

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

NUMBER 27, FALL 2018

EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

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When we allow our hearts to resonate with stories, we feel a reverberation, the echoing spirit of all humanity, and the universe itself, beating within. We are called into harmony, and we feel our spirits aligned with all that is. As Wedlidi Speck states in his introduction to this important book:

Reconciliation is storied differently by different people... In the end, by sharing the stories in this book, we may just find the definition of reconciliation is embedded in each story shared... Readers will find that reconciliation is personal, and it includes family and aims towards community. To that end, in order to understand the fullness and richness of reconciliation, we hope each reader will find a role in reconciliation by placing all these stories together in a mixing bowl of sorts and coming up with a broader view that will heighten our country's cultural awareness, deepen Canadian sensitivity, sharpen Canadian agility and grow cultural safety in all our country's homes, villages and work spaces.

The Journal of Creative Aging

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SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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FROM THE EDITOR

It is with great pride that we present this 27th issue of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* and launch into our eighth year of publication.

By exploring our imaginations through creative expression, we begin to live more fully and find pathways to wellness, recovery and transformation. Encouraging others to present personal perspectives through imaginative creative forms has directed my life journey, first as an English and Visual Arts teacher and now in retirement as an advocate for creative wellness. I believe the heart of who we are beats through sharing our stories. When words are not enough, we turn to images and symbols to communicate and seek wholeness. Relaxing into authentic, inventive self-expression allows one to realize a transformation into the core experience of healing. While creating, one begins to establish a head, heart and hand connection that allows us to actualize who we are. Teaching creativity and observing has shown me that tapping into the heart's intelligence and creating from it bring a deep sense of

inner knowing, wisdom and self-worth. The Journal has presented seven years of creators generously sharing how creating can be an effective wellness practice. "Art is medicine," Joan Landell explains in this issue as she relates her growth into her Aboriginal culture.

Recent research demonstrates that it is possible to build a "cognitive reserve" through engaging in novel, creative experiences, and these experiences can have a protective effect on the brain. Studies support the idea that engaging the mind may protect neurons, the building blocks of the brain, from dying and also stimulate growth of new neurons, or may help recruit new neurons to maintain cognitive activities in old age. This issue's opening article by Martha Moore presents her personal experience of creative wellness and healing through painting and drawing. Poet Janice Notland reflects that after pursuing other healing modalities she ultimately found healing in "that deep place my own voice released" when she connected to nature and began to write poetry. The voices in this issue laud self-

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discovery through creative expression. When the intent behind our art is self-expression, the process of creating becomes a wellness practice. The Journal is proud to publish articles by those engaged in reflecting, creating and enlivening being.

“There are two basic values that can assist us to heal and remain whole, if we honour them...

The first value is our own creative self... Its expression may flow through many channels: through writing, art or music, through the inventiveness of work or in any number of ways unique to all of us, whether it be cooking, gardening or the art of social discourse. The point is to honour the urge. To do so is healing for ourselves and for others; not to do so deadens our bodies and our spirits...

The second great affirmation is of the universe itself – our connection with all that is.

When The Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress, Gabor Maté, MD

– Karen Close, Editor

SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO SAGE-ING

• **Article is to be related to aging and creativity, in any of its many forms, as a path to gaining wisdom and self awareness and/or the act of harvesting life’s wisdom as a legacy for future generations.**

- Article to be attached as a document in .rtf format;
- 500 to a 1500 word maximum;
- Photos: Please attach each photo separately including: the writer’s headshot photo and four or five photos, related to article . All photos should be attached in high resolution jpg format with a caption;
- Insert the word “**photo**” with its caption within the article where you would like each image placed (we’ll try to honour this request as layout permits).
- Please include brief bio information (one or two short paragraphs) placed at the end of your article; this is meant to give the reader an idea of who you are, your passions and/or what you do and have done with your life that feels relevant to the article. Include contact info: email, website, blog address – whatever you want to include. For each journal, due date is the 10th of the month preceding release date. We release around the equinoxes and solstices. **For next issue due date is November 10th, 2018**
- Email the article and photographs to karensageing@gmail.com

Antiquity identified a sage as a wise person ... wisdom is a form of goodness, and is not scientific knowledge but another kind of cognition.

– Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b

INTERPRETING MY WORLD

THROUGH DRAWING AND PAINTING

Martha Moore SCA, NCA



Did you know that there are scientifically proven health benefits to being involved in the arts? My name is Martha Moore. I'm a successful visual artist who has lived with progressive multiple sclerosis for over twenty-four years, and, thanks to my all-consuming passion for painting, I'm doing very well in body and spirit.

As anyone who has lived with a chronic disease knows, you face daily challenges others can only imagine. For me, my mobility has been compromised, and simply rising from a chair becomes scaling Mount Everest in effort. Thankfully, my life isn't defined by MS; it's certainly slowed me down, but just enough for me to make a wonderful discovery that I have some talent. I can paint and create contemporary landscapes and abstract paintings that people are drawn to and enjoy.

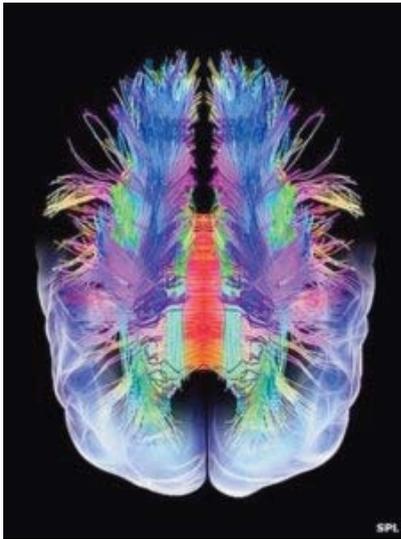
My life since moving to Vernon, BC, in 2011 has evolved in a completely different direction than I ever imagined. After a fulfilling career in television broadcast journalism in Alberta (Global CanWest and Allarcom) and corporate communications in Toronto (McLuhan & Davies Communications),

where I raised a family (two daughters with six grandchildren), I moved to the beautiful Okanagan Valley. I credit my move as the motivation behind my shift from interpreting my world through writing to drawing and painting. I've replaced the work and sports activities I used to do with everything art, never thinking it would one day be the nucleus of my world as it is today.

The creation of my paintings has done wonders for my brain; the process has encouraged it to rewire and regenerate. German neurologists at the University Hospital of Erlangen have been studying the "brain on art." According to a recent experiment, while painters have their ups and downs, it's not painkillers they're reliant on. Instead, it seems artists are engaged in the refinement of grey

Refuge





Left: A Creative Brain – Scientists “read dreams” using brain scans (Rebecca Morelle, BBC Science)

Right: Tidal Flats



matter – building connections between regions of the brain for higher, more integrated functioning. In the study, 28 men and women took a “resilience scale measurement” psychology test, agreeing or disagreeing with statements like, “I can usually find something to laugh about,” and had their brains scanned. Then, once a week for ten weeks, they either learned to paint or attended an art appreciation class where they analyzed and discussed artwork with an historian. After the ten-week period, participants retook the resilience test and had their brains rescanned. Researchers noticed that the painting group saw raised levels of brain function connectivity and a considerable bump in psychological resilience, while the appreciation group remained unchanged. The painters’ brain improvement was pinpointed to within their default mode networks – an area responsible for introspection, self-monitoring and memory.

Beyond



Perhaps you already knew this, but art-making demands our experiences and observations be processed in inventive, abstract ways, with focus and emotional alertness – or, as the researchers concluded, painting requires “enhanced memory processing, which is indeed required when stored knowledge is connected with new information to create creative works.” Squeeze out ... You’re only a painting away from a better brain. Creating, whether you’re good at it or not, is good for the body and soul.

Painting is my meditation. I zone out and immerse myself in the process; it’s my healing time and the only time I’m completely pain-free.

I believe some things are just meant to be – and being an artist



Awakening

is what I'm meant to do. I'm no longer able to walk without an aid, but I can express myself with paint and create images that have an appeal, that evoke an emotional response that I can share with others. MS took away my mobility, but provided me with an opportunity I might have otherwise missed ... and for that I feel truly blessed.

Martha Moore is a self-taught artist who without fail paints every day. "When I paint I'm totally immersed in the moment and lose many hours focused only on my canvas, the marks I make and the feelings they evoke. No matter its size, when the painting is finished, my canvas is covered in paint and as a rule so am I – I'm exhausted and exhilarated. Beneath layers of texture and colour, a story on canvas begins to emerge, apart from any intention on my behalf. What appears is often a mystery, and quite arresting in its intensity. I'm very grateful for the

'stories' I'm able to create and even more grateful for the connections and pleasure they bring to others. My paintings are recognized for their strong expressive strokes, emotional energy and unique blends of colour."

Martha is very involved in the arts community, and in a relatively short time has excelled as an artist. As a volunteer, she is a Past President of the North Okanagan Federation of Canadian Artists, and a Director of the Arts Council North Okanagan. Her art designations include being an elected member with both the National Society of Canadian Artists (Toronto) and North American Painters Contemporary Fine Arts (USA).

Martha's paintings have been accepted in national and international juried shows and currently they can be found in seven galleries across North America, including Leyton Gallery, St. John's, NL; ARTSY Gallery, New York, NY; Gainsborough Gallery, Calgary, AB; and Arte Funktional, Kelowna, BC.

www.marthamoorecanadianart.com marwest2@gmail.com

WRITING AS A WAY OF PERCEIVING



Janice Notland

“But beauty interrupts restrictions in every place and thing.”
Stephen David Ross

I started writing poetry in the spring of 2006 while living in a small valley outside of Nelson, BC. My husband and I had left Vancouver, where we had both lived for many years, to begin a new chapter in our lives. Our new home was surrounded by forest with a creek running through the property. This move ignited in me a creative spark I didn't know existed, or at least had not recognized. Looking back I see that this seed had been inside me all along waiting for the right conditions to germinate and come to fruition.

In my twenties I had a lot of scripts going around in my head of what I would call plays or stories. They were filled with crazy and wonderful friends and acquaintances who peopled my life. Not being involved in the art world, however, I never gave them much attention.

For several years during the same period I had a piano at which I would sit down sporadically to play. I enjoyed playing anything – from classical to Latin, to Blues, to Folk. The piano was easy to pick up again, having taken lessons as a child for five years, but writing was the furthest thing from my mind.

Later, in my thirties, I became interested in different healing modalities. I began journalizing as a way of writing down what I experienced in meditation, dreams, or in particular workshops I attended. Again, I never thought of trying seriously to write. I assumed that was for actual writers who knew the craft.

This all changed when I was living in an idyllic country setting. What a change from a noisy, bustling city. The mountain air was pure and fresh, and the silence in the valley was so profound it reverberated. I could hear its unmistakable voice, and from that deep place my own voice released. It was this intense connection with nature, I believe, that gave life to some of what was inside of me.

After living for about a year in our peaceful oasis, a friend suggested I write a poem about what I had experienced in a healing energy session she had given me. When I commented that I didn't write, she suggested I try.

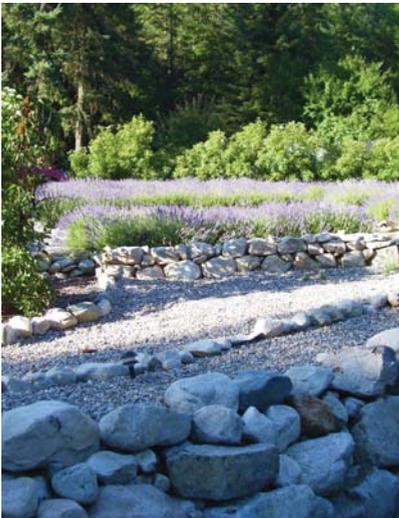
Spirit must have been present to urge me because I went home, surprised myself and wrote a poem. The next day I wrote another, then another, until a month later I had written over thirty poems.

Our country home





Top: Waterfall above our house
Above: Lavender beds in our yard



As each new poem came to life I felt such satisfaction. I was communicating with a part of myself that was truly who I was, and it was very nourishing. Not sure at that time where these poems were coming from, writing them made me really happy, and I didn't question it. A part of me knew enough not to get in the way. Something alchemical was happening: I had opened to a higher source flowing through me. This touched something beyond the ordinary senses, though the five senses were definitely involved.

Whatever this process was, it changed who I was on some level, because it provided a new avenue to express the beauty all around me, and allowed an insight into how important nature and beauty had always been to me.

Often what is most dear to us can be clouded until we name it. I think certain aspects of ourselves are so innate they do not register as being valuable, or our self-esteem may have been so low at certain periods of our lives that we haven't felt we were worthy enough to pursue some skill or interest.

In beginning to write I was able to open to beauty in a new way. To me this awakened perception serves as an actual function in forming my inner world and is a meditation on life itself. Relaxing into my imagination is not a running away. To me it is an embracing of all that is, good and bad, and a way of understanding polarities. My writing builds a container that holds all of who I am, and from which I can then live my life, hopefully with integrity and compassion for myself and others.

Opening to beauty, light and silence is life changing. Once open to these forces, I believe they come looking for you, and synchronicities begin to appear more readily.

Writing also provided a vehicle for me to express sorrow. Writing at times helped me step aside momentarily from a painful situation and become the witness, as is taught in Eastern spiritual traditions. This new skill provided a welcome relief, perspective, acceptance and resilience.

My skill became valuable when my mother developed dementia and I tried to advocate for her in providing adequate care. Many times, after yet another troubling incident in the facility she was in, I would come home and write a poem about what had happened. This would inevitably shift my energy, returning me to some degree of balance. What a gift! Writing on this topic also presented a new avenue for me to pursue. I now have a volume of writing on dementia, including poems, which I plan to publish when complete.

We all have happiness and sorrow brought to our doorsteps, as one cannot exist without the other. How we learn to deal with these emotions is crucial. I believe art can play a role in changing how we view our individual lives. That's the power of music, the visual arts, the written word, dance, film, photography, whatever medium one is drawn to. Art is an expression of who we are and it has an important place in society.

It was only after I started writing that I started reading poetry. After meeting a few writers in Nelson I was guided to poets they liked. Mary Oliver

THE MOMENT

The moment when she
was no longer herself,
has slipped away
in my own mind now.

The past several years
have pursued her unravelling,
relentless and eager.

Condition subject to variables
similar to any other decay
brought about by a crush of life.

Outside her empty apartment
I cut back wilted leaves
of beloved hostas,
clip red and yellow rose bushes,
wrap windmill palm for winter.

Neighbours appear, stepping gingerly
onto patio, one by one,
politely asking of her.

I compact dead leaves
ready for compost,
image of mom and me earlier today
room 9, unit 4, Taylor Home.

I lift a gift out of its case,
her arms reach, like
heron wings rising
with grace and precision.

Plummeting screech of bow
up and down old violin
against obstinate strings,
her eyes intense, focused.

Alerting me she is still in there
searching for lost notes
she distantly remembers
but can no longer find.

ARTISAN

Autumn frost is due this morning.
Walking out my kitchen door
on grass made spongy,
the cold north wind blown in.

Sky with pillowcases of clouds
lay shadowy streaks
upon crystal blades,
erect in the cool awakening.

Suspended at the tip of a green leaf
a tiny ball of liquid
hangs within the foliage of a lilac tree.
It is as red and delicate as a blown glass
apple
forged in an artisan's shop.

In a blaze of sunlight
scarlet spins in and out of view æ
standing one inch out either way
I lose it.

A miracle it was seen in the first place;
I wonder what else I haven't seen
right in front of my eyes
every day.

seeing, nudging me in directions previously unimagined.

Poetry is a container for my emotions and a way for me to connect to spirit. I can pour everything into the reading and writing of it.

Listening to ourselves, whether through dreams or random, idle thoughts, we begin to hear our true inner voice, and from that all things move. Writing provided me with this and I believe will sustain me in coming years no matter what events occur in my life. For this I am grateful.

Janice Notland pours a wealth of life experience into her poetry. Born in Calgary, AB, she has lived in Montreal, parts of the United States' Pacific Northwest and British Columbia. A former mental health care worker, she presently lives in Kelowna, BC. The book *Dreams Laid Down*, her first collection of poetry, was inspired by her time living outside of Nelson, BC. *Dreams Laid Down* is available by contacting Janice directly at jnotland@telus.net. Music inspired by Janice's poetry is featured on an upcoming recording by her husband, Alan Rinehart, on Ravello Records (www.ravellorerecords.com/catalog/rr7996/).

and David Whyte were two who resonated with me. Many of their interests, observations and sentiments matched my own soul's yearning. I found sustenance in their words and encouragement in their viewpoints. These were words to reach for in times of trial and words to enjoy, take delight in, and savour.

I found authors like Wendell Berry and numerous others who explained the human condition in insightful ways not often promoted and held up in our present culture. Reading them gave me peace, stillness and sanity. This, I believe, is the power of poetry.

I like the connections that come with poetry. One idea leads to another and a comparison can be drawn. This is how my writing process happens. Everything in life is a mirror if I pay attention. Light is shone anew on any situation, revealing hidden angles and opening me to creative ways of

MOON GATE

Graham Stonebridge



Graham and wife Lally

Since my late teens I have been enamoured of the Japanese/Chinese aesthetic. I painted my room in a Vancouver suburb a crisp white with a thin black and red line trim. The windows were covered in Chinese newspapers, the floor was layered with bamboo matting, steam rose from my green tea, and I sat listening to bamboo flute music slowly and eerily weave through the smoke of incense. Ahhh, heaven. I enjoyed a feeling of contentment and belonging – something that was definitely missing for most of my teen time.

Another element that found its home inside my innermost being at this time was the joy of paradox found in Zen koans. I loved the thought of the sound of one hand clapping. The expression of a Zen koan defies the brain's ability to rationally and intellectually place the koan in a nice tidy box of comprehension.

This period was also the time of one of my earliest recollections of having passed this way before. Some would name this as past-life recall. To me it is a sense of deep inner connectedness.

Fast forward from 1967 to 2017, when I was fortunate enough to have a brilliant young man, Thomas Kjørven, building thousands and thousands of square feet of magnificent dry-stone wall on a job site. This is a stone building technique done without mortar. His skills touched that same aesthetic vein that koans had kindled in me as a youth enamoured of precise randomness.

By employing Thomas Kjørven's skills, I saw an opportunity to create something of beauty and wonder. Thus the birth of our Moon Gate, a form inspired by Chinese architecture.

Now, to approach the front door of our home, one must pass beneath a circle of dry stacked stones. Several visitors have commented on the faith

required to pass beneath these heavy stones precariously balanced and held in place only by gravity. Simply put, a Moon Gate is a fully round opening which allows passage from one side of a wall to the other. It is a playful and beauty-full way to mark a transition.

The Moon Gate has an intrinsic artistic appeal because of its circular shape. The fact that it is only held together by gravity and lacks obvious support creates awe for the non-engineering mind.

The inspiration for this work of art finds its source in the insightful

o approach our front door





The interior of our front garden

words of Meher Baba, who lived in India. On his tomb is written the following:

“Eternal Beloved
Avatar Meher Baba
February 25, 1894 - January 31,
1969.

I have come
not to teach
but to awaken.”

Meher Baba has been my personal inspiration for the last 50 years and has internally assisted me through physical, mental, emotional and spiritual challenges. He sums up my adopted world cosmology thusly: “To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance, and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others by expressing in the world of forms Truth, Love, Pu-

rity & Beauty, this is the sole game which has intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments can have no lasting significance.”

I realize that the above sentence is carrying an enormous amount of information, and so I would like to unpack it just a little. I have desired to know what the Purpose of Life is since my first stirrings of consciousness at age 16. My next five years were fraught with deep inner unknowing, questing, longing and searching into the two basic questions that lead to even more questions:

WHO am i?

Who AM i?

Who am I?

and

WHAT am i doing here?

In Meher Baba’s world view, the fragrant expression of Truth, Love, Purity and Beauty in the world of forms is the only mode of being that has any lasting significance as substantive answer to these questions. To be able to

relate to oneself and to others (whether these be family, friends or acquaintances) in daily life, using these four deeply endowed words, is the goal of life itself.

It is my wish that something as simple as an opening in a wall – a Moon Gate – to our house might move others to wonder and delight in its simple beauty. May it also serve to remind me that Beauty exists everywhere that I choose to find it.

Graham Stonebridge was born in 1947 in Cambridge, England, and can remember the ration books necessary after World War II. He became an immigrant to the New World in 1957.

After a two year stint at UBC, hoping to uncover the Truth within by studying architecture and psychology, he was disappointed. From 1968 to 1970 he wandered around Europe, the Middle East and India, where he found his answer in Meher Baba. Returning home to Canada, he married and had two children. He moved back to Europe from 1972 to 1975 to learn the art of being a building contractor.

“Upon return to Canada, my marriage exploded. I came close to slipping off the planet, but, fortunately, engaged fully in life instead. My father met a sudden unexpected death at age 55, and my mother had cancer. I was taking care of my diabetic grandfather and my mentally ill grandmother, while being a single parent and a building contractor.

After this storm passed, an angel named Lally appeared, and we got married. From there life was mostly about parenting my two daughters, her daughter and our two new daughters, and operating a successful building business in the Gulf Islands.

In 1994 we moved to Kelowna to enrol the two youngest daughters in the Kelowna Waldorf school.

In 1996 we created *The Laughing Moon* Restaurant/Post Office/Gift Store/Gallery, until life said it was time to sell the business in 2003. Now I dabble in an occasional construction project, counselling, travelling God’s blue planet, watching grandchildren grow into themselves, and playing in the garden with my wife Lally. Meher Baba is taking very good care of us.”

BREATHING INTO THE VOID



Heidi Garnett

If asked, I'd probably say I'm not afraid to die, but often I say this as if I'm standing at a distance from myself. I say this with my head, my intellectual being, not my heart, my emotive and intuitive being. I know that I am of an age where time is limited, yet there is time enough for me to hold my weapons close to my chest, to fight within the armour of my defences against being hurt by some slight, some negative comment I turn over and over in my hand like a precious jewel. There is time enough for me to delay asking the question that questions the natural design of things, to push aside the fact that I am sliding downhill instead of climbing up, that I'm approaching the end of my life. I believe I know how I'll respond when I'm told I have months, weeks or days to live, but, the truth is, I don't.

"This is about a certain end. Let us then hasten to begin at the end." This line opens Jean Birnbaum's book, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, the English version of Birnbaum's interview with the famous French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, shortly before his death in 2004. When asked if he had accepted his life as it was, Derrida answered, "No, I never learned to live... *Learning to live should mean learning to die, learning to take into account absolute mortality... I have never learned to accept it, to accept death, that is.*"

Ernest Becker, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Denial of Death*, writes that all of our efforts to avoid what we see as a fearful finality result in a kind of neurosis, an armour we begin to fashion piece by piece as children and wear our entire lives as a defence against feeling the despair that Kierkegaard, a Scandinavian philosopher, describes so painfully.

"The whole order of things fills me with a sense of anguish, from the gnat to the mysteries of incarnation; all is entirely unintelligible to me, and particularly my own person. Great is my sorrow, without limits."

Like an axle around which the wheel of life turns, as we grow into adulthood we assume certain static positions, often an ego perception that we're the centre of everything and everything revolves around us. We are the centre of our own small universe, but, in this position, we can never truly interact. We watch from a distance, and the gap between our inner and outer experiences is felt as a constant and pervasive sense of separation and anxiety. And so we enter symbiotic relationships in order to feel secure. We stay busy or retreat into somnolence. We live polarised lives within the armour of our defences. Yet, from this perspective, we can only pretend our lives have meaning and that there is a reason for our existence.

Ronna Bloom
 George Elliott Clarke
 Lorna Crozier
 Amanda Earl
 Heidi Garnett
 Julie Cameron Gray
 Catherine Graham
 Cornelia Hoogland
 Doyali Islam
 Claire Kelly
 D.A. Lockhart
 Canisia Lubrin
 Ayaz Pirani
 Sandra Ridley
 Souvankham Thammavongsa
 Anna Yin

POEM IN YOUR POCKET

Wish List

Heidi Garnett

From the 2017 "Poem in Your Pocket Day" booklet

I want to meet a blue parakeet that reads the future pulling Tarot cards with one delicate outstretched foot, the hanged man uncovered. I want to own a Corvette, a 1960 red and white convertible hardtop and drive around town with my dog Bud. I want to write love poems as if world peace depends on them. I want to shape each day like a clump of clay until it becomes what my hands remember. I want to see the turnings of things, who and where we already are, light rising again in the east, the moon climbing into my attic through a trapdoor each night, a place of worship. I want to see a white-tailed deer gazing at an inverted image of itself in a frozen lake and just once the clearly marked tracks of a bobcat breaking new snow. I want to go home as if I never left. Like the sun I want to enter my life through one door and leave by another.

It is only through dismantling our defences, by admitting our fears and stepping towards them, that we can begin to truly accept our mortality and embrace a world where what seems incoherent and frightening joins hands around the dinner table. Death and life, love and hate are inextricably joined. One cannot exist without the other.

*If I speak for the dead, I must leave / this animal of my body, / I must write the same poem over and over, / for an empty page is the white flag of their surrender. / If I speak for them, I must walk on the edge / of myself, I must live as a blind man / who runs through rooms / without touching the furniture. / Yes... I can dance in my sleep and laugh / in front of the mirror. / Even sleep is a prayer, Lord (Ilya Kaminsky, "Prayer," *Dancing in Odessa*).*

Humbled, we begin to see the exquisite and perfect trajectories of our lives, difficult as they were, and the perfection in the lives of those whose deaths we've grieved so mournfully. *Truly to sing takes another kind of breath. / A breath in the void* (Rainer Maria Rilke, "In Praise of Mortality," *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Part One, #3). We begin to enter a state of mind that is perhaps a kind of not-thinking, a state of mind that bides its time and waits as the farmer does for the seed to come up and ripen. This awareness is the gift old age offers. We begin to see creative possibilities and beauty everywhere. We begin to serve dinners at the local shelter, to arrange flowers in an old porcelain vase that belonged to a beloved aunt, to walk in the woods as if each tree is a praise song, to look in the mirror and see our true face, wrinkles and all. We begin to live poetically.

In this place, we are naturally open to giving and receiving, to embracing the briefness and intangibility of life with-

out judging ourselves or others. In this place we seek the white pebbles we dropped in the forest as children. We see that our parents didn't abandon us, but set us free so we might learn how to live fearlessly. In this place we can forgive and, in turn, be forgiven. Though the path ahead isn't clearly marked, we know the way home. *Do you still not know how little endures? / Fling the nothing you are grasping / out into the spaces we breathe. / Maybe the birds / will feel in their flight / how the air has expanded*

(The quotations from Rainer Maria Rilke are from *In Praise of Mortality: Selections from Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus*, translation by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy. New York: Riverhead Books, 2005.)

The roses growing under the front window have no thought for prettier or better ones. The dog isn't worried about yesterday or tomorrow as he chews on his bone. The air feels brisk now and a door swings open. Shake off your dust and step through.

Finding your passion is the key to a generative life no matter what age you are. When I retired from thirty-some years of working in the field of education, I felt lost. Work had filled much of my time and now there were these empty spaces I didn't know how to fill, but one day I sat down at my desk and began to fan a small fire in my mind, this idea that I might create something beautiful and/or meaningful with words. Soon I was writing almost every day, but I needed guidance. Since then I have studied with some of the world's finest writers and become part of a literary family. I have completed a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at UBC Okanagan, taught at UBCO, had two books of poetry published, won or been shortlisted for numerous literary awards and had short stories and poems published in many literary magazines. Recently, I was awarded the Timothy Findley Scholarship to work on a novel, and received a Canada Council Grant to do research in Germany for this novel. I encourage you to dream big, to fan the little fire you've built in some secret corner of your mind and let it ignite your passion.

Heidi Garnett has a B.Ed., University of Lethbridge, 1968; an M.Ed., University of Western Washington, 1973, and an MFA in Creative Writing, UBC Okanagan, 2010. She is the recipient of numerous awards honouring her achievement. In 2017 her book of poetry, *Blood Orange*, launched in Calgary, Kelowna, Vernon, Nanaimo and Victoria.

**Padding Together
Towards Reconciliation,
Part 4**

JIGGING OUT OF THE COLONIAL CLOSET

GROWING INTO MY METIS SKIN

Susan Landell



I was born April 22, 1948, in Montreal, Quebec. My mother was a young Scottish/Irish woman and my dad's heritage was a mixture of Woodland Cree, Welsh and Scottish. I have two Elders – Spirit Eagle is Mohawk and Many Shawls Woman carries Lakota teachings. My mother was surprised to see a baby with a shock of dark hair and brown eyes. She was teased that she had delivered the wrong baby. I looked like a little Inuit child. My mother had fair skin, bright blue eyes and red hair. She didn't know what to make of me; she didn't accept my Aboriginality. And so began my journey of discovery to find who I am. I am proud of both sides of my heritage, although the word "Métis" was never spoken in our house. My dad owned a ceinture fléchée, a type of colourful sash that was a traditional piece of French-Canadian clothing in the 19th century; he later gave it to me. We went snowshoeing as a family a couple of times, but there were no traditions, no cultural events or ceremonies to honour our rites of passage – to stand us up. No Métis words were uttered; I was culturally displaced. My family was divided, as was some of Canadian society, between "the dark eyes" (Indians) and "the white eyes" (the settler people). My ancestors came from Îsle à La Crosse, near Great Slave Lake, Saskatchewan; they were Cree Métis. There was family pride that we were relatives of David Thompson, the mapmaker, surveyor, fur trader and explorer. He was named by the native people *Koo-Koo-Sint* – "He Who Looks at the Stars." He worked for the Hudson Bay Company and later for the Norwesters. David Thompson, my great-great-great-grandfather, left from England when he was 14; after he left for the New World, he was never to see his mother or his country of birth again.

My father refused to use alcohol as a trading commodity. He journalized that he didn't like the effect it had upon the Indians. I read about my famous relatives and Aboriginal culture, but I had little direct personal experience of what it is to be indigenous. Little was said of Charlotte Small, my great-great-great-grandmother, except that she and my grandfather had one of the longest marriages within the fur trade, and that Charlotte bore 13 children. She was a "country wife," although she later married in a church. She helped her husband to survive, and translated the Cree language into English. She understood the land, and when and where to hunt moose, elk and buffalo. She was taught about the wild plants and their medicines; she made clothes for her family, cooked food and took care of the children – a monumental task

in the wilderness – while going on explorations with her husband.

I was “counterculture” in the 60s. I left some of my parents’ values in Quebec and packed my bags. I wanted to expand my consciousness on the west coast. My boyfriend and I needed a place to live for free and we were told of a prospector’s cabin outside of Agassiz, but it had no running water, heat, refrigeration or electricity. We had a wood stove, a barrel of water and root cellar. There was only one room with a table, a window and bunk bed. It was a great adventure. I heard the song of the mountain, the sway of the alders and the pulse of Ruby Creek. I cooked bread in the pan of an old car motor and we chopped wood for almost a year.

When I participated in my first sweat lodge, my identity began to emerge. I knew I was finally home. Sitting in the darkness on cedar boughs, watching the sparks float upwards from the sage and sweetgrass being offered to the lava rocks, I felt the hiss of the steam as it rose with our prayers to the Creator. I soaked in the welcoming steam, relaxing and purifying myself. This was my spirit calling. Now I had a community and I would follow the Red Road. I asked Many Shawls if I could apprentice with her and she accepted my request.

Through participating in the Sundance ceremony, I learned to pray, to

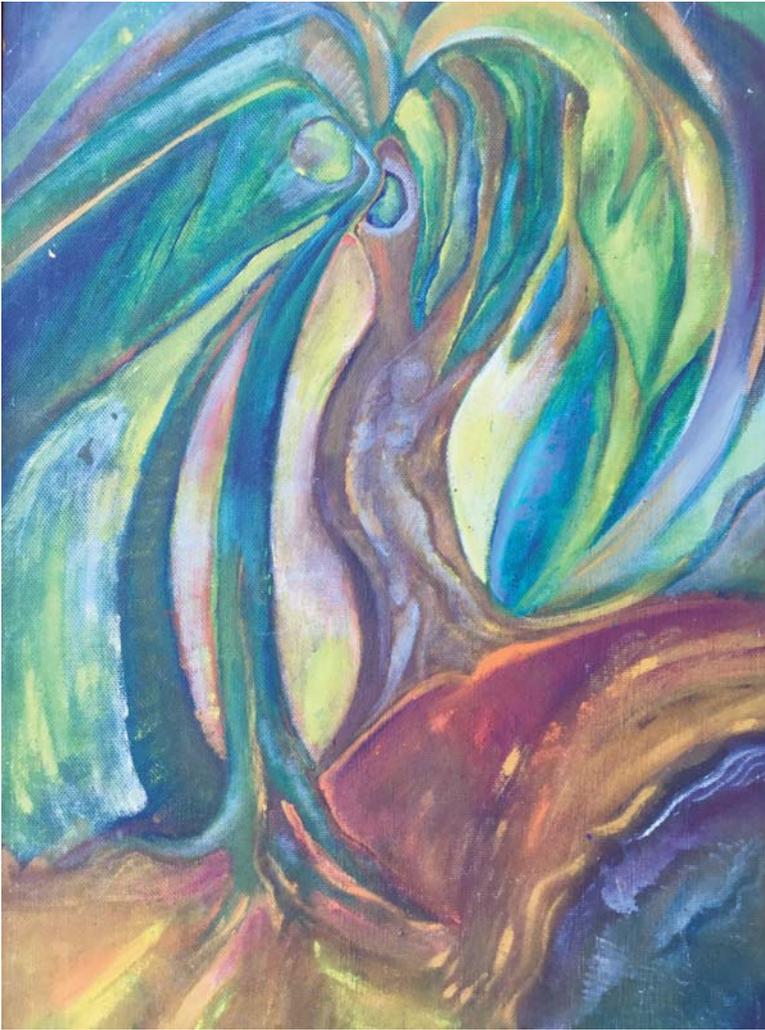
Tree of Life: Sundance Tree



sacrifice, to surrender and work with others in humility. My next dance will be my 14th year of participating in the dance of renewal ceremony for the people. These ceremonies give me so much insight into the land and all of my relations, and how to stay connected and support one another. I am filled with gratitude for those experiences and the medicine events that they hold.

I met Spirit Eagle ten years ago, and he helped me to deepen my practice. He offered me opportunities to learn and to grow. He gave me my medicine name, “Evening Rainbow.” David walks in the world with gentleness, careful attention and a wicked sense of humour.

Four years ago, in Campbell River, I received my North Island Métis status card. I joined the North Island Métis Association, and I began to learn my culture and experience some of the Métis way of life – beading, jigging, cooking raw foods, wild plant identification, fishing and making my own drum. As my Elder says: “Everyone is indigenous to some place.” I could begin to reclaim the Seven Sacred Values of humility, respect,



Lady Palm

wisdom, courage, honesty and truth, all woven together with love. These are the foundations of my culture, the tracks, the map of how we live and maintain balance and harmony as a tribe. What happens when an invisible person becomes visible, when they come out of the shadows and sing their song? My ancestry has blood from different continents – these two rivers flow together in my soul, spirit and DNA. I am a Métis woman dancing out of the cultural closet. We can decolonize together – for ourselves, our families and for several generations to come.

What I have Learned From My Art

I believe everyone is an artist. Creativity is a gift endowed to all humans by the Creator. The heart is the first organ to develop in a foetus; creativity is the intelligence of the unborn. I rely upon the heart for my creative guidance, and I worked for twenty five years as an Art (heArt) Therapist/ Play Therapist. It came naturally for me to jump into the process of art and trust my training. I believe each person knows, consciously or unconsciously, how to heal themselves. Each of us holds the

key to our own journey.

Painting brings me home to the story of myself – my origin myth. It is a prayer to the Creator. I want to share the map of the sacred territory; I want to reconcile the different rivers that flow within me – the Scottish, Irish, Woodland Cree, Métis. I want to stand on the shoulders of my ancestors. My task is to find a way to harvest the wisdom that I have been given to share with the people and the Earth. I want to share my reverence for life. I experience life viscerally, through my senses – physically, emotionally and spiritually first. I will always learn, and grow as I create in joy. I think what we all really want is love, freedom and bliss.

The Sundance tree is a warrior; it is an axis, a conduit that connects to the Creator, to all my Relations – the people and the land I dance on.

My painting process tends to be fairly spontaneous and intuitive. It is a channel for my soul to speak. I dive into the canvas with colours, line, movement and shapes. One step naturally follows the next. I allow the painting to suggest things to me. I clarify some details, exaggerate others and eliminate some altogether. It is a process of creation and destruction. Sometimes I don't actually see what's there until days later, then something



Deep Rainforest

emerges. Sometimes I turn the painting so I can see it from all four directions, or I paint back and forth with my right and left hand having a conversation. Once, a raven walked through my oil painting, improving it greatly. I've learned to appreciate accidents, mistakes and surprises, because I have to respond to them in a new way. The painting sometimes paints itself, quite magically and often outside my control. I need to get out of the way so that my unconscious can speak. I can begin to decode some of my inner landscape, and my personal mythology begins to reveal itself to me.

I connect with the peace and beauty of the "Standing Ones," but am also aware of the movement and grace that trees possess at their core. They are rooted in sensuousness, in the flow and pulse of Mother Earth, swaying with nature to a universal melody.

I've also had supernatural moments when I have painted and almost summoned life itself—a leaf almost moved in the wind, a human touch almost felt warmth, the second dimension almost transformed to the third. The ceremony of creation brings me closer to my own

heart and to the Creator. Creativity is an ancient and sacred way to share dreams, gather insight and illuminations, and explore visions as you explore your own inscape—thoughts, actions and beliefs. Painting is an act of courage and it requires all of you to participate in it. I run risks, challenge myself, laugh and run free, but I also am walking on a razor blade where success is not final and failure is not fatal. My challenge is to maintain balance between the ebb and the flow, the structure and the chaos. Creating is a deep dive into the abyss, an act of faith; for the blank canvas can hold the universe, but it is ultimately about gratitude. Painting gives my life meaning; it is one of the ways I leave a legacy. Art helps me to observe the masks, songs, imagery and movement inherent in my DNA.

This painting is an homage to wandering in the wilderness absorbing the smells, sights and sounds—the mystery of shapes that live in the mist, and shadows that stalk the sunlight. The rainforest is sacred, reverent, both a temple and a sepulchre. Several times my paintings have been prophetic in that they capture a person, place or theme that I have yet to experience, and



this is one of those paintings.

Actually, there are three participants in the creative process – myself, the painting and what happens between us: the dialogue, the creative energy that flows. It is as if my soul is trying to see itself and remember that everything I need is within me. It helps me to end old cycles, heal wounds and bring the unseen, the unconscious, to the surface. In this way, art is medicine. Sometimes you need to dance with the shadows to discover the path to the light. Painting helps me to be more of who I am. I bring forth the wild woman – it is the call of my flaming heart. I forget my-



self and enter a realm where there is no time or space and I cease to exist. I create from the unknown. Everywhere I look I am a reflection and reflected. The brain begins to synchronize with the heart to form a coherent wholeness that creates a new frequency. The two sides of the brain harmonize in an eloquent state that cues us that we are on the brink of something amazing. As we step out of convention, miracles happen, trauma is resolved, bodies are healed, even our chemistry and genes are altered as we become a unique and authentic version of ourselves. In my tradition, my living well and using my gifts is my art.



What I create is a gift for myself and others. As I age, I try to embody the best of what that might mean. I consider the Elders needing to share their teachings and cultural traditions – to offer generously to others what they have gathered in experiences, stories and lessons. This is the emptying of the golden cup so that the next generation can drink long and hard of the cool clear waters, which offer everything down to the bone so the wind can whistle through without holding on to anything. The creative process becomes an expression of that divine intelligence that passes through us all.

Top Being in Place

Middle: Salt Spring Sheep. A quick and whimsical mood piece on the idyllic pasture and the frolicking sheep in the meadows.
Above: Red Cat. A hint of Egypt built in colour and shape and symbol – buried treasure.

Padding Together Towards Reconciliation, Part 5



A WAY OF BEING

Mary Everson

I was born on January 1, 1946, in the Comox Hospital on Vancouver Island. I was raised by my parents: my father, Andy Frank, and my mother, Maggie Frank. My parents placed in me the ancestral knowledge of family, history, clan and cultural identity. They also taught me that the gift and beauty of our lives had come down through the generations of our ancestors.

My father Andy was a Hereditary Chief and my mother Margaret (Maggie) was the daughter of a Hereditary Chief. Both of these people taught me and entrusted me with the traditional knowledge and a responsibility to keep that knowledge for the generations to come.

Mother kept me home until I was eight years old. She saw no practical use for school as I was being raised in my culture with my primary language of Kwakwala. My world view, as a result, was distinctly different and my relationship to the natural world was framed in the culture.

I had difficulty feeling at home in English as my root language was Kwakwala, a language that is connected to the world around me: more than just words. The gift in this is the way I look at the world – my world view. I can see the interconnectedness of all things and life around me. As a result, I am very sensitive to energies, which for my ancestors would have been a very natural state of being in this world. I would describe it as being intuitive, as well as a nonverbal way of being connected to the energy that emanates from the soul. It speaks to us; we hear it and we listen.

I have been taught by my ancestors that you can use your mind too much and become stupid; you can use your heart too much and become a fool. If you use your soul's intuition to guide you, you will find balance.

I come from a place where “We and Us” is a guiding value, meaning that we give without hesitation. We give of ourselves and our possessions to help others. I was raised to look at the land as a reflection of me, and that the land is a part of me. I understand that we are stewards and protectors of the land.

Our old values and ways of seeing the world around us have suffered as a result of the assimilation policies of Canada. The only positive I can see is that, when we were placed onto reserves, we still had each other and we could still be connected. In the history of our country, our people were made to feel less; our language, culture and spirituality had to be put away in place of religion. For many of our communities, this was a time of great sorrow and abrupt transformation to another way of life.

I was so fortunate to have my parents. My father began *Building Bridges Towards Understanding* long before the Truth and Reconciliation process that we see happening today. I grew up attending many public events and gatherings where my parents and I would be in full regalia, proud of our heritage. This was a time when it was illegal in Canada to take part in our ceremonies and wear our regalia.



Top: Mary Everson in a Big House Ceremony

Above: Mary Everson with Father and Mother in regalia

Father would say, “I just have to remember that they are people, just like me.” He did not separate himself from others, he wanted to coexist; he would invite people to engage with him, while still protecting our cultural identity and spirituality. My parents were my role models. They taught me about our ceremonial practices, such as the puberty ceremony and the importance of this ceremony to our transition into adulthood.

My grandparents were of great influence to me until I was ten. They saw the world in the old way of seeing. They would sing songs to me, tell me the old stories of a time when there was so much salmon that we could have literally walked across the waters on their backs. My father role-modelled generosity and respect whenever we would go to get fish at the Puntledge River. As we approached the river he would tell me to walk softly upon the earth, as the sound of my feet would vibrate and the salmon would hear us coming. Once we had caught the fish we needed – never more than we needed – we would take them home. Whatever was left we would give to the Elders in our community and the families with small children; we always shared what we had.

I am eternally grateful for the cultural and spiritual strength that has been given to me in my life.

The Big House – *Gukwdzi* – is my home, my heart. Prior to 1914 the Big House was located away from our village, at the Rotary Bowl area in our community. I was told that the reason it was built there was because of the fear our community had that the Big House would be visibly identified as Aboriginal if it was on the land where we lived. This was a time of struggle for some of our people.

My father raised money to move the Big House to where it now lives. Unfortunately, he did not see this in his lifetime. He passed away in 1972. In 1974, through a grant that we received, the Big House was relocated to its proper home, and it has been there ever since.

In my life I have found that the most important value in my heart and soul is that of love and family. I have always had a desire to help a child to feel like it belongs and that it is a treasure, a *Glugway*, as it is said in our language. All children are treasures. We must provide a safe place of loving connection so that these children can unburden themselves of the guilt and shame of the past, so they can fly. I have been blessed to be a foster parent to over 60 young people, adopting five and raising my own three sons. All of these are my children, although they range in age from 54 years to nine years. I feel so rich, so blessed and so grateful for the abundance of love that has been given to me in this lifetime.

Reconciliation has been a way of being, and a way of life for me, since I was born. Reconciliation means allowing people to truly know who they are, and honouring that we have gifts given to us from the Creator. My father taught me to see people as people just like me. He role-modelled a practice of mutual respect and understanding.

In this photo, taken in 1949, I am with my parents, in full regalia. We are proud and standing with an open heart, inviting us all to come together, to coexist in this beautiful life.

PAINTING OPENED ME TO A NEW WORLD



Ronald Hedrick

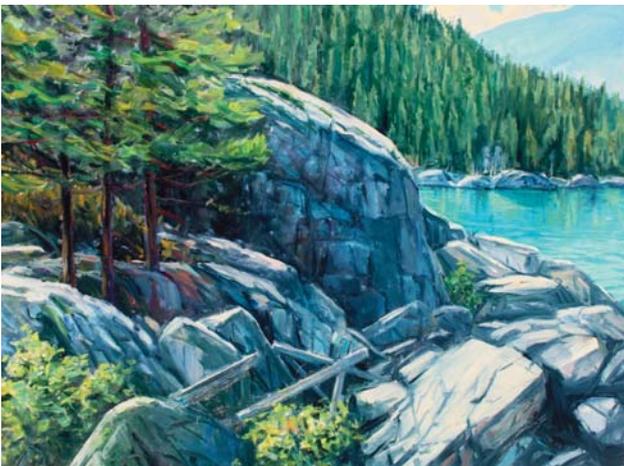
The purpose of my artwork is quite simple: create a piece that captures the essence of the subject from my own twist and visual perspective. My subject matter includes a wide venue: local landscapes, seascapes with children and families, nostalgic winter scenes, or a scene from my travels to Europe. I like variety in my works. It keeps my time at the easel much more interesting, adventurous and challenging. I create most of my works in my studio, working from photos that I have manipulated to fit my vision. I also love painting plein air, which I often do with my daughter, Jessica, a great artist in her own right.

The subject matters that I have chosen have a real spot in my heart. I enjoy being outside and I like portraying those feelings I have of being in nature onto canvas.

I relish the bright, fresh summer days at the beach; the memories of playing in snow as a child; the warm summer air and the freedom of travelling through Italy, Greece and France; the crisp chill of autumn scenes. I appreciate artworks from many other genres as well, and often spend time painting artwork that is never intended for galleries, just for the joy of trying something entirely different.

Working as an artist doesn't always come easily to me; sometimes it is a struggle, and the results seem devastating in my own mind. This is when I have asked myself, "Why do I do this and who am I kidding? I can't really paint, I just get lucky from time to time." At other times, the painting I am working on just seems to flow and come together in no time, without any

Left: Shoreline Arrow Lakes
Right: Tulameen River





Top left: Reassuring Beach Waders
 Top right: Shannon
 Above: Ocean Visit

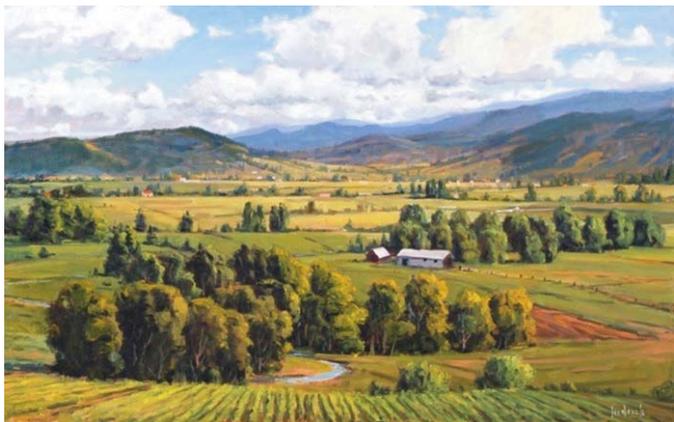
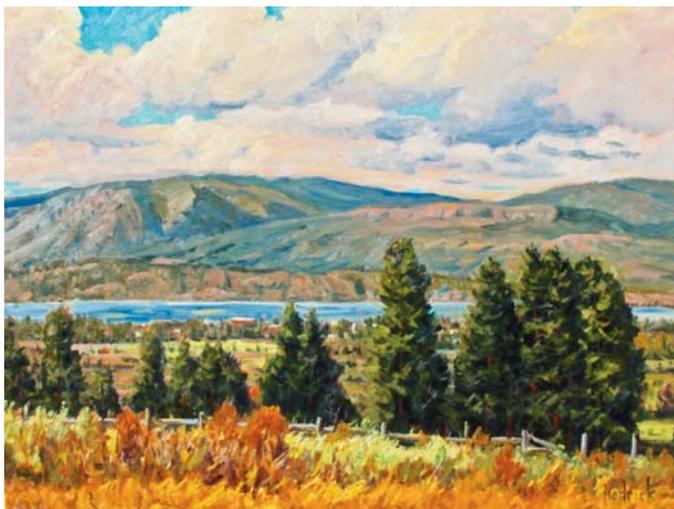
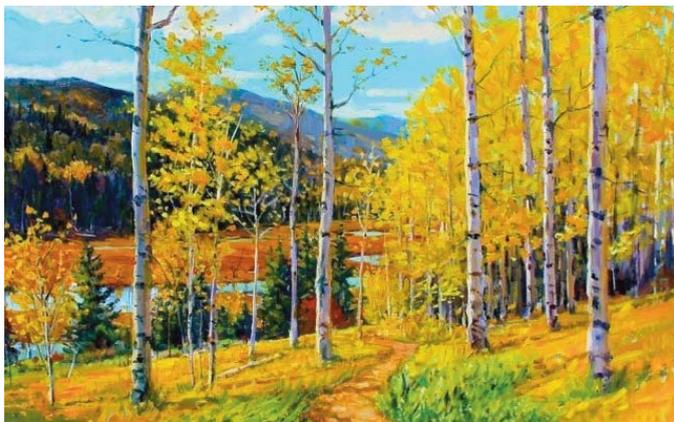
effort and with very satisfying results. However, after all these years, I have learned not to be so hard on myself and to simply enjoy the act of creating and painting.

I know many of my students go through this self-doubt phenomenon, and I can relate to what they are talking about. I always assure them that perseverance pays off. I also encourage them to do a lot of small paintings in order to develop their style and skill level and to minimize the level of failure when the odd painting doesn't work out.

I haven't always made a living as an artist. I have worked for a variety of companies and even owned a restaurant over the years. However, at age 35 my life took a dramatic change. I had been browsing in a bookstore while living in Kamloops, when I happened upon a book featuring Tom Thomson paintings. I was mesmerized by the impact these images had on me. I knew then that, no matter what, from this day forward I would put all my spare energy into developing my skills as an artist. I told my wife, Sandra, that my object was to become a professional artist in five years. She gave me her full support, and, without her encouragement, I don't think this marvellous world of art and all of its ramifications would ever have developed for me.

I began taking workshops from various well-known artists, generally spending most of my spare time at the easel. I didn't quite reach my goal in five years; however, after six years I quit my job and never looked back. What I didn't foresee was that this new found art career would bring me into a whole new world. The side benefits have been amazing – I have met such wonderful people; I have become lifelong friends with both collectors and students. My wife and I are often invited as guests to various exotic homes in Vancouver and abroad. We have been to Europe several times through teaching workshops and painting excursions with friends and students. In short, I feel very fortunate to be in the whole business of art.

My wife and I moved to Kelowna a little over two years ago from the Lower Mainland. We lived on acreage in rural Mission for over twenty years. I must admit I hated to leave the property that we had toiled over for so many years; it also had a very spacious art studio. I would often host workshops



Top left: Autumn Trail
 Middle: Kelowna Westview
 Above: Winfield Vista
 Top right: Ron and Mackenzie

with well known American artists as guests. I had a large following of students attending classes, and over the years these students have become more like good friends.

Our daughter, Jessica, and her husband Dave had moved to Kelowna four years previous to our move. They announced that we were about to become proud grandparents.

That's when we decided to sell and move to Kelowna. I also have an older daughter, Debi, who, with her three daughters and her husband Rick, have lived here for twenty years. Debi is a proprietor of *Orah Spa and Salon*, a well known and highly rated establishment. We are so happy we have made the move. We get to be closer to our family and our new granddaughter, Mackenzie, plus able to enjoy this great city.

It still feels like we are on holidays! We love it here. My wife Sandy has her new pottery studio set up, and she is creating some amazing cups, vases and whimsical sculptures. I have my studio with all my requirements and enjoy my painting. My works, as well as my daughter Jessica's, can be found at *Hambleton Galleries* in Kelowna.

My daughter and I both teach painting classes. If you're interested in taking lessons, please contact Shelley Bauer at blueapplestudio@shaw.ca.

SPIRIT OF THE LENS

VERNON PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB "SEES"

Ian Bull
Erika Lambert
Harbin King

Glennis O'Neill
Carol James
Svetlana Shkuratova

"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself."

– Henry Miller

"Blessed are those who see beautiful things in humble places where others see nothing." – Camille Pissarro



INTRODUCTION

Ian Bull

In these days of unlimited photographs, the commonplace ease at which photographs can be snapped can often seem to trivialize the act. For some, however, becoming a thoughtful photographer and creating a deliberate photograph can be a journey. One might begin that journey simply as a record keeper, hoping to catch and hold a memory of place, event or a subject. However, looking through the lens, the act of determining what is to be included in the frame and what is to be excluded starts the process; as one continues further, with time, inspiration and experience it eventually may bring photographers closer to the goal of being able to communicate and express themselves thoughtfully to others: to create art. The process of making a photograph combines intention of purpose and an inspiration to create. Slowly a style is developed, what Robert Henri called the art spirit. For a photographer on this journey, this spirit of expression can be found when looking through the lens.

Photographers in the Vernon Photography Club are all at different points on their journeys. The intent of the club is to develop a welcoming community of photographers, and to encourage within that community an environment of support and inspiration. We encourage members to create and to develop their own particular styles and artistic vision. It is with this spirit of support, inspiration and artistic goals that the club presents the many varied styles of members into this single combined exhibition, "Spirit of the Lens."

We thank the Vernon Public Art Gallery and sponsors for giving us the opportunity to share our works and for their continuing encouragement to local artists.

This article is a small collection of those who participated in the Vernon Public Art Gallery exhibition.



FREE TO SEE, PHOTOGRAPHY

Erika Lambert

I recall when I took photos with a turquoise plastic box camera during the late fifties and early sixties. Photography may be in my DNA as I was attracted to photo-taking through my father, who had been an avid photographer. We had albums full of his black and white photos. I carried on the tradition and also filled many albums with colourful photos of family, friends and whatever caught my eyes' interest. Years later I took up painting pictures, at first en plein-air and later in-studio, inspired by my photos.

In recent times, I find it easy and fun to take photos with my phone camera. After a Vernon Camera Club Educational Evening, which showed participants how to get the most from phone cameras, I felt assured that quality photos can come from this newest technology. I challenge myself to transfer my photos onto canvas and paint within the photos on the canvas. I've enjoyed this method, since it integrates my artistic journey.

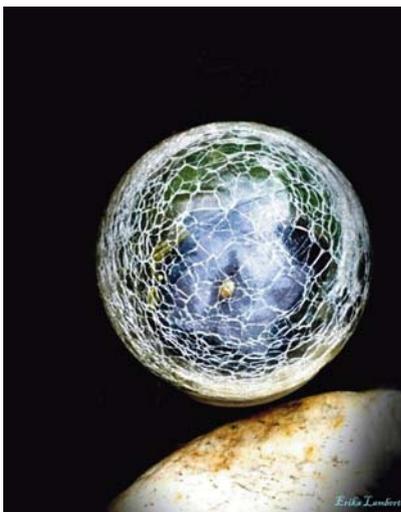
Sometimes I feel like an explorer; I feel free to wander where my intuition leads my feet, when the mood strikes. It may happen at any time of the day, with different ambient light, which exposes different impressions. With my camera hung on my wrist, I walk around in order to discover something, anything in my environment that may capture my attention. It may beckon me to stop, look and focus on something impressive that beckons to be expressed. Then I "click, click, click," and something will present itself in my captured digital images. I feel utter freedom to approach the moment without a preconceived idea and think, "This grabs hold of my curiosity!" Later, I have the freedom to keep or delete the images.

The light globe in my flower bed with its crackled surface beckoned further attention. Later, upon assessment of the image, with the background already darkened, I thought the swirls of blue and green reflected from the globe represented the earth's globe. The pattern of minute surface cracks evoked several symbolic responses from me. Is our Earth in the midst of a new design? Would earth settle on solid rock? Hence, "Disruption."

A spontaneous moment can express and make an impression on me. Like a rare gem, brilliance can twinkle and surprise the edge of my peripheral vision. With a quick reaction, no time to figure out the specifics, I click the camera in the direction of the liberated flash. In that moment, it is possible to capture the sparkle struck by a charged photon. I am thrilled when a scintillated image appears in my photo. When I look at the image I may notice I captured a gem of an abstract photograph.

I like to scrounge around my yard or inside my house and capture light filtered through trees, leaves and petals or reflected off objects and structures. My eyes roam and my gaze may fall upon spring blossoms, flowers in bloom, twigs, leaves and scattered objects that present geometric shapes and display composition. Sometimes, a mundane activity can lend itself for an abstract art photograph. For example, as I sat in my car, in an automatic car wash, I

Disruption





Top: *Scintillate*
Above: *Eruption*

was mesmerized by the soap bubbles, water spray, and liquid flow on the window pane.

Suddenly, I became aware of the light rays refracted and reflected off the water drops. I grabbed my camera and captured the event. It was fun to notice the results in the digital images, of which one eventually turned into an abstract art photograph.

A few times I discovered I had pressed the camera button in haste, eager to capture my new find, and the image appeared out of focus. To the wonder of my eyes, an abstract image sometimes appears, like an abstract painting. This abstract image allows for my personal interpretation. I may see a face or an object. Upon another glance, I may see something else. These spontaneous interpretations seem symbolic and depend upon the mood I present at the time. I feel free to turn the abstracted image around, crop or saturate the colours to appreciate another view.

I tuck most of these digital images away into a computer file to observe how an image resonates in another time. In the future I may check to see what I can express with these impressions. This method has been previously suggested by abstract artists.

I have chuckled when I've stood back, as an anonymous bystander, and observed a viewer's body language and heard their personal interpretations of my abstract images. This is the beauty of abstract creativity: it allows for personal interpretations from the vision of its beholder. Whether the reactions are positive or negative, the abstract image, captured by the photography artist, can evoke a variety of reactions. Others' responses may be the overall intent of creative art, as in most artistic endeavours, and are also appreciated in artistic photography.

CREATIVITY LIVES WITHIN US UNTIL IT'S EXPRESSED

Carol James



I have enjoyed taking photographs casually for many years. Then, in 2011, I bought my first DSLR (Digital Single-Lens Reflex) camera, but it took me a couple of years to actually take it off automatic. In 2013, serendipity led me to a small patch of insect eggs on a garden leaf. With some directional e-mails from my husband guiding me, I switched to a macro lens and then extension tubes. This was a huge stretch for me, but I persevered and took a hundred shots that day. I submitted one of those photos to a wildlife competition hosted by *Canadian Geographic*, where it was selected as runner up in the macro division. My photo was published in the December 2013 edition of the magazine and I was hooked on photography. My interests have widened since that time and I do some portraiture, travel and landscape photography,



Left: *Environmental Wedding* This portrait was taken recently and I thought the setting was perfect given the bride's style. The lush vegetation growing up around the solid, rusting structure, the dark metal and the bright sky, and the pop of red flowers all make for an interesting and surprising photograph.

Right: *Grass and Water* In this photo I "painted" with my camera (intentional camera movement) to blend the greens and blues of the grass and water. I love the texture and movement this provides.



but I still have a soft spot for macro and in particular nature. I love the colours, textures, shapes and surprises found in nature. More recently, I have been trying to capture nature in surprising ways so that the viewer hopefully sees something they haven't noticed before.

I have always been a creative individual, expressing myself in food,

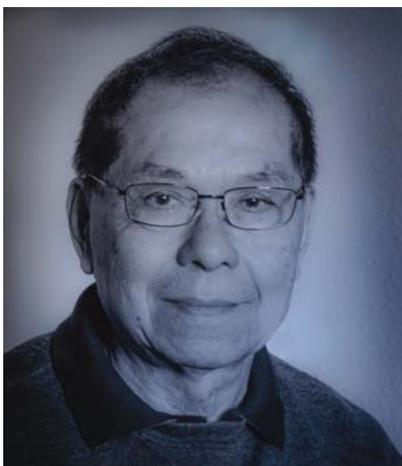
textiles and, more recently, photography. This quote by Brene Brown sums up my thoughts on creativity:

"I am not creative' doesn't work. There is no such thing as creative people and non creative people. There are only people who use their creativity and people who don't. Unused creativity doesn't just disappear. It lives within us until it's expressed, neglected to death or suffocated by resentment or fear."

Creativity through photography makes me a wiser, more connected person, and keeps my feet planted on the earth.

Carol James: 250-540-0322

ABSTRACT IN NATURE Harbin King



Right: Abstract In Nature

My photograph, *Abstract in Nature*, captures a vari-coloured eucalyptus tree. My idea was to emphasize the complementary colours and their juxtaposition, as well as the brush stroke-like texture of oil or acrylic painting. The picture reminds me of the modern abstract expressionist artists, such as Morris Louis' colour field paintings or Mark Rothko's bold colourful canvases.

The other colour photograph, *Daybreak at Grand Canyon*, conveys the atmosphere of the soft pastel colours of the early morning light that creates contrasting light and shadow, and is almost graphic in nature. I could almost hear Grofe's *Grand Canyon Suite – Sunrise* softly streaming in my ears.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5yZcwe_T48&list=RDU5yZcwe_T48&index=1





Right: Northern Mist, northwestern BC
Above: Sea Exploration, Madagascar



JOURNEY WITH THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY **Glennis O'Neill**

Photography makes you look, really look at the world around you. It demands that you pay attention to detail, to form and lines. It calls you to pay attention to light and colour, and that you observe mood and movement. I really began to enjoy photography when I started to see it as an art form. I love that I can capture all those things – light, form, mood, energy. Photography lets you transform the beauty in a moment of time into art that endures and can be shared.

My journey with the art of photography began about eight years ago. I particularly like travel photography, especially taking photos of people in their environment. As well, I love to get in close to objects or people to take a shot that draws the eye to a specific detail. I am honoured to be able to share my work.



MY WAY OUT OF GRIEF

Svetlana Shkuratova

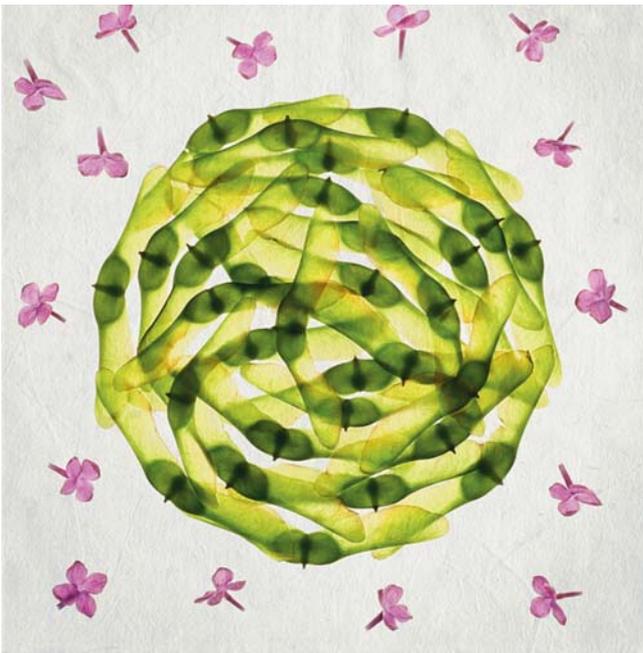
Born and growing up in the Soviet Union, I was introduced to photography at an early age in my father's home-set darkroom. The slow pace of developing film and printing photos had a great impact on me. Later I translated what I learned into my vision of photography. When an image is not taken, but rather created, slowly, with lots of observation and deliberation, in order to communicate an intense emotion, a meaningful thought or a memorable idea, it is Fine Art.

This process of creating a photograph starts with an attempt to see, and, as Claude Monet said, in order to do that "we must forget the name of the thing we are looking at." Thus I try to forget and proceed into observing, finding patterns, and seeing regularities and connections between different expressions of life. While I prefer to create as much as I can in-camera, as this kind of editing seems more truthful to me, the creative process doesn't stop after the camera shutter is released. The image can be taken then into the digital darkroom to add a few final touches on the image and sometimes more. The final stage of creating involves printing and finishing a photograph. The choice of a substrate and of a finish depends a lot on the idea I want to express. Having said that, I don't plan each step at the very beginning. The process evolves one step at a time, with lots of experimentation at each stage and looking for the best solution for expressing the idea.

My photographic interests lie in capturing the beauty of imperfection of nature and people. I enjoy the explorative and experimental process of merging photography with different forms of visual art. In my photographic works, I like using multiple exposures, soft focus and texture to convey the ideas of impermanence of things, and capturing their evolving nature. I like creating riddles with my art, when a viewer is not exactly sure what they are looking at. To me it makes a photograph more engaging by opening it to different interpretations. "Hmm... What is it?!" is one of my favourite questions that I like to hear from a viewer.

These photographs are part of the series titled, *Spring Mandalas: My Way Out of Grief*, a collection of over 20 images of mandalas created out of plants. The series was born as a powerful response to my father's unexpected passing, and draws its inspiration from nature, the land art of Andy Goldsworthy, the photographic technique of Harold Davis and the book by Robert Monroe, *The Ultimate Journey*.

Mandala intuitively became the symbol essential both for emphasizing the beauty of a plant and for my gradual way out of grief, which, of course, I wasn't aware of during the process of creating. The only thing I knew at that time was a strong urge to make these mandalas, almost every day, almost obsessively. Was it a form of therapy, meditation, reflection, all of it? I think it was. These mandalas became my beacons healing me and leading me out of grief.



Above left: Jean-Samare Erable: Circle

Above right: Jean-Samare Erable: Design



Each mandala in this series has so much character and personality, just like us, humans. I started associating them with people, known or unknown to me. Thus each of them has its own human name. Each plant is organized in two patterns: a Circle, representing what we learn during our life, and a Design, representing what we choose to create with all this life's knowledge, skills and experiences.

This second mandala and its name is my nod to the province of Quebec, where I lived for 6 years, and its deep connection to sugar maple and, of course, to maple syrup. The person associated with this mandala is an artistic eccentric, original and creative, flexible and open-minded, who appreciates beauty in all its forms, and is always ready to explore and experience something new. Just like Marie was given as the first name to lots of girls in Quebec (from the Virgin Mary), Jean (after Joseph) was given to lots of boys due to the strong religious roots of the province of Quebec. *Erable* means maple in French.

Some time after finishing this series, and looking back, I realized that the loss of my father, however painful and sad it was, also had something positive. It brought me to the next stage of self-expression, helped me grow as a person and as an artist. Some things were completely broken and lost in me, but other things, new and exciting, started sprouting. Through grief and loss we gain, we grow and evolve, and I keep growing and evolving. With a loss, there is always something new that comes our way; the only trick we need to remember is to keep our eyes and heart open to it.

Svetlana Shkuratova svetlana.shkuratova@gmail.com

TAKING TIME FOR ART

IN THE OKANAGAN

Suzanne Chavarie

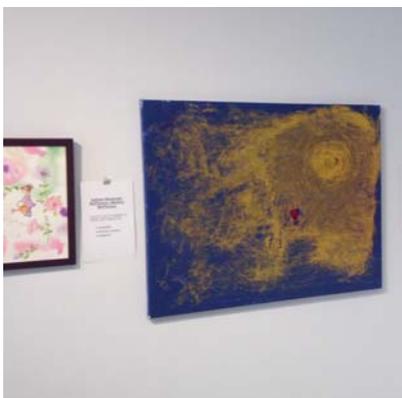


My practice of expressing my grief and sharing it with others came to the forefront in my most recent art adventures, and created a sense of openness and sensitivity in my latest pieces. Siblings are the first people we practise on as we discover fairness and cooperation, kindness and caring. The piece *JeSeBeC* reflects the star that my mom had the privilege of naming in the universe (reference number STARR5MJFPDDKG). Wanting to keep us safely connected forever, she used my and my three siblings' first initials with the vowel e after each to create the name *JeSeBeC*.

My younger brother, Billy, passed away in my arms, with his wife at his side, just three weeks after his diagnosis of stage 4 glioblastoma brain cancer. I could feel my heart crumbling as my tears fell with relief that he was no longer in pain. Once home in my studio, I had time to reflect and paint. On my blank canvas I saw a universe where we four siblings are safely together. A week later, my piece was accepted into the show *Who Are We* at Lake Country Public Art Gallery. I want to give a huge "thank you" to gallery curator Wanda Lock for the opportunity to share my grief with others. I believe the three ingredients needed to make up a strong, inclusive community are a sense of belonging, feeling acceptance and having your basic needs met. I found those with this exhibition.

Another of my recent art pieces is a tribute to an Okanagan citizen, the well-known paddle boarder Bob Purdy. Bob paddled 135 kilometers, the full length of Okanagan Lake, as part of his campaign www.paddlefortheplanet.ca. His dying wish was to carry on his legacy of creating awareness for the environment by bringing people together to change the way we live on the planet: "With spirit we are connected to everything on the planet. The tutu is for those without a voice. The paddling is for change" – Bob Purdy.

Below: *JeSeBeC*.



Art R.I.P. Bob Purdy January 2018
Mountains are, Life is, Rain falls,
River flows, Ocean waits, Earth supports.
Trees rise, Birds fly,
Fish swim. Fire is Light.
Fuel is passion,
Follow the way,
Express yourself
A gift to me and you! – Bob Purdy



Left: Gallery manager Petrina McNeill with artist Suzanne Chavarie hold Suzanne's tribute piece to Bob. Both are wearing pink tutus in tribute to Bob's wish to honour "those without a voice."

Middle: Butterfly Dedication Card
 Right: Field of released butterflies



At the *Hospice Butterfly Effect Program*, I witnessed 500 Painted Lady butterflies released into the tranquil gardens on the property at Falcon Ridge Farms. It was a truly magical moment, and very healing to be surrounded by local artists showcasing their work and listening to live music. The event, *Growing With Our Community*, by the Central Okanagan Hospice Association, made a stronger community for us all as we shared in creative spirit.

The butterfly is a symbol of hope.

"A butterfly lights beside us like a sunbeam and for a brief moment its glory and beauty belong to our world, but then it flies on again; although we wish it could have stayed, we feel so lucky to have seen it." – Unknown

Community Engagement Coordinator and Art House Manager Tina Knoohuizen from Lake Country Art House asked for pieces for their upcoming annual picnic night. Karen Close and I decided to work on a collaborative piece. We had both lost loved ones and liked the fact that our piece would become part of a large scale, interactive installation, called *The Tribute Tree*, being established at the picnic evening of art, live music, spoken word, food, and art activities. What a positive way to wrap up our summer of 2018.

Catch my smile!

Left: Our Piece
 Right: The Tribute Tree



"Don't put on a happy face because you think it's expected. Grief denied is grief unhealed." – Barbara Bartocci, *Nobody's Child Anymore*

"Many commented on how strong I was. Little did they know what was going on inside me" – James R. White, *Grieving Our Path Back to Peace*

Photos taken by Suzanne Chavarie

A CONTINUATION OF OUR STORY

THE WRITERS' GROUP OF WEST KELOWNA

Mel Kazinoff



Let's continue on the theme of heavenly bodies, this time focusing on our writers' family of planets. As a family of less than two years, we are beginning to understand each other, our interests, our goals and what makes us tick.

Gustav Holst, a British composer of the twentieth century, composed an amazing suite of music called *The Planets*. It used the ancient assigned emotions and personalities, producing magnificent music for a full orchestra. Let's explore how this suite applies to the endeavours, personalities and efforts of our planets in West Kelowna.

The first piece is *Mars*, the bringer of war. The Roman God of war is angry, ominous, dramatic and pulsating. How does this apply to us, I asked myself?

The war each of us engages in is within ourselves. To write or not to write? What will others think? Is this good enough? Where do I start? Where is it going? And where will it end? All good questions and, I believe, all based in FEAR. Someone once said to me, "Where there is fear, there is no love." Each of us, as we sit down to create another page of our stories, we do it with love. We do our best and we grow as we proceed. The love shows as the story unfolds and we share some of the words with our fellow writers.

Next, Holst wrote *Venus*. This bringer of peace is depicted as melodic, slow, gentle, relaxing and a little eerie. We all want peace. We don't need to be writers to have this desire for our life. But what is peace? Peace for us is, perhaps, the satisfaction of a page that meets our expectations – a job well done. Then our feelings might be relaxed, gentle, less frantically urgent to complete and, maybe, a little eerie.

The third section is *Mercury*, the winged messenger. This is a lively and exciting piece of music, bringing the Gods' message to the world. Our group's aim is to bring our work to an audience, whether limited to close family or friends, or to the whole world. Our lively action, and the excitement of getting it "out there," is the goal we seek. We are each mercuries in our

own universe.

Fourth is the king of the Gods' piece, *Jupiter*. According to Holst, Jupiter brings jollity. Jupiter is huge and majestic, the largest of the planets. Is the work we produce huge and majestic? Do the words we write bring us joy? I hope so.

Saturn is the bringer of old age. The

The Group



music is sombre to start, then marches forward as if striding towards its end. Most of our group consists of the happily retired. This wasn't consciously intentional, but when you hold your meetings on a mid-week afternoon, who else is going to come?

As seniors, we are also marching towards some end. We had choices as new retirees, and decided on the creative route. I find that the more I write, the more alive I feel. The march towards that inevitable future is extended perhaps. The music of the march is uplifting, and we can sing our way into that wondrous goodbye.

Uranus is the God of the sky. Holst calls this icy planet the magician. Every word I write is magic to my ears. Sometimes I go back over an hour's work and wonder, "Where did that come from?" Words magically appeared on my screen almost unbidden. I'm not the only one who has this experience. Maybe all writers experience this phenomenon at one time or another.

Finally, Holst gave us the mystic, *Neptune*, a sea God whose depths are the mystery. Who of us has not had mystical thoughts, perhaps the mysticism of religion and all things spiritual? As we move into seniority we wonder. What is life all about? What happens next? What if I were born into the wrong belief, or chose the wrong path? All we have to go on is our own faith, and in the end perhaps it really doesn't matter. Our writing must reflect our imaginings and our questions. Maybe not overtly, but somewhere in there doubt is lurking. Embrace it, don't fight it. And, most important of all, don't fear it, but love it.

Let's see what some of our writers have been creating.

I WALK IN THE CEMETERY

Geneva Ensign



I walk in the cemetery on the hill
 Among the gravestones
 That whisper quiet lies.
 Some say, "In his service."
 Some say, "Beloved by all."
 Some say, "Remembered forever."
 Lies, lies, lying.

I walk in the cemetery
 Among the silent gravestones
 That whisper quiet lies.
 I walk, I am not lying. I walk,
 Yet without fear, a gravestone myself.

The sun is warm; the air caressing,
 Fingers soft upon my eyes, my lips.
 I walk with death and feel no fear.
 I feel nothing, no-thing.
 No emotion—no fear, no love, no desire,
 Neutral, awaiting—fear or love—
 Some sign of life, waiting to be.
 Waiting, thinking, while waiting,

That in the tomorrow of tomorrows,
 I want no gravestone to whisper
 That I have lived.

How many years
 Must a gravestone shout
 Silently
 That I have lived
 Before the shout becomes the truth?
 How many years?
 An eternity
 Is not enough.

I walk in the cemetery
 Among the silent gravestones
 Mere existence
 Is not a life...
 A spark only,
 Not a flame.

I walk in the cemetery
 Among the silent gravestones...

Single ones, double ones
 Some complete, neat, even.
 Mr. and Mrs. lie here
 Together
 An eternity of togetherness,
 An eternity of aloneness.
 Some double gravestones
 Are only half,
 Incomplete inscriptions cry
 "Come, lie with me,"
 Add your name next to mine."
 Waiting,
 Wanting
 To fulfil in death
 A completion
 Not attained in life.
 Two people,
 Corpses, silent and alone
 Can lie in a double grave
 As in a double bed,
 Alone in life
 Alone in death
 Alone,
 Dead.

I walk **out** of the cemetery on the hill
 Where silent gravestones
 Still whisper quiet lies.
 I walk out of the cemetery
 Where silent gravestones wait,
 Yet
 For me.

I stroll on the hill and discover
 Nestled in the lee of the
 Old priests' building,
 Red-bricked and tall,
 Sentinel against the night,
 Red poppies, bright and beautiful,
 Despite the autumn's killing frost

Blood red, the poppies,
 Defying death, they stand, erect,
 Affirming in this autumn day
 That life and love are yet to be.
 I will live and I will love

While yet alive
 And death will need no silent gravestones
 To whisper quiet lies.

"Which planet might Geneva most have connected with based on this wonderful verse? Maybe Neptune The Mystic. What do you think?"

MY OLD FRIENDS HAVE PASSED Blair Jean



But they are not forgotten.
 I stop to reminisce.
 And still, I hear their voices.
 No smoke from the chimney.
 No ring of the axe.
 No roar of a float plane.
 And still, I hear their voices.
 No canoe on the landing.
 No moose hide stretched.
 No fur in the cache.
 And still, I hear their voices.

"Does Saturn, the Bringer of
 Old Age, fit here?" – Blair



Right: Big Eddy Cabin

Another of our writers is Jamie C. McHugh-Lachiver. She shares some of her thoughts:

TSUNAMI

Jamie C. McHugh-Lachiver



Of the lost

Souls

Shimmering aquamarine

Stone of breath

Luminescent loss

Your sighs

crying across the ripples

Caressing the stillness

of the light

My kayak

gliding

over your

sunlit shadows

Amethyst flame

reborn

into the mist

Emission

of your light

Murmurs of my paddle

your whispers

Tendrils of coral

a tickle a touch

Diaphanous petals

float across the breeze

Celestial teardrops

kissing you to sleep

Those you left behind

Silently to weep

As with most writers, I have always needed to write; a passion that started when I was quite young. I still have poems I wrote in fourth grade, which my grandfather typed for me on his old-fashioned manual typewriter. I would fall asleep at night reading the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Fifty plus years later, I am again writing. Soon after moving from the prairies to West Kelowna, I fortuitously found the West Kelowna Writers' Group. The stories, successes and encouragements of this group motivated me to complete a non-fiction book, *The Best of Luck: Secrets of the Super Successful, Attracting Luck to You*.

A few years after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, I visited the Thai Phi Phi Island. It is a dazzling, breathtaking place for kayaking amid the limestone cliffs. As I was kayaking, a delicate wind was blowing. The fragile petals of the flowers above were floating down, onto the water gently. While soothing, it was also eerie, as if the souls of those lost to the sea were calling out to us.

Glen Olien has to be the great giant, Jupiter. Glen is a big man. Big hair, big heart, big smile. Does he bring Jollity? Sometimes, most definitely. But he is also a most serious scholar. His work and writing is based on fractal geometry and how it can be used to solve individual, local, or even world problems. He has been invited, among others, by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to present a basic proposal that, if chosen, could lead to a research grant, followed by huge financial support to launch a world wide pilot project. His application was necessarily short, but, to get the essence of what he is proposing into very few words is really writing at its finest. Good luck Glen, your writing family is cheering for you.

Here again is a farm story from Ede. I think that Ede has to be Mercury, the winged messenger. She is small and full of mischievous energy. She brings her message to us with tongue-in-cheek humour, but often with a serious underlying message. Ede has a multitude of stories from her life experiences. Some are fun and joyful, but many are dark and dire. She was born on the Germany/Poland border before the war. She saw and experienced atrocities one wouldn't wish on anyone. For now she is writing about the happier times.

Ede says the following mouse story actually happened. Her nephew Gunter was ten at the time. Forty years later he confided: "Tante Edeltraud, I saw what you did with the pudding, but we ate it anyway."

OF MAN AND MICE

Edeltraud Schult



Doris lives in an old house, together with a squadron of mice, who never pay a penny of rent. The beasts love to sit on the sill of the window. Here they stretch their small bodies out into the warmth of the sun.

Today the Lady expects her in-laws for supper. She cooks all morning and makes a vanilla dessert from the milk of her goat. While she gets wood to feed the flames in the stove, the grey coats with their black eyes and whiskers made out of fine silk spot the bowl, and at least a dozen or so jump onto the crust, which has hardened by now. Here they dance and eat. With sheer delight they bounce up and down on their spindly legs. Their fingernails make artwork which is a delight even to the most critical eye. At the squeak of hinges they all disappear. One leaps into the bandonium, which is a musical instrument from Russia.

The Lady looks around. Is anyone here to see the evil deed that is about to happen at this moment? She takes a big spoon, and munches the pudding into a *creme à la procure*. The footprints and the start of an artistic masterpiece are gone. Perhaps it could have become most famous.

In-laws and outlaws under one roof don't mix. The mice stay in their hiding place till all the good food disappears into the bellies of the people who came from the city, including the yellow, creamy vanilla.

But as soon as the guests leave, joyful mice gather together again; they dance with bliss on the black and white checkerboard floor and sing as loud as they can.

"We ate first, tralalala, tralalala, tralalala, we ate first." – Ede

Thank you, Ede, for giving us the opportunity to smile.

As for me, Mel Kazinoff, I really don't know which planet most suits me. Maybe I will leave this to other members of our group to decide.

We are formed from an early age – our ideas, our behaviours, our personalities. Most people can remember some small events from about three or older. I am no different, but the following piece is from a much earlier

time in my life. How much of the events documented here have been integral in forming my life? Writing is a great part of who I am, now that I am older and greyer. I think about the connections.

MY EARLIEST MEMORIES: 1942 in War-Torn London

My name is Mel and I am in my seventies.

That is now, but it wasn't then. My age was measured in days, not years, maybe only two or perhaps three, and I had no name. I was a number on a hospital chart or perhaps in some government filing cabinet.

Boom! The noise had started once again. There is light and then there is dark, then light again. Last time it became dark there was the same sound, coming nearer then further away. As it became louder, the fear in the room increased. I had no language, but I felt emotions and this emotion was fear. Fear permeated the room that held many women and their newborn babies. All were still officially nameless, and if the mothers had some ideas about a little Fred or a Carole or maybe Dan or Daisy, these were all overshadowed by the sound and the fear.

The screaming started, low and insidious. The mothers clutched their newborns to their breasts and shook uncontrollably. Then the many unnamed started to cry. We felt the fear too, and responded in the only way we knew. And what was I to do? My small body was being crushed against my loving mother. It hurt, but was comforting at the same time. But I could feel her terror as her bloated body vibrated and a slow streaming sound came from her opening mouth.

Boom! Much closer this time, and a great flash of light flared and was quickly gone. Sirens wailed and bells rang. Panic in the streets below. Boom! Flash! And in crashed a window at the far end of the room. More intense screaming as nurses rushed in to tend to someone hurt by flying glass. A mother or baby? Or both? I don't know. I don't know much of anything. I only feel.

I am now a half day older. I am unaware of this, but that was the way of life if one survived the dark, and the dreadful sounds. All was calm now. I snuggled to my mother's breast, but there was little satisfaction there. The doctors soon discovered that the experiences of the night bombings had caused my mother's body to stop functioning in a normal way. There was liquid, but no nutrients. I was not flourishing well even at three and a half days old. I had to be fed from a bottle, and I didn't like it. The formula tasted bad, and I missed the nurturing. But somehow I understood that if I was to survive, this was a necessary part. My mother's loving voice broke through the sucking and the images in my mind. It was gentle. I relaxed and sucked more deeply. I could feel a new energy seeping through me as my tiny body strengthened and grew. Yes! I could actually feel my energy growing as health filled me. You may not believe me, now that you are measured in years



Princess Margaret Hospital back in 1942

and not days, but it is true. Those feelings I had about myself were powerful, new and sharply clear. They would fade quickly enough, but I can still feel them now. Growth, health, vibrancy, excitement. And when darkness came, I felt that, followed by the screams and the crying.

I closed my eyes while the feelings were good. I'm lifted from my mother and tucked into a small bed by her side. I don't want to go, but I am getting used to the routine. How quickly I am learning. I could cry my objections to this move, but it would do no good. The rhythm of yesterday and the day before continued, and I rolled this way and that as I got comfortable, and the inner darkness took over to be replaced by the brightness of my dream world.

Even then, I wondered which world was real. In my dream I am not just three and a half days old. I am many years, maybe even hundreds, and I think I like it much more in this sunny, peaceful land.

Not many people remember the first days of their life, and I am no different. This memory came to me one day when I was deep in meditation. On checking with my mom, she was shocked at the detail I related and said that it was all true. She had forgotten almost all of it and now wondered how I could possibly know so much, not only of the physical activities, but of the emotions that were happening at the time. I guess we all retain all our memories. Some get locked away inside of us and only come out when least expected, if they ever come out at all.

Once again our celestial minds and hearts have tried to entertain and share some of the reasons we write. Most of us could not have claimed to be writers prior to seniorship days. Our sharing also says it is never too late to start. There are no limits to excellence. All efforts are excellent. With that in mind, if you have the slightest nudge, then put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and go for it.

“All the steps we take, all our dreams, our memories, our reflections lead us to the centre of our being.” – Susan M. Tiberghien, *Writing toward Wholeness: Lessons Inspired by C.G. Jung*

The Voices of Creative Aging

CREATIVE AGING is a powerful new social and cultural movement that is stirring the imaginations of communities and people everywhere.

This is the first book to document the movement.

Often called Sage-ing, Creative Aging takes many forms: academic, social and personal. It includes festivals, conferences, classes, group sessions and individual creative pursuits. The Journal Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude was founded by the Okanagan Institute in 2011 to honour the transformational power of creativity. Intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing, the Journal presents the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement.

Sage-ing is about seeking – satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Aging can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to Know Thyself and contribute that

knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and wellbeing

for the individual and to our culture. Creative Aging brings together more than 50 essays and galleries of images that showcase the power of the imagination expressed and enjoyed.

CREATIVE AGING

STORIES FROM THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL
SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE
SPIRIT, GRACE AND GRATITUDE
EDITED BY
Karen Close and Carolyn Cowan



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SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

A Journal of
the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close

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Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude exists to honour the transformational power of creativity. We are a quarterly journal intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing. We present the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement. We invite all ages to contribute their discoveries.

Sage-ing is about seeking - satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Ageing can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to *Know Thyself* and contribute that knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and well-being for the individual and to our culture.

This journal exists for all those serious in exploring their creativity, in a chosen expression. It is a forum for publication and exposure to other artists, both novice and established. This journal is an easel for any form of artistry undertaken out of personal intuition and imagination.