

THE *Lathrop Nor'Easter*

A Quarterly Publication by the Residents of The Lathrop Communities
at Northampton and Easthampton, Massachusetts

Series II: Vol. 9—1

A Community Converses

Winter 2024

ART AND ARTISTS AT LATHROP



Myanmar Buddha
by Alison Ryan

About the Artist: Alison Ryan

Ever since high school, photography has been an important leitmotif throughout my life. I have been fortunate to focus my lens on all seven continents, including my backyard, searching for patterns in nature, reflections in water, glass or metal, and of course "local color." My photo education was largely through experience but did include some formal training with workshops and courses.

Winning 2nd prize in the 2001 Valley Photo Center contest encouraged me to share my images with a wider audience in solo and group shows.

Recently my iPhone has become my preferred camera, and I enjoy exploring the realm of digital editing tools. In addition my photos help me document my volunteer efforts in controlling invasive aquatic plants and preventing harmful cyanobacteria blooms in local waters.

Since moving to Lathrop I continue to delight in focusing on the world around me with my photographic eye, sometimes also with my camera.



Icy Foliage Puddle by Alison Ryan



Contributing to The Nor'Easter

It's about the poems you write, about the vignettes you've related for years but have never recorded, about the foul ball you caught with your *other* hand (or maybe dropped with the favored one), about a chance elevator ride with a celebrity du jour, about that epiphanic moment when it all became clear, about the first sight of the phantom of delight who changed your life, about that time in the Great Depression or in the War of Your Choice, about your genealogy searches, about your travels, about your work or profession — in short, about what interests you to write, and you know better than we do what that is.

We do encourage all residents to contribute to the *Nor'Easter*, with poetry, art, photography and both fiction and non-fiction writing. Biographies of new residents are a popular feature.

Submissions can be sent to: Sgauger@lathrop.kendal.org

The Lathrop Nor'Easter

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Malley O'Hare, *Easthampton*

My unconventional life actually started off quite conventionally. I was one of four children born to Quaker parents who were college professors. They both worked for social change—my father in nonviolent direct action and my mother in the application of feminist theory. This laid the groundwork for my liberal attitudes and when the countercultural Hippie movement got underway, I jumped in—and dropped out.

After two years of art courses at Earlham College, I dropped out and found my way to East Wind Community, an intentional community located in the southern Missouri Ozarks. There my belief system and values solidified. I thoroughly embraced the living practice of socialism and communism. As a community we promoted the tenets of peaceful co-existence and worked hard to eliminate sexism. I reveled in the freedom of women to choose traditional men's work and became both a tractor driver and a fence builder.

After a number of years, I found myself missing the exposure to the arts, which I had enjoyed while growing up outside Philadelphia. I moved to Cambridge and immediately sought employment, with one condition, that I not be sitting at a desk in front of a computer. My work at East Wind Community had enamored me with manual labor. The years that followed included work in the produce department of Bread and Circus, Cambridge (subsequently Whole Foods), plus work in greenhouses and garden centers on the north shore of

Boston. Not particularly liking Boston nor the ocean (you can't walk on it) around the age of 40, I decided to move to western Massachusetts, a place where, I discerned, I would be happy for the rest of my life. It turned out to be an excellent choice.

In the Valley I continued greenhouse work, but suddenly due to unforeseen circumstances, I had to quit at the age of 50. Being a bit of a workaholic, at first I floundered. Eventually, however, I found a niche volunteering at the Jones Library in Amherst. In the beginning I shelved books, but then became an ESL conversationalist with a University of Massachusetts grad student from China. It turned out to be an extremely rewarding experience.

Just as I was waving farewell to my student, as he headed to California for a job in computer engineering with Apple, Covid-19 arrived. I lived alone and found the endless waiting and wading to be excruciating—waiting for Covid to be over, waiting to get into Lathrop, and wading through mountains of grief at the death of my mother (5/2020). So I fell back on my former interest—art. I took online painting, drawing, and writing classes, culminating in a series of workshops on how to write and illustrate children's books. Creating children's books felt like my true calling and I embraced it wholeheartedly. Please feel free to contact me via email if you wish to see a sampling of my writing and art on my website.

Other tidbits about me: I enjoy watching Korean TV dramas, and I'm learning to speak Korean. My dog, Poppy, and my cat, Yani, are my kids, having had none of the two-legged kind. My spiritual beliefs align with the place where Buddhism and Christianity meet.

I'm delighted to be here at Lathrop and I look forward to making new friends! Blessings, and namaste.



Hamilton and Delycia Salsich,
Easthampton**Hamilton**

My full name is Hamilton Enos Salsich, but I've also been known as Dad, Ham, Hammer, Hambone, Hammy (by my grandchildren), Mr. Salsich, and Professor Salsich. I was born on November 26, 1941. Until about age 20, I lived with my beloved family — my parents, Peter and Ann Salsich, and my wonderful four brothers and four sisters, in Webster Groves, a lovely village on the outskirts of St. Louis. I always felt lucky to have such an affectionate family around me. I remember very few arguments or meanness among the nine Salsich siblings, and my two older brothers, Al and Pete, were — and still are — especially wonderful role-models for me.

I enjoyed four years at St. Louis University High School, and from there went on to earn a B.A. at St. Louis University, where I actually began, *finally*, to love reading. Books had always been a struggle for me, but in my college years, I suddenly discovered the joys of reading and writing — especially poetry, which became my lifelong love. In 1968, I earned an M.A. in English at The University of Kansas, where I decided that teaching would be my career, and for the next 48 years, I felt privileged and grateful to be a classroom English teacher. I taught students from 6th grade through college, including 35 years at a small independent school in Stonington, Connecticut, and 20 years teaching an evening class for Three Rivers College at the US Submarine Base in Groton, Connecticut.

My first wife, Jan, and I raised four wonderful children — Luke, James, Jonah (aka Matt), and Annie — who have brought us countless blessings, including four remarkable grandchildren - Noah, Ava, Josh, and Louie. My second wife, Delycia, whom I met through an online dating service, has been my dearest friend since 2011. (She also brings me the loving friendship of her son, Aaron.) Together, Delycia and I have ridden bikes, hiked on trails — including countless paths in her beloved England — read classic literature, meditated, and shared our lives in the deepest ways. With her encouragement, I write poetry and short essays on an almost daily basis. Over the years, I have written thousands of poems, hundreds of essays, two novels, and a few dozen short stories.

Very little of my writing has been published, but I'm ok with that. I guess I think of my writings as non-material gifts to myself and the world. Somehow, in some spiritual way, I'll bet they've gone out into the world and found some hearts. And the word “spiritual” reminds me that Delycia and I have long been devoted to the practice of mindfulness and meditation. We look forward to continuing on that path with others here at Lathrop.

To conclude, let me add that now, at the blossoming young age of 82, I sometimes feel as spirited and full of astonishment as a first-grader. My life, each day, seems brand-new in amazing ways. Here at Lathrop Easthampton, I feel like I'm setting off on a mind-blowing hike on fresh new trails, and astonishing wonders await me. I'm betting I'll be writing a lot of fresh new poems, essays, stories, and — who knows? — maybe even another novel. I can imagine a good plot: a bald and bent 82-year-old guy living in an inspiring neighborhood called Cranberry Lane suddenly becomes a blissful, bouncing, sharp-eyed, and adventurous 6-year-old again!

Delycia

Mine has been a life I never imagined I could live! I was born in Pennsylvania, but moved to Texas when I was about four years old. When I was 41, I shared with my co-workers that I was moving to Massachusetts.

They told me how I would hate the cold, dark, bleak winters and would regret the move. However, quite the opposite is true. I LOVE the weather in New England: the change of seasons, the mountains and forests, the many perennial flowers I can grow here, and yes, the snow, and the lacy silhouette of the trees against the sky in winter.

I will *never* move out of New England willingly, and I plan on *never* returning to Texas! When I first moved to Massachusetts, I had a neighbor who also enjoyed the out-of-doors. We went on many hikes in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and I climbed most of the 4,000-footers. She also enjoyed travel, and since neither of our husbands wanted to travel, we took many overseas trips together, with the emphasis on hiking.

At the age of 60, I moved to New Hampshire, closer to the mountains I love, but the back and knees were not working as well as I would have liked, so I took up kayaking and cycling. Thanks to an Appalachian Mountain Club paddling group, I kayaked many rivers and camped overnight along the rivers of New Hampshire and Maine. (At this time, thanks to a Quaker friend, I discovered the beauty of opera.) When I was about 63, I started traveling on my own or with hiking groups based in England, like Ramblers and H. F. Holidays. I also enjoyed cities like London, where I could spend the day walking and sightseeing, and where the rail service and underground are good — and I *still* have a love for those cities and their theaters, museums, and operas.

Travel introduced me to other cultures, foods, architecture, and history, as well as birds and animals that interest me. I especially appreciate the rail travel in Europe and was fortunate to be able to go on a Trans-Siberian rail trip through Russia and China at the age of 68.

Writing this biography is sending me down memory lane. It reminds me of trips in South America where it would take two days to paddle and fly in and out of base camp to see the many birds and animals we do not have in North America. I am reminded of landing in a four-seater propeller plane on a grass field in

the rain forest, and also on a beach on the Pacific coast of South America, both times to hike the rainforests.

Now, my airline trips have to be shorter, but since I consider myself an Anglophile, I hope to return to Great Britain once again for walks, hiking, opera, museums, and theater.

I must also mention that I have a wonderful son who lives in New Hampshire and who visits often and joins me on many hikes, for which I am grateful.

And I cannot forget my equally wonderful husband, Ham, whom I met through an online dating service in 2011 at the age of 71, and married a year later. We lived in Mystic, Connecticut, until our move to Lathrop. We have lived here only a month, but feel it was definitely the right move at this time, and we both look forward to many happy years in the community. ❀

Pinnacle Phoebe

by Don Horton

A phoebe perched on my porch,
elegant in charcoal and gray back,
pumps its tail in pensive intention.

A white breast conceals it to the sky
as it leaps to snatch an insect in flight.
A few swift wing beats regain its perch
and it deftly filets and consumes its prize.

After several successful sorties,
I improve my perch to ascertain his prey.
A dissonance strikes me as I see he feasts
on my esteemed red dragonflies.

The pinnacle insect predator, the raptor of the small sky
plays the prey to the dancing flycatcher,
the Eastern Phoebe.

Russian Revolution ... Reversed

by Pam McNaughton

In the 1990s I helped establish an undergraduate academic program in Moscow for Stanford University's Overseas Studies Program. My direct observations of conditions there, as well as those of students and faculty, give a sense of the traumas that led to the rise of Putin and his autocratic ambitions.

In 1985 Gorbachev introduced *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). The West revered Gorbachev, but he was deeply unpopular in Russia because on his watch the Soviet Union dissolved and lost its superpower status. In 1991 the hammer and sickle yielded to the Russian tricolor flag. In February 1992 Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation, declared the end of the Cold War.

In early December 1992 I traveled to Moscow for the first time to confer with local Russian faculty and develop an academic program for Stanford University undergraduates. My boss had brought canned hams, powdered milk, and diapers for expat friends, but when our "delayed" suitcases were delivered to us, we discovered most of the contents had been stolen. The thieves had a conscience though. They left me some warm clothes, a pair of boots, and two Band-Aids. We stayed in a Radisson hotel, where Russians were not allowed above the ground floor for fear they would make trouble.

Russian university presses had suspended printing academic texts and turned to publishing mysteries and thrillers to make money. Many faculty members acknowledged that work stopped each day so they could follow the American soap opera *Santa Barbara* and learn about the West.

Russians were experiencing a cataclysmic shift from Communism's centrally planned economy to the capitalist system. Before, there had been frequent shortages but security. Now, there was the freedom to fail. Outdoors you could see elderly women holding up salamis at arm's length to try to sell them. They wouldn't look directly at people because they were so ashamed. Subterranean passageways under the avenues were filled with people selling puppies, kittens, and, at the warmest

levels, birds. Families squeezed into tighter quarters to provide homestays for our students and thus earn money.

The government distributed vouchers to all Russian citizens to be exchanged for shares in state-owned businesses, which were privatizing. Young men circulated outside the main train station carrying cardboard signs signaling they would purchase these vouchers, and people gladly sold them for cash. The emerging oligarchs consolidated economic power by paying these men to buy up the vouchers.

Bribery was rampant. When our Russian director wanted to enroll his daughter in a particular school, the response was, "Our principal needs a new computer." Major cultural institutions devised a two-tier pricing system, with one price for foreigners and a much lower one for Russians. If you had Western currency, you could buy what you needed at hard-currency stores, but if you only had rubles, you would stand in long lines at a normal store and face frequent shortages. On one visit I stayed at the Hotel Moskva, where the common refrain in the restaurant was "*u nass nyet*"—"there isn't any."

Young people quickly adopted English, but older folks had difficulty with this, of course. Our colleagues warned us not to speak on the metro system or draw unwanted attention to ourselves. While the metro system had been a source of national pride, I regretted accidentally bringing plastic metro tokens back home, since Russia had a plastic shortage.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reached out to introduce democracy and representative government. Mike McFaul, previously resident assistant for our Poland program, established the Carnegie Moscow Center. On leave from his Stanford faculty position, he spent two years as ambassador to Russia for the Obama administration. He became a target for Putin because of his network of contacts and his ability to reach the broader population using Russian-language social media. His family, who came to Russia with him, left early because they were being followed and har-

assed. In 2014 he was barred from entering Russia again.

In the United States we take branding and marketing for granted. Jim's relative Zoe Coulson, vice president of Campbell Soup, went to Russia to offer marketing workshops. Previously, store windows displayed stacked blank metal cans stamped with the contents. After her workshops, manufacturers added labels with photos of the contents and began using brand names and logos. In this low-tech environment, at checkout the cashier would calculate your purchase with an abacus.

Our first students arrived in Moscow in the fall of 1993, taking classes in the former Communist Youth League headquarters. Faculty expected students to submit handwritten papers. One student described drafting and revising papers on his laptop. Since there were no printers, he would then handwrite from screen to paper.

After these students arrived, there was a coup. Yeltsin sent tanks to fire on Parliament. Despite our director's warning the students to stay away, several returned with photos of water cannons firing on the crowds. One student described his experience this way: "At first I couldn't stop taking photos. Then, when some bullets smacked the wall to my right, I thought about getting the hell out of there. As it turned out, half the photos were for naught, since a soldier later tore the film out of my camera."

In December there was a true multi-party election to the lower house of Parliament. This meant that politicians, political parties, party names, and platforms were needed. Eventually, there were 43 parties, including the Apple Party, Democratic Choice of Russia, Memory, Our Home Russia, even the Beer-Lovers' Party, and many gave presentations to our students.

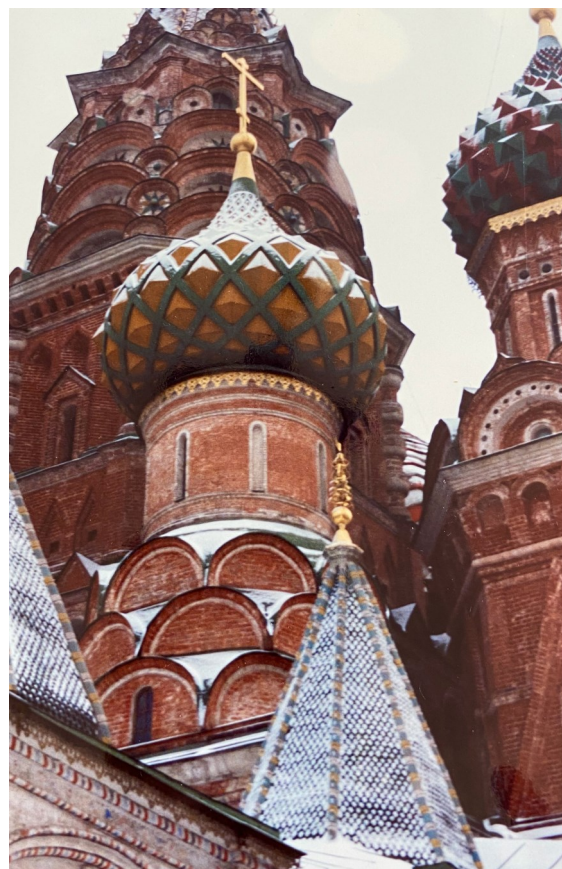
In January 1994, President Clinton met with Yeltsin in Moscow and said, "You are in the process of transforming your entire economy while you develop a new constitution and democracy as well. It boggles the mind, and you have my respect."

Russians struggled to maintain pride in Soviet-era accomplishments, especially space exploration. When I visited their equivalent of our Air and Space Museum in 1995, I found that all exhibits were pushed to the perimeter, and Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit the earth, was stranded in a corner. The open floor space became a showroom for luxury Western cars for the newly rich.

Russia wanted to use soft power to exert influence. Initially they turned toward the West and participated in Europapark, a popular amusement park near the German-French border. Gazprom, the government-owned gas and oil producer and the biggest company in Russia, sponsored the largest rollercoaster ride there.

In 1998 the banking system collapsed, and all ATMs were closed. Faculty traveling to Moscow from the West carried enormous sums of money to cover program expenses. At Stanford we suspended our program and placed our students elsewhere.

Where could Russians turn to find power and meaning? This is when the Russian Orthodox Church began its resurgence.



St. Basil's Cathedral

Under Patriarch Aleksey II, the church grew rapidly when state-supported atheism collapsed. In 2009, Patriarch Kirill I became the first post-Soviet patriarch. He interlocked church and government, sending priests to sprinkle holy water on missile systems in Crimea. For him the church is explicitly a political actor, counteracting the chaos of the 1990s and the negative influences of Western individualism and materialism. Defense of the Motherland is also defense of the faith, making the war in Ukraine a just war from his perspective.

Earlier, in 2023, Putin had an important icon, *The Trinity*, painted by Andrei Rublev in the early 15th century, removed from the Tretyakov Gallery and returned to the Russian Orthodox Church. This is seen as reward for Kirill's support of the war and reflects popular belief in the miracle-working power of icons.

Putin ascended to power in 1999 and has been either prime minister or president ever since. He believes Russia needs a strong ruler to provide order and stability. A decade ago he reminded Russians there would be no return to Soviet ideology, but Russia could not move forward with a Western lifestyle. The news in November 2023 suggests that he will run for president

again in 2024 and be in office until 2030 or even 2036, since no one can realistically oppose him.

Our colleagues in Moscow told us that Russians generally marry young and have children early, in part because male life expectancy is short. From 2011 to 2019, average life expectancy for men rose from 64 to 68 years, but by 2021 it declined to 64 years again. Over the same period, average life expectancy for women similarly increased, from 75 to 78 years, and then declined to 74 years. Putin turned 71 in early October 2023, so reports of his ill health or death are easily credible.

In the 1990s men's short life span was attributed to heavy vodka drinking, stress, smoking and other negative behaviors. Now, the war is taking a heavy toll. Many Russians who are oriented to the West have left. One of our former directors has moved permanently to the country of Georgia.

The Stanford undergraduate program in Moscow closed for good in 2014. Perhaps someday Russians will turn toward the West again, and we can once more encourage our young people to engage with them. ❀



Coins In Dublin Fountain by Alison Ryan



Myanmar Parasols
by Alison Ryan

Indelible
by Don Horton

A tattoo on my heart
The colors of a bruise
The symmetry of a Rorschach
Fixes my memory of you.

Pretty pain, your Terpsichore back-step;
A bleeding stain your absolute exit.

Sharon Dombeck and Stephen P. Baker,
Easthampton



Really, on close examination, it seems that Stephen and I have little in common: I was born and raised in the city of Chicago in 1943 of recent Polish-German stock. Stephen was born in Worcester in post-war 1949 of a Yankee father and French Canadian mother and raised in Auburn, the suburbs. Not even the same generation!

He was a blonde; I was a brunette. I was a dogooder; he was a free-living Hippie. He had a Bugeye Sprite. I had no idea that a Bugeye Sprite was a car! He was a ham radio operator; I was a meditator.

Things we had in common: He had just been discharged from the U.S. Army; I was recently released from my religious vows as a Maryknoll nun. He had had a company commander; I had a mother general.

We both had hair down to our waists when we met in Somerville, Massachusetts, 1972, on our way to a camping trip in Baxter State Park, Maine, with mutual friends. Two years later we had our honeymoon there in a little primitive cabin on Daicey Pond. Stephen fly-fished for trout in the pond, and I saw my first Common Yellow-throat Warbler in the little bush in front of the cabin with my old Bell and Howell binoculars. Once we got ourselves a dog, Daisy, we couldn't go to the park anymore. No dogs allowed!

Stephen and I share a life-long love of camping and the outdoors, fishing and birding at local New England spots across the United States, and abroad. We no longer go fishing since becoming Buddhists and have had our consciousness raised in that way. And we haven't gone camping in quite a while, either. But we go birding whenever we can, far and near.

Stephen was the treasurer of the Hampshire Bird Club for about seven years, sticking with it like an English bulldog, tenacious beyond reason. I was secretary for maybe five years; think of me as one of those scruffy Terrier ratters. We were lucky to have wonderful teachers from among the local birding masters.

After getting his degree at the University of Massachusetts, Stephen went back to Worcester to work as a biostatistician, consulting and teaching at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. After earning my master's in social work in 1974, two weeks before our wedding, I have held many jobs in the social work field, almost always with disadvantaged populations, specifically with at-risk children and adolescents and their families—just as I did when I was a nun missioned to work in Roxbury during the Civil Rights era. Stephen felt similarly fulfilled in his commitment to the life-saving field of medical research.

So much for the boring bits.

We do seem to share a similar aesthetic taste: A love of old houses, primitive antiques, and history: personal genealogy and interest in the wider goings-on of the human race. In 2003 we learned a little of the Polish language at Cambridge Center for Adult Education on Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Armed with a few phrases, Stephen mastering them so much better than me, we flew into Krakow on a beautiful May day. We stayed on Florianska Street in Krakow's Old Town, enjoying the festive atmosphere of spring with music, folk dancing, and delicious food.

Then we rented a car and drove about 40 minutes southwest of the historic city to—and through!—the sleepy little town of Bulowice, ancestral village of my maternal grandfather, Josef Bryzek. Amazingly, we found my long-lost cousins by cold-calling all the Bryzeks in the local volume of the white pages! They were living in the family homestead, a large old house with stables, horses, and 200 acres of farmland currently

being planted with organic strawberries. Sadly, that crop of strawberries never made it to market as the family gathered to welcome visitors from America. It was a happy occasion.

We have yet to explore Stephen's English roots among the watermen of Norwich. Covid intervened, but maybe there's a chance yet.

Stephen loves sailing, learning at age 12 on Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester and then helping to pass on the skill to our son through a sailing club on the Boston Harbor. This was when we lived for 15 years in Arlington, Massachusetts. Stephen and Alex went on overnight trips to the Harbor Islands; I, on the other hand, have been known to panic if the sails flap too loudly in the wind. Guess I'm just a landlubber from the Midwest.

Stephen and I raised two children in south Amherst: Jessy, age 45, a globetrotter with a degree in international relations from SAIS, and Alex, age 41, a homebody born and raised in Amherst with high-functioning autism happy to live permanently in his hometown.

In 2012 I retired at age 69 from a part-time group practice as an LICSW psychotherapist and as a faculty advisor at Boston University to become a full time farmer. Stephen joined me in 2013, retiring as a professor at the medical school in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he had worked for 30 years. The same year, 2013, both of Stephen's parents died within three months of each other, and Stephen, the oldest of seven siblings, spent the better part of the next three years resolving their estate.

In the meantime, we left Arlington for a lovely old 1820 antique farmhouse with a beautiful little post-and-beam barn, a couple outbuildings on four acres in Conway, where we spent the next 12 years raising honey bees, ducks, geese and a very large vegetable garden.

In 2019 with Covid on the horizon along with awareness of our aging bodies in an isolated rural community, we saw the handwriting on the wall. We signed up for Lathrop, and our number came up in October 2021. We said, "He who hesitates is lost," and the rest is history.

From our perch on Blueberry Lane we enjoy the natural setting on the edge of a marsh with Basset Brook running through it and the community village

spread out below. We are enjoying our new friends and the fun activities available to us. We look forward to getting to know more folks better and contributing to a happy, thriving community.

Happy 2024! Wishing us all Peace and Good Health.



May I Touch You?

by Mally O'Hare

May I touch you?
Touch your star spangled eyes
Touch the warmth of your words
As they pass through my ears
Vibrations heard

Touch the happiness
That beams from your face
A smile so full, so wide
I'm brought to another place

I yearn for touch
Be it yours or mine
Be it lasting or ephemeral
Be it coarse or sublime

To be touched by the heady scent of honeysuckle
Or a furry head-butt from a cherished cat
Or yummy food sliding down my throat
As I give my belly a pat

So many different ways
To enjoy the world of touch
To receive the blessing
And to acknowledge the connection
That is always there

With every breath
To touch the air



Irish Cottage (above)
and Western Rocks (below) by Alison Ryan



My First Painting

by Betty Schaffer

I am often asked, "When did you start doing art?"

I usually answer, "I've been doing it as long as I can remember."

And then I tell them about my father drawing a cat on a piece of paper and giving me a pin to punch holes along the lines. His office was in our home, and it had a carpet on the floor that made it easy to punch the holes. I suspect that he did it to keep me busy so that he could get work done at his desk. When we held the finished art work up to a light, we could see the outline of the cat.

I drew and colored with Crayola crayons all through grade school, but I never tried painting until later, when I received a water-color set as a gift.

However, I recently remembered that I actually did my first painting when I was quite young. Perhaps I was only about seven, because my judgment was not very mature. My playmate and I found a can of paint and some brushes and looked around for something to paint. The house next door looked like it needed painting because it was old and weathered and gray.

What I remember most vividly was our excitement about what we were doing. It would be so successful that everyone in our world would be amazed and impressed! We started by the front door on the wall of the house. Have I mentioned yet that the color of the paint was bright pumpkin orange?

We didn't get much of the house painted because the paint soon ran out. When our parents discovered what we had done, we were surprised that they were horrified rather than favorably impressed.

We did NOT get the praise we had anticipated, though I do not remember any punishment beyond the painful realization that my parents were obviously worried about the costs that might be involved in cleaning up our painting efforts.

Now, when I am asked when did I start painting, perhaps I should say, "My first painting was a house, but I never got it finished."



Myanmar Fishermen by Alison Ryan



What We Are Reading

We have again asked two lanes, one from each Lathrop campus, to submit book recommendations for the larger community. Given the enthusiastic response we have enjoyed, we are continuing this approach in this issue. We have chosen just one book from each person's submissions (some of us apparently are robust readers!). Enjoy reading your neighbors' recommendations!

Crabapple Lane

Liz Cheney, *Oath and Honor: A Memoir and a Warning*

This story about the January 6th insurrection is by someone who was on the inside of the investigation. Liz Cheney is one of only ten Republicans who voted to impeach Trump in 2021. Six months later, Nancy Pelosi appointed her to the January 6th Select Committee to investigate the attack. Liz offers insight about her Republican colleagues, including Mike Johnson, current Speaker of the House. This is a timely commentary and a quick read from a life-long Republican who, for her service, was stripped of all her committee posts and voted out of office in her Wyoming district.

Recommended by Virginia Irvine

David Grann, *Killers of the Flower Moon*

This narrative nonfiction account of the one-by-one slaughter in Oklahoma in the 1920s of the Osage Indians after they discover oil on their lands and became extremely wealthy is told mainly through the story of Molly Burkhart and the murders in her family. When the FBI finally becomes involved, the crimes are solved. A compelling and painful story long held secret, it exposes the devastating oppression of so many Native Americans throughout our history.

Recommended by Joan Laird

Rive Lehrer, *Golem Girl*

Golem Girl is a memoir by an artist, college teacher, and disability activist born with spina bifida. She's smart, witty, generous — spirited, passionate, and good company. For me the second half of the book was especially compelling: Lehrer's devoted but controlling mother dies, and Riva enters the University of Cincinnati to study art and begin an adventurous, independent adult life. *Golem Girl* is not a detailed account of spina bifida or of Lehrer's innumerable surgeries. Through lively stories about her life, Lehrer shows how disabled people see themselves and how able-bodied people

perceive and misperceive them. The book includes colored plates of Lehrer's portraits, many of disabled friends with their own remarkable careers.

Recommended by Ruth Elcan

Elizabeth McCracken, *The Hero of This Book*

This is a novel written as a memoir. A writer is remembering her mother's life shortly after her death and how, although her mother was severely disabled, she lived a very full life. She particularly recalls a visit they made together to London, as she retraces the places they visited. In fewer than 200 pages we have a portrait of a remarkable life.

Recommended by Gillian Morbey

Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*

I approached this book's 500-plus pages with doubt, but it pulled me right in. Robinson looks at some of our world's major systems—economic, military, financial, political—and imagines what it might take to change them in ways that would lead to a livable world in a few decades. He does this using accessible stories and examples that make important points. It's a major read, in many ways, and I can certainly recommend it.

Recommended by Fran Volkmann

Audrey Magee, *The Colony*

A way of life is disappearing on a small island west of Ireland. When a French linguist and a British painter, with competing interests, reside on the island in the summer of 1979, promises made then broken expose long-held assumptions. A family of four generations exemplifies the strained currents between a respect for the past and the lure of the future. The youngest, shuns the traditional livelihood, fishing, subsequently fashioning an unexpected path off the island. Reports of the violent killings in Northern Ireland, not lost on the islanders, magnify unhealed wounds of colonialization's deeply personal and political entanglements.

Recommended by Jill Toler

Peggy Gillespie, *Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families*.

This is an inspiring collection of interviews by the director of the Family Diversity Projects. In their own words, each person, along with family members and partners, shares stories of lived experiences, challenges, and triumphs. Each story is accompanied by photographs, which add to the immediacy of this important work.

Recommended by Gary and Rowena Roodman

Cranberry Lane

Bonnie Garmus, *Lessons in Chemistry*

This is one of the best books I have ever read. At first I avoided it because the blurb mentioned a cooking show on TV and I thought “no way,” but eventually, after the book was on the best-seller list for weeks, I bought the book and was glad I did. The heroine is a young woman who was educated in the late fifties and the early sixties. She was able to get only a lab assistance job, and then was abused by the men she worked with. The book is well written, the story is unique, and that cooking show turns out to be a scientific cooking show. It was well worth a read.

Recommended by Sherrod Perkins Keane

Lynda Rutledge, *West with Giraffes*

Stick your neck out and read about these long, long-neck animals! Based on a true incident, this heartwarming tale is a delight to read. The excellent writing conveys the emotional responses between animals, between humans, and between human and animal. Bumbling along, driving from east coast to west, travel with these two unique animals and those who “speak” giraffe.

Recommended by Susan Lantz

Roger Housden, *Ten Poems to Set You Free*

Ten Poems to Set You Free has been a truly inspiring book for me. The author picks ten excellent poems by poets like David Whyte, Naomi Shihab Nye, Rumi, and Thomas Merton, and then shares his thoughts about how liberating each poem can be. The poems have a spiritual shine to them, but in his commentaries, Housden sheds all kinds of fresh light on each one.

Recommended by Hamilton Salsich

James McBride, *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*

James McBride’s *Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* raises the same question as did author Carlos Fuentes, “Did we come here to laugh or to cry?” McBride gives us imperfect African American characters living in a contemporary “designated” colored neighborhood of a Pennsylvania town controlled by the white, Christian majority. The story, like his two earlier novels, catches the tempo of survival living with screwups, false starts, schemes, frustrations balanced with humor, forgiveness, loving kindness. McBride has us laughing through the tears.

Recommended by Bill Keane

Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Art of Living*

Most of the books that I read, I either give away or throw away. However, all the books I’ve read by Thich Nhat Hanh have been helpful and are keepers. He is a Zen Master and revered spiritual leader who lived through the troubled times of the Vietnam wars. In *The Art of Living*, he “reveals an art of living in mindfulness that helps to answer life’s deepest questions and experience the happiness and freedom we desire.” He offers seven meditations “that open up new perspectives on our lives, our relationships, and our interconnectedness with the world around us.” He draws on examples of his life, he shows us “how the meditations can free us to live a happy, peaceful, and active life, and face aging and dying with curiosity and joy and without fear.”

Recommended by Delicia Salsich

Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land*

“Why Israel, what is Israel, will Israel” continue to exist. These are the questions that the book wades into. It is the personal odyssey of an Israeli journalist who ponders the historic drama engulfing his homeland.

Recommended by Abe Gelbein

Richard Russo, *The Risk Pool*

The Risk Pool is an early novel by Richard Russo. It is the best story about a father and a son that I have come across. Years after I have read it, various scenes from the book come to my mind at times. Despite all the flaws the father possesses, the son still sees him as a man of memorable traits.

Recommended by Roger Herman

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New Zealand Tree by Alison Ryan