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Chernobyl Aftermath

(Visited in 2006)

Joyce Carr Stedelbauer

Addition

9/11/01 scenes scorch the walls near the ticket booth.
Flames leap to the ceiling and sear the soul.

Why here?

Why this jarring juxtaposition of attack and accident
on a dingy side street in Kiev, Ukraine?

The addition of 9/11 to 4/86 is strange math indeed.
Continue adding 76 villages, 90 K, 30 years
adding loss and distance and time to thousands of lives.
An incalculable sum total of grief, red as rosy apples
spilling down the museum staircase from painted trees,
branches angled in tortured anguish.

Subtraction

Under a great bird crafted of netting, wings of black
and white spread wide in flight like doves of peace
fleeing from ravenous vultures hungry for blood.
We sink to small stools before a video screen---
a helicopter speaker blaring orders to evacuate
almost drowned out by the screams of terrified children
being bundled into buses to be hurried away for “two-three days.”
In the center stands an altar from a local church
surrounded by the hauntingly beautiful young faces
subtracted from life.

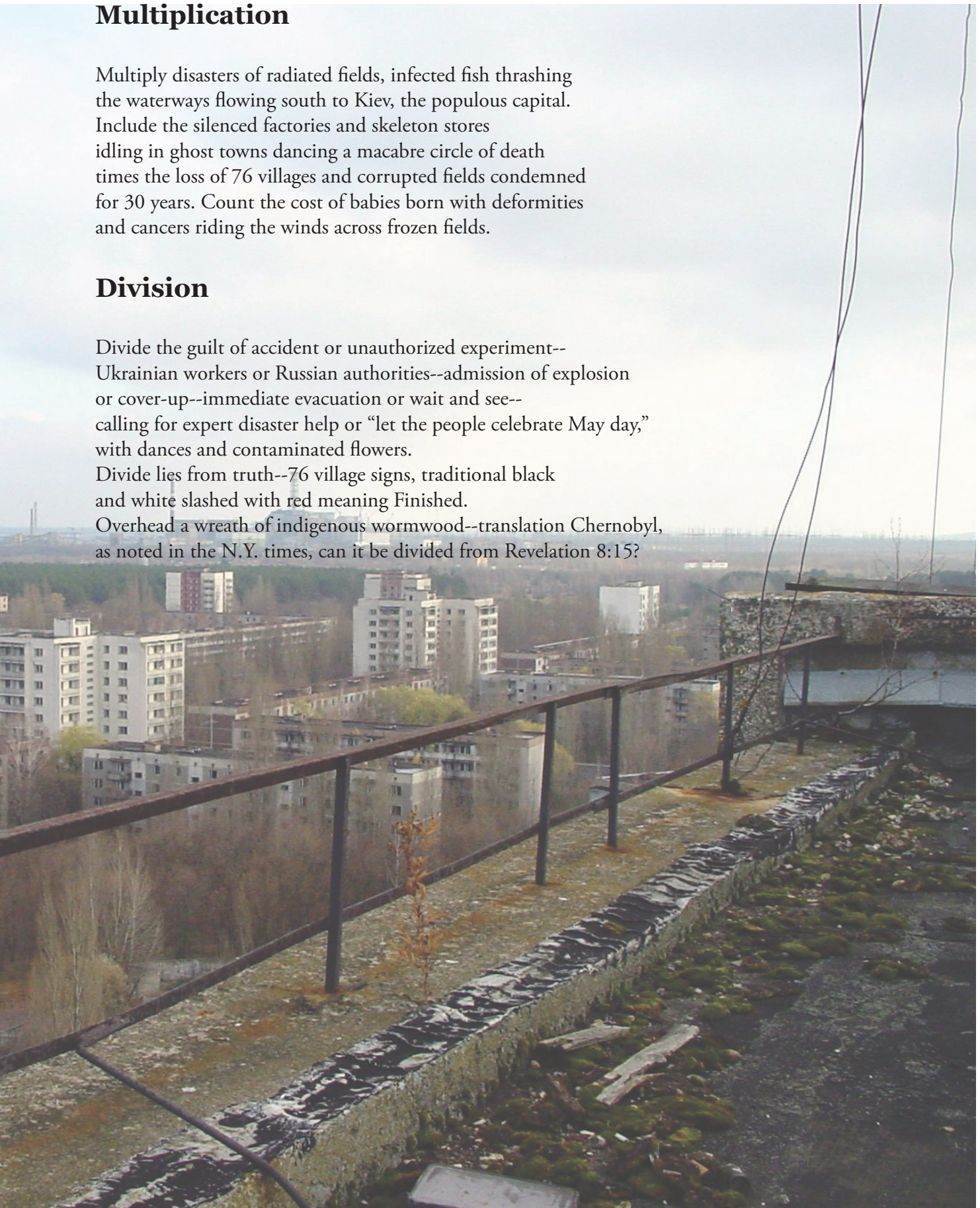


Multiplication

Multiply disasters of radiated fields, infected fish thrashing the waterways flowing south to Kiev, the populous capital. Include the silenced factories and skeleton stores idling in ghost towns dancing a macabre circle of death times the loss of 76 villages and corrupted fields condemned for 30 years. Count the cost of babies born with deformities and cancers riding the winds across frozen fields.

Division

Divide the guilt of accident or unauthorized experiment--Ukrainian workers or Russian authorities--admission of explosion or cover-up--immediate evacuation or wait and see--calling for expert disaster help or "let the people celebrate May day," with dances and contaminated flowers. Divide lies from truth--76 village signs, traditional black and white slashed with red meaning Finished. Overhead a wreath of indigenous wormwood--translation Chernobyl, as noted in the N.Y. times, can it be divided from Revelation 8:15?



Family

Kathleen P. Decker, MD

it would be easier
if it were a drink
called smoothie
already sounds better

imagine
a hunk of pineapple stepchild
splash of angry sibling
for spice

cousins softer than sibs
traces of parents
like peanuts for fortitude

spouse-berries
bursting with flavor
and arguments

kind aunts and uncles
honey that sweetens
hefty bran elders for substance

impertinent kiwi-kids
for fun

all blended harmoniously
as families rarely do

Which Way?

James L. Garrett

I went to a lecture one morning,
part of a series of lectures about decisions.
The speaker this day either ended
his thoughts with anyway or began
new thoughts with anyway.
After a number of anyways,
I began pondering what he meant
by anyway, anyway.

Which way was I to go?
Was he telling me to choose a way?
If I went away,
would I walk this way, or that?
I could go to San Jose,
if I knew the way.
Or I could go to San Francisco
with a flower in my hair.

I could go the way that takes me to Key Largo,
just like Bogey and McCall.
I could go west,
but I'm not a young man anymore.
Maybe I could go north to Alaska
which might be a tad too cold,
or to Hell, but that might be a tad too hot,
even for me.

We could go separate ways,
or I could go my way; you yours.
I could go the wrong way,
but I don't know which way is wrong.
I could go all the way
but I've been there and back.
Maybe I'll go down wicked ways;
now that might be fun.

I could go the hard way,
but that would be too much work.
I could go the long way home;
that sounds too much like the hard way.
I could go the way it is,
but is it?

I might go the way back
if I knew the way it is.
I could go one way or another,
but how do I choose?
What if there is no other way?
We could have a parting of the ways
if there is no other way.
Maybe I'll try going the middle way.
Or I could go every which way,
but might I be stretching myself too thin?

Time Travel With Me...

Back to 1950

Sharon Canfield Dorsey

I was seven.

A stamp was 7 cents.

Haircuts were 30 cents.

Gas was 25 cents a gallon.

Hotels charged \$2 a night.

Harry S. Truman was president.

The minimum wage was under \$1.

A one-day stay in the hospital was \$15.

All About Eve won the Academy award.

The electric typewriter had just been invented.

The highest paid baseball players earned \$50,000 a year.

Few people believed fast food restaurants would catch on.

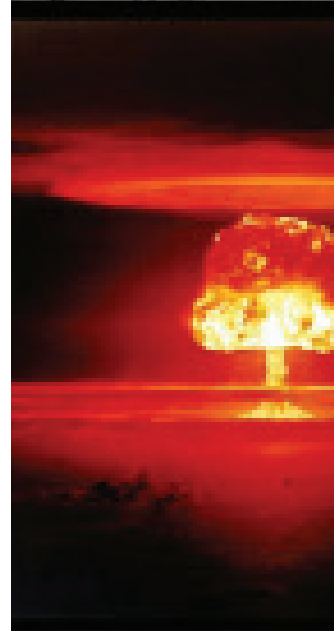
Parents forbade their teenagers to listen to that evil rock 'n roll.

Married women who worked outside the home were soundly criticized.

Elvis Presley's "gyrating" on *The Ed Sullivan Show* was declared scandalous.

People worried the new Volkswagen would open the door to too many foreign businesses.

Our world now changes so quickly...where will we be in 2050??







Ancestry.com...who knows? Who wants to know? Should we uncover our past? Uncover our relatives? We may prefer to leave them in the past. My mother loved history but she shunned following her roots, "There might be a horse thief back there!" she'd exclaim.

My husband always thought that would be the fun part. To uncover some ol' codger from the past who dared to skirt the law or perchance was hanged in defeat.

I feel that to learn one's ancestors' names but not their thoughts, their dreams or their deeds is to lose the richness of the fabric of their lives. On the other hand, it could be revealing to see how our DNA guides our life choices and makes us wonder if we are really in control...or does it control us?

Off I went to college to major in home economics. A natural choice I thought since I loved to cook and I made my own clothes. We were assigned to take a special chemistry class for home ec. students. It was there that the head of the chemistry department suggested I major in chemistry. So who's thick headed?

Back to genetics: so I majored in chemistry in college and taught chemistry only to learn in recent years that my father's oldest brother majored in chemistry. Wow! I never knew.

Now, my grandson, who is biologically my third cousin who was adopted by my adopted daughter (got that?) is majoring in...you guessed it...chemistry. I ask you, "Is it in the genes?"

To Spit or not to Spit, that is the Question

Peggy Newcomb

When I was in the eighth grade, my school gave all the eighth-grade students an aptitude test. My results said I'd be good in chemistry. I didn't even know what chemistry was back then. Remember: the only TV we had was Howdy Doody and Gabby Hayes...no PBS's *Nature* or Neil de Grasse Tyson. A few years later I did well in chemistry, but by this time I'd forgotten all about the aptitude test.

Maybe we are best left to wonder. I can always dream that some of my genes can be traced back to Robert Boyle, Henry Cavendish or Madam Curie instead of a horse thief. To spit or not to spit...that is the question!

Life's Transitions

Elizabethan Sonnet

Edward W. Lull

My first career, a deep sea Navy man
whose yearn for travel was indeed fulfilled.
But aging showed the need for a new plan;
then business was my new career to build.

Although the change was fine for family life,
transitions were quite difficult to make.
The edges were smoothed by my loving wife,
who helped me find good paths that I could take.

Retirement was the greatest change of all.
I took up writing and made many friends.
I thought my spirits would not ever fall.
My partner died; my joyful story ends.

The love she had so very much to give
will be with me as long as I shall live.








Photograph RebeccaDay, Sliabh Liag Donegal

Choosing Ireland

“May the road rise up to meet you...”

Reyn Kinzey



I'm a typical American-British mutt. With my DNA, I could easily choose any home country to call my motherland: England, Wales, Ireland. I could probably scare up a Scottish ancestor if I needed to. My name is Welsh; my mother's family, English. I felt free to choose.

But there was never any choice for me. It was always Ireland. I wasn't raised Irish-American – far from it. I grew up in the American South, Virginia to be specific, and I didn't go to a Saint Patrick's Day parade until I was an adult. As children, we were told that our great-grandmother was Irish, perhaps from around Cork, or maybe that was what her papers said because she came to America on a ship from Cork. Turns out, she was actually born in the great Irish city of Philadelphia. She lies there still in the cathedral

cemetery, with her mother's people, the O'Connor's,

although in fact she was a Connolly. Lots of sad, Irish stories about my great-grandmother. But she died long before I was born and never factored in my decision.

No, if I chose Ireland as a second, spiritual home, it was probably because of my great uncle Frank O'Brien, who, despite his name, really wasn't all that Irish – he was raised in Virginia, too, although his father did work on the railroad – typical Irish-American occupation. Frank technically wasn't even blood; he was my great aunt's husband, but he was a grandfather to my brother and me. More importantly, he was a tenor, and he and my grandmother taught me all the Irish songs before I was old enough to even remember.

The first time I went back to Ireland was 1972. I was twenty-one. Ireland was still old Ireland: white-washed cottages, thatched roofs, turf fires. Ireland was still very Catholic and still desperately poor. I refused to stay in a B and B in central Dublin because they wanted almost three dollars for a night. I went up the Belfast Road and found a place for two dollars. I drank in a bar where they still remembered Paddy Kavanaugh, “a drunk and a nuisance,” but also the poet of “The Hunger.”

After that it was out on the open road with a backpacking tent. Fuchsia grew like a weed in the ditches, and it rained every day. That's Ireland. They'll tell you: “If you want to know the weather, turn around. If you can see the hill behind you, it means it's going to rain. If you can't see the hill, it's already raining.”

So, I often had rain falling on my shoes. Still, back then, the rules were that if I stuck out my thumb,

the next passing car had to stop, take me to the next town, and stand the first round in the pub. What was not to like?

I traveled west, not south along the tourist way: Waterford, Wexford, the Ring of Kerry, the Rock of Cashal, where Saint Patrick converted the pagan kings of Ireland, a thoroughly commendable path that I would follow on later trips.

But this time, it was the West, where many still spoke Irish: the Dingle peninsula, from which Saint Brendan the Navigator sailed to America, long before the Spanish or the English; the Burren with its moon-like, rocky landscape and stone megalithic tombs from the 4th millennium BC— Ireland is older than I could have imagined.

From my hotel I could see the spectacular Cliff of Moher and the Aran Islands (the backpacking tent was fine, but sometimes I just had to get out of the rain). The hotel keeper told me, “If you wake up and can see the Cliffs, go see them before it starts raining.”

I took a ferry out to the Aran Islands on a storm swept day that made even the sailors seasick. In the old days, Aran fishermen didn’t learn to swim: if they came out of their currachs, swimming would only prolong the hypothermia that had already doomed them the moment they met the waves. Their bodies would wash ashore near Galway. The mainlanders would bury them but keep the distinctive knits of their sweaters so that their families could identify the bodies when spring allowed them to make the crossing.

Many on the islands only spoke Irish. The English never occupied Ireland, because it’s just sand and rock – dogs, like cats, sleeping on rock fences – nothing worth stealing there, only an ancient culture worth preserving. School children from Dublin would come in the summers to reclaim their language and learn the old ways.

Ballintubber Abbey, near Saint Patrick’s own well, is nestled below Crough Patrick, where pilgrims still make the ascent, the truly faithful barefoot and on their knees.

In County Clare, Yeats’ Tower still stands. Poetry makes nothing happen, but it endures.

Sligo was Yeats’ home, and he lies there now in Drumcliffe, in the cemetery of the Protestant Church of Saint Columba (some irony in that name: Saint Columba helped convert the Irish to the Catholic faith). Leaving Sligo, I hitched a ride with a truck driver who recited the entire poem of “Under Ben Bulbin” for me as he drove past the mountain: “gyres run on...”

On to the north, to Donegal: I drank in a pub that seated only four, and the men’s room was upstairs in the owner’s home.

County Donegal, for me, is the true north: the sea, the cliffs of Sliabh Liag, even more spectacular than the Cliff of Moher.

According to tradition, Donegal is also the gateway to Purgatory, whose patron saint is Saint Patrick.

Perhaps it’s true. For all its beauty, Donegal gives way to the six northern counties that are still no longer free, despite the efforts of Bobby Sands and the Hunger Strikers.

Derry, a town I could love so well. I would return later in life, with my rugby club, to play a tournament there. We walked the walls that encircle the city. The host club, City of Derry, entertained us in the Guild Hall, the traditional seat of Protestant power. The mayor had a full bar in her office (Catholic or Protestant, it’s still Ireland). Behind a





Photograph Rebecca Day - The Burren, Ireland

curtain, she also had an altar to the Hunger Strikers. I gasped. “I’m Sein Fein,” she said. I felt at home.

But the first time I passed through the north I hitch-hiked a ride with a reporter from Dublin. The IRA checkpoints waved us through, but the English were more testy: they pointed machine guns at us. He showed his journalism credentials and claimed that I was his cameraman. The Irish are natural actors. I was just glad they didn’t hand me a camera and ask me to operate it.

And so, back to Dublin: the main post office

that still bears scars from the bombardment that ended the Easter Rising, but prepared Ireland for independence; Saint Stephen’s Green; Trinity College, where Catholics weren’t permitted; Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, still Protestant, despite it all.

But also, the Dublin of Grafton Street, pubs, snug places like McDaid’s and Donahue’s. A fiddler touches a bow and plays a traditional reel, and all else falls away. Music is the best resistance. Frank and grandmother taught me that before I could even remember.

Climate Change

James L. Garrett

Smoking caterpillars in the fall
no one seems aware
no one comes to call
for fear of persecution
or not caring at all.

Being outside his mind
and counting down the time
as the storms and wildfires rage,
leaving nothing behind to find,
leaving not one of any kind.

The wind sweeps across the land,
no one listening to the band.
Environmental refugees stand
on nothing but shifting sand
trying to find their habitat.

No one to guide them,
no island in the storm
and Sieago and everyone
on Tuvalu – just two meters
above sea level –
slowly disappearing into the sea.

Few are willing to be
the ones to help the climate refugee.
Seeing no climate change in view –
anti-immigrant nationalists –
what else is new?





Rebirth

Cindy L. Freeman

Awakening from winter sleep,
the earth shouts with joy.
Burgeoning buds shed their cloaks,
heaving proud chests toward a beckoning sun.

On the feeder, arrogant cardinals “twit, twit, twit”
their harbinging, anticipating, bullying.
Canada geese appear on the pond,
refueling for the final leg of their snowbird journey.

Fat Albert, our resident overweight squirrel,
never stops trying to steal seed
meant for feathered neighbors,
though sufficiently rotund without it.

Daffodils in golden finery
with matching Easter bonnets,
stand at attention, trumpeting sun
to dispel the early spring chill.

Basking in the marvel of rebirth,
I tremble at the presence of Holiness.



Start Small

I was speaking with a dear friend a while back—let’s call her Tian—recounting a conversation I had with another dear friend of mine. I’ll call him Michael.

I told Tian that Michael had asked his spiritual mentor to help him with something. The mentor took off his glasses, laid them on the desk, and asked, “What is it?”

Michael replied, “I want to learn how to love.” The mentor gazed at Michael, sat up in his chair, and said, “So do I.”

I, too, wanted to learn how to love, truly love others. Tian and I spoke at length about love. She is a counselor, healer, life coach, author, and student of life. She is also filled with love, herself. You can see it in her tender smile, and hear it in her kind, compassionate voice. You know you are loved the minute you engage with her.

Lynn Underwood

Not many people are like that.

Tian gave me the most simple challenge: “If you want to learn how to love, start small,” she began.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

She unwrapped the answer for me like a Christmas present. “Fall ... in love ... with a plant,” she said. Pick a plant in your house or maybe one at a nursery that is not in good shape. Start giving it love.”

“Okay, but how?”

“Learn about the plant. Research it online. See under what conditions it grows best. Then nurture it, feed it, water it, fertilize it. Love it!”

She had my rapt attention, but I was skeptical.

“Then maybe touch it. Stroke its leaves and branches. Talk to it gently and lovingly. Play music for it ... the soft mellow kind. Be its friend.”

"Its friend?" I asked. "How can I be a plant's friend?"

"Well, what would you do with a human friend? Find out her name. Speak to her like you care about her welfare. Tell her what's been going on in your life. Share your sorrows, your hopes, your dreams, your aspirations. Confide your secrets. Tell your new friend the secrets you've been afraid to voice to a human."

"Hmm."

"Trust your new friend with your secrets. Trust is, after all, at the core of a true friendship."

I smiled, thinking of some of those secrets. The money my mother was saving for a trip to Hawaii that I stole from her piggy bank when I was ten; the time in the third grade when I pulled Margaret's pigtails and blamed it on Jaime Gonzalez; the time in the fifth grade when I was caught throwing rocks into the Gem Grocery Store across from Smith Elementary School. I lied to the principal about that one.

"I have a lot of secrets," I said to Tian.

"We all do, Lynn. Talking about them to a trusted friend is part of letting go of our guilt. Those things are over and done ... but only if we let them go. Telling someone helps us drop them."

I paused to let that sink in.

"Tian, suppose I do all those things and the plant still dies. Does that mean I failed to love it enough?" Tian couldn't know that I was no longer thinking about plants. Rather my thoughts had floated to another place, as they had many times lately. My precious wife, Glenda, had passed away only weeks before. No matter how hard I tried to adjust to my new lonely "normal," the harsh reality would hit me like a punch to the gut. I loved her with all my heart, and life was empty without her. I wondered if I had loved her enough, if I had loved her the way she needed to be loved.

As if she had read my mind, Tian said, "Sometimes plants die ... just like sometimes people die even when we care for them and feel deeply about them. The point in this exercise is for you to learn to love ... not for you to be the plant's savior. That's just an ancillary benefit. Remember, it's about you learning to love."

She paused, then added, "Think of everything the plant needs to flourish then provide it. But more than that, give it parts of yourself: your friendship, your time, your consideration, your compassion. Show the plant that you care about its needs."

I had been taking notes when she said, "You're treating this like a class, Lynn. Put your pen and notes away and just ask yourself what you need. Then do the same for the plant." The exercise still seemed a little silly, but I was willing to give it a shot.

"Just focus your attention on the plant, Lynn. Give it a name. Introduce yourself. Make it a significant part of your life. You're a writer. Maybe name it after your

favorite author or artist or musician. Make it a real friend. Just know that what you are doing for your new friend is teaching you how to love on a small scale. Each day ramp it up with higher and higher order. You'll see that it works."

So, here's what I did. I picked a hydrangea in poor condition because I had neglected it. I named her Harriet and introduced myself. Then I had a talk with Harriet.

"Harriet, I am so sorry I neglected you. I'll make it up to you. You're gonna be okay," I told her.

I brought Harriet outside during the warmer part of the day, pruned all the dead leaves carefully, trimmed some of the dry branches, and cleaned up the pot. I tilled the soil a bit and mixed some Miracle Gro in a watering can, measuring carefully. I watered and fertilized her. I stroked her leaves that were still supple and green and gently spoke to her, checking my surroundings to be sure no one saw me talking to a plant. I let her enjoy the sunshine during the day.

Just focus your attention on the plant, Lynn. Give it a name. Introduce yourself. Make it a significant part of your life. You're a writer.

At five o'clock I brought Harriet inside and set her at the French door with exposure to the afternoon sun. It was near a Bluetooth player, so I asked her if she would like to hear some music. I played the Ed Sheeran station with soft, gentle sounds at a moderate level. Finally, I wrapped her pot in a red ribbon with a great big bow.

My next step was to research Hydrangeas as Tian had instructed. I learned all about them from several different websites until I was the neighborhood expert in Hydrangeas.

I thought Harriet looked lonely and wondered if she needed a friend more like her but wasn't sure if my attention to another plant might make her jealous. I gave myself to her instead. I would be her friend. After all, she was now my beloved.

After about two weeks, I began to see signs of regrowth with tiny green sprouts coming out on the stems that I thought had died. I praised Harriet's fortitude and again apologized for my lapse in her care.

I made Harriet my whole world whenever I was home. I centered my activities around her. If I had any reading or writing to do, I would do it near her so I could gaze at her often and admire her emerging beauty and stamina. She was gorgeous. I told her so. I praised her strength and continued to care for her, often more than I did my own personal appearance.

One morning, I wondered what Harriet might think of my scraggly, unshaven face, but I always smiled at her. Then I went to the shower to wash and shave.

I placed Harriet outside on the guardrail bench overlooking the lush, green trees that define my backyard. I wanted her to have a pretty view. When I would bring her inside she had the best room in the house. I placed her in the sunroom near some beautiful artwork of happy children playing in a garden. The sunroom is painted lime green and has lots of windows with natural light. There are many other healthy plants there, but she is the only one with a ribbon and bow.

When I came home after errands, I would tell her stories of things that happened. I even shared jokes. I laughed near her. I laughed with her.

After a month or so, Tian called to talk about what I had learned from the assignment. I had forgotten the assignment. It had begun to feel natural to love this emerging plant. I had fallen in love with Harriet!

Tian and I talked about what I had done over the past month and whether Harriet was responding to my attention.

I proudly announced that Harriet had grown into a beautiful plant with lush green foliage and vibrant white blooms.

"So, you passed the first test," Tian said. I could tell she was smiling.

"The first test?" I asked. "You mean there's more?"

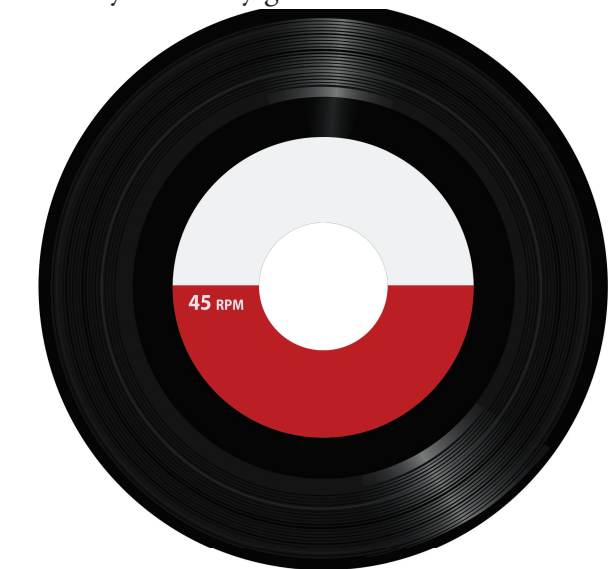
"So much more; but it's important to start small. Now you know something about how to love, in a small way, at least. Imagine what would happen if you applied those simple principles of love to the people in your life."

That's when I knew Glenda and her love were still with me every day and my love was with her; our love had not ended with her physical death. Now I understood that Glenda's death had nothing to do with how much I loved her. In turn, I was still filled with all the love she had showered on me. I always would be.

Older Than Dirt

A friend sent me a quiz the other day with a list of sixteen things designed to determine whether I am older than dirt. The list carried me on a nostalgic stroll down memory lane.

PARTYLINE TELEPHONES provided entertainment for the whole community when I was a teenager. There are no secrets in a small town, so if you wanted to get news out or spread a rumor, you just called one person and by the next day, it was everywhere. My girlfriend and I talked on the



phone for hours every night, so it wasn't unusual for someone to pop in and request to use the phone. It was all very congenial.

Sharon Canfield Dorsey

NEWSREELS BEFORE THE MOVIE gave us a big-screen taste of the world outside our little town – a world of wars, sports, and glamorous movie stars in fur coats. That was before fur became a dirty word. I was in my early teens when our first movie theater opened. The debut movie was *Love Me Tender*, with Elvis Presley. I saw it four times and fell madly in love with The King. Still am!



WASHTUB WRINGERS were a big step up for my mom. Previously, she would wash clothes in a round metal tub and wring everything out by hand. Then, she'd carry the clothes up the rock steps behind our house and hang them on the line, even in winter.

I still remember her sitting by our pot-bellied stove at night, rubbing Vaseline into her red, chapped hands. The wringer washer was a miracle!

HOME MILK DELIVERY IN GLASS BOTTLES was common in nearby towns. But our milk was delivered every morning in a metal bucket, foaming fresh and warm from my Aunt Kaye's cows. It became many things – butter that we churned in a wooden jar and sometimes, cottage cheese, aged in cheesecloth. Today's cottage cheese bears no resemblance to the small, tangy curds that were left after the milk soured and the whey was drained away.

CANDY CIGARETTES were one of my favorite treats as a child. We'd pretend to smoke them, then crunch the thin, sweet sticks. We didn't know, of course, that real cigarettes were lethal. We would make the box last a long time because candy treats were rare, only for special occasions like birthdays and Christmas. In December, I wrote a story for my family newsletter about my first shopping adventure at the age of eight. I talked about buying penny candy for my little brother and me with my left-over Christmas shopping money – things like candy cigarettes, coconut slices, taffy, fruit chews and Dubble Bubble Gum. On Christmas morning, when I opened my present from my very clever son-in-law, I discovered a box, full of all those treats. He had tracked down every candy I had mentioned, even the Dubble Bubble Gum!

TABLE-SIDE JUKEBOXES were usually found in dark, smoky, bar-like places. One exception was the small, family-run hot dog and hamburger joint across from my high school. We had an hour for lunch each day so my friends and I would dash across the street to grab a booth and order our chile/cheese dogs before the rush. We'd pool our left-over nickels and fight over which songs to choose on the jukebox, usually Elvis or the Everly Brothers.

In my senior year, during the last week of school, a bunch of us decided to skip school one afternoon and hang out there. This was a first for me. The jukebox was blaring, people were dancing, when, suddenly, the front door opened and the principal was standing there, scowling. He lined us up and marched us back across the quiet, neighborhood street to his office, closed the door and said, "I

considered letting you get by with a skip afternoon. I know it's your last week of school. But then, I thought about what a bad example that would set for the other students, especially since Cookie is student body president; Sharon, you're president of the Honor Society, and the rest of you are cheerleaders." Heads down, duly shamed, we crept back to class. Word spread quickly, and by day's end, we were all heroes. I always wondered if Principal Hinkle realized his shaming plan had back-fired.

I continued to go down the oldness test list...pea-shooters; Howdy Doody; 45 RPM records; 78 RPM records; 33 1/3 hi-fi records (all of which I still hoard in my record cabinet); metal ice trays with levers; blue flashbulbs; cork pop guns; Studebakers; and TV test patterns that appeared after the last show ended at 11p.m. and were followed by the national anthem blaring against a fluttering flag background. The test pattern stayed on the screen until morning.

I remembered everything on the list. I also recalled a recent question from my young granddaughter. We were taking votes on a place for a quick lunch. "Gramma, what was your favorite fast food place when you were my age?" She was shocked when I told her we had no such thing when I was growing up. We ate at home, whatever Mom chose to cook, and if we didn't like it, we had the option of sitting at the table until we did.

Oh my! I really am older than dirt.



Dad's Diaries

Cindy L. Freeman

My dad kept diaries;
I never knew why.
I read some entries after his death.
Dates, facts, weather reports.
Devoid of emotion, commentary, critique--
no words to reveal who he was or how he felt.
I would like to have known the man inside.

His journals were like him,
afraid to go there;
too much pain, too broken,
furiously paddling to stay afloat.
Existing on the surface
where sunlight masked his darkness.

I wish I understood his anger and sadness.
It's too late.
I berate myself for not pressing harder.
But the wall was solid, unmovable, nonporous.
I wonder why he kept those diaries,
a mystery for all time.
Maybe, like me, he just had to write.



Dr. Kathleen P. Decker

Kathleen P. Decker is a poet, physician, and musician. She is a past president of the National League of American Pen Women, Seattle Branch, and has been Vice President of the Poetry Society of Virginia, Eastern Region since 2019. Dr. Decker has been a member of the Williamsburg Poetry Guild since 2018, and Haiku Society of America since 1996. She has authored several books of poetry including, *Russian Reverie*, *Whispers on Paper*, and *Essence of Woman*, in addition to multiple poems published in national and international haiku publications.

<https://KathleenDeckerAuthor.com>



Sharon Canfield Dorsey

Sharon is an award-winning poet and author. She has written four children's books, a memoir, two books of poetry, an anthology, and a travel memoir. *Writing is like breathing for me – necessary for survival. It's the first thing I want to do in the morning and the last thing I want to do at night. I have been honored to have my work published in many anthologies and prestigious magazines like The Pen Woman, the publication of the National League of American Pen Women, alongside the work of such icons as Maya Angelou.* <https://www.sharoncanfielddorsey.com>



Cindy L. Freeman, Editor of The Journal

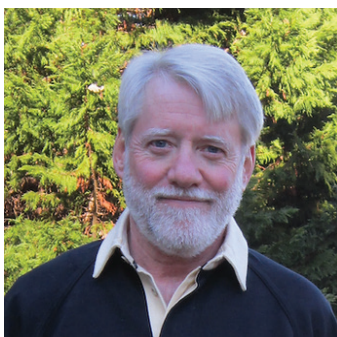
Writing is one of my passions, along with singing, teaching, playing the piano, and choral conducting. My publisher calls me a "literary late bloomer" because I didn't get around to writing my first novel until after retiring from a long career in music education and music ministry. I write about women who find the strength to overcome adversity. My novels tackle challenging social issues like child abuse, domestic abuse, substance abuse, and homelessness. But really my novels are about hope, help and healing. My latest project includes After Rain, a book of weekly devotions. All proceeds benefit Hospice House of Williamsburg.

<https://www.cindylfreeman.com>



James L. Garrett

James Garrett is a retired high school English teacher. He and his wife, Suzanne, moved to Williamsburg three years ago. He enjoys reading, writing, and watching the birds in his backyard.



Reyn Kinzey

I was born and raised in Richmond, Virginia. I went to UVA, graduating Phi Beta Kappa. I had no idea what I was going to do with my life, so I hung around and got an MA, and M. Ed. and even finished the course work for a Ph.D. But I never finished my dissertation (actually, I never started one: my attention span isn't that long). Still not knowing what I wanted to do with my life, I took a job teaching at Virginia Commonwealth University, where I taught for 20 years, both full time and in the night school. <https://www.ReynKinzey.com>

Edward W. Lull

Having begun my writing career in my mid-sixties, I never ran short of life experiences to write about. Where younger writers face the dreaded "writer's block," the advice "Write about what you know," is often marginally helpful. My years in the Emerson Society of Williamsburg produced numerous essays on a variety of topics. Several were written from research conducted on U.S. Navy history - a favorite topic of mine. Others included leadership training, risky childhood experiences, golfing exploits, and English language peculiarities. I have known and worked with wonderful people throughout my life; I have love for all and ill will toward none. I am truly blessed.



Peggy Newcomb

Peggy Newcomb was born and raised in Chester, Virginia. She graduated from Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia (UVA) with a BS degree in Chemistry. At the time of her graduation, women were not allowed to attend UVA unless they were in the nursing program. She taught Chemistry and Science at York High School, Yorktown, Virginia. She wrote for several newspapers, and her work has appeared in various publications including *The Poet's Domain*. She is a member of the National League of American Pen Women and the James City Poets. A portrait artist, her paintings have been displayed in local galleries.

<https://www.PeggyNewcombAuthor.com>.



Joyce Carr Stedelbauer

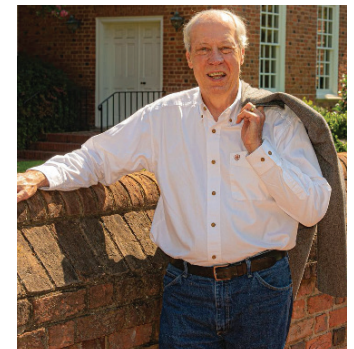
Joyce Carr Stedelbauer is a member of the Poetry Society of Virginia, and has belonged to the National League of American Pen Women for more than forty years. She is also a charter member of the Williamsburg Poetry Guild. She is an inspirational conference speaker and has authored seven books. Her latest book, *Batteries Not Included; Some Assembly Required*, is her personal account of encouraging others who are learning to live again after the death of a loved one.

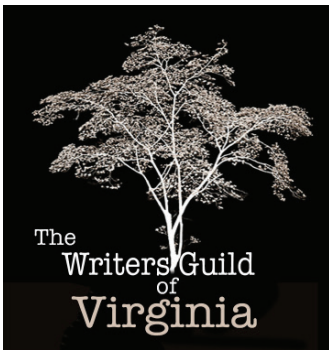
<https://www.JoyceCarrStedelbauer.com>



Lynn Underwood

Lynn Underwood was a building official until recent retirement. He has worked in the building safety profession and building code development for 35 years. He led a team of inspectors to El Salvador on behalf of the CASA Corps (ICC Ad Hoc Group) to inspect restoration work performed by USAID projects. Before college, Lynn enlisted in the USMC and served in Vietnam with the 1st Marine Division. He was awarded several medals including a Purple Heart and Navy Commendation, and a Meritorious Combat promotion. <https://lynnunderwoodauthor.com>





About the Writers Guild of Virginia

The Writers Guild of Virginia is a 501(c)3 organization. Our mission is to nurture writers of all abilities in the crafts of writing, publishing and marketing their work. We offer a series of programs throughout the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Williamsburg areas.

We hope you will visit us on our website to learn more about us and join us at one of our events.

Thank you for your support!

How to Reach Us

email: wgvirginia@gmail.com

website: www.wgvirginia.com

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First Edition 2022

Compiled and Edited by Cindy L. Freeman

Published by High Tide Publications, Inc.

Deltaville, Virginia

Graphic Arts: Firebelliedfrog.com

www.HighTidePublications.com

Printed in the United States of America.