

HILLTOP

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A quarterly magazine of writing and art by North Hill residents

Volume 155



I am thrilled to feature Deborah Shannon as our Artist of the Month, certain you will be as dazzled as I by her diverse and inventive achievements in a variety of mediums. Originally employed as an economist, Debby took her first art class, in oil painting, only after the birth of her first child. Being told, after six weeks by her instructor, “My God; you don’t even know how to draw!” encouraged her to trash her oils and turn to drawing lessons. After art classes at Morley College in London where she and Don moved their young family for four years, she enrolled in classes in Connecticut and became President of her local watercolor society. A subsequent move took the family to Dallas for thirty-two years. There she joined seven other artists in running a gallery where they sold their own work. As President of the Western Federation of Watercolor Societies she, with her colleagues, travelled to paint in Italy, Spain and France. “In Dallas,” Debby says, “I was always involved in one art class or another: oil, watercolor, watercolor monoprints, acrylic, photography, photo transfers, and print making.

Upon moving to North Hill, Debby found a studio in an old mill in South Norwood where, with several other artists, she says, “I am happily continuing to paint.” We, as her fellow residents, are most fortunate.

In this issue we acknowledge the beginning of the school year with four essays recounting the writers’ experiences in both public and private schools in this country and abroad. And, as the sailing season reaches its final stages for this part of the world, two of our most experienced sailors reflect on their adventures at sea.

Finally, Sybil Miller, through David Epstein’s lens, shares with us a portion of her collection of Bantu tribal artifacts from her native South Africa. Enjoy.

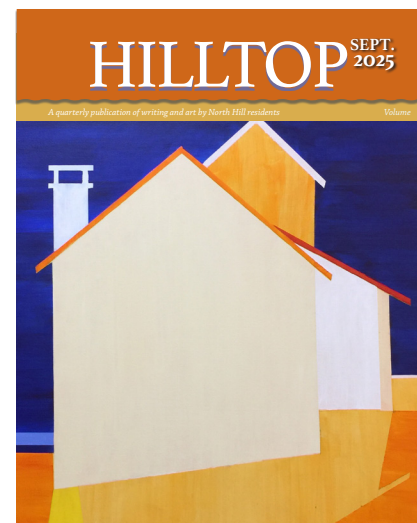
David Crellin, Editor

Cover

Deborah Shannon

Carmel by the Sea
mixed media

I have always been intrigued by the interrelationships of flat shapes on the painting surface, and I often strive to achieve a sense of abstraction without being nonrepresentational, a challenge that I find intriguing. I like to push the colors into vibrant harmonies, which are often unrelated to reality. My subjects often include architectural images, drawn from New England barns to San Francisco Victorians.



HILLTOP

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**The Hilltop is published quarterly and welcomes fiction, essays, poetry, and graphic arts.
Information about submissions can be found on My North Hill under the North Hill Info tab**

Please submit your work to NH-Hilltop@outlook.com

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Sandstorm

Denise Stanford

If it weren't for the postcard my grandma saved I might have imagined the sandstorm, like memories we rub so often details fade into oblivion until we invent new ones. But it was real, as real as the card's 1950 postmark.

When I was halfway through sixth grade my parents announced we were leaving home to spend a year in the middle of the Sahara Desert. My anthropologist father wanted to study life in Sidi Khaled, an Algerian oasis. My first reaction was, "You're kidding. Just when I'm starting to be popular?" But at least I'd finally have my own stories. I'd been raised on my parents' tales of their crossing the Sahara to Timbuctoo in the back of a truck, living on canned sardines and red wine, glad they'd decided at the last moment not to take one-year-old me with them.

Now, as we left the last town at the edge of the desert to follow two tire tracks into the sand—a *piste*, Dad called it—I was sure this was the start of my story. I couldn't wait to see the sweeping sand dunes and camels and Arabs in white-hooded burnouses that Hollywood movies showed. But the only thing we saw was a lone Arab boy tending a herd of scrawny goats nosing the sand in search of something to eat. When I waved at the goatherd he looked startled, as if we'd dropped from the sky. Where had he come from? There wasn't a tent

or a palm-fringed oasis in sight. Or anything else to look at. I'd expected to be hot and thirsty. "Part of being an anthropologist," Dad would have said if I'd complained. But I had never expected to be bored.

We ate lunch in the jeep, crackers and canned Spam Dad said reminded him of Army K-rations. I was already so thirsty I'd taken to sucking the inside of my cheeks to make enough spit to swallow. When I jiggled my canvas-covered canteen—left over from WW II like everything else Dad had bought up in Algiers, including the jeep—it was empty. All I could think about was water. Water from my grandparents' well that tasted like old metal spoons. Water in the school drinking fountains that dribbled past wads of chewing gum.

The sandstorm came out of nowhere. A gust shoved us sideways so hard I grabbed the side of the jeep to keep from being thrown out. Wind shifted from steady hissing to a low growl that scratched at the jeep's canvas roof a few inches above my head and flung handfuls of sand into my eyes and ears, even up my

nose. Our windshield wipers tried to keep up but all they could do was push sand back and forth across the streaked windshield.

Ahead of us, an orange curtain of sand swung a few feet above the desert. Then we were inside



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it, plunged into hazy darkness, the sun a weird orange smudge somewhere outside. I don't remember being scared. Too much was happening too fast, all of it so new it didn't fit into anything I'd ever known. But then the jeep shuddered, slowed, and sank slowly into a drift.

For a moment no one spoke. I wanted desperately for my parents to say, "Don't worry, Dee. We'll be all right." But maybe we wouldn't. We hadn't passed a car or person all day except for the goatherd. What if no one ever found us? What if we died of thirst and heat and my friends never even knew what happened to me?

In the front seat Dad was trying to start the jeep. "Out of gas," he shouted over the wind. "Not to worry. Gas in the jerry can." He turned around so I could hear him more easily. "You're going to have to help me, Dee. If sand gets in the gas"—he paused—"the engine won't work. I need you to hold your burnoose over us while I pour gas into the tank."

Now, looking back on this moment, I find there's a blank space in my memory, as if the film's been spliced. Why didn't he ask my mother instead of me to help? She always said she didn't like wind, but that was ordinary wind on an ordinary street back home in Ann Arbor. Why didn't she tell Dad I was too young—not even twelve yet—to be responsible for whether or not we reached Sidi Khaled?

I don't remember if I said any of this. I do remember Dad's removing the jeep's thin canvas seat cushion and unscrewing a metal cap. I remember clutching the sides of my burnoose while the wind tried to rip it out of my hands as he poured a stream of strong-smelling gasoline into the hole. And I remember concentrating so hard on not letting sand get into the gas tank that there wasn't room left over to be scared.

He reattached the jerry can to the bumper and tried the engine. It coughed and quit. He tried again. When it finally caught he hopped out of the jeep, got down on all fours and swept his hand back and forth over the sand. What was he doing? If the engine quit now...

"Track's still there," he shouted, jumping back into the jeep. "Good to go."

Then another splice in memory. I don't remember whether he told me he was proud of me. I like to think so. Most of all, I remember feeling important. That he and I were a team. That I wasn't a little girl anymore.

Years later, going through a box of letters my mother had kept from our year in Algeria, I found the post card I'd sent my grandparents. It was unusual for my unsentimental but beloved grandmother, as well as my equally unsentimental mother, to have saved it. "Dear Grandma," I'd written in my best sixth grade penmanship. "I like Africa. I helped Daddy in a sandstorm. It was exciting."

We Remember

ELAINE GROPIEN • RUTH HERRMANN • LAWRENCE DAMON • JAMES CORKINS
ARTHUR O'SHEA • GLORIA LEWIS • BARRY ROBBINS • LEONA HALL
ROBERT BERNSON

Maltese Journal

Stan Fisher

It was April, 1960, and I had left my studies at the University of London to travel in Europe. While traveling, I was offered a hotel job in Malta. From Rome I caught a night train to Sicily and, at midnight, boarded *The Star of Malta*, a small, gleaming white ship. Its engines churned through the night, and at 7 A.M., I had my first sight of Malta. Sheer limestone cliffs, fortress cities, curved Arab arches, and arid hills in a sweeping dazzle of light.

After we docked at the port city of Valetta, I took a crowded bus to Malta's north shore, and a short ferry ride ("All passengers and freight travel at their own risk.") past the barren, uninhabited islets of Comino and Cominetto. I had reached Gozo. Another bus, smaller and less crowded, took me to the northeast tip of the island and the town of Marsalforn, which consisted of tiny, vacation cottages curved around a small, blue-green bay. The town was deserted – vacationers were not expected for another week or two – but by June the homes and beachfront would be crowded with Maltese residents, British sailors, and assorted tourists, all fleeing the heat of mainland Malta.

On a quiet side street sat the two-bit, two-story hotel that was to be my home. My boss, William Caffery, was obese, 60-ish, with olive skin and curly, greying hair. He drank booze throughout the day. Mrs. Caffery, likewise, habitually wobbled around, Scotch-in-hand. The only other employee was Evelyn, a 40-ish Maltese cook and housemaid. My duties included food-shopping, tending bar, and waiting tables. When the summer waitstaff, all English university students, arrived in June, I was meant to supervise them. In compensation I would receive room, board, and two pounds a week pocket money.

Unlike the much larger island of Malta, which in 1960 already had sprawling cities, looming grey battleships, and roving groups of sailors, Gozo was rustic. Aside from the hilltop fortress city of Victoria, the island's 25 square miles consisted mainly of parched, stone-terraced hills and small farmhouses hedged by tall prickly pear cactus. There were fishing villages, red sand beaches accessible only by dirt paths and, from

every vantage point, a view of the sparkling blue Mediterranean. Because most of the island lacked electricity, at night most light came from the soft glow of kerosene lamps jutting from occasional walls or raised on slender lampposts. And from the stars.

Although in the pre-season the hotel was usually empty, we did have some excitement. One night a jovial, black cassocked priest dropped in with two Maltese farmers; one played the guitar and sang, the other played the harmonica. For three hours they played tunes ranging from "Tom Dooley" to the Italian hit "Marina" to Maltese folk songs. Their faces were pale white from the cap-line to the hair, leathery brown below, reflecting the glow of kerosene lanterns and the effect of repeatedly filled glasses of Scotch.

In July, just two months into my tenure at the Club, I was fired. Mr. Caffery's justification – that I had entered his bedroom while he was away – was unfounded. His real motivation, I suspected, was his attraction to Opal, the waitress with whom I was keeping company. Evidently, he thought, my absence from the scene would improve his romantic prospects. This suspicion was consistent with his chronically lecherous behavior toward the female staff, such as had occurred a few days earlier when he requested a waitress to bring a beverage to his room. When she did, he received her, wearing an open robe, with nothing underneath.

If indeed I was fired to ease Mr. Caffery's path to romance, he must have been disappointed. Opal quit her job the next day, followed shortly by all the other English waitstaff. One week later we were all at Police Headquarters in the Maltese capital, Valetta, filing formal complaints against Caffery for sexual harassment of the waitresses. The police took our written statements, but we left convinced that they would do nothing.

A few weeks later, I left Malta and never returned. In the years since, the island has become a prime tourist destination, and the beachfronts of once-quiet Gozo are packed with gleaming resort hotels.

I am grateful for the Malta of my memories.

Deborah Shannon



Vermont Barn
acrylic/paper



Winter Frost
photograph



Four Chimneys
photograph

Photography

Photography is a whole other wonderful art form. Here you create with your eyes and the click of a button. The photograph “Winter Morning” was taken through the windshield of our car as the sun was rising. The windshield wiper had taken one pass through the ice on the window leaving a wonderful pattern of streaks.

In “Four Chimneys,” I loved the fact that the four chimneys were made of the same material but were very different shapes and the roof clearly repeated the pattern of the material of the chimneys.



Railroad Station Vermont
acrylic/paper



Frozen Pond
collage



Cuban Market, Blue Figure
watercolor



Memories of China

Collage

Collage is simply pure fun. I have boxes and boxes of material that I have collected for years.

I separate the material simply by color: warm, neutral, cool. Included are ribbons, wrapping paper, magazine cut outs, postage stamps etc. When I set to work, I draw most of my material from one box and then look for color accents in the other boxes.



In the Mail



Blue Butterfly

Watercolor

I have done large serious watercolors. Now I work primarily in acrylics as that medium is more flexible. But I still love to do small spontaneous watercolors on site, and that is what I have shown here.



Fountain Monreale



Russian Chapel



Cuban Market Cash

An American Woman as an Olympic Executive

Cynthia Kelly

Executive Committee Member, United States Olympic Committee

Growing up, I was a tomboy. I played just about every sport. When I reached my mid-teens, I began to focus on badminton, the second most popular sport in the world. One hundred twenty countries play intense competitive badminton, and in Asia, top players are millionaires. I won several junior national titles and then began adult competition. After a few years, I became one of the top players in the country and competed for a number of years. Then I retired.

In 1992, three things happened: Badminton went into the Olympics as a medal sport, I became president of USA Badminton, and the Dream Team won the gold medal in basketball – a team still talked about today. I then became badminton's representative on the Board of the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Typically, if a Board member wanted to take a team abroad, or join a committee, that person would stand up at a meeting and list his or her credentials. Often the Board would vote to select someone. Soon I realized that my credentials were better than those of the guys who were promoting themselves. I was an "athlete" in the Olympic definition, I had been president of a sport for both sexes (women headed sports such as synchronized swimming or women's field hockey) and I had an MBA from Boston University.

So I began to put myself forward. I was chosen for a number of tasks. I took 100 teens from the USOC to the World Youth Games in Moscow.

I represented the USOC at the International Olympic Academy in Athens, and I represented the USOC at some International Olympic Committee meetings in Lausanne, Switzerland. I

went onto many Olympic committees, and then was elected to the Executive Committee of the Board. There were twenty five members of whom four were women. Then, I was chosen as part of the management team to the Olympics in Sydney.

I think all of our work really helped potential Olympic athletes. We worked to help promising athletes and to help potential Olympic medalists.



For many years, I was on the Board of the U.S. Olympic Foundation, which managed about \$200 million for the USOC. George Steinbrenner was chair and I was vice chair. If you want to hear some Steinbrenner anecdotes, I've got them.

Title IX has been a great boon for women. Can you recall that if men's and women's teams went somewhere to compete, the men flew and the women went in a school bus. Things are much better for women athletes now. In fact, in Sydney, more US women than men won medals. I feel strongly that man-to-woman trans folks should never participate in women's sports.

Finally, I hope everyone was watching the Olympics in Paris last summer and if you can't make it to Los Angeles in 2028, you will be cheering for the U.S. from your couch.

This is the fifth in a series of talks presented by eight women residents of North Hill in February 2024 during a panel discussion:
Coming of Age as a Professional in a Male Dominated World.

Nursery School Lab Rat, 1939

Lynn Zimmerman Bloom, Class of '41

I was a nursery school lab rat, and hippity hop happy about that. One of six children recruited to spend weekday mornings at the University of New Hampshire Child Development Lab, I blissfully devoured the bait—a magical trove of blocks, boats, books, and musical instruments. We tackled these in a large indoor playroom located in the university's gracious, modern, home-management house, "a typical New England home of the upper middle class" said Phil Hart of the Boston Herald (2/4/1940). Outdoors we tackled swings, slides, a sandbox, a jungle gym—and each other. In this oasis, home ec and psych students studied us with rapt attention.

As the scent of our daily snack, graham crackers—the equivalent of Proust's madeleine—wafts through my imagination—memories come drifting back. Elicited by the emergence of my January 14, 1939, report card from a collection of family papers, the phantom spirit of my four-year-old self arises.

Contrary to Mark Twain's observation that "When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not. Now that I am older I can remember only those things that never happened," I swear that my recollections are true.

The following commentary, written by one M. Karr, not only reinforces the memories but goes to the heart of my essential self, a constant from that time to this.

My "small muscle control was excellent," an asset in "drawing, music, books, and neatness," and in my preference for "sedentary rather than physically active play." I was enraptured during story time, and drawing was a squiggle of delights. Did I also paint at an easel with a tray that held jars of paint in primary colors, as well as water to clean the brush? Or am I eliding this image with my own children's easel? I was also able to "manage [my] clothing very well"; it was not easy in those pre-Velcro days to tie one's shoes and buckle up galoshes.

My large muscle control, however, ranged from "fair" to "poor." Although I eventually attained proficiency on the swing and playing hopscotch, my inability to throw, catch, or run fast remained. I was chosen last on every team in every grade, and weaseled my way out of as many gym classes as possible throughout high school to avoid the shame—finally redeemed in college by an A in figure skating. "Lacking in assurance," I failed naptime, for I "did not relax during rest" then or for the next twenty years until I married Martin, an expert napper, and napped happily ever after.

Despite my "pleasant manner," "enjoyment of the other children," and "eagerness to be included in the play," I was "indifferent to adults," and "liked to direct others when I could." Naturally, my favorite extracurricular pastime was playing school, where I, of course, was the teacher, keeping reluctant pupils from their own play with bribes of chocolate-chip cookies.

We lab rats were occasionally tested by the college students. A year later, after I'd learned to read, I knew intuitively that the tester wanted me to run through the maze in a particular direction. I was supposed to reconstitute a sentence that had been broken up into three flashcards as "I"/"am going"/"to the store." But, in a determined act of micro-defiance, I insisted that "I/to the store/am going" was what I wanted to say, and I stuck with this unidiomatic locution, for I also understood that I could get away with it. Rebelliousness ran in my family. Two years after I put the tester to the test, my younger brother insisted on spelling backwards every word they gave him when he was tested.

Ms. Karr concluded her report with the kind reflection: "Lynn appreciates encouragement." I still do. Who wouldn't? Then, a hug: "Lynn is a very sensitive child and should be protected against over-stimulation." Eighty-six stimulating years later, as a retired professor still writing, I'm trying hard to relax. So I, to the store, am going.

The Manor School

Sally Sullivan

I scrunch up with my back to the soft moss growing on the trunk of the bush, my knees drawn up to my chest and my head between my knees. My arms hold my legs in place. I turn my feet inward so the tips of my toes don't peek outside my little nest. The branches and leaves cover me completely; I look up and can see only blue between green and brown. The sunlight is fractured and dappled and shines in jagged spots on my arms and legs. I am well and truly hidden, and no one can possibly find me. I will win at Hide and Go Seek.

I am at The Manor School, Great Durnford, near Salisbury, Wiltshire, England. I sleep in a dormitory with seven other eight-year-olds, four to a wall. We each have a bed with identical covers and identical bedside tables. At the end of the room is a chamber pot, because we are not allowed to go down the hall to the bathroom at night. I dread the mornings when it is my turn to empty it.

We are not allowed any personal items, so the photographs of my parents and my sister and my one-year-old nephew were confiscated, and my bedside table is bare, save for a lamp. My mother gave me a blue leather folding travel clock, with my initials in gold. Now the property of the Head Matron, Mrs. Broadway, it sits on her bedside table, the numbers glowing in the dark. We wear uniforms – grey skirts or shorts, grey knee socks, blue or white aertex shirts. My mother sends me flannel-lined jeans to guard against the cold. They are sent back.

We eat in a long, cold, dining room, each form with its own table. Marmite is everywhere – it tastes like dead leaves mixed with dirt. For our bedtime snack, we get dripping toast spread with rendered beef fat. It's supposed to be a delicacy, but in the cold of the English country house the fat congeals, and I gag as I try to eat it.

I hold onto my American identity fiercely, as if I would not exist without it. There is a record player

in the common room, and, for some odd reason, a record with "The Yellow Rose of Texas" on one side and "Home on the Range" on the other. I play them over and over, although I am not sure I know where Texas is. But it is in America. In geography class, Miss Bowker asks why New York has skyscrapers. Everyone is stumped. I wave my hand frantically and finally she calls on me. "Because New York is on an island." Only I know this. I am achingly homesick.

But I love the nature walks. We play Hide and Go Seek about twice a week, and since I have found my hideaway, I am a frequent winner. I am good at other games as well. I race around the square in Rounders, a sort of baseball, and twist and turn to escape pursuit in Netball, basketball without a backboard.

The school sits on the river Avon, and we walk along the banks in our gumboots, squishing in the mud up to our knees, leaning over to pick flowers and plants that grow in the riverbed. I must take care to avoid the nettles. I could identify poison ivy in America; here nettles hide in the grass and bushes, ready to spring out and sting at the slightest misstep. But everything is green and luscious and alive, even the nettles, and everywhere I look something beautiful grows.

I have my own pony, Kentucky. His full name is Kentucky Derby – very American. My parents bought him for me as a going-to-boarding-school present, and I love him beyond reason. Like everything else at school, ponies are shared, so on riding days I rush to the posted list, ecstatic to see my name next to his, and despondent to see someone else's.

When I ride him, I am happy. I curl my hands around and into his mane and whisper to him. Some days are reserved for schooling, and I learn to make figure eights, change legs, even jump. Other days we ride through the countryside, trotting along the edges of fields of cropped hay,

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the ponies' hoofs making crackling sounds as they crush the shortened stalks. We gallop across the downs, the undulating hills near the school. Occasionally we come across fallen logs or a small creek and take turns jumping. On longer rides, we pack picnic lunches and eat them, leaning against the huge monoliths of Stonehenge, while the ponies graze nearby.

Two years later, I am more British than American. My accent is as British as any of my friends. I can recite the kings and queens of England in order. I can draw a map of the British Isles freehand, complete with cities, towns, and rivers. I can pronounce the unpronounceable names of Welsh towns and villages. Because my parents have moved back to America, I spend many holidays with my friends. At Ariel's farm in Wales I watch cows give birth, the calves emerging wet and struggling, as the mother licks them, and they

root around on spindly little legs to find her milk. I stay with my best friend "the Lady Sarah Coke," known as Cookie. She lives in Holcombe Hall, a stately home where the family manufactures pottery to pay for upkeep.

I know how to muck out a stable and plait a mane and tail and I can tie a four-in-hand as well as anyone. I spell "or" words with a "u" – "honour," "favour," "behaviour." I know all the words to the Apostles Creed and "Jerusalem," which we sing in church every Sunday.

After I've moved back to DC to live with my parents, my classmates tease me about my British accent. At night, I lie in my bed and sing "Jerusalem" to myself. I have ridden across England's green and pleasant land; I know it well. I hold onto my British identity as fiercely as I once did my American one.

It's a bird. It's a plane. It's the fifth grade.

Anne Weaver

On the first day of fifth grade, our teacher, Mrs. Brown, asked how we wanted to tour the United States—by bus by train or by plane. We enthusiastically voted by plane, not knowing what was ahead.

We studied airplanes. We went to the airport and toured a plane, including the cockpit—which one could do then—and talked to the crew, including the pilot. Then we built a cockpit for the front of our classroom and a control tower for the back. On days we "flew" we lined up outside our classroom with the tickets we had printed and checked our bags—our lunches. We took turns being pilots—just the boys back then—or stewardesses—the girls—or traffic controllers or weathermen or ticket takers or baggage handlers.

We spent the year flying across America studying maps and learning the history, the geography and

the current events of the places we visited. Our spelling words included, fuselage, and aileron. We did time-rate-distance problems in math. We studied weather patterns and kinds of clouds. We created a huge mural across the back of the classroom to which we added with each new stop. I drew a Spanish conquistador and later a horse— notable as the only things I ever drew that turned out well.

Alice Brown was a master teacher, inspiring, creative, and fully modeling integrated learning. She was also a wonderful person, warm and kind and motherly. The year was 1955 just after the Brown versus the Board of Education decision. My K-9 public school in segregated Baltimore had just admitted its first Black student, a sixth-grade girl. Mrs. Brown taught us acceptance and welcoming.

It was a memorable year.

Tanner

David Crellin

“That’s two boots in today’s game, Crellin. If you want to bring home the bacon, you gotta deliver the goods!”

It was Tanner’s (Miss Grace Tanner) response to my second wrong answer that day in ninth-grade Social Studies. I shrugged and looked at her blankly. “Sorry; I thought I was right,” I could have been saying, or, for all she knew, “Who cares? Try some smart kid if you want the right answer.” That was probably closer to the truth since I, like everyone else in the room, hated her class.

First of all, she was way too old to be a teacher. Her scraggly hair was so thin you could see her scalp in places when she embarrassed you by calling you up to the front to show everybody else you’d gotten an especially good grade. It made us even more jealous of the kids in Miss Argento’s class across the hall. She was brand new and the boys all had crushes on her.

Her classes were “a riot,” everybody said, and you didn’t have to do any work in there. The few times she did give homework, she never checked to see if you did it or not. In Tanner’s class you had to do your homework every night. Lots of times she’d collect it and go over every detail. Maybe the snide little comments she’d put on my dumb mistakes did help me remember for the test, but I still didn’t like them.

Just about every kid got an A from Miss Argento because her tests were so easy. In Tanner’s class you had to work your head off for a B. No wonder she was jealous of Miss Argento’s popularity. We could tell, because when the noise and laughter from her room came into ours, she’d purse her lips and shake her head. That’s why everyone was shocked when a sub showed up in Miss Argento’s class after Christmas recess. We heard that Miss Argento didn’t want to be a teacher after all. Why couldn’t Tanner have been replaced by a substitute? Maybe then we’d have a little fun in class for a change, instead of just learning, learning, learning.

The weird thing is, Tanner thought she was funny. She was always giving us riddles, about history, naturally. “How did the Roman Empire get cut in half?” she asked one time, and when no one knew, she said, “Oh, come on. That’s easy. With a pair of Caesars.” She’d actually laugh at corny stuff like that. Then she’d twist it into little lessons, such as the fact that there were two Caesars: first, Julius, then Augustus, whose real name was Octavian. “Why is early history called the Dark Ages? Because there were so many knights,” was another one. From that, I learned what “Dark Ages” really meant. We’d all groan, and no one would laugh. Sometimes it was hard not to, though I’d never have let on at the time – I mean “Caesar’s,” for scissors? Sometimes I’d remember a fact that helped on a test. Maybe that was why she used them, but who knows with Tanner? All we knew was that she was senile or maybe insane.

Even some of the nicest girls made fun of her when she turned her back to point out something important on the blackboard. They would mimic the faces she made as she acted out one of the dumb little scenes she’d cook up—for example, Genghis Khan talking to Edward R. Murrow—to get us to understand some point we absolutely had to learn. Her blackboard had four leaves that opened like the pages of a book. Every day they’d be crammed with new stuff for us to think about. It was ridiculous how excited she could get about things that happened a million years ago. We’d roll our eyes at each other when she’d go off on a tangent over some “fascinating” thing she had just learned. She did have a few good stories, of course, since she’d been in twenty different countries, but learning something new at her age? Who’d believe that?

The worst part was when she’d lean over us at our desks to show us what was wrong with our answers on a test she’d just returned. She’d explain and explain about why we got marked wrong. All we would be thinking was why she was

taking so much time with us. No other teachers did that. If you “got it,” fine; if you didn’t, too bad. You could go for after-school help if you wanted, because Tanner stayed every day, but who was going to do that? What was it to her anyway if we didn’t get every last thing she was teaching? She was supposed to be our teacher; not our mother. That was the thing about Tanner: she could

be sarcastic just because you didn’t do your homework or made a dumb mistake on a test. She let herself get way too excited about the stuff she was teaching. She just kept after you and wouldn’t quit till she was sure you had tried harder than you wanted to. When it paid off in a good grade, it was OK I guess, but mainly we hated that class. Who wouldn’t?

Indoctrination

Nancy McKelvy

I learned to sail the first summer of my marriage to John. His Concordia yawl lay waiting alongside a dock in Padanaram where we boarded her for the first time as husband and wife—skipper and first mate... I knew nothing.

Before giving me command of the wheel, he explained how to follow a course on the compass—quite different from driving a car. With only the two of us aboard, I would steer while he would navigate and tend the sails.

It was very foggy, and visibility in the harbor was negligible. John cast us off the dock, and I dutifully followed the compass course out of the harbor. Because he was below and I couldn’t see him, I felt quite alone. I could see nothing and could hear little but the hum of our engine. Suddenly, his head popped out and he said, “You may see a black bell on the course, and if so, we can pass either side of it.” Then he again disappeared below.

As I peered through the fog, I thought, “What does a black bell look like?”... It never appeared.

After a couple of hours, we anchored Aeolus in the protected harbor of Cuttyhunk, John’s favorite destination, where the Bosworth House served twin chicken lobsters and the local fishermen gathered every evening. The fog was still thick, and the boat was damp and cold. He attached the Charlie Noble (the metal chimney vent), filled the stove with charcoal, and lit it. Before long, the cabin was

warm. The oil lamps were lit, and our home afloat was comfortably cozy. We did go ashore to the Bosworth House for the twin chicken lobster dinner and a walk around the island. That was my indoctrination.

In late summer it was time to return Aeolus to Padanaram for winter storage, and we had to get her there, a day’s sail from the house on the Cape. We wanted to stop in “the Hunk” for a final night before turning the boat over to the yard. The weather was lousy all week, so we decided to bite the bullet and just get there, and so we headed out into wind that increased to 25 knots as the afternoon progressed. I was at the wheel most of the time, so John could tend the sails. The cold salt spray whipped at my face and exposed hands, which grew quite numb. I couldn’t submit to seasickness since I was concentrating so hard to steer as we tacked back and forth. I was so cold my tits hurt.

When John took a moment to commiserate, he said, “Hang in there. When we get to -- the Hunk-- all will get better.”

Once we arrived at that special island and the anchor was secure, John wrapped me in a blanket, gave me a dollop of Scotch to warm my insides, lit the stove to warm the cabin. In another hour we were again at the Bosworth House ashore enjoying the chicken lobster dinner.

That was the beginning and end of my first summer of sailing, more than sixty years ago.

First Voyage

Tom Selldorff

“Strange,” I said to Carolyn, “Cuttyhunk island should be visible, but it’s not.” We were sailing along nicely with the wind behind us on a beautiful fall day, our first on a delayed honeymoon. We had left Wickford, a small harbor near to Newport, Rhode Island, that morning, expecting to spend the night moored in Cuttyhunk, a little island about 25 miles eastward.

We had been married only a few months earlier, but since I was in the midst of finals in my last year in grad school, we had only a couple of days together after the wedding, and this week aboard was our first real honeymoon. We had chartered a 28’ cutter (a sailboat with two sails in front), and it was the biggest boat either of us ever sailed up to that point. Not only that, but I had not been cruising before and was unfamiliar with all the things that involved, like charts, navigation and so forth. We did have an old Mobil road map which showed the waters of Narragansett Bay, and we were adventurous and fit, so what could go wrong?

It was early afternoon, sun was shining over the glistening water as the boat skimmed along and we were in love. After a while, some land appeared on the horizon and while it was not at all where Cuttyhunk Island should have been, it was close enough. So we headed for it. After an hour or so we came near enough to get a good look, and it wasn’t an island at all...there were cars on the causeway between it and the mainland, and we had no idea where we were. (It turned out we were victims of a meteorological phenomenon common to the area in which the haze blocks out distance accessibility, but does not interfere with seeing things nearby. The next day, the haze dissipated and we saw Cuttyhunk clearly.)

“Better turn around,” I said, “and go back to the last place we recognized,” – a harbor called Sakonnet we had passed about five miles earlier.

We lowered the sails, started the engine and began retracing our steps. I was scanning the shore with binoculars to see if I could recognize anything, but all I saw was a number of red buoys which I knew could mark rocks or reefs to be avoided. But then there was a point of land with a big house and a lawn... and rising out of the lawn were several sailboat masts. It was beginning to get dark, and we

faced a choice between trying to reach Sakonnet while we still had visibility or going closer to shore to see if there was something behind the point of land where boats with masts might be moored. We chose the latter course and as we came close to shore, we spotted green and red

buoys marking an entrance to a harbor. Cautiously and slowly, we crept between them and saw a long curving line of channel markers. Shortly the narrow waterway opened up into a harbor—Westport—with a line of anchored boats, a dock and a boatyard. Very carefully we came alongside the boatyard dock and tied up, heaving a sigh of relief that we had made it safely. We had brought along a book entitled “Guide to New England Cruising,” and when we looked up Westport Harbor it said: “A fine, safe, well-- sheltered harbor, but with a narrow, tricky entrance that should never be attempted without local knowledge.”

We had been fortunate that our entry had been at high tide. The next morning, as we left through the narrow opening at near low tide, we could see huge rocks on either side behind the green and red marker buoys.

For Carolyn and me, this was the beginning of many years of sailing and cruising together, with no shortage of adventures all over the world.



Arthur Ohanyan: Our Renaissance Supervisor of Maintenance

Gary Seligson

North Hill's Maintenance Supervisor Arthur Ohanyan likes to keep a low profile, but he and his talented crew have been making our lives at North Hill run as trouble free as possible.

North Hill's vast complex of public and private spaces totals nearly 800,000 square feet, including miles of corridors, hundreds of apartments, thousands of rooms and an enormous infrastructure to support our residences, offices and many activities. This is all kept in impeccable working order by the dozen or so skilled team members of the maintenance department, under Arthur's supervision.

In the apartments, whenever something needs attention, residents simply click the "Services" icon in the MyNorthHill app, fill out a brief form, and soon a member of Arthur's maintenance team is on the job.

Arthur was recruited to North Hill in December 2024, after decades of varied and increasingly responsible roles in facilities maintenance, both in the United States and in his native Armenia. He has been an electrician, an HVAC expert, and an insurance appraiser, to name just a few of his skills.

Life was not easy for the Ohanyan family in Yerevan during the Soviet era. Arthur's mother was a civil engineer, and his father ran an underground factory stitching blue jeans, greatly in demand, but completely illegal. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Armenia fell into a deep recession and life became even harder. When Arthur's parents split up, his mother moved

to America where her sister lived, and Arthur stayed in Armenia with his grandfather.

Both Arthur and his wife Margaret are of mixed Armenian and Greek ancestry and are fluent in Greek, Armenian, Russian, and English. They both studied at the University of Athens, where Arthur graduated with a degree in economics and business, and began a career as a financial analyst. It wasn't long, however, before he realized that working with numbers at a desk in an office was not for him. He needed to be out in the world, fixing things, maintaining and repairing infrastructures.



Shortly after their marriage, Arthur and Margaret emigrated from Armenia to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where his mother and her parents were already living. Two children followed: Katarina, who is now 21 and a recent graduate from fashion school in New York, and 17-year-old Eric, who is entering his senior year of high school. Margaret is a social worker, caring for the elderly at an adult day care center.

In contrast with his imposing physique, honed by his many years of boxing and martial arts, Arthur is soft-spoken and thoughtful and considers himself religious. He loves jazz and classical music, particularly Armenian composers like Aram Khachaturian. More than anything else, though, his interests are focused around his family and his work.

He is committed to a long-term career at North Hill, and has even offered boxing lessons to interested residents. It is our good fortune to have him here to keep things running smoothly.

Selections from Sybil Miller's African Tribal Art Collection

Photography by David Epstein

Beaded Art of the N'debele Tribe in South Africa and the Bushmen (San People) in Botswana

Each tiny bead or embroidery thread is fragile on its own, but like drops of water in the sea or grains of sand, they are powerful. Together they define and represent the human need to survive and maintain faith in Family, Tradition and Identity.



Jocolo

N'debele Marriage apron



Bushmen Beaded Bags

From Botswana in the Kalahari Desert. Beads, sewed onto bags made of hartebeest (African antelope). According to San mythology, one can "Go into a skin bag and take on the animal's strength."





Jocolo. Aprons worn on formal occasions by married women.



Mapoto

Fertility Aprons. Less formal, indicate married status.



Fertility Dolls

Beaded by young maidens after puberty.



Perpetu

Rectangular aprons, beaded on canvas. Worn by young women, signaling marriageable status.

“As a child, dreaming amid the colors of S.Africa, and later stepping ahead on both the smooth and the jagged stones of this vibrant society, I was captured by the beauty of Tribal Art. My treasured gift from Africa was discovering messages of love, human endeavor and the struggle of cultures to preserve and celebrate their traditions and rituals.”



Shangaan Tribe tapestry.

Hand embroidered design drawing from Shangaan culture and mythology. The bold images speak of the great elephant, the powerful crocodile, the tree of life and love, the flight of birds... A product of an initiative begun in 1989 to create jobs and uplift the local communities of the Limpopo province through their art.

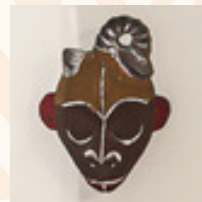
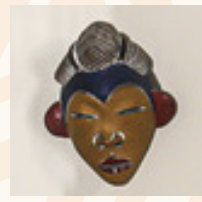
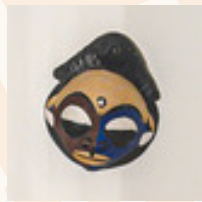
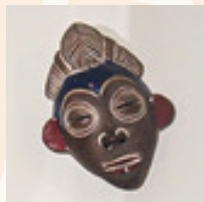
MY AFRICA

Our flamboyant Umsinsi,
My lucky bean tree,
Mocks me, asks me,
“Is your soul indigenous
Or does it belong anywhere,
Everywhere, there
Or here?”

The Yellowwood I Planted,
Is it there?
The old Loquat must be
Dead by now,
Its flaking trunk
Its crooked bough
Sucked by the sun,
Its fruit long gone.

I like to think
The falling flowers
Of Red Camelia
And White Hepatica
Still carpet the earth
At home
In Africa

Sybil Miller, 1984



Clay Passport Masks --- Puna Tribes, Equitorial Africa