

The Second Half  
Magazine  
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# *Perspectives...*

from later life learning

Contributions from The Second Half membership

## **HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS**

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words  
And never stops at all,*

*And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.*

*I've heard it in the chillest land,  
And on the strangest sea,  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.*

*Emily Dickinson*



Woodcarving by Paul Pasquariello

## In My Opinion

### SENIOR LIVES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

The at-home sheltering demanded by the current epidemic has provided us not only with time for more reading, quiet contemplation and some film-watching bingeing, but it has also prodded us to engage in some introspection and ethical and philosophical musings about the meaning of our senior lives.

Governments and our states were woefully unprepared for the challenges presented by the current epidemic. Medical supplies were in short supply, hospitals were overwhelmed and unable to care for all the people requiring treatment. We have seen the emotionally wrenching pictures of patients lying in cots in the corridors of hospitals in Italy and Spain. In the presence of limited beds and inadequate medical supplies, doctors were put in the uncomfortable position of having to decide who lives and who dies. How do you go about making this difficult choice?

What ethical principles do you apply? A medical board in Massachusetts issued guidelines for doctors based on a biological algorithm which would certainly be rejected in any other setting absent the current medical emergency. In short, these medical guidelines advised doctors to treat the young, the healthier, and those with a better chance to survive before treating the old and the sick with concurrent morbid conditions: in other words, most likely **us, the senior population.**

We all remember the political debate carried out in the public arena about the lack of ventilators. They were heralded as wonderful life-saving medical devices. We forget that usually the patient must first be put in an induced coma before being placed on a ventilator and then must be fed intravenously. The patient can be in this condition for a week, two weeks, or longer. Also, survival of people on ventilators is not guaranteed. Here, then, is an uneasy question: How do we reconcile these heroic efforts to save lives **at all costs** with maintaining the quality of life at the last stage of the person's life? And an even more provocative question: When is it time to say enough is enough and push back against the medicalization of the dying process?

American culture is averse to acknowledging death as an integral part of the human life cycle. We use all kinds of euphemisms to mask the reality of death. When was the last time you heard somebody say: "So and so **died?**" Instead we hear: "So and so passed." Where, we may ask, did the person pass to, or from? The highly contagious nature of Covid-19 has led to old people dying alone in hospitals without the comforting touch or consoling words of the people who love them. People have also been denied the opportunity to have meaningful burial rituals to facilitate the grieving process for the loss of a dear person. Will this lead to a further depersonalization of the dying process and denial of death in our culture?

We are witnessing the push to open up society to **save the economy**. Behind this is the unspoken calculation that saving the economy is worth the loss of human lives. How many, we may ask? And whose lives? Dan Patrick, the 70-year old lieutenant governor of Texas, opined that **older people** might want to sacrifice themselves during this pandemic for the good of the economy and the prosperity of their children and grandchildren. **Are seniors expendable?** I am afraid that the bias against older people that exists in our society will only become exacerbated with the current pandemic.

Current clinical data is still inconclusive as to whether surviving Covid-19 will give people immunity. Let's assume that it does, even life-time immunity. Will this split humanity into two: the strong and the weak? Will survivors of Covid-19 be given an **immunity passport** which will afford them special consideration by society, unique access to certain jobs, preferential treatment at airports, etc.? Does this sound like echoes of the "Brave New World" and a disguised version of the Darwinian "survival of the fittest?"

In the absence of an effective vaccine, we as seniors will continue to face the uncertainty and the fragility of our lives, while also being challenged to make our lives meaningful and advocate for our proper role in the larger society.

Mariano Merino

### **The Pandemic and Aging**

A Personal Essay informs or persuades the reader with a moral lesson not based on facts.

I know older brains can be re-trained and this is a perfect time for you to do it. My own old brain needed a tune-up recently; it wanders off into the past and revisits matters settled long ago and best forgotten. Recently I devised a code phrase, "stay on the farm," meaning "be here now." To my surprise, when I invoke the phrase "stay on the farm," the wanderer responds and is now spending more time with me in the Here and Now.

Just as life expectancy has narrowed for seniors, a life-threatening pandemic has surrounded us; for many it delivers a knot in the stomach. It is harder to breathe freely or think clearly let alone practice kindness towards ourselves or others in a manner we would like. That knot in the stomach is about the difficulty in breathing deeply. And just now breathing is so important because it is the body's principal way of letting go of stress.

We absorb so much stress each and every day from newspapers, TV and our smartphones. One activity that helps me and many others to de-stress is walking outdoors and encouraging deeper breathing with each set of strides; that is, walking while inhaling and exhaling through the nose and trying to feel the diaphragm in the stomach area while continuing conscious breathing. This and many forms of exercise can eventually untie the knot. As a result stressful thoughts will subside and the mind will slow down and become calmer.

Here and now is an opportunity to work on some issues that have always been challenging but are suddenly more noticeable and acutely felt. There are other thought loops that need attention: over thinking (thinking too much), negative thinking (negative thoughts about self or

others), and rumination (going over the same problem repeatedly) can become more entrenched and more painful. Now, when the pressure is on, may be the time to confront and dismantle these hurtful thought patterns.

This pandemic is stressful, make no mistake about it. You may live in a beautiful place and want for nothing. Yet we still are caught together in the pandemic and, of course, long for it to be over. In the meanwhile we can take this gift of time to monitor our thinking and breathing and get some exercise. There are two more profound human attributes to consider before closing.

The first, resilience, is the healthy human response to adversity. It is the ability to recover quickly and is thought to be both innate and something that can be accomplished. The second, kindness to self and others, is the heart of human endeavors. Kindness is notable in its absence and transformative in its presence.

Richard Dow, MSW, NYU School of Social Work 1987

### **SHE SAID**

Here's an idea for cogitation. I am usually not into conspiracy theories, but this one intrigues me. If the store clerk in Minneapolis had not phoned the police, there would have been no murder and no subsequent riots. I have a feeling that it was all planned by a faceless, nameless group with the ultimate goal of bringing down our beautiful country. I feel that the groundwork for the riots was laid out in advance, and Mr. Floyd's death was the spark that set it off. I think they chose Minneapolis because they knew the kind of cops they have there. I think the petty theft was planned, and that the clerk was primed. How many petty thefts are committed every day in convenience stores all over, and cops are not usually called. I don't think they meant to kill Mr. Floyd. He was used for a purpose.

Someone funded the purchase of bricks, lumber, and gasoline used in the attacks. The attacks were carried out with a definite method in each city. Too many to have been random. These were criminals waging battles, using teenagers as foils. This was way beyond protesting. It was war. They also timed it in the midst of a pandemic when people have been confined for months, so there is a lot of pent up energy to be exploited. After months of not being able to see people, now there were thousands of people jammed together fighting and breathing in each others' faces. We'll see what happens in two weeks after the incubation period of the virus.

I saw one elderly black woman sobbing, saying, "They burned my stores, that's where I do all my shopping. What am I going to do?" It's so sad and so scary. When the first brick is thrown, that person should be arrested and sent to jail. When the first police car is torched, grab the nearest person and slap on the handcuffs. The more they get away with, the more they will do. The violence and property destruction was monumental. Unwarranted.

Joan McKinley

## **SHE SAID**

A proponent of nonviolence until his death, Martin Luther King, Jr., nevertheless said, “A riot is the language of the unheard.” Our reflex may be to focus on the violence, but the grief is real, the justification for protest is real. King also said, “Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention.” We watch the violence, the burning and looting in sorrow and sometimes in anger, but can we understand its source?

It appears there are two different protests taking place—the peaceful but long-term protests that demand justice for George Floyd and for all black people who have long experienced differential treatment, and often uncalled for violence, at the hands of police and white people who feel naturally superior to blacks. See, for example, the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed jogger, by two white vigilantes; the murder of Breonna Taylor in her own home by police who were at the wrong address pursuing a man who had already been taken into custody. See, for example, the outrageous behavior of Amy Cooper in the Ramble in Central Park toward an innocent birder who happened to be black. See, for example, the murder of Atatiana Jefferson, shot in her own bedroom by police who had been called on a non-emergency line to check on her welfare.

The other “protests” appear to be carried out by persons with their own agenda, and we don’t know what that is or who they are. Some are looking to “score” free merchandise by breaking into places of business and taking what they want. Some are seeking to ramp up the violence, provoking a military response. I don’t believe that these “protesters” and the non-violent demonstrators are one and the same. A single response to both types of protests is a mistake. There is another way to respond. Yesterday in New Bedford a police officer took a knee and fist bumped a white, non-violent protester. There was no violence in New Bedford. The day before, the sheriff in a county in Minnesota talked protesters into turning their protest into a parade before it had the chance to become violent.

In the days ahead I am afraid we will continue to see extremely violent responses from the police and perhaps the military without their making any effort to distinguish between the peaceful and the violent protesters, and without the nuanced understanding needed to get us safely through this difficult period.

On the one hand, we need non-violent protests to continue until we have social justice and progress toward equality and respect. On the other hand, we need to condemn and contain violent protests that serve only to provoke violent countermeasures. We should demand appropriate responses from our government.

Eileen Sorrentino

### **Letters to the Editors**

This space is reserved for feedback about the magazine and its contents, including In My Opinion essays.

## Necco's Demise



When the New England Confectionary Company, of Revere, suddenly shut down in July 2018, it marked the end of the oldest continuously operating candy company in the United States. Most importantly, it ended the production of Necco Wafers, which were first produced in 1847. This is my homage to a childhood relic that will always be associated with going to the movies. The poem is also in response to the surprisingly intense reaction by consumers when first hearing of Necco's demise. The poem's title was, literally, "ripped from the headlines." Surely, we all remember the

woman who offered to trade her car for the company's remaining stock of Necco rolls! For those of you nostalgic for that familiar "snap" or looking to colorfully shingle your holiday gingerbread house—and willing to put in the time— this website offers a recipe said to be a close second to the original: [www.sprinklebakes.com](http://www.sprinklebakes.com).

### **Speculators Hoard Fans Scramble To Stockpile Still Others Barter Their Possessions**

A Boston druggist's  
famous concoction,  
America's first  
wafered confection  
turns to dust after  
eight score years and ten,  
its panoply of  
flavors unchanged since  
their initial run

orange and lemon  
citrus fans' delight,  
wintergreen freshness  
a counterpoint to  
bursts of savory  
cinnamon and clove

lime and licorice  
generously shared,  
unlike uniquely  
coveted rolls of  
only-chocolate,  
darlings of the pack.

its name stamped on mints  
and memories of  
rainbow-shingled roofs  
in holiday displays;

stand-ins for hosts in  
sacramental play;  
requisitioned sweet  
supplied to soldiers  
fighting the Great War

Indestructible  
Indispensable  
NECCO classic treat

By Anne-Marie Grillo



Postscript from Anne-Marie:

Two years after purchasing NECCO out of bankruptcy, the Spangler Candy Company has announced “the sweet return” of Necco wafers. Spangler is marketing the classic treats in their original eight flavors and wax-paper packaging. With a nod to Necco’s origin, the disk-shaped candies will be first sold at drugstores and pharmacies before expanding to other major retailers. Spangler expects limited production of the wafered rolls to be on store shelves in June. As CEO Kirk Vashaw stated in a *Boston Globe* article on June 3, 2020: “Candy is a simple joy in life, and it’s a simple reward.”

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The following is an article taken from the Quebec newspaper, “Le Devoir,” and sent to me by a Canadian named Normand Fugere, Nancy Cronan’s cousin. The article is translated by Lorraine Carey.

### **WHO SAID THAT HISTORY IS BORING?**

**Louis XIV n’a pris que deux bains dans sa vie: un le jour de son mariage et l’autre, la veille de sa mort.**

*Louis XIV only took two baths in his life: one the day of his marriage and the other on the eve of his death.*

**On a dû se demander si cela n’avait pas été la raison de sa mort! C’est qu’il a vécu fort longtemps pour l’époque, le vieux renard, 76 ans, et sans douche!**

*People must have wondered if that was not the reason for his death! He lived quite a long time for the era, the old fox, 76 years, and without a shower!*



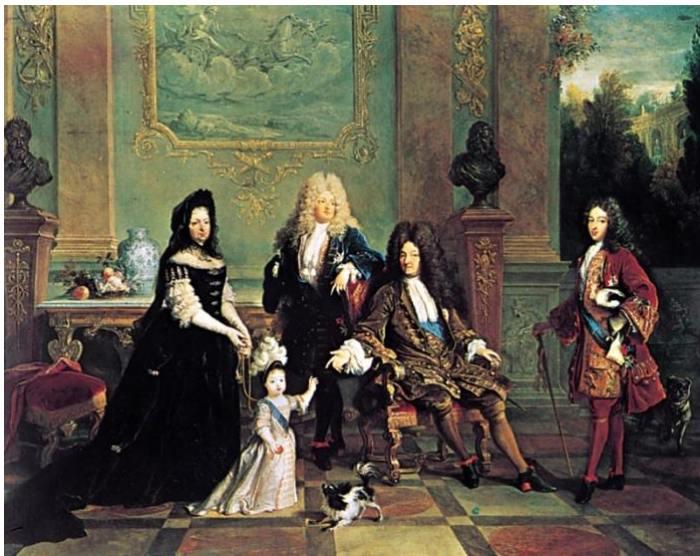
**Les dames faisaient pipi debout les jambes écartées, en raison de leurs encombrantes jupes, ça devait quand même éclabousser sur leurs bas et chaussures, et on n'ajoute pas certaines périodes du mois.**

*The ladies urinated standing up, legs outspread due to their cumbersome skirts, which must have splashed on their stockings and shoes anyway, not to mention certain periods of the month.*

**Les escaliers de Versailles servaient de latrines, on se soulageait là où on se trouvait, alors au 17<sup>ème</sup> siècle aussi, on se parfumait beaucoup. On portait vêtements de satin et bas de soie, sans sous-vêtements. Les changeait-on souvent? That is the question...**

*The staircases of Versailles were used as latrines. One relieved oneself where one stood, so in the seventeenth century also, people used lots of perfume. People wore satin clothes and silk stockings without underwear. Did they change them often? That is the question....*

La famille de Louis XIV



**Mais l'amour, étant toujours l'amour, les puanteurs, les maladies de peau, les poux, les puces et punaises ne gênaient point les effusions. On se grattait mutuellement. (Ceci ne figure pas dans les manuels d'histoire.)**

*But love, always being love, the stench, the skin diseases, lice, fleas, and bugs did not inconvenience demonstrations of affection one bit. People scratched one another. (This does not come up in the history books.)*

**La prochaine fois que vous vous laverez les mains et que vous trouverez la température de l'eau pas**

**vraiment agréable, ayez une pensée émue pour vos ancêtres. Voici quelques faits des années 1500.**

*The next time that you wash your hands and find the water temperature not to your liking, think about your ancestors. Here are some facts from the 1500s:*

**La plupart des gens se mariaient en juin, parce qu'il prenaient leur bain annuel en mai et se trouvaient donc encore dans un état de fraîcheur "raisonnable" en juin. Mais évidemment, à cette époque, on commençait déjà à puer légèrement et c'est pourquoi la mariée tentait de masquer un tant soit peu son odeur corporelle en portant un bouquet. C'est à cette époque qu'est née la coutume du bouquet de la mariée.**

*Most people got married in June because they took their annual bath in May and thus were in a state of reasonable "freshness" in June. But, evidently, by June they began to smell somewhat, and that is why the bride attempted to mask her body odor by carrying a bouquet. It is in this era that the custom of the bride's bouquet was born.*

**Pour se baigner, on utilisait une grande cuve remplie d'eau très chaude. Le Maître de maison jouissait du privilège d'étreindre l'eau propre; suivaient les fils et les autres hommes faisant partie de la domesticité puis les femmes et enfin les enfants.... Les**



**bébés fermaient la marche. A ce stade, l'eau était devenue si sale qu'il aurait été aise d'y perdre quelqu'un. D'où l'expression jeter le bébé avec l'eau du bain.**

*To take a bath one used a large cistern filled with very warm water. The Master of the house had the privilege of being the first to use the clean water, followed by the sons and the other men who were part of the household, then the women, followed by the children. The babies were last. At this stage the water was so dirty that it would be easy to lose someone. From whence comes the expression "to throw the baby out with the bath water."*

**En ce temps-là, les maisons avaient des toits en paille, parfois même la maison n'était qu'un toit. C'était le seul endroit où les animaux pouvaient se tenir au chaud. C'est donc là que vivaient les chats et les petits animaux (souris et autres bestioles nuisibles), dans le toit. Lorsqu'il pleuvait celui-ci devenait glissant et il arrivait que les animaux glissent hors de la paille et tombent du toit. D'où l'expression anglaise "It's raining cats and dogs" (Il pleut des chats et des chiens.)**

*At that time houses had straw roofs. Sometimes houses consisted of just a roof. On top of the roof was the only place where animals could stay warm. It is there that cats and other little animals (mice and other pests) lived. When it rained the roofs became slippery, and it happened that the animals slid outside of the straw and fell from the roof. This is the origin of the English expression "It's raining cats and dogs."*

**Pour la même raison, aucun obstacle n'empêchait les objets ou les bestioles de tomber dans la maison. C'était un vrai problème dans les chambres à coucher où les bestioles et déjections de toute sorte s'entendaient à gâter la literie. C'est pourquoi on finit par munir les lits de grands pilliers afin de tendre pardessus une toile qui offrait un semblant de protection. Ainsi est né l'usage du ciel de lit. Bien évidemment, les plus pauvres devaient s'en passer.**

*For the same reason, nothing stopped objects or animals from falling into the house. It was a real problem in bedrooms where pests and feces soiled the bedding. That is why one furnished a bed with tall pillars over which to stretch fabric, creating a canopied bed, which offered a semblance of protection.*

**À cette époque, on cuisinait dans un grand chaudron perpétuellement suspendu au-dessus du feu. Chaque jour, on allumait celui-ci et l'on ajoutait des ingrédients au contenu du chaudron. On mangeait au plus souvent des légumes, et peu de viande. On mangeait ce pot-au-feu le soir et laissait les restes dans le chaudron. Celui-ci se refroidissait pendant la nuit et le cycle recommençait le lendemain. De la sorte, certains ingrédients restaient un bon bout de temps dans le chaudron....**

*At that time, people cooked in a large pot which was always hanging above a fire. Each day the pot was heated, and ingredients were added to the contents of the pot. Most often, vegetables were eaten and very little meat. The contents of the pot were eaten in the evening, and the remains were left in the pot which cooled off during the night, and the cycle continued. Certain ingredients remained in the pot for quite a while.*

**Les plus fortunés pouvaient s'offrir des assiettes en étain. Mais les aliments à haut taux d'acidité avaient pour effet de faire migrer des particules de plomb dans la nourriture, ce qui menait souvent à un empoisonnement par le plomb (saturnisme) et il n'était pas rare qu'on en meure. C'était surtout fréquent avec les tomates ce qui explique que celles-ci aient été considérées pendant près de 400 ans comme toxiques.**

*The wealthy often used pewter dishware. But food with high acidity often caused the migration of lead particles into the food, which often caused lead poisoning, and it was not unusual that people died. It happened frequently with tomatoes, which explains why tomatoes were considered toxic for nearly 400 years.*

**Le pain était divisé selon le statut social. Les ouvriers en recevaient le font carbonisé, la famille mangeait la mie et les hôtes recevaient la croûte supérieure, bien croquante. Pour boire la bière ou le whisky, on utilisait des gobelets en plomb. Cette combinaison mettait fréquemment les buveurs dans le coma pour plusieurs jours!**

*Bread was divided according to social status. Blue-collar workers got the burned bottom, the family ate the soft doughy part, and guests received the crunchy upper crust. To drink beer or whiskey, one used lead goblets. This combination often put the drinkers in a coma for several days.*

**Et quand un ivrogne était trouvé dans la rue, il n'était pas rare qu'on entreprenne de lui faire la toilette funèbre. Il restait ainsi plusieurs jours sur la table de la cuisine, où la famille s'assemblait pour boire un coup en attendant que l'olibrius revienne à la conscience: d'où l'habitude de la veillée mortuaire.**

*When a drunk was found in the street, it was not uncommon that the body was prepared to be laid out and remained for several days on the kitchen table where the family assembled for a drink while waiting for the oddball to regain consciousness: hence the origin of the mortuary vigil or wake.*

**La Grande-Bretagne est en fait petite et à cette époque, la population ne trouvait plus de places pour enterrer ses morts. Du coup, on déterra des cercueils et on les vida de leurs ossements qui furent stokés dans des bâtiments ad hoc afin de pouvoir réutiliser les tombes. Mais lorsqu'on entreprit de rouvrir ces cercueils, on s'aperçut que 4% d'entre eux portaient des traces de griffures dans le fond, ce qui signifiait qu'on avait enterré là quelqu'un de vivant.**

*Great Britain was small at this time, and the population ran out of places to bury its dead. To solve the problem, they unearthed caskets and emptied them of their bones in order to re-use the tombs. But when the caskets were opened, 4 per cent of them had traces of scratches on the bottoms, which meant that a living person had been buried.*

**Dès lors, on prit l'habitude d'enrouler une cordelette au poignet du défunt reliée à une clochette à la surface du cimetière, et l'on posta quelqu'un toute la nuit dans les cimetières avec mission de prêter l'oreille. Et c'est ainsi que naquit là l'expression "sauvé par la clochette".**

*From that time forward, people habitually rolled a piece of rope around the wrist of the dead, a piece of rope which was tied to a bell at the surface of the grave. Someone was posted all night long in the cemetery with the sole mission of listening. And thus it is the origin of the expression "saved by the bell."*

**QUI A DONC DIT QUE L'HISTOIRE ÉTAIT ENNUYEUSE?**

## Possessions

These possessions  
stretch out  
as far as the eye can see,  
stretch out  
in all directions,  
piled high,  
pile upon pile;



Barely attended,  
barely utilized,  
barely read  
--pile upon pile  
just waiting  
endlessly--  
the tea leaves  
of our destiny.



Photos by Sheila Koot

Clem Brown

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### **Book Review A History of Judaism Martin Goodman Princeton University, 2018 By Dr. Ron Weisberger**

The history of the Jewish people and the history of Judaism as a distinct religion are intertwined. Important distinctions can be made, but however one views Jews historically or today, their religious beliefs as practiced (or not) cannot be ignored. Numerous histories have been written that try to either connect the two or make fundamental distinctions. Martin

Goodman, a professor at Oxford University, is the latest to take on this task. He points out that his *History of Judaism* is not a history of the Jewish people; rather, “Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people and therefore the book must trace the political and cultural history of the Jews so far as they impinged on their ideas and practices.” In other words, there is a strong correlation between the two.

Goodman, as an historian and professor of Jewish studies at Oxford, makes clear that until the common era (CE), there is little concrete evidence of the origins of the Jewish people or their religion. The story as related in the Torah or Jewish Bible (Old Testament), including the origins of the patriarchs, going out from Egypt, the covenant at Mount Sinai, and the conquest of Canaan cannot be verified by historical documentation. Goodman begins with Flavius Josephus, who in his *Antiquities* follows the biblical narrative and brings it up to his own time in which the transition from the Temple cult to Rabbinic Judaism was in process. By the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE and the diaspora of much of the people, the fundamentals of the Jewish religion were already set, and Judaism had become a religion “rooted in historical memory real or imagined.”

However, during Josephus's time there were important differences in interpretation among the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes. Goodman goes into some detail in explaining the differences as well as the emergence of the Jesus cult that eventually evolved into a distinct religion, Christianity. He shows that what eventually became Rabbinic Judaism and the evolution of the Talmud became the dominant form of Judaism, although other interpretations and practices remained. The debates and discussions of the rabbis created the practice of Judaism up to the present but under the influence of Christianity and Islam changes such as the development of Jewish mystical theology did occur.

The form and practice of Judaism remained consistent with some codifications and commentary during the Middle Ages by men such as Rashi and Maimonides. In the 18th century there was a major movement, Hasidism in Eastern Europe, that was influential but did not change in a fundamental way how Judaism was practiced. However, in the modern period, under the influence of the Enlightenment and philosophers such as Moses Mendelsohn, we see the development of the Reform movement in Germany and the United States. The Conservative movement that began in the United States also developed as a sort of middle ground between Reform and the more traditional Orthodox.

Goodman's book is comprehensive and a good place to start to appreciate the long history of Judaism in all its diversity. He makes clear the important connection between the religion and Jewish identity. As he points out, in the long history of the Jewish people their religion was paramount. With the creation of the state of Israel with its strong secular tradition, the practice of Judaism has become less important but not its history. In the United States, which with Israel constitutes the majority of the Jewish population in the world, assimilation and complacency, perhaps, has meant a decline in attendance at synagogues and temples in recent years. What this portends for the survival of Judaism and the Jewish people as a distinct ethnic group is an important question that Goodman does not answer. However, a reading of his book may provide some optimism, seeing the long history of the Jewish people, their religion, and the way they have survived despite major obstacles.





## TREES

by Joyce Kilmer

*I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;*

*A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;*

*A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;*

*Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.*



Photos by Sheila Koot

It seems everywhere I look this Spring, I see beautiful flowering trees. Maybe because I am on foot rather than driving by, I am noticing them more. I am reminded of Joyce Kilmer's poem, *Trees*.

In seventh grade we had to memorize a poem of our choosing to recite on the last Friday of every month. Inevitably several students (usually boys!) forgot, and so they were given the poem *Trees* to memorize while the rest of us recited our poems. Having heard *Trees* repeated many times over the year, that is probably why it is one of the few poems I remember in its entirety.

Sheila Koot

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### Interview with Beverly Stevens

Sheila Koot



Bev was the Executive Director of The Second Half from 2007 to 2017. She currently is the Chair of the Membership Retention and Development Committee.

**Bev, when I joined The Second Half in the fall of 2007, you were the Director. Can you tell us how that came to be? Was there an advertisement that you answered? What type of work did you do before joining The Second Half?**

Retiring from the MENTOR Network after twenty-two years and then catching up with most of those tasks on the “To Do List When I Have Time,” I realized that I needed to find something to do that would bring some new meaning and purpose to my life. One can only do so many lunches with friends even though these are great fun. I saw an advertisement for The Second Half in the South Coast Insider announcing an open house so I called my sister and talked her into attending with me. We both signed up for courses in the spring of 2007.

While attending the classes I, along with every other member of The Second Half at the time, received a letter announcing that the current Director was taking a full-time position elsewhere and that the Board of Directors was looking for a candidate for the position. A job description was attached. I read the job description and realized that I had the skills the Board was looking for and the idea of a part-time job appealed to me so I applied and was hired.

The MENTOR Network is a health services company providing therapeutic foster care services, residential and other services for children at risk, children and adults with developmental disabilities, and adults with acquired brain injury. In my years there I had many different roles. As a licensed social worker, I was hired as a clinical coordinator, then moved on to a clinical supervisor role, then to program manager and for several years prior to retirement I oversaw all of the company’s developmental disabilities services in Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well as providing consultation to programs in other states such as New Hampshire and Pennsylvania.



I was excited to be joining The Second Half and to have a new opportunity to put my skills to work in the service of an educational program that had so much to offer to adults in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. I was only a member for a few months before becoming the Director but that was long enough to know that this was an organization committed to providing quality programs.

**During the years you were the Director how did The Second Half change?**

Dr. Fred Gifun was the President of the Board of Directors when I began my work with The Second Half. At that time The Second Half had about one hundred members and I can't remember exactly how many courses we offered then, perhaps fifteen or so, and the "catalog" was a Word document that I typed up and mailed out. When Fred and I met to talk about the program my goal was to grow the program, to the point that it would need a full time Executive Director and to put myself out of a job. We succeeded in doing that. Membership tripled, the number of courses offered increased, local trips and special events were offered, and we had the beginning of international trips. Although the international trips owe their creation to Russ and Lorraine Carey, I am just grateful they started on my watch. We also created the first version of the current catalog which Executive Director Roberta Melton has continued to improve. One thing that I am proud of is that in 2013 The Second Half hosted the Northeast Lifelong Learning Conference at the Fairfield Inn and Waypoint Conference Center in New Bedford. Members of Lifelong Learning Programs from several states attended. The conference was very well received and for a few years afterward I would receive calls from people asking if we were planning to do another one.

**A few years after you stepped down from serving as Director, you assumed another role. Can you explain what that is and what the job entails?**

Actually, I stepped down on June 30, 2015 and accepted the position of Assistant Treasurer on the Board effective July 1 of that year. About a year ago I resigned from that role on the Board to become the Chair of the Membership Retention and Development Committee. This is a new committee to encourage more participation of our members in the organization. The pandemic has brought these efforts to a halt while the Executive Director and the Board work to develop plans to continue to offer quality programs in a way that keeps our members safe as we deal with this new reality.

**What are your favorite types of courses to take?**

I am a bit of a political junkie so I have taken courses related to politics with Bob Miller to learn more about the issues facing our country in more depth. In both my undergraduate and graduate work I somehow missed taking an economics course so I really appreciated the courses offered by David Wyss. I have taken a variety of courses since I am always looking to learn new things, especially in areas that I really know nothing about.

**What do you like to do in your spare time when you are not taking classes?**

As the mother of five children and the grandmother of twelve grandchildren, family takes up a lot of that time. I also have a large extended family with whom I spend time. I bowl on a team with several of my cousins in a local league. I am an avid reader and it is this which has helped me the most in getting through this time of social distancing.

I love the theater and have subscriptions to the Providence Performing Arts Center and Your Theatre in New Bedford as well as attending performances at Trinity Rep and other theaters. I enjoy concerts when I can and meeting friends for lunch or dinner. I also like getting out into nature and taking walks, sometimes with my camera in hand.

**If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?**

This past summer I traveled to Barcelona, Spain, to visit my granddaughter who was living there temporarily while teaching English. I was joined there by my son and his family and we had a wonderful visit exploring together. I have also been to England, Ireland, Germany, Austria and the Azores. I would like to visit mainland Portugal someday. My trip to Ireland included time at Anam Cara, a writer and artist's retreat, with a group of friends for a writing workshop. Much of my travel is in this country visiting with my children in California and West Virginia or friends in Florida or other states.

**What type of music and art do you enjoy? Do you have a favorite museum or cultural event that you attend?**

I have been a member of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston for many years and I particularly enjoy the impressionist exhibit. I was looking forward to the special exhibit of impressionist paintings that they had put together this year, but the museum closed just about the time it was scheduled to begin. I am hoping that they will still offer it once they re-open.

My taste in music is varied. I enjoy music from Broadway shows, jazz, country and some classical music. I am grateful to Salma Jabbour for introducing me to Il Divo because they have become one of my favorite groups.

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**SECRETS OF THIS UNIVERSE**

By Vic Zeller

**Planet EARTH is a SCHOOL and a ZOO, One of Millions in This Universe. Some purposes are for Recycling and Evolution of DNA, Consciousness, and Intelligence. Understanding This View of the Universe is a Goal of Vic Zeller, Westport MA.**

**Please contact Vic at 508-636-5379 or [mzeller@umassd.edu](mailto:mzeller@umassd.edu) with questions, comments, and new ideas.**

Learning what the Secrets are requires open minds, positive attitudes, and a willingness to expand your mental boxes. Think "Yes, Maybe, Why Not, and What if." Avoid "No, Never, Impossible," or "My religion forbids that idea." Avoid absolutes, such as, "Always, Never, All, and None." There are MANY answers to complex questions. Ask Questions and Be Imaginative and Curious.

## The Mystical Wisdom of the Ages

The following websites and books will help develop the Evolution of your Consciousness and Psychic Abilities and Knowledge from ancient Egypt to the present. They provide many helpful experiments for health and psychic abilities. Find your Master Within.

### Explore the following:

- The Rosicrucians [www.Rosicrucian.org](http://www.Rosicrucian.org). Download free booklet "Mastery of Life," which is an online Home Study course with experiments. See YouTube.
- Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.).
- [www.EdgarCayce.org](http://www.EdgarCayce.org)
- [www.NSAC.org](http://www.NSAC.org). Spiritualist Church principles about the Intelligence and Consciousness of the Universe. Also Mediumship, Healing, The Golden Rule and much more.

### ■ Books: Overall Views of Consciousness, Reincarnation, Universal Intelligence, Healing, Past Lives

- **The Holographic Universe** by Michael Talbot **is the best of this group to read first.**
- **Divine Matrix** by Gregg Braden. *New York Times* best seller.
- **Hands of Light** by Barbara Brennan. Human Energy Fields, Reiki, and Healing techniques.
- **Psychic Development for Beginners** by William Hewitt has many interesting stories and helpful experiments for you to connect to higher Consciousness and Intelligence.
- **The Lost Teachings of Jesus, Book 1** by Elizabeth Prophet. How reincarnation was lost.
- **Old Souls** by Tom Shroder.
- **Many Lives, Many Masters** by Brian Weiss. A classic book about past lives.
- **The Sleeping Prophet: Edgar Cayce** by Jess Stearn.
- **The Edgar Cayce Primer** by Herbert Puryear. **Path to self-transformation**

### ■ Lost Civilizations

- **Fingerprints of the Gods** and **Magicians of the Gods** by Graham Hancock
- **The Search for Lost Origins** and **Forbidden History** by Editors of Atlantis Rising Magazine.
- **Mysterious Origins of Mankind**. Video by Charlton Heston.

### ■ UFOs and Crop Circles: See MUFON.com, Cropcirclesecrets.org, ColinAndrews.net, Earthfiles.com, NationalUFOcenter.com, UFOHastings.com (UFOs interact with ICBMs.).

- **The Bible and Flying Saucers** by Reverend Barry Downing. Good for beginners.
- **The God Hypothesis** and **Rulers of the Earth** by Dr. Joe Lewels.
- **The Gods of Eden** by William Bramley. Aliens promote wars by using religion and banking conspiracies to keep humans from spiritual advancement. Scary book.
- **Secrets in The Fields** by Freddy Silva. Crop circle designs and alien technology.

Quotes: "Learn today as if you live forever." Mahatma Gandhi  
"Curiosity and Imagination are more important than knowledge."  
"We are Spirits having a human existence."

What do you want to do in your next life? Be Curious.

Please pass on this *Secrets* to anyone interested.

Vic April 20, 2020

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## Maps

Warmth spun in dreams  
out of deep winter bluster--  
white white white--and  
the memory of Maine  
borne across a tropic view--

red sun through mist  
on the Maidan;  
clouded glimpses of  
Kanchenjunga from  
Observatory Hill--

I fall away now  
poring over maps  
of childhood homes,  
places far away a  
mere twinge of mind.

Miss Barth's Kings  
House Day School,  
an entry in Wikipedia,  
the old stained stucco  
colonial building

with a high portico  
facing a deeply-shaded  
Calcutta back street  
completely gone from  
view on Google Earth,

replaced by a  
densely-packed  
mixed-use high-rise  
fronting on a busy street,  
not a tree in sight

Clem Brown



view of a Maidan



view of Kanchenjunga

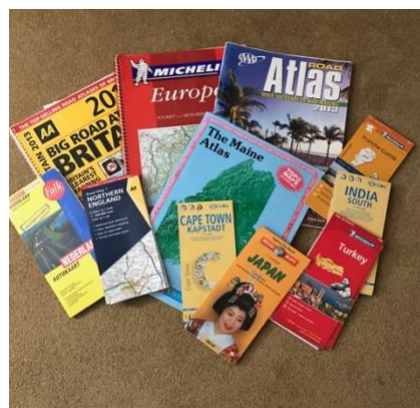


photo by Sheila Koot



## A Walk in Destruction Brook Woods



Jenn Brindisi took these photos of lady's slippers and fiddlehead ferns in Destruction Brook Woods, a property owned and managed by the Dartmouth Natural Resource Trust (DNRT). The DNRT is a non-profit land trust with fifty-eight reserves and over forty miles of trails. ([dnrt.org](http://dnrt.org))

A narrow trail in Destruction Brooks leads to a grove of lady's slippers that bloom in May.



### Interesting Facts About Lady's Slippers and Fiddleheads

It is illegal to pick lady's slippers in Massachusetts. They were called *Moccasin Flowers* by the Native Americans. For an interesting essay on how "This shift in plant names ominously mirrors social perceptions of the apparent need for Indian removal during the same period," google *Taking off the Moccasin Flower and Putting On the Lady's Slipper* by Kyhl Lyndgaard. <https://potash.marlbورو.edu/node/60>

Fiddleheads or fiddlehead greens are picked when they are very young for eating. If left to grow, they will slowly unfold into the frond of a fern. Raw fiddleheads are poisonous and not all of them are edible. It's the Ostrich fern that you see in the markets. Its taste is similar to asparagus or spinach. Google *How to Find, Identify and Cook Fiddleheads*.

Sheila Koot



## **Interview with Joyce Miller**

Sheila Koot

Joyce is a long-time member of The Second Half and currently serves as the Chair of the Membership Committee.

### **I know you love books, Joyce. Did your life before joining The Second Half involve books?**

My love of books began early. My mother bought a set of Childcraft books, and she read stories to my sister and me. I still have several from that set. For several years I lived a block from a small library, so I had a convenient source for books. When I was about 12, I rode my bike a few miles to buy hardcover Nancy Drew books (\$2 each then). Once I was a parent myself, I read to my children who are now dedicated readers themselves.

I worked for Baker Books for about ten years after leaving teaching and our daughters were older. I did sales, decorated a few windows, bought the greeting cards, started a book discussion group which continues to this day, and had fun doing a once weekly radio chat with Pete Braley about what Baker Books had to offer. I learned how to make great coffee drinks too. The most rewarding part of my work there was finding exactly the right book for a customer. I loved watching a child smiling and hugging a book. I also enjoyed my employee discount. Like many other independent book stores, BB had a staff very dedicated to the store's mission.

### **Do you have a favorite genre of books?**

I read a wide variety of books, and it would be impossible for me to pick a favorite. When reading for light entertainment, I prefer legal thrillers and novels. Nelson DeMille, Noah Hawley, Colson Whitehead, Anne Tyler, Richard Russo, and Toni Morrison are among my favorite fiction authors. When I read to expand my knowledge (and I am in the mood to really concentrate), I choose books about cosmology, genetics, paleontology, and what might be called cultural history. Yuval Noah Harari, Jared Diamond, Mark Kurlansky, Tom Standage, Bill Bryson, and Elizabeth Kolbert are among my favorites.

### **Have you facilitated courses? If so, what type of courses?**

For several semesters, I have facilitated a nonfiction book discussion group, focusing on popular science books written for the general public. It was so enjoyable to share these books with a group of curious, bright, and avid readers. Many of those in the groups knew more than I about the topic at hand, so it was rewarding to learn from them. They would probably tell you that I am a little obsessed lately with books about trees.



## **Do you have a favorite museum or cultural event that you attend?**

Where to begin. My husband and I celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary by taking a trip to Italy. One outstanding feast for the eye after another, but the Vatican and the Villa Borghese stand out. The Gardner House in Boston, the Getty in Los Angeles, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, the botanical gardens and museum in Brooklyn, and the Newseum in Washington, DC (which has closed), were food for the mind and soul. We also have season tickets to our own New Bedford Symphony Orchestra.

## **What do you like to do in your spare time when you are not either taking or facilitating a course?**

I learned to knit a few years ago. I am proud to announce that I have happily accepted that I will never be more than a bit beyond the beginner stage in this endeavor. I make blankets, shawls, sweaters, and hats for my family and as gifts. I have still not found a way to read and knit at the same time!

In addition to facilitating and taking The Second Half classes, I serve on the Board as Membership Chair. It is a treat to share with anyone who will listen how much I believe in our mission and a joy to work with the dedicated people on the Board.

I am in two book discussion groups. We have a meal along with our discussion. I am the facilitator for one, and we take turns in the other group.

With the ever helpful Sue Richard, we created the library at The Second Half. Sue and I (OK, mostly Sue) organize and cull books as needed. I hope to start a children's section once things return to normal. I hope it becomes a source of books for our members to read to their grandchildren.

Does having one, or even two, 45-pound rescue mutts arranged on your lap qualify as a spare time activity? Ranger and Finney would tell you it should be my main activity in life, but they only speak dog.

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### **Earth, Water, Air: The Silent Spring**

18" X 18"

Oil painting on wood

By Jane Bregoli

My latest painting has an environmental theme painted with images that are typical of each artist's subject matter. Georgia O'Keeffe often painted the landscape of the American West, Monet was known for his Waterlily Pond paintings, and one of John Lennon's popular songs "Imagine" is about the world becoming one in peace. The song "Gimme Some Truth" I hadn't heard for a very long time, and I was struck by how powerful and appropriate it is for our times.



The painting of John laying on the ground looking at the clouds is on the back of his “Imagine” album cover. In the time before 8 tracks and CDs were sold, I would study the front and back of the album covers. Oftentimes the album opened where you could read the words to the songs and see more material about the band. Klaus Voormann, who The Beatles knew from when they played in Hamburg, Germany, played bass on every song on the “Imagine” album. He also drew the cover for the album “Revolver.”

*Silent Spring*, a book by Rachel Carson, was published in 1962 and is credited with having launched the environmental movement. My work entitled “The Silent Spring” is a reference to our own spring of 2020 in which we are expected to stay at home because of a worldwide pandemic.

Books are essential to our lives. The ideas within them may give us hope and positivity. They cause us to stop our busy lives and pay attention to the ideas held within them. Well-read books show signs of outer wear and tear to the covers that show that it has been loved, thought about and revisited many times, giving comfort and education to its owner.

When I paint, I not only think of the colors and how the paint is applied to the surface; I am thinking about the reasons I chose these artists to include in my work of art. I think of Georgia O’Keefe’s independence and groundbreaking work as an artist, Monet’s beautiful colors and flowing brushwork, and how John Lennon put his ideas about world peace into inspiring music. None of these artists was afraid to follow their own path, and I am inspired by their bravery. Each minute I spend painting them is one more minute I have the chance to honor and revisit their accomplishments and their lives.

These books are not in a library, so don't Google them; you will not be able to find them!  
Painting my subjects in a book form indicates that there is much more to their stories than is visible to our eye. There are many stories held within about each person.

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## Retirement

I thought I'd simplify.  
I thought I'd meditate  
and free myself from  
earthly bonds.

I thought  
I'd turn aesthete and  
float off into some  
wan paradise of  
thin gruel living.

I thought too much.

I'm now more tied to  
this earth than before,  
more day-to-day,  
                    in-the-body  
down-to-the-ground  
tied-to-the-earth than  
when I was running  
around at work  
like a chicken with  
my head cut off.

No,  
I guess there is  
just no escaping  
this gravity  
we embrace,  
which in turn  
so gently  
embraces us.

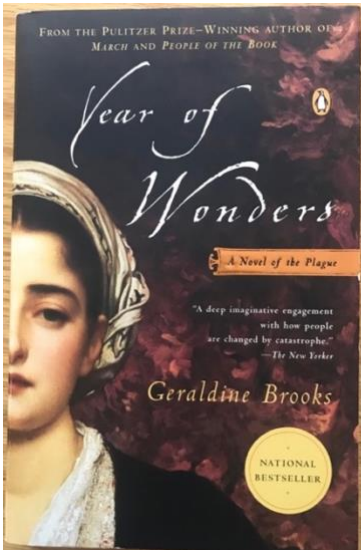
Clem Brown



Clem (on left) enjoying retirement

**Book Review**  
**Year of Wonders**  
**Geraldine Brooks**  
By Sheila Koot

**The Ultimate Quarantine**



Like many of you I enjoy reading. Most normal days I am so busy with activities during the day that my reading is limited to two or three hours in the evening. But these are not normal times and I find that I have plenty of reading time now. I love historical novels. So when this pandemic broke out, I went to my bookcase to find and reread a book I read some time ago. Geraldine Brooks' *Year of Wonders* deals with the same issues we have today of pandemics and quarantines.

Eyam (pronounced eam as in stream) is a small stone village in the heart of Derbyshire in the Peak District. It is famous as the Plague Village. In September 1665, when the last of the major bubonic plagues to infect England was killing hundreds in London, a tailor received an order of cloth from London. Since it was damp, the cloth was unrolled and left to dry. Unwittingly, the tailor released fleas infected with the

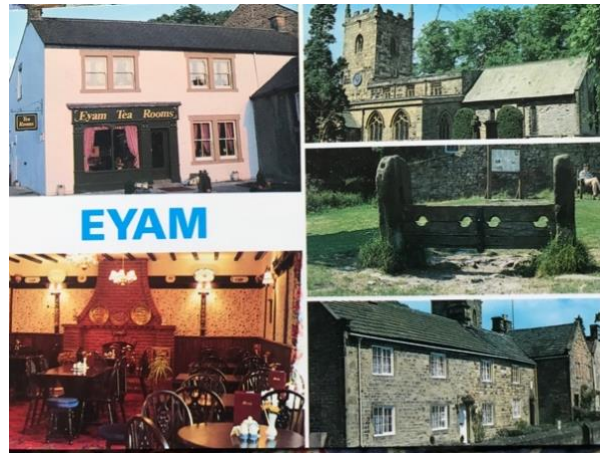
plague and within weeks many villagers had died.

Over the course of fourteen months, 260 out of 350 villagers perished. What makes this a remarkable tale is the decision the village took to isolate themselves so that neighboring villages would not become infected. That meant no one left, no one entered. All food and medicine were left at "the boundary stone" outside the village. Money to pay for these essentials was left in a hollowed-out rock filled with vinegar that was thought to kill the plague germs. The dead were buried on the hillside outside the church graveyard and the church was closed. Because of the villagers' selfless act of self-quarantine, none of the surrounding towns was infected.

Those are the known facts. Geraldine Brooks used them to create a tale of courage, self-sacrifice, mistrust, and finally superstition that devolved into witchcraft. As noted on the front cover, "The New Yorker" described the book as "a deep imaginative engagement with how people are changed by catastrophe." I highly recommend reading this novel. Note: As I was writing this, *Year of Wonders* was backordered on Amazon. It seems that others have discovered this book.

In 1990 my family and I visited Eyam on a tour of Derbyshire, a county where we had lived two years before. I wrote in my journal: "9<sup>th</sup> August. Eyam. Had coffee in the Tea Room. Visited the Market. Bought post cards and peanut butter (our younger son would only eat peanut butter sandwiches for lunch). Walked to Parish Church and Plague Cottages. 259 out of 350 villagers died."

Amazingly, the village is still intact--the church, cottages, graves, and “boundary stone” can still be visited. On a side note, Geraldine Brooks also visited Eyam for the first time in 1990. I would like to think that perhaps we both signed the church visitor’s book that same summer.



Postcards bought in the Market.  
Views of the Tea Room, the Church of St.  
Lawrence, the stocks, and the Plague Cottages

## Body Surfing

“Acapulco cliff-diver *corazon*,  
Fine as an obsidian dagger,  
Alley-oop and here we go,  
Into the froth, my life.....!”

—Sandra Cisneros, “Little Clown, My Heart”



A long line of stratus clouds cuts the sky  
and ushers in nothing  
but blue from the west,  
so we head to the beach,  
where the waves are fairly big,  
breaking perfectly in alternating sets of  
large and slightly smaller waves, perfectly curled.  
Seagulls whirl and swoop above a school of fish at some distance  
out to sea as a steady westerly breeze sweeps the clouds from the sky.



It's as close as you will ever get to that dream of flying. Body-surfing is pretty simple: you need the right wave (you can't have top-breakers, double waves, choppy waves, or waves breaking right up on the beach), then it's really all just in the timing—you have to catch it just before the break. You need a good foothold from which to push off and a good forceful kick after that; keep your head down and your arms straight ahead as if you were diving from a high cliff. And if the wave is big enough (about three to four feet above the sea's level is just about perfect for the body-surfer), you do have to survive the drop as you fall into the curl keeping your body straight but limber and ready to fold (too rigid and you break your back); then keep your head down as you rocket forward through frothing white water --holding your breath down there as long as you can-- as the wave takes you swiftly from the break right across the shallows up onto the beach, a sandy beach, not a rocky one--tearing your chest open on the rocky shingle is a hazard for the body surfer, like the sharks who linger just off-shore, willing to mount the waves for a quick taste.

By Clem Brown [with thanks to BJ Nooth and Jim Cronin]

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**MOVIE REVIEW**  
**By Eileen Sorrentino**  
**GROUNDHOG DAY (1993)**

**102 minutes**  
**Directed by Harold Ramis**  
**Starring Bill Murray (Phil Connors)**  
**Andie McDowell (Rita)**  
**Chris Elliott (Larry)**

Several members of the film class have continued to watch films separately and discuss them together on Zoom once a week. *Groundhog Day* was not on the original list of films, but it seemed to be especially relevant during this time when each day seems much like the last, and we wake up each morning with the sense that “Oh, yeah. Here we go again.” We all enjoyed the film and the discussion, so here is a review that might entice you to watch the film.

While *Groundhog Day* received a mild reception when it opened in 1993, it has since been recognized by Roger Ebert as one of the 100 best films of all time, and by the American Film Institute as number 34 in its list of all-time funniest movies. *Groundhog Day* was dismissed by some reviewers as a light-weight comedy, fluff even, and seen by others as profoundly



philosophical, dealing with topics like time; redemption; and the reactions of a selfish, self-centered misanthrope to a dilemma he can't control.

In the course of the film, Phil endures Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Harold Ramis had this to say, "Danny Rubin [screenwriter] actually took Elisabeth Kübler-Ross as a model---her five stages of death and dying---and we used that as a template for Bill Murray's progress." When asked, Ramis said he believed Murray's transformation took from 10 to 12 years.

Ramis was surprised to find his film was attracting a lot of attention from various religious groups, meditative gurus, and other parties who were into metaphysics. Ramis was particularly surprised, especially as he was expecting a backlash against him. A December 7, 2003, "New York Times" article entitled "Groundhog Almighty" discussed both the seeming incongruity of *Groundhog Day* being curated alongside such "serious" films as Luis Buñuel's *Nazarin* (1959), Federico Fellini's *8 ½* (1963), Ingmar Bergman's *Winter Light* (1963), and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966), and the opinions of different clergy-people and religious adherents (including rabbis, Jesuit priests, Buddhists, practitioners of Falan Dafa, and Wiccans) about how the movie is applicable to or actually about their respective religions.

During the filming Bill Murray was going through a divorce, and he was very anxious about every detail of the film. He would call Ramis frequently, often in the middle of the night, until Ramis assigned someone to sit with Murray. Murray took great offense, and they didn't speak to each other for years after finishing the film—not until Ramis got very sick before he died.

Phil Connors kidnaps Punxsutawney Phil in one of the many groundhog days he endures. During the drive after the kidnapping, the groundhog playing Punxsutawney Phil became very agitated, trying to climb over the steering wheel. He bit Murray in the hand twice, hard enough to necessitate medical treatment and a course of rabies shots for Murray.

Bill Murray and Harold Ramis have both been honorary Grand Marshals for the Groundhog Day celebrations in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

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## In The Air

A new year coming in,  
More revolution,  
More doubt as to  
The way this ends.

Something in the air.  
Something in the water.  
Screaming faces full of hate.  
Chaos in the streets.

Something in the water,  
Something in the air,  
Fear and greed,  
Greed and fear.



Politicians I admire  
Prattle on,  
Urging themselves  
Into a lather.

I want to sink deeply  
Into mournful melody,  
Chopin perhaps,  
And cry for this land,

Weep for our children,  
Wail for the future,  
So dark and treacherous  
Is the path ahead.

The world wobbles,  
The world trembles.  
Faith is lost,  
Faith is gone.

This too.  
This too shall pass.

Clem Brown

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## BACK IN THE DAY...WHILE CLEANING THE FRIDGE

By BJ Nooth

A funny thing happened the other day; as I was giving my refrigerator a thorough cleaning before a massive pandemic-inspired shopping trip, I reached the condiment shelf and voila! There were enough capers, baby gherkins, and stuffed olives to make my favorite potato salad, ensaladilla rusa, that came to me through taking Spanish in my early days with The Second Half. My husband says I just love to say it and it's true! The syllables ease off your tongue as easily as your taste buds savor this mélange of flavors! Try it out: ensaladilla rusa!

Memories came rushing back to days before Currant Road, before Bedford Street, to the Main Street building where I first took Writing from the Heart and Spanish is Fun! Those two courses, the instructors, and my fellow students became the mainstay of my introduction to lifelong learning and the wonderful community that is the Second Half.

While we find our way through this pandemic and miss our friends and our luncheons at The Cove and Bittersweet Farm, let me take you back to the days when we were much smaller, 100 members or so, and made our own parties and events. We started out in church kitchens and social halls, first at Allen's Neck Friends Meeting and later in Fall River at the Blessed Trinity Church. Parking was limited, we had to carpool, and we filled the trunks with our potluck offerings. Those who didn't cook would order take-out (antipasto platters from Riccardi's were a popular choice); others became known for their specialties: elegant platters of salmon, cream puffs, trifle and other desserts, devilled eggs. Because of my Spanish

class, this potato salad became mine. We also collected non-perishable food items for the Fall River Community Soup Kitchen and were happy to contribute to their cause.

The entertainment was stellar because we provided that, too! Especially our holiday parties! The language classes would perform carols and I was proud that we devoted so much time in



Sharon Andrade & Barbara Pauls  
greeting Members to the Pot Luck  
Photo by Sheila Koot

our Spanish class to learn and practice actual Spanish carols. This took time since the tunes were not familiar to us, and so Mariano Merino, our instructor, took this seriously as a way to learn the language. We had some good singers, Steve Brauch and Joan McKinley among them, and as long as I stood in the midst to keep in tune, we gave a rousing performance! The French class, wearing berets, performed also; the French carols we knew in English and there were solos with guitar accompaniment all under the direction of Lorraine Carey.

This was fun that was a lot of work overseen by Sheila Koot: organizing to ensure enough of everything for everyone, jobs assigned for set-up, decorating, break-down, and clean-up. As our membership increased we just outgrew it all! Enough! We wanted to be served a meal, not wait in line in a crowded room, and wouldn't it be nice to enjoy a glass of wine? We wanted to pay our money, make a selection, and let someone else cook and clean up!

Those were the days, though, when we felt we knew everyone! Now it's more of a challenge but a wealth of riches awaits those willing to make new friends and stretch themselves even more in all the classes the Second Half has to offer.

This recipe has been approved by my Baker Books colleague Paula Daigle Mozaz (now living in her native Spain who says it's light on the mayo, and it is!) and gets a thumbs-up from Edna PetruzzIELLO (whose "other half" is Mariano Merino), who should know.

### **ENSALADILLA RUSA (SPANISH POTATO SALAD)**

This traditional tapa is served throughout every region of Spain, with little variation. A poorly made version will taste like a mouthful of mayonnaise. On the other hand, a well-made ensaladilla rusa is a perfectly balanced mixture of potatoes, hard-cooked eggs and vegetables, using mayo solely to accent these other flavors. This colorful salad is served at nearly every tapas bar, even free at times with an order of beer!

Serves 4; easy; 45+ minutes prep.

Ingredients	3 medium (16 oz.) potatoes	12 anchovy-stuffed olives
	1 large (3 oz.) carrot, diced	1 hard-cooked egg, sliced thin
	5 tablespoons green peas	Scant ½ to 2/3 cup (5 oz.) mayonnaise
	2/3 cup (4 oz.) green beans	1 Tbl. lemon juice
	½ medium onion, chopped	1 tsp. Dijon mustard
	1 small red bell pepper, chopped	Freshly ground black pepper to taste
	4 cocktail gherkins, sliced	Chopped fresh parsley, to garnish
	2 tablespoons baby capers	

Preparation: In a saucepan, cook the potatoes and carrot in lightly salted water. Bring to a boil and simmer until almost tender. Fold in peas and beans and cook until all veggies are tender. Drain and transfer to bowl or platter. Add onion, bell pepper, gherkins, capers, olives and egg slices.

In a separate bowl, thoroughly combine mayo, lemon juice and mustard. Add to other ingredients and mix well. Sprinkle with pepper and toss. Garnish with parsley and refrigerate. Allow to stand at room temperature about 1 hour immediately before serving to enhance the salad's flavor.

As any dish made with mayonnaise, ensaladilla should be refrigerated and will not keep for more than 1-2 days. Recipe adapted slightly from <http://www.spain-recipes.com/ensaladilla-rusa.html>



Photo by John Sorrentino

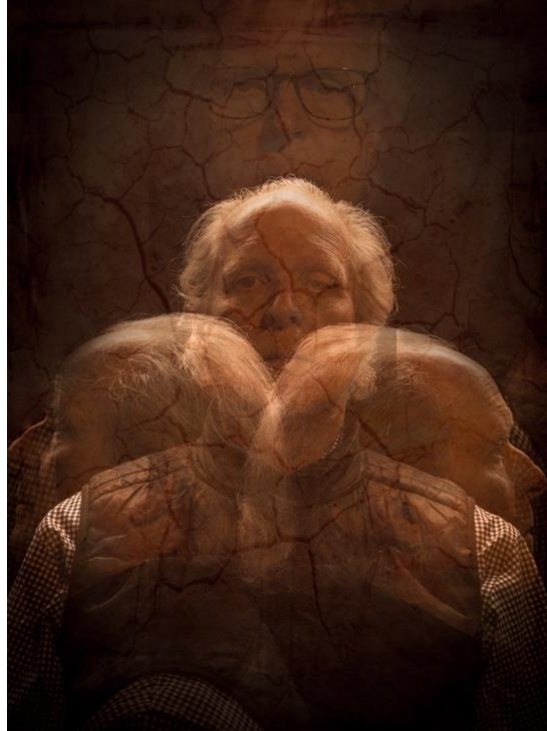
### **Woodchuck**

She peers out from under a great rock,  
Her little one not leaving her side.  
She emerges as if by an internal clock  
Always wary of a place to hide.  
Last Wednesday, working in the garden,  
I chanced a peripheral motion.  
I felt my muscles harden.  
Momma and baby had caused the commotion.  
The cutest little groundhog  
Was standing by my feet  
Digging the shell of a quahog  
And looking oh so sweet.

John Sorrentino

David Pinkham submitted this photo. He called it....

### QUARANTINED



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Thank you to the following contributors of this edition of *Perspectives*...

Jane Bregoli, Jennifer Brindisi, Clem Brown, Lorraine Carey, Anne-Marie Grillo, Sheila Koot, Richard Low, Joan McKinley, Mariano Merino, Joyce Miller, Betty Jeanne Nooth, Paul Pasquariello, David Pinkham, Eileen Sorrentino, John Sorrentino, Beverly Stevens, Ron Weisberger, and Vic Zeller

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The third issue of *Perspectives* is in the planning stages. Keep those submissions coming. Photos and drawings are welcome. How about stories of how you are passing your time? Have you read an interesting book or seen an engrossing movie? Why not use this forum to make recommendations? Remember that we have added two new sections. **In My Opinion** is an outlet for essays and opinion pieces. In the **Letters to the Editors** column you can give us feedback about the magazine and its contents. Please remember to avoid discussions about politicians and the upcoming election.