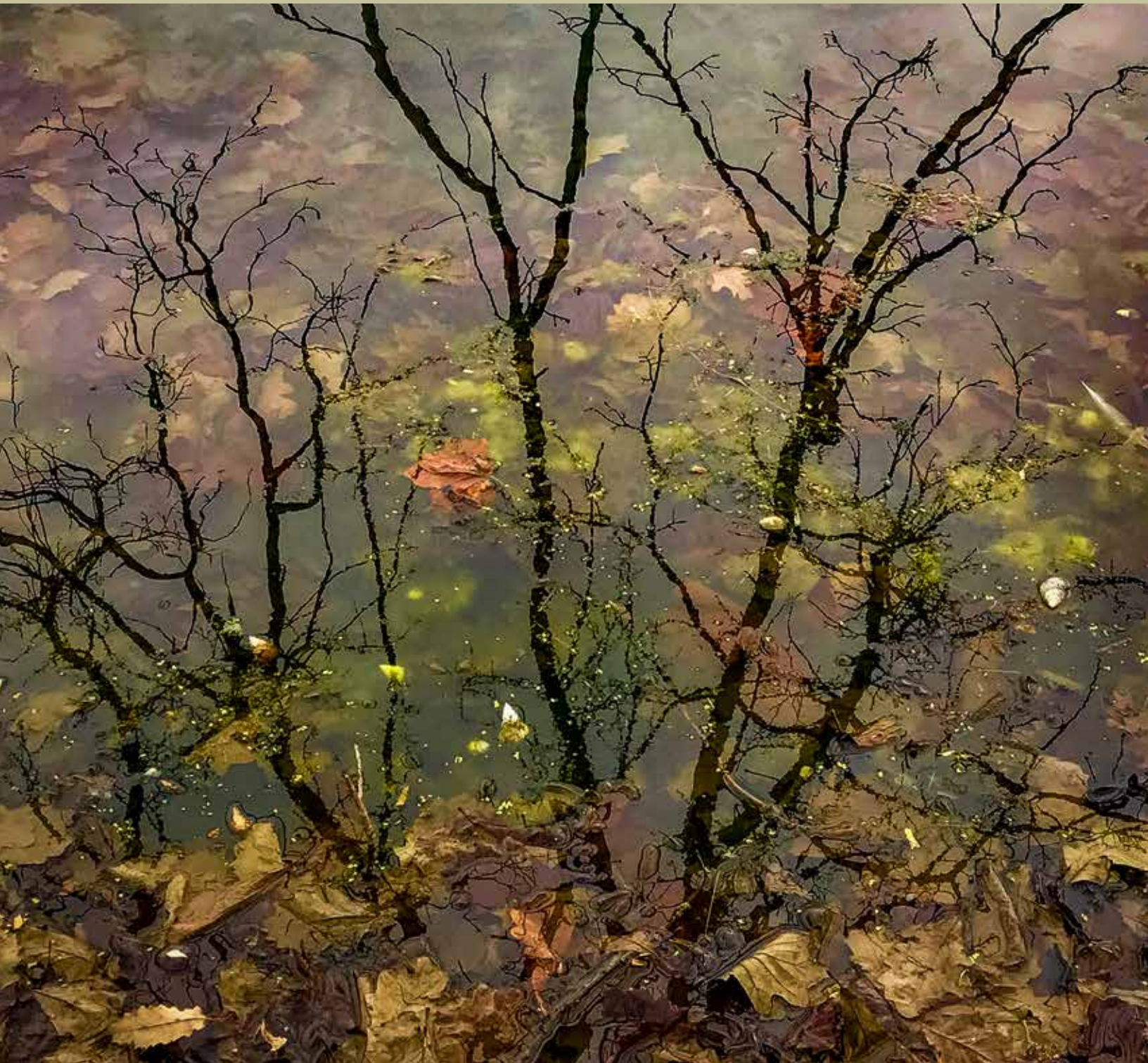


Creative Voices

Creative works by members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati **2016–2017**





Cover Art

Branch Reflection 1

Photograph by Molly McDonough Mahler

As an amateur photographer, Molly McDonough Mahler strives to continually grow her capacity for seeing everyday images that she can work with to create photographic art.

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Each year, OLLI at UC invites members and volunteers to contribute their creative work in the form of short fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and visual art to be featured in *Creative Voices*.

Editor

Cate O'Hara

Selection Committee

Judy Stewart

Connie Trounstine

The selection committee for *Creative Voices* wishes to thank everyone who submitted their creative endeavors and made the process of selection so delightful and so difficult.



Serenity in the Garden

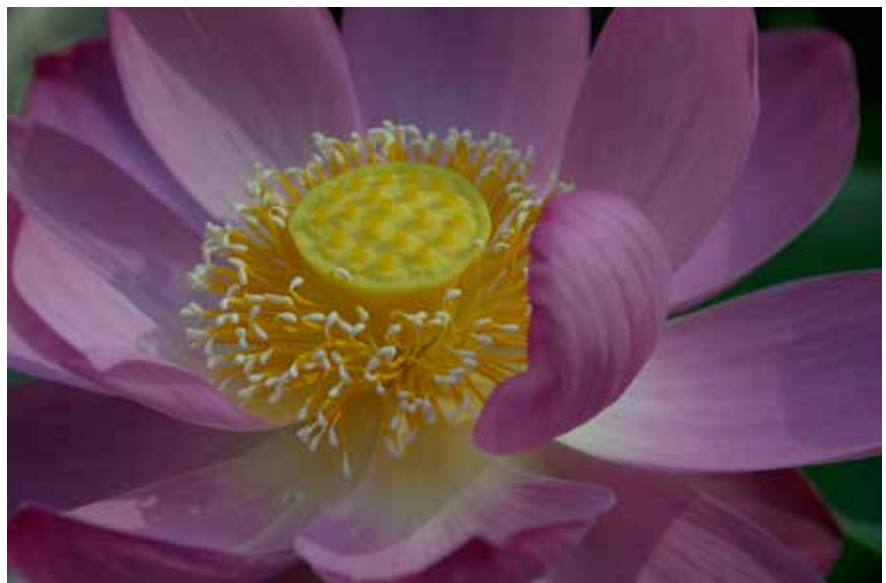
Painting by Barbara Kuntz

A signature member of the Cincinnati Art Club, Barbara Kuntz enjoys painting portraits as well as joining fellow artists for weekly plein-air opportunities all around Greater Cincinnati from early spring through the autumn months.

Lotus Flower

Photograph by Joyce Schehl

Joyce Schehl endeavored to capture the complex beauty of this flower that a casual look would surely miss.



Beginning Cycle

By Emilie Kerlin

The moment he let go of the bike and stopped running along beside me is a moment I will remember forever. At first, I felt afraid of what would surely happen. But then, all I felt was magic. Seven years old, hearing Dad shouting to me, “Keep your head up, don’t look back, keep pedaling!” So many things to remember. Could I do this? “You can do it, you can do it!” I kept hearing him shout to me. Then suddenly, me, gliding along all by myself. Down the sidewalk I went, in full control, master of my destiny. Nobody could stop me now!

Just like that day on the bike, Dad’s steady hand guided me through many channels of my young adulthood. And now, although he’s no longer here, with every challenge I face, I still can hear his voice encouraging me: “You can do it. You can do it.”

Thank you, Dad, for always being there.

The Blooming Hill

I noticed in my mind’s eye today, as I often do, the image of Mom’s shrubby hillside. To me, a little piece of heaven on earth that she had created on the back hill of the yard where I grew up. She had every flowering shrub you could imagine: peonies, roses, lilacs, forsythia, bridal wreath, all given to her as Mother’s Day gifts by either Dad or one of us.

She tended to that hillside, and all her gardens, with the loving care and nurturing that was so much a part of her. What horticultural lessons I learned while helping her work out there—planting, pruning, mulching—her green thumb in evidence everywhere. What life lessons she imparted to me in those shared hours—to be mindful, respectful, appreciative, to tend to those things that needed tending.

I see her now in every bloom of spring. The flowers speak her name.

An OLLI writing class inspired Emilie Kerlin to begin writing her "life story" through a series of short essays: these are the first two in that collection.

On September 11, 2001, as employees ran down the stairs of the World Trade Center, they passed a daycare center on the second floor. The children were coming out of the center, and “as people went by they just started scooping up the children and running out with them.” All the children were evacuated safely.

The Children of 9/11

By Judi Morress

I wonder how much they remember.
They were so young, but still,
they must have been terrified.
The noise, the smoke, the falling rubble,
the screams of grownups, their own screams.

People they didn't know scooped them up.
Where were they going? Out, out!
But the air was filled with dust, and they
coughed and choked.
People they didn't know carried them to safety.
They cried then, cried for Mommy.

Did Mommy find them? Was Daddy gone?
The strangers held them for only a moment,
such a short time.
Do they remember the strong arms holding
them?
Where did they go? Where did anyone go?

They're teenagers now. Countless times
they've been told the stories of how they were
saved,
so now they remember the storytelling.
Maybe that's best. Best not to remember
the noise, the smoke, the screams.
Maybe they remember being held.

Judi Morress, a published poet and member of the Monday Morning Writers Group, co-moderates OLLI's Poetry Writing Workshop



Weavers Nest Building

Photograph by Judy Stewart

Surprise makes Judy Stewart continue her passion for photography.



Down to Earth

*Photograph by
Huei-Chi Connally*

Huei-Chi Connally is a Cincinnati Public Schools retired teacher and amateur artist who is interested in all forms of art.

Tabbouleh

By Doug MacCurdy

Its origin is Greek and common in Macedonia, Lebanon, Cypress, and throughout Anatolia.

It's easy to make; I'll take you through it.
Get your ingredients and tools. Let's do it!
First dice two tomatoes, fresh and plain.

Put them in a sieve, and let them drain.

Save half a cup of liquid, it has a use.

Mix with an equal part of lemon juice.

Wash and carefully clean one cup of bulgur to remove the detritus: it tastes quite vulgar.

To the bowl, stir in the tomato/lemon mix till the bulgur thickens and starts to stick.

Leave it in the bowl and let it stand.

In half an hour, the grain will expand.

Fresh parsley and mint, each one cup, but first you need to chop them up.

Blend together the parsley and mint, add to the bowl and stir them in it.

A little minced garlic will add a bite, but not too much: you want it just right.

A drizzle of olive oil enhances the flavor, a pinch of salt, now taste and savor.

Serve with seasoned grilled meat or fish.

Your guests will praise this tasty dish.

Tabbouleh, easy to make, a special treat.

A boost for any Greek food that you eat.

This is an actual recipe, with the exact ingredients and methods, from *America's Test Kitchen* on PBS; Doug MacCurdy says, "Give it a try."

A Millennium of Spitballs

By Jack B. Meibers

This is the year I turn eighty. It is also the year I complete my millennium of spitballs. The day before my eighth birthday, March 31, 1945, I was given a punishment by my second-grade teacher to make one thousand spitballs before leaving the classroom. Now, this year, 2017, is the year that I can finally feel satisfied that I have completed that punishment.

My eighth birthday fell on a Saturday in 1945. The day before, on Friday, I was so excited about my upcoming birthday weekend that I overplayed my hand as the 3 p.m. school bell rang. The bell signaled the end of the school day, but for me it was the beginning of my weekend birthday celebration. I had lined up on the edge of my desk one of those small, square, cardboard number tiles that we second-graders used for math in those days, and, as the bell rang, I flicked it across the room with thumb and forefinger. I was aiming at my brother, Richard, on the left side of the room (first and second graders shared the same classroom), but the shot sailed to the right and landed near Sister Rumolda's desk. She thought it was a spitball.

Truth be known, Sister "Rommel, the Desert Fox," as we wartime urchins called her, had probably been watching me set up my cannon shot the whole time, because she came directly to my desk and told me to stay until the rest of the kids had cleared the room. Then she lowered her boom! She said she wanted me to stay in the classroom until I had made her one thousand spitballs. ONE THOUSAND SPITBALLS! Can you imagine? I tried to tell Sister that my shot was not a spitball, but my argument was to no avail. She had made up her mind. The punishment stood—ONE THOUSAND SPITBALLS!

Now I could have been held prisoner in that second-grade classroom all night because the classroom was actually part of my home in those days. Let me explain. My mother, Martina, died in October 1941 when I was four years old. In early 1942, after a few months in the care of aunts, my father, Harry, had to place me (and my two younger brothers, Richard and Joe), into St. Aloysius Orphanage at 4721 Reading Road, Cincinnati, Ohio. So the classroom was actually part of my "home." But even

so, at 3 p.m. on Friday, March 30, 1945, the beginning of my eighth-birthday weekend celebration, I should have been free to play in the yard and then at 5:30 p.m. to go to the dining hall for a hot meal and a birthday cake that just the kids at my table would share. (Weekend birthdays were celebrated on Friday or Monday because some of the kids were allowed to visit relatives over the weekends.) But here I was, a POW at hard labor, captured by "Rommel, the Desert Fox," after making only one lousy cannon shot.

I figured I had better get to work so that I could at least make it to the dining hall for my birthday cake celebration. The first problem I had to solve was a logistical math question: how could I show and prove to Sister that I had actually made one thousand spitballs? My answer was sets and subsets; sets of one hundred, broken down into ten subsets of ten each. On that day in 1945, as a second grader, I did not know those terms. It wasn't until much later that I learned "sets and subsets." In 1945, it was just a whole lot of spitballs. During the intervening years, though, I have begun to think of them as years and decades and centuries... my millennium.

The second problem was where do I line up these hundreds and hundreds of spitballs? It's going to take a lot of room. The largest floor space available was the space between the front row of desks and the front wall, which held the classroom door that opened inward from the small hallway. I settled on this space for my field of operation and began to tear out sheets of loose-leaf paper from my binder to rip into small pieces for wadding spitballs.

I made pretty good time making the first one hundred spitballs, averaging about ten-a-minute. Watching the clock, I figured I'd make it to the dining room in plenty of time for my birthday cake. Then I suddenly began to realize my third problem: I was running out of spit! That caught me by surprise. I thought a kid, especially a boy, could spit forever. But no, my throat began to dry up, and soon I could just barely generate any saliva at all. So my fast-running operation suddenly turned to a slow crawl. I suppose I could have just wadded the balls, but Sister had said "spitballs," so to conscien-

tious me (a kid who would soon make his first Confession and Communion), they had to be “spitballs.” Then catastrophe struck!

My count was up to about 350 when the kitchen/dining-room nun, Sister Rogatia, sent an eighth-grade girl down to check on my progress. She opened the classroom door and *Whoosh!* the perfectly lined-up spitballs flew everywhere. The girl had no idea what was going on, so I tried to explain it to her. She said she was sorry, and she did let me out to go to the bathroom, and while there, I was able to take in a long, long drink of water.

Back in the classroom, I had to gather up the 350 scattered spitballs and line them up again in decades and centuries. More wasted time. Being somewhat slow-witted about the immediate future (other than my birthday cake), I hurriedly lined them up again in the very same spot, the space between the row of front desks and the front wall ... and the door!

I was up to about 600 spitballs when Sister Rogatia sent another eighth-grade girl to check and see how I was doing. She innocently threw the door wide open and *Whoosh!* ... there they went again ... six centuries, sixty decades, six hundred spitballs flew to all corners of the universe. I was in shock. I just sat there and cried. Once again, I tried to explain to this girl what the heck I was doing, and she apologized and helped me gather the spitballs into a pile. She let me out to get another long, long drink of water. I don't remember if it was at her suggestion or just my idea alone, but I moved my field of operation to the far, rear corner of the room. The space was tight between the last row of desks and the rear wall, but I had no choice. I had to escape that incoming *Whoosh!*

Dejected, I resignedly dug into the pile of spitballs and began lining them up again in sets and subsets of six hundred years. More time wasted. My hope of supper and birthday cake was growing dimmer and dimmer. My count had reached 920 when I heard the doorknob turn again. I threw my whole body lengthwise between the *Whoosh!* and the spitballs, and I was able to save my near-millennium count. I saw the black habit at the door, and I was hoping it was Sister “Rommel,” because I was now somewhat proud of my 920 spitballs and wanted to point out to her that I only had eighty more to go. Only eight more rows of ten each to complete the one thousand spitballs.

But to my disappointment, it was not Sister “Rommel” but Sister Rogatia, who was getting anxious about finishing up her kitchen duties for the evening. She said, “Young man, what in the world are you doing?” I explained to her the punishment and that I had only eighty more spitballs to go. She looked peeved and said, “That’s enough! Gather them up into that waste-can and get down to the dining room!” At this point I felt cheated. I had come so close.

When I got to the dining room, there was only one light on, the one right above my table in the far corner. The table was set as it had been since 5:30 (it was now close to 7 p.m.). The plate of food, the utensils, the glass of milk—they were all there. But where was the birthday cake? There was no birthday cake. Either they forgot about my birthday, or the rest of the kids at my table had finished it off when I didn’t show. I didn’t dare ask. All of a sudden, I was too tired to care anymore. The food was cold, and I didn’t like the Friday fish anyway. I took a sip of milk, and it was warm. I didn’t like warm milk. I suddenly decided I really wasn’t hungry ... just tired. Sister saw this in my demeanor and said maybe it would be best if I just went up to my dorm room.

The next day, I turned eight, and life was different. I can’t tell you exactly how or why life was different—it just was. I can tell you, though, that down through the years I have always felt a little bit cheated at not being able to finish those last eighty spitballs. But now, this year, 2017, at age eighty, I’m beginning to have a sense that I have finally completed my millennium.

Jack B. Meibers is a retired postal employee, hoping to forestall the dead-letter room.



Happiness

Painting by Huei-Chi Connally

Huei-Chi Connally is a Cincinnati Public Schools retired teacher and amateur artist who is interested in all forms of art.

What is Silence?

By Mary Nemeth

What is silence?

Silence is the rare double rainbow
after the thunderstorm.

And the tranquility of a lily pond
where the tadpoles dwell.

Silence is the delicate blue dragonfly
As it swiftly alights on a tall cattail.

or the serenity of the bright night sky
filled with billions of twinkling stars.

It's the dewy grass on an early summer morn
that cools and tickles my feet.

What is silence?

A book lies silent before you read it.

A song before you sing it,

A poem before you even write it.

A baby is silent too, when sound asleep
in the wee hours of the peaceful dawn.

When children are suddenly silent,
wise parents come running to see just what's up.

My cat remains absolutely silent while watching
a ladybug crawl up the screen door,
then with haunches rhythmically thumping,
she pounces. Got it!

So too, the old grandfather clock,
long standing guard in the hallway,
is relatively silent just before its hourly chime.

What is silence?

The last red maple leaf as it releases its grip
and falls to the ground on the same still autumn day
that sees the first snowflake float down.

It is the slow melting of snowdrifts
in the warmth of an early spring day.

Silence observes the first crocus of the season
emerge from winter's sheltering grasp.

What is silence?

Silence is the hush that falls over
the crowd when a tragedy occurs.

Opportunity is silent when it enters our lives,
How we handle each opportunity can make our lives
overpowering and vulgar,
or tragic and distressing,
or rich and fulfilling,
or gentle and sweet.

What is silence?

Silence is also the suppression of freedoms,
the muzzle of voices by dictators around the world.

Silence is the loud roar of many
when they stay home on election day.

Silence is the wrong done when
we close our eyes to the suffering among us.

Silence is a lack of
noticing,
seeing,
caring, and
taking action
when we are aware of injustice.

Mary Nemeth, retired elementary teacher and longtime photographer, is now branching out and exploring the realm of poetry and prose thanks to the guidance of the talented folks at OLLI's Poetry Writing Workshop and the Monday Morning Writers Group.

An ancient form of music in India, ragas are played with many instruments such as sitar, drums, and flutes. There are ragas for the morning, evening, seasons, festivals, and other occasions. Traditionally, ragas were not written down, so every performance is a little different. This raga poem honors a wonderful organization that brings people together—OLLI.

Raga Poem for OLLI

By *Randy Hirtzel*

I am not a singer
But our lives are music
Music like a raga
Ragas sing of life

Da da da da da boom

Raga is ancient music
Often played with sitar
Flutes and drums together
To the beat of life

Da Da da da da Boom

We are born in tunnel
We struggle in the darkness
Unaware that all around us
There is blinding light

Da da da da da
da da da da boom

When you look at statue Shiva
The arms and legs seem frozen
But looking is not seeing
When you see the Shiva
The arms are whirling
legs are stepping, ever turning

Da Da
Da Da
da da
da da
Da da da da Boom

We have come to OLLI
To learn, to laugh, to love
OLLI is like music
OLLI sings of life

Da da da da da Boom

OLLI brings us all together
To share much more than rooms
We bring our inner souls
And build new family

Da da da da da da da da da Boom

In this shining moment
We share the now together
We learn about our lives
OLLI sings of life

Da Da da da da Boom

Whirling, stepping
Dancing, turning
Inside, outside
Upside, downside
Darkside, lightside
Eastside, westside
Loving, laughing

Da da da da da da da
da da da da da da da
da da da da da Boom

Legs stepping
Arms twirling
Learning, talking
Laughing, crying
Birthing, dying
Worlds turning
Suns shining
Our endings end
In new beginnings

Yearning, striving
Reaching, holding
Seeing, praying

All Life is a staging
Against the dying of the light
We are raging

Rising, dancing
Stepping, turning
laughing, crying
birthing, dying
Always stepping
Ever turning
OLLI brings us all together
We share wisdom
And our endings end in new beginnings
Endings end in new beginnings

Da da
Da da
Da da
Da
Da
Boom

Randy Hirtzel lives in Finnytown and credits classes at OLLI with helping to improve his writing.

Jinx

By Glenn King

She was young, headstrong, and really loved me. I was a little square and not the biggest or fastest on the block, but I came from Great Britain and had “a certain” flair about me, both inside and out. We celebrated her seventeenth birthday together, and she took me for a ride into the nearby German village to show me off. I was mighty proud to be seen with her, and she felt the same about me.

My nickname was Jinx. Everyone called me that because of the problems I often had. This didn’t make any difference to her. After seven years of shared memories, she still loved me. There was the time when she took a boat to the United States, and I went on another boat to join her in that new world. I knew she needed me. She was so excited and showed me off to all her new friends. I got the feeling they were quite fascinated by me, and I did my best to impress them with my European appearance. I wore black and yellow, which made me look very dashing. I also had the Union Jack flag on me at all times.

One winter, my special young woman and I went together to her grandmother’s home for Christmas. Two of her friends who needed a ride east went with us. There was Bill, an art student, and Nasir, a foreign exchange student from Jordan. There was also a third rider, a three-foot statue of a naked woman. But that’s a story for another day. We drove together over 1,500 miles, stopping to visit overnight in Kansas, Bill’s family home, and then on to Chicago where both boys were dropped off to explore the Windy City for a week.

Just the two of us—I preferred it that way—continued on to Detroit, an alien town to me, but we were received with open arms. Her grandmother was excited to see both of us and took many photos. I didn’t expect to be such a novelty; however, being both good looking and British, I’m used to admiring glances as well as occasional stares.

The next morning, it was decided that we would take a trip across town to her friend Pat’s home. I waited for my sweetie in the driveway while she fussed with makeup and put on just the right outfit. She was excited to introduce me to Pat and sang happily all the way across town. When we arrived, Pat met us outside, gave her a big hug, and, as she looked at me, she said in glowing tones, “Wow, I’m impressed. I think you hit the jackpot.”

My lady, who was now quite grown up, smiled at Pat, tossed her hair to the side, and sighed, “I am so glad that Jinx followed me so we can be together all the time. I am very lucky!”

During our seventh year together, a dashing young man came into my lovely lady’s life and insisted that I leave. He loved her and was concerned for her safety. I was devastated. I could sense the hurt in her voice as she acquiesced to his demands.

I will always miss her hands on me, her gentle voice, the happiness in her eyes when she looks at me, and the secure feeling of being with her wherever she goes. It is a sad day for both of us.

After a brief discussion with her young man, the following notice appeared in the classifieds:

FOR SALE
Best Offer!
British Import
1960 Hillman Minx
10,500 Miles
One Owner

Partially based on fact, this is one of Glenn King’s favorite short stories written with OLLI, which is a wonderful outlet for her wildly active imagination.



Defying Gravity

Drawing by Glenn King

Glenn King considers herself fortunate to have studied art and sculpture with some of the finest teachers in both the US and Europe and has recently been illustrating children's books.



Geese

Photograph by Richard Lingo

Richard Lingo loves Cincinnati so much that he moved downtown in order to better enjoy what it has to offer.

Sailing beyond a Destination

By Ellen Frankenberg

Sailing is intoxicating. The simplicity of wind and water, keel and cloth, compels me to learn geometry—and the paradoxes of life—again.

When I feel the wind in my face, I have to sail away from it. I have to find the right angle that will take me away from where I want to go. Sailing too close to the wind—within 45 degrees on either side of it—will cause my sails to luff, flapping to nowhere. I have to tack into a triangle with the right proportions, the right hypotenuse; a straight line will never lead to my destination. But once I have set a course, any small change in direction, a few degrees anywhere in the journey, will lead to a very different place on the opposite shore.

There are those who say that a sailboat is a metaphor for living well: the keel provides stability and prevents capsizing; the tiller offers direction and awareness of alternatives; and the sails, the sails express lift, power, energy, inspiration. The balance among those three forces creates headway.

But that is not why I go sailing. I go for the silence and the speech of the wind and the water; I go for the challenge of making something work, even if I am not mechanical; I go for the absolute need to come closer to everyone in the same boat on whom I must depend; and I go for the joy of galloping through wave upon wave in the bright light of day, and evening too, until we anchor, and the stars sail over us, even if we never reach our destination.

Ellen Frankenberg, a recovering English teacher, psychologist, and lover of whatever floats on water, enjoys also the opportunity to teach for OLLI and share the wisdom of Wendell Berry.

The Accidental Hero ("Little Billy")

By Doug MacCurdy

Duty called, and with no gallantry,
He got much luckier than most
And avoided the dreaded infantry.
The tank squadron was his post.

Italian rain, cold, and stalemate
Moved slowly up the mountain spine.
The task, too grim to contemplate,
As they approached the enemy line.

The battles wore on for nearly a year.
Then the Allies' final great surge.
The foe retreated: Italy was clear.
Now off to Holland for the final purge.

The war was ending, almost complete.
Now bring relief to the starving Dutch,
For the enemy had accepted defeat,
And succor those who suffered much.

Which way to go, it was all confusion:
North or east, what road to select?
No map or signs to give them direction.
Bill chose wrong and liberated Utrecht.

The way was opened, the town was cleared.
"We are not in our assigned sector," they knew,
But the people happily waved and cheered.
They lovingly welcomed Bill's tank crew.

There was no proud boast or jubilation,
Made his home and a cottage at a lake.
He went to work, helped build a nation,
"Little Billy," a reluctant hero by mistake.

Doug MacCurdy was inspired by a true story of a WWII tank commander who, like most veterans, never spoke of his combat experiences but told this story with self-deprecating humor.

Stages

By Pamela D. Hirte

Home was the same; Victorian furniture, silk flowers on every table, TV shouting shows from the past. Yet, something was different. More than stale grief over the loss of Dad, Mother was bereft with loss of self.

Things misplaced, later found in peculiar places. People forgotten. Words hard to retrieve. Stories told again and again. Can't remember if the two young men asleep in her guest room were grandsons. Deep caves of disconnect.

She fell in where the recent past failed to emerge. Submerged in this drink, memories melted. From underneath, she cried out

"Will I always be like this?"

Family rallied around Mother. She was loved in her murky world. We would hold on long after she remembered.

Pamela Hirte is a writer and master gardener who believes nature can inspire the poet in all of us.



In the Grocery Store

By Judi Morress

I saw the young woman bend down, trying to comfort her sobbing toddler who wanted to sit in the grocery cart, but couldn't. The new baby was there.

And I thought how hard it is to be the older child, feeling displaced, to be the younger child, always trying to catch up, to be the mother, trying to accommodate everyone.

And I wondered how do we do it—this moving through life, moving through roles that never quite fit us before we move on, every experience overlapping the previous one before we've learned how, only to be overlapped by yet another.

And I realized how unknowingly brave it is to leap into the role, to play the part, to be the one. We discover the part we're already playing, making it up as we go. And somehow it works.

Wisdom comes slowly, and then acceptance, and finally forgiveness. Hardest of all is to forgive ourselves.

Judi Morress has been attending OLLI classes for 13 years and co-moderates the OLLI Poetry Writing Workshop.

Cotton Dresses

Photograph by Virginia Cox

To be able to share her photography in *Creative Voices* is an added benefit of being an OLLI member for Virginia Cox.



Wet and Wonder

Photograph by David Feldstein

Since his retirement as a Certified Financial Planner in 2009, David Feldstein has been improving his photography skills, studying history, and enjoying OLLI classes.

Eskimo Poet

By Dick Hellmann

The snow slashes across our trail on the frozen bed of the Yukon River.
Flakes sting my face; ice-encrusted eyes see only the first two rows of dogs.
These, and three more rows of dogs plus the lead,
Work tirelessly out of sight in this raging blizzard.
Eleven dogs in all.
I trust my dogs.
I love my dogs.
I rely on my lead dog, Queen, for my life. She's the smartest, the bravest.
All strain in their harnesses, noiseless, except for their rhythmic breathing,
And the shush of the runners on the ice.
Their work, the unrelenting cold, has them near exhaustion.
We must stop and rest.
The snow lets up just in time to reveal a cave on the frozen shore,
And I steer the sled up a short incline to the opening.
Each unharnessed dog bounds into the cave for relief.
No wood for a large fire, but a camp stove takes the chill off, heats snow for water.
I unload the sled and flip it on its side to block our newfound haven from the wind.
We eat: frozen seal meat for them, some pemmican from inside my parka for me,
And then curl together in a pile, tired and exhausted,
Warming each other.

Dick Hellmann is a retired GE jet engine engineer/manager who had to put his creative writing on hold until after his working days and is now an enthusiastic member of the Monday Morning Writers Group and has seen a few of his works in print.



Silhouette

Photograph by Bernadette Clemens-Walatka

Photography has enhanced Bernadette Clemens-Walatka's awareness of and connection to visual beauty.

Untitled

Painting by Lynn Hamamoto

Lynn Hamamoto paints big and spontaneous, experimentally. No titles. Never signed. Just is.



So you want a rhyming poem

By Rick Stein

poems ain't rhymed since old Walt Whitman
they coming at you like a stoned cold hitman
if you think a poet has to use rhyme and meter
i give you Sylvia Plath and you can't beat her
now an ancient old poem like Kilmer's "Trees"
just sounds like a sick dog scratching at fleas
i can go all day, go all night, full time, nonstop
hip hop, won't drop, new crop, doo wop
if it's got a good beat and a nice rhyme
the song's the same from the beginning of time
when old man Ezra pounded that thing
and the beat generation began to sing
the old style poems became just that
like a buggy whip or a stovepipe hat
don't feel bad for those poets long dead
their work won't pass, it will still be read
but the poems, the songs, the music of the street
bursts out, explodes, talks real, won't cheat

Rick Stein has had short stories and many poems published in a number of publications; most of his poetry is meant to be read out loud.

1953

By Tom Fahey

At six years of age I don't have a great deal of history by which to judge, but I firmly assert that June 21, 1953, is one great day in my young life. It begins as any ordinary sunny summer Sunday with nothing more eventful than church and breakfast with Mom, Dad, and my sisters. Mom and the girls will soon be whisked away in a big green four-door sedan. There is nothing extraordinary about that except that they never ever leave without me and Dad. I'm not heartbroken over these events, but I do wonder why Dad still wears his white shirt and tie, and I have on my best sailboat-patterned shirt with a striped bowtie.

Soon there are cars on the street emptying their passengers at our front door. Dressed in Sunday-best crisp white shirts, bright ties, cool woven straw fedoras, and suspenders are Grandpa, Great Uncle Harry, and uncles Howard, Richard, and Danny. Great Uncle John, with a ruddy face, large nose, white eyebrows, and very thin reddish perfectly combed hair covering his otherwise bald dome, enters last. His shoes are woven tan leather, a goldenness such as the sweetest of fresh ladled caramel. The tops are a shiny white like the cap of an ocean wave. What is the occasion? I stand in awe in the center of this group of men as they light big black cigars and discuss the recent fate of the Cincinnati Redlegs. I hear John, the statesman of the group, decry Joe McCarthy's attacks that have forced team owner Powell Crosley to abandon their Communist-sounding "Reds" moniker. Richard, young and muscled and tan with wavy gold hair, changes the subject to the prowess of powerful first baseman Ted "Big Klu" Kluszewski.

Dad breaks up the group as he leads them into the dining room. The table is flanked by seven chairs, and each place has an ashtray and coaster. The centerpiece is a large leather container holding twelve slots of red, white, and blue poker chips. I know this scene. It's poker time. Usually, the men of the family retire to this amusement whenever they gather. I don't know why they are here today until Grandpa offers that Richard should deal first being the "man of the hour" and soon to be married. I get it: a pre-wedding celebration.

I jump into a chair near the table and watch the cards ripple through Richard's fingers as he shuffles and then deals the first hand. It isn't long before Uncle John raises his leathery tanned, gold-ringed finger toward me and motions me to come to him. "Get me a Schoenling, Tommy."

"I'll take a Hudepohl," demands Richard.

Soon seven voices signal me for a round of drinks. I repeat each order to myself as I head to the kitchen, hoping to get the orders all correct. This is a huge responsibility for a six-year-old young man. "Let's see," I question myself. "I've got two Schoenlings, three Hudepohls, one Burger, and a Wiedemann. That should do it." I carefully take the bottle opener to the cap atop each amber glass bottle and pry it off without spilling a drop. My toothy grin belies my elation in a job well begun. Now I need to make it two at a time to the dining room and match the correct drink to the correct relative.

I bring Uncle John's beer last. He smiles and pats me on the head. "Good work, Thomas. You make a fine bartender. Here are two bits."

I offer my biggest ten-teeth thanks smile. Soon the other card players dig change out of their pockets—five pennies from Danny, a dime from Harry, two nickels from Richard. I put a big handful of coins in each of my pockets. The treasure filling my pockets jingles as I walk to the kitchen. Fears of pirates, robbers, and Indians race through my mind. What should I do with this fortune to keep it safe? Perhaps, as John would suggest, I should invest my windfall. "That's it. I'll invest!"

I run to the corner of our street to the large two-story brick building housing Radel's Groceries. I push the front door open and walk in. Right beside the copper-keyed cash register sitting on the counter are several boxes of sweet-smelling, brightly colored, wrapped packages. Each wax pack cries out in big red print, "Six full color baseball cards and a delicious stick of bubblegum for only five cents."

Mrs. Radel stands, arms crossed, at the counter. I empty my pockets and throw the contents onto the counter. A quarter, several nickels, some dimes, and a lot of pennies roll across the counter and into Mrs. Radel's hands. "How much do you have here, Tommy? Where did you get all this?"

Staring at the beckoning yellow wax packs of Topps baseball cards, I spill my story into Mrs. Radel's ears. She counts the change and asks, "What do you want to do with a dollar and fifteen cents, young man?"

"Baseball cards," I shout. "How many of those Topps packs can I get?"

"Well, let's see. At five cents each, you can get twenty-three packs. Are you sure that is what you want to do?"

"Uh-huh!" I shout. "Yes, that's what I want!" I grab the small brown bag of treasures and run home with each foot



OTR Wall 19

Photograph by Larry Pytlinski

Larry Pytlinski is an avid amateur photographer whose passion is street photography; his work can be found on display at CILO and Art Beyond Boundaries Gallery.

occasionally touching the ground. I sit down on the front porch, take the first yellow pack from the bag, and hold it admiringly in my small hand. I never knew Christmas could fall in June, but on this day it does. I tear open the wrapper. The sweet sugary smelling pink gum flies into my mouth and wraps itself around my teeth. I pick out the cards one at a time: Luke Easter, Cleveland Indians; Smoky Burgess, Cincinnati Redlegs; Enos Slaughter, St. Louis Cards—the names roll off my tongue as the cards roll off my fingers.

I stop at a mouthful of six pieces of gum, but I open every pack and study every card. Each card is a museum piece, a masterfully hand-painted portrait of every ballplayer I could imagine. There are 138 cards in all. A handful of the duplicates I clothespin to the spokes of my bike for a roaring motor sound. I garner a few more cards throughout the summer. I never let them go.

Later in life, I renew my interest in this 1953 introduction to the beauty of baseball cards. I search out and purchase the cards I was unable to get in my youth. I finish my collection with 268 of the 274 cards Topps initially introduced in that golden year. I still have them and cherish the manner in which I began this collection.

“And, Uncle John, that 1953 Enos Slaughter costing me less than a penny is now worth \$485.”

OLLl tantalizes Tom Fahey’s taste buds to write of the flavors he savors from the stained plain paper menu that is his life.



Alchemical Emblem No. 1, Sacred Geometry

Painting by Jim Slouffman

Jim Slouffman has enjoyed his retirement because of his intellectual growth through OLLI and his inner growth from his artwork and musical explorations.



University of Cincinnati
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Vision Statement

OLLI is the premier organization offering educational and social experiences to the mature residents of Greater Cincinnati by:

- Nourishing intellect, 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.

OLLI at UC

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