



The Boston Home
Writing Group
SUMMER SHOWCASE

June 22nd, 2024

FEATURED WRITERS

“YOU CAN’T USE UP CREATIVITY.
THE MORE YOU USE, THE MORE
YOU HAVE.”

-MAYA ANGELOU



OUR GARDEN	LAURIE WYSE
SEA GLASS	
JEWELRY	ANNIE BETSCHART
LIFE’S EMBARRASSING MOMENTS	
GRAMMIE	BONNIE WAKER
BEAR’S DEN	
MOMENT OF HUMILIATION	KATHY HOGAN
BIOGRAPHY TITLE	
SHOES	NANCY WILKINSON
LIFE BEHIND THE MASK	
THE BUGGY	ELIZABETH SZILASSY
AIMING HIGH	
MEETING BABY NOLAN	GINGER GROEPER
MY LITTLE BROWN VAN	
FOR MY MOTHER	MINDY CHEEVER
NIGHT	
A STORY ABOUT MY FATHER	THERESA KANE
WEDDING SONGS	
CONFESSIONS OF A VERMONT DRIVER	SARA QUAYLE
THE KEEPER	
THESE EYES	BETH FOURNIER
THE KEYS	

Every week a talented group of Boston Home residents meets to share and discuss pieces of writing that they have crafted inspired by a common theme. Some of them write poetry, sometimes fiction, and often times they share remarkable tales from their own lives. This collection of writing pieces showcases some of their favorite works along with their talent, passion, and joy in creative writing.

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PREFACE

WE ARE...

We are the wheelchair brigade. We stand out but we are not ugly or bizarre. Just different.

Ours is not a lonely plight for there are many of us, a diverse community of people who are physically challenged.

We are alive with creativity, ingenuity and hope. We know very well the value of compassion and optimism.

We know that the little things in life bring much joy. Gratitude is our sacred pledge. Humor and laughter are the spice of life.

Many of us remember fondly and wistfully, even with reverence, what it was like to be fully capable and independent.

But we are not sorry for ourselves and we are not despairing. We are simply altered versions of our former selves.

Our bodies carry our burdens with a noble dignity and we have a humble pride in our accomplishments.

Other people can't imagine our place in the bustling throng of humanity, nor comprehend the difficulties we surmount every day.

If they see us at all they feel sorry for us and thank their lucky stars they are not us.

We can't blame them for their pity. It is entirely understandable. But we do not seek their pity. It is not useful to us.

We are more like them than they know. We are all on our personal human journeys.

And we have learned that life is precious and beautiful, hour by hour and day by day.

-Sara Quayle



Annie Betschart

PORTER ROAD

Annie Betschart

I grew up on Porter Road, in Natick, MA. Like so many of the era, our home was in a middle class subdivision, built to house all of us baby boomers born in the 50's-60's.

Most homes were filled to the brim with children, stay at home Moms and working Dads. It was a time where a family could live comfortably on one salary. While it seems old fashioned by today's standards, women were expected to keep a clean home and clean children. Very few were in the workforce full time. The Dads were out earning a living.

The five homes closest to and including mine, had a combined 21 kids. In those days, after school leisure time was usually just "go outside and play." Every kid heard the same command.

We didn't have to stray too far to find a playmate. Our Moms could keep an eye on us just by looking out the kitchen windows. Each of those five homes had its own special attribute that contributed to the communal neighborhood hijinx.

The houses on my side of the street were built at the bottom of a large hill. It was the perfect place to explore the woods and look for arrowheads. Natick has a rich Native American history. We thought for sure that the forest held many secret relics of days gone by! Unfortunately, I never found anything of note. Our lot provided the perfect space for sledding. The hill and tree lines were just perfect. A snowy day meant that our yard was full of joyful children sledding and throwing snowballs.

Next door were the Chaille's. Their house was a source of curiosity. The daughters were a few years older than me. They went to school with my older sisters, but I think they were "too cool" to hang out with the likes of us.

Mrs. Chaille was a wonderful mystery. On a sunny day, she could be found in the backyard. She would lay on her long beach chair with her perfectly frosted hair, wearing a two-piece bathing suit, chain smoking and if the time of day was right, sipping a cocktail. I recall hearing whispers among some of the Moms about how inappropriate she was. Her golden skin and leisure time was

something I found fascinating. This red headed, freckle faced, sun burned little girl longed to be so exotic.

Across the street were the Shastany's and the DeToma's. Their homes were on the sunny side of the street. They didn't have all the trees (or autumn leaf raking) that our side had. This provided them with the perfect yards for pools! My best friend Patty DeToma had us over every day to swim in her pool. It was above ground and suited us just fine...but we could hear the raucous laughter coming over the fence from the Shastany's. *They* had an in-ground pool, with a *slide*. But the kids were a few years older than us, so we rarely got to swim there. The exception was when the grownups got together. The whole group of kids splashed and played together for hours.

At some point during my childhood, one of the Dads spray painted a 4 square grid on the street. There were always a few kids playing. If you weren't playing, you were sitting on the side of the road watching. Younger kids, older kids; all together just hanging out. I can still hear the little voices of the on-lookers warning the game players, "CAR!" as a vehicle would come down the street. The game would pause as the car went by and then quickly resume.

If we weren't doing that, we were fabricating such games as "hot oven" – All the neighborhood kids lined up with wide legs to form a tunnel. One by one, someone would crawl through the tunnel while getting slapped in the butt as they went through. At the end of the tunnel, you stand up and join the lineup, sore butt and all! Any given day you could hear the noise of young musicians practicing on their new instruments. Only a few would progress from noise to music.

Barbies, ball games, races etc. Time passed and our imaginations grew. We would stay out until roughly 5:00. Then everybody ran inside to prepare for our family dinners.

A time of innocence and joy. In today's complicated world of scheduled playdates, youth sports and enrichment programs, the days of "just figure it out" are long gone. Too bad, because it taught us to get along. Boys, girls, of all ages, together by chance and having a blast.

Oh, The Places You'll Go
(The Boston Home Quarantine Edition)

Annie Betschart

I wake up every morning
Ponder what to do today
But alas, it's just like yesterday
Leaving not much else to say
I send Leah a text
Asking what to do next
Meet me in the solarium
We'll fend off this delirium
Our day is filled with idle chatter
We dream of a time when Covid won't matter
Boredom has brought us so much dismay
We study the parking lot day after day
We see who comes in, we see who goes out
Will we ever get to travel about?
We can't see our friends from floor number one
If we do, precautions will all be undone
It's a little absurd
We can't see the bird
That lives in the aviary downstairs

For a change of scenery
We wheel past the new greenery
Maybe some time in the family room
Will help to curb this doom and gloom

Wait... what do I hear?
A pleasant friendly voice is near
Here comes Maddy, here comes Emme
How wonderful to see both of them
They say, "we bring you coffee,
We bring you games"
"We haven't forgotten; we remember your names"
We will soon be together, floor one and floor two
We will be happy with much more to do
Watercolors, chatting, coffee and news
Writing group, games and occasionally booze
Oh, the places we go may be just a few
But I'm so glad to go there with each one of you.

NAMES

Annie Betschart

On an unusually warm Autumn morning, I rode down Dorchester Ave. The mission: to satisfy a craving for pumpkin spice hot coffee. A nearby Dunkin' Donuts makes this an easily attainable goal. This trip has become a ritual I look forward to once or twice a week.

En route, I pass a small cemetery. The unusually thin headstones and unkempt lawn reveal it to be a very old resting place. I think of the souls there; lives unknown and names long forgotten. It is a brief thought, as the focus turns back to coffee.

Soon, I am returning home with a hot steamy cup ready to be enjoyed. Looking ahead I see two people peering through the rod iron fence surrounding the cemetery. Its locked gate prevents any visitors from entering. No one is allowed to walk on these hallowed grounds. You must visit from afar. I see one woman is wearing a bright red vest, the other holding a large green bag. This brings a smile to my face as it evokes images of the upcoming Christmas season. Going by, I notice their heads are bowed and appear to be deep in prayer. The sight strikes deep in my heart. I wish I could stop and join them. It is an ironic thought, as I don't consider myself to be religious. Spiritual, yes, but not interested in subscribing to any particular faith. Their prayers are private. I roll by a hundred feet or so, then pause.

So many thoughts and questions are swirling in my head. Given the assumed age of the cemetery, it's unlikely they knew the people who lie there. What happens to our souls after we pass? Is there life after death? If so, are they aware that these women prayed for them?

Likely decades or perhaps centuries after they left their earthly bodies, someone chose to stop and remember them. It is a special time. Quiet and reverent.

What compelled them to stop? Did they plan this visit, or happen upon it? Their prayers served another purpose as well. They offered a gift for me. A moment to be still. To reflect on life and death.

These two women, whose names I will never know, praying for souls whose names I will never know.

Their unselfish gesture witnessed by a woman (me) whose name they will never know!

From now on, when I pass this spot, I will remember this event. Each time, for a brief moment, I will bow my head in prayer. I will think of lives long gone and the kindness shown to them by two wonderful strangers.



Mindy Cheever

FINDING BEAUTY

Mindy Cheever

Beauty to me is like a beautiful butterfly ready to bloom.

A beautiful butterfly is in a cocoon, but

When it comes out it is beautiful to look at and dream about.

You can always know how to dream in your sleep.

Everybody dreams differently.

A butterfly goes over the water and splashes

A big beautiful water of green, blue, purple and orange.

It doesn't matter how we are.

We are all alike and yet so different.

I just want everyone to love it as much as I do.

A lot of time goes into my thoughts so I can write them down

I think about what it is that I do or say to the people I love.

They are all beautiful people.

WATER*Mindy Cheever*

Water is bluish green.

The sun shines over the water.

Crystals are on the water.

The crystals are shiny.

They are like diamonds in the sky.

They shine as the beautiful sun goes over them.

We look upon the ocean and see great things happen.

Fish are swimming, and the thought makes me jump for joy

And I smile.

My eyes show it all.

I think about how the sun is warm.

It warms me inside.

It brings me joy and happiness.

My brother used to take me to the ocean and we would go over the waves.

That was fun.

NIGHT

Mindy Cheever

When you look at night, night is black. But the night has dreams; anything you like to dream about. I like to dream that we are at camp with everybody, where I rode a horse for the first time. They put me on the horse with my back arched so that I could see where I was going, so that I could see what the horse saw. I had never ridden a horse before that.

It feels like everybody that is warm, like me and Susan, are in the black sky with the sun beaming the way that it does. You never know what's coming down the pike, but everyone that is around us; we can all dream. We can dream we are around a fire, and the fire is warm to the touch. When our families join to pick us up they say, "It is warm to us too." And then we have more fun riding.

It's no wonder that we are going to find more friends and more wild times in the sun of our hearts. Mine is burning for all of the people that are around us every day. I dream we are on a horse carriage ride and the sun is with us so that we can be warm, and so we can dream about meeting around the fire that night.

Susan and I wake up the next morning to a white place in the clouds. Then we travel to where our families are awaiting. They have been waiting for a long time.



Beth Fournier

CONSTELLATIONS

Beth Fournier

I stand in the chilly summer night air.
 Looking up,
 I am surrounded by a sea of stars.
 I look for constellations:
 Ursa Major,
 Ursa Minor,
 Cassiopeia,
 Orion's Belt,
 And the red star Betelgeuse.
 I can make out the hunter
 in the Orion constellation.
 I do not see what Cassiopeia
 is supposed to be,
 But I know it's M-shaped.

Who decided to name these stars
 As they are known today?
 Are the stars still alive up there—
 The ones they saw?

We can still see a dead star
 Long after it has flickered out of existence.
 It continues to shine
 Despite the fact that it
 Has moved on to the heavens.

Who mourns a dying star?
 Is that what a shooting star is—
 A tear
 For a lost comrade?
 Or is a shooting star
 A metaphor for us?
 Brief, but bright?

I'd like to believe
 That we are born as stars,
 Flickering lights,
 Bright and beautiful.
 And then we are named,
 Making our own constellation.

And when we have passed
 We are still seen
 In memories, in pictures.
 We are still alive
 Long after we have
 Moved on to the heavens.

DANCING DURING THE STORM

Beth Fournier

I hear the familiar musical tapping on the windows, like tapping on the white keys of a piano. It's the musical sound of the rain. I see the dark clouds rolling in, so I know it will be a big thunderstorm. The musical sound brings me hope for the next day, and I am excited for the deluge that I expect. It brings more happiness to my plans.

Meanwhile, I walk around the house to the tapping of the keys, and I am immersed in the sounds. "You are the only one who finds joy in what other people complain about," he says as he watches me dance around as if in a ballet. The soft tinkles of the white keys turn dark, like black keys now, bigger splashes on the window. Then the lightning comes, bringing a light show across my "dance studio." I continue performing my ballet across the house.

"But what about when the thunder comes?" He says to me.

I say, "That is the best part."

I see him rolling his eyes. That does not dampen my spirits. I just laugh. The light show dances across my studio. Then the thunder comes, almost on cue. Now there is an added bass and drums to my symphony of lights, white and black piano notes, and cymbals. The audience is quiet. The grass is soaking it up—what I have been waiting for. The trees are swishing in the wind, adding more sound to the performance. He continues to watch me; he has no idea what I am waiting for. This does not bother me. He doesn't need to know. The deluge continues, as well as the performance.

Then I stop dancing. The grass quietly continues to soak up the rain, and the lightning continues to batter the ground, nourishing the soil as it does so. There is a lull in the battering of the rain; everything is quieter now. The black keys stop playing completely. Only the white keys remain until the ballet is over. The audience—the grass—gives me a standing ovation. I curtsy. “Well, that was a nice performance,” he says. I can hear some sarcasm and bitterness in his voice, but I ignore it. The audience is amazed, and I am amazed myself, for dancing as long as I did. He still has no idea why I am so happy.

The next day, when the rain is done and the grass and trees and the world are thoroughly soaked, there is wonder in my eyes. I go outside and smell the air. It is fresh; it smells like new earth, new life. It is magical to look at. I feel as if I am looking into a dream, a magical land. The greens of the grass and trees are more vibrant now. This is what I was waiting for. This is the perfect time to take pictures of the scenery. There is so much beauty after the rain. The world looks so much more beautiful than it looked before.

This is my dance of divorce. I am pleased and overjoyed that it is over now. I can finally stop dancing. He has left me no choice, and there is so much beauty beyond it. “Look at the grass,” I say to no one in particular. It shines like emeralds. “Isn’t it magical?” I can imagine a fawn coming to graze in it. It’s so much better than the life I had before, the dance I was struggling to perform every day. My legs are finally at rest. I find beauty in smells and sounds, like I never have before.

MOOD SWINGS

Beth Fournier

I can be cold.
 I can be hot.
 I can be lukewarm.
 I can be a sheet of ice.
 I can be calm.
 I can be reckless
 like a rogue wave
 and thunderous
 like rough seas.
 I can be still.

 I can be sharp as ice,
 cutting you down.
 I can melt
 in your fingers.
 I can hold you
 in the palm of my hand.
 I can quench your thirst.
 I can be caring,
 nourishing
 where you need it most—
 your body and your soul.
 I can be boiling mad
 and scald you with a touch.
 I can be cool and forgiving.

I can be a playground.
 I can open my heart to you,
 letting you dive into me.
 You can skate all over me
 —if you dare.

I can carry all kinds of life.
 I can cleanse you.
 I can be holy.

 I can cradle you in my arms
 and drown you.
 I can be intimate
 and shower you with affection.
 I can carry you.
 I can freeze you in your tracks.
 I can freeze you to death.
 I can make your heart melt
 and then freeze it and shatter
 it.
 I can put out the fire in you.
 I can quench the earth with rain
 and douse a fire.
 I can devastate you
 with torrential rains.
 I can be beautiful
 white diamonds on the ground.
 I can devastate you
 with an avalanche.
 I am all moods.
 I am water.



Ginger Groeper

MEETING BABY NOLAN

Ginger Groeper

This story is about a long overdue visit to see a best friend and meet her baby—their names are Jenna and Nolan.

My sister Jackie and my mother picked me up at 12 noon. I had a late breakfast because I didn't want to eat lunch. The last few times I rode in a car I got carsick, and we didn't want that to happen again! It took a half hour to get to Waltham. Jenna lives in a condo and we could not figure out which was hers because there were so many condos on her street. We called her, she came outside, and finally we knew where to go!

My sister put me in a manual chair to head upstairs to Jenna's place. There wasn't an elevator! So, Jenna's husband, Jenna, and my sister carried me up the stairs in my chair.

It was so good to see Jenna! She used to bring me some of my favorite foods to The Boston Home. We would sit and have supper together. Then when Covid came, that was the end of that!

During the pandemic, Jenna delivered a baby boy. His name is Nolan. I would be meeting him for the first time on this visit. He is so cute! We had visited Facetime but being together is so much better. Nolan is not quite a year old. He stands holding on to toys and furniture. He loves to be read to. Jenna read to him while we were there and he sat quietly and looked at every page. After about three hours, it was time to let Nolan have his nap. So the visit was over and he kissed me goodbye.

What a wonderful day!

A NIGHT OF SNOW AND MUSIC

Ginger Groeper

This story is about my night at the Boston Pops and my experience getting to Symphony Hall.

We had tickets for an eight o'clock Christmas Pops Concert in Boston. It started snowing in the morning and continued to snow all day. The sidewalks were covered and the streets were not much better.

I lived across the street from Symphony Hall. When I would go to concerts there, I would go in my power chair. Not today! Too much snow! So, in my manual chair, off we went. It took three people: Mom, Jenna and her boyfriend to push me across the street. Not only was there pushing involved, there was much laughter. We even needed a policeman to stop the traffic because we ran out of time crossing the street on the crosswalk. But, we made it to Symphony Hall! Even with all of that snow outside, the Hall was full of people.

We sat at a table and had some refreshments along with a glass of the famous Pops Punch. It's been on the menu for years, and I have a glass every time I go to the Pops. John's mother happened to have tickets for the same night. We met, and talked about the music at intermission. We loved the Christmas music and Santa Claus was there too!

It was Jenna's first time at the Pops but we would go so many times after that night. After the show, the trip home was much easier. The snow had stopped, the sidewalks had been shoveled, and the streets had been plowed.

It was a night I will never forget!

SHOES WITH DIAMONDS

Ginger Groeper

This story is about my fancy shoes.

I was invited to Nikki and Tony's wedding. I lived in Boston and the wedding was in a town near New York City. So, my sister Jackie, Mom and I drove to a hotel for the weekend. The wedding was in a beautiful church and the reception was at Nikkis parents' country club. I needed to have a special outfit for this special wedding.

So, I got a nice pink dress and shoes with rhinestones. And I did look very special! I received lots of compliments. Everyone was saying how beautiful I looked and that I had "diamonds on my shoes."

A few years later, I was invited to another wedding. Ian and Annie were getting married at another country club. This time, I was prepared—I had a beautiful dress and shoes with diamonds.



Theresa Kane

MATTHEW

Theresa Kane

I was seven months pregnant when I had an appointment for my swollen legs and preeclampsia. I was 32 weeks into my pregnancy. I went to see my doctor, and my husband met me there. We went in separate cars. My appointment was at 1 o'clock on Wednesday, and I was told not to eat anything. Within 8 hours, I was told to pick a hospital that had a NICU. We chose Brigham and Women's. We went there that night after a stress test. It was scary, but I was happy to be in a doctor's care. At midnight we were finally transferred. My husband met me there and finally on the seventh of February 2003 at 6:55pm, we had a c-section. He was born at 4 pounds, 5 ounces, 15 inches long. He is now 20 and 6'2". His name is Matthew, which means gift from God.

THE GIFT

Theresa Kane

On Christmas Eve 1992, my husband and I had been living together for two years and I thought I was ready for a ring. My husband, thinking we would open only one gift on Christmas Eve, had me open up a set of knives. I gave him a dirty look. My husband loves knives and thought that I would be happy with them.

So, after I begged and pleaded with him to let me open another one, it wound up being a diamond necklace. Not the ring, but in the right direction. So, that has been a joke that he tells to this day.

MUSIC

Theresa Kane

For me, music is like the blood in my veins. In addition to singing to my mother, I would also sing to my husband. I surprised my husband at our wedding by singing “Making Whoopie” from the Fabulous Baker Boys movie.

Sometimes in the 90’s, I would win karaoke contests, mostly by singing Patsy Cline. I won \$500, which at the time was a lot of money. I sang “I Fall to Pieces.”

This morning I enjoyed our music and memories group. So, I still use music to help me survive.



Sara Quayle

SHELL SEEKERS

Sara Quayle

We stroll along in the surf
collecting shells,
silent companions
in the early morning mist
our feet in the cold foamy brine,
leaving no footprints.
We exclaim, "Look!" as we bend low
to snatch up the best ones-
the ones that catch the eye,
pink and purple and pure white
and the ochre of bleached bones
smooth or scalloped or spiraling
or clamshells lying open
like two cupped palms.
We turn away, our hands full
of our claimed treasure,
the remains of creatures
from a world we do not know.

SEASON OF OPPOSITES

Sara Quayle

Autumn is a paradox-
a time of new beginnings
and a time of dying off,
the season for planting bulbs
and the harvesting of crops,
the stretching out of summer
and the shortening of days,
a time of reckoning and remembering
and always the start of the school year
the omega of the growing season
and the alpha of hibernation,
the end of the beginning
and the beginning of the end.

THE MISSION

Sara Quayle

Here I am at last. I have heard so much about this trip for so long, and I certainly never thought I'd get to go. All the planning and dreaming. Gordon has been training for this mission forever. It's hard for me to tell, being a dog, how long it has been since he first mentioned that he was going to Mars. Wherever that is.

At first I couldn't quite believe he was actually going. But he kept telling his friend Ariel it was going to happen within the year and he'd be gone for a couple of years. I could tell that would be a long time. I would hear them at the dinner table or in bed at night discussing all that went into planning the trip, and every detail of the spaceship. I just could not bring myself to believe that Gordon would ever leave me for a long time. He kept telling Ariel it was the chance of a lifetime, and of course I wanted that for him, but I didn't want to miss him for so many days in a row.

He has always been my best buddy, ever since I was a puppy. When he comes home from work he scratches behind my ears and rubs my tummy. Then we go outside and play fetch with a stick. We go for walks every day, rain or shine, even when he's tired, and he lets me stop and sniff anything I want along the way, which is important to me. He brings me presents whenever he goes on trips. My favorite was the meat-scented plastic bone. I wasn't fooled by the scent. It *was* just plastic and of course I would have preferred the real thing, but it was still a nice present.

Ariel doesn't spend any time with me. She just ignores me. She calls me The Mutt or just Mutt to my face. I don't know if she even really knows my name which is Gemini, or Gem for short.

So now we're both strapped in and waiting for the countdown. Gordon says we're going to have to eat dehydrated food, which doesn't sound very appealing, and I'll have to pee in a bag strapped to my torso. I can't lift my leg to pee, which is certainly annoying but it'll be worth it. I'm not sure what to expect on Mars but as long as Gordon's coming along I'm all for it. I hope they have trees there and maybe some grass to run in and lakes to swim in. Hopefully they'll have regular dog food there. At least I won't have to go to the vet or get shoo'd out when Ariel's around. It's gonna be great. Just the two of us.

Oh! They're counting down now. I can hear it over the radio. Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Lift off! There is a roaring in my ears and I feel like I'm taking off! Gordon is right beside me and he is totally focused. So, in my heart I know it's going to be a fantastic adventure!



Stuart Robbins

UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS

Stuart Robbins

While I was a student at Northeastern University, I drove a checkered taxi to earn some extra money. I was driving late one evening, when two men hailed my cab. They got into the vehicle and instructed me to go to a rather distant and scary location. While I was driving them there, I learned both of their names, the nature of their business and what their plans for when they reached their destination. When we arrived and I stopped my cab, one of the guys put his arm around my neck and stole all of the money I had made from the evening. As soon as they left, I immediately drove to the nearest police station where I spent thirty minutes describing these two men to a detective. The police promptly arrested both of the men and we went to trial. I was the first witness against the two thieves. I told the jury exactly what happened and the defense attorney stopped the trial. The defendants each ended up spending 3-4 years in jail.

50 YEARS LATER

Stuart Robbins

My favorite musical was “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying.” I was a singer and actor in high school and college, and my college, Northeastern University, was going to put on this play. This show had recently been on Broadway and was also a movie. I saw the movie and I decided that I wanted to play the part of Bud Frump, the dim-witted nephew of the boss. I tried out, and I won that part.

The same night, the women were trying out as dancers. In my excitement about getting the part, I decided to check them out.

One woman caught my attention. She was tall and very pretty. Every day after rehearsal, we would all sit and chat, but that pretty dancer was never there. The actress who was to play the “blonde bombshell” character told me that the pretty woman’s name was Connie, and that she never attended our post-rehearsal chats because this was her first play. As it turns out, this actress had plans to set me up with Connie, but I was going to beat her to it. So, one night after rehearsal, I caught up to her as she was walking to her dorm and introduced myself. I invited her to join us in our after-rehearsal get-togethers. We got to know each other as the rehearsals went on, and I had the guts to ask her for a date. She accepted!

Having grown up in the New York city area, I took her to a deli and a movie. The movie was about a gang take-over of a New York City subway car, and being a

film reviewer for the Northeastern News, I could see that it stunk. The star of the movie was the man who said “Here’s Johnnie” on the Johnnie Carson show, and he was pitiful. Suddenly Connie got up during the movie and started walking out! I thought she was leaving because I was a lousy date! When I caught up to her and asked what the problem was, it turned out that she had a problem with one of her contact lenses, not me. We watched the rest of the movie and we began dating for years. I asked Connie’s father for his permission to marry her, and we’ve been married for 51 years with two children and two grandchildren.

A STORY ABOUT MY FATHER

Stuart Robbins

My father and I took the train to Grand Central Station in New York City to check out the annual boat show. Dad took a close look at an eighteen-foot-long fiberglass boat with a 110 horse power engine. He and I would spend a lot of time fishing for striped bass, and this boat was ideal for such fishing. We would put long worms on hooks in order to troll at a low speed that would entice the bass to bite. I would drive the boat and dad would fish, and we would catch stripers that were about 5 to 7 pounds.

When another Boston Home resident overheard me talking about bass fishing, she showed me pictures of herself and her father holding up stripers that were between forty and fifty pounds. When I compared them to the fish that dad and I caught, I was thoroughly embarrassed.



Bonnie Waker

BEAR'S DEN

Bonnie Waker

The native Americans knew it was a sacred place, a private place, a place where they wouldn't be disturbed. I discovered it because I was living nearby. It was called Bear's Den. There was a pull off, a parking space and a short path under huge boulders. Water poured through over rocks huge and small, creating water crashing down into a pool where I could refresh myself. I discovered a path that went along the brook on the other side. I explored that side and discovered up above the waterfall a magical space. It was a huge rock with a hole inside it about 6 feet long and 3 feet wide. It was filled with sand and I could lie down inside without anybody seeing me. I could hear the water and I was quite inaccessible. I was overjoyed to find this place. I came back to it again and again, to be quiet, to be by myself, to feel safe. No one would ever find me there. I felt held by the elements there—the sounds of bubbling water, the smells of pine trees. You could look up and feel part of the sky. I don't know if anybody else knew about it; it became my special place.

BEAUTY

Bonnie Waker

Beauty makes me feel so good. Beauty can be seen, heard, tasted, felt, or any combination of those. I think of the beauty in nature – oceans and sunsets. I remember how I would watch the sky on a regular drive home from the Y, right at sunset time. There was a spot that overlooked the Connecticut River, we would be passing by right at sunset. Oh, the different cloud formations, and pinks, reds, yellows—a feast for our eyes. There is the beauty of a tree budding in the spring, the soft new green leaves, the change of color in the fall, the brilliant yellows and reds. Beautiful new fallen snow, and the way it covers trees and landscape; such a beautiful silence as I ski through the forest. When the sun comes out the snow sparkles like colored diamonds.

Singing voices that are angelic sounding, or music that hits me just right. A delicious meal, prepared with love and served to a group of friends. Chocolate mousse and tiramisu come to mind. Puppies or any newly born; newborn humans.

And so much else in the human realm: Beauty on the outside and beauty on the inside. I remember a dream I had during a vision quest with Mary Thunder—She was our teacher; not so good looking on the outside but in the dream she was a beautiful woman. And she WAS a beautiful woman—her heart and her wisdom demonstrated who she was. I guess that was my introduction to what real beauty is.

So, now when I reflect on what beauty is, the words that come are awe, inspiration, honesty, kindness, purity, acceptance, tenderness, appreciation, gratitude, delight, amazement, creativity, forgiveness, radiance.

Relationships with friends can engender a sense of beauty. A kind word, unexpected laughter, an experience that amazes or reminds me of my connection to the larger whole that we're all a part of. I've had this experience with some people here. Their presence and listening when I am bereft and upset—it has happened numerous times with numerous people. I am so grateful.

I'LL FOLLOW YOU

Bonnie Waker

Wouldn't that be nice—to have somebody join me wherever I go. They could feel my aching legs, the frustration and angst of my fading spirit, the desires to move like a wild woman. Maybe they could join me where I want to go. I want to stand tall, breathe deeply, walk, skip, run, jump, shake my booty. I want to wave my arms—there was a move in belly dance called snake arms. Oh, to do what used to be so simple.

I want to learn those free movements in my mind, to do them with ease in my mind, to have that fluidity like the slipperiness of soap, like cruising downhill on skis through a foot of powdery snow, like gliding across glassy ice on figure skates, like a beautifully choreographed dance. My mind can do anything it wants; it's a matter of getting those bloody habits of rigidity, of hardness, of hesitation, procrastination, inferiority, resentments, waiting, the opposite of being in the moment, to stop. Instead let it bring softness, immediacy, trust, knowing my worth, embracing the present for whatever it is. It isn't perfect, but it is perfect because that's how it is.



Nancy Wilkinson

I still feel the sands of Stinson Beach enveloping my feet
the surf whispering its way into and over the fleeting impressions
the soundtrack of migrating birds overhead
the embrace of a child's blanket
it was home for me my shoeless runway
two boys dance in camaraderie on the water's edge
while I am observing the great faraway of the ocean
the pulse of freedom evens and blesses from the far heavens
though opening to this sacred place my gaze is on my feet
there are treasures along the way for a shell seeker
yet I must be certain not to walk too far
for fear of falling
i know soon i will be done with walking
with stepping and gliding
and for a long while with shoes

Nancy Wilkinson



because the queen is dead my eyes know but a few sweet tears
my father is dead there is no one to lift me against their shoulder
my mother is dead her arms that held me are but lifeless
a generation is gone that drew me toward god toward honour
i walk with the soldiers finding courage in the soles of my feet
my spine grows straight and i am a warrior dancer
i knew kneeling when our family filled the length of a pew
bowing my head when the words were hushed with solemnity
when my father was king seated to the far right first to come and go

because the queen is dead i see the thousands of farewells
lines moving beside september trees and open streets
the faces seeming cleansed by the fresh air
like mine walking up into the highlands out west
a sure purpose with each step to climb higher
until the descent toward home
we will feel peaceful now that the horses hooves whisper
the boys clear voices have evaporated into sacred air
the church bells have ceased their tolling
only the haunting sound of the queens piper grows quiet in the distance

Nancy Wilkinson

the garden made me smile this afternoon
the sunlight spread the smile through me
with its warmth and clarity and optimism
the spring bulbs are new green and blossoms
the weeping cherry tree shapes like an umbrella
covered with white flowers like snowfall
my mind feels clear and empty but for the smile
my heart beats steady except for the scent of
the mulch which always carries memories
i am walking quickly to see my godmother
past all the gardens there among the live oaks
aunt sheila will be barefoot watering her plants
or inside on her bed the newspaper everywhere
i lay there below her feet and feel so at home
lulled by the soft southern song her voice could be
sometimes i cry and speak my heart
the house smells of wood everywhere
the fence around the house is cedar
and when rain falls its scent brightens
we drink cafe au lait in the kitchen
i kiss her soft cheek and begin my walk home
this time along lake pontchartrain
i feel the sunlight on my bare arms and legs
i walk the seawall watching the breaking waves
the sound is soothing and makes me smile
these words will serve to make me smile again
when like the cherry tree my tears become flowers

Nancy Wilkinson

