American Feminism Surges On, with a Third Wave

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In the late 1960s and early 1970s, an activist women’s movement re-emerged, first in the US and then internationally. Eventually it would be called the Second Wave, and the 19th century movement that ended with the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment, on women’s suffrage, would be called the First Wave. But in keeping with the spirit of those times, this new movement called itself not a “wave” but a liberation movement, the Women’s Liberation Movement: liberation fighters for women’s rights. I was one of them.

In the fall of 1969, when I moved to Baltimore and started teaching Philosophy at Towson University (then “Towson State College”), I jumped right into “the movement,” joining an exciting collective of women who had started publishing a magazine (which predated Ms. by four years) called Women: A Journal of Liberation. We worked out of a very modest second-story office on Greenmount Avenue in Waverly. I also was active in Baltimore Women’s Liberation (office: same building, Greenmount Avenue, Waverly).
This was a group that formed coalitions with other city groups (e.g., Welfare Rights), engaged in projects (e.g., Red Wagon Day Care Center), published a newsletter (Cold Day in August), and had a speaker’s bureau that accepted numerous requests for speakers to a wide variety of events and venues, from meetings of the Kiwanis Club to high school classes and community groups.

So much was accomplished during those years—the 70s: women’s studies programs were created; rape crisis centers and women’s law centers were founded; numerous issues were fought in the courts—reproductive rights and pay equity, to name just two; one of the most famous was the Supreme Court’s ruling on Roe v Wade (1973) which paved the way for full control by women of their bodies, but its power was immediately weakened by the (Henry) Hyde Amendment which outlawed the use of federal funds for abortions.

Then came the real backlash. It happened with the rise of the Religious Right, groups like Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum—which started in 1967! There were also new books lauding the traditional secondary role of women and emphasizing the sexual traps these disempowered women should use to eventually “get their way.” Ronald Reagan was in office for eight years, and many in the country, charmed by him, came to share his conservative views. The women’s movement went underground, in a sense, because there was no longer a strong activist presence, though there were cases wending their way through the courts, ongoing projects, successful litigation, and even some federal legislation: e.g., the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, the result of activism during the 80s and early 90s. In the more academic world of “feminist theory,” the 80s was the decade when the women’s movement tried to make its peace with the role of motherhood and to incorporate gender difference into its claims of gender equality.1

In the 1990s a new wave finally formed, a resurgence of feminism into what would be called the Third Wave. Twenty-some years after many of us had entered the movement, our “daughters” were now beginning to create their own space, with their own issues and methods. But mothers and daughters don’t always agree, as many of us know. The daughters disliked the Second Wave’s emphasis on problems, its overriding analysis of oppression; they called it (wrongly, I think) “victim feminism.” They also faulted (rightly, I think) the Second Wave for lack of attention to race and class issues. “Intersectionality” became one of the touchstones of this wave: acknowledging the interlocking connections between race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, the abled/disabled categories, and more. As a Huffington Post article described the Third Wave, just before the Women’s March in January of 2017, “The new feminist icons must include women of all ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, races, religions, sexual orientations, and ethnicities ... (because) the remedy for the age-old criticism of feminism is so simple—the third wave of feminism must be this: when all women (and not just the ones that happen to be just like we are) are more equal, we are all more free.”2 Heartened by the growing success of the gay rights movement, this wave paid more attention to sexual preference, which would eventually become the issue of sexual “diversity.” Now it wasn’t merely a question of accepting lesbians into the movement, which Betty Friedan had refused to do in the early days of NOW, but celebrating sexual diversity—which includes bisexuality as well as homosexuality and heterosexuality—even asexuality. These days “LGBT” has been replaced by “LGBTQIA”: “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual.” (For those terms you’re unfamiliar with, I suggest Googling them. You will find explanations online, believe me.)

While the Second Wave “mothers”—raised in the rigid 50s and early 60s when the “madonna and the whore” categories (embodied by Doris Day and Marilyn Monroe) were the only options for girls—
had objected to the sexual objectification of women, as embodied in fashion, makeup, and film, as well as in the behavior of males, these daughters, standing on their mothers’ shoulders, more easily could pick and choose which fashion, which makeup, which body decoration (including tattoos and piercings) they wanted to use. This has led to a “Girlie Culture” of great decoration, hair coloring, and a more individualistic attitude toward dress. Importantly, as young women have changed, so too have young men; they were no longer stuck in the “women are sex objects” mind-set of the Mad Men era. They were/are more willing to move beyond the “macho” gender identification of males also, allowing themselves to more fully develop as sensitive human beings.

Along with the Third Wave’s freer emphasis on the body is an attention to the world of popular culture and its stars, some of whom are attempting to work out their own brand of Third Wave feminism: Madonna, Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Regina Spektor, to name just a few singers. Added to this now is the world of the feminist blogosphere, along with the attractions and dangers of social media (e.g., the dating “app” Tinder), none of which existed during the Second Wave.

A few years before I retired (in 2007) from teaching Philosophy and Women’s Studies at Towson University, I developed my final new course: “American Women and Popular Culture;” my decision to create that course forced me to mount a steep learning curve on the subject, gathering together much of the new material of our popular culture, some of which (but not all) had connections to the Third Wave. I’m glad I did it, because it’s helped me track the immense changes in American popular culture as well as examine the use of social media happening over the past ten years.3

If you’re looking for a good introduction to the Third Wave (and how it differs from the Second), I suggest Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future (2000) a kind of “bible” of the Third Wave, though by now it’s almost two decades old. Authors Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, both born in 1970, credit the Second Wave for its accomplishments, but they also express the disappointments the Third Wave has felt about it. And while there have been setbacks in this country due to conservative swings in government and the Supreme Court, there is also a body of accomplishments and legislation that will continue to grow, through the Third Wave, Fourth Wave, and beyond, into what we hope will be a happier and healthier future for all.

1 The Feminist Majority website contains massive documentation of this history. See www.feministmajority.org, and click link, “Research Center.” For readings on motherhood and also on “difference,” see Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering; Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice; and Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought.


3 If you’re interested in women and music in American popular culture seen from a feminist perspective, check out Girls Rock!: Fifty Years of Women Making Music, by Mina Carson, Tisa Lewis, and Susan Shaw (2004).
Adventures on the New York City Subway

By Murrie Burgan

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It was summer in the 1950s. My sister’s friend (I’ll call her Brenda) had a summer job working in an office in mid-town Manhattan. She lived in Queens, so she had a one-hour trip on the subway to get to work.

She was coming home one day wearing a dress, heels, and white gloves—all standard for an office job then. Since it was rush hour the train, as usual, was crowded and, as usual, she had to stand for the long ride home. In front of her sat a man, fast asleep, his jacket open and his legs spread wide. Brenda, who was hanging onto a strap above the seated man, had taken off her glove, which she held in her hand. The train swayed back and forth and occasionally gave a jerk as it sped along the tracks. Brenda moved her hand to get a better grip and dropped the glove—right between the sleeping man’s legs.

What should she do? She wanted the glove but couldn’t pick it up because of its location. Just as she had decided to wake the man up, the train gave a jerk, which woke him. Seeing something white between his legs and being half asleep, he unzipped his fly, stuffed the glove inside his pants, zipped up, and went back to sleep.

Brenda came home that day with only one glove.

Famous Last Words

I lived in Queens and had a long subway ride to school in uptown Manhattan. I was coming home one day during rush hour; fortunately I had a seat. A well-dressed man got on the train a few stations after I did and stood in front of me. A woman was seated next to me at the end of the row. She had a package on one side of her and on the other side she had left room between herself and the metal railing at the end of the bench. The man asked her politely to remove the package and slide over so that he could sit down. She very indignantly refused.

He didn’t press the matter but stood quietly for the rest of his ride. Finally the train stopped at his station. Just before he went out the door he yelled very loudly so that everyone could hear him, “Queen of Squatsylvania!”

Make Room for Mother

My mother was a soft-spoken, quiet woman but she could be assertive when she wanted something. She and my sister, who was a teenager, were coming home on the subway one afternoon. There seemed to be no seats. However, my mother, an experienced subway rider, carefully perused the row of men who were sitting in front of her with their legs spread. Drawing herself up to her full height of four feet 10 inches, she suddenly yelled, “OK, men. put your legs together!” The surprised men snapped their legs together, making enough room for my mother to sit down. My sister was mortified but my mother wasn’t embarrassed at all and sat serenely all the way home.

Memorable Riders

As I rode the subways to school every day, first to high school then to college, I often saw the same people on the trains.
There was the woman who got on the train a few stations after I did, always well-dressed and obviously on her way to work. She’d stand or sit quietly for a while, then start talking in a loud voice about the men’s ties. She was convinced that the patterns on the ties were some sort of secret code. What she thought the purpose of the code was I never could figure out.

If I took an express train on the way home from school, I had to switch to a local at an elevated outdoor station in Astoria, Queens. There was often a man standing on the platform waiting for the train who whistled as he waited. This wasn’t ordinary whistling; this was whistling of great virtuosity. He trilled and warbled, entertaining himself and everyone else waiting in the cold for the train.

When I traveled the subway to school in uptown Manhattan, I had to switch trains for the last few stops. I often rode a train that had a conductor who obviously liked his job. As he announced the stops he’d make comments about them. When he reached the stop I wanted he’d usually say, “116th Street, Columbia University, for higher education—if you want it!”

Coda

When I left New York, my subway-riding days came to an end. Although the subways were crowded and uncomfortable and often not pleasant to ride, I sometimes miss them and the adventures I had on them.

The Gift of Generations
by Janice Dykacz

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One gives, one receives.

One loves, the other is loved.

Life continues.

The gift

between generations

is two-way.

The heart sings,

down its byways,

and up its byways.

One giving to another,

augmenting the love

of generations.

We have played

with the little ones

and have given them

our wisdom and knowledge

……

and they have given us

their love.
My body couldn’t stop shivering. Goose bumps popped up on my arms and legs as I sat on the edge of the smooth pool tiles that pressed against my thighs, while my legs and feet dangled in the cold waters of the pool. An acrid smell of chlorine filled my nostrils and the entire indoor pool smelled like the bleach my mother added to the weekly wash. Not only did the water chill my body, but also the air seemed especially cool.

I thought maybe my nerves are playing tricks on me and it’s not as cold as I feel. Looking around at other students sitting along the edge of the pool, I wondered if they felt nervous and cold like me too. On one side of me, I saw a boy with goose bumps on him too. On the other side, Marion (who happened to be my girlfriend) held her arms around her chest trying to keep warm. I decided my nerves are fine and that the room and water really are cold.

The indoor pool, built especially for scuba diving lessons, measured about 20 feet by 35 feet, with a deep end of about 12 feet that provided the depth needed for developing scuba diving skills. The room dripped with moisture that condensed on the tile walls. The small, incandescent lights tucked away in the high ceiling of the bare room seemed hardly adequate for such a large area.

Six weeks earlier, Marion and I decided to take scuba lessons at a dive shop in Brooklyn. Marion surprised me when she agreed to take lessons with me. I suspected that her interest and enthusiasm didn’t equal mine for wanting to do this. I thought she did it more to please me than herself, but I knew she also wanted to share scuba diving with me. And besides, her dad told her, “If you want to go scuba diving with Tom, you need to take lessons first and prove to me you can do it. You don’t drive a car without lessons and you’re not going scuba diving without lessons!”

Living close to the Atlantic Ocean and Long Island Sound, we looked forward to the excitement of exploring the undersea world and sea life around us. But we needed to learn the science and techniques of scuba diving and get certified before beginning our undersea adventures.

At 21 years old, I stood nearly six foot tall, weighed about 165 pounds, with muscles that were strong and taut from lifting weights for some time. Physically, I felt great. Putting on a bulky, heavy, scuba tank and weight belt wouldn’t bother me at all. But I worried that Marion, two years younger than I, who stood five foot six inches and weighed less than 100 pounds, might find this too difficult. Nonetheless, she surprised me and everyone else in the class, including the instructors, when she passed the qualifying test and managed just as well as the other 12 students who, by the way, happened to be all males.

As the only female in the class, Marion often attracted the attention of the other young men. Her pretty face, long blond hair, greenish eyes, and shapely body drew their eyes and interest. But their curiosity also made them wonder how she would do in an activity dominated mostly by males. I felt, though, that Marion’s determination and pluck would ensure she’d do everything the boys did and maybe better.

We spent part of the time learning about the science, physics, and techniques of scuba diving. Part of the time we practiced scuba diving in the pool with our
air tank, regulator, weight belt, snorkel, and diving mask all under the watchful eyes of our two instructors who taught and guided us.

After six weeks of intense training, we would take our final exams to decide if we passed the course and received our certification. Both Marion and I easily passed the written part of the exam. Now we needed to demonstrate our scuba diving skills in the pool to pass our final exam.

Even though the many weeks of study and practice taught me all the basic skills I needed to know, I felt nervous and apprehensive about the pool test. I also worried about Marion and whether she would be able to pass the pool exam.

Turning to her I asked, “How are you feeling right now?”

“Cold and nervous,” she said.

“Me too. I wonder what they’re going to make us do. After all the practice we did, they should realize by now that we know what to do.”

“We’ll find out soon enough,” she exclaimed, “it looks like they’re getting ready to start.”

“All right, class,” one of the instructors began, “this should be easy for you since you’ve all been practicing for several weeks and should know the techniques we’ve taught you in the pool. You must pass the pool exam to pass the course and receive your diving certificate.”

I thought this should be as easy as the written exam. I know what to do. I’ve done what they’ve taught us many times during pool practices. No problem, I thought, trying hard to convince myself that I’d ace the test. Somehow, my bravado made me feel a little less cold and nervous.

“Everyone ready?” said the instructor. “Does everyone have their masks, snorkel, weight belt, and air tanks fitted on properly? Make sure your gear is securely fastened. Now listen carefully, I don’t want to repeat myself. When I say so, everyone is to get into the pool, grab the side, and wait for further instructions. OK, everyone into the pool slowly now.”

As I lowered myself into the pool, the cold water rose to cover my body chilling me further. The aroma of chlorine smelled stronger than ever and my goose bumps seemed to grow larger as the cold penetrated my body. I turned to see if Marion got in OK. She looked as cold as I did.

“Everything OK?” I asked.

“Yes, I only wish the water was warmer. I’m freezing and I’m nervous too!”

“OK class, listen closely to my instructions,” said the instructor. “The test will last about 20 to 30 minutes. We’ll tell you when the time is up. Make sure your air is turned on. See this bag I’m holding? It’s filled with marbles that I’m going to throw into the pool. Each of you will try to get as many marbles as you can from the bottom of the pool. Whoever has the most marbles at the end will be our winner. When I say ‘Begin!’ you’ll start your dive and try to get as many marbles as you can.”

I thought to myself, this sounds easy. What’s so difficult about this test? “OK, ready, class?” said the instructor.

We all put on our masks and waited like racehorses at the starting gate, bracing for the starting “gun.”

After a noticeable delay that only increased our anxiety, the instructor said, “Oh, class, before we begin I have some additional instructions you need to know.”

Something in his voice sounded ominous and made me think, uh oh, this doesn’t sound good. What else does he want us to do?

“Once we begin you won’t be allowed to come out of the pool or hold onto the sides until the time is up.”

That’s not bad, I thought.
“To make this more realistic,” said the instructor; “we’re going to introduce some challenges for everyone.”

Not good, I thought. What does he mean by “realistic and challenges?”

“As you try to get as many marbles as possible, you’ll also be allowed to prevent other students from getting their marbles by any of the following means: you can turn off their air, remove their mask, remove their weight belt, even remove their air tank, if you can, and knock any marbles out of their hands. However, you’re not allowed at any time to hit or restrain another person. Are there any questions?”

Gulp, I thought, is he kidding? Turn off our air, take off our masks, stay in the pool, and don’t hold the sides of the pool. This is crazy, I thought. We’re all going to drown down there! I thought about Marion, the only girl in the class up against all the other boys, many much bigger and stronger than her. How would she survive or compete against them? But, as I looked at her, she didn’t seem afraid or upset, maybe a bit nervous, but not afraid.

“Marion, do you think you can do this? Are you worried? I feel worried.”

“Yes, I’m a little worried. Try to stay close to me, if you can, and see that I’m alright.”

“I’ll try,” I said, “I’ll do my best.” But could I, while at the same time taking care of myself? 20, 30 minutes of this? How will we survive? The rest of the class looked as scared as we did.

“All right, class, let’s begin our dives,” said the instructor. “Remember, no hitting, getting out of the pool, or holding onto the sides. Everyone must stay under the water or, if necessary, may come briefly to the surface to swim or float, during the testing time. Good luck!”

We’ll need all the luck we can get, I thought, as we slowly descended under the water.

Underwater lights illuminated the depths of the pool and made the water shimmer brightly and the marbles glisten like jewels. As I descended toward the bottom, I saw Marion and the others diving towards our “treasures.” Reaching the bottom, I began snatching as many marbles as I could before anyone could stop my treasure hunt.

For some time, I continued scooping up marbles without interference and wondered why no one bothered me. Looking around, everyone seemed intent on collecting as many marbles as they could without interfering with anyone else. Thinking about this, I realized that no one wanted to be the first to attack another person and disrupt his or her efforts. Whether from shyness, or fear, or both, no one seemed anxious to start the undersea warfare. And for the next few minutes our peaceful underwater dive continued without incident.

However, this abruptly changed when both instructors jumped into the water with their diving gear. After observing our passiveness, they changed the game by launching a full-scale attack on us.

Busy with scooping up marbles, I felt no threat until my air suddenly stopped and I began choking as my lungs strained to suck in air that never came. In a flash, I realized someone turned off my air supply. My instincts told me to surface for air. But I suppressed the urge, turned off my air supply, and looked around to see who did this to me. Surprised to see the instructor, I realized that he probably turned off my air supply.

As the instructors began disrupting us, wide-eyed looks of fear began to show on our faces. Oh crap, I thought, the instructors mean business. Playtime for us is over.

Just as I turned my air back on, I felt cold rush water rush across my face, eyes, and nostrils as someone ripped my mask from my face. With blurred vision, I could see my mask slowly sinking to the bottom of the pool. I dove down, put on my mask, and began clearing the water from inside the mask, using a technique the instructors taught us to do while under water. As half...
of the water emptied from my mask, someone turned off my air again, making me choke. A jolt of fear and panic arose in me and I felt a strong urge to surface to safety and fresh air. But with great effort, I squelched my panic and quickly turned on my air again. Puzzled, I now felt myself rising toward the surface without understanding why. Soon I realized that someone removed my weight belt, making me buoyant causing me to rise toward the surface.

Damn, I said to myself. My mask half full of water, someone shut off my air, and now my weight belt on the bottom of the pool, while I’m rising to the surface. What’s next?

As I reached the surface I emptied my mask of water and looked under the water to locate my weight belt. As I peered into the water, I saw several boys struggling without air or masks. Clearly, the game had escalated into an all-out-war with every person for himself or herself! Both students and instructors now launched attacks on anyone near them. I thought if they can attack me, I could play the game too! I thought, “It’s better to give than receive,” hence, I would give back to them as much as they gave to me!

Still buoyant, I struggled to swim to the bottom of the pool to retrieve my weight belt when someone tore my mask off again, instantly flooding my face with water. But this time I didn’t panic. From my training I knew how to breathe underwater without a mask. Composing myself, I took several breaths and proceeded to fasten my weight belt around my waist. Next, through blurry water, I saw my mask a short distance away. As I swam toward my mask, someone cut off my air again. I quickly turned on my air, then retrieved and cleared my mask. With my mask clear and air flowing again, a renewed sense of confidence returned to me.

I thought to myself, OK, I survived and overcame each attack without serious harm or damage. I think I can handle anything they throw at me. But, where’s Marion? Busy with myself, I didn’t know her situation at all. Looking around, I finally saw her just as someone turned off her air while she tried to clear her mask of water. Without panicking, she turned her air back on, cleared her mask, and proceeded to search for marbles along the bottom of the pool. I felt a sense of relief seeing her in control of her situation.

Turning toward the bottom of the pool, I began rapidly scooping up marbles but now with more confidence and determination to collect as many as I could before time ran out. Although attacks and disruptions continued unabated, I felt in control and no longer anxious or afraid. No matter what they did to me, I quickly and calmly corrected the problem and continued with the marble hunt. What began as a frightening experience slowly became routine for all of us as we met and overcame the challenges that arose.

Coming out of the water at the end of the exam, everyone seemed more relaxed while happily chatting about the whole experience. Marion looked pleased too, knowing that she met every obstacle and never gave up.

“I’m proud of you,” I said, “and I’m proud of myself for not losing my ‘marbles’ and self-control. Only once did I feel like I might panic. But, I got past it OK.”

“It was scary at first, but after a while I got used to it and it didn’t really bother me anymore. But, I’m glad it’s over.”

“Congratulations to all of you,” said the instructor, “you did great! You handled every difficult situation very well. Congratulations on your good work. Everyone passed and will get their certificates.”

I felt relaxed and relieved, no longer cold or anxious, and with no more goose bumps! Even the air in the room felt warmer now.

I turned to Marion and said, “Do you think we’re ready for our ocean adventures? After all this, I think we can handle just about anything that comes along without too much difficulty.”
“Hmmm,” she said, “maybe we should start in a lake or quarry before we tackle the ocean. We need to walk before we run. Don’t you agree?”

And, of course, I did.

Channeling my Other French Connection: SVS Wilder

by Randy Barker

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When I recently did my genealogy homework, I discovered that SVS Wilder (1780–1865) was my great-great-great grandfather. His full name was Sampson Vryling Stoddard Wilder. SVS and I have in common strong ties to France … mine being Marie Claire (we were married in Montmorency 50 years ago); SVS’s being his near rescue of Napoleon from exile, his ardent Protestant evangelizing in Catholic France, and his securing an apology to France from Andrew Jackson that may have averted a war. These stories turn up in “Records from the Life of SVS Wilder,” published in 1865. A few details follow.

In 1810, SVS represented the United States at Napoleon’s last marriage to Maria Louise of Austria. In 1815, when soldiers from all of Europe were pouring into Paris following Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo, SVS (a prosperous silk merchant) offered to Napoleon clandestine passage to America where he would be a welcome guest at SVS’s home in Bolton, Massachusetts. Napoleon was to board SVS’s ship disguised as a valet, then hide in a large hogshead till the ship was far from France. Per the account in the book, “Napoleon seriously considered and declared it feasible, but finally declined because he would not desert his friends who had been faithful to him through prosperity and adversity.”

In 1818, traveling to Lyon, center of the French silk trade, SVS’s party stopped in a village (today St. Etienne) and in an instant SVS’s servant saved an infant from being crushed by a coal cart. In no time, SVS was being celebrated for the rescue of the imperiled infant; and again, in no time, he turned to his real calling: bringing the message of Christian love to a large crowd. Seems he was packing a supply of Bibles and religious tracts in his diligence; and in the ensuing days he evangelized and distributed Bibles and tracts to the villagers, who by the sound of it were members of a banned anti-Catholic, heretical Christian sect. Thus began a fervent and long-standing relationship between the villagers and SVS Wilder.

In 1830, back in America, SVS received a plea from his old acquaintance the Duc de Broglie, then prime minister, to obtain from the newly-elected American President Andrew Jackson an apology for crude remarks in his first address to congress threatening war with France if she did not repay debts owed to the United States government. Per SVS, as he spoke the word “apology,” the President, “became excited and rose to his feet, (sic) exclaimed ‘No, sir, Andrew
Jackson never will’, bringing his fist down on the table with a heavy blow.” SVS did not cower. He began by reminding the President “of all the widows and orphans a war would bring … You, sir, are in the providence of God, occupying a station which, if you should find the grace to discharge with fidelity the responsible duties, will produce results of vast importance to the present, future, and eternal good of our fellow-men.” Jackson wrote an apology, the debt was settled, and war was averted.

Postscript: I wish I could say plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose, but as of this writing as far as I know President Donald Trump has not yet apologized to anyone for anything he has said or done.

Woody Allen or Not Woody Allen?

by Les Weinstein

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Some people think that I look like Woody Allen. I actually see the resemblance myself. Occasionally I have been asked by strangers if that is who I am. Sometimes I say “yes,” sometimes I say “no” and sometimes I say neither but indirectly imply that I am. The following are a couple of examples of the latter:

Once, after I got into a taxi in New York City, I noticed that the cab driver kept glancing at me through his rear view mirror. After a while, he said that I looked like some celebrity, but he was not sure who. I asked him if he had ever heard of Woody Allen, and he exclaimed, “Oh, yes, that’s who I was thinking of!” When we reached Radio City Music Hall, where I was going to the Tony Awards, he asked if I had been nominated for one. I said “No, not this year,” which was the truth; I of course had not been nominated, and somewhat coincidentally, neither had Woody!

Another time, I went to see a play in London. I had arrived early and took my seat before many other people did. Then I saw a man and a woman and a teenage girl, possibly their daughter, walking toward me. The man had a camera and took several pictures of me, after which he said, “Thank you, Mr. Allen!” I did not respond at all, thus neither confirming nor denying that I was who he thought I was! I always chuckle when I think about this, and wonder if, somewhere in England, there is a picture of me (the imposter!) displayed prominently in their home! I still feel guilty about these deceptions. Well, just a little!
Javelinas on Parade: A Love Poem

by Mike Abel

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An entire family of them,
sons and daughters,
aunts and cousins,
even snorting nieces,
had come to see her off.

They marched through my backyard,
snacking on the bushes that grew against the trees,
occasionally glancing over at me
as I stood on my balcony.

They were focused mainly on the mama
who, because she marched so resolutely
ahead of the crowd,
seemed to be going away, leaving them behind.

Close behind her lumbered papa.

He and mama grunted low, snorting
endearments
to each other,
until at last they reached
the boundary hedge between my yard,
and a stream and a woods beyond.

As she slowly splashed into the stream,
then gumphed into the darkness of the trees,
I heard in papa’s plaintive “nornk”
the words of the old poem, the one that recalls
the vow of love’s eternal life:

“And I will love you still, my dear,
While the sands of life shall run.”

We can’t begin to measure
the length of our days together.

But I see us crossing the streams
and stepping carefully—
mama and papa—
hand in hand—
into the forest beyond.
Halfway up the mountain, we old farts huffed and puffed like the Big Bad Wolf trying to blow down a house of straw. As if he weren’t carrying a pack at all, our son was whistling a merry tune and outpacing us all. We started to wonder why we had invited him in the first place.

The hike up to our campsite is not an easy one. While the trail is only two and a half miles long, it is not well marked and rises nearly 2,000 feet in elevation. The hike takes over three hours with a rest stop half way up at an old slate rock quarry. The trail follows the roadbed of the old trolley cart that hauled the quarried stone to the nearest stream bed. From there the ascent becomes much steeper as you follow the stream to the top. Since one of our group of family and friends discovered this place, we have been backpacking and camping there every couple of years for the last 40 years. One might say it had become a tradition in our family.

During the summers of 1972 and 1973, Rosann, a young, pretty community college student, and some of her friends from New Jersey volunteered as camp counselors at Camp St. Helene, a summer camp for needy kids from New York City. The camp grounds lie on the outskirts of the town of Palenville on the grounds of a convent for the sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. In addition to the camp houses and chapel, a small lake for swimming and a picturesque stone grotto with a Shrine to St. Helene beckon. An enchanting hamlet, Palenville rests in the Catskill Mountains of central New York. Known as “the village of falling waters,” it was described in the Legend of Rip Van Winkle, a fictional citizen of the town. Woodstock, the site of the three-day rock music festival in 1969, dwells just down the road.

It was the early 70s; whispers of Woodstock were still in the air. Rosann and her friends regretted missing the festival held a few years earlier. Rosann was a bit of a tomboy and usually dressed in blue jean overalls. Her friends, Beth and Mary were not much different in tight blue tie-dyed tops. They were assigned as counselors to the 10 boys in cabin #1. The boys were from New York City, ages ranged from nine to 12 years old, and came from families that couldn’t afford to send them to camp. Catholic Charities of New York financed Camp St. Helene and paid for the expenses of the counselors and campers. Rosann would read “Uncle Wiggily” to her boys after lights out and take them on cherry-picking field trips and find-the-watermelon hunts.

Most of the resident nuns were in their early 30s and friendly, not at all like the ruler-wielding “penguins” the girls were accustomed to in school growing up. One day, one of the older nuns invited Rosann and a few of her boys on a hike up the side of the mountain to a spot in a beautiful meadow at the edge of a rock ledge overlooking the Hudson River valley that she called “High Heaven.” The nuns used this place as a
peaceful retreat when they needed some time for quiet self-reflection.

Unfortunately, Camp St. Helene closed in 1973. Still, those Jersey Girls and their friends traveled up to Palenville every few years to hike up to High Heaven to party and camp out overnight. Many years later, that Jersey Girl, my wife Rosie, accompanied by five of our family and friends, took our 27-year-old son, Chris, on a “rite of passage” backpacking trip to High Heaven. Tradition was that all the campers would meet at our brother-in-law Earl’s house in Sellersville, PA the night before to prepare for the trip and distribute the food, water, and alcoholic beverages. Earl made sure that these consumables were distributed evenly so no one’s pack was too heavy.

That night while everyone was eating, drinking and generally being merry, I brought up a scene from the movie, *The Eiger Sanction*. In this scene, George Kennedy’s character was training Clint Eastwood’s character to scale the Eiger Mountain in Switzerland. The training site was in the mountains of Arizona. To make sure he would be ready in time, Kennedy pushed Eastwood really hard. When he thought Eastwood was ready, he took him on a “graduation” free climb up an ancient volcanic chimney in the desert. After a hard climb, they finally reached the summit. They sat, dangling their legs over the edge and enjoyed the breathtaking view while they recovered.

Kennedy turns to Eastwood, “How about a beer?”

Eastwood replies, “If you brought beer up here, you’re even crazier than I thought!”

Reaching into Eastwood’s pack, Kennedy states, “I may be crazy, but I’m not stupid. I didn’t carry it, you did. It’s in your pack!”

Since he was young and fit, Chris sensed that we were planning on pulling this gag on him as a form of hazing for his inaugural trip to High Heaven. Of course, after Earl finished loading all the backpacks, he secreted a six pack of beer in the top of Chris’ pack.

We all got up early the next morning, loaded two cars with our gear and drove the three hours up to Palenville; all the women in one car, the men in the other. After we parked, we put on our backpacks and took a group picture of our motley crew. The leader of our group, Earl, looked like a typical aging hippie in faded blue jeans and an old shirt. Everyone in our group of hikers was middle-aged except for our Chris. Chris wore cargo shorts, t-shirt, and a bandana. Before we started our hike, Rosie gave everyone a tour around the grounds of the former Camp St. Helene.

Most everyone was exhausted when we finally reached the meadow at the end of our hike. Dropping our backpacks and plopping on the ground, we sat on an outcropping of rocks at the edge of a small clearing and rocky ledge admiring the colorful foliage and inhaling the pungent aroma of the pine trees. The clearing offered an awe-inspiring view of the Hudson River valley for miles in any direction. Basking in the midday sun of a beautiful fall day, we enjoyed the quiet and stillness of the moment.

After a while, Earl smiled and broke the silence, “Boy, a can of beer would really taste good about now.”

Chris laughed, reached into the top and his pack and proudly pulled out a six pack of beer, “After the story Dad told last night, I knew that you were going to trick me into carrying the beer up here.”

Earl walked over and dug deep into the bottom of Chris’ pack, pulling out a cast iron frying pan, “Yeah, but you didn’t know that you were also carrying this!”

Chris stared slack-jawed at the heavy skillet Earl held up for all to see, “I can’t believe I hiked all the way up here with that in my backpack!”

We all enjoyed a good laugh as we drank our beer. His High Heaven initiation complete, Chris was rewarded with the first stack of pancakes the next morning. Before we hiked down, we buried the skillet where no other hikers would find it. We still use it when we hike up to High Heaven.
Notes On My Nonexistent 100th Birthday
by Chares E. Sternheim

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So here I am
looking out

mindfulness
wobbly

memory
forget it.

So here I am
looking out

side by side
you and me
weathering
life’s losses.

So here I am
looking out

your
nearness

reminds me.
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