

HUDSON
SENIOR
AREA

CENTER
LIBRARY

CREATIVE
CREATIVE

WRITING
WRITING

**HUDSON
AREA
LIBRARY**



Hudson Area Library is located at 51 North Fifth Street in Hudson, NY. The mission of the library is to enrich the quality of life by providing free and equal access to programs, services and resources, and by creating opportunities for all members of our community to connect, create, learn and grow. For more information visit hudsonarealibrary.org.

City of Hudson Senior Center is located on the 2nd floor of 51 North Fifth Street in Hudson, NY. There are county and city services at the center including meals for seniors; yoga, aerobics and painting classes. For more information call: (518) 838-3200.

This class was a collaboration between the Hudson Area Library and the City of Hudson Senior Center. It was taught by Maureen McNeil; author, artist, educator, and social activist. The class and this zine were made possible in part by funds from the Mid-Hudson Library System.

SENIOR CREATIVE WRITING

Erika Bornn Tipple

Marita Russo

Darlene Loiler

with words

Susan Rubin

Elsa Levisieur

5 HAIKU

NANCY ZUCKERMAN

I can sense and feel
my ear to the ground, the moans
of the earth, it's tears!

As she contemplates
the beauty of a single
leaf, her heart is aglow

They run through the street
filled with the exhaust from cars
Tap, Tap, wake up world!

Quiet, quiet, quiet, listen,
the universe is speaking
It pleads, Love, Love Love!

My head spins wildly
perspectives all run amok
what is truth? To whom?

9/11, 9/11, 9/11

NANCY ZUCKERMAN

A day that will never be forgotten!! Where to begin? That is my problem. It is so vast in its length, width, depth and breadth! Many, Many, Many stories. Almost daily for me there were miraculous events and coincidences that at every moment started to transform my life. I did not journal daily, since I was so, so in the moment, the energy of this, this other place in life; that was actually miraculous and weirdly magical; and whether others in the world could ever understand; my Spiritual Awakening. An awakening that I had been seeking my entire life. Please understand this was the light part of the journey that appeared to me. There was the dark, which I also seemed to deal with everyday through my daily wailing, and I was not going to let any seed of hatred enter my soul!! This was a declaration! I was LOVE, HOPE, COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING!! I went out every day after meditating and lighting a candle on my dining room table, (which I had set up immediately as an altar for Alan) His picture, the American flag that was given to me, this amazing urn filled with the earth from Ground Zero where I mediated daily for his recovery. I went out into the world, embodied, holding this Love, Hope and compassion and understanding as I walked through the streets of New York City. I felt a calling!!!

The event itself held enough darkness, which I see now was its own very dark animal, which sadly still exists today looming larger. I share with you today, one such story of the beauty of Hope, Love, compassion and understanding; which is part of that battle to bring the light through the dark.

Obviously this was as I stated a very large event. The actual time frame of everything I discuss was long ago, but my moments are forever imbedded! Approximately one month after this tragic event, the city established a center for all the victim's families at the piers on the west side in midtown. I had gone by myself the first time to see what it was about, and what was available to me. (There is a story about a book here and how I was able to gift these books in gratitude to many, many people who came into my life. I just cannot go there at this moment.) I did, however, sign up and fill out various forms that day and was very moved by the love and compassion provided at this center. I was given the folded American Flag there, where I just began to weep. A woman from the Red Cross came and gave me a hug. I hugged her back and thanked her from my heart.

My mother and father lived in Florida at the time, and my eldest brother lived in California. I did get to see my other brother and an aunt and uncle and two cousins after the event, but due to the chaos and security issues, my family could not get flights out to me for a month. They had finally arrived! I had shared with my mother what I was going through daily by phone. I do not think she could really understand. You see I never did receive any sense of spirituality from my family. She did listen, and try! It was interesting to be in such a different space than they were. There was this kind of cold distance, which was kind of challenging. They did not know how to be with me. I did need them though, and sadly had to ask my mom to give me a hug. I think she needed it almost more!

I needed to go back down to the center to sign up for some other benefits. My eldest brother said he would accompany me. I remember being again so present in this other dimension. I was in such gratitude to the world. I was one of those people, who was receiving financial support from all these beautiful, compassionate people. This was a bit surreal and at times overwhelming. How can I ever give back enough? I was grateful for what the city and all the volunteers had created. I thought it was so peaceful, respectful. I was hugging and greeting the workers in total love and gratitude. My brother seemed in shock to me. I had to touch him. He did not once touch me. I had an interview, I supplied all the info that was needed. While there, I found out that the city had cleared out a section of the devastated area, which was known as "Ground Zero"! They were offering a ferry over to the site for the families to be with their loved ones, who were still buried in this rubble of a graveyard. Of course I tried to sign up immediately!! I had to be near Alan! Sadly, they had booked for the day, so I signed up to come the next day with family members.

Well the next day arrived. My father, brother, sister-in-law and a friend went with me. We signed in and were brought to this room with seating to wait for the next ferry. They even were supplying bouquets of flowers for us to take to the site for our loved ones. Then this woman and her beautiful dog appeared and greeted us. Her dog seemed to go straight for me. It jumped in my lap and began kissing my face. I was so moved! My wonderful husband, Alan had actually left his beautiful, Blue Merle Collie (which is the color grey; I had never seen a collie this color before Dusty) with his parents to move in with me. This was very hard for him. I too had left my dog with my parents, years before, to move into the city. I personally did not really feel that the city was a place for animals. I did not have any with me in NYC. My apartment did not allow dogs. After Alan moved in with me, we even attempted to find another apartment where we could have a dog, but none were as nice and far too expensive. So we ended up with two cats! Well even though this dog at the center was a different breed, it felt like and looked like a smaller version of Alan's dog. This dog was a Dutch Barge dog. The owner of the dog was Cindy. She had come from Oregon with her therapy dog through the Red Cross to help families, volunteers and all the rescue workers. And all of a sudden she asked if we were Jewish? I remember thinking that it was a bit odd. She said that her dog's name was Tikvah, which was Hebrew for Hope! I couldn't believe it. This just so touched me and resonated with me. After all I was walking with this Love and Hope every day in my heart. Actually Cindy, I learned later, was an Evangelist Christian, Republican. Oh my! I thought this was just so important! She laughed at one point and said she was going to name her dog Hope, but thought maybe a bit too weird yelling 'Hope, Hope' all the time when calling to her dog. She finally fell in love with the name Tikvah. Tikvah ended up laying by my feet. I was massaging her. She had been giving so much of herself, you could tell she was exhausted. Cindy was so moved herself by our encounter. She asked if she could accompany us on the ferry to Ground Zero. Of course, I said yes!

We were all on the ferry. It was not really that large as I recall and the boat was very open. I felt the wind on my face and blowing through my hair. Cindy and Tikvah at my side. Tikvah was certainly playing her real role. After all she would be on the water regularly as a Dutch Barge dog! She seemed to love smelling the air. It was a misty morning on the water. Then at last we began the approach to the mouth of Ground Zero. The Energy Shifted. The air felt thicker. The smells were not good. We landed and disembarked on a beach with flowers strewn all over. I remember seeing to my left a tower of building with this very large steel structure jutting out of its side, as if it had been stabbed by an enormous knife. We continued walking through the cleared off area between buildings and rubble where we knew there laid hundreds to thousands of bodies. The broken bones of so many of our loved ones! It was surreal and eerie, yet I was so present with all of these visions in front of me.

I saw some workers on scaffolding up high above the ground with their hard hats on; working daily in this very sad land. I don't know why, but I looked up and saluted them. I just so wanted to thank them for what they were doing! I remember thinking as I walked, this is what war looks like; and this was just a small section of our city. I could not have imagined what World War II was like. Whole cities demolished. Yes, all of these kind of thoughts were rapidly firing away in my mind. Then we came to a halt! We were at the center of it all. The guide pointed to what had been Tower number II. My husband Alan's building. He had worked on the 92nd floor. Alan was in there somewhere!!! I of course broke down crying. Cindy placed Tikvah in my arms, she was again licking my face. I said "Alan, I have a beautiful dog her with me! There is a dog here for you!!" Everyone else was just in their one zone. I do not know what they were thinking and experiencing. Of course tears were filling all of our eyes. I remember looking behind to my sister- in-law crying. I never asked, but her sister worked in the World Trade Center and was not there that day. She had been there for the attack a few years earlier. I am sure she was thinking of her. I went down again with other friends for another Memorial given by the Mayor, and of course was there for the first Anniversary Memorial! Cindy, Tikvah and I became fast friends and had many other moving experiences together, and of course it did not matter that she was a Republican, Evangelistic Christian, Of course not!!! We were linked by our embodiment of Love, Hope, Compassion and Understanding! Our hearts were one!!!

Again so many stories in between. They were daily!! However, one month later, I was doing my daily walk, on yet another spectacular sunny day! Not sure if it was my spirit, but it seemed that every day for a long time was very beautiful weather-wise. I went to Gramercy Park, a section of the city near to where I lived, that I have always loved. I stopped to get coffee at this lovely new coffee shop that had opened. You had to step down into it. It was very cozy. I decided to take my coffee to go and sit out on the bench outside. I looked up through these glistening leaves on this tree right beside me. I was in my zone, when a women and her most adorable puppy came by. The puppy was black with these white paws. So cute! She did not hear me and went down into the coffee shop. As soon as she emerged I had to get her attention and ask if I could pet her puppy. I shared with her what happened to my husband, and how we could not have a dog; and would stop people to ask if we could pet their dogs, so we could get our dog-fix. She was not really very present.

In fact, I think she was almost leery of me. She was a bit cold and distant. Perhaps in her own form of shock! She did however share that she had wanted to adopt a dog, and after 9/11 decided to not wait. So I asked her what her dogs name was. She said it was Sheema! I could not believe it! I shared with her how I had been singing this chant to myself. This chant that I heard on a CD (one of many that I had been listening to which were so consoling and healing). She shared that she had done a chanting workshop and loved it and decided to name her dog after it. This Sheema chant held a lot of power for me. I had to go home and see if I could find out the meaning. I suggested we stay in contact. I gave her my number. She was still kind of distant. I think I freaked her out a bit by my enthusiasm. She seemed kind of numb. So I went home and read that Sheema is Hopi Indian for Love!!! Oh my God, again, to me, this was just magical and amazing. Within a month I meet two beautiful animals with names from other cultures; and their names were HOPE and LOVE!! I was on the right path!!

Well, this woman did after many encounters, eventually agree to meet with me. It took four persistent years! She came with Sheema for a weekend to my beautiful cottage on the creek in upstate New York that I named Healing Waters. We were friends for many years, and she ended up moving upstate!

2 HAIKU

NANCY WESTBROOK

Cat softly purring
creates happy illusion
Then he bares his teeth

Anticipation
Hopes rising then descending
Live in the moment

TE QUIERO

I LOVE YOU

NANCY WESTBROOK

Me dijiste "te quiero" y te creí.
Pero no sabía que eran palabras que facilmente
cayeron de tus labios.

Yo tambien te dije "te quiero".
Eran palabras serias de mi alma.

No sabía de tu historia
que eres Ladron de los corazones de Mujeres,
tus Amantes.

Me dejaste triste y destruida.
Inútil para el futuro.

You said "I love you" and I believed you.
But I did not know that they were words
that easily fell from your lips.

I also told you that "I love you"
They were serious words from my soul.

I did not know your history,
that you are a Thief of Women's hearts,
your Lovers.

You left me sad and destroyed.
Useless for the future.

HUDSON

DEBORAH MILLER

He comes into the world at 4lbs. 13 oz. My grandson. My minute. My second-hand. Too tiny to be believed.

Let me back up a bit. The phone rings at 6 a.m. Way too early for me. I love to sleep in. Everybody knows this. It says “Mom?” “Mom!” It’s my son Sam, my NYC son, all grown up and the bearer - at 6 a.m. - of what can only be bad news at this ungodly hour. I am a catastrophizer. I freely admit this. Crack of dawn phone calls spell doom, the kind of doom that starts with a capital D. The kind of doom you see on a soap opera.

Proportionately speaking, I have been blessed with practically none of these crack of dawn phone calls. Only one, in fact: my husband’s mid-life motorcycle accident. Broke his back. Broke my heart. But I digress.

Happy ending ahead of time: I know you’re worried. Such small babies can mean nothing but trouble. Ever hear of the Nicu? For extra little babies, catastrophe, calamity, collapse, ruin, affliction. None here, I promise, but who knew at the time? 10 weeks later he lives in the world today at a whopping 11 pounds; more than twice his birth weight. He is hale and hearty and happy. He is beautiful. He loves to nurse and his mommy loves to let him. This is called nursing on demand. At the rate he’s going, we’ll be calling Weight Watchers any day now.

Back to the beginning: I am breathless in my most dire imaginings. I can barely exhale but somehow I find the breath to say: Oh, my God, Sam, Sam what happened what’s wrong? Are you okay? Is Sarah okay? What about Juancy? Is he okay? What happened?

It’s 6 o’clock in the morning! Was there an earthquake an avalanche a falling crane a fire a car accident a home invasion a terrorist attack Was it.....

“Mom!” Sam yells. “Stop. Right about now, you’re the only one who’s not okay. You’re being really childish. Would you please just shut up and listen for a minute?”

The baby! All of a sudden it comes to me. It dawns on me. The baby! Sarah! Oh dear God I think and say, “Your sister?”

“Yes,” he says. “but she’s okay. She’s fine. Relax. It’s just that things are happening a little sooner than planned and...”

He keeps talking. I hear the word induce. My daughter Sarah isn’t due till February 12 and today is just January 4th. The baby! It is too soon, way too soon. It will break my heart with its deformities. It will weigh a pound, small as a teacup Chihuahua. It will have 2 heads, one arm, 12 fingers, webbed feet, a head the size of a honeydew. It will not cry. It will be limp as an old dishrag. When the doctor spansks, it will not say Waa.

In my overwrought and ever so childish mind I decide that 5 weeks early is 5 weeks too late for the birth of a living, breathing normal baby. It will only last a minute or two. The doctor may even say Oops.

Away from my frenzied thoughts for just a second, I manage to squeak another litany out that is not quite so crazed: "What's going on?" I ask in my calmest, most mature voice and then hang up on Sam. Whatever it is, I really don't want to know. I pace the floor back to counting off in my mind all those aforesaid imaginings that I do not want to hear from my son. This makes some sort of insane sense to me: If I'm not on the phone listening to him, all those bad things cannot be true.

He calls me right back, sounds a little ticked off. "Are you listening? Do not hang up the phone again. Got that? Just listen. Everything's okay."

Liar. "Okay," I say very weakly with zero conviction.

I hear him say viable and ultrasound and probably 5 pounds and go get yourself a train ticket and I'll meet you at Penn, and Mom?

"You will not be hysterical around Sarah, you hear me?"

"Ha!" I think. Pipsqueak. Don't you tell me how to act.

"You will not misbehave," Pipsqueak intones, and of course he is right. "Say it," he says.

I will not say that; I do not take orders from him. "I'll be good," I promise. And this is a promise I will keep. Once I get to New York and notice that it hasn't been bombed into oblivion or fallen into the sea, I calm right down but don't think for a minute I don't have other fears: Sarah being held hostage by a deranged Nicu nurse. Sarah seeing her little freak for the first time and wailing so the heavens can hear.

But I bite my tongue and - if I do say so myself - act my age.

3 HAIKU

DARLENE LOILER

Blazing red-oranges
Of maples sear against the
Dark blue-green of fir

Loquacious black crows
Quarrel over seeds scattered
From songbird feeders

Rain cleaned air lightly
Lifts rich aroma of warm
Fires and wet crushed leave

STRANDED IN LA

DARLENE LOILER

As she switched on her Camry, she noticed that her gas was low. She'd have to go to the more dangerous part of Long Beach to find a gas station and then drive home through the dull industrial section. Or she could float along by the brightly lit bay and soar over the bridge to where it joined the freeway high above the dingy section of town.

She chose the bright lights. She was a true Angeleno, born and raised. She'd grown up in a safe neighborhood and usually only ventured out of her cocoon to drive to other cocoons. There were huge areas of the city she'd never seen except from a distance. She drove quickly by restaurants where late patrons were lingering over their coffee. As she turned right onto Ocean Boulevard, she caught a glimpse of the Queen Mary. The boulevard was mostly empty and the stoplights seemed like a waste of time. The empty sign on the dash began flashing, and she knew she had to find gas soon.

Her breath caught as she drove up the ramp to the Vincent Thomas Bridge. She never tired of the view of the port far below with its cruise ships, fishing boats and giant spider-like cranes lifting cargo containers day and night off waiting freighters. As she dropped down the other side, she enjoyed the scattered lights of the Palos Verdes peninsula. Most of those folks were tucked safely in their beds. She swung smoothly onto the 110 freeway. She loved the freedom of driving the freeway at night.

"Almost home," she thought, "just a few more miles to the Pacific Coast Highway off-ramp." She'd be sure to find a gas station open somewhere along the highway. Somehow the miles to to highway seemed longer than usual.

Suddenly the car began to cough. It had been years since she ran out of gas, but she knew that sound. "There's the off-ramp," she thought. "If I can just roll down the ramp toward the highway..." She'd always been lucky that way. She was almost to the ramp when the car gave its last gasp. She rolled down it, and had just enough momentum to reach the other side of the street.

She'd forgotten how dark this area was. It was all industrial. There wasn't a house in sight. It would be scary waiting here for the auto club. She found her cell phone and tried to turn it on. No signal. She was down in a trough blocked by the freeway.

The lights of the Pacific Coast Highway were several blocks ahead. She knew she could walk that far, but then where is the closest gas station? Her mind retraced the map in her head. No gas for ten miles to the right. How far to the left? She felt her sweat build up as she realized it was at least three miles and she knew she was not able to walk that far.

She turned on her flashers. "Cars come off the freeway all night long. Maybe one of these nice folks will stop and help me," she thought. Just then she saw the headlights of a car. It slowed, then sped up and was gone. Car after car came by, but none stopped. She began to worry. She had a pillow and blanket in the trunk. Maybe she could just spend the night in the car and walk for help in the morning.

Then she saw headlights again and a car stopped. Two women got out and walked toward her door. "Oh, no," she thought. The women were gangbangers, with wild hair, tattoos and heavy make-up. She'd heard stories all of her life about gangs attacking stranded motorists. It was too late to lock the doors.

"Do you need some help?" the first woman asked.

"Yes, I ran out of gas."

"How long have you been here?"

"A few hours."

"I can't believe that people would drive by and not help a sweet Abuelita like you. What is wrong with people? I'll go get some gas for you and my friend will wait with you."

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN THE CONCRETE JUNGLE

SUSAN RUBIN

After WWII returning GIs and their growing families put a strain on the need for available housing as never before. Whole towns of tract houses and Veterans' Authority loans enabled young families of aspiring middle-class workers and young professionals to move to new suburbs. Government housing projects were built to stem the migration of the city's poorest and non-whites to the suburbs. These would later come to be known as Concrete Jungles as their populations got poorer and darker skinned.

It was 1949 when we moved to the Lillian Wald Housing Project on the Lower East Side in Manhattan. We lived in a 14-story brick building, on East Houston Street one building away from the FDR Drive and the East River beyond. The Lower East Side was then experiencing development on a scale that hadn't been seen for almost a century when the original tenements were built. In our immediate neighborhood there were two NYC Housing Authority projects, named for Lillian Wald and Jacob Riis, both early social reformer advocates for the poor and disenfranchised. The demolition of small dark tenements cleared the way for these two projects covering almost 40 square city blocks, spanning Houston to Thirteenth Streets, from the Drive to Avenue D. There are 35 buildings, six to fourteen stories tall, with a total of 9000 occupants. I've since lived in cities with smaller total populations.

In the 1950s these were new communities that resembled the suburbs in many ways. Income levels were lower, the population was more ethnically and racially diverse, necessary amenities including shopping, schools and entertainment venues were easily accessible without the inconvenience of a car in the city, and the physical community was vertical rather than horizontal. The buildings were laid out according to idealistic philosophies that originated in Europe before Corbusier. They were set back from the streets, creating mini-neighborhoods including green, open space, ironically surrounded by fencing to discourage walking on the grass and playgrounds with park benches to encourage gathering of adults and children.

Most of the young couples were in their first homes. They were experiencing the lived realization of the American Dream in both the projects and the suburbs. Over time the cultures and environments they produced became dramatically different, but in the early days after the War these later-disparate population centers developed along similar lines.

The parents in our building became friends, some families became very close. Families had potlucks together. On Fridays or Saturday nights one father would baby-sit for another couple so that they could go out to dinner and a movie. The next week they switched roles so the other couple could go out to the movies.

In the evenings after the dinner dishes were washed the women removed their house dresses and aprons, combed their hair, applied rouge to their cheeks, dabbed on lipstick and played Mah Jongg or Canasta in each other's apartments. The men played poker, softball, basketball and the like.

Even if their kids weren't our friends we were sort of bound to them like cousins because of our parents' relationships. Our family was very close with the Weiss family—Lillie and Errol and their kids Harvey and Sheila. My sister and I loved Lillie and Errol. They were loud, lively, joke making, fun loving New Yorkers, younger and much more out-going than our own parents. Sheila was young enough that my sister and I treated her as a cute baby sister. Harvey was a year behind me. Today he would be called hyper-active or ADD or whatever is the current terminology for a kid who is kind of wild. When he misbehaved, as he often did, Lillie would yell at him "Haarvey, Haaaarvey, if you don't stop it I'm calling Bellevue." Bellevue Hospital, about a mile north, had a famous psych ward. We heard it frequently and I can still hear it now more than 60 years later.

We kids all played with or were close by each other in the playgrounds or in front of the building. Each floor in the building had nine apartments and there were two staircases and two elevators. Sometimes we played in the hallways where the sound of our voices echoed loudly in the cinder-blocked common areas. There was lot of running up and down the stairs as we visited one another.

Dogs and cats weren't permitted in the projects. One afternoon shortly before the Easter vacation when I was in 5th grade and Harvey in 4th he came home with a tiny baby duckling tucked inside his leather bomber jacket. He'd taken a long walk deeper into the old Lower East Side to a pet store and bought an adorable little duckling with his allowance. He called him "Webster Webfoot."

Predictably, Lillie was not enthusiastic but we kids were ecstatic. He got a cardboard box for Webster, lined it with newspaper and equipped it with water and food bowls. All the kids wanted to come to Apartment 7E to see Webster. Lillie wasn't having any of that so Harvey would take the duckling around to various apartments to show him off. But the enthusiasm for that soon wore off. Just peeking inside Harvey's jacket to see the tiny thing shaking ceased to be fascinating.

One day Harvey had a terrific idea. He got one of those metal basins covered in white porcelain with a red rim, filled it with water and invited all the kids to watch Webster swim around in it. Now this was fascinating. Pretty much the only frame of reference for real nature that any of us had was Central Park's lake and zoo.

Every year we had a class trip to the zoo. Now we had Central Park in the 7th floor hallway. I was the oldest so I was in naturally in charge of all the kids, making sure that they behaved, didn't annoy or distract Harvey or even worse, upset Webster. Harvey just watched Webster adoringly, every so often delighting all the kids by taking Webster out of the water so he could shake himself causing peels of delight from the kids or, best ever, chirped his head off. If Harvey got up to walk, Webster having imprinted on him immediately followed. This was a real duck, not some stuffed animal or cartoon character.

Harvey tried to bring Webster to our apartment. He wanted to show off his pet to my mother. We put Webster down on the grey area rug in the living room. Webster started waddling around and we called my mother in. She took one look and said “Get that thing out of here Harvey. I don’t want him crapping all over the rug.” She was pretty much as insensitive as Lillie.

One afternoon Harvey came home from school to discover that Webster had gotten out of his box and was lying kind of helpless on the living room floor. It appeared to us that he had caught a cold swimming around in the drafty concrete hallway. Lillie wouldn’t help. Sobbing, Harvey tucked Webster into his jacket and ventured out into the still chilly and blustery April air and headed back to the pet store for help.

As my mother later explained, the shop owner was probably shocked that the bird had survived as long as he had. He sent Harvey away, offering neither advice nor hope for Webster’s recovery.

Most of those Easter chicks and ducklings bought in city pet shops never live to see Easter. Webster had already outlived all expectations of his life-span in the cardboard box in Harvey’s room.

When Harvey returned home, still crying, Lillie told us to throw the duck down the incinerator as he was apparently dead. Instead Harvey got a cardboard shoe box, lined it with a kitchen towel, laid Webster in it and tucked him in up to his neck with a washcloth. He lit the oven, set it on the lowest temperature, placed the box into it, and left the oven door ajar. He called it an incubator. We sat vigil. Sort of. We actually watched TV.

After a while we heard chirping coming from the kitchen. Webster had revived, jumped out of the oven and was waddling around. We were jubilant. Lillie was aghast but had to congratulate Harvey for his faith and perseverance. For the next couple of months as we resumed our normal lives, spending increasingly more time out-of-doors than in the hallways. Webster became more a regular than a spectacular phenomenon, as he grew from a fluffy yellow duckling to a sleek white duck and his chirps became honking loud quacks.

Lillie and the kids always went to spend the summer on her brother Irving’s chicken farm in New Jersey. That year they took Webster. We would miss him of course but we thought it would be a great experience for Webster to have freedom to roam outside on the farm, and of course he and Harvey shouldn’t be separated. When they returned at the end of Labor Day weekend they didn’t have Webster with them.

Harvey refused to talk about it. My mother told me the story. For the last family feast of the summer the adults had decided to serve duck instead of the usual chicken. Harvey screamed and protested but he really had no power in this. Uncle Irving took Sheila’s hand, grabbed his ax, walked around back of the barn and chopped off the head of an unsuspecting Webster. Lillie cleaned, dressed and roasted the duck and he was served up to the entire family. Harvey raged and threw up for days.

So much for animal husbandry in the concrete jungle. None of us ever had other pets, except parakeets and short-lived goldfish. Nothing could compare to our beloved Webster Webfoot late of Apartment 7E at 484 East Houston Street, NY, NY.

4 HAIKU

ELSA LEVISEUR

A grey-green fat frog
Sits motionless on the stone
Submerged in a pond

Multi-colored bright
Zinnias attract butterflies
Monarchs, flying South

An empty platter
Lonely on the deserted beach
Foaming pale waves break

A happy woman
Laughing, dancing through the grass
A joyous sight

MAÑANA

ELSA LEVISEUR

If you asked my father to mend or make something for you he would say “Consider it done,” by which he meant that if you consider it done then he doesn’t have to do it and it won’t get done. Another of his favorite sayings was “More is nog ’n dag”, Afrikaans for “Tomorrow is another day.” However, some things did happen, like the roundabout he made from a wooden side of a giant cable drum for the kids to play on. Or the platform in the trees from which we launched, hanging on a foofie slide and landing on a stuffed sack, feet first, at the bottom of the vegetable garden.

He was a doctor, a general practitioner with a special interest in children, many of whom he had delivered. He entertained them (and us) with stories and drawings of strange and incredible animals. One he called the Hosteostilus. Our favorite serial story was called “Mr. Pretend and Mr. Extraah Strong”, who had wonderful adventures on and over the oceans. Mr. Pretend always sat down and had a sandwich of bread, cheese and apricot jam whenever there was a dilemma to be tackled and then again when the dilemma was solved. My father loved bread, cheese and apricot jam.

He was the kindest gentlest person, quite small with an always smiling face. He loved people, he was a doctor with great human insights, but too kind really. One night when thoughtless patients called him out at two in the morning - a half hour drive - to arbitrate a fight they had had, he became very angry, and being unable to express his anger, he suffered a major heart attack. He did survive and retired to a small farm which gave him much pleasure and many Mañanas.

3 HAIKU

MARITA RUSSO

Chips

Salty chips I love
fun to crunch and munch and dip
simply delicious

The Glow

Horrified, they gaped
fire danced like a bright leaf
flee from the red glow

Harsh

My mom was smart once
disease took over her brain
spark gone forever

UNDER THE OLD APPLE TREE

MARITA RUSSO

The old apple tree at my grandma's house had been there for many years. The branches fanned out over the space between the long white house and the shed. It was a favorite place for my older brother. He'd take his salami sandwich in one hand and climb up very easily onto a sturdy branch. I tried to climb up after him, but my legs were too short. So, I'd grab a book and sit in the metal garden chair. The chair felt cool on my legs in the hot summer afternoon.

The apple tree's branches swayed in the slight breeze. Sometimes, a hard ripe little apple would fall down near my chair. I'd look up into that tree. My brother would just smile. It was his special place, but I could keep his secret.

As weeks went by, the leaves began to turn a reddish color. The breeze became colder. I knew that our lazy days were soon to be replaced by schedules, homework and early mornings.

When my parents showed up in their blue station wagon to fetch us, I did not want to leave. I reluctantly dragged out my ragged brown suitcase from under the bed. I came downstairs to find that my brother had gone missing. My parents looked all over. He was nowhere to be found. My mom frowned. My dad yelled. And my grandma brought out cookies. Finally, I saw him coming down from the old apple tree.

"I wanted to stay here," he said. "I thought you'd just leave without me."

My grandma gave him a hug. My mom sighed. My dad turned around and headed for the car.

"Hurry up," he said. "I want to get home before dark."

I had already settled in the back seat. My brother slumped down, cookie in hand. As the station wagon backed out of the driveway, I saw him wave to that tree one last time. "See you next year," he whispered. I waved, too. Then I pulled a napkin full of cookies out of my jacket pocket.

"Want one?" I said.

"Sure," he answered. Maybe you'll be able to climb up that tree next time.

I sighed. I could hardly wait to visit our old apple tree again.

5 HAIKU

ERIKA BORN NN TIPPLE

Where are we going
spiritually for sure
knowing more and more

Leaves are falling now
feeding my awareness
of next spring already

Joy my hopeful food
to share with you my friendly
ear and open heart

Colors flow off brush
out of empty consciousness
to my pure white sheet

Never before tried
brings forth our hidden talents
to dance with us now

PETER AND THE BEAR

ERIKA BORNIN TIPPLE

Once upon a time there were lots of thirsty people. They all liked to drink a bubbly drink that was made in a factory. The people liked the bubbly drink so much, they drank more and more. The factory had to be made bigger and bigger; more bubbly drinks had to be made for the thirsty people.

Peter's father owned the factory. For a long time, his Daddy wanted to give something very special to the men and women who made the bubbly drink. Daddy wanted to make everyone HAPPY!

Peter knew his Dad thought long and hard for a good idea. The moment the perfect idea popped into father's head, Peter saw his Dad's eyes become restless with excitement, his round face took on the largest smile, and he got very busy.

Time went by, springtime changed to summer. Peter felt something was different. Then, one day, Dad made a promise: "Peter," he said, "in four days you and all the people of the factory will get a big surprise." "Four days?," Peter shouted. "That's a long, long time, Daddy!"

The fourth day came and Dad loaded a picnic basket into the car. "Whoopee," shouted Peter. "Hey Dad, we're going to have our first picnic, and I love picnics!" "Quit shouting," dad muttered. "Go and get a blanket and your ball!" Peter was so excited, he wished their car would go faster. And then, as the car turned the corner they met HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE all crowded around this BEAR!

This Bear was taller than everybody! This Bear didn't make a sound or a move. NOBODY WAS AFRAID! Because this Bear was a sculpture. This Bear was the gift to all the people who made the bubbly drink in the factory and to Peter.

When Peter finally got close to the Bear, he touched the Bear gently. Peter felt the cold smooth stone the Bear was made of, he even put his cheek on the side of this GIANT! The Bear felt good like a friend. That night Peter stayed awake much longer than usual. Slowly Peter fell asleep and he began to dream about the Bear.

How exciting became Peter's dream when he felt the Spirit of the Bear stepping off the sculpture and slowly traveling towards Peter. Now together, Peter and the ghost of the Bear were having the greatest fun. They swam together with giant turtles in crystal clear waters. They made the funniest happy noises together, until...for just an instant, Peter turned his head, and the Bear ghost slipped under the door. "Stop, stop?" cried Peter. "Come back, come back!" The dream ended too soon. Luckily, not all was lost. Peter visited the Bear in the park almost every day. He could pet him, he could talk to the Bear and they were friends forever.

For a while Peter kept his dream a secret. He imagined his friends would think him strange. But, when he was alone with his Dad again, Peter told him about his dream adventure. His Dad understood and was happy with Peter.