For as long as I can remember, I was interested in both weather and geography. Since Maryland has a variety of geographical features and four seasons worth of weather, my fascination with these disciplines has never faded. Today I am very fortunate to be able share these very same fascinations through my love of being a college instructor.

One of my most vivid early memories of weather occurred when I was five years old. I immediately became fascinated with the phenomenon of falling snow during the winter and would stand in awe watching snowflakes slowly descend from the sky. I often wondered: are all snowflakes the same? Several years later, my mother bought me my first “weather” book and I learned about the weather,
including snowflakes—discovering all the while that no two were the same.

A few years later, I distinctly remember visiting the United States Weather Bureau Office at Friendship Airport (today, better known as Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport). I remember spending a long time viewing the various weather instruments being used by the meteorologists. But for me, the highlight of the visit was watching these meteorologists drawing and interpreting weather maps.

By the time I was 10 years of age, I had become a weather “junkie,” and spent many hours observing the atmosphere via my Lionel Weather Station. When I wasn’t watching the weather firsthand, I listened faithfully to weather forecasts on the radio. I can still remember discovering weather forecasts and observations on the shortwave band of my radio, and memorizing the exact times when they would be broadcast—usually at the top of every hour. At other times, I would search the AM dial and find news stations in distant places and listen to their weather forecasts. It couldn’t get any better than that!

By the time I was in junior high, Mother Nature generously punctuated my life with several memorable weather events, including some hefty snowfall amounts—including the 51.8 inches that fell at Friendship Airport during the 1963–1964 winter season.

In 1966, I built my own weather station and began keeping my own weather records. I still have and use those same records today—some 51+ years later! While I was a student in high school, I wrote a weather column for a community newspaper, “The Northwest Star.”

Following high school, I attended Towson State College (University) and studied geography and secondary school education both at the undergraduate and graduate level. During that time, I was befriended by Joe Moyer, Maryland State Climatologist, who mentored and tutored me on the days that I did not have any classes at Towson. Mr. Moyer also gave me my first set of “professional” weather instruments that I proudly maintained in a self-made weather shelter in my backyard. In 1970 I began taking daily weather observations as a “Climatological Observer” for the Office of the Maryland Climatologist and the National Weather Service, and maintained this routine through 2015.

Today, I consider myself very fortunate to be a part-time adjunct at several local colleges, including Hopkins, and thoroughly enjoy sharing my weather knowledge and passion with my students.

Walter Reuschling, my geography teacher at Woodlawn Senior High School, inspired me to develop a curiosity and interest in geography, which has stayed with me through my life. Mr. Reuschling was a special teacher who always had enriching and inspirational geography lessons that enabled me to travel around the world without ever leaving his classroom.

While studying geography in college, I learned that geography is a living, breathing subject, adjusting itself to change. What is more, the study of geography is dynamic and relevant. For me, geography is a great adventure with a distinct purpose.

Today, as a classroom instructor, I focus on helping students make connections between the geography concepts we are learning in class and their real lives. I also try to engage and motivate my students by skillfully using maps and other relevant information. I enjoy planning activities that give my students the time to explore new information and relate it to what they already know.

In conclusion, the best part of being a college instructor is having an opportunity to share the academic passions of my life and using them to elicit constructive and positive interaction with my wonderful students. Lastly, seeing my students develop their own enthusiasm and interest in these two disciplines is the best part about being a teacher.
I first came to the United States in March 1965, planning to stay one year to improve my English, to be able to teach it in France. I was an au pair, and I am here today because I fell in love with Randy, uncle to the three boys I was caring for in New York City. Like every family, mine has heard many times some of my favorite stories about l’Amérique. Here are My First Thanksgiving, BL and Ts, and Becoming an American Citizen.

My First Thanksgiving: In the fall semester 1965, when I was taking a course of English for foreigners at Columbia University, I signed up for a traditional Thanksgiving experience offered to international students. By bus, a group of us was brought to a rural Pennsylvania community in Lancaster County, where we stayed in the homes of our Mennonite or Amish hosts. How I remember the kindness of our traditionally dressed hosts and the turkey and vegetables and pies that represented that first coming together of pilgrims and their native American friends! Of course, no alcohol was provided that day.

BL and Ts: Before returning to France in 1966, I paid $99 for 99 days to cross America on a Greyhound bus with another French girl. It was an unforgettable experience. Through an international welcoming organization, we were met and housed by American families in many places along the way, including Salt Lake City and San Francisco. During long days aboard the Greyhound, I became hungry and found that hot dogs and hamburgers were not up to my French taste. What I did discover was bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwiches—and to this day, that is one of my favorite all American items on the menu. Whenever I eat B. L. and T.s, I recall my wonderful road trip around the country: 99 days for $99, a pretty good deal at the time.

Becoming an American Citizen: After the election of a Hollywood actor to the presidency in 1980, I decided that I needed to have a vote in all future American elections. I learned the answers to the 100 questions about the United States, and with my husband and another citizen as my witnesses I went to my hearing before an administrative law judge. The other witness was Mark Boling, the now-deceased spouse of Osher’s own Francette Boling, and a very special friend. “You don’t look American to me” said the judge to Mark. From Mark, as I recall, came a full-hearted roar of laughter.” Madame judge,” said he, “I am part Cherokee Indian, more American than you!”

After these 52 years of life in America, I feel like a good American citizen who always votes; but I still enjoy going back to France every summer with Randy to visit my two brothers and my sister and numerous nephews and nieces … and of course to speak French.
I have always sought opportunities to work and communicate with Spanish-speaking folk: colleagues, trainees, patients. Highlights have been two sabbaticals: three months in 1973 in Cali, Columbia and one year (1995–1996) in Barcelona. For the past year or so, since fully retiring from Hopkins, I have volunteered as a primary care doctor once per week at Baltimore’s Esperanza Center, where undocumented Latino patients find welcome and help. Here I give an idea of how Esperanza Center has brought special gifts to me.

RECIPROCATING AT ESPERANZA

Reciprocating makes for a lot of closeness in medical visits. And the way it happens has a lot to do with words—words and knowing looks. I and you, my patients at the Esperanza Center, do a lot of reciprocating: giving, receiving, giving back, receiving.


“Que lindo su nombre.” “Si, no hay muchas Idalias.”

Here we are, sharing words:

“Picason,” you say, and show me, and now I know, and say, “itching.”

“Palillo,” you say, to tell me what you think is in your throat, and now I use a new word you have taught me, by miming a tooth pick.

“Parche caliente,” brings a smile from you when I use that word, given to me by a colleague, and show you my hope that the heating pad will help your shoulder pain.

“Estrella Aurora,” Morning Star, brings a smile from me when I ask of you the name of your seven-year-old daughter. I say that my seven-year-old granddaughter, whose Papa is from Peru, is Carmen, and you smile.

Our words during your visit are from your word world. You are giving me new words. I am saying them to you and to others. The words we both know, now, help us to have knowing looks when our visit ends. Knowing looks, I think, are part of all special relationships, whether personal or professional. For me, they are a way of saying this relationship is reciprocal; without saying that out loud we can indicate it in our eyes. We have each extended ourselves to each other, discovered through sharing some of our otherness how important that discovery is to our togetherness, and said, in our knowing looks, I care about you.

MOTHER/Daughter Style
by Sandra Goldsmith
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“How long will it take to get downtown, Mommy?”
I whimpered, wriggling in my seat. “I don’t like the streetcar.”

“Sweetheart,” my mother said, “today is our last chance to find you a dress. Cousin Marian’s wedding is in two
weeks, and she’s counting on you. You’ll be a darling flower girl!”

We rode along the track, the streetcar’s wheels clacking noisily all the way to State and Madison. Relieved to be exiting the stuffy car, I stood up and peered through the fogged-up window at the big sign for Marshall Field & Company. Mother took my hand as we crossed over the tracks to the gray sidewalk.

Entering the huge building, I looked around, turning slowly to take in the enormous room with its high ceilings and elaborate chandeliers. Counter after counter of jewelry and scarves and hosiery on that floor caught my eye. We found the escalator in the midst of the enormity of the department store, and we rode up to the Girls’ Department. I tried on dress after dress, all sleeveless white tulle reaching to the floor. I modeled each one, seeking Mother’s approval. Finally, she chose a dress we both liked, one that fit my skinny frame. It even came with a veil.

I gazed into the dressing-room mirror, imagining bouncy curls as I walked down the aisle scattering flowers. Every few months, Mother took me to the beauty shop on Kedzie Avenue for a permanent. I sat on the high, swivel chair and watched in the mirror as the beautician laboriously spread smelly chemicals onto tufts of my hair and then rolled those tufts into curlers. She seated me under a hot dryer for 45 minutes.

“Mommy, look at my curls!” I enthused, thrilled over the transformation. “Maybe this time the permanent will take.”

Every bedtime after such a treatment, I laid my head gingerly on my pillow in hopes of waking up with the full, curly hair that Shirley Temple had popularized. Every time, though, I woke up the next morning from a fitful sleep only to discover that my hair hung straight as ever.

“Mommy,” I sobbed, “all the curls are gone…”

Today, after leaving the children’s department with my newly purchased flower-girl attire neatly wrapped, Mother said in a reassuring way, “We’ll go to the beauty shop before the wedding, Honey. This time, though, we won’t even try a permanent.” She seemed happy at the prospect of showing off her little girl, and I delighted in knowing I wouldn’t have to endure another hair ordeal.

Mother steered us to a different section of the store. She stopped to check a shopping bag she had brought along, which contained a carefully folded black peau de soie dress with a cowl neckline.

“Now that you’re all set, Sandy dear, I have to buy a brassiere that will hide my scar.”

“What scar, Mommy? Like the one I have on my knee from roller skating?”

“No, this is different.” She looked at me as if trying to decide whether or not to share her secret. We kept walking.

When we arrived at the Lingerie Department, Mother approached a sales clerk and spoke softly, tentatively. “I need a special bra to wear under a cowl-neck dress. It’s for a wedding.”

In the dressing room, Mother took off her blouse. I saw wrinkled, shriveled skin at the top of her bra and coming across her shoulder, a disfigurement I had never paid attention to before. Then, as she took off...
her brassiere, I stood transfixed by the true scar. In place of my mother’s left breast was flattened flesh with jagged red marks.

This can’t be MY mommy. Her chest is ugly. Why does it look this way?

I knew that Mother had had an operation—at least that’s what Daddy said. I even went to visit her with Daddy and Jerry when she stayed at Rest Haven. Instead of focusing on either her illness or her recuperation in that big brick nursing home, flanked by lush trees that denied the dourness, I obsessed over my loneliness and my need for a mother to hold and hug me.

“Why is Mommy at this place, Daddy?” I asked him.

“Your mother will be home soon, Sandy dear,” he responded. “She’ll be okay. She misses us.”

When she did come home, she couldn’t lift much of anything for a long time, and certainly not her needy little daughter. She could barely bend down to hug me. “Mommy,” I said in a trembling voice, “did I do something wrong? Are you mad at me?”

Her cancer was clothed in secrecy. Sadness sometimes overshadowed her otherwise sunny disposition, and I never knew why. Eventually she healed, or so I thought. I never knew about her prosthesis until we stood together in the dressing room that afternoon.

“Okay, Ma’am,” intoned the abrupt saleswoman who had followed us in. “What do you need today?” Although I was a little girl, I not only observed my mother’s awful mastectomy scar but also sensed her humiliation in front of a woman whose harsh manner and brash bosom mocked us.

Recovery Room

Half-conscious, I reach for my cheeks
to brush off tears for your sadness and pain
while I trace with closed eyes
the enormous gash of a scar
you endured alone,
without drug therapy, or a “y-Me” hotline,
with only a pathetic prosthesis
fitted coarsely at a corset shop
where I stood beside you, helpless and small
as you bared yourself for the tactless woman
whose brash bosom mocked you.

I call to you from an anesthetic trance,
will your life back, a painless one
where you can embrace my childhood,
fuss over mittens and a warm hat in the morning,
serve me cookies and milk at three,
pore over science projects and book reports,
hold my hand on the Marshall Field’s escalator,
hum a 50s song as you stand at the kitchen sink,
play the piano after dinner as you harmonize
a simple day’s worth of motherly joys
that should have been your long-time entitlement.

My eyes open as a nurse peers down at me,
tenderly adjusting my intravenous
and conveying the surgeon’s good news
that all the poison-cells are out of my system.
The day before Cousin Marian’s wedding, Mother and I had our hair styled in Mother/Daughter likeness, with our hair pulled away from our faces and turned under in the back. The hair style showed off my sweetly angular face and round, blue eyes. A happy smile revealed my dimples, as well.

I could never be a Shirley Temple look-alike but when I walked down the aisle at the wedding, scattering flowers and grinning coquettishly, I felt special. My beautiful mother, wearing her cowl-neck dress, sat with all the relatives and beamed at me.

The Promised Land

1920

Dressed in muslin,
her feet taking big steps
up a gangplank, a little girl
carries her favorite doll, a pillow
for the droning nights in steerage,
a hairbrush for the shining curls
that would dull on the journey,
be snipped at Ellis Island.

1948

Dressed in pink organza,
with ringlets of hair bouncing,
her daughter
walks toward violin music,
smiles at the camera,
the approving faces —
a flower girl
prinkling bits of lavender.

1992

Dressed in sequined tulle,
her granddaughter
carries a cascade of iris and roses
down an aisle of white chiffon
cordoning orchid-topped columns —
a young woman gracing toward her groom
to the harmony of piano and flute,
hair flowing free.

Not a Memoir
by Janet Schutzman
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While preparing for company dinner my feet begin to hurt. I remove shoes and walk barefooted to closet
to retrieve serving dish. I pull out desired dish, and another crashes onto tile floor.

I notice stinging feeling on next-to-last toe of left foot.

I walk to bedroom to examine injury and tell husband Fred what is happening.

Blood flows. I limp on my heel and give Fred update.

I see the cut and wash, disinfect, and place butterfly band-aid on it.

Butterfly cannot control bleeding.

I ask Fred to come help.

Fred appears instantly and says we need to disinfect. I say problem is to find narrow band-aid to wrap around toe to stop bleeding. He cuts regular size band-aid in half. It slides off.

Phone rings. Fred answers. I hear him say, “Of course she’ll talk to you now.”

I find phone in one hand while other is applying pressure to cut.

President of our temple is returning my call. She thanks me for discussing my complaint and says problem cannot be solved in near future. “After all, Rabbi is only 34 years old.” I give her positive feedback on other issues and sympathize with magnitude of her job.

Another band-aid stops the bleeding on foot. I announce I will spend rest of day walking around in socks. As I put sock on right foot I notice three other cuts there. I say, “The hell with them,” put socks on without more treatment, and go to kitchen to fix dinner.

On way to kitchen I see Fred on floor cleaning up broken plate. I stoop to pick up tiny pieces he is unable to see. Blood appears on my right index finger.

I say I want to write about these events. Fred says, “Don’t bother. No one would want to read such a memoir.”

I wasn’t sure I wanted to join a fraternity. I had just transferred to Bucknell, a school of 2000, in October of my junior year. After two years at Penn, a school of 20,000, I felt sophisticated and experienced. I was coxswain of the Freshman Crew and then the Junior Varsity Crew. Coach Joe Burke, an Olympic Single Sculls Champion, had told me I was to be penciled in as Varsity coxswain my junior year. Jack Kelly, brother of the actress Grace Kelly, had asked if I would consider serving as coxswain of their Vesper Boat Club Four that was going to try for the Olympics. Super!

It all changed, one afternoon at the end of my sophomore year. The pre-med advisor advised that I wasn’t going to get into medical school, the goal my mother had set for me at age five. “You did poorly in Organic Chemistry (a premed must), you are from New Jersey (no medical school) and you are Jewish!” I didn’t tell my parents and in September began my junior year as a History major. Early October, my parents arrived at my dorm room at Penn, announcing that I had been accepted as a transfer at Bucknell. Ninety percent of premeds got into medical school from Bucknell and only 75 of 275 premeds at Penn had...
gotten in the previous year. This was the only time my parents had ever (or would ever) tell me what to do. I listened and was off to Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

At Bucknell, the courses seemed easier, I was not distracted by the crew practice, and I felt relaxed. Social interactions were focused in fraternities and sororities. I was invited to join Sigma Alpha Mu, a Jewish fraternity. The initiation involved hitchhiking to another chapter, in this case Ohio State in Columbus, Ohio. I didn’t know the other two “pledges,” both sophomores. They were English majors and had started a literary magazine. With luck we made it to the Columbus Sammy house with just three rides. We had been expected and there was a weekend party underway. We got to socialize and stayed for a day or two. We hitchhiked back to Lewisburg and I returned to my premed studies. I don’t remember details of the weekend.

What became of us? Peter Tasch became a Professor of Literature at Temple University. I got into medical school and became Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins. Our third hitchhiker, some four years later, wrote a short story that featured the Sammy House at Ohio State. The story and the subsequent book and movie were entitled “Goodbye, Columbus.” His name was Philip Roth.

Socrates’ Secret
by Betty Spears
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An elderly couple, the Alesandrinis, came to my workshop with a statuette of Socrates needing major repair. Their broken English indicated they were neither American-born nor aware of the item’s origin. The foot-high Socrates lounged on a bench, draped in his toga, missing one foot, some fingers and toes, and filthy with many layers of grime. Clearly, life had dealt him some rough, tough blows. I examined the figure carefully and after some communication difficulties we agreed on the charges for repairing the objet d’art. Off they went with the promise I would restore Socrates to the best of my abilities.

The first step in restoration and conservation of porcelain objects is a clean-up bath. For this case, I submerged the hollow figure in a warm sudsy bath to soak loose more than a century of accumulated crud. Gradually his original color and texture revealed itself. To my great surprise, I noticed a bunch of wadded-up newspaper stuffed inside. Aha, what have we here? I
removed the paper gingerly and gently spread it on the table. Curiosity made me wonder what might possibly be hidden in this old Socrates. I could feel something solid inside the soggy newsprint. My adrenaline rose as I picked apart the layers of paper. Alas! Inside I found a gorgeous, jeweled brooch that resembled some royal gems I had seen in museums. Surely this is not intended to be inside an old, bedraggled piece of porcelain. Surely the owners didn’t know their Socrates contained a valuable treasure, probably more valuable than Socrates himself.

What is my next step? I pieced together the scraps of the newspaper so it could dry out enough to be read. The only thing readable was the date, July 19, 1875. The almost illegible text was printed in a foreign language. It seemed to be German or one of the Scandinavian tongues.

I pondered this for some time and finally decided to contact the FBI. It took a while to make them understand what I was talking about. They couldn’t visualize a fine piece of jewelry hidden in a broken figurine. But I knew the FBI has a division devoted to searching for and identifying lost and stolen art objects. There are similar groups around the world that cooperate in returning lost or stolen items to their rightful owners and catching the thieves, counterfeiters, and third parties involved. The FBI asked me to send pictures for them to examine. My email brought an immediate response. An agent would be at my house soon. My adrenaline rose several more points.

The agent came to the door, showed me his badge, started asking questions when hardly through the door. He wanted to know: where I got the figure, the reason I had it, to whom did it belong, something about my past, had I been to various European countries, did I know some people he mentioned, etc. He took the brooch, gave me a receipt and told me he would contact me soon. He suggested I continue with my repair job and urged me not to inform the owners until the FBI had time to investigate the situation. He added that these cases sometimes take months or even years to solve.

Meanwhile I finished restoring Socrates to his original state – new fingers and toes and foot replaced. The owners came to collect him, none the wiser about his precious contents, but pleased with my work and happy to have him back.

Many months later I heard from the FBI. The brooch was traced to a Duchsmenian princess
who had been robbed while on an official trip to Bulgaria in 1871. The thief stole many fine pieces of her collection while she attended a royal reception. Most of the stolen pieces were recovered shortly after the heist. The lost brooch remained on Interpol’s list of items never found. The newspaper was published in Sweden. They did know it had been held by a number of fences. They traced it from Sofia to Madrid to Siena to Nice where they lost track of it in 1914. They had a lead in 1935 but it led to a dead end. No more sightings happened until I found it in 2001.

The present owners of Socrates inherited him from the wife’s Italian grandfather, who was part of the Mafia in Sicily. They immigrated to the United States in 1963 and brought the figurine with them. Mr. Alesandrini disliked it so intensely he didn’t want it in their home even though it was in pristine condition. It stayed in the cellar gathering dust and abuse until they began to clear their house as they downsized to a retirement facility. They planned to sell it after its restoration.

The FBI told me that the Duchsmenian government offered a $5000 reward for information of the whereabouts of the pin. Duchsmenia said they felt so grateful to have this royal brooch returned they would happily pay the reward money to me. Since it was so long past the statute of limitations they did not charge the Alesandrinis with bringing stolen goods into the United States. It is still a mystery as to how the brooch found its way into Socrates’ gut.

A few months later a diplomat from the Duchsmenian embassy called to invite me to a reception in my honor. I bought a new dress, had my hair done, and off I went to Washington for my fifteen minutes of glory, and came home $5000 richer.

The Best Kind of Childhood Playmate
by Judy Ashley
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John proved to be my perfect playmate. He lived next door on our busy street near downtown Lansing in a very large house with three stairways. John celebrated his 80th birthday when I was five. He devoted his full attention to my way of doing things, spending hours with me each week, never in a hurry to get away. He shared fascinating treasures. I could get dirty without worrying about my mother’s rules of cleanliness. He let me talk and talk and he listened, but he answered all my questions.

In our neighborhood, the houses were very close together. From our dining room window, I could see into John’s dining room and if he were walking around, I knew it was time.

“Mother, I can see John. He is walking around. Can I go visit him now? Can I?” I begged.

“Yes, you may go visit him. It will help him not be so lonely,” my mother said.

Later after four hours next door, I heard my mother say on the phone, “I did not mean she had to be there all day!” If John suffered from my visits in any way, I never knew it.
Every day, John dressed in a black, pin-striped, three-piece suit, white shirt, and a dark-colored tie, with a gold watch fastened to a chain in his vest. On special occasions he let me touch the sparkling gems he wore in the cuffs of his shirt. He wore glasses, but often only when he read.

“John, you have no hair on top of your head, but only on the sides, why do you cut it that way?” I asked.

In a very soft-spoken voice, he replied, “I am not sure. That is a very good question.”

Often, we walked in his backyard and he held my hand. I noticed he had very chubby fingers, contrasted with my father's thin ones. It never occurred to me to ask John what work he did when he was young like my father. I only knew he must be very smart because he taught me how to play Chinese checkers and Canasta. Later, when I discovered his pharmacist background, I figured that must have been easy compared to teaching me these games.

Any time we planned to challenge each other, John pulled up a special game table in the den; I sat in the puffy, pink-flowered chair, he in a straight-backed chair. Although I admired his ability to teach me these games, he lacked any ability to win. He often complimented me about my cleverness, and delegated responsibility to me as a result. He allowed me to put the Chinese checker marble set under the huge dresser in the main bedroom. Occasionally he delegated me to shuffle the cards and put them in neat piles and return them to the third drawer in his desk, requiring the use of a brass key to unlock the drawer.

John also taught me about intrigue, as we often went to the upstairs closet to search for secret drawers. He showed me the machine in the basement which pressed sheets and towels and made them easy to fold. His house had a special room in the basement, too, only for making wine or canning fruits and vegetables, and included a strange two-burner stove.

John clearly was rich, because my parents frequently visited friends at their houses, and John’s house was the only one decorated with dark, thick, emerald-green carpeting. Additional evidence of his wealth included the bookcases in the parlor with metal grill doors, and when you closed them, the latch made a loud, clicking, rich sound.

A favorite activity John taught me involved climbing the hall steps to the first landing, sitting down, scooting to the edge, and plopping down each step to the bottom. We laughed and squealed each time for at least an hour. He patiently watched from the bottom of the steps.

My most important lesson from John, however, occurred on a day when I changed the rules of our Canasta game. I wanted to win that day, and if I changed one of our rules, I would win.

“John, did you know we only need one card of a suit to pick up the discard pile?”

“Well, well…let me think about this…hmmm, I seem to remember that,” he whispered.

I jumped up and down for several minutes while picking up the stack of winning cards, giggled, and teased him about his loss. While walking home later, I felt guilty and realized somehow by changing the rules in the middle of the game, I had cheated John. So the next day, I announced the old rules again. It felt fair when winning then. It took me years to understand John’s tactics in letting me win. He really was smart.

When I was seven, my family moved across town to a new neighborhood. John lived a few more years, and we visited him regularly until he moved into a nursing home. I missed him, but after entering school, new friends entered my life. Whenever people told tales about childhood friends, John became my best story, and, even though he was 80, he defined the best kind of playmate.
Morning Prayer
by Linda G. Middlestadt

You grew so fast in body, mind, and soul—
From curling infant to that whirling boy,
To lazing teen who slumbered through ‘til noon —
Before your Mom could sate her heart with joy.

And so, my son, as autumn leaves fall free,
I wake to watch the graying of the day
And wish for you, asleep in some far world,
Sweet joys of love to warm your way.

A newborn baby sleeps through glare of day
And opens his tiny eyes and sucks at night
When lamplight haloes Mother’s tousled hair
And loving eyes can share their sole delight.

A toddler snaps awake at break of dawn
And slips from bed and patters down the hall
To crawl inside the softness of her arm
And snuggle there, a warm and furry ball.

At six he tosses twisted blankets on
The floor and races, eyes aglow with pleasure,
To face a day of this and that, and in
And out, of boundless seas and countless treasure.
The leader had guided us to a soccer field, where we were to “commune with Nature.”

He told us to find a spot anywhere that was not too close to another person.

Then he instructed us to sit quietly, to listen and observe.

And so I found a place alone, behind and away from the rest of the group.

And as I sat, listening and observing, I began to notice something odd.

In front of me, beyond the silent, spread-out group, were some very tall trees which formed a sort of semicircle around us; their branches pointed upward and, pushed by a soft breeze, swayed back and forth, in a sort of gesture of applause.

I wondered what they were cheering, until it dawned on me.

The leader had told us to sit down and observe. “Look at the nature around you; listen,” he had said.

But it wasn’t I who was sitting down and looking at nature and listening, nor was it the other people sitting in front of me.

No, we weren’t the audience at all.

Those trees, rising gigantically around us—they were the audience!

We were the performers!

Oh, how suddenly I wanted to please them. I wanted to stand up and do a slow dance just for those trees. I wanted to twirl and leap and spin until I had spun myself to heaven, and I wanted them to stretch their branches high and clap them together in leafy applause.

For just a few moments time stood still and I was suspended in eternity.

How long had that audience of trees been there, waiting for just this show, just these performers?

They seemed so glad, as they swayed there before us, glad and grateful for our offering.
In the Caves of Hercules:
Origin of Foreplay
by Charles E. Sternheim
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Fragments of flutes carved from vulture and mammoth bones have been discovered dating back 35,000 years. Photo: The Archaeology News Network.

he approaches
his beauty’s rose
this very night
he plays
he expresses
the rhythm
of his heart’s delight

she unfolds
in warmth
of fading light
she welcomes
his sweet sounds
of every tone
she expresses
her heartfelt desire
ready to ignite

New Administrative Supervisor Joins Osher at JHU
by Kathy Cooke

One month into her new position as Administrative Supervisor for Osher at JHU, Ann Wiker says the best part of the job so far is working with the Osher staff and having one main office. As a long-time faculty member teaching art history courses, Ann is quite familiar with the Osher program—and happy to focus her energy on it rather than continue traveling to multiple adult education sites as a teacher.

In addition to teaching, Ann founded her own business called Art Exposure in 2000 to bring art to communities through art education, art creation and by displaying art in public spaces. This experience serves her well in her new role at Osher. “Operating my own business motivated me to be a problem solver and to be creative in growing the business. I’m already using both of those skills [here],” she said.

As an entrepreneur, Ann cultivated valuable interpersonal skills that translate well to her current position supervising five staff and interacting with the Osher membership. Director Susan Howard thinks Ann’s talent and energy are a perfect fit for Osher at JHU.

Ann grew up in Columbia, Maryland. As a young adult she once rented a cottage on a Damascus horse farm. Every Sunday she fed and walked over 20 horses and mucked out stalls to pay the rent. She now lives in Baltimore with her husband and two children.
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The Osher Journal is published for the entire Osher at JHU community. Articles from all members are welcome, subject to editorial review. To submit a story or article, send it by email to linda@middlestadt.net, or by hard copy to the above address.