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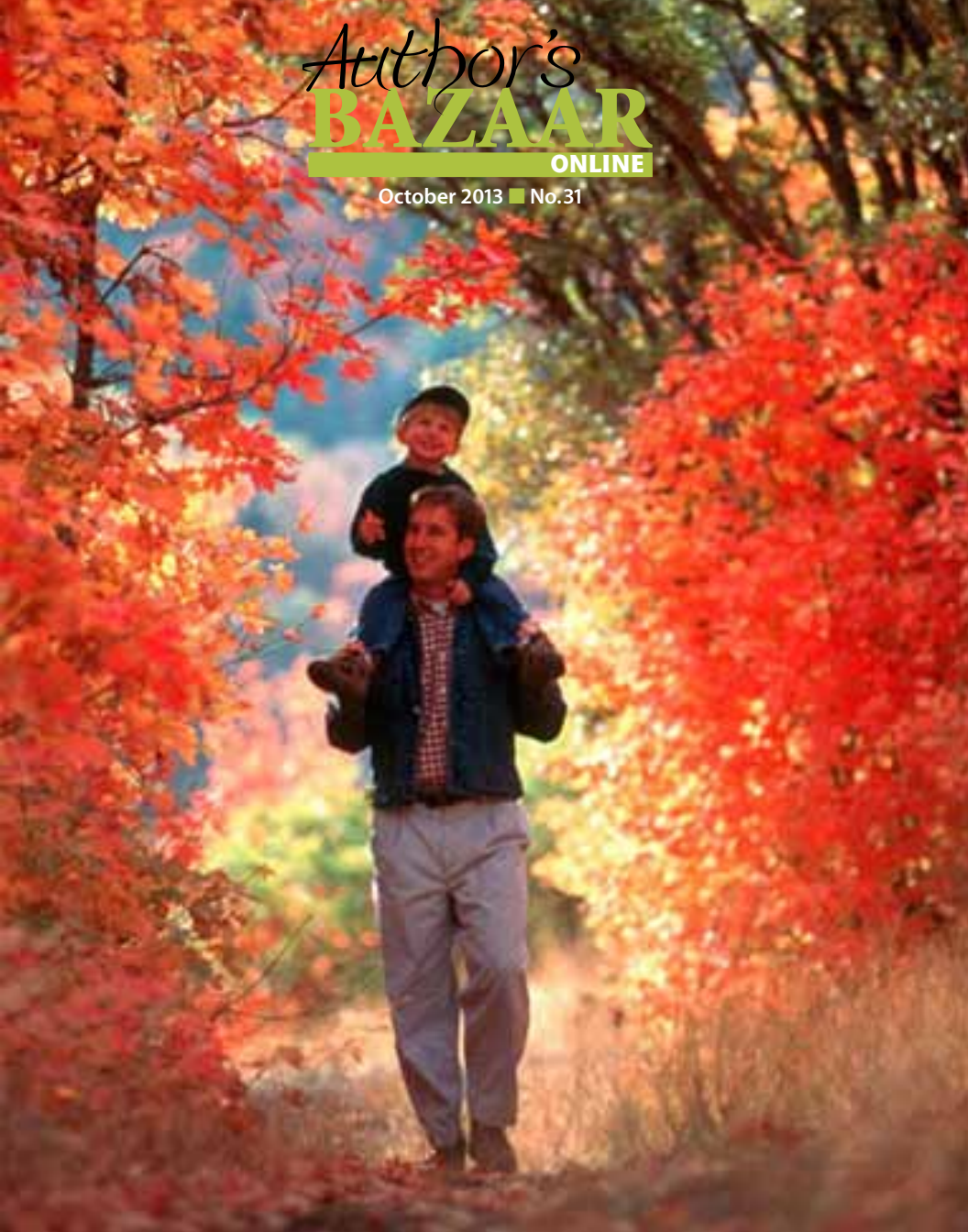


EDITOR'S NOTES

Dean Rea

Author's Bazaar greets two writers who accepted invitations to join us online this month.

Jeanette Bishop participated in a writing seminar in late September and read the Halloween story that will appear in her memoir. Jeanette is a retired music teacher, counselor and realtor who lives in Eugene, Oregon. She has been honored twice for metaphors created during Beachside writer's gatherings on the Oregon Coast.

Doug Bates, who writes about September light in a short essay, recently retired as a newspaper editorial writer and

now writes fiction in his mountaintop home in the Oregon community where he was born and reared.

Paul King, another Oregonian and a frequent contributor to *Author's Bazaar*, recounts a flying adventure in which he escapes with his Navy commission and his life.

Louise Fusfeld, who lives in Pacific Palisades, California, entertains us with a yarn about Lenny, a cool character who sports dark racing strips on his cheeks. The Leadbeater's possum that lives in Eucalyptus trees north of Melbourne, Australia, is highly endangered. Fusfeld participated in an Earthwatch expedition led by David Lindemeyer and helped gather information about them.

Kathleen DesHotel takes time from her busy career in Slidell, Louisiana, to write and to illustrate a poem about Lily and Rose.

You will tap a toe as you read David Griffin's latest contribution, "Once Upon a Time."

If you wish to contact the writer via e-mail, simply click on the blue by-line of the writer.

My Favorite Halloween Treat

By Jeanette Bishop

I've mostly dreaded Halloween. You had to help think up costumes for the kids, and it was always a lot of work to make them. You had to go shopping for masks, candy to give out and a pumpkin. And then try to get somebody to carve it.

I always try to buy the Snickers and Mars bars snack packs early so we're ready. But Scott, my live-at-home son, and I have to test one or two to see if they're still as good as last year, and invariably we find we've run out before Halloween. So, we have to go out at the last minute trying to find a store that still has some Halloween candy.

In my early years Halloween was a time when you got some candy corn and watched your dad carve a jack-o-lantern. A lot of work and thought was given to how many teeth to put into the mouth and the expression the face

should have. I knew it was a time for wearing funny or scary costumes, playing tricks on people if you could think of any — I never could — and bobbing for apples. But that was just folklore. We never did any of it.

Unless somebody gave a party, there wasn't any place to wear a costume. And there weren't any parties. But there seemed to be some excitement about the whole thing. I remember having a costume — probably a sheet with some eyeholes cut out. I must have just stood around in it looking at the jack-o-lantern all evening.

We'd heard about kids egging houses and tipping over outhouses. Sometimes the next morning we would find that car windows had been soaped. That's about as creative as they got.

But when I was 9 or 10, a new vogue set in: trick or treating. I was excited about going out with a group of friends.

But my dad said, "I don't believe in that."

"Why?"

"I just don't think it's the right thing to do."

I had no idea what he was talking about. It sounded like innocent fun to me. He didn't put his foot down about it. He just grumbled a little, and I went. I don't know how the other kids or anybody found out about trick or treating.

They said, "You go knock on doors and say 'trickortreat' and they give you candy."

Some people passed out homegrown apples and you were lucky if yours didn't have a worm in it. Others had popcorn balls, homemade taffy or graham crackers sandwiched with powdered sugar icing.

We didn't take paper bags to fill up and see who could get the most. We just ate whatever they gave us and walked long distances from house to house in the pitch black along country roads in our costumes, wondering what we'd get at the next house.

It was years later before I figured out my dad's objection to trick or treating. He didn't approve of blackmail. My dad was a principles person. It didn't quite add up, however, because practical jokes were his specialty. The trick part never entered our minds. We just went out for the treats.

My best Halloween came years later.

My unpretentious son, who is easily satisfied, free of greed, unkind words or thoughts, helpful and generous, drives me places when I don't want to go alone.

Scott's most sophisticated drink is Mountain Dew. He doesn't touch alcohol and prefers eating fast food alone rather than a gourmet meal with anybody. He is full of trivia and the funniest person I've every known, though

few people know it because he's soft-spoken.

When he was in his teens and early 20s, Scott worked as a dishwasher. I made one of my rare stops to visit him at his workplace on a Halloween and discovered that the staff had come to work in costume.

I knocked on the door and told the clown who opened it that I needed to see Scott.

"Did you see his costume?" she asked.

"No, I hadn't."

"Come here Scott," she called out.

Scott was well known for not being the most meticulous dresser. He usually had one end of his collar tucked in and the other end sticking up, his shirttail hanging out on one side, and he commonly wore mismatched soxs with his pants legs rolled up at the bottom. He probably could have come to work as usual and been a bum for Halloween.

However, he looked transformed, wearing nice slacks, a white shirt and tie. He even had his hair nearly combed, and he had on a Nancy Reagan button.

He'd come as a Republican.

September light

By DOUG BATES

You love the way January moonlight can turn a Central Oregon snowscape into magic. You never tire of the April sun painting rainbows over showery Yamhill County vineyards. You emerge from each gray spring with a yearning to see the summer sun sparkle again in the surf off Neskowin.

But you also know this truth about Northwest living: It's the September light that always sneaks up on you. It's the September light that dazzles most.

It arrives around midmonth, and there's nothing gradual about it. You always notice it with a start, as though you looked up to find a friend you didn't know was standing in the room.

Late one afternoon you step outdoors and there it is, casting impossibly long shadows over a tableau the shade of amber ale. Maybe it's on a lovely Oregon campus, or on a Willamette Valley mint field, or on the Park Blocks in

downtown Portland or Eugene.

You can see it along the waters of the Deschutes, flanked with gorgeous groves of aspen suddenly gone to gold.

You can even see it on a suburban scene, your ordinary neighborhood transformed into a cozy illustration from a children's storybook.

There it is again in the alpenglow on what's left of Mount Hood's skimpy white summer skirt.

But this isn't really summer anymore. Nor is it quite fall. Late September is Oregon's ambiguous fifth season – as fleeting as a Rogue Valley pear at its perfect moment of ripeness.

September brings our most evocative light, calling up aching half-forgotten emotions and turning our thoughts to questions of existence.

Is this brief interlude a beginning, or is it an ending?

Now and then, as days slip by, we ponder this. Eventually, we sleep on it.

Then we arise the next morning to find the wondrous light gone and the riddle locked away, luminescent no more until this time next year.

Under the Bridge and Down in the Field

by PAUL KING

It was seat of the pants, head in the prop wash, contact flight (fly only when you can see the ground). About as close to being an Eagle as man ever gets.

Fliers called her the Yellow Peril and the Stearman was the first trainer flown by countless WWII pilots. She had a steel framed body, wood framed wings, both fabric covered. She was a bi-winged, radial engine monoplane used by all the flying services to learn the ABCs of flight prior to mastering more advanced planes designed for combat.

Not the only primary trainer in the world, but surely the most memorable.

To a man, he who flew a Stearman never forgot it. Open cockpits for pilot and student in helmet and goggles,

connected by an air filled, one way Gosport tube so the instructor could scream epithets in the ears of his student who could not reply. Real Red Baron stuff.

I trained for carrier certification and recall the Stearman with lasting affection. It was March of 1945 and icy in Oklahoma. I was assigned to the Navy's Primary Flight Training Base in Norman. Light trainers used no paved runways but flew off grass turf on fixed landing gear.

Our first trip to the flight line ended in viewing a Stearman tragedy as three planes piloted by students took off in formation. A wingman forgot to adjust his trim tabs correctly for takeoff. As they shoved their throttles forward, the pilot and plane at fault climbed straight up, stalled, rolled and crashed on top of his mates. The fabric planes went down and burned fiercely with their young pilots who were beyond saving by rescuers.

To say we were shocked does not begin to describe our emotions at that moment. In spite of our stunning experience, kids as we were (mostly under 20), we saw that flying could be both exciting and perilous. Perhaps we were not all coming home with medals and rows of Zeros painted on the Grummans and Corsairs some of us would soon be flying in the South Pacific. A sad and indelible introduction to the hazards of flight.

Shortly, we began shooting 200 ft. diameter circles, always, always, always landing in the first 200 feet of our glide path so that soon our tail hooks would grab the arresting cables on the carriers and we would not coast over the bow with insufficient takeoff speed and into the drink.

We also circled the mat at 1,000 feet as the instructor cut power at some random point. Why? Because we were required to glide dead stick and head into the wind, always, always, always landing upwind in the first 200 feet of the grass mat. This training was soon to save one yellow Navy trainer and me.

Soon we were reveling in what every young flier lusts for: aerobatics. It was while I was piloting solo to perfect these maneuvers that I nearly bought the farm. The Stearman was powered by a 225hp engine, insufficient for a steep climb.

So, we were forced to dive to gain enough airspeed to practice a series of elementary dogfight maneuvers. We did a split-S to invert the plane and begin an inside loop. Still inverted at the top of the loop, we did an Immelmann, rolling the plane upright, which enabled us to head off in the same direction as the series began.

As I searched for a relatively clear patch of blue in a scattered overcast to begin my aerobatics, I spied the Canadian River Bridge, at once the flyway to cadet immortality and the way to assure we would never attain Navy wings of gold. Flying under it (flat-hatting) was a perpetual temptation for cadets at Norman. The persuasive bridge sirens challenged us whenever near: "Betcha can't do it. Betcha can't," and we all yearned to show we could, indeed.

But the bridge was an egregious Navy no-no, punishable by summary discharge from the flight program and a swift train ride to Chicago's Great Lakes boot camp for reassignment to sea as an unrated seaman. Scuttlebutt

had it, "Do it if you dare, but be super alert. Know with certitude there are no instructors nearby to report you."

That day, the evil bridge sirens were persistent: "Do it today. You'll be leaving Norman soon. Just do it." So, it came to pass, that I joined the immortals and emerged downstream, beaming in triumph. If I live to 100, I thought, this will be the most unforgettable dido of a sometime misspent youth.

The Navy required trainees to begin aerobatics at 5,000 feet, which seemed to take hours to reach in the underpowered Stearman. So, I climbed to start my series and found myself instantly inverted inside a cumulus cloud. To say we were shaken up doesn't cut it. A whirlwind snatched, mauled and tumbled us as if in some draconian shaker. Lordy, Lordy I thought, forgive me for I have sinned. The Devil made me do the bridge. But, still inverted, I came into the sunlight and rolled the plane upright.

It was only then I felt hot oil on my face and noticed that it covered my heavy, fleece-lined winter flight suit. And that I had to clear my goggles with my sleeve. Then the engine began to sputter and my Stearman began losing altitude. I nosed it down to regain flight speed.

I raised my goggles and sought a likely place to make a dead stick landing. And Lady Luck smiled. I spied a farmer

who had just begun spring plowing but still had ample acreage in cover crop stubble. I could glide down onto that and it appeared unlikely the Stearman's fixed landing gear would stick in the frozen mud and cause it to nose over and cartwheel and maybe burn. So, I said a little canticle and set her down gently.

The farmer ambled over and, after I assured him I was OK, said he'd go to the house and call the base. A Navy car with pilot and mechanic showed up and soon had the plane in shape to fly it home. I rode back with their delivery driver.

At the base, I was summoned before a squadron board. While my heart raced and sweat oozed down my khaki shirt, the brass told me I had showed skill, courage and good judgment. This was unexpected praise as I was sure that an instructor had seen me do the bridge and that I would be on the train to Chicago in the morning.

I never flew off a carrier, shot down a Zero nor heard the sound of guns. WWII ended in August 1945 when I was in advanced training at Corpus Christi with six months left to earn wings. I survived a crosswind landing blunder there, but that's another story. I could have signed up to finish a four-year hitch as a second Louie with wings in the Marine Corps, but entered the inactive Navy Reserve, then

enrolled in the University of Washington on the GI Bill to seek another career.

Boeing produced nearly 10,000 Stearmans. The Navy trained 65,000 pilots in them (1941-45). Surprisingly, some of the planes are in use to this day and four have appeared repeatedly at the Hillsboro Air Show near Portland, Oregon, offering rides for $100. Crop dusters gave them a second life after WWII.

The Stearman was valued for maneuverability at low altitudes. Dusters replaced the 225hp with a 450hp engine and placed a chemical hopper in the front cockpit. A few of these venerable planes, first manufactured in 1934, continue to appear all over the country.

Could just be, before I become too decrepit, when I've some green in my jeans, and I'm wallowing in nostalgia and not quite yet senile, I just might pony up $100 for one last swing around the field in the Yellow Peril. If I do, you can bet a silver dollar I will, in my mind, have my hand on the stick again and be smiling and emerging in my Stearman from the downriver side of the highway bridge over the Canadian River near Norman, Oklahoma.

lenny the leadbeater

by LOUISE FUSFELD

Lenny was a young, radical Leadbeater's possum. His Latin name, *gymnobelideus leadbeateri*, means "naked glider." Lenny didn't know why humans called him this. He wasn't a glider, and he wasn't naked. They were naked. He had a nice coat of grayish-brown fur that was fluffy as cappuccino foam. He also sported dark racing stripes on his cheeks and one going all the way down his back. Thomas Splintermayer, the eminent ecologist, said it was to make him look like a big glop of sap. But Lenny knew it was to make him look cool.

Lenny was a hard-line anti-human. Humans cut down

his old-growth eucalyptus forests and put up cheap, sub-standard housing to replace his natural tree-hollows. Then, to add salt to the wounds, regiments of people reeking of bug spray would come into the forest at night to spy on him and his brethren.

Lenny's mother, Mathilda, told him not to be so inflexible. There were good humans and bad humans, just like there were good possums and bad possums. Ever since Lenny was an embryonic possum in his mom's pouch, she had told him about Thomas Splintermayer, the famous ecologist, who was trying to save the Leadbeater's possums by influencing forestry management policies. Now that Lenny was a young adult possum, however, he realized that his mother's mind had been poisoned by establishment propaganda.

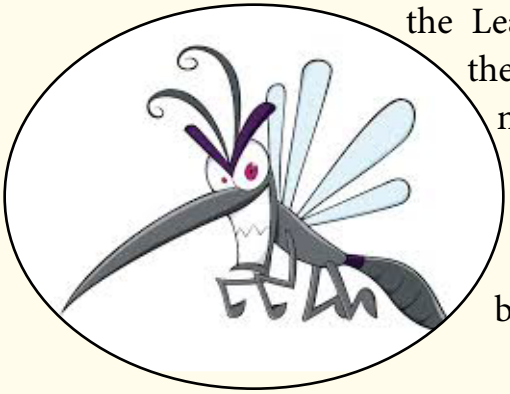
The Alternative Nightly, a paper run by young, left-paw possums, had implicated Splintermayer in the horrible trapping rampages. Traps were being set with generic peanut butter and stale oats to tempt hungry, at-risk marsupials. The morning after being caught, a groggy human with coffee-breath would pop open the door, grab the occupant from the trap and shove a bag over his head, probably to avoid criminal identification. Then the victim would be unceremoniously fondled and have some vile-

smelling white sap splashed on its ear. If Splintermayer were the ringleader of these torturers, he had to be stopped.

Together with his like-minded comrades, Lenny planned the revolution. Works by Che Guevara and Subcomandante Marcos were consulted for strategy while Jackie Chan movies provided ideas for the hand-to-hand combat.

Finally the night came when Splintermayer and a mob of his spies invaded the catchment where Lenny and his tribe lived. They tramped around, peed in the bushes and told some tall tales, which the ones with American accents seemed to believe. Then they noisily settled themselves under the older trees with possum hollows and waited to catch a glimpse of an endangered celebrity.

Lenny and his troops set their well-crafted plan into action. For the first stage, they sent in some Greater Gliders to distract them with dramatic smacks into trees. This gave the Leadbeaters time to position themselves without being noticed. Then Lenny gave the cue to the mercenary mosquitoes to start the irritation maneuvers. Just before a Leadbeater changed



position, the mosquitoes would intensify their swarming of the enemy force's faces and ears, causing massive flailing and swatting of their own heads. At the same time, a few snakes were strategically placed to slither along thighs, creating panic and an all-consuming preoccupation with imminent death.

By the end of their possum watch, Splintermayer's supporters were weakened by fear and were hungering to see a Leadbeater in the wild. One of the American invaders from New Jersey mumbled something about suing the tour company if he didn't see any of "those little furry bastards." At least Lenny thought he said, "furry."

To restore morale to his forces, Splintermayer said he'd try his imitation of a distressed Leadbeater.

Although none of the Leadbeaters were fooled by this routine, one of them would usually run down after a bit just to get him to stop and maybe give his hand a nip to add drama. This time, however, Lenny had a full assault organized to scare Splintermayer's troops into staying away for good.

Splintermayer gathered his mob near some trees known to house Leadbeaters, had them turn off their lights and started tch-tch-tch-tch-tching. Lenny waited a few minutes to heighten the tension. The ecologist knew it sometimes

took a few rounds; so he said he'd give it one last go before they headed out.

Following the last "tch," there was dead silence. Finally, after about a minute, Splintermayer gave up and said, "Guess they don't feel like saving their chum tonight." The disgruntled humans turned on their heels and headed back to the trucks.

This was the moment. Lenny signaled to his Leadbeater insurgents, and they attacked in unison. It was the Boston Tea Party of the possum world. Some ran up legs, others jumped onto heads and licked ears and Lenny landed on Splintermayer's chest, slipped down his overalls and gave him a hearty chomp in his most austral region.

All of the other possums easily escaped as their victims were mostly urban types. Splintermayer, however, knew how to catch possums. Before Lenny knew what had happened, he was enveloped in a large hand and was staring straight into Splintermayer's smiling face.

When Lenny woke from his faint and realized he was still alive, he assumed he must be in a high security prison and would be tortured for information about his allies. After examining his surroundings, however, he seemed to have been plopped down in Leadbeater's heaven. Maybe he had died.

He was lying in a large Leadbeater's nest made of soft eucalyptus bark. When he crawled out, he found himself in the midst of fresh wattle trunks bursting with sap. Being a bit peckish after his ordeal, he scrambled down a branch and hungrily lapped up some of the frothy liquid. When he looked up with a sap moustache still clinging to his upper lip, he saw peering down at him from behind a yellow wattle flower the most beautiful female Leadbeater he had ever seen. He quickly wiped his mouth, surreptitiously sniffed his armpit and grinned flagrantly. The female stifled a chuckle and extended her nose in greeting.

"Leadbeater, Lenny Leadbeater," Lenny chirped in a strangled attempt to act suave.

"I'm Violet," the comely Leadbeater replied. She then began to explain their situation, and Lenny listened to her like a kookaburra at a grub hole.

Violet told him that they were being held in captivity for a couple of years for breeding purposes and would then be returned to their home. Lenny began to hyperventilate at the word "breeding" but managed to maintain his breathing and a few shreds of social dignity.

She also had learned from the keeper that all the work Splintermayer and his team were doing was to gather information to save the Leadbeater's habitat. Her sincerity

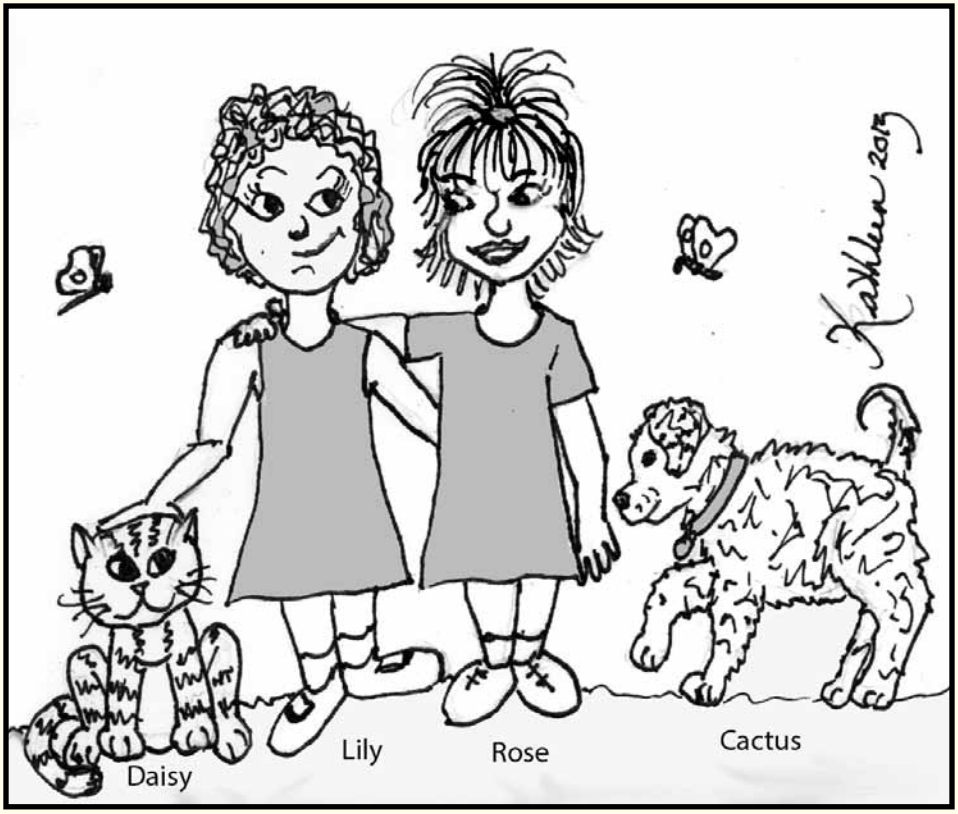
and straightforward nature convinced Lenny that she was telling the truth.

Lenny began to think that although these ecologists' means were somewhat incommodious to the possums (current situation excepted, of course), they seemed to have their hearts in the right place. Mathilda may have been right all along. There might yet be hope for the human race.

Disclaimer

All characters contained in this work are completely fictional. Any resemblance to persons living or dead, including David Lindenmayer, is completely coincidental and not a good enough reason to sue the author for defamation of character.

No possums, gliders, snakes or even mosquitoes were harmed in the production of this story.



LILY AND ROSE

By KATHLEEN DESHOTEL

Lily and Rose were both born in the spring
When beautiful birds were all on the wing.

On May 27, two babies would meet
To share birthdays and be best friends, oh so sweet

The two families were neighbors on Garden Drive,
One at 103 and one at 105.

Mothers named their two pretty, little flowers
After thinking of names for many hours.

When Mrs. Petal first saw her baby's nose,
It was so red that she named her baby Rose.

A twisted half a grin that looked so silly
Caused Mrs. Bloom to call her baby Lily.

They were such happy babies each sunny day.
Outside in their playpens they'd babble away

As if talking with their own unique words
While waving their arms at red and blue birds.

Soft breezes would make the tree leaves wiggle.
This caused the babies to smile and giggle.

The baby girls grew to toddlers together
And would come out every day in good weather.

They continued to jabber in their own way
"Goo Goo" and "Ou Ou" were some words they would say

As a yellow and white kitty named Daisy
Mewed in response, then yawned ever so lazy.

Their mamas loved to hear them say what they could,
Little words no one else ever understood

Except for Daisy. She's a very smart cat,
Who listened as they spoke about this and that.

Lily asked Daisy, "O O Be Bo Woo Bi?"
Daisy meowed, "Yes, I see the butterfly."

Rose wiggled her fingers toward a strange thing,
And Daisy meowed, "Watch out; that can sting!"

Daisy waved her paw at the huge bumblebee.
It quickly flew off to a purple pansy.

The two girls and the cat became fast friends
Playing and conversing in their gardens.

Daisy taught lessons she thought would be good
For them to know about their neighborhood.

"Meow mew mew" meant don't touch the leaves of three;
They'll make you itch because that's poison ivy.

Then Daisy shrieked to Lily and Rose, "Mew-eet,"
Meaning, "Don't you ever run out in the street!"

"Our mothers have warned us all about the street
Where the cars and trucks can run over our feet!"

Daisy, the cat, cautioned them about Cactus,
"That big, furry brown dog, he might attack us."

Lily thought, "What an awful situation.
I'm glad Daisy gives us an education."

"That dog is big and causes me to worry.
He thinks everywhere is his territory."

They listened to Daisy's every meow sound.
She knew about things because she'd been around.

But, one breezy Thursday, Daisy didn't show up.
Daisy hadn't even drunk the milk in her cup.

Lily and Rose waited and waited for her,
But there was no sign of the bright yellow fur.

Lily and Rose could only make one guess –
Daisy must be busy with other business.

Perhaps she had some other children to teach,
Or maybe she was out frolicking on the beach.

On Friday there was still no sign of that cat,
Not in the house or the car or under a hat.

Saturday they saw Cactus, the dog, barking at birds,
"Woof, woof, woof," but they couldn't comprehend his words.

"Arf, arf," he continued barking where he sat.
Too bad they didn't speak dog, but only cat.

Rose wondered what Cactus, the dog, was saying.
It's obvious that he wasn't just playing.

Furry, brown Cactus raised his head really high,
And he howled and pointed his nose to the sky.

Finally, the little girls looked up at the tree
Where way, way up high clung a frightened Daisy.

Her eyes were all big and her mouth showed a frown
Because she had no idea how she'd get down.

"Meow, Meow, Meeeeow," the yellow cat screeched.
Woof," barked Cactus, "I don't think she can be reached.

She climbed up there because she was scared of me,
But Woofy, Woof, Woof is as sweet as could be."

Mrs. Petal said, "Doggie can stop yelping;
I called the firemen. They are always helping."

A big red fire truck came to help them all.
The fireman didn't want Daisy to fall

So, he climbed up a ladder to rescue her.
Daisy was so happy she began to purr.

Everyone cheered with their hands in the air
Even the dog with his paws full of hair.

After Daisy's rescue, they all realized
They should not ever judge by fur or by size.

Everyone learned something as this story ends,
And all four of them join as really good friends.

Matthew 7:1 Do not judge that ye may not be judged.

Once Upon a Time

By DAVID GRIFFIN

I met Tony Bennett in New York City at the famous 21 Club. It was a busy lunchtime two days before Christmas of 1963 and the staff put him on the service elevator with me, special treatment for a celebrity, believe it or not. To be kept from the bother of other diners on the main elevator, only to wind up riding with me.

I was on my way up to the top floor to work on a punched card sorter in the club's office. Tony didn't object to my presence. ♫**A Stranger In Paradise**♫, I was a young repairman wearing a business suit, hopefully on my path from ♫**Rags To Riches**♫.

My tool bag was made to look like a knowledge worker's attaché case. Tony Bennett was shorter than I expected, and he wore a suit that would have cost me two or three month's salary. I just stood there trying to look like it was not the first time I had come within a half mile of a world-famous celebrity. Without a mirror on the elevator, I could not know if I was successful. But I think I **♫Put On A Happy Face♫**.

Just the two of us ascended in the tiny elevator car. I had stepped on in the basement, having come in from the street through the waiters' locker room, stamping the season's first snow off my cheap shoes. He got on at the first floor, headed for the private dining rooms on the third floor while I continued to the fifth. We spoke not a word. He hummed something while I cleared my throat.

Just as the elevator stopped at his floor, I said, "I must tell you something, **♫I Left My Heart In San Francisco♫.**

The doors opened and he stepped out without acknowledging my attempt at conversation. He may not have heard me.

I was twenty years old and from a small city farther upstate. I knew a little piano, but never thought to ask Mr. Bennett if he needed an extra accompanist

who could play just about any Chuck Berry song in the key of C. And not much else. It might have been time for the aging crooner to consider updating his repertoire. If he could do ♫**Sing You Sinners,**♫ he could certainly include Chuck's classics like Maybellene and Roll Over Beethoven. Forcing his voice up to the key of C should have been no problem for a professional.

Frankly, I'd probably work for free. And carry his bags. I could even try to transpose to A.

I wasn't very realistic at age twenty. It's a wonder I ever got any work done. On that morning, the most important thing rolling around in my mind was not whether I could remember the wiring circuits that controlled the little magnets that pushed down the long thin blades just in the nick of time to send a punched card to the correct pocket on the sorter machine. I was ♫**Younger Than Spring**♫ and my mind concentrated on the snow falling on the streets of Manhattan and how pretty it looked.

To some people snow is not pretty. I have to say I would lean in that direction as I got older. But in my early adulthood — a period I now more honestly label my late childhood — snow was gorgeous. It would bring to mind a pretty girl with red cheeks sitting on a

toboggan wearing a pink scarf and tight jeans.

My thoughts jumped to later, sheltered from a snowstorm in a dimly lit café, hunched over mugs of cinnamon-laced hot cider, her blue eyes and flaming red hair tugging on my heart as I sat in **♫The Shadow Of Her Smile♫.** Still later, a dark sky arched high above a street lamp shining down on the snow covered sidewalk as our feet crunched along, bodies shivering inside our clothes, anxious to get to her apartment to enjoy each other's warmth. **♫For Once In My Life♫**, I was in love.

♫Where Do I Begin?♫ It is probably true that the last person you would expect to make a mature decision about a potential lifetime mate would be an unrealistic older child of twenty who couldn't remember whether the little magnets that sent a punched card to the correct pocket were powered by a pulse from the cam contact or the detector switch. More alarming, I didn't care about cams and switches and detectors that morning.

I went back down the elevator and out into the middle of West 52nd Street to build a snowman. But of course there is absolutely nowhere you can build a snowman on West 52nd Street, except perhaps on the roof of a parked car. **♫Just In Time♫,** I stopped

myself from making a mess on top of a very plain late model automobile when I realized I was approaching an unmarked police car.

What I remember best about the girl is she was nice to me. Most young women I met at age 20 looked right through me as though I was a sheet of glass, like the door in the office building they pushed aside and went through each morning. To get upstairs to a job, to earn money, to buy pretty clothes, to attract a man like me. But not me.

In our twenties, most boys and girls were unaware we were simply at the age for chasing after someone else's life we wanted to share. ♫**That Old Devil Moon**♫ had a simple reproductive battleplan that demanded we couple soon, while we still might live long enough to raise human children to the age of their own coupling. We humans had no better game plan than a ♫**Firefly**♫**.**

Most of us ran around and tried to look smart, pretty or handsome. We hoped to meet the one who would serve our fancy, and maybe even our needs. ♫**I May Be Wrong**♫**,** but I probably had no idea what my real needs were.

One definite need was to eat, so I went back upstairs to my job and ♫**I Got Rhythm**♫**.** I finally

came to understand the music of the spheres, the interposer magnets and how to set 8-thousandths of an inch adjustment on the card feed blade. ♫**Maybe This Time**♫ I would remember to turn off the power before probing the circuits.

For many of my friends, their one true love or a reasonable facsimile eventually showed up. Or they got tired of searching and settled for companionship or sex. Some gazed with new eyes over old ground that held past partners. And if their old lovers were now spoken for, one could certainly find the old personalities wrapped around new candidates.

Some of my friends hoped what didn't work in the past would work now. "♫**They Can't Take That Away From Me**♫," they said. Many were disappointed to find you unlearn a good lesson at your own peril.

Evidently all of us believed five or six dates at the movies or tucked into a booth in a quiet bar were enough to form the basis of a lifetime commitment. Some of us were right.

Biology pounded at the door and families, parsons, chapels, gown makers, formal attire renters and honeymoon destinations coaxed young lovers toward cementing their union.

One of **♫My Girl's♫** friends already had married a boy who sold hot dogs downtown in an office building to earn money to buy her pretty clothes that made her attractive. **♫But Not For Me♫.** I wanted the girl who promised she'd sail away with me on a ship called the **♫The Good Life♫.**

"For us," I told her, "it's **♫A Time For Love♫.**"

"**♫This Is All I Ask♫**," she answered, "**♫I Wanna Be Around♫."**

"♫Because Of You♫," I said, "I will never walk that **♫Boulevard of Broken Dreams♫**."

"**♫The Best Is Yet To Come♫**," she said.

Tony Bennett may have said the same each of the three times he married. I still feel that way after nearly 50 years of marriage. And if Tony and I were to meet again on an elevator, we might agree that for us, the birds, the bees and the marriage industry, **♫The Music Never Ends♫.**