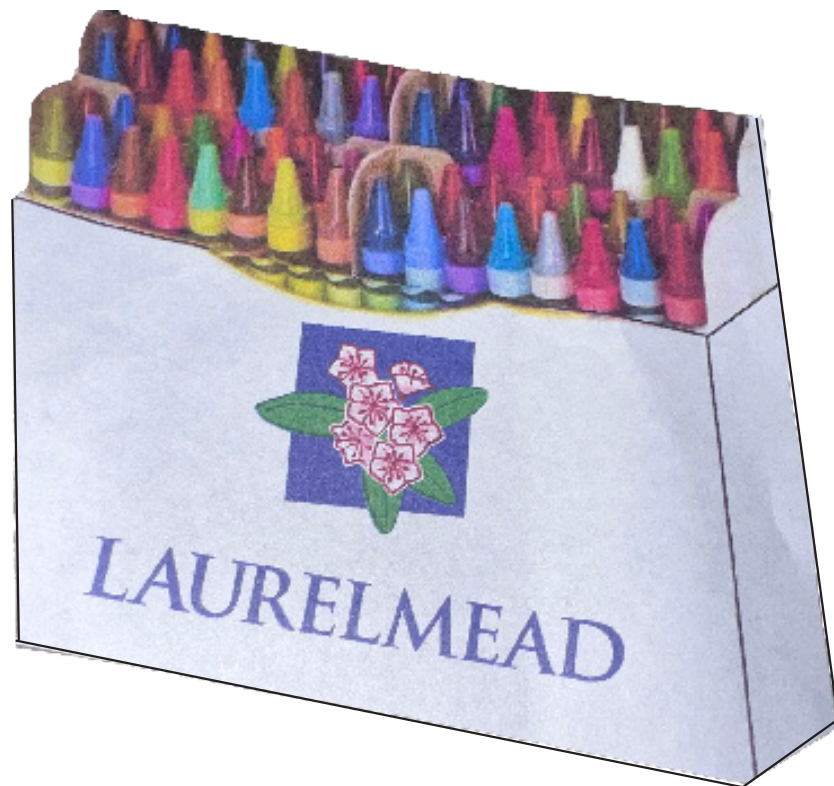




LAURELMEAD JOURNAL

JUNE 2026
Digital Issue 2



Prompt:
LOOK THROUGH YOUR PHOTOS
FIND ONE THAT'S "SPEAKING" TO YOU
AND THEN TELL US WHAT IT'S SAYING

JUNE 2026
Produced by Nicky Nichtern
Proofreading (with sincere appreciation) Betsy Shea-Taylor

Lowell Rubin

The Death of Gordon Wood

Death so tragic, so unexpected.

Old but still vigorous

I see him striding down the hall

Yet, suddenly struck and killed.

Not in poor health

Waiting for the end

Just there, at the wrong moment

So sad

Taken from his Louise and their family

Us, as shocked bystanders.

We remember you Gordon

Famous, accomplished but

Also amiable, a friend.

Suddenly

Someone's tragic error

Such is life it seems

Such is Death on a sunny afternoon.



Barbara Ruttenberg

I have enjoyed dancing all my life. I have been to many different dance performances, and it is always my favorite outing, especially contemporary ballet. I have also enjoyed being a dancer. From my role in childhood as a Chinese dancer in the Nutcracker Ballet at Adelphi University to my taking tap dance lessons with Brian Jones, I have loved moving my body to music.

My husband and I even won a Ballroom Dance Award in our early married years!

I have also loved to travel and I have visited 45 countries. My main travel interest is interacting with the people, and what could be better than dancing to accomplish that goal! You will see how much I enjoyed it by noticing the smile on my face in the following photographs.

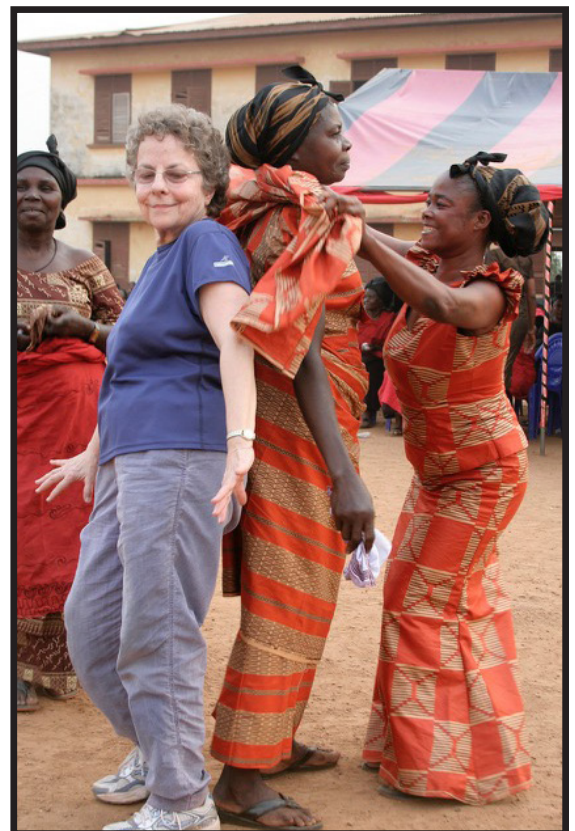
Dancing Around The World



My Brazilian partner...ooh-la-la!



Cuban people dance with great rhythm!



African women in Ghana love to dance!

Patricia Becker

Remembered Days: Those were the days remembered, when I could do it all.

Those were the days when most weekends were spent on the water, when, with my post-divorce significant other, we canoed Wisconsin rivers in our sturdy Yellow Canoe, camping overnight or driving home late in the dark. Sometimes we struggled into wet suits to canoe seriously whitewater rivers. Often, we joined the Sierra Club Canoeing Group.



Those were the days when, on academic and summer holidays, we trekked the Yellow Canoe all over the country and up into Canada, to canoe rivers big and small, gentle and wild.

We canoed in the Ozarks, where we almost lost our canoe in a flash flood; in the Everglades, where we slept on a platform listening to the alligators; in central Florida, where we canoed with the manatees; in Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp, where water levels were so low that half the time we were walking in the mud pushing the canoe; and on the Mississippi River north and south, occasionally running aground on a sandbar.

We canoed on Isle Royale in Lake Superior, where we missed the return ferry carrying all our gear and the Yellow Canoe, and were thankfully ferried out in a speed boat to climb up a rope ladder to the waiting ferry's deck. We canoed on the Green and Snake Rivers out west, through majestic landscapes. With a Sierra Club group, we canoed the Missiniabbi River running from Lake Superior up to the town of Moosanee on James Bay. For the last few miles, to meet a return trip deadline, we flagged down the local train and hitched a ride, canoes and all, in the freight car.

Those were the days when we took a foldable Folboat to canoe in Alaska. In Homer, we got the best fish and chips ever from a vendor on the pier where we assembled the Folboat, and where, when we finally got out into Kachemak Bay, we were thoroughly doused in a surprise downpour.

Those were the days when I could help get Yellow Canoe up on and off the van, put up the tent, and help portage between lakes and rivers.

Those were the fondly remembered days when I could do it all.

Claire Hatch



Just Yesterday

Just yesterday ... maybe EVEN before..

Remember? So young... So naïve. What do you know?

Nothing, just smiles, happiness, laughter, and love.

How long will it last? You're not even asking that question. Not even a thought.

Just yesterday...Enjoying those 2 beautiful baby boys... let's just play.

Have fun. Grow up together.

Just yesterday...You walked them to school...Watched them play baseball....

Just yesterday...Graduation Day...

Just yesterday...Jobs...Girlfriends ..

Just yesterday...Marriage ...

Just yesterday...Grandbabies...

Just yesterday...It's Already Today...

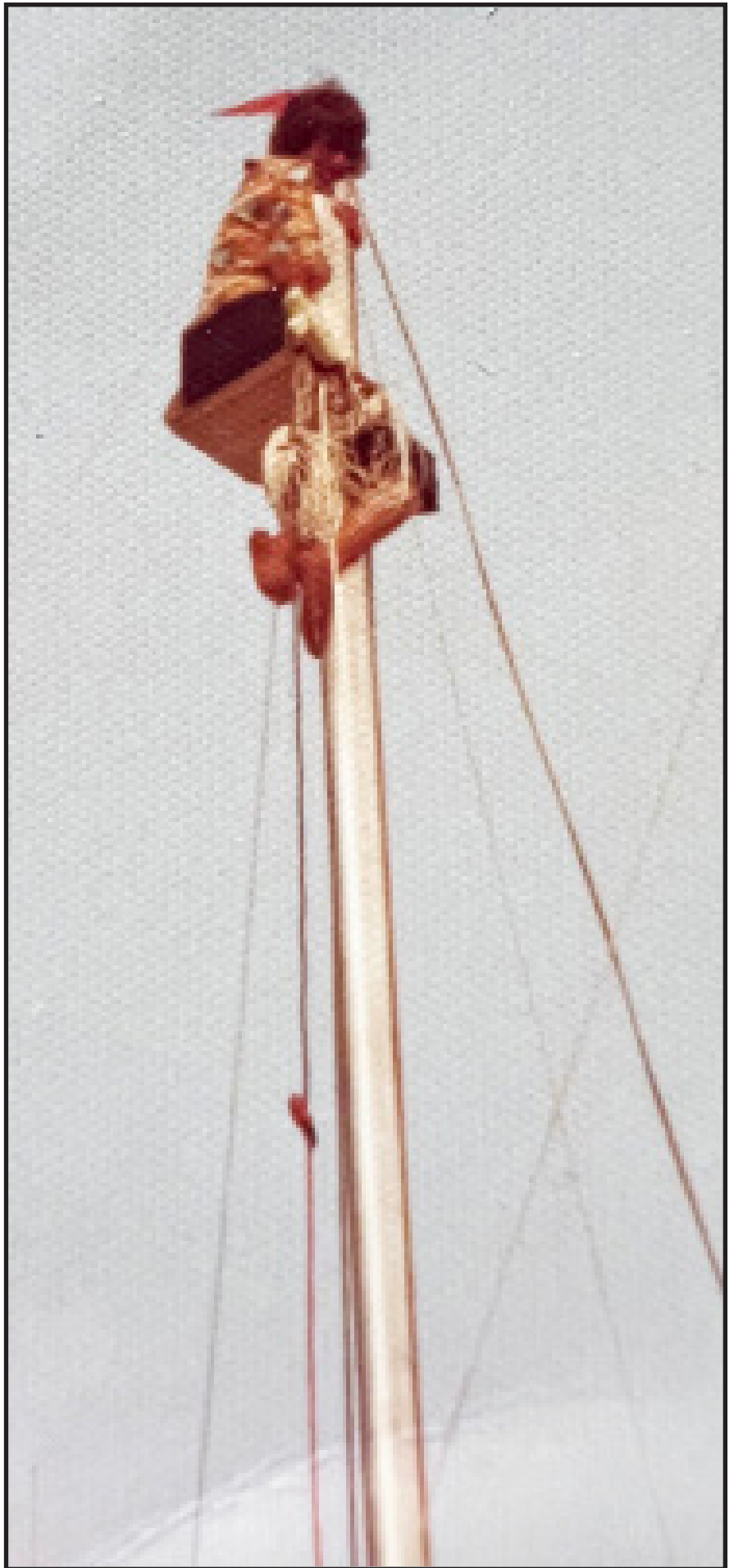
Nicky Nichtern

Once you look at this photo ... need I say more? But when did you ever know me to stop at one sentence??

So back in the 1970s I used to do a lot of sailing - my (second) husband and I owned a 32' Endeavor and every summer we took a three week cruise - leaving our marina at Croton-on-Hudson, sailing or motoring down the Hudson River, around the Island of Manhattan, up the East River, through Hell's Gate, and into Long Island Sound. We'd sail from port to port, out to Nantucket or the Vineyard, until it was time to head back up the Hudson to home and work.

To prep for this trip in the summer of 1976, my (then) husband along with two of his buddies from the yacht club, hoisted me up the mast to check on the wind indicator, the antenna, and lights. I was the lightest in the group and really the only one willing to go up 53 feet to check it all out.

Once I was at the top of the mast they tied off the lines, and with giant grins on their faces, yelled up to me that they were going to lunch - and off they went. Need I say more?



Karen Natal

Tom and I met when we were 13 and 14 years old at Bonnet Shores. We hung out with a large group of kids who also lived at Bonnet.

After a few years things became more serious. Tom went away to Villanova, and I eventually went to St. Elizabeth's in New Jersey.



We always said we wanted a large family. Tom was from a small family – one sister seven years younger and one brother seventeen years younger. My family was larger – three girls and three boys with twelve years between all of us.

Five kids came our way in five years!
There was always a lot to do.

There still is!!



The five young “kids” grew to become five adults. The family has grown into the large group you see here.



Rosie Litchman



LEARNING TO DRIVE A “STICK” SHIFT

My 1960 Rhode Island driver’s license was stamped For Automatic Transmission Vehicles Only. At 16, that restriction meant nothing to me since both my parents drove automatic cars.

Years later, my boyfriend casually told me that he had a stick shift. “What is that?”, I innocently asked? He quickly assured me that he would teach me how to drive his Ford Falcon in a flash. I nodded and smiled. Yes, honey pie.

After we married, I spotted my first driving lesson penciled in on our calendar. It did not go well. I flunked clutch again and again. That is how I learned nearly every incline in Fall River whose motto is “hills, mills and pork pies”.

Everyone took driving lessons from the same teacher, Albertino, so I signed up for 10 weeks. In the meantime, I became pregnant. My teacher smoked stinky cheap cigars. The bad combination led to shortened lessons!

I finally got the hang of using the clutch properly which came in handy much later, when I happily drove my red Corvette up and down the steepest hills in Fall River! Thanks, Albertino!

Lester Shapiro

His name was George Weissman. His name was George Whitman. It depended on how fiercely the anti-semitic winds were blowing.

George came to live with us in the late 1930s at the request of some friends whose son had just bought a weekly newspaper in Raritan, NJ and hired him to edit it. They couldn't take him in because they were already sheltering a Jewish doctor who had escaped the Nazis. All went well for a while. Then George got into a bit of a squabble with a local politico, and had to leave rather hurriedly. I never found out what that was all about. When we started to clean out his room, though, we were stunned to see that all the drawers were lined with pages from *The Daily Worker*. If George wasn't a Communist at that time he was certainly what was then called a "fellow traveller".



Despite this load of negative baggage, George managed to enlist in the Navy the day after Pearl Harbor, and served for three years as the commander of a submarine destroyer in the Atlantic and the Pacific. He was quite proud of the fact that he had managed to conceal his politics so he could serve.

After the war George worked in public relations in New York. He joined Phillip Morris in 1952. He and a colleague introduced the Marlboro Man. George rose through the ranks at the firm, and became chairman and CEO in 1978. At this time he also became chairman of the board of Lincoln Center, and was a founding member of the Lincoln Center Jazz Festival, and a trustee of the Whitney Museum.

George remained a friend. For example, my sister, the mother of four sons, always sent them to George for advice.

George died in 2009 at age 90.

Prior to all this, George and three colleagues made a country-wide tour of the United States during the depression, and wrote a book about it. His companions were Lillian Ross, who went on to write for *The New Yorker*; Joe Wershba, who became a producer of the Edward R. Murrow program, and Mel Fiske, who was a card-carrying Communist.

Jay McCubbin

My talents as a gardener are modest at best. The spring of 2024 put my ambitions to the test. I began with a small raised bed at Laurelmead. A trip to Four Town Farms provided me with a carload of zinnias. They were my flower of choice because they had been my mother's favorite.



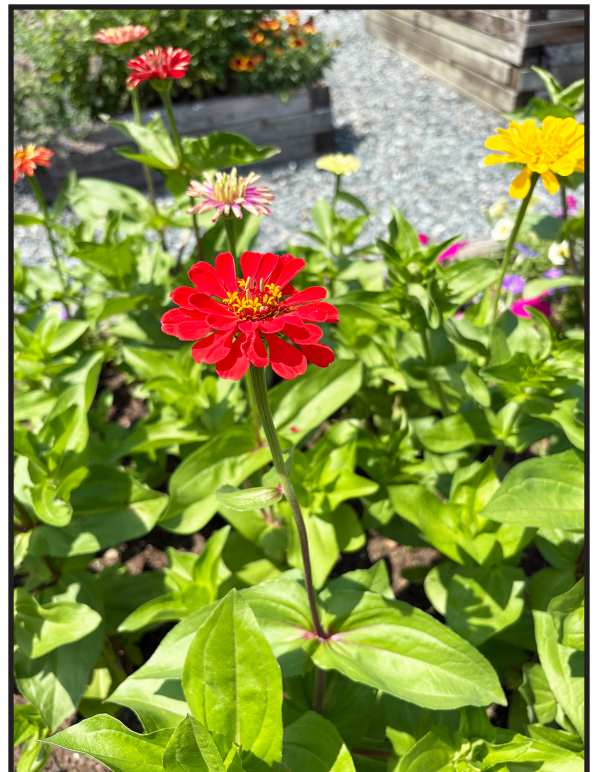
In the small Maryland church I attended as a child, zinnias were the preferred summertime adornment of the sanctuary. “Miss Anna”, as my mother was called, provided the church with zinnias in abundance during the sultry days of July and August.

But I knew nothing about growing flowers. I just bought them and stuck them in the ground. To my astonishment, they grew in profusion: Reds, greens, yellows, oranges and more, shooting up 4, 5, 6, even 7 feet! And they lasted until finally subdued by the frosts of November. I was the master gardener, reveling in the hubris of horticulture

Then came the spring of 2025 – A repeat performance, I thought – more zinnias – more plantings. The next day when I returned to my garden

I was horrified. My precious zinnias were now green stubs in the brown dirt. What had happened? Rabbits! I was told – the bane of the raised gardens. I had never particularly like the critters. Now I was filled with hare hatred. I got more zinnias and doused with some sort of toxic repellant. It worked, but somehow my zinnias were never again as resplendent as before. How had Miss Anna done it? I don't remember the obnoxious repellants in her garden.

It is now 2026. My garden is more modest. Cheerful zinnias cautiously unfold their radiant blossoms, now surrounded by other neighbors. I hope they will soon adorn our table at Laurelmead. Thank you Miss Anna.



Betsy Shea-Taylor

The curious thing about love is this -- you can never ever use it all up because it so efficiently replenishes itself even within a broken heart.

So it's been with two exceptional men in my life.

Eddie the tuxedo cat died at 20 during the pandemic. I cradled him and whipped off my N95 mask to sing him his song -- Kookaburra -- as he left.

This is too weird to share but I did actually sing that to him when he was old, every night before sleep. (Hey, if you have a critter in your life I know you've got your own secret story.)

"Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree, eating all the gum drops he can see. Stop Kookaburra, save some there for Eddie."

And that was to be it. Of all the billions of cats and dogs and hamsters and guinea pigs that had peppered my life Eddie was penultimate.

I loved him, I was done. Eddie died, and so did far too many friends, and the house that once was always full was always empty. Time to go.

Where was love? Gone.

So, I settled into Laurelmead with a few beloved relics and a couple of sticks of new furniture, and started anew.

Except something was still missing. It was the first time since my birth I'd not co-habited with a critter.

One day a shelter where I'd once volunteered and where Eddie's headstone is in their cemetery, called to ask if I was looking for a cat. They'd gotten one they thought I'd like. Nope. Well, maybe...

That's what was missing.

Majestic the 15-pound tabby was caged, mile-long tail, sagging belly, torn ear, declawed toes. Which left him with stubs. He was two.

We took the measure of one another. Staff opened the door. I balled a fist so Majestic, hauled up on a transport from Georgia, couldn't bite a finger.

He lay his head on that fist.

The curious thing about love is this -- you can never ever use it all up because it so efficiently replenishes itself even within a broken heart.

Our favorite time is watching the TV show Maine Cabin Masters, me on the couch, George (no longer Majestic) pressed against my thigh with his head on my knee. We do not watch the news. Love does not live there.

It does live in what once was an apartment and now is a real home. It just took George to transform it.



Barbara Sheer

My mother was a master knitter. There was nothing she couldn't or wouldn't make. She knitted for all of us - family and friends alike. Often, she donated her items to various organizations.

Arthur's and my sons attended a day school that held an annual auction. Every year, without fail, my mother contributed to it. Her baby sweaters were well received, and they always brought a nice price for the school.



In October of 1996, my mother handed in to the school a beautiful white baby sweater. With cables and pink and lavender buttons, it was fit for a princess. As I write I can still hear the “oohs and ahs” of the auction committee members!

That October my 80-year-old mother and my brother left Massachusetts and flew to California to visit my cousin and his family. While on vacation there, my mother fell, broke her hip, and underwent surgery. While the surgery itself was

successful, problems arose, and she never left the hospital. With one of our sons, my brother and me by her side, she passed away in California.

The funeral and Shiva were back home in New England. During Shiva the president of the day school PTA came to pay her respects. She brought me a gift to be cherished - the precious baby sweater. Her kind gesture and words brought tears to my eyes: “I kept this sweater aside because you should have it to keep in your family”!

Never has any gift meant so much to me. I remain forever grateful to this kind lady who chose to return the sweater to me. It now remains among my treasures. Will I be here to see a great-granddaughter wear the last sweater made by my mother? That would thrill me, but it doesn't really matter. What does matter is that someday it will belong to some baby girl in our family. It comes with this story, and it was made by the baby's talented great, great grandmother.

Meg Curran

This is a picture of me and D'Artagnan, my favorite wolf. We are atop the doghouse in his enclosure. It was taken in 1974, at the North American Wildlife Park, now called Wolf Park, a wildlife research and education facility in Battle Ground, Indiana. Its primary function since its founding in 1972 is the maintenance of a captive, socialized wolf pack for research, study, and education. The park's founder, Erich Klinghammer, was a professor of ethology in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. I was there as a graduate student, Erich was my advisor, and I was studying wolves.



At the time, wolves—*Canis lupus*, aka the gray wolf or timber wolf—were becoming the subject of much serious, scientific research. The work of Erich Klinghammer and his students with captive wolves produced a comprehensive catalog of wolf behaviors and vocalizations and also improved techniques for working with and caring for captive wolf packs.

D'Artagnan was largely tangential to most of the research at the park. While he was well socialized to humans, he was never a member of any pack. He was raised solely by humans in the children's petting zoo of the St. Louis Zoo, without the presence of any other wolf. He was not exposed to other wolves until he arrived at the park. By then, he was too old to be socialized to wolves. Consequently, he never developed the behaviors that wolves socialized by humans but also living as pack members would. Despite numerous attempts to introduce him into the pack, he had to remain in a separate enclosure.

Ordinarily, I would argue that treating a wolf the way D'Artagnan was treated, denying all intraspecies contact until he was too old to benefit from it, is cruel and inhumane. But there was no other viable option for D'Artagnan. He was an orphan. The only other option at the time was to euthanize him.

Over his lifetime at the park, D'Artagnan made significant contributions to other wolves, even while he had to live apart from them. He was an outstanding ambassador, giving countless numbers of people the opportunity to actually meet and touch a wolf. That experience belies the bloodthirsty monster view of wolves that many people hold. Moreover, he helped to demonstrate that the behavior of captive wolves could be shaped using clicker training, a phenomenally successful way to control these still-wild animals. Using these methods, the safety of both the wolves and the humans working with them was greatly enhanced.

But none of that is why D'Artagnan is my favorite of all the wolves I was privileged to know. As anyone who works with other animals comes to understand, those relationships are pretty similar to our relationships with fellow humans. You meet some who you just really love. Who knows why? That's how I felt about D'Artagnan.

Joan Halpert

Just the other day. I came across a picture of my twelve-year-old self on my beautiful blue bike. Three friends - Pearl, Cindy Reva and I were at Slater Park in Pawtucket - two miles away from my home in Oak Hill Plat. Often, we went there to play a little tennis, have a bite to eat and share our dreams, fantasies and the latest gossip about our classmates.



It was one of many adventures I had riding on my Beautiful Blue Bike. Another fun trip we had was biking to the local tennis court where we crashed the occasional wedding party held there. I loved to look at the brides. They were so beautiful, I was mesmerized; would I ever wear a white dress like that one and marry a handsome prince? The best part however, was when the kitchen staff gave us ice cream and cake as we watched the bride and groom dance together.

My beautiful blue bike took me wherever I wanted to go. I loved the feeling of independence. Often, I biked up the hill to Reva's house and learned how to roast a chicken from scratch; Reva cooked every Sunday. Her parents owned Miller's Deli on Hope Street and had to work on Sunday. It was there that I fell in love with Mario Lanza - we listened to him and others almost every weekend. That was the catalyst for my lifelong love of opera.

My blue bike not only helped me have fun and a way to explore my world, but two years earlier when it was brand new it helped me rescue my friend Paula from possible tragedy.

Paula and I liked to ride down to the open field on Pleasant Street that once was the gas works. Next to the field was a wooded area. Tucked in there was the pet doctor whom we loved to visit. We would play with the animals and watch Doc work.

On this day we decided to ride to the middle of the open field and then play catch. Here we met a tall teenage girl wandering around who stopped to chat. She was very friendly and suggested we come to her house on the other side of the gas works and have cookies and milk with her.

Sounded good---so we hopped on our bikes and pedaled to her house. After the treat we thanked her and said we needed to get home.

"You are not going anywhere", she said. Suddenly terrified, Paula and I stood there feeling helpless. "The door is locked - you have to stay" she repeated. I started to cry and she looked at me and said, "you can go".

I dashed out the door, hopped on my bike and pedaled home as fast as I could. My mom called Pauline, Paula's mother, who called the police who came rather quickly.

We all jumped in the police car; I remembered the house and Paula was rescued.

Iris Jacobs

My husband Bernie loved to perform in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He excelled in comic roles, such as the sergeant of police in *Pirates of Penzance*, but he could also be sedate. His favorite role in “*The Sorcerer*” was going down the escape hatch to the nether world, laughing diabolically all the way.



Joy Twelves



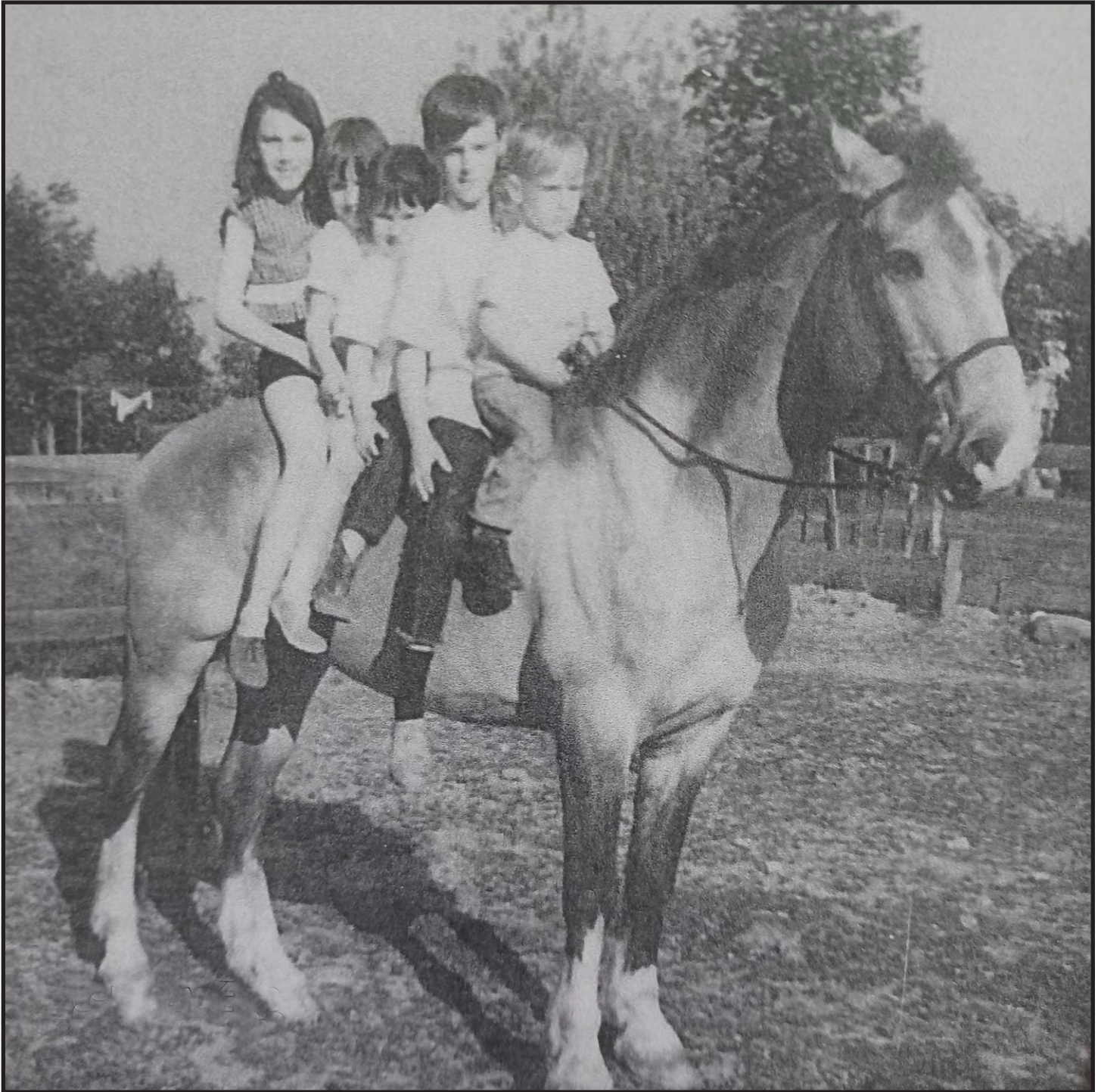
I was five years old when my first sibling (of five) entered the world. So as I was growing up I always thought of my four brothers and one sister as ‘those bratty little kids’ who I was enlisted to help take care of. And when I left for college in 1964 that’s how I remembered them. (The youngest had just been born).

Fast forward thirty years to 1994. We decided to get together for a family reunion and to celebrate our parents’ 50th anniversary. It was a week-long celebration at Goose Rocks Beach in Kennebunkport, Maine. It was such a pleasure to meet my siblings again, and observe them as adults/spouses/parents. And WOW! they turned out to be really nice people...and talented, as well as loving and nurturing parents. I had never imagined them that way! I really felt proud to be their sister.



Anyway, we had so much fun that first week, we have been doing it every year since then. In 2016 we decided to imitate the 1963 photo, and we have all treasured both photos.

Marlene Denesen



MY CHILDREN

Those precious years passed . . so fast.
It was one foot in front of the other in those days.
So much to do; so little time to prepare for the future.
Who knew?

Heidi Moon

When I heard at our Activities Committee meeting that someone was coming to speak about Beacon Hill, I went home and googled Anthony Sammarco. I quickly learned that *Beacon Hill: Through Time* is one of 25 or more of his books about my beloved Boston and Massachusetts and as I perused the many titles, I began reliving my childhood.

SS Pierce reminded me of shopping for those high-end products at Drury's groceries on the Upper Common in Fitchburg.

Christmas Traditions in Boston brought back R H Stearns, Filene's and Jordan Marsh where we shopped before going to see the Christmas tree lighting in Boston Common.

Kenmore Square and the Fenway made me remember my 6th grade teacher who in 1950 took us for our graduation trip to Fenway Park for a baseball game starring Ted Williams and 1963 when my new husband and I held our wedding reception at the historic Hotel Kenmore.

Howard Johnson's brought back the taste of fried clams after our Leominster High School teenage dances on Saturday nights.

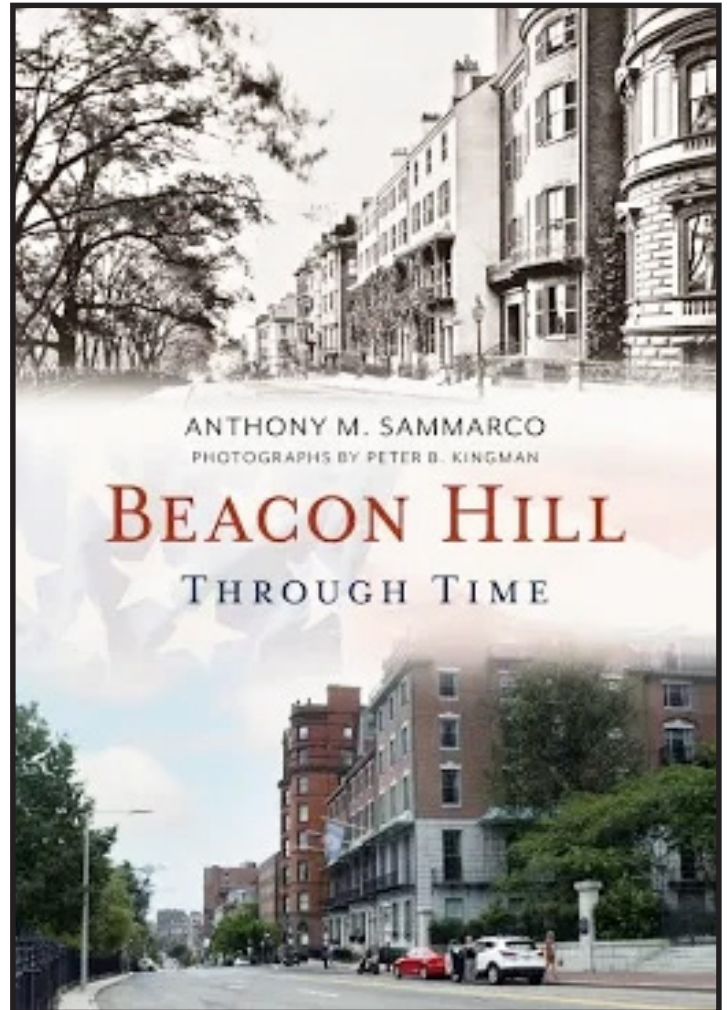
The Other Red Line -- not exactly the Red Line that I commuted on from Quincy into Boston.

Dorchester -- where my son Peter was born at St. Margaret's Hospital

Christmas Tree Shops began on Cape Cod in the 1970's and grew into an eighty-two-store chain in 20 states that ended its run a few years ago. That included one Rhode Island store in Middletown, the best place for impulse shopping when I lived in Jamestown.

After I'd finished looking back, I bought *Beacon Hill: Through Time* to prepare for introducing the author. My favorite picture of Beacon Hill is on page 67. It shows the Charles Street Meeting House where in 1960 I was commissioned by the Universalist Service Committee to serve as a volunteer for a year in Germany.

Constructed in 1915 at Commonwealth Avenue and Kenmore Street, the Hotel Kenmore famously operated as the "Baseball Hotel" after World War II by housing all 14 visiting Major League Baseball teams. It was later converted into a college dormitory, and today serves as Kenmore Abbey, a senior housing facility.



Carolyn Roberts

The Day I Got the Perfect Cribbage Hand but Lost the Game

I have played cribbage since I was a child. I taught my children to play, then my grandchildren. Now my great-granddaughter is just starting.

My husband, Ed, and I played every day—over breakfast coffee, on airplanes, wherever we happened to be. We carried a travel cribbage board and kept a running score throughout the year: a nickel a point, double for a skunk, and fifty cents a game. The final reckoning came every New Year's Eve.



Cribbage is a wonderful blend of luck and strategy. The goal is to be the first player to reach 121 points, scoring by making combinations such as pairs, runs, and totals of fifteen. Players keep score by moving pegs along a cribbage board.

One of the game's great legends is the perfect 29 hand—the highest possible score in a single hand. It requires a very specific combination of five cards and is extraordinarily rare, occurring only about once in every 216,580 hands.

In all the years and hundreds of games I played, I had never gotten one. Then, one day, I finally did.

There was only one problem: Ed won the game before I had the chance to count my hand. After waiting a lifetime for the perfect 29, I was holding it in my cards while watching my husband peg out and win.

It was a little like making a hole-in-one and still finishing last in a golf tournament.

Oddly enough, I think losing the game made the moment more memorable. I don't remember who won most of our cribbage games. But I will never forget the day I got the perfect hand—and lost.