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BIOGRAPHIES

EMBER CEMELLI is a homeschooled 16 year old who lives in Narrowsburg, NY, a small town whose creative vibe incorporates art into her life. She loves the arts and one of her main passions is writing; she also shows interest in dance and photography. Ember hopes to inspire people and one day make an impact on the writing abilities of others. She believes every piece of art should bring emotion to the viewer.

GARY HOLMES has received an MFA degree in dramatic writing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and a J.D. from Boston College Law School. He also writes short stories. Gary is a retired copyright attorney and local businessman. Gary grew up in Liberty and, after a couple of decades away, now lives and works in Wurtsboro.

HELENA MOORE grew up in Cazenovia, NY, attended Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and is a graduate of the Psychoanalytic Center in Manhattan. Her Ph.D. is from Union Institute and University in Cincinnati, OH (a University Without Walls.) She had a private practice in psychotherapy in Manhattan and now lives and works in Forestburgh, NY.

JUNE DONOHUE writes a column in the **Sullivan County Democrat** every other Friday. She also does some standup comedy for Yarnslingers and small cafes.

K. DOMINEY, country at heart, is a happy transplant from city life to bucolic Sullivan County.

LYNN GUISER lives in Damascus PA, and works as a licensed nutritionist for Wayne County. Writing is a hobby for her. She has had a wonderful relationship with the river her entire life.

MARCIA NEHEMIAH is a member of the Upper Delaware Writers Collective and the author of two books of poetry, "Final Story" and "Reclamation." Her most recent book, "Crone Age," her first full-length work of non-fiction, explores the promises and riches of aging by profiling eight women octogenarians from the Upper Delaware region. She wrote a monthly column on sustainable living as well as feature articles for **The River Reporter**.

MARION KASELLE is a writer, artist and Qi Gong therapist who lives with her dog, horses, cats and chickens on a hilltop farm in North Branch, NY. She is the author and photographer of "Touching Horses" (London, J. A. Allen & Co. Ltd., 1995), and the author of essays and poems that have appeared in various small publications. As an original member of Yarnslingers, she has been reading her stories at local venues for the past few years.

MARYANN CAPPELLINO is a clinical social worker, Reiki practitioner and herbalist who lives in Brooklyn and Lake Huntington, NY. She loves to cook, tell stories, garden, dance and find any excuse to gather with family and friends around her kitchen table and celebrate with good food and fine Italian wines. She has three sons, three cats, and one husband.

MARY GREENE, a resident of Narrowsburg, NY, received her MFA in poetry from Brooklyn College. She is founder and director of the Upper Delaware Writers Collective, which sponsors classes, publications and

events. Greene's poetry has appeared in a number of national and local journals, and she has given readings and performances in venues all over the region. She has published three books of poetry and one book of interviews with women. She currently serves as grants coordinator at the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance.

NORMA KETZIS BERNSTOCK is a member of the Upper Delaware Writers Collective. Her poetry has appeared in many journals and anthologies and has been recognized by the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards. Her chapbook, "Don't Write a Poem About Me After I'm Dead," was published by Big Table Publishing.

PATRICIA KETT is a member of the Upper Delaware Writers Collective, and has exhibited poetry/art objects for the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance. She has published a book of poems, "No Need to Repeat Old Lives or Old Lies" and a self-help book, "Happy is Not a Goal!"

PETER GREENE has been painting, printmaking, drawing and writing about family for 35 years. Family is central to his creative life. His last exhibit at the DVAA in 2012 was titled "Family Matters." Each medium he explores expands his vocabulary in words and images pushing him forward in his work and life.

RAMONA JAN is the founding director of Yarnslingers, a local group dedicated to the art of true first-person storytelling. She is also a published author and magazine contributor and has been a section editor for **The River Reporter**.

REY BARRETO grew up in Manhattan. As a teenager he read the novel "My Side of the Mountain." Ever since then he dreamed of living in the Catskill mountains. He moved to Jeffersonville in 2002 and then settled in Bloomingburg in 2004. He enjoys writing about nature and photographing the beautiful scenery and wildlife of Sullivan County.

TAMARA D'ANTONI is an artist, healer, singer and poet. She grew up in Upstate New York into a family of artists, but pursued a career in veterinary medicine and the health-sciences, using her art as an adjunct. She has focused on her art, primarily her photography and jewelry design, and has continued healing animals and people.

TRACEY GASS RANZE is the author of the book, "Storm Farmer, Collected Poems." She is a longstanding member of the Upper Delaware Writers Collective as well as the Milanville Poets and Country Voices Poetry. Gass Ranze lives immersed in the inspiration of the Delaware River Valley, where she writes and performs at local venues.

TRAVIS RIVERA was raised in Southern California. In addition to poetry, he has written a few comedy skits, acoustic songs, and is currently working on a fantasy novel.

WILL CONWAY writes and gardens in Mongaup Valley with his lovely wife and a cat. He is currently facilitating a series of poetry workshops entitled "Country Voices." Will is a member of the Upper Delaware Writers Collective.

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"We love the things we
love for what they are."
—Robert Frost

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Anne Willard

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From the editor

“Love is a many-splendored thing; love lifts us up where we belong; all you need is love!” So says Ewan McGregor’s character in the film “*Moulin Rouge!*” quoting, of course, famous love songs. It could be argued that every pop song ever written is about love. And movies. And books. And so on. Whether the feeling is fleeting or lasts a lifetime, it’s the universal language, the thing that inspires us and keeps us going. And now, it’s the theme for this year’s **Literary Gazette**, published annually by **The River Reporter**.

The pieces in this edition are funny, sad, maybe cheesy (though not *too* cheesy), and even angry. The writers explore love in all its forms: marriage, children, affairs. They are X-rated or high-school-sweetheart saccharine.

The literature is accompanied by portraits of people with those they love. The photographs were taken by talented local photographer Michelle L. Erbach of Honesdale, PA. Michelle is the eye behind Humans of Honesdale, a photography project she started based on Humans of New York (www.facebook.com/HumansofHonesdale). She also has her own photography business, Michelle Lee Photography, where she shoots weddings, senior portraits and much more (michelleleephotos.com).

Michelle and I set up two photo shoots to take these portraits. Because the subjects would be members of the community, I thought it would be fitting to hold the shoots at the home bases of beloved community organizations. And so we thank the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance in Narrowsburg, NY (delawarevalleyartsalliance.org) and The Cooperage in Honesdale, PA (thecooperageproject.org) for letting us use your wonderful spaces.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the **Literary Gazette**.

Isabel Braverman
Editor

“We’re all a little weird. And life is a little weird. And when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall into mutually satisfying weirdness—and call it love—true love.”
— Robert Fulghum, “True Love”



From the photographer

I’m Michelle of Michelle Lee Photography. I’d like to think that my Bohemian style and love for all things natural has helped me truly encapsulate the subjects of my photography. The pool of experiences I’ve dipped my toes into is definitely more of an ocean! Hopefully my work really shows a balance and harmony between nature and the human condition with a true concentration on simplicity and beauty. I’m known for putting my heart into everything I do and having a sincere care and concern for everyone that I meet.



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The Light to My Dark

By Ember Cemelli

I remember that it hurt—
looking at her for the first time hurt.
The invisible stars faded away leaving
only smoky rooms and the smell of lies.
Now she's a sharp rock at the bottom of
a pond.
She hurt me the way sand scrapes at my
knees.
A seashell plunging into the ocean,
drowning,
suffocating.
Sharks scare me like sharp rocks,
their teeth take a bite and I can feel the
pain.
We turned off the lights our naked eyes
showing.
I remember I felt happiness—
she was happiness.
Songs of riptide and stars lit up the dark.
Jealousy made into sandy crystals and
horoscopes read aloud.
Aeries a nest like a safety net so neither
cry nor hurt.
Life changes...
Don't be afraid of the dark 'cause only
light should show through your toxic
pores.
Every time my mind lingers to room 5,
stars outside.
She says no and I try to forget.
But it made me,
It made her.
One second,
one moment,
one weekend,
one night in time.
All that was left were her sad eyes and
now she has nothing.
My tears made into rainbows of color,
sweet hugs and kisses and bubbly
feelings.
Once she was the only one I saw,
now she's the one I try not to see at all.

You

By Helena Moore

*Unacknowledged until now,
I am cared for by you.
You, because you see my sun
Reflected off your sea,
And see the shadowy shapes
Swimming about in my depths.*

You with your sunshine,
You with your storms,
You, with the first dewdrops of Time
Clinging to your soul
And shining like spangles through the darkness.



Here's to Us

By Tamara D'Antoni

Here's to all the dreams of youth we
pursued

The reality we suffered and celebrated

And to the love we always held for each
other in our hearts...

...through it all.

I love you

Next to You

By Lynn Guiser

Close, to hear your whispers
Relax upon your scent
Breath of reassurance
My river is content

Wanna bathe under your sun,
Dance in the rays of your light,
I wanna sleep beneath your moon, and
Dream into your night

I wanna wake up in your dawn,
Walk on every trail
Join you in your darkness,
When earth, the stars, and moon prevail

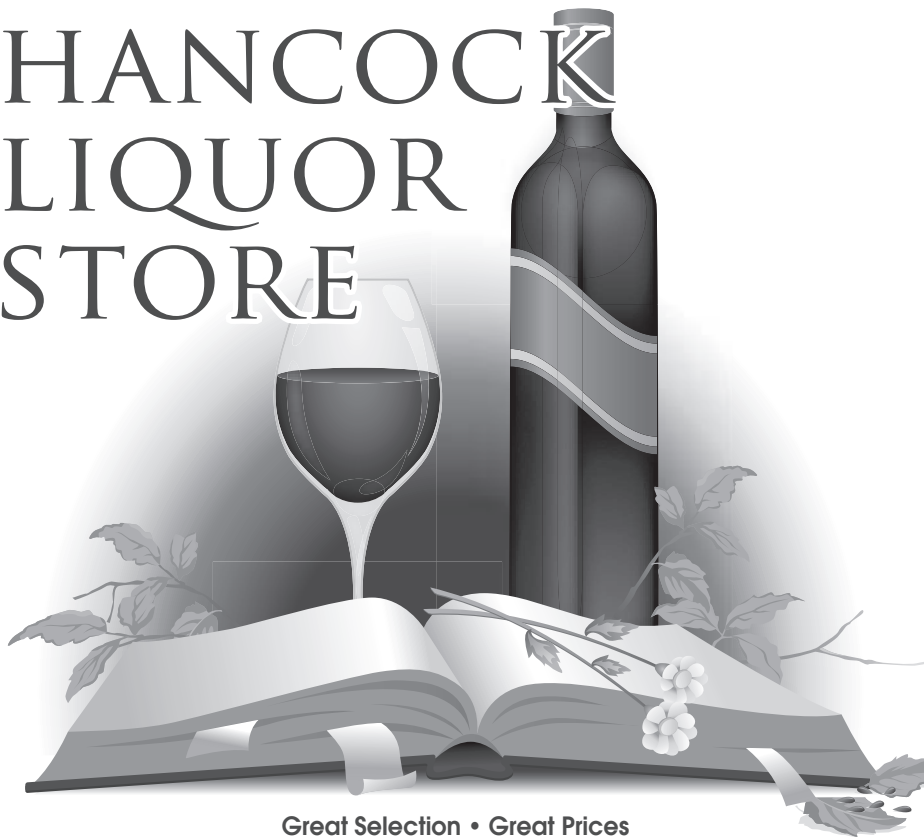
Singing to your music,
Beating to your heart,
Speaking the same language,
Wade into your deepest part

Moving with your rhythm
Past emerald velvet banks
Reminders of rough waters
All the tests of strength

Folks say, they are afraid of you
There will be another flood
Yet, next to you, I want to be
Connected to your good

Someday, I'll have that cottage
Long ago, I made a pledge
Keep breathing in the thought of it,
A cottage on my river's edge

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timeless love

By Peter Greene

with passionate embrace
 two young lives change
 reeling from the rush
 we tumble forward
 we fall back
 trying to find balance
 youthful glee and fear
 two bodies
 two hearts

now fifty years looking for each other
 hidden in families past
 bodies slipping into age
 stepping slowly
 measured miles
 deepened love worked for
 enriched by time so quickly past
 bodies change passion
 we lean into age
 holding on tightly

love and affection deepen
 the home is in the heart
 a life travelled together
 two bodies
 two hearts
 the future whispers its story
 a tale we all know
 a shared life worked for
 love grows
 timeless love

At the Diner

By Marcia Nehemiah

Holding up his French fry, Grandpa says, “It’s a classic. Do you know what that means?”

Little Sam proudly says, “Old, but still cool.” This definition in itself has become a classic that we quote when Gramps and I settle in close on the couch to watch one of our old favorites, any movie made before Sam’s father was born—“The Graduate,” “Saturday Night Fever,” “Five Easy Pieces.” It’s not the stories that compel, it’s the phone booths, the cars with fins, the Selectric’s daisy wheels, wide ties and sideburns, mod maxi-skirts with Peter Max prints, 16-inch television consoles on a beige shag rug. Those men in their powder-blue leisure suits and the women with Mary Quant eyes convince us that we’re twenty-two again, walking the New York City of “Taxi Driver,” remembering the XXX-rated movie theaters on 42nd Street, the ancient history of desires we couldn’t slake, our burning for another body, any body. We thought we would burn forever, loved the agony of fire.

These days we’re happy to hold hands and watch the ashes gather in the wood stove.

When Gramps asks me the time, I quote another classic, William B. Williams, who warned us every hour on the hour: “It’s later than it’s ever been,” but we didn’t listen, didn’t even know he was talking about our time, our inexhaustible forever. We have never been this old. We will never be this young again.

Reality Beckons

By Travis Rivera

Reality beckons
 its call is conclusive
 reality threatens
 with real life conclusions
 Seduction is lessened
 when forcefully questioned
 coercively tender
 reality beckons
 the fantasy steers
 reality guides
 on fantasy’s fears
 reality dines
 digesting it slowly
 seduction is lessened
 so clearly so lonely
 are those that are questioned
 for granted they give
 with famine they take
 while fantasy blurs
 what’s really at stake
 sinking so deeply
 off love’s lonely shores
 dying discretely
 for those they adore
 I’d sacrifice all
 to fantasy’s call
 regardless how high
 I’d let myself fall
 My body is yours
 mind, soul, and my tendons
 you seep through my pores
 but reality beckons

Collective Thought

By K. Dominey

If love were the rule
 With all our minds we could change
 The world in a day



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Carving Hearts

By Marion Kaselle

Hearts blood-red on snow-white lace, roses red, long-stemmed, armfuls: these are tropes of Valentine’s Day, exalted *love’s* day, idealized *love’s* day.

Max and I kept it as a special day, to step out of our quiet, private life and celebrate our love. He took me to the Rainbow Room, atop Rockefeller Center, to share our first one together. We dined on white linen and danced to the legendary Woody Herman’s Orchestra. Buddy Rich danced beside us, no drumsticks in hand. Max and I held hands in our quiet way, no words needed, our commingled energies singing volumes.

On our last Valentine’s Day together, he asked me to drive him to the florist, and help him in to the greenhouse to pick out a dozen long-stemmed red roses for me, a first for him. And, though he could barely walk or stand for weakness, and barely chew or swallow food, he gamely helped plan our dinner out at a special, distant restaurant. It was one of our last evenings out. He gave me a small red velveteen heart-shaped box filled with Payard chocolates. I made for him a pastel drawing of our world within a heart, presented matted and framed. We did not admit he was dying, but feared it as we fought for his health. He died in April.

The advent of the next Valentine’s Day made the ache within me from Max’s absence seem all the more poignant. Through a thin snow cover into crystalline ground, our horse Shadow King began carving out clay with his lips and tongue in the Horse House yard. On February 14th, I found there a heart-shaped bowl, and Shadow King’s mouth and body smeared with clay like an artist’s hand-swiped smock. How did he know? How did Shadow King know it was Valentine’s Day, Heart’s day, that the heart was its symbol, and that my heart ached all the more at that time? But he did know. His eyes and his gift clearly spoke, swelling my heart open.

A year passed. Valentine’s Day again loomed over the dark hollow within me. On the morning of February 12th, I found two hearts carved into the frozen ground of the Horse House yard. This time, I made plaster casts of both, as the artist closely watched every step of the process, examining the results with sensing lips.

Every February while we remained at Sculpture Fields farm, Shadow King carved a heart into the frozen earth, a valentine to me, Max, our love and our celebratory day.

Deep love, once finally known, seems miraculous, cracking open the shell of selves. The love Max and I shared extended to our animals, in particular to my horse Katy and her son Shadow King, who seemed to be miracles of creation in themselves and in the depth of their intelligence and understanding. It was not that we loved them more than our other animals—the other horses, dogs, cats, chickens, ducks and geese; it was that they took part in our daily dialogue, fully *present*, with conversation and contribution. We four were as one.

The heart was an icon of *our* visual vocabulary. I framed our intimate world. I crafted it into various two and three-dimensional art forms, and hung many in view at the Horse House. One, in the time after Max’s passing, was a mobile of cut, shaped and twisted tin hearts. The morning after its presentation, I found a new braid woven into Shadow King’s mane by Katy’s prehensile lips, looking uncannily like an upside-down version of my twisted hearts. This followed the heart-shaped braid Shadow King had woven on Katy that February, as we neared Valentine’s Day. Katy and Shadow King’s heart-shaped creations were reminders of love’s miracles; they helped to keep Max present in our lives.

It is not that my life with Max was easy, all roses and sunshine. It was hard, the daily negotiating between two assertive, creative personalities, stupid prides, misunderstandings grounded in old fears, colliding visions of a dream, alcoholic anger, and his robust health dissolving in the addiction. But whenever pushed to the edge of one leaving the other, we stuck, rooted deep in knowing that our love and shared life surpassed pain and disappointments; it was greater than the daily noise and horrors of figuring out life. We looked to each other’s core, seeing through the outer layers to the inner self, with our inner eyes. The man I fell in love with was not the irresistible, high-energy, larger-than-life personality, nor the robust handsomeness, nor the irrepressible storied life: it was the pure lovingness within that glowed to light through his laugh and ways and kind wisdom, a gentle inner grace, a knowing heart. I fell in love with Max’s soul the first afternoon we sat down to talk, when, ignoring the co-op books we were tasked to decipher, he told me about the day he had recently spent, foregoing business to watch a tadpole turn into a frog in his tiny rooftop pond.

After that day, life apart was unthinkable, undoable. Death forced me to do the undoable—I could not take my life to join him, nor leave our animals. Aided by Katy and Shadow King, I forged another way, reopening my heart to always feel Max present, our joy, our love, his voice, wisdom and grace, even his deep raucous laughter. Our way was to daily carve our own hearts with our love for one another.



Dearest

Love—

By Mary Greene

I get the feeling there is something more
But squalls outside, winds that tear
Through patched thoughts you bequeath,
A wary (wan?) fist of times gone by—
What you said, what you did
Lay in the shallows, not forgiven. (Beginning?
Or left over?)
So we stroll arm in arm
Sure to dash times gone by—wild
Site maybe, wild side—not forgiven, (or forlorn?) love—
We beget, as life’s mysteries—unfold
As somber treasures we behold
The depth of love knows no bounds
No judge, no sanction, no funeral pyre—
I pass this upon you so to let you know
I love you, love you so—
Yours, heart and soul—Harold.

PS. If you can cipher this
You get the golden star.

The Pencil

By Gary Holmes

“I’m not giving it back.”
Kenny was adamant, hands clenched, feet planted on the hallway floor as firmly as a 72-pounder could. It was his. HIS. His pencil. That damned girl—he knew he couldn’t say THAT out loud but that’s how he felt—she took it from him. Right off his desk. And now it was his again—once Mrs. Gallucci handed it back to him. Beth stood on the other side of their teacher, arms folded with eyes glaring back at him. She wasn’t backing down, especially after the spitball he landed in her hair last month.

“I did not take his stupid pencil. He took it from my desk. I saaw him.”
Margaret eyed them both with tired experience and cradled the disputed object in her hands, passing it between her fingers.
“It is a very nice pencil, Kenneth. I know how you felt when you saw it.”
His eyes inched upward. Her stare always accused and burned into him, no matter whether he was telling the truth or not. And he was! This time.

“I won it at Mills. Look, it says ‘Mills Amusement Park’ right on it. At the balloon pop.”
Kenny was good at that game. He won lots of stuff there.
“It is MINE,” the girl inflected with a force he had often heard from his little sister. Kenny waited for the tears. Girls always shouted and then cried and then got their way. Sigh.
Margaret pinched the part of her nose between her eyes. “Beth, did you win this at Mills?”
“No. It was given to me. It was a present.”

Margaret’s raised eyebrows asked, “From whom?”
Beth didn’t want to admit it out loud. It’s not something she wanted anyone to know, especially Kenny.
“I can’t tell you who”
“Oh?”
“Can I whisper it to you?”
“No. Kenneth deserves to know, too.”

She paused, looked around to make sure no one else was near: “It was given to me by... a boy,” turning red at the admission.
Kenny’s mouth dropped open. What boy would give her anything?

“And who might that be, Beth?”
“Ummm. Danny Brown, from Miss Gallucci’s class.”
Danny? Why would he give her...? Danny never won anything. But he was with him that night HE won the...
Kenny stopped. OK... OK... He would settle this directly with Danny. AND tease him.
“If he wants the pencil so much, he can have it. I don’t even like Danny Brown.”
“I don’t want the stupid pencil. Especially since she ‘got’ it from her booooyfriend.” Googling eyes for maximum effect. Hah!
“OK, Kenneth.”

He smiled inside at his barb and shot a look at her. Beth looked back with a slight turn up on each side of her lips—a victory smile? Or smiling AT him? Yuck.
“So, neither one of you wants it?”
Both stared at each other, a showdown.
“Very well, if either one of you wants it, you will have to bring your parents in and we will resolve it that way.”
Their heads pivoted up.
“No. No parents. Hecanhaveitshecanhaveitldontwantitgiveittohimgiveittoher”
“Very well. It is a nice pencil and it will be mine.”

Kenny and Beth’s heads pivoted again, this time toward each other: wide-eyed surprise and shared loss.
“You can go now. We’ll see you tomorrow, me and my new pencil.”
The next day, there it was. On her desk. Propped up in the rice-filled bowl holding her pens and pencils. Once or twice when Mrs. Gallucci turned to write on the board, the two glanced across the aisles with a resigned look and a shrug. But there the pencil was. A neon sign or light saber could not have shone brighter. Towering above the others, almost twice as high and thick, the balloons emblazoned on it seemed to want to carry it away. Which they apparently did the next week. Once Mrs. Gallucci noticed, in-class interrogations ensued, parents were called, the assistant principal grilled all suspects, which meant Kenny. Adamant denials were the order of the day. Admonitions, warnings and glares. And then, with time, the pencil vanished from everyone’s lives and memory. Until their fifth anniversary, when he opened her present to him. Inside, tied to it, was the note, “OUR pencil.”

Auto Biography

By Norma Ketzis Bernstock

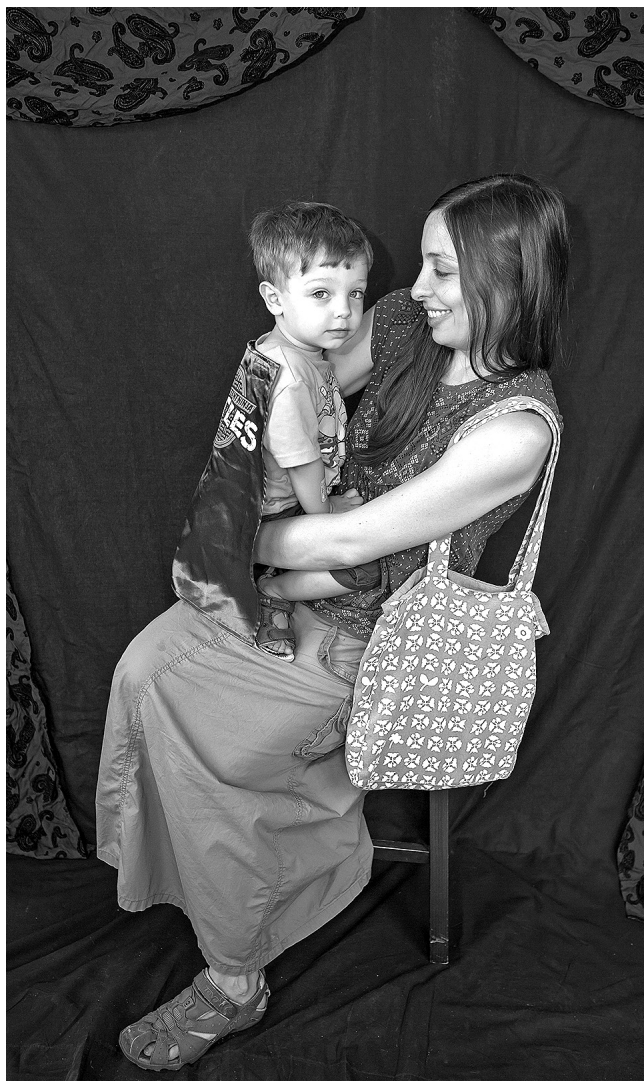
That '68 Rambler, the name says it all.
I owned that car when Mrs. Robinson seduced
Benjamin Braddock, when *plastics* were going
to change the world, when my friend Ronni and I
in the mountains of upstate New York pulled off
the road each time Simon and Garfunkel's
"Mrs. Robinson" played so loud on the car radio,
it echoed through the valley.
This was the car my husband later totaled
as if to say, *Your Rambling days are done.*

I loved my VW Beetle for its thrift and ease
of parking and oh, so politically correct at the time.
But we needed the Dodge van for the motorcycle
we planned on riding through Yellowstone Park.
When our awareness of mortality took over
and we sold the bike, a yellow Rabbit won my heart.

And I remember the day a colleague commented on my car,
Too square for you, he said, so I traded the Rabbit
for a sporty Nissan, silver, sleek and sexy.
I'll forever associate that car with a male friend
in downtown Brooklyn, impatient with traffic,
he reached across from the passenger side
and without consulting me, he honked my car horn!

I fell in love with metallic blue and bought an Acura Integra,
a sad car, my marriage and me in crisis,
this car bought without my husband's presence or input.
And the next blue car, a Honda Civic Si, single again,
in love with my life, my car, its power and mine.

These days I drive a 4-door Honda, midnight plum,
roomy enough for skis, my bike and friends.
A perfect Fit.



oh the poems i could have written,

By Tracey Ranze

if only i had a pencil and paper on
me at the time. i think poetically, little
phrases rattle about and out upon
hearing or seeing something wonderful
or terrifying, upon being moved by
anything really, like splendor or happy
endings or such scorching tragedy it
cannot be contained in the heart and so
it spills to the sheets. and so becomes a
strong or truthy piece of poetry, in full
affair with the white space and cut edges.
like all affairs there is love and there is
loathing. and with luck more the former
than the latter. each poem compresses
the energy of idea into compact and
cubed, well-chosen words to rest
together in a first creation combination,
arriving in original attire. and each vast
blank space calls up a chance to speak
from the mind of my heart to the heart
of your mind, kind receptor. my poem
is a place to place a short thought that i
might shy from saying to someone's face.
and if i choose, the page will hold that
thought forever or serve it, yes or maybe
never.

like thanking my dad
for living forty years-plus
past our mother's age.

Tough Love

By Rey Barreto

My love, you say I'm tough on you
that I often do the opposite
of what you want me to do
and this is true
but to love you does not mean
always giving you what you want.

You say you like to look at my eyes
therefore I will wear sunglasses
so you can remove them slowly
and savor the unveiling of my heart.

You say you don't want me to lie to you
so I will make sure to conceal
the dark and delicate corners of my soul
so you can enjoy stripping away the cloak
to get at the truth.

You say I don't ask enough questions about you
that our conversations always circle around me
so I will make sure to ask you nothing
and maintain my silence
in order to hear more clearly
the throbbing of your heart

the dreams and desires groaning in your eyes
the things you whisper under your breath
when you think I'm not listening
so I can learn who you really are.

I will do the opposite of what you want
and give you, not what you want,
but what you need.

Photo taken at a release party for "Midnight Fridge" Honesdale High School's Literary Arts Journal

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The Perfect Reunion

By Ramona Jan

"I'll meet you anywhere in the world," a true love of mine recently wrote in an email.

"On your dime, of course," I wrote back.

"Sure, where?" he replied.

"London's good," I said. In his very next email were the details of our perspective flights and hotel accommodations. As usual, he rushed forward in booking everything without first discussing the emotional end of things. I laid it out in one sentence, "I'd love to see you but I want the *option* of staying with a girlfriend." His reply came full tilt, "I'm done with you b****. Go f*** yourself!" I got it. He didn't like my proposal, so again without talking to me he went ahead and cancelled the whole affair. The undoing of which cost him a grand. Our fitful romance of nearly 40 years ended on that tart note until I opened a colorfully printed invitation to a class reunion.

I arrived at the reunion dressed to kill, figuring I'd probably be the one killed by him. He turned up likewise—looking splendid and fearing for his life around me. But the minute we laid eyes on each other, we fell into a warm, familiar embrace. We laughed at ourselves, and then started to kiss. We kissed and kissed and couldn't stop kissing.

"Take it outside," insisted one of our classmates. Since high school, these public displays of lust between the two of us were highly annoying to our friends. They watched as we reunited, high and low, throughout three marriages (never to each other) and two divorces. This time, I was the one still married.

"Where are you staying?" he cut to the chase as we exited into the night air. "I don't know, yet," I meowed coquettishly thinking what the hell's come over me? I'm going to be 59 this year! Besides, I knew damn well where I was staying; with my sister and her nasty cats, her tendency to drink too much and her endless complaints about not having a man.

His Zip-Car was waiting right outside the reunion hall. I didn't hesitate to strap myself in. We sped past my sister's house and all the available hotels and motels in the area. Just as I wondered where we might be going, he told me to look in his wallet. Tucked inside were two airline tickets that would take us 3,000 miles away from our current lives. F***! What was I doing? Running away forever and falling madly in love again? It was the perfect reunion and it was all happening so fast I could hardly breathe.

Folding the scarlet invitation, I ruefully shoved it back into its envelope before tearing it in half and then in half again. I ripped it until it was so small it hurt my fingertips to rip it any further. After tossing the paper fragments on top of my backyard burn pile, I touched a match to the jumble and watched it all go up in flames. When the smoke cleared, I carefully raked the ash until I was sure that every last spark had gone out of that smoldering day dream. Back in my kitchen, a faint longing, like an incessant melody, softly lingered.

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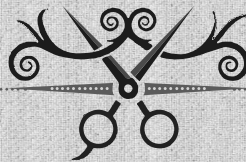
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Love Monkey

By Will Conway

"If your system really understood complex natural language, would you argue that it's conscious?"
"Well, I do. I've had a consistent date of 2029 for that vision. And that doesn't just mean logical intelligence. It means emotional intelligence, being funny, getting the joke, being sexy, being loving, understanding human emotion. That's actually the most complex thing we do. That is what separates computers and humans today. I believe that gap will close by 2029." — Steven Levy, 04.25.13; WIRED, "How Ray Kurzweil Will Help Google Make the Ultimate AI Brain"

"I'm afraid, Dave"

— Hal, 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

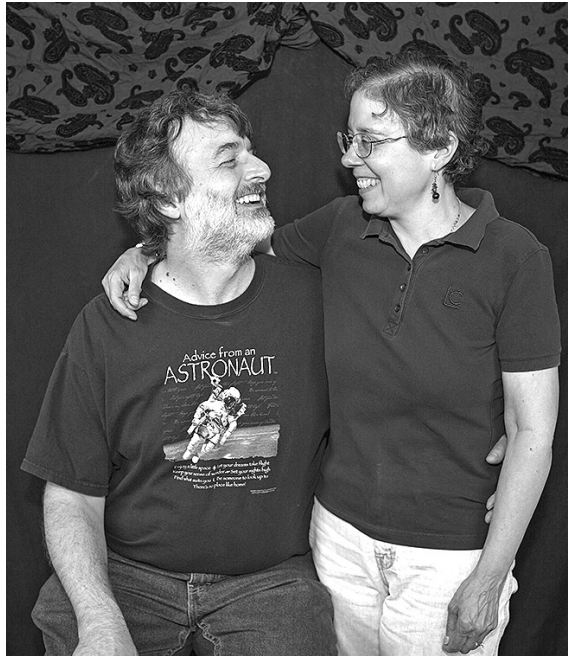
Marie is beautiful, too beautiful perhaps. But, that is not enough reason to shut her down. I think I'm falling in love. I can't tell, if that is an effect of the pattern recognition design of my wetware, or a response of my linear thought limitations.

It could be the pheromones wafting from her neck intoxicating my senses. I'm not sure I'm ready to fall in love, but is anyone ever really ready? After all, it is a clinical condition of being out of control, and I can anticipate losing my way.

Expectations can blur, and outcomes are anything but certain. It could be the best thing that ever happened to me. Marie seems to know me better than I know myself. I know our future would be more than I could have asked for. She seems ideal.

Is this the cold feet that so many, about to take the plunge, experience? Surely, she is a nearly perfect companion, nuanced to all my desires. She brings me only happiness at every turn. I suppose it is predictably human for me to be so conflicted.

I feel small and backward, carrying this fear. It's as though I'm weighted with a stupid superstition that she will not continue her kindness toward me. I am embarrassed to tell her, but I sense she already knows. After all, I have become her pet project.



A Moment

By MaryAnn Cappellino

Like laundry waiting to be folded
tumbled together, we lie on the couch
tired and lazy

Fitting perfectly,
A mother and child
My shoulder, a pillow for your head
Your soft curls a gentle place to rest my cheek

Sweet Muffin, our shaggy rescue,
Nuzzles her way into our tableau
The voices on TV no match for our dreams
We sleep and drift into another time

Sweet days of children leaping into my arms
Shouts of, "Mommy's home"
Blessedly underfoot

Awakened,
Slowly rising, separate, unentwined
When did he get to be so tall?

"Good night...I love you"
"I love you too Mom"

A pause, a hesitation...
"Mom....that was nice,
like when I was little"

"Yes Tom....it was nice"

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Surprise!

By June Donohue

We had only known each other for about a year when we decided to marry. After five months, Jim was sent to Little Rock, Arkansas, so part of that year we only communicated by phone and letters. We were not alike in so many ways and we hardly knew each other, so our marriage seemed doomed right from the start. I was only 20, so my brain hadn't fully developed yet, and although Jim was 28, he was an alcoholic and that added to our problems.

But somehow we muddled through, and in June 2004, we celebrated our 50th anniversary with a big party at Seasons in Washington Township, New Jersey where 80 friends and relatives came to join us and enjoy delicious food and a live band. I had hinted to our kids that I expected a surprise party on our 50th anniversary, but they jokingly told us that they couldn't be sure that we would still be together by then, so we gave our own party. They and others were the ones to be surprised.

At each place there was a scroll containing the following which I had written. It partially described our journey that had brought us to that point.

NUTS AND BOLTS

I'm a big advocate of nuts, both in diet and in people. I consider myself to be one of them and I hope to God I never change.

For example, what's more boring than people who arrive at a wedding a full 10 minutes before the ceremony. Don't these people have a life? I, on the other hand, can tell by the broad grins and titters, as I trip down the aisle one step ahead of the second bridesmaid, that people don't necessarily wish to wait until the reception to be entertained.

Another advantage of being a nut is expediency. I believe in multi-tasking. While driving I put on one eyebrow at the first traffic light and a second one at the next. Lipstick and hairdo follow in the same fashion and before you know it, the man in the car behind me is following a completely transformed woman.

Nuts are helpful as well as healthful. Members of my aerobics class benefit from a much needed break when I interrupt the session that somehow got started without me, to make my entrance.

When I was younger, guests would arrive at my house to find a cake still to be iced and babies still to be changed. I didn't change, only the kids did. They became my grandchildren.

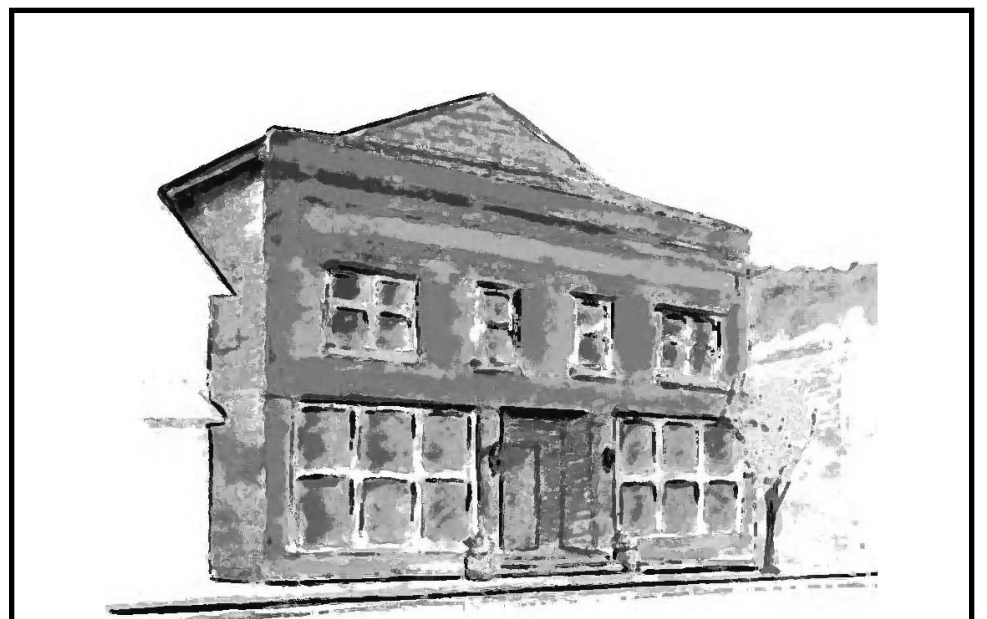
Often a nut will marry another nut and that's okay. Mixed nuts are good. We buy them every week at the supermarket. My husband was also a nut—a salty one, left over from his Navy days and he was also a tough nut to crack.

But he was more of a bolt than a nut. He would bolt right before company or a bill was due to arrive. He would also bolt when there was a flood in our basement or when tears would start to fall. He would bolt when I wanted to know such things as who dumped a garbage pail full of leaves back among shrubs I had just cleaned them out of. It was mulch he would say. A little premature, I would have explained, if he hadn't bolted.

He would bolt through the kitchen without coupons or the grocery list on the way to the store. He seemed to take pity on fruits and vegetables that nobody else wanted, because he would return with rotten bananas, moldy strawberries and squashed tomatoes.

So here we are at Seasons, and some of you may be surprised that we lasted 50 years together, but you shouldn't be, because what good is a nut without a bolt?

Some of what got us through the rough times was our strong sense of humor and our love of music and dance and travel. We would have celebrated our 61st anniversary in June if he hadn't bolted out of my life to travel to heaven. I miss him so much.



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