacts

Please consider how you can help OLLI grow and improve! Volunteer for a committee.

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## *Friends of OLLI at UC*

*Helping to make your  
“great experience”  
even greater*

## What makes OLLI Great? You do!

It would be hard to find a more enthusiastic and energized group of people than the members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati. Volunteers abound. Few members ever miss a class. Participation is contagious. We have a great thing going.

In an organization driven by volunteers, your contributions make a major difference in OLLI's success. Your support guarantees that OLLI will continue to offer a superb program at a bargain price.

We know that lifelong learning is important to you, and we know that OLLI plays an important role as your source of lifelong learning.

A contribution to the Friends of OLLI helps to sustain the program and make it accessible to your friends and neighbors as well.

A gift to Friends of OLLI supports:

- Scholarships for those who need financial assistance
- Parking expenses for members attending classes on main campus
- Purchase of audiovisual equipment
- Underwriting of special events

Please consider a generous gift to Friends of OLLI. Your classmates are counting on you.



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# No Other Love

by Glenn King

**MARGUERITE DiMARTINO** enjoyed talking with her parish priest, who was a good listener and delighted in her company as well.

“You know, Father Joe,” she said, “I have never believed in ghosts, nor held my breath when passing a cemetery. However, we Italians are superstitious, and our Maccio family was no exception. We threw salt over our shoulders in the kitchen for good luck and believed that spirits of the dead would surround us throughout life, hopefully not slipping on the salt! I always felt superstition was for those who nurtured an enormous imagination but had no grip on reality. That said, in the last few weeks, I have had reason to revisit my beliefs, and I’d like to explain why.”

Father Joe smiled and replied, “By all means Marguerite,

please continue.”

“Well, you knew Antonio DiMartino, Father. His family and mine attended Saint Augustine Parish all our lives. Tony and I were best friends from childhood through our teenage years and even beyond. Our families lived next door to each other and were close friends. Simple things like the smell of Mama’s savory spaghetti sauce lured us into her kitchen for tastes in the summer, and on wintry days when it was too cold to venture outside, Tony and I played hide-and-seek and sipped hot chocolate. We laughed together when Papa flew off my Flexible Flyer into a snowdrift and cried together when Tony lost his precious black lab, Thor. We confided and shared everything, so it was odd at first when I realized I didn’t just love Tony . . . I was in love with



*Eye under Bridge* by Meg Ruwe

him, and I was sure he felt the same about me.

"In 1960, my best friend asked my father for my hand in marriage. Poor Papa, who as you know had six daughters and no sons, was delighted to have his eldest daughter bring another male into the estrogen-charged family and happily said, 'Welcome to the family, son.'

"You married us at mass, Father, just a year later. Tony was a good man. I loved him with all my heart and was proud to be his wife and the mother of the three beautiful children we brought into this world. He went into the restaurant business with his father and eventually took it over. We lived a comfortable middle class life until 1984 when my beloved Tony was involved in a horrific automobile accident. A large truck coming from the opposite direction on a rain slicked road veered left of center and ran into my husband's small, compact car.

"I spent days in a hospital room that smelled of Lysol, had machines that beeped unceasingly, and was frequented by medical professionals who hovered over my Tony sadly shaking their heads. It was a devastating time for all of us. Five days after the accident, Tony died,

never having regained consciousness. I couldn't accept that he was gone. He had always been there for me and I for him. It was over a year before I could bear to part with the last of his clothing. Eventually, one of our grown children took his jackets, pants, and sweaters to Saint Vincent de Paul for me.

"I spent the following morning searching for a small Lalique crystal I had given Tony on our fifteenth wedding anniversary. I couldn't find it and knew he had always carried it in his pocket. It was quite expensive, small, clear, faceted, and said simply 'LOVE' on the top surface. I began to cry. I must not have checked all his pockets, and now the clothes were gone. The pain of his loss came back anew.

"The following day, bright and early, I drove to the Saint Vincent de Paul location near my home. I looked through the men's clothing bins, feverishly tossing aside unfamiliar items and wiping away my tears. I was halfway through the second bin when I sensed someone was watching me. Glancing to my left, I saw him. Honest to God, Father Joe, it was my Tony! I reached out to touch him, and he was gone. Surveying the store, I saw only two cashiers, one rather unkempt dark-haired man, and a woman in the electronics area.

"'Why are you here, Tony?' I whispered. 'What are you trying to tell me?'

"More than a little shaken, I continued to hunt for the missing crystal. While repositioning hangers to check jacket after jacket, I came across one of Tony's tweed coats and looked in all the pockets. Nothing was there. I hugged and smelled the coat before hanging it back on the stand and could feel Tony's presence again. Looking up, I saw his reflection smiling at me in a mirror on the wall. I thought I was going crazy.

"Tony's deep resonant voice said, 'I miss you, Marguerite. Know that I am with you always.'

"'Can other people see you, Tony?' I wondered aloud.

"'Only if I want them to,' he replied.

"At that moment, an oddly dressed man in a checkered jacket, cowboy

hat, and boots walked in the door and scanned the store. He checked out the jewelry area and then men's shoes. After that, he sauntered over and joined me in the men's area. We both reached for a leather jacket at the same time, and the touch of his hand startled me.

"In a low voice, he said, 'Oh, I'm sorry. Do you come here often?'

"'No I don't, but I'm looking for something very special.'

"'I come here frequently and would be glad to help an attractive lady like yourself. What are you searching for?'

"I figured two pair of eyes would be better than one and told him the details. We searched the other bins together. He kept getting closer and closer, which made me uncomfortable.

"I looked him straight in the eye and asked, 'Are you trying to pick me up, mister?'

"'Well, funny you should ask.' He moved away to select another jacket. 'I enjoy the company of women, and you're neither hard on the eyes nor are you the first I've met here.'

"I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I thought to myself, 'What a creep.' He continued to look through a bin of Levis, then without saying another word, he quickly began walking toward the exit.

"I thought his rapid departure a little odd, but as he approached the front door, his feet suddenly went out from under him, and he fell flat on his face. It was quite shocking but comical at the same time. Tony's crystal flew out of his hand and rolled across the linoleum, landing at my feet. I carefully covered it with my shoe.

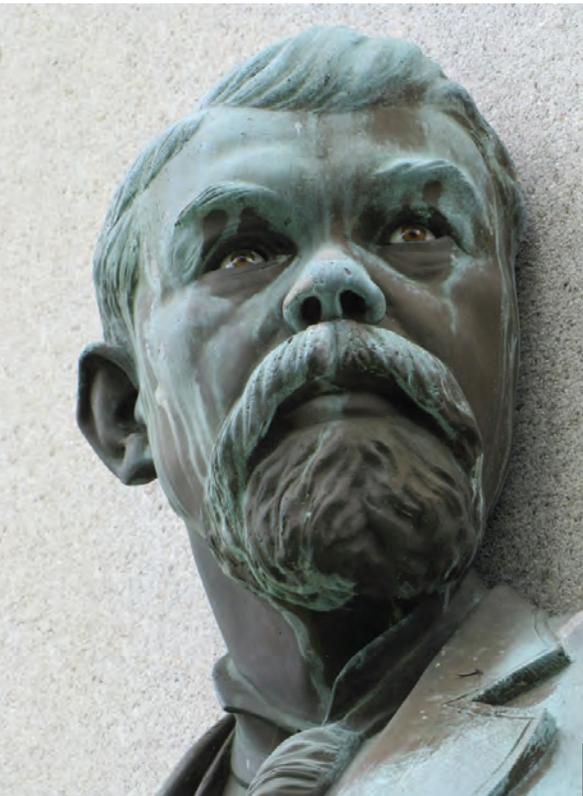
"'Who the hell tripped me?' he bel-lowed.

"'I can't imagine,' said a cashier, 'There wasn't anyone near you that I could see. I hope you're not hurt.'

"'I had something in my hand I can't find. Oh what the hell! Who needs it?' He roughly brushed himself off, grabbed his crumpled hat, and left in a noisy huff.

"That was when I knew, Father Joe.

"Gently, I reached down to pick up the crystal, and whispered, 'Good job, Tony. You've always had my back.'"



*Ever Watchful* by Judy Stewart



**Turtles All the Way Down** by Sam Hollingsworth

# Willy and Me

by J. Michael Wagner

OVER THE YEARS, different works of literature have had a powerful effect on me. But more often, a scene from a play, a sentence in a novel or short story, or a line from a poem was all that remained. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that he might read three hundred pages for that one golden sentence. Often I did not realize at the time I read the literature its significance. Only after several years, it took on new meaning—sometimes in a sudden epiphany, sometimes in a gradual discovery, sometimes painful, sometimes joyous.

Clifton Fadiman once said, “When you reread a classic, you do not see more in the book than you did before, you see more in you than there was before.” Such is the case with Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*.

Willy Loman, the sixty-three-year-old salesman whose lifetime dreams of

success for both himself and his son, Biff, were never fulfilled, still believes in the possibility of greatness. I am troubled by those who see Willy as a crazy old man who spent a lot of time talking out loud to himself. Maybe the only difference between Willy and most people is that Willy talked out loud whereas most people keep their conversations in their heads. After all, isn’t that what Shakespeare’s soliloquies are?

Willy had great dreams. Perhaps they were too big. He is in many ways like Gatsby. F. Scott Fitzgerald referred to Jay Gatsby in his novel *The Great Gatsby* as having “an extraordinary gift of hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person which it is not likely I shall ever find again.”

I once taught *Death of a Salesman* to a freshmen class at Miami University community college. The ages of the students

ranged from the early twenties to the mid-fifties. An older woman in my class told me, “You can’t know what it is like to be married to a salesman. You constantly have to be building yourself for the big sale.” Arthur Miller never tells us what Willy is selling. This was not an oversight. We are all Willy, building ourselves up for the big sale.

There are those who judge Willy to be a philanderer and a liar. I used to have little sympathy for him. That was when I was younger and dumber. Now in my seventies, I asked the question that Langston Hughes asked: “What happens to a dream deferred?” But even more I ask, “Why give up the dream?”

Forty-eight years ago, my father lay in bed dying. His last words as he looked up at me through watery eyes were “Michael, I have so much I have to do.” The next morning he died. He was only fifty-two, but if he had lived to be one hundred and two, he would have said the same thing. My father-in-law in his late sixties bought a farm. Most people thought he was a little crazy, but I thought of Willy’s words a day to two before he died. “Oh, I’d better hurry. I’ve got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing’s planted. I don’t have a thing in the ground.”

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians wrote of his great hope: “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” As I read this, I see Willy. I see Gatsby. I see my father-in-law. I see my father. I see myself. All straining toward the goal that is ahead.

Arthur Miller once said that tragedy is more hopeful than comedy. The tragic character knows that things will get better. Willy died knowing that his son and everyone else would love him. Jay Gatsby died knowing that Daisy would call him. My father died knowing that he would accomplish all his dreams.

## Calm Seas

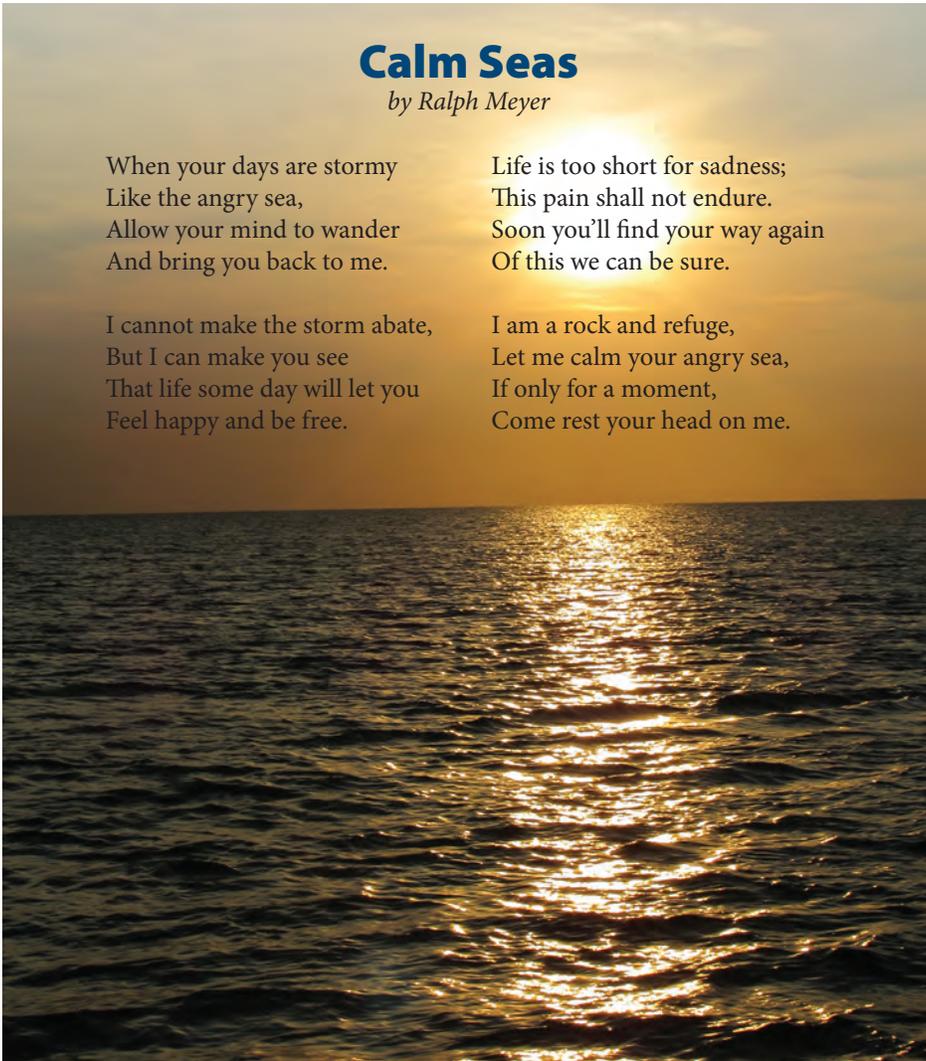
by Ralph Meyer

When your days are stormy  
Like the angry sea,  
Allow your mind to wander  
And bring you back to me.

I cannot make the storm abate,  
But I can make you see  
That life some day will let you  
Feel happy and be free.

Life is too short for sadness;  
This pain shall not endure.  
Soon you’ll find your way again  
Of this we can be sure.

I am a rock and refuge,  
Let me calm your angry sea,  
If only for a moment,  
Come rest your head on me.



## While Memory Lasts

by Judi Morress

“Oh,” says my lifelong friend, wiping her eyes,  
“I thought I’d let go of all that a long time ago.”

We’d lived our lives in tandem,  
sharing our stories as we were living them.  
We were there, we remember, we understand.  
Is anything ever over? Not while memory lasts.

We absorb, we incorporate, we accept,  
but it’s all there under the surface, the good and the  
bad.  
Something—a word, a name, a particular scent—strikes  
a chord,  
and the echoes take us back in memory to that—what?

What would we be without our memories?

Would we get up each morning like a blank slate,  
having to figure everything out all over again?

Memories are like guideposts we’ve passed.  
Some we embraced, some we slipped around,  
some we hit head-on, over and over again.

Pain remembered still hurts but not as much as  
when it was fresh.

I wouldn’t trade the memory of joy for the  
absence of pain.

My hard-won strength has come from bearing  
pain.

No one ever tells us to “let go” of the good  
memories.

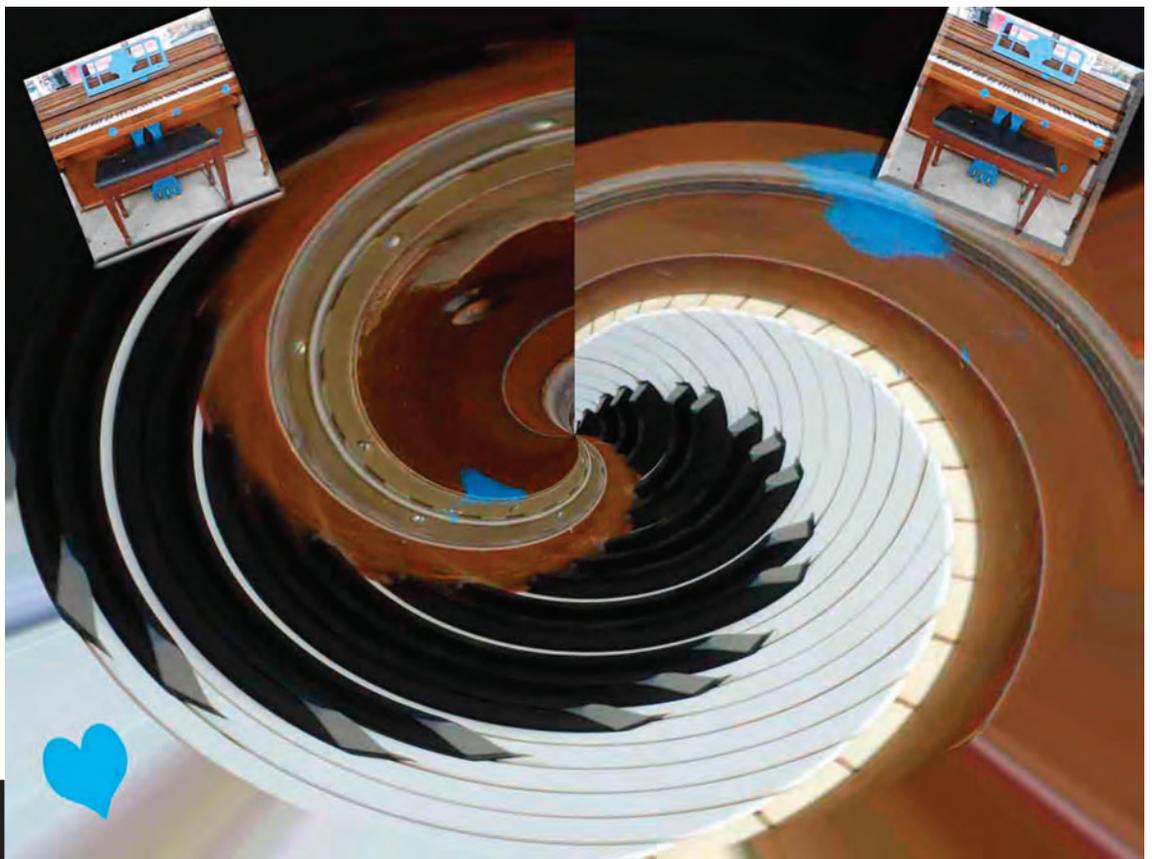
Nothing is ever over. Not while memory lasts.



*Halstadt* by Tim Langner



*Winter Landscape*  
by Sally A. Peterson



*Piano Keyboard*  
by Virginia Cox

# The Millionth Time

by Daniel Gibbons

*To a grand old woman and a courageous young man*

'Twas the season: it was Christmas, the generous time,  
And in the late afternoon at the soup kitchen, I tried to form  
a line.

We had gathered groceries and presents, "our consciences  
to heal?"

And trying to "Live the Word," we served a healthful free  
meal.

Outside, at times, the burly, the bullies, pushed to the front,  
Causing the older, the weaker, to pause in the hunt.  
It was cold; I was harried, asking, "Please stay in line,"  
When I saw her waiting, quiet and frightened, behind.

She was tiny and eighty, frail in a simple black coat,  
But in bearing and courage, she was St. Joan crossing a  
moat.

All her family had gone before her; she seemed not of our  
time.

Yet she girded to the battle and joined the ragged line.

We gave bags full of food and presents from Santa  
To the many there waiting in the winter wind's mantra.  
Just climb the few steps now and a place she would win,  
Then four youths slipped past her, and they were the last  
ones in!

She raised a grizzled hand meekly, her spirit crushed to the  
core,

Yet only breeding and character addressed that closed door.  
Silent and alone on the street in the gathering gloom,  
She crossed herself reverently and started back to her room.

Pushed back by the rush, I screamed silent with rage  
At insolent youths versus this tiny four-score sage.  
From my place on the inside, I cursed at the sky.  
Now very angry, I asked Him again and again, "Why?"

In a while, I saw her hunched, moving arthritically away  
Into the gray sidewalks and buildings and day.  
And then I saw them, four street toughs, overtaking her fast,  
Their arms full of presents and food as they cruised past.

Then the last youth stopped, and I held my breath,  
Suddenly praying and frightened nearly to death.  
The youth raised his arms, and fast raced my heart,  
As he carefully lowered his groceries, his presents, into her cart.

In a flash, he was gone down the street, now bright in the  
gloom.

Her faith in man/God renewed, she danced back to her room.  
The miracle of Christmas, 'round the youth and woman grew  
bright,

And I "learned" for the millionth time, "judge not at first sight."



**Pekin Duck** by Peter Nord

# The Finish Line

by Rosemary Deitzer

**EACH JULY**, our family participates in the Jenny Evans 5K Run/Walk that benefits the Fairfield High School cross country teams. The benefit was spearheaded by Jenny's parents to honor her life after her tragic death by a drunk driver.

My granddaughters, Melissa and Lauren, have run on the Fairfield cross country team. Melissa was awarded one of the Jenny Evans scholarships, which she uses for her studies at the University of Cincinnati.

I'm a walker, so I always start after the runners have taken off. Last July, I quickly became aware that I was at the end of the pack. Feeling alone and embarrassed, I proceeded. Then I saw Richard and remembered him from previous events.

He is challenged physically and mentally but perseveres. We were out on the course alone. I began to feel like the lucky one, getting to see courage first hand. All the runners had, by now, crossed the finish line and were tallying their run times and waiting for us to return so they could start the awards ceremony.

But the race wasn't over yet. Richard and I were still out there. I finished about ten minutes before he did but waited at the finish line to cheer his crossing.

I remembered a remark I heard at one of my granddaughter's cross country matches. At the finish line, a father told his son, "Jeff, remember the only position that matters is to finish first." Jeff and his dad need to meet Richard.

What does it take to finish first?  
Determination? Endurance?

Practice? Dedication? Passion?  
Exactly what it takes to finish last.

Richard didn't come to finish first. He came to finish.



*Painted Ladies* by Larry J. Pytllinski

## Don't Cast Him Aside (St. Francis Seraph Soup Kitchen, January 1996)

by Daniel Gibbons

For Bud McDermott, January 13, 1996

He boiled in angry and hungry beside;  
Others who knew him shuffled aside.  
He glared at the servers and scowled at the food;  
Many among us knew of his moods.

He demanded "more meat" and "I want two trays!"  
We acquiesced meekly just so he'd go away.  
"Hey you! Don't serve me none of that crap!"  
My reddened face burned from his verbal slap.

Bud calmly asked me to "help him, yes, help him,  
Act as his guide,  
Work with him gently, very gently.  
Don't cast Him aside."

He was tough, he was homeless, and mean as a snake.  
I wanted to scream out, "Hey, just cut me a break."  
A master manipulator, he played with my mind  
And easily deflected surface attempts to be kind.

He pushed and he prodded and crammed his bags full  
And said only of entreaties, "That's just a lot of bull."  
His clothing was dirty; he smelled like the streets.  
His nose it was broken, and he wore sandals on his feet.

He locked on my face with dark piercing eyes,  
Snapping with anger and wide with a high.  
Without a kind word, he turned for the door  
And stepped out quickly into the blizzard's roar.

Still trying to know him, I asked for his name.  
His response, a slow turn, the end of our game.  
Snow covered his cloak and covered his back;  
Yet the carpet of snow showed not his track.

The snow swirled between us, and in the clearest of words,  
He stunned me with, "I'm Jesus Christ, or haven't you heard?"  
Time froze around us. I felt heavy with sin.  
He was the least of my brothers. It may have been Him.



**Over-the-Rhine Abandoned by Hirsch Cohen**



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## Vision Statement

Our vision is to be recognized as the premier organization offering educational and social interaction to mature residents of Greater Cincinnati by:

- Nourishing their intellects, expanding knowledge, and exploring new ideas.
- Sharing interests and experiences.
- Cultivating friendships.
- Being a resource of the University of Cincinnati and supporting its goals.

## Mission Statement

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati provides opportunities for lifelong learning and social interaction to the mature residents of Greater Cincinnati.

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