

Quaranzine



A virtual magazine from
the Wellfleet Public Library
celebrating the art, craft
and importance of the
written word in the
time of Covid 19

volume 1

summer 2020

WELLFLEET FIRE TOWER
ELEVATION 70 FT.

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August 15th, 2020

In setting out to publish our "Quaranzine", we decided that the library could play a role in the creation of an online literary journal. It is a mixture of literature, technology, and a "place" for community to come together - all the things that make the Wellfleet Library special. We assumed that many of you were writing during this time of isolation; of frustration; of social injustice. When we put out the call for pieces, we did not know what we would receive. We received a bounty. We hope you enjoy our first issue. There will most certainly be more issues to follow. One thing is clear - people have something to say.

*Jennifer Wertkin
Library Director*

Garden Tomatoes

*"You can't buy love
or garden tomatoes."
- my mother*

On the way back from the picnic that afternoon, we had made plans to stop in at Beth Israel Hospital where my older sister Lorena had just given birth to a baby girl. Francis had met my sister on several occasions already and was more than happy to tag along, despite the heat.

The closer to the hospital we got, the more anxious I felt. It was entirely possible my parents could be there, and never having met my boyfriend before, I didn't want any scenes. My mother, particularly, changed the subject every time – not often – I mentioned his name. . .

I learned later my sister's discharge date had been extended by a day as she was still hemorrhaging after giving birth and sure to be suffering from equilibrium issues (without air-conditioning at home), if they sent her there too soon.

My older sister has a weakness for flowers and chocolates, and I think we brought both; the zinnias, fresh from our garden, were wrapped in wet towels, carefully propped up at the picnic. Somehow they survived. The chocolate bar, I'm afraid, might have been a sorry mess.

Lorena was sitting up in bed. I kissed her on her deep brown round cheeks.

"Bobby, how nice to see you."

"Same here," I laughed.

Ken, her husband, at 6'5", was standing about a foot away, with a suppressed grin, and the little infant girl in his arms, rocking her gently back and forth.

"Oh, she's beautiful, you two."

"Bobby, you just missed ma and dad," Lorena called out. "They left here about an hour ago."

"Oh, really," I said, hesitant to say more. "We were at a picnic at Larz Anderson Park in Brookline just now. Sunday is the only day we all have off from work. We walked straight from there."

. .

The route we took back from the hospital was, if not cooler, at least shadier, as we headed down a back road and avoided hot, treeless Brookline Ave. I think we were both delighted to be returning home, which was probably the last, pleasant, carefree thing I remember, when suddenly I felt a little moisture running down from my left nostril. Almost as a reflex, I went to wipe it, only to discover, to my surprise, a slow, deep red smear. Not having any tissues with me, I called out to Francis, "Wait up. I can't believe it. I'm having a bloody nose."

By the time we arrived at the sidewalk outside my gate, I was feeling faint. Just as we walked through the open gate – I don't remember who noticed them first – a box of freshly uprooted but mature tomato plants, with root balls attached, ready for planting, was sitting on the right-hand wall just inside my fence. I couldn't imagine how they could have gotten there or who might have reached over to drop them off. Francis, leading the way, managed to get the doors unlocked, and I, once inside, washed my hands, grabbed some towels, and threw myself down on the bed.

It was about then that I put two and two together and came up with the only logical explanation. It must have been my father to have dropped them off. Margaret, my upstairs neighbor and our volunteer victory garden

administrator, would have left them in the garden. Even in the few seconds that it had taken me to notice them, they looked fully grown, covered in yellow blooms, and if it were indeed from whom I suspected, they hadn't even drooped on their long commute: my Uncle Mike, in Winchester, my second mother's brother. A year ago, last summer, while visiting, I clearly remembered him mentioning he would leave aside a few seedlings, next year, for me to grow in my Mission Hill plot. I lay there, ice pack pressed up against my forehead – the blood had finally congealed – chagrined that I hadn't been home.

Francis, assured now that I was okay, packed his bag and got ready to leave, shifting Big Foot, his knapsack, over his left shoulder. I watch him walk up the street, feet slightly splayed, 104 pounds of him, in jeans and sneakers, and a little aureole of curly hair. At the intersection, as if he knew I was still there, he turned and smiled and waved, as he followed along the victory garden fence and disappeared.

The following day, Monday, I called my mom to confirm my hunch, and I was right. Uncle Mike remembered that I was planning on a garden and had dug up the plants. They had dropped them off on the way home.

In the week that Francis was away, I dug holes for each of the six plants my uncle had given me.. I had to widen the plot to accommodate them all. As we found out, it didn't take them long to put out fruit: giant red tomatoes that cracked with juice just as I remembered them in my grandfather's garden when I was a boy. We fed and weeded them, and by August we had enough for tomato and mayonnaise sandwiches, or for salads. I called my uncle to tell him his transplants were a success. And it's true what they say: store-bought tomatoes just don't taste the same. They don't have the same color, the same richness of flavor, streams of juice, fresh from the garden, running down your arms.

But it is here with our little victory garden, and rented home, neighbors chatting over the fence, where we first put down roots. It would take my mother another thirty years to discover Francis's charm, the wisdom of her "truth". You can't buy love or garden tomatoes, it's true. You earn them.

Robert Cataldo, novelist and poet, is currently at work on a book of short stories. He lives in Providence with his partner of forty years.

Fomites

(or Fear in the time of Covid-19)

We used to fear the vectors
Like the rats that brought the
plague
Now we fear the fomites*
The reason is just the same
Fomites are not some biblical
desert tribe
But like an encounter
With some mysterious unknown
clan
Require distance and respect
It was in my medical school Micro
class

I was first indoctrinated to
Fear the fomite(s)
It became my second nature
To glove my hands before
Initiating contact
With all surfaces
In an infected patients' room
And use the dedicated
stethoscope
Hanging on the IV pole
Fomites --- they're everywhere
around us
Where pestilence can hide

No longer can you handshake
Because the hands skin layer
Can harbor virus hordes
It hides in all the handles
That you use to open doors
Or push the carts that move
things
Or lift the basket(s) and the pails
It has been shown that this virus
Can live on all surfaces, such as
(wood, plastic, steel, or rock)
And on those large and small
Containers and barriers
Designed to keep things clean
and apart
That are all around us
Especially in the stores
Even on those cardboard
packages

That appear magically at our
door

We used to fear the vectors
Like rats that brought the plague
Now we fear the fomites
The reasons just the same

**Fomite(s)---any inanimate
object that can transmit disease*

*Please
Glove and mask up when out
Keep your family and neighbors
safe
Let us save each other*

The Bible

The Bible used
As a prop embracing Hate
Is an image that I
Could not conceive
But there it was
In front of me
Promoted on TV
This was the
Ending to an anniversary
Celebration of the horror
From exactly 30 years ago
That was Tiananmen Square
Relived just moments before
When United States
Military troops attacked
Innocent civilians
On American soil in
The district known as DC
Movement of this incumbent
Towards a Military State
Forebodes an attempt
To highjack
Our freedoms
Our liberties
To make over our country
In the image of a
Totalitarian State
No photojournalist

Saw Lincoln cry
Today
Sitting on his pedestal
High above the fray
Tears streaming down
His stone face
Tears of rage
Tears of anger
Tears of grief
As he remembered
His proclamation
150 years ago
Nearly on this day

World will not

World will not
Defeat Covid-19
Without the development
Of an effective vaccine
But such a treatment is
In danger of being
Corrupted by the
Political Machines
Around the globe
Those resurgent "Me First"
Strongmen that care
Only for their own
Skin and monetary
Wealth enrichment
Regardless of the cost
In lives, livelihoods
Or the economic
Raping of the "emerging
Economies" that engenders
Eighty five percent of the
World's population
Rich and powerful nations
Are already prepaying
For and buying
Millions of doses
Stocks of the
Untested
Unproven
Vaccine candidates
Of which there are

Dozens in research
Protocols in laboratories
Of private companies
Throughout the world
This nationalistic versus
Globalistic approach to
World healthcare
Is certainly destined
To ultimately backfire
Because if only the
Rich and powerful
Will be inoculated
First!!
Then the poor(er)
“Essential” workers
Healthcare frontliners
The huddled masses
The proletariat
Will continue to bear
The brunt of the pandemic
Become infected,
Die!
Become vectors
To spread this pestilence
Far and wide
Further damaging the
Globe's ability to contain,
End this scourge
Too many world leaders
Do not understand
The interconnectedness
Of humanity and
The economy
That isolationism
Will only further
Global recession
Lead to tens of thousands

Of preventable deaths
Not just from The Virus
But also, from starvation,
Other pestilence
Resurgence of treatable
Conditions because of fear
To seek medical help
Lack of treatment facilities
Lack of infrastructure
Lack of protocols
Lack of protective devices
The incumbent in the
United States has fired
The first volley
In this VR war
By buying, hoarding
All manufactured Remdesivir
A Pyrrhic victory
At best, as this
Treatment only ameliorates
Symptoms and its price
Tag places it out of
Reach for all
But the extraordinarily
Wealthy
The implication is
That a “rich” nation
That develops an
Effective vaccine
Will buy and hoard
The entire supply
To first treat their elite,
Their military, the scions
Of commerce and industry
Before the most
Vulnerable of their
Populace!

This upside down
Logic will not slow
The international pandemic,

Will not
Protect the health
Of most citizens
Of the hoarding country
It will create increased
Global tensions
Raise the possibility
Of armed conflicts
Widen the economic
Gap between the enriched
And the impoverished

World will not
Survive unless we
Heed WHO
And the private
Foundations,
Consortia like CEPI*,
Covax**, and Gavi***
That have the goal of
Providing free
Covid-19 vaccines
To all citizens of this
Planet---Earth!

**Coalition for Epidemic*

Preparedness Innovations

***Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access
Facility*

****Gavi—the vaccine alliance*

*“None of us is safe until all of us
are safe.” UN Secretary General
António Guterres*

James Cornell: I have written poetry all my life but have only been consistent with it since retiring. I had two prior careers: first as a Professor of Biochemistry, second as an Intensive Care Physician. I struggle with my desire to express the wonder of the natural world in words but the realities of humankind's inhumanity, lack of empathy and lack of a plan for erasing global economic inequalities skews the direction of my poems.

Blockade

During the Revolution, British blockades
condemned the ships of Wellfleet
to rot at their moorings
in Duck Creek Harbor.
Today, a virus throttles our currency.
Railways discontinued turn back to the land
the tracks rendered obsolete
no longer carry me
on the search for sustenance
to Maple Street
the mills of erstwhile industry
the adjacent forest and main.
The castles of medicine magnates
stand alone in their newly barren fields
the parks littered with
contaminants, the inhabitants,
weight hanging from our faces,
cropdusting aerosols
of unknown provenance.
Empty promises of vague returns
an opportunist's sirens' call.
Collusion unconstitutional.
My converted Schuylkill-side
carriage house sings tonight
with foreign voices
telepathic screens a midnight ritual
swimming with sounds
the black pavement acoustic.
The rationing of food, hemp, paper.
Perhaps some spinning
analog ghost will allow
some solace atop the dunes.
I'll tell what is known of the Hollows
LeCount, Cahoon, Newcomb
my thoughts diffusing
like Marconi's radio
to a Portuguese peninsula.

John DeBruicker is a writer in Philadelphia. He is a former editor of The Pequod, the literary magazine of Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He currently works in healthcare advertising.

When Else Is There?

We could see the ghost pacing the potato field from the overpass. They had been there for years. No one questioned the phosphorescent being, not as far as we knew. The ghost's long hair dragged in the wind, shirt sleeves tattered. They had given up waving to passing cars and attempting to wrangle sidewalk pedestrians. Their midnight moans faltered sometime before we were born, the once-person's voice now mute. Our mothers told us they used to need earplugs to sleep, that the call cut through the night, thicker than cicadas in summer.

We understood ghosts marked a scene of violence, returning to the living world to make themselves known, to locate lost bodies, to beg closure. Our town ignored their presence. We didn't know who decided this route of action, how it had become unspoken law. Something bad happened in the field, and everyone over a certain age seemed to know about it, but no one cared. Except us.

Murder was our first guess. A betrayal bonding bones to spirit. Was it a child, a lover, a friend? An act of passion or malice? *But what if it's something more?* one of us asked. The field might be poisoned, the ghost alerting us to chemicals leaking into the ground water. Could they have been a pharmacist doling out abortifacients beneath the counter? The whistleblower at the factory from before the new safety regulations went into place. It made us think about conspiracies, what the town would want to hide.

Our parents never answered us when we asked. *Never speak of that in our house,* they'd say, eyes cast out the window, viewing something none of us could see. There were so many possibilities they want muted, ignored like so much else that had come before. Every earlier generation had its sin. Every decade stripped away another horror of the past. What had they left us to mop up, as they, themselves, had done for their parents?

The ghost nearly didn't look up as we stepped into the field, navigating tufted green potato foliage. The muddy, weed-choked scent drifted up from the Connecticut River, the moon full overhead. Our sneakers sank into the dirt, recent rains softening our steps. When we were close, we called to the ghost. They startled at our flashlight beams, the clatter of shovels and hoes tied to our backpacks, implements we hoped would aid in unearthing the ghost's message.

Really, now? they asked.

When else is there? we replied, opening our backpacks, unlacing every digging implement in our parents' tool sheds.

Corey Farrenkopf lives on Cape Cod with his wife, Gabrielle, and works as a librarian. He is the fiction editor for The Cape Cod Poetry Review. His work has been published in or is forthcoming from Catapult, Tiny Nightmares, Redivider, Hobart, Monkeybicycle, Volume 1 Brooklyn, Flash Fiction Online, Bourbon Penn, and elsewhere. To learn more, follow him on twitter @CoreyFarrenkopf or on the web at CoreyFarrenkopf.com

AND still in survival mode....

By: Judi Getch Brodman (jbrodman@verizon.net)

From my blog: <https://judigetchwriter2.blogspot.com/>

Will life ever return to normal I ask myself every day. I now understand how much we have taken for granted - the hugs from family and friends, visits with grandparents and the older generation, meeting friends for coffee and a chat, eating out, the kid's sports, even work... I miss all that and more.

My professional life has sometimes taken me on very solitary journeys - I built software and computer systems and then went on to manage a very large department, but even then, I couldn't socialize with my workers. And being a writer? Talk about a solitary profession. Saving grace is that I have my characters to talk with :-)

I read an editorial today in a writing magazine which expressed beautifully how the editor felt... that her emotional swings were "seismic" over things like no toilet paper in the store or photos of people flaunting being out and about disregarding medical advice. I know how she feels... going out for groceries is a big deal now - I take my mask and gloves, my list and enter the closed foreign environment. I clean the carriage handle and begin my adventure following the arrows, making sure to stop or turn if someone passes, hating the feel of the mask over my face and mouth fogging up my glasses, knowing I have to do this now. I make my shopping venture quick, precise, and once every two weeks if I can. I've taken to rationing how much news I watch, the stories of loved ones dying without the touch of a family member's hand; a new baby entering the world without Dad there to hold him/her moments after they begin their journey through life; Dad not being able to hug his wife and tell her how beautifully she did during the birth and how much he loves her; grandparents and soldiers being taken from us just because they are living in a place that their family thought was safe for them - the agony on the faces and in the voices of those family members; the protests that we all hope will bring real change not just die away... I agree that all of these stories are important and need to be told, but some days, I'm overwhelmed by the sheer volume of them all. And then, family and friends are going through their own tough days on top of all this and all I can do is support them long distance.

But in spite of all that I have said, I take solace in walks, in gardening, and of course in my writing and painting. It gives me joy to think that maybe when someone reads one of my books, it will take them away for a few hours from the pressures and sorrows of today's world. My paintings seem to reflect the solitude that we all feel these days...

But we know that these days will pass; eventually we'll laugh and love again... it's only a matter of time, but until then, stay safe, stay well, and keep writing.

Till,
Judi

A former software consultant turned writer, Judi's the author of two children's books (the Fiona the Firefly series); two mystery/romance novels - She's Not You and Dark Secrets; a time-travel mystery/romance - The Looking Glass Labyrinth; and a new Christmas romance - Broken Christmas Promise. Her books (published by Solstice Publishing) can all be found on Amazon.

Judi's travels have taken her all over the world, even to the Marshall Islands, and have filled her bookshelves and computer with photographs and journals that capture her experiences and feed her imagination as she writes. But her roots and true inspiration come from New England, in the mountains of Vermont and her childhood beaches of Wellfleet on Cape Cod.

For more information about Judi check her Website: <https://judigetcbrodman.wordpress.com/> or Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/judigetcbrodman>



© Painting by Judi Getch Brodman "Freedom"

NIGHT WALK, APRIL 2020

*Let everything happen to you,
beauty and terror.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

I shouldn't be doing this.

I'm near the end
of Hopper Street,
looking through
open curtains,
noticing
the way shadows fall
against the sides
of sofas and chairs.

There's a man
wearing a torn shirt
and slippers,
holding an empty glass;
a Tiffany lamp
is on the table,
its stained glass shade
shooting flames.
He's about to start life alone.

Across the way
orchids are blooming
in a hot-house window:
Dancing Lady
Yellow Pine
White Lilly.

I see a woman
in her kitchen,
don't know her;

there are dark lines
along the wall
and over the sink;
she's cleaning
her groceries,
one item at a time.

The Full Pink Moon
is beautiful.
Starbursts
from the streetlight
remind me of the gold
wildflowers of spring.

In the last window
I see a man on the edge
of his bed.
The covers are rumpled.
One pillow on the floor.
There's a woman
sitting at a dressing table;
she's wearing a red dress.

I know him.
His shoulders are bent,
he's struggling—
doesn't want to
tell her
what for weeks
he's been keeping to himself.

Barry Hellman

Barry Hellman is a clinical psychologist whose poems have appeared in literary journals, anthologies, broadsides, and The King of Newark published by Finishing Line Press. He's the founder of the Cape Cod Poetry Group, curates and hosts its Poetry & Music Series and group page on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/263857693775152/>, and leads workshops on the art, craft, and performance of poetry. He is the Outer Cape Representative for Mass Poetry in Boston, an advisor to Poetry Sunday on WHAI with Mindy Todd, and previously curated and hosted the Poets Corner Poetry & Music Series at the Cultural Center of Cape Cod in S. Yarmouth, designed and led poetry events at the Chapel in the Pines in Eastham, and founded and led a writers group at the Eastham Public Library.

The Chick

That winter Kirik and Evan somehow acquired a baby chicken. It was in fact too young to have been separated from its mother and sisters and brothers. It was often loose in the flat, not in its small box. When the children were at school, and I was working at my typewriter, it would come and sit on my bare feet—for warmth or comfort, I don't know which—a tiny pale golden piece of fluff, peeping softly.

One day the children were playing in the living room with their English friends, Stephen and Graham. Graham, at four the youngest of the gang, was sometimes teasingly called Gray Ham, though I had said very often that this hurt his feelings. I was at my typewriter that afternoon, and Daniel was in the kitchen. I heard a great outcry, and then silence. Daniel and I rushed to the living room to find the children gathered around the tiny chick, which had flopped over on its side and was twitching silently.

"Graham stepped on it," Stephen said accusingly.

"It wasn't my fault." Graham was close to tears.

Evan was red-faced and crying already. Kirik and Stephen were frozen in shock.

"I will fix him," said Daniel. "Take him to doctor. Right away." And he scooped the chick into a basket, hurried outside and took off on his bicycle, the basket balanced carefully on the handlebars.

Recriminations flowed along with the tears. I tried to comfort the children, and to lay the blame where it belonged—on me, for not keeping the chick in its box. We waited and waited. It grew dark. The boys' mother came to fetch them, but they wouldn't leave. She went home. We waited. I fixed supper, but they weren't much interested in eating. We waited.

At last we heard the bike crunching along the road, and then Daniel swept in with the basket in his arms. Kirik and Evan, Stephen and Graham gathered around, breathlessly. Daniel whisked off the lid with a grand gesture, and put the basket on the floor.

There, standing quite upright inside it, was a very large and very black, half-grown chick. The children looked astonished.

"I take him to doctor," Daniel said firmly. "Doctor give him injection. Make him big and strong and black."

The children looked dubiously at the chick, at each other, at me and then at Daniel. Could this possibly be the same chick, fully recovered? Daniel said it was, so it must be true. After all, wasn't Daniel the final authority, being very big and very strong and very black himself?

The children hugged Daniel in a big crunch, laughing and a little shrill, not wanting or daring to ask too many questions. Then each one of them patted the chick, with just a couple of fingers, very gently. Kirik got a dish of water, and Evan put down some corn meal in a saucer. Graham was immobile. We all sat on the floor in a circle and watched while the little chicken ate and drank, chirped and scratched and ate some more.

After Graham and Stephen had gone home, and Kirik and Evan were in bed, I went out to the kitchen. Daniel was ironing.

"Daniel, what happened? Where did you go?"

"Chicken be dead, quick quick... market all finish," he said, slipping the iron back and forth on his second uniform. "No small chicken. One woman with this. Two shillings."

And he smiled.

Aylette Jenness: This is an excerpt from my manuscript in progress, Sometime a Clear Light. It describes an incident from the time I lived in the city of Ibadan, Nigeria with my children and our wonderful helper, Daniel.

& it stoned me – a meditation – of a morning

beloved I am presence bright round me
seal your tube of light from ascended
masters flame called forth now in g-ds'
own name let it keep my temple free
& full of pure love sent from thee I am
calling forth violet fire to transmute
all desire keeping on in freedom's name
'til I am one with the violet flame

violet fire my way through
mourning dew splits intentions
vestigial flints spark stone
pinking the deepdown
dark center

open slit ignites
the sheer lacuna pinks
catch my breath & swallow whole
pushing down softbellied –
stonesunk periscope eyes comings

& goes through calcified tunnels of love with-
out navel connection, sui generis nourish-
ment nature abhors vacuum they say
whisper angels w/out purple pupiks

are they as cold & hard as I?
alabaster bearing
slit the difference
let the air out the other

end the cleft between
quixotic quadrants forget
beauty in symmetry
go their separate ways
in my face about it

gaseous gaffs slit stone
open freespace in the occupied
territory of my chest

quartz rose to the occasion
of my flaming slit

amid the ado
how pendulous
pit, slit, in lieu of a beat
boxing the loving cup
ears muffled in listening

crouch behind my double
chin up, slithead, lest we
fail to see

inviolable fire surround
sounds the stop drop
& roll stone's pinkening
underbelly up-
hill – canopy as smoke

blacken inner eye so
recently divested of pink
patch a pirate scab
crosshatched slits light in

at angles akimbo
transmute stony desire
downhill roll red
accrue attitudes left
& right fractured speed
bumps benight me

spark synapse pale
to notions of right
use of will powered by know
nothings – they come not
single spies to slit violet

fire of distant concatenating
constellations, images mirror
our slattern pinks –

space slit by stones
sunk in violet fire.

Skip the stone
& halve the slit!
Our carapace awaits.

earning begets yearning:
I am a being of violet fire
I am the purity g-ds desire.

Violet fire thou plum divine
blaze w/in slit heart of mine
thou art mercy's sweet residue
keep me always perfumed with you.

Silence, a Poe erasure/scramble

Listen to the Demon as s/he speaks
borders of quiet waters saffron;
hue sickly onwards, beneath
convulsive eye, motion pale
bed of solitude unto necks long
stretch toward to & fro, nod
heads everlasting cometh, slit.
Among murmur one rushing sigh
unto water of subterrene other.

Boundary their lofty realm – dark
boundary there, horrible to agitate.
Low the waves under forest wood
continually about; heaven tall
rock & thither crash sound
primeval with mighty drop slit.
Writhing summits lie at the roots,
slumber in flowers' strange noise –
poisonous forever overhead clouds roll
loud until the grey rush rustling
fiery cataract the wall of heaven slits
throughout neither quiet nor silence
by the horizon of forever, riven.

Fell the night, & having fallen,
blood stood tall in the morass
among my head violet fire fell
upon the slit sighs solemnity, & I
of desolation unto rain feel.

Moon thin mist arose crimson,
feel mine eyes all at once color
grey through huge lighted shores.
& grey was its front, ghastly
characters close came until I,
engraven might read through the slit morass.

Water could not but go back –
decipher violet fire read fuller,
& I upon the moon looked;
shone again the desolation
upon the characters I turned.

Stood the summit, I
looked upwards there hid
among tall actions discover I
might the stately form of violet fire be.

Wrapped up in shoulders indistinct
outlines was the old mantle slit of the deity;
moon uncovered the night of his features
& mist thought the figure lofty.
With wild care the brow, weary with longing,
furrowed the few eyes that read the sorrow
of fables wrote upon night's cheek –
sat solitude in the disgust of mankind.

Head out, lean upon the desolation.
Hand the man his slit head, the rock
down low into the unquiet trees look
higher at moon-tall heaven rustling
violet fire's crimson shelter.
Close actions lay within man
waned upon the night-trembled
solitude sat he.

Dreary attention turned from heaven –
the pale slit sighs listened out to
waters yellow with the violet fire legion.
And the covert I came close to lay
a murmur among them waned;
sat and observed my actions slit
in night solitude upon trembled rock
sat the man ghastly.

The morass waded in and dwelt
in the recess of violet fire down,
called unto the behemoth my name,
which fens heard loudly roared
with fearful foot upon the rock
sat the night slit beneath a trembled moon.

Then tumult-cursed gathered I
a tempest where the livid head shrieked
before foam tormented floods beat
heaven to the crumbled fire beds, violet –
& man came down the rock-rolled night
sat out its covert actions of solitude – slit –
that lay foundation for a trembled forest rolled
lightning waned before close observations
of my silence fell.

Silence cursed the sighs I grew,
became thunder-still, heaven;
wind ceased its totter up my pathway
of violet fire accursed, by motionless moon
died away slit the flash of clouds sunk
no longer heard murmur of level trees

remained the shadow to sigh no more.
Among them characters illimitable rock
ceaseless sounds the hung silence.

Fell hand from head, the wan eyes raised –
a voice listened in a faraway face
beheld the countenance of characters vast,
turned slit so that I no more stood
& shuddered silence hurriedly fled
through mine haste to rock the terror forth.

Fine bound melancholy now the magus tells:
volumes of sea in the iron-ruled heaven of slit earth,
over I say the glorious histories of the holy dim;
genii love trembled the tomb of my Demon,
heard by the shadowed cavity of my laugh
side by cursed side steadily dwelleth;
Demon faced sybils saying stories fell, slit
sat down in the face of love too wonderful,
to make an end in the tomb the Demon lay
downed fable which could not laugh
within silence I hold, holy –
at the feet of violet fire read with murmur.

Lauren Kalita

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Pandemic Cooking

In college I retired from cooking,
turned to TV dinners—franks and beans,
meatloaf with mashed potatoes and peas,
or turkey with cranberry sauce—
for my daughter and me.

My second husband did the shopping
and often the cooking, too.
Said it gave him a feeling of power.
“More power to you!” was my attitude.
I gladly ate his pot au feu.

Then I lived for thirteen years
with a man who only liked to eat
his own cooking. I had no complaint.
He made pasta with homemade pesto.
I opened the chardonnay.

My third husband likes restaurant takeout
like chicken saag from Khana Peena.
We used to keep DoorDash busy,
bringing us pizza, enchiladas,
mu shu pork, hot-and-sour soup.

But Covid-19 drove me to the kitchen,
my mother’s recipes in a drawer
with *The Fanny Farmer Cookbook*—
a gift from an optimistic boyfriend
for my birthday in 1984.

I cook pork tenderloin, salmon,
ham with pineapple, chicken soup
with carrots, celery and mushrooms,
penne with marinara sauce
and parmesan, all with the enthusiasm

of the newly converted.
I’ve never cooked so much in my life.
I toil earnestly at the range,
a sinner who’s finally repented.
At the altar of pot roast, will I be saved?

Lucille Lang Day is the author of six full-length poetry collections and four poetry chapbooks. Her seventh collection, Birds of San Pancho and Other Poems of Place, will appear from Blue Light Press in November 2020. She has also coedited two anthologies, Fire and Rain: Eco-poetry of California and Red Indian Road West: Native American Poetry from California, and published two children’s books and a memoir. Her many honors include the Blue Light Poetry Prize, two Josephine Miles/PEN Oakland Literary Awards, the Joseph Henry Jackson Award, and ten Pushcart Prize nominations. The founder and publisher of a small press, Scarlet Tanager Books, she lives in Oakland, California, with her husband, writer Richard Michael Levine. <https://lucillelangday.com>

My Grand Theory of Change

Over the years, I have often been called upon to present my Grand Theory of Change to many learned bodies. And now through the beneficence of this august organization, I can at last bring my philosophy of the ages before the general public so that this eminent readership may benefit from the wisdom of these notions that strike right to the core of human existence.

I mean, what the heck to do with all those pesky pennies, nickels, dimes, and yes, even quarters, that jumble around in my pocket in such an annoying manner. Those infernal disks clog up my pockets and spill out of the dish on my dresser and are just a general nuisance. Every day, it's the same bothersome story. I start out the day with nice clean, empty pockets, and by the time the sun sets, a transaction here, a purchase there, and my pockets are spilling over, and I am slogging around with enough ballast for an ocean liner.

Of course, when the day is done, I do what every right person does. I dispose of the pests into a cracked coffee cup in my sock drawer. And later that night, they jump right out and slide around in my drawer and cause general mayhem, and the really bratty ones wedge themselves into the crack between the side and the bottom of the drawer. And once I round them up and herd them back into the corral, then what I do with them? The bank won't take them, Coinstar charges a sacrilegious 9.5%. So, they just continue to multiply like their brethren, the single sock, until you feel the universe is spinning out of control. All I want to do is battle the incessant forces of entropy and bring chaos into harmony.

Change is the enemy. It's been years since I picked up a penny, and now even the hearty nickel and the genteel dime are fading into obscurity. Yes, I will occasionally stoop to pick up a dime, but look at any "Give a Penny – Take a Penny" dish in a convenience store and you will see many of those clunky nickels, even an occasional dime. Every one in that dish is a vote against the party of coins. Nobody wants these vermin.

This coin family is a dysfunctional crew anyway. What a ragtag bunch of misfits they are. If I ran the zoo, each coin would logically grow in value and in size. Put some logic to it, man, it looks like the design was the evil work of two drunks in an alley. First, we have the last born penny, with its dirty copper color and greasy feel. Next comes his bully brother, the nickel, with its sweaty silver hue and its clunky, weighty feel, an overgrown oaf of a teenager. Then,, the thin and elegant dime, just a wisp of a coin, but twice the value of its ponderous, hulking younger sib. Next the athletic quarter, at last a coin of nobility and substance, a cleaner feel than the younger nickel and with a clearer visage and a reassuring heft that brings joy to any change jingler. And then, the seldom-seen half, the much older estranged sib away at college, never really a part of the family. And last, the step-child one dollar piece, its parentage in question. Where did it come from? Is it really a member of the family or the product of some evil alien union. There they are and what a motley bunch.

But I am a man of action and I decided that I would fight back, put order where once there was disorder. And I had a plan.

My casual commute, yes, I do have a job, requires that I fill my gas tank once a week. My Sunday task, with Saturday's hectic errands behind me, became a leisurely drive to Petrol Gas, their motto, "Cheapest Gas (with a backwards 'S') in Town".

And the captain of the ship at Petrol Gas was a spry, elderly gent who did not seem happy with his lot. His manner was disgruntled, but polite. He was not a talker. He was the wiry type, but had a good head of hair, gunmetal grey with a wavy shank falling across his forehead, but despite his advanced age, he had no need of a comb-over. He wore a dark blue work shirt with " " Vern" "(Vern in quotes) emblazoned across his chest, and I saw no need to inform him that his shirt was grammatically incorrect.

“Vern” flew solo on weekends with his only companion the standard issue 13” black and white TV equipped with the traditional coat hanger aerial clothed in tin foil. I selected this emporium for its cheap prices, its self-service mode, and its redundant name. The following was my brilliant stroke on how to combat the Sorcerer’s Apprentice of change.

When pumping my gas, I always made sure that I was near, but not up to, an even dollar, say, for example, \$17.94. I carefully inched up to the high nineties and then I went to work. From the change bucket in the console of my car, I scooped out a generous handful of the accursed ovals, always spilling a few into the Bermuda Triangle of coins between the seat and the console, where worldwide, billions of dollars are stored. Then I carefully counted out my ninety-four cents, starting with the dodo of coins, the penny, and working my way up the family tree. Armed with the maximum number of coins, I strode into the captain’s quarters, and over the blare of the TV, I nobly slapped a twenty on the counter and announced, “and, I have the exact change” and then I dropped the rascals into a pile on the counter. No glare, but I should have read the message in his uncharacteristic disinterest in actually counting the coins as he dribbled them into their various sleeping compartments. But I was too enraptured by my one giant step for harmony to read this ominous message. And a few weeks into the game, he was ready for me and my world came crashing down.

I approached the holy dais with ninety-six cents and my trusty twenty. But he was locked and loaded. He took the change and forebodingly kept it cupped in one hand, while with his other he drew out from the register a single bill. He spoke for the first time, ever, “\$18.96 out of \$20.96. That’s two dollars change.” He handed me back the bill, “that’s one”, and then he handed me back my ninety-six cents, reached into the till, took out four pennies, and ceremoniously dropped them into my hand one by one. Quietly, he then delivered the knockout blow, “and that’s two. Have a nice day.” I had met my maker.

But I am not a man without a country. As I changed checkout lines for the third time at my local grocery store, the light bulb went off (which curiously means the same as the light bulb went on). An elderly lady in front of me in line had used a credit card to charge a twenty-three cent apple. The teenage cashier, “Luz”, said, “I’ve got a quarter, if you need it”, but she was sternly rebuffed. Still.....

So now I charge absolutely everything, a newspaper, a pencil, a stamp, everything. I get the look once in a while, but I am a man on a mission and I will not be denied. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is my Grand Theory of Change.

The Crown

This king of viruses wants to thank you
For hosting. We couldn't have survived
Without your help. We would like
To apologize for spoiling the party
And making you ill, but there's a price
For everything in this life
And that's the price you pay
For hosting. Next time
Don't cage the bats.
Don't feast on pangolin.
Meanwhile, gracias, danke, merci
For the chance to travel
All over the world.

Skipping Stones

Do you remember keeping your eyes open
for flat, oval rocks to pocket on walks to the pond?
Saving the best for last, you'd lean
to one side and flick your wrist
flinging the stones just off the water.

It isn't easy to defy gravity
and make a stone skip like a tern
and skim weightless
soaring without wings,
touching down like a plane
while you count until it sinks
and heads to rest anonymous
on the bottom.

Maybe that's what we're after
as we try to stay afloat,
skimming on the surface,
defying the odds
for the fleeting feeling of flight.

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The Sparrow

During the pandemic of 2020
my friend Kathy and I
sat apart on a bench in front of St. Mark's Church
at dusk.
We took off our masks for a few minutes
in order to drink to-go tequila drinks.
In front of us, a rose bush.
As we talked, a sparrow landed on the fence
protecting the flowers from the calamity of the city.
Without delay the sparrow shifted its tail and lifted its feathers
and pooped a tiny poo
that captured a sliver of the twilight
as it fell to the cobblestone.
And then the wee bird flew off.
I asked Kathy if she noticed the sparrow too.
She did. What joy!
We laughed at the funny split-second show the sparrow performed
and how proud the wee bird appeared to be
at its mundane achievement.
Drinks finished, we put on our masks
and walked away,
feeling somewhat uplifted and slightly tipsy.

July 2020

Coronavirus Love Life

John Morrissey

Ed Rush and George Cromarty wrote the folk classic Plastic Jesus in 1957 and recorded it in 1962 as the Gold Coast Singers. Since then countless riffs have been based on it. Many of these riffs were done in dorm rooms, on long car rides or between tokes on a pipe. Considering what's going on in the world today, there is plenty of material for inspiration. So, just for kicks & giggles, here's mine.

I don't care if she coughs or sneezes
Long as I've got my plastic Jesus
Sittin' on the bed post in my rooom.
Tall or short, bald or hairy
She could beee Typhoid Mary
Don't want to be kissing over Zooom.

Down on the bed we be sinnin'
Siri's up there blinkin' and grinnin'
Didn't know that we were streamin' Liiive.
Got a call from Doctor Fauci
Really good guy, but kind of grouchy
Wanted to know, did we wash our haaaands?

President tweeted, "hey there mister
Does she have a cute little sister?
Take 'em for a ride on Air Force Onnne."
Sorry mister T, these girls are hidin'
Hunkered down with a guy named Biden
Taking that ride in twenty twenty-onnne.

Our Commander in Chief has got the Blues
Could be bone spurs, maybe the news
Worry he'll go off the rails.
Culture war or shooting war
Needs diversion like before
Anything this man wouldn't dooo?

On Cape Cod we're all hunkered down
Wearing my mask, feel like a clown
I'm so lonesome I could cryyy.
Summer friends are headed our way
Bringing that virus, coming to stay
O my gosh, we're all goin' to diiiiie.

So, I don't care if she coughs or sneezes
Long as I've got my plastic Jesus
Sittin' on the bed post in my rooom.
Tall or short, bald or hairy
She could beee Typhoid Mary
Don't want to be kissing over Zooom.

Astral Projection

I slosh in my jaunty boots
No farfalle in Saskatoon
Milkweeds rosin the shanty
Milagro, Bonita, the moon

Mountainous clutter
A bumble bee sputters
dreamy molten clouds
Dance like sugar, forsythia shimmer

Where am I off to now?

(March 2020)

Notwithstanding

The clouds are still there.
Yesterday's garden blooms one more time.
Prayer flags, even now, flutter in the breeze.
Again, again, and again.

The world is turning.

(April 2020)

Some of Them Embrace It; Some of Them are Wearing Hats

Women I know are talking about coloring their hair
Silver and gray betraying what they had kept secret.

I tried it once, but lately, I have let it go.
Afterall, I haven't worn real pants since March.

(May 2020)

Note to Self

Everything goes by.

The pansies once
so cheerful in the spring air
droop in the hot sun.
The soft green moss has turned brown
and stains the yard with dark patches.

And I am autumn—who am I kidding—
Winter— myself, and I, too, am drooping
and not exactly brown,
but not as pink and lavender as I once was.

Still, my heart, my soul sparkles
like the girl I was, the girl I am inside.
Thank you for never leaving me.
Even unto the end

It will be your eyes that I see with
Your heart that beats in my chest
Your laugh that fills my face
and echoes in my voice.

(June 2020)

Things That Fly

Could there ever be a blue
bluer than the sky?
The osprey doesn't notice—
Like a fish doesn't know water.
I'm told
that it isn't even blue at all.

(July 2020)

OLD SOUTH

By Candace Perry

When I was a sophomore at Louisiana State University (LSU), I was invited to the Kappa Alpha Fraternity's annual formal ball, known as "Old South." The year was 1967; I was nineteen years old. A small Black boy, dressed in a white shirt with a black bowtie, climbed the curved staircase to my dormitory to hand deliver my invitation on a silver platter. He was the son of one of the cooks who worked in the fraternity house. Any unease I felt about the child's servitude was quelled by the envious oohs and ahhs from the freshmen girls in Louise Garig Hall, where I was the Resident Assistant. Kappa Alpha was one of the "best" fraternities at LSU, and attending Old South meant I would get to dress like a character out of *Gone with the Wind*, escorted by my date who would be dashing in a Confederate uniform. I accepted the invitation.

Last year, when Governor Bill Lee of Tennessee was confronted with a photo of himself in Confederate uniform at his Kappa Alpha Old South Ball in 1980, he apologized. "I never intentionally acted in an insensitive way, but with the benefit of hindsight, I can see that participating in that was insensitive and I've come to regret it," Mr. Lee said in a statement to *The Tennessean*, of Nashville, after the photo was discovered. No diligent journalist has to unearth the photo of me attending Old South. I have it among my memorabilia and etched into my memory. The girl I was sits smilingly in a hooped skirted gown the color of lime sherbet, my handsome Confederate at my side. The photo haunts me. I want to do more than apologize; I want to understand.

Growing up, my family always lived in the South, but my father, an Air Force pilot from Ohio, insisted we were not Southerners, even though my mother was from Meridian, Mississippi. We lived on or near bases in South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Texas and Virginia, but when we visited Mother's family in Meridian every summer, our cousins called us "the Yankees." As a child I would tell my cousins that they shouldn't use the n-word, and at the tender age of seven I scolded my grandfather, Big Daddy, for his use of the word. In my teen years, I consistently argued with my Mississippi relatives about racial equality. And yet, I accepted the invitation to Old South and pretended to be a Southern belle, costumed for a party to celebrate the "Lost Cause."

The Kappa Alphas began Old South balls in 1939, the year the movie of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, came to the big screen. The fraternity saw in the story, which glorified the horrors of slavery and depicted the nobility of the Southern cause, the perfect vehicle for paying tribute to their "spiritual founder," Robert E. Lee.

The charms of the book and the movie seduced me early on. Here were chivalry and passion, the great tragedy of a lost war fought for the sake of good manners and exquisite clothing. Slavery was barely a sidebar to the dramas of tempestuous Scarlett O'Hara, daring Rhett Butler, forlorn Ashley Wilkes, and patient Melanie, his wife. My girl cousin Nonnie and I played "Gone With the Wind" every summer my family visited hers. She was a year older than me, and I desperately wanted her to like me, so I never complained that she always took the role of Scarlett. I was happy to be Melanie, the nice one. Melanie was never cross with her slaves, like Scarlett. She was caring, kind, a role model for a young girl.

Years later, when I costumed for the Old South Ball, I took pains not to look like Scarlett, rather to emulate Melanie, who embodied all that was good in Southern womanhood. Played in the movie by Olivia de Havilland, she was the counterpoint to Vivien Leigh's flirtatious and conniving Scarlett. Instead of Scarlett's famous Southern belle sunhats, meant to shade delicate, pale complexions, Melanie wore simple bonnets, tied at the chin. For Old South, I fashioned a bonnet from a little girl's hat I bought at a Baton Rouge department store. The dress I rented was less expensive than the more popular off-the-shoulder, bosom revealing gowns which imitated Scarlett's wardrobe. I went to Old South as a Lady.

I should have known better. Melanie was gracious, loving, and a slave owner. She took for granted the life of ease her station and her whiteness gave her. As an adult I learned that my mother's family had been slave owners, back before they lost everything through the family's penchant for gambling. When my aunt sent me the ownership records, evidencing the family's earlier prosperity, I was ashamed to have such ancestors.

A dear friend, whose ancestors had been enslaved, agreed that she and I should write a book about being the descendants of slaves and slave owners. But after only a few sessions of working with the material, my friend decided that digging into her family's history of enslavement was too painful. She didn't want to live in that time, not even in imagination.

It was an insult in 1967 to pretend that what happened one hundred years earlier was costume-party fun. If we are to move forward we have to take the moonlight and magnolias out of the hundreds of years when we enslaved people to create a good life for some and terror for others. I want to do more than apologize; I want to help topple the monuments to a way of life that should be gone with the wind.

*Candace Perry is a writer of plays, essays and short stories.
More information at www.candaceperryplaywright.info.*



Candace and date at Old South, 1967

What's in our future?

Will I ever again hug or kiss a friend?
Will I ever again have friends for dinner?
Will I ever again go to a movie or play?
Will I ever again enter a public restroom?

Will I ever see fans cheering a team?
See packs of kids playing together?
Will I ever walk freely into the library,
a store, museum, winery. restaurant?

Forget foreign travel. Will I go anyplace
where I can't make it back in a day?
I remember hotels, bars, room service.
I remember live music and concerts.

Will I ever again throw a party for holidays,
for birthdays, just for fun and friends?
Will I ever again walk a crowded sidewalk?
Will I ever again see faces in public?

I don't want to catch the virus or pass
it to anyone else. I wear a mask, gloves
wash my hands fifty times daily, but still
I remember gone pleasures and events.

I used to give readings to live audiences.
I used to meet with a poetry group in my
own livingroom. I never realized how rich
was my life before, before, before.....

a touch, a meeting, a trip, a sneeze
could kill me. Now I never leave home.

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Outline

The merest touch of breeze or rain or passerby
in early June sets pitch pines off in green-gold
pollen spasms: old efficiencies of hazardous
excess, their clouds stain everything they touch,
and they touch everything: windowsills and dishpans,
every kind of tree or leaf; roofs and gutters, walkways,
paintings, sheets—all greened and gilded: spring's profligate
last fling before the summer's rest. Plenty of pitch pines
get defiled along the way. It's profane. But only as
the green-gold library inside Siena's Duomo is.

Tonight, I conjure up a late spring day.

The deck out back, suspended in the trees, is plush
with pollen fall, and through the slider's mirror I can almost see
the mark we might have made when, young, we touched
by chance, flashed like tinder, and left the shape
of tangled, wingless angels edged in gold and green.

Guy Rotella

Sheltering At Home, Day 22

Wash Your Hands by Wilderness Sarchild

One day you had lunch in a crowded cafe with a friend,
then walked hand-in-hand on the narrow bike path.
The next day all restaurants were ordered to close. You
were warned to stay at least 10 feet away from other people.

One of the most important things you can do right now: wash your hands

Every Thursday, for the past eight years
you picked up your grandchildren at school
until the schools closed and now you're only
allowed to see them on a computer screen.

Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands

Before: you shopped in well stocked grocery stores;
at home you quickly put the items away.
Now: home delivery—so much out of stock. Wipe everything
down with disinfectant before you bring it into the house.

Wash hands while you sing "Happy Birthday To You" all the way through two times

Before: You used 2-ply ultra-soft toilet paper and sometimes flushable
wipes that actually shouldn't be flushed, even though you sometimes did.
Now: You're running out of toilet paper, none in store. You use
napkins because your tissues and paper towels are also running low.

Rub palms together with soap and warm water

Before: You worked two jobs to make ends meet, no time to take a dance
class or attend a concert, and you couldn't have afforded it anyway.
Now: You are unemployed, and have all the time in the world to take
free dance classes or attend free concerts on-line, but you're too worried.

Rub soap on backs of fingers, thumbs, finger tips (both hands)

Psychologists say it takes 4 hugs a day to survive, 8 to maintain, 12 to grow.
They say we can live without hugs, but it's like dying a little every day.
Now it takes 50 likes on each of your FaceBook posts to survive, four calls
from people in your church to maintain, and a long daily walk to grow.

If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol

Wilderness Sarchild is an award winning poet and playwright. She is the author of a full length poetry collection, Old Women Talking, published by Passager Books, and the co-author of Wrinkles, the Musical, a play about women and aging. She has won awards for her poetry and play writing from Veterans for Peace, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Chicago's Side Project Theatre Company, and the Joe Gouveia WOMR National Poetry competition, judged by Marge Piercy. She was selected as a Poet of the Week on Poetry Superhighway. Her poems have been published in numerous anthologies and literary journals. Wilderness is also an expressive arts psychotherapist and grandmother of six. She is a social justice activist and is a consultant/teacher of skills in conflict resolution, consensus decision making, mediation, meeting facilitation, and empowered aging. Wilderness lives in a cottage in the woods in Brewster with her husband, poet Chuck Madansky. They are surrounded by wild neighbors that include turkeys, coyote, fox, deer, squirrels, giant snapping turtles, and birds.

Dark and Stormy Nights/ Sunshiny Days

by John Shuman- two year (and counting) Wellfleet resident

It was a dark and stormy night. It was March 15, 2020. The Ides of March. I was on the Mass Turnpike heading east- Northampton to Cape Cod. Beware the Mass Turnpike heading east on the Ides of March. I had completed a weekend in Western Mass. I was to stay with good friends and have dinner with mutual friends. I am an actor looking for work- always looking. At the dinner was to be a neighbor of my friends- a professional theatre director and producer I wanted to meet. I also had an interview about a possible play project in the Berkshires. My overnight hosts spoke of some illness going around that may or may not be contagious. "We're okay", they said. "Come". But my dinner hosts sent a message that maybe it wasn't a good idea to gather during these times and they canceled. It was the first sign to me that life wasn't normal. The play project producer said he was interested in my solo piece but wasn't sure he was going to have a season at all. On parting I moved to shake his hand and instead we did an elbow bump. I hadn't seen one of those since watching a football team transmitting good luck to each other before going on the field. I'm thinking: are we really stopping our lives for an illness that is affecting less than 1% of the country? It appears to be so.

So I headed off on the turnpike in my two-month old car. Somewhere near Sturbridge I drove into a huge pothole or over some big object. "Wow", I thought. "I just ducked a big one". But the "tire-is-in trouble" light flashed on and I realized I hadn't ducked anything. By good fortune (the only bit of it that weekend) I immediately passed an on-pike police station and I sputtered in. I anxiously told the desk clerk my story. "Oh sure", he responded. "I'll call the pike repair guy- I know he's nearby- he'll be right over". Before I could complete one hysterical phone call there he was. He filled the damaged tire and put on the spare. And he didn't charge for the work. I guess if you have a flat on the turnpike it's their responsibility. "Have that tire checked when you get home", he advised. "And oh- don't go over 50 mph on the spare." "Sure", I replied not knowing how difficult that would be. It was a VERY long, dark and stormy drive to Wellfleet and the next day the tire was replaced.

But nothing else seems to have been replaced. Life has indeed stopped. Possibilities of summer theatre work evaporated. I have worked every summer of my life- now there wasn't any work to be had and no talk of future employment. Friends wouldn't see me- strangers rush by me. I live alone- now it's really living alone.

So I've been reading, hiking, watching theatre and film online and Zooming- although Zooming I'd say at a Grade Z level.

And then the temperatures rose. Suddenly I was able to swim in ponds and in the ocean. I've always loved the transition into spring and then summer. This year spring/summer feels like a Red Cross nurse has arrived and done her duty. I read books on an inflatable boat in the middle of a hidden pond. I float, drift with the wind and read in my library boat...It's the only library open this summer. And I hiked to the tip of Great Island- Jeremy Point. I wasn't even sure that was possible. It is in low tide. I think of it as my 2020 Mt. Everest expedition.

Yet it's still dark and stormy- sometimes stormier.

But there's also light, warmth, luscious greenery.

Keeping spirits up is the requirement. On the trek to Jeremy Point I mediated about all this. It's something I always seem to do during hikes. And I thought of an important song in my life that I needed to access. It was used in an off-broadway play I did. My character- a young boy- is abandoned by his family and the audience

wonders at play's end what is going to happen to him. A woman turns on a radio and gets me to dance with her as she sings and the lights fade.

The song:

I can see clearly now the rain has gone

I can see all obstacles in my way

Gone are the dark clouds that had me down

It's gonna be a bright- bright

Sunshiny Day.

Amen

3/26

FaceTime, Late March

How are you doing?

do you know anyone who has it

We're fine. A lot to do.

can't concentrate on anything

So far so good.

someone is bound to get it

No one we know.

who will be the first

Really—you're soaping fruit and vegetables?

what am I not doing to save myself

What do you hear from her?

I never called

She must be okay or I'd have heard

all alone like that

what would I do

At least we can get outside

for now

Enjoy some spring weather

even now

You getting outside?

especially now

Do you have what you need?

what does that even mean

Let's talk again soon

it's better than nothing

Wish I could hug you

how can I get used to this

I'm already getting used to this

Love you

Love you

bye-bye....



WELLFLEET PUBLIC LIBRARY



A note on the cover art-

This print of a woodcut of the Wellfleet Fire Tower was donated to the library by the artist, but it was never signed.

We're hoping to identify the artist so we can thank them for their gift, and give them proper credit for reusing their work.

If you are the artist, or know who it is, please contact us at wpl@wellfleet-ma.gov. Many thanks!