Fannie
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It was a grand family that gathered at our house for holidays and homecomings: Sweet Aunt Essie, married to Harry, the grumpy plumber from Brooklyn. She became a champion wartime riveter, tougher than he was, but now with the war over, Essie was a housewife again and Harry not quite so grumpy anymore.

Uncle Chick, who grew Brillo on his chest. He knew how to tear a telephone book in two and the children made him prove it every year. Uncle Abe, (“Call me Al,” he said), a sometimes-professional dancer who borrowed money from his sisters to pay off gambling debts. “Don’t lend him,” Fannie would say. “Our
younger brother is a good-for-nothing and he will never pay you back." Uncle Abe looked like Tyrone Power and he knew it. He never paid anyone back.

There were seven of them and their spouses and their children around our table, and the meals were like contests as the men moved on to third helpings and the women urged extra glasses of milk upon their children. How I loved this family and the boisterous normalcy they brought in with them. But there were moments in every gathering when I would be reminded that my mother Fannie was not like others, and I was embarrassed by the difference.

I would hide under the table if possible when the toasts began. Nothing could dissuade my mother from making the same final toast at each dinner. They all saw it coming: her serious and visionary expression as she rose and held the glass forward. Uncle Chick groaned in anticipation, and Abe made believe he was going to stuff a napkin in her mouth, but she went on, paying no attention. “And peace!” Fannie called out, “Peace on Earth!” “Stop it already with your ‘peace on Earth,’” Harry would grumble. “When are you going to realize that the war is over?”

Her face would flush as she tried to counter their laughter with stories of refugees in concentration camps. Even Essie would plead, “Lighten up, Fannie, It’s a holiday.” Why did my mother have to act this way?

Following the dinner Fannie would sit at the piano and play for them. As she thundered through Chopin’s Revolutionary Etude, her face reddened with passion, her hands flew high above the keyboard and descended with power and drama. Schubert’s G Flat Impromptu she played with a romantic yearning that seemed more Slavic than Viennese. The relatives, attentive during the flamboyant Chopin Etude, seldom sat so still for the impromptu, but Fannie was lost in a dream, singing as she played, eyes closed, unaware of any sounds but the piano’s. When she finished and her eyes opened, they were filled, filled with tears. I would see this and run from the room.

Is there any human virtue finer than to be a good son or daughter? It seemed to me that this is the core of decent behavior, of civilized responsibility to all our neighbors, of our capacity for kindness, compassion and love—to honor your father and mother. My father died too young for me to know him, but my mother lived to her 70s, and I can do today what was so difficult for me while she was alive—honor her.

She came to this country at the turn of the century, a child prodigy at the piano, escaping the Ukrainian pogroms. The household in America was organized around her schedule: three younger brothers and three younger sisters grew up learning that Fannie was the special one. In the public schools and settlement houses, on the territorial streets of the Bronx, they became Americans. But Fannie was tutored at home and was sent to the Manhattan studios of Walter Damrosch to prepare for a great future. She was to remain an émigré.

Fannie never read the funnies or played hopscotch on cement. Automobile rides would forever make her sick; she learned neither to drive the machine nor trust it. The telephone would be glared at when it rang and answered with suspicion. Finding the correct radio station was a mystery of the modern world. Fannie never told a joke and never understood one unless the punch line was explained. To her brothers and sisters, she was an exasperation. In her parents’ eyes, she was the center of the world.

She met a younger violinist. They fell in love and married.

Fannie and Fred. After six years they had two children and a modest, but respectable career. It must have been to them the sweet and fulfilled promise of the new
land. Then in the midst of the depression, suddenly, Fred died. Fannie woke up in a different world. She found a job as a library clerk and taught piano to a few neighborhood children at 25 cents a lesson. She set about the serious business of keeping a family together. The loss of husband and lover, musical partner and father of her two boys, the artistic dreams replaced by an ordinary and unchallenging routine—all this dangerously tipped her ecstatic temperament toward an inner life of emotional martyrdom and a distrust of the surrounding world. She protected her two boys with fierceness so palpable and excessive that they, we, had to challenge the boundaries of safe behavior in order to maintain a sense of self. An unending intensity of love and anger was exchanged between us, to the end of her life.

Now, when I sit at the piano and work my way through the Schubert G Flat Impromptu as best I can and at half the speed I remember her playing it, I understand why it was that she cried; I understand that it was sheer and continuing perfection of an exquisite music that never loses its sweet thought of love, that knows of no disappointment, that grows no wrinkles. No false thought, no tragic turn away from the beautiful in its melodic life, no loss of the perfect world that floats on its harmony. I know that she cried for all that this was and all that her life could no longer be.

And today, in these times, there seems to be no wish, no toast among loved ones, relatives or friends, or even among the most cynical of strangers, that makes as much sense as Fannie’s words, repeated year after year: “And peace!” she called out, “Peace on Earth!”

Fascination in Memoirs Class
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Here is what happens in the member-led Osher Memoir Class:

We wonder how one becomes Director of Asian Studies for the University of Maryland before such a program exists. Julian shares his adventures of developing the program while living in Japan and traveling for business and pleasure to many other countries. These travels include being pressed to drink too much vodka during required toasts with Russian university officials in Siberia; being accused as a spy by an angry crowd on the streets of Vladivostok in 1990; and staying in various hotels during vacations such as the luxurious Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, at Raffles in Singapore, and sleeping in a hotel where he felt lucky to have a mattress on the floor. He can tell you stories about rogue airlines, one of which entailed a disappearing stewardess who walked away from a traveler gushing blood when he hit his head on a shelf. It was up to passengers to deal with this emergency.

And how does he enjoy his work? Still employed with pay after retirement, he will ask you not to mention to his boss that he would work for nothing.

Mary, a geodesist (one who maps the earth), describes her mother’s wedding to her American banker father stationed in China an hour after she got off the boat. Mary was born in China and traveled the world alone before marriage to a member of the American ambassadorial staff. She and her husband then lived in South and Central American countries, as well as Egypt. We learned how she raised her children and developed meaningful friendships and activities in her life abroad. Of special interest is her attending the Nobel Prize Awards in Sweden, unheard of for an American unless receiving an award; spending time...
with British Prince Edward in an observation boat during an international crew race; and conversing with the Prince of Siam, portrayed in the Broadway show, *The King and I*. She also is a long-term friend of his princess granddaughter who became famous in this country after her picture appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine.

Betty keeps us up to date on the tribe of flamingoes planted in her Mt. Washington neighbor’s front yard. These metal birds have become semi-human by leaving notes and appearing on other neighbors’ lawns. You may have read about them in an Osher Journal. And Betty opened our eyes when describing her observations of sub-human treatment of Eskimos in Alaska.

Our last year’s Memoirs Class learned about a member (me) raising two athletes and attending the Olympics in Seoul in 1988 and Barcelona in 1992 where they competed in saber fencing. Family anecdotes include experiences of feeding and providing sleeping space for my sons’ college teams, sometimes 25 at a time on the way to and from out-of-state competitions; relating to their coaches on a personal level; and watching my boys compete against each other for international points as the huge gym became silent from clashing swords and every participant stopped to watch the Friedberg brothers fight it out. Who could choose which one to root for? Certainly not the mother.

We also learned about funny and maddening experiences for a classmate while earning his PhD from Cornell University. You wouldn’t believe what goes on in academia.

Our architect member told us what he thinks about as he designs or renovates a home or commercial space (he dislikes minimalism). He also writes about family dynamics and his love of sports.

Leight shared about meeting his future wife on a ski lift who later impressed him by sitting and talking with him all night on a train in coach rather than use the bunk she had reserved for herself. Leight also talks and writes about writing and surprises us with many other subjects, always in short pieces, one page or less.

Another classmate shared a tragic personal loss about which she had been unable to speak in the intervening 40 years. This experience was a significant accomplishment for her and provided her with welcome emotional relief.

We learned why Jerry’s family referred to him as a bum; that he worked in a filthy, spooky pawn shop that scared him; and felt socially awkward as a college student at age 15 1/2. He also shared how he survived dangerous adventures while owning and running a bar; working as a lawyer; and he explained how he and other navy recruits built a radio with the ability to reach thousands of miles from a few pieces of wire and an empty cardboard toilet-paper roll while stationed on a ship in the South Pacific during World War II. Jerry also tells how he learned that his daughter was not deaf, as feared. (This has to do with ice cream in the night.) Jerry and Leight are 20-year-plus members of the class.

Every week we learn tricks of the trade and read aloud memoirs of one to five or six pages about our adventures and misadventures, followed by lively discussions. If you join our community you can make sense out of your life by breaking it up into pieces, not necessarily in chronological order. Your children and grandchildren will cherish your stories. And you will relate on a new level with fellow Osher members.
Ode to Wear And Tear
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A bolt covered in rust
A screen door that no longer slides
A handle that fails to turn
Solution: Three-In-One Lubricating Oil

A knee that fails to flex
A shoulder that rotates in, not out
A back that breaks
Solution: A cortisone shot

A tongue that lost its liking
A flavor with no savor
A taste without its tang
Solution: Extra salt

A sleep that thrashes about
A clock that crawls
A night that lingers
Solution: A melatonin tablet

A brain that can’t remember chit
A brain that can no longer spell
A brain that can’t complete an ode
Solution:

Dates of Spring Semester:
February 17, 2020 to May 8, 2020
This reflection is intended to provoke admiration for three really special men who were my uncles Henry, Jeff, and Will. They were respectively; Henry Taylor of my father’s family; Jeff Walker, my mother’s brother-in-law; and Will Henry McCauley, my father’s brother-in-law. Each with a different last name and representing a different twig of my family of origin tree, these men shaped my understanding of what it means to be male, compassionate, and confident in the worthiness of our lives as whole human beings. They taught me that life has meaning, no matter the tragedy or joy that occurs or to whom these gifts are given.

Although I did not spend an equal amount of time with each of these men, the time we shared is punctuated with bolts of incisive hope that always promised me happiness. My survival as a child, young adult, and now mature man remains flavored with those expectations that sustain the notion that happiness is more a process than a singular idea. Because my memories with Uncle Henry remind me of early ideas about happiness, I want to remember him first in this triumvirate of familial hope.

A younger during most of the time I spent with Uncle Henry, I had my greedy little child’s heart thrilled often with watermelon slices and stories about his rows of peanut plants in the garden. He could also entertain me when he talked about rabbits in the woods that would occasionally peek at us from a place we could barely see. Uncle Henry seemed always tall and erect with a complexion called pecan-colored. His skin stretched on his face like a mask. Stretched to its capacity with a smile contented in its surrounding, his was a face always welcoming for the impish little boy I proved to be. Always pleasant and yet stern with my sister and me, he never left me doubting his love and commitment to us as sojourners in a world overwhelming and strange. He was the overseer of his farm, which meant acknowledging the existence of his sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, and the grandchildren who blossomed from his family. In the case of my sister and me, we were a grand-niece and -nephew. He set limits for all of us as to how much we could torture...
his hunting dogs, tease his chickens, or wander in the woods. And we all did need limits set!

As I remember my days with “Pa Henry” it seems they were bright and sunny with an expectation always of more fun to come. Even with an occasional thunderstorm the feelings associated with my time in “Pa Henry’s” company bring up delightful memories. This period in my life was so wonderful that today I must remember that the time we had together was just too short!

Georgia clay is the literal ground on which the stage of my life with Uncle Henry is drawn. His house sat distant from a dusty clay road that ended circling a simple A-frame structure with an open porch on one side. In Georgia what is known as “red clay” may seem endless, ever-present, and solid as a rock. Though the soil is not red but more like an orange pallor, it is the product of a visual symphony of yellow and red mineral chroma. Georgia clay is an enchanting memory of reflected light; it seems more like a yellow sun than the red of blood. Though blood and sun resonate in the labor engrained in all true melodies about Georgia and the South, the idea of “red clay” is still one of comfort for many although chagrin for others. American history suggests there is a lot of blood absorbed in this ground with a history of lynching and demeaning labor, both of which happened in the blistering sun, with much blood spilled in the dark of night. None of this was apparent to me when I was with Uncle Henry.

Georgia clay is real clay. Clay as an earthy material with plastic properties which when baked becomes adhesive and hard and can be experienced in Georgia as dusty, hot, or hard. When other soils break away to crumbs, Georgia clay breaks down to dust. Its plasticity supports an inherent strength and flexibility. Add water and Georgia clay produces comforting thick syrup that adheres to become engrained with whatever it touches. Georgia clay is maybe a ceramicist’s friend or another’s nightmare. I have had artists tell me both good and bad things about Georgia clay and its usefulness as a ceramic medium. While the strength of clay is in many instances appreciated for varied options in making bricks, I discovered at one time that clay could also become an ogre towards me. It became a monster when its plasticity worked against me as a barefoot boy caught out of doors in a thunderstorm, finding much sitting water and holes in the ground.

This was Georgia clay which didn’t seem like regular dirt but seemed to live. During a flash thunderstorm I discovered that mud from Georgia clay could embrace me, scare me, tease me, and challenge me about my personal independence. The storm in question came so quickly and with such ferocity that a room in the center of the house seemed the only safe haven to a scared little boy. Even there I sought to crawl beneath a bed to be comforted in darkness. The loud flashing of lightening did not just show up but made a noise like none I had reckoned with before. It sounded with a loud “Crack-Kaboom!” making the walls and floors of an old country house shake.

The mystery in this story is that I do not remember or understand how it was that I was not in the house hiding during the entire storm. How did it happen that I thought I was independent enough to run out into the yard? Or to even think I could handle a storm and its mud to retrieve anything? I suspect I was intoxicated with the joy I found in splashing in mud puddles. Jump here, jump there, splash here, splash there, “plop, slop” and then run to the next recession filled with water and more wonderful mud! On this occasion I found an oasis of puddles in an area set aside in the yard for chopping firewood. It was a recessed area about 20 feet away from the front yard of the house and included a small homemade shed. The recession had several peculiar ditches full of mud. The bigger yard may have held a few sandy patches.
and likewise with grassy spots, but in the woodshed recession area there was nothing but clay which was at this time mud. I did not fathom that because the area with the shed was recessed it would hold more water for longer periods in its pools. The puddles would be deeper and hold more mud. This thought seemed great! With the whole area being approximately 12 feet by six feet I had a great play pen all my own!

I was soon to learn that clay mud in pools can be treacherous towards little barefoot boys who liked stomping in them. This was the kind of clay that seemed to wrap around my ankles like socks and shrink with every effort I made to get free. In the warmth of a summer day this coverage was a little comfortable but when I could not retrieve any firewood because I could not retrieve my feet I knew I was in trouble! With my other foot and leg slowly giving way to joining its partner in one hole, I was left to howl in hope of being heard by someone in the house for rescue. Then someone did hear! It was Pa Henry who came and with one “whoosh” yanked me and my muddy feet free of the recession to be landed safely on the porch of the house, with a stern warning not to run beyond a warm stove in the kitchen. It seemed peculiar that in the rain and the mud I was warm; out of the rain and the “mean ole mud,” there was a chill. Under his arm, “Pa Henry” had hauled me to the porch scared and howling. Tears mixed with rain to sanctify that I would never forget his rescuing me. In my heart I did not know how to express my gratitude beyond sniffling and trying hard to stop crying. I knew my Uncle Henry (“Pa Henry”) loved me “special” and what seemed a rescue from impending doom bonded us in a way that allows me to remember him today and connect with my option to cry as a person in distress.

As an adult I cherish and share with my estranged sister how special we must be to have had an Uncle Henry to love us. How special it was for me to have been rescued from sinking into that muddy pit. I cherish his rescue and remember it now as I come to accept that life ends and its joys can be fleeting. I delighted in hearing him call my father by his family moniker of “Bro.” And I remember how charming he was when he and my Aunt Frances, his wife and partner long blind, argued because he was a bit tipsy and called her a seductive kind of “Sug…”

I never knew my grandfather Will and have only one portrait picture of him. He was Uncle Henry’s brother. In the picture I can see the resemblance. I never got to talk with “Pa Henry” about his act of kindness for a wayward little boy so this story casts light on him as a gem in my life that like too many wonderful people are gone too soon.

“A love that’s lost was never there…”

Jaynes H. Taylor is a Georgia native who is an ordained minister, counselor, artist, activist and certified public school teacher. He has worked for the Friends of Prisoners program in New England and for the United Youth Adult Conference of Atlanta. He served as Founding Pastor of the New Hope Community Baptist Church of Hyannis, MA and the President of the Organized Neighbors of Edgewood in Atlanta, respectively. He came to Baltimore in 2017 as a student advisor to a local artist establishing a museum trust.
Persephone
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Persephone was the daughter of Demeter, the Greek goddess of corn, and thus of growing and harvesting.

I know you told me not to wander, so protective of me were you, Mother, but the air was so sweet with the fragrance of flowers, and off in the distance: one golden narcissus, how it flashed in the sun.

Then I heard a roar like a thousand lions, and felt my waist grasped, and I was borne sideways by a mighty force. It was Hades himself, his dark beard flying in the wind as he clutched me to his breast, his free hand wrapped with the reins of coal-black steeds leaping before his chariot.

Again with a roar, the earth opened up and we plunged into swampy darkness.

I closed my eyes in fear, clinging to his arm.

The air rushed past; I heard water gushing. The chariot slowed and I opened my eyes. We raced across a wide cold wasteland with meadows of pallid asphodel, then rising before me a sable palace, many-spired and gated, luminous in the mist.

I hear that you weep for me, Mother, that you lay waste to the fruits of the earth, and let nothing grow, that Zeus has sent messengers to you to relent in your anger, that Hermes will come to the underworld for me. My husband has told me this in the night when we lie on his bed of silk and I feel again the sweep of his arms. He holds me with his dark eyes and offers a seed from the juicy red flesh of a pomegranate; I taste it and my mouth throbs.

Here I am Queen.
Things Your Mother Told You That Weren’t Necessarily True

Otts Laupus

“Don’t get overheated!”
A favorite admonition of mothers when you walk out the door in the summertime to play with your friends, a warning that you’d better not come back hot, sweaty, and out of breath. But then I always did. When I walk in the door, my mother is right there to chastise me about not heeding her command. “What did I tell you! You ran around like a chicken with its head cut off, got overheated and just look at you! Can’t you see yourself? Don’t listen to me. Now look at you—hot, sweaty, and out of breath. Just what am I going to do with you?” I’m too hot, sweaty, and out of breath to respond.

“Always wear clean underwear because you never know when you’ll be taken to the hospital.” I know. Just about everybody remembers that one. At one time I honestly thought it was a part of the Ten Commandments. Talk about drumming fear into someone. I’d have dreams of being in a horrible accident, placed on a gurney, and taken by a screeching ambulance to the emergency operating room at Johns Hopkins, where some surgeon in pristine garb, along with teams of nurses, would pull down my trousers, see my soiled underwear, and shout as a chorus, “Ugh! Will you just look at that? Get him out of here!” The surgeon stomps out of the room, tearing off his mask and tossing aside his medical implements. Nurses, finger waving and tsk-tsking, put on my pants, get me back on the gurney, and shove me in the ambulance that takes me—no sirens this time—to some back alley where I am unceremoniously dumped and abandoned, never to see my parents and friends ever again, a poster child for Sanitary Delinquency.

“You can always wait ‘til you get home.” This is said by my mother when I’m away from home and have to go you-know-where. Public facilities anywhere are a bane to mothers, bacteria basilicas lying in wait for unsuspecting prey. When I ask why I can’t go now, she says, “You don’t know who’s been in there. You don’t want to sit on a dirty toilet seat, do you?” When I tell her I only want to pee, she says, “Same thing. You don’t know who’s been standing in front of that urinal. You could catch all kinds of diseases. You want to wind up in the hospital?” Why is it mothers use overkill? “But Mom, I really have to go.” “Just hold it a little while longer. We’ll be home soon.” “But I can’t hold it any longer,” I tell her. She heaves a deep sigh and says, “All right, it’s against my better judgement. Just go, but make sure you wash your hands, and if you have to use the toilet, put something down on the seat. But remember, I’ll be standing right outside the door waiting for you—and don’t forget to wash your hands!” (I know. She said that twice.) She waves me off with a quick hand gesture.

To be honest and politically incorrect, I think it’s a female thing. Guys can go anywhere—trees, rocks, bushes, alleys, fields. When I’m with my father it’s no big deal. He’ll even get the key to the men’s room of the Shell station in Laurel. If my mother only knew. For girls it’s worse. They must go to some facility approved by the Ladies Home Journal. Put it under the category of Prim and Proper.
Not long ago I am in Giant with my wife when nature calls. When I tell her, she reacts the same way my mother did seventy years ago, that “Oh my God here we go again he does it every time” pained, contorted expression. It must be in the DNA. “Can’t you wait ‘til we get home,” she says through clenched teeth, an echo from the past? I tell her that nature can’t be put on hold. “Just go,” she says, waving me off with that quick hand gesture, same damn one my mother made. As I am scurrying down the aisle, she shouts at the top of her lungs from the other end of the store, “Put something down on the seat.”

I wait in the men’s room an extra five minutes hoping that any audience to our exchange has left the store.

I am 82 years old, and there is not a day passes that I am not reminded of one of those dire warnings: I exercise at a controlled pace, wear impeccably clean underwear, and even when I’m home, always put something down on the seat.

Lightning
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When shall we three meet again,

In thunder, lightning or in rain?

These two lines are the opening of Shakespeare’s Scottish play; the mention of its name brings ill fate to actors who dare do so.

Lightning is an electrical disturbance in the lower atmosphere, consisting of a huge spark between volumes where positive electrostatic charges predominate, and neighboring volumes where negative electrostatic charges predominate.

Such a spark as it moves through space represents electrical current, and is accompanied by intense light and sound (thunder).

This essay will be split as follows:

I. How electrostatic charges are formed.
II. The attraction between opposite charges results in a current which tends to equalize the two.
III. The association of intense light with the spark.
IV. Safety issues
V. The association of sound (thunder)
I. How electrostatic charges are formed.
Most of us have probably heard the story of somebody in ancient Greece who had observed that upon rubbing a stick of amber with a piece of rabbit fur, the two attract each other. We interpret this phenomenon to be due to the two objects—electrically neutral at the beginning—becoming electrically charged with opposite polarities: one positive and the other negative. The word for amber in Ancient Greek is *electron*, and in Latin it is *electrum*.

The piece of amber retains an excess of negative charges (*electrons*) while the rabbit fur has a dearth of electrons, and thus a net excess of positive charges (*protons*). The electrical charge on an *electron* is equal to that on a *proton*—although they are of opposite polarities.

Note that the designations of “positive” and “negative” is arbitrary. We could have designated them otherwise. The important thing is to maintain the consistency of the designations.

Ordinarily, matter is electrically neutral; we interpret this as being due to the equal numbers in it of negative charges (*electrons*) and positive charges (*protons*) which it contains.

II. The attraction between opposite charges results in a current which tends to equalize the two.
We probably experienced the phenomenon of static electricity generated by friction. Combing one’s hair in a dry room, we notice a crackling sound and strands of hair trying to “stand on end.” This is due to the fact that the friction of the plastic comb causes transfer of electrons from itself to the strands of hair.

The latter, therefore, repel one another. The air acts as an insulator, the drier it is, the more of an insulator it is. Had the air been damp, it would have been much less of an insulator and would have allowed a gentler transfer of electrical charges between the two polarities.

Another example is walking in a dry room across an acrylic carpet, where the friction of one’s shoes on the acrylic carpet builds electrostatic charge, which results in an actual spark between one’s finger and the metal handle of the door. If the room were dark, one would not only hear the crackle of the spark, but actually see a flash of light between the finger and the door’s metal handle.

Consider a similar situation in the atmosphere. Air currents of different temperatures pass over a cloud or clouds. Some clouds are composed of water droplets, others are composed of minute ice particles, and yet others are composed of a mixture of the two. The air currents that pass over these different “mixtures” result in different electrostatic charges: some positive and others negative. This is how static electrical charges form in the atmosphere.

III. The association of intense light with the spark.
Two conditions are needed to cause lightning. 1. The two opposite charges formed in different areas must be large enough. 2. They must be separated by an insulating layer of air that prevents “gentle equalization” of the opposite charges—since we know lightning to be sudden and violent.

When the latter condition occurs, the sudden and violent electrical currents that are formed
generate tremendous amounts of heat. The resulting temperatures may locally approach values close to those on the sun’s surface.

The path of the lightning may be from a cloud to ground (or from ground to cloud), or from one cloud to another, or from one part of a cloud to another part of the cloud. The electrical charges that collect on the earth beneath a cloud are of opposite sign to those that collect on the lower portions of the cloud above it.

As noted earlier, the plasma that is formed in the volume where the electrostatic currents transverse is extremely hot. Electromagnetic radiation results. The higher the temperature, the further the color of the light shifts towards the blue—and eventually towards white. Think of a cooktop in the kitchen, where the spiral hot-plates appear dull red when low current is passed through them, then shift towards bright red as the current increases, eventually becoming bluish and white.

IV. Safety issues

Lightning kills about 250 people annually within the United States. The best protection from lightning is not to be where it strikes. At the approach of a thunderstorm or any electrical disturbance, seek physical shelter. Generally lightning is expected to strike the tallest structure. But this is not guaranteed. I recall a few years ago a person standing on a street corner in the Bronx, among tall apartment houses, was struck by lightning and killed. To seek shelter in a metallic enclosure presents better protection than in a non-metallic structure. Being inside a car is safe—if you keep away from metal handles, etc.

V. The association of sound (thunder)

The explanation of the formation of thunder will be presented in three stages (the first two are general relating to sound, and the third deals with thunder itself).

First is the case where the source of the sound is stationary (e.g., a hammer striking an anvil). Here, the sound waves spread out in concentric spheres.

Next is the case where the source of the sound moves at a constant speed along a straight line (e.g., the anvil is on a moving belt). In this case, the sound wave fronts “crowd” one another in the direction of the motion of the source. This case is analogous to the optical Doppler effect.

We now come to the third case (there is no longer an analogy with the optical Doppler effect), wherein the electric spark of the lightning generates a “shock wave” in the air. The suddenness and intensity of the “lightening spark” result in thermal expansion and formation of a “lightning channel” in the air. The temperature in that channel may instantaneously approach the temperature at the surface of the sun. As this superheated air collides with the outside cool air, a shock wave is formed. The temperature of the “super-heated” air drops precipitously, and the “shock wave”—which is like that formed by an explosion—moves faster than the sound it has generated! When this reaches our ears, it is the same as the “sonic boom” that we hear. This is when the source of the sound moves at a speed that exceeds the speed of sound itself.
Now and then, I dredge up a short story about one of my kids.

This one is about Jim. He and his wife Denise are visiting, and I can’t stop thinking about “now” without first journeying back to a tiny event that took place “then.”

He was our first-born, and here’s what happened in 1950, shortly after he joined us.

There was a small, slightly elevated table to put his tiny body on when changing his diaper. When we turned away for a moment, he rolled over and crashed to the floor. He was a tall, slim baby and, thank God, was not hurt much. But it helped him learn to cry. I’m sure he doesn’t remember this, but it crashed along with a sharp focus, into my memory.

I can’t help but marvel about where he is “now.”

Jim and Denise have just semi-retired from their joint jobs of captaining and sailing wealthy people’s yachts. This means that they are working only four months a year instead of the previous six. Yes, you heard me right; they could only survive this 24-hour, seven-day work week by having six months off.

Here they are, visiting me and getting ready to find an abode in Florida for the winter. But today, as I sit here writing this, Jim, six feet two, is at the dentist having two teeth pulled from his 68-year-old self. I’m sure he’ll survive, but I can’t help journeying back in time when I held his tiny body in my arms.
**NAPPER**

Randy Barker  
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Hot or cold, in or out, home or away  
Are all the same way  
To places filled with swift  
Mind-journeys to anything goes  
Often abruptly stopping mid-journey  
Drool on my chin  
Or  
Utterances upon the evanescent  
Gone now but as unstoppable  
As the drift to out-of-touch reverie  
Is foundational to me being me.

*Awakened when noticing that naps, such as  
my daily nap in the car at Osher (am I the only one?)  
are to me what walks are to MCB 12/6/18.*

---

**WALKER**

Randy Barker  
*Ibarker3@jhmi.edu*

It was and  
It wasn’t  
A surprise  
In my moving-by view  
Along the road I run down,  
Noting all I know  
Most every day,  
To note your colored coat  
And your hat  
And your walking stick.  
A deep learning about Us  
Voiced deeply and often by You:  
Solitary walks, less lonely  
For all our filled-up long lives as two,  
Are foundational to your being you.

*Awakened seeing MCB as I drove down  
Springlake Way 4 PM December 4 2018.*
The Osher at JHU Journal is published semi-annually in the fall and spring by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Johns Hopkins University to strengthen community connections and share experiences. Readers are encouraged to respectfully share their reactions with authors via email.

All members and faculty are welcome to submit essays, anecdotes, poetry, and memoirs, subject to editorial review. The Journal strives to publish a diverse array of voices. Send work by email to Linda Middlestadt, at linda@middlestadt.net or mail a hard copy to Osher at JHU, 6740 Alexander Bell Dr., Columbia, MD 21046.

Submission Guidelines:
• about 250-1000 words, or up to 50 lines of poetry
• emphasizing one significant experience or idea clearly and succinctly
• relevant to the Osher community
• accompanied by a photograph or illustration

Submissions are accepted all year, due by January 15 for the Spring issue and August 15 for the Fall issue, and are evaluated during the last weeks of January and August. Writers will be notified if their articles will be published in the current or a future issue. When an article needs modification, a writer will be given an explanation and will be encouraged to consult with committee member Randy Barker at lbarker3@jhmi.edu or Chuck Sternheim at cstern@umd.edu if they decide to make revisions. A revised submission will be subject to the same editorial review as any new submission.

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