

The Second
Half Magazine
Volume 2 Issue 2
August
2021

Perspectives...

from later life learning

Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier.' [Alfred Lord Tennyson](#)

Contributions from The Second Half membership

HAIKU

White flies
In shafts of sunlight
Summer sun.

Eileen Sorrentino



Destruction Brook
A Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust
(DNRT) property

Photo by Eileen Sorrentino

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Dear Second Half Members,

Most of you understand that The Second Half is a volunteer organization. We have one overworked staff member—Robin. The rest of the organization is run by volunteers—from board members to committee members to facilitators. We continued to offer classes during Covid-19 when many other lifelong learning programs shut down. Now we need help finding a new location and keeping The Second Half running during re-opening. Let's not let our organization wither now—I hope we can count on you.

Thank you,
Eileen Sorrentino
President

Why Volunteer?

At a recent Board meeting, we were lamenting the lack of volunteers for positions on committees and the Board as we are a volunteer organization. Someone suggested for the next issue of *Perspectives* that I interview current Board members about why they decided to volunteer their time for The Second Half. What follows are some of the comments I received. Sheila Koot, Member-at-Large and Co-Editor of *Perspectives*

From Beverly Stevens, Former Director and Chair of Membership Retention

My road to volunteering was probably different from most because I was staff first. I volunteered for the Board because I wanted to stay involved and felt I could contribute to the continued development and growth of the program. My satisfaction came from feeling I was making a contribution.

Since my work as Director was part time, I needed to involve lots of volunteers to work on various tasks, or I would not have been able to get those things done. Volunteers helped with recruitment by giving brochures to people they knew; they helped with mailings; they helped with putting together the membership handbook and the membership book, which we eventually discontinued. A few helped with office tasks. As they still do now, Curriculum Committee members helped with the development of classes. Many people worked on the conference we held. Board members went the extra mile and did all of these things and more, which made it possible for us to separate from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, become a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, and continue to thrive.

Thanks for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts on volunteering with you.

From Jan Chisholm, Chair of Special Events

Great Reasons to Volunteer for me were to

- Help others,
- Make a difference,
- Bolster well-being,
- Enjoy a meaningful conversation,
- Connect with people,
- Feel involved,
- Contribute to a cause that I cared about,
- Use my skills in a productive way,
- Learn new skills,
- Take on a challenge,
- Have fun!

From Lorraine Carey, former Chair of the Curriculum Committee, Incoming Chair of Publicity

When in an organization like The Second Half, I always feel that I should give back in some way, but I also feel that my contributions may be inadequate. Will my opinions be of any value to the advancement of the organization? I have come to realize that when the opinions of the many--not of one, not of the few--formulate the ultimate decision, that is what builds a strong organization. Everyone has something to offer, new people on a Board as well as its seasoned members. In fact, organizations continually need fresh points of view to grow. Fresh points of view and opinions are the "fertilizer" of the organization. I have also come to realize over the years that volunteering brings its own rewards: intellectual growth, new relationships with like-minded people, and a feeling of accomplishment, of perhaps bringing the organization and society a little bit further ahead.

From Joyce Miller, former Chair of the Membership Committee

It was very gratifying to contribute, as a member of the Board, to sustaining The Second Half. I found that meeting Second Half members and talking with them face-to-face was the best medium to find out what they wanted from the organization; and that allowed me to reflect their opinions in Board meetings. In addition, as Membership Chair, I was able to urge everyone to be ambassadors to recruit new members. That is the best way to be certain that The Second Half thrives.

From Robert L. Miller, Member-at Large

When I was asked to serve as a member of the Board, I saw it as an opportunity to provide input on the direction of the Second Half and to volunteer time to it in exchange for the many meaningful courses that The Second Half has provided to me over the years. The ability to learn in an environment with my friends, and to make new friends with great facilitators has indeed been something that I've treasured since I retired. The fact that I can now contribute to helping The Second Half for current and future members is an opportunity that I value and find very satisfying.

From Eileen Sorrentino, President

The Second Half provides members with lifelong learning and opens us to new experiences and new people. What a wonderful and important mission for an organization! As soon as I heard about The Second Half, I wanted to participate. I took some classes, and my first delightful surprise was finding how interesting our members are and how much they have to contribute. I wanted to help, and soon I found myself facilitating classes, sitting on committees, and eventually becoming President. I volunteer because I want to do something meaningful in my retirement by being part of something that will outlive me. I get back the joy of new friendships, the satisfaction of helping to build and sustain something I believe in, and the opportunity to work together with people who hold the same commitments I do.

Mary Martha Murphy's Birding Class

Our group intently
waiting and watching,

Discerning five swans
through binoculars,

White summer snow globes
congregating close.

Then in the corner
of my eyepiece,

Noticing gray blue
colorization,

Lone Blue Heron,
alien I thought

Standing statue-like
on the grass mudflat.

It's sinuous body
and dagger-like bill,

Bobbing and weaving
it's S-shaped neck,



Online photo

Cautiously waiting
while eyeing its prey.

Swans symbolize love,
Blue Herons wisdom.

The spectacular
Swans and Blue Heron

Harmoniously
living together;

Love and wisdom,
wisdom and love,

Grateful for nature,
people, poetry

And Mary Martha
Murphy's birding class.

By Paul Mercier
June 9th, 2021



Online photo

Blossoms

So many blossoms!
Tulip and
Johnny Jump-up,
Daffodil and Daisy,
Grape Hyacinth,
Weeping Cherry,
Pear and Azalea,
Lilac and
Star Magnolia.
Time again for
vaguely realized urges
and wanton spells
occasioned by warm air,
perhaps a westerly breeze,
perhaps the smell of sea.

Clem Brown
2021



Online photo

The Thing That Flowers

The older I grow the more do I love spring and spring flowers.
Emily Dickinson

Let white cherry weep
their tears of joy rejoicing
in the daffodils who trumpet
spring's serenade.

Let yellow forsythia cluster
close to your heart as they
ring their bells for
applauding bees.

Let purple hyacinth exhale
fragrant scents with their
bouquets of essence
lifting your soul.

Let pink rhododendron
with their bursting buds
explode into orbs of
heaven on earth.

My heart skips with
the budding blooms:
their show-stopping surprise
of color and fragrance.

Emily sent friends fragrant
bouquets of flowers from
her garden often with
notes or verses tucked in

That I imagine I am reading now:

Dearest Friend,

*If hope is the thing with feathers
then love must be the thing that flowers.*

By Paul Mercier
April 14, 2021



Photo by Sheila Koot



Photo by Sheila Koot



Photo by Sheila Koot

Outgrowing Things

The closet door opens to full capacity
As I steep deep sorting through now untouched
Impractical belongings
Superficial silk blouses
Linen skirts lined with acetate
Business suits weigh on poles
Long gone
High heels that strained backs and stilted movements
(and nylons stretching up legs)

This is all passed now distancing
Reaching sensibility and disarmament
As I toss into a couple of empty grocery stores brown bags
The mishaps

The closet near empty
Slivers of remnants still hang in arrears
Where I am no longer
Shelves sparse of a mindset of life's enablers

My hands now moved into a tall chest top drawer
Where a collection of gold, silver, jade, turquoise
Embedded into bracelets, necklaces, pins, and chosen trinkets

And placed in the far back corner
A sanctuary
A tiny sarcophagus of gifted promises
A silver plated necklace with a Mother's Day greeting card
From a teenage son with all his irony attached
Prodding me with his love and trust
As I trusted him
To shine me into this old age seeking
His possibilities

My hands fold the preciousness
The coolness of the metal with heat rising through
Gently placed in its container

Some things are never outgrown
Or could ever be discarded
But treasured for what could have been,
And was not.

Barbara Wackowski-Faria
April 2021



Online photo



Online photo



Online photo

Copicut Reserve



Sunday morning visitors to this storied forest refuge,
we set out in communal silence along Shockley Trail
seemingly embraced yet guardedly watched
by those who walked these paths long before us

In this season of abscission, layers of
pine needles cushion thickly rooted paths,
softening and silencing our boot treads

Groves of White Pine and Oak stretch skyward
in austere inspiration as wayward branches
arc groundward in deferential nods

Indigenous plantings still thrive in the understory
of shade trees along Meadowhawk Trail
blackberries and pepper bush
sassafras, witch hazel, and cucumber root

With its ancestral stone walls and scenic cart-path,
Miller Lane alternately broadens and constrains our stride
as we map our way from Soggy Bottom to the Ed Shed
and its corner-post messaging of *Dream, Hope, Success*

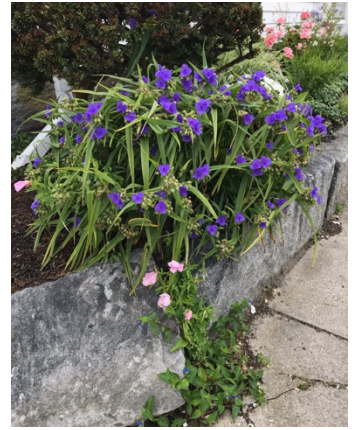
Protected within a grove of Beech trees,
their branches windblown into playful dance,
the Witness Tree bows with its burdened legacy
Its blighted spirit exorcised by
the rooted sustenance and shielding canopy
of its wary guardians as
verdant monochromes of filtered light
bleach away the bestial ills
of man's darkest constructs

Like the Witness Tree, we too tap into the sustaining
strength of Copicut's soul-restoring reserve.

by Anne-Marie Grillo



Photos by Anne-Marie Grillo



Summer Flowers

Main Road
Westport Point

Photos taken by
Sheila C. Koot



AN ORANGE FOR CHRISTMAS

A Reminiscence

by Renate Oliver

That morning I was happy to go to school; there was to be a Christmas party in the gym--we were going to sing Christmas songs for some British soldiers, and they were going to bring presents for us. I was not sure why the soldiers would be coming to the party; adults were always telling us that they are the "enemy occupiers" and to have nothing to do with them, although they seemed nice to kids when we saw them on the street sometimes. So why would they be invited to a party at our school and promise to bring us presents? I was excited about the idea of presents, though, and wondered what kind of presents they might bring and how they would know what each kid wanted--after all, there were a lot of kids at our school, and nobody had asked me what I wanted.

Early in the afternoon every class filed into the gym and lined up in neat rows, sitting cross-legged on the floor with the youngest kids in front. A bunch of men in British uniforms came in. They were carrying some large boxes that certainly did not look big enough to have a present for every kid. Then they sat down on some chairs facing us, and some smiled and sort of winked at us.

The principal of our school, with stern looks and warnings, got us to stop whispering and fidgeting while the music teacher lifted his baton and said, "We'll start with 'Oh, Du Froehliche, Oh, Du Selige' (a German Christmas carol), and everyone will sing together." We

had practiced this song many times, and even if you did not remember all the verses, all the voices of the kids around you carried you along. This was followed by some specific classes singing and some smaller groups and solos by kids who had good voices. Since I was not part of that, I was daydreaming and fidgeting and thinking about the presents instead.



Online photo



Online photo

Suddenly my daydreaming was interrupted by the principal's announcement, "First class step forward." The youngest kids--five rows in front of me--hesitantly took some steps toward the soldiers who got up and handed them chocolate bars, packages of gum, and one orange each. I had heard about oranges from adults who raved about their taste and aroma, but I had only seen them in picture books and certainly had never tasted such an unbelievable luxury item. The girls curtsied and the boys bowed while thanking the soldiers and then started to form little puddles of kids, whispering and ripping open chocolate bars and gum, stuffing them into their mouths or pockets. One by one the lines of kids were called to the front to receive their goodies, and soon quite a crowd of kids was milling around.

Finally, our turn came. I went straight to the soldier who was handing out the oranges, held out my hand and said, "Please," while pointing at the fruit. He handed one to me, and before even saying thank you, I took one gigantic bite out of it. I started to chew the glowing peel and the white stuff inside, and while it certainly smelled wonderful, the taste was awful and

bitter, and it was hard to chew, never mind swallow. I could not understand why adults thought this was so wonderful. I looked around for somewhere to spit it out when the soldier looked at me, chuckling, and then hunkered down beside me and said something I didn't understand. He pulled out a little knife from his pocket and neatly sliced the peel away, handed me back my orange, and guided my fingers and thumbs in taking the sections apart while he thoughtfully took out his handkerchief, making a spitting motion for me to get the stuff out of my mouth.

Ah, my face must have lit up--he was grinning and enjoying my wonder at this juicy, indescribably sweet taste and aroma as I greedily popped one section after another into my mouth. He stood up and reached into the box again and handed me another one. Just then I realized that my teacher was standing there, frowning at me with disapproval, and saying something to my hero. He just smiled and nodded, said something to my teacher that I could not understand, and I was allowed to keep my treasure.



Online photo

Suddenly I remembered that I had not even said, "Thank you," so I put on my biggest smile, curtsied, and said in my very best English, "Merry Orange, Mr. Christmas."

WILD TURKEYS



Photo by John Sorrentino

Six wild turkeys stomping on the ground
Looking out now for the mean hound.
These large birds will not be a meal
Wild drumsticks are not the real deal.

Watch these turkeys when they cross the street
They stay together and don't miss a beat.
Be very careful you don't hit the bird
You'll hear the loudest squawk you've ever heard!

John Sorrentino

Postcard to Heaven

Hi Mom I'm writing
this postcard to you

About Joyce Kilmer's
poem, the lovely *Trees*;

Your favorite poem,
the one you taught me

That we recited
not so long ago.

The way you said it
like an audition

You prepared for me,
words etched in my mind.

The way you struggled
with your memory

But not with this poem;
this prayer to God.

The way we performed,
acting out the lines

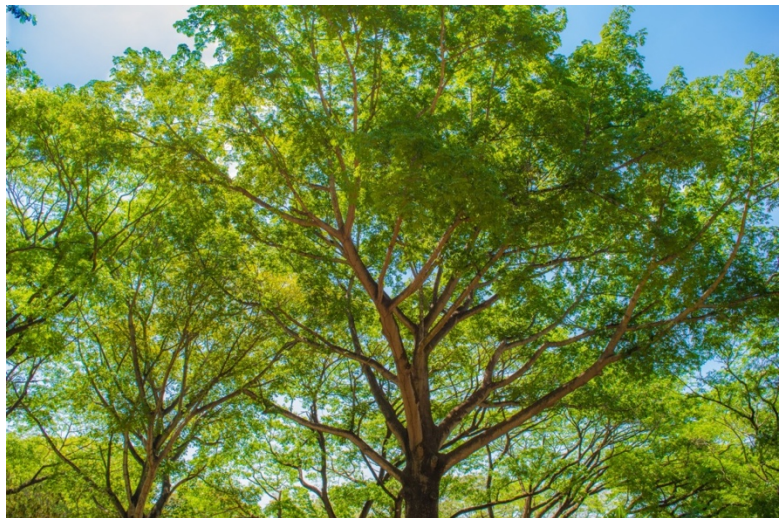
And now both of us
chanting together...

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

By Paul Mercier
April 28th, 2021



Online photo



Online photo

The Crow

My wife knows:
I'm a little bit dog,
I'm a little bit cat,
also a little bit bird,
crow to be exact.

Hear me sing!

Clem Brown
2021



Online photo

Sunrise

The hours pass.
I hardly notice
the hours pass.
Days, weeks,
months, seasons,
and years pass.
It slowly dawns
—a tardy sunrise—
how slowly the
years, seasons,
months, weeks,
and days pass!
How slowly
the hours pass!

Clem Brown
2021



Online photo



GARDEN OF MY DELIGHT

In the acres of my heart a garden grows.
There I savor the charms and risks
of growing things.

My beloved is a cactus and I a tiny finch
slipping between the thorns.
I stay for cactus blossoms
and delight.

Peony child, buds full, swelling,
not blooming and not blooming
until Ah! one day they gently unfold
into mind-numbing glory—
blossoms huge, hearty, generous.

Narcissus daughter, disingenuous blooms
hiding a poisonous root.
Or is she an iris, partially open, partially closed,
concealing the loving treasure within?

Spicy and rich, this daughter,
a profusion of chrysanthemums,
fireworks of color in my garden.
They last, it seems, forever.

My sister is Queen Anne's Lace,
Purple heart visible.
No need for a garden to grow in,
she thrives on the borders,
on the edges of things.
And her root is life sustaining.

Six buds wave in the wind.
Will this one be strong,
that one fragile?
Which one needs special care
and more nurture?
Curious, I wait, with wonder and hope.

I stroll through the garden of my heart,
cherishing first one, then another,
filled with the glory of growing things
and the little anxiety
that always accompanies love.

Eileen Sorrentino

ALMOST

Traveling touching life choices
That can make us or break us.
Did Robert Frost get it right?

Two days before the purposeful gathering,
My insides interrupted pangs
Quaking interference.

What am I about to do?
Cancel out this road once before traveled,
Many years ago experience?

Friends descended; "Everyone feels the jitters."

Relentlessly, given in to their calls,
I signed the binding contract,
For better, for worse, almost.

Now nearly twenty-eight years since, I think
About that almost twisted sidestep,
Taking me into another unpaved path.

What could have been,
What would have been,
Reconciliation?
Almost.

Barbara Wackowski-Faria
June 2021



Online photo



CORRECTION

This photo of a beautiful tree covered in snow that we printed in the last issue was incorrectly attributed. It was taken by Linda Harrop. We apologize for the error.

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

Clem Brown, Lorraine Carey, Jan Chisholm, Anne-Marie Grillo, Linda Harrop, Sheila C. Koot, Paul Mercier, Joyce Miller, Robert Miller, Renate Oliver, Eileen Sorrentino, John Sorrentino, Beverly Stevens and Barbara A. Wackowski-Faria

Editors: Sheila C. Koot, Betty Jeanne Nooth, Eileen Sorrentino

The next issue of *Perspectives* will be published this fall. Keep those submissions coming. Photos and drawings are welcome. How about stories about what you are looking forward to doing once you have been vaccinated? 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.



Photo by Sheila Koot

"Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."

— Henry James

"To see the summer sky is poetry, though never in a book it lie—true poems flee."

— Emily Dickinson

"Summer has a flavor like no other. Always fresh and simmered in sunshine."

— Oprah Winfrey

"Live in the sunshine. Swim in the sea. Drink in the wild air."

---Ralph Waldo Emerson