

# 73 Years of Interpretations: A Look into the Past



**Interpretations:**

**73 Years of Interpretations: A Look into the Past**

University of Saint Joseph  
West Hartford, Connecticut  
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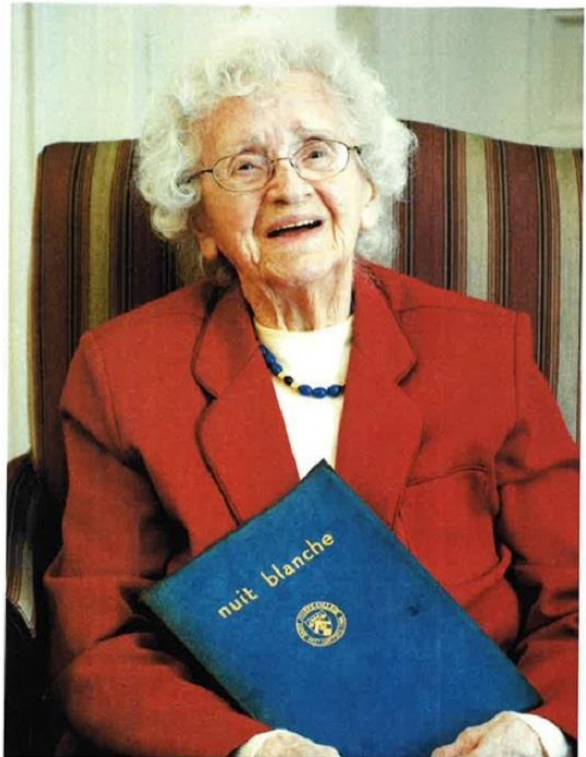
**Front Cover Photo:** Sarah Keane

## INTERPRETATIONS

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This issue is dedicated to Marie LeVan, the oldest living alum, born in 1915 and graduated in 1936. Although Interpretations was founded after she had already graduated, her passion for writing is truly admirable.



## **Editor's Preface**

In 1945, Saint Joseph College (now the University of Saint Joseph) published the first issue of *Interpretations*. The university supported the student created arts journal, giving its student editors free rein to gather and publish creative work from students, staff, faculty, and alumnae. For the past seventy-three years, the publication has been in print.

However, the board has now chosen to go digital. In light of both this shift to digital and of the University of Saint Joseph transition from a women's university to a co-ed institution, we have decided to reflect on the past productions of the journal. Consequently, we have published a retrospective from past issues to commemorate its history.

Aiding in this retrospective tribute, USJ librarian and alumna, Ann Williams, has combed through the archives and digitized back editions for this issue. We give Ann our deep thanks for her help.

We would also like to thank Maggie Pinney and Katie DaSilva Burke from Institutional Advancement for their help in accessing the archives for information on the alums whose works we have included. Thanks to them, we were able to produce this tribute in an ethical manner as well as properly acknowledge each author.

Within this retrospective issue we have aptly included works from authors who have demonstrated dedication to *Interpretations*: English professor Dennis Barone who has not failed to contribute a piece since 1993. Joan Cassidy Vayo '52, who has remained an active contributor over the last decade and also, notably, received a Distinguished Alumni Award in 1998. We would like to sincerely thank them for helping to keep this publication alive. Our thanks also goes out to the other alums who kindly agreed to have their works republished: Ann Nelson '92, M'98, and Stacey Giguere, '92. We only published those alumna whose permission we were able to obtain.

In addition to these alums, we would like to acknowledge the late Jean Markham '45 whose play, "Diana and The Moon" opens our literary selection. Jean was one of three sisters who attended USJ, including Claire A. Markham, RSM, '40, Ph.D. Chemistry, DAA '75, H'89, and USJ faculty in Chemistry, and Elizabeth (Betty) Markham '51, Ph.D. Mathematics, USJ Faculty in Mathematics Jean also received a DAA in 1998 for her pioneering work in social work. Therefore, we feel she makes a fine representation of the USJ community and its core values within this issue.

Readers will also notice the short history of *Interpretations* by former archivist Diana Barnard to start off the selection. While several attempts at reaching Diana, unfortunately, failed, the editors feel it is too vital of a piece to be left out of this retrospective issue. We extend our thanks to Diana for writing this important piece.

In addition to the retrospective pieces, we have included some new, never-before published works by the faithful Dennis Barone, senior editor Sarah Keane, Barbara LaButis, administrative assistant of the business administration/school of graduate and professional studies, and CAE writing contest winner Devon Roberts, who graciously agreed to have her piece published.

We were unable to access every edition of the journal and apologize to those writers and artists that we were not able to include. We hope readers enjoy this trip down memory lane and the 2018 entries.

We strongly encourage students to contribute to the publication in the years to come as it truly is a reflection of the University's creative energy and talents.

Sarah Keane '19 Senior Editor  
Dr. Catherine E. Hoyser, Faculty Advisor



## **Interpretations: A Short History (2008)**

**By: Diana Barnard**

With the financial assistance of alumnae, the first issue of *Interpretations*, "the long-dreamed-of Saint Joseph College magazine",<sup>1</sup> Annmary Collins '45, Mary Luby '45, Pauline Wertsching '47 and Lucille Arrigan '46, mother of the best-selling author, Luanne Rice. Although selections were solicited from students, alumnae, and faculty, the content was entirely the work of students.

The second issue, Spring, 1945, included alumnae sections – one by Mary Katona '43 and one by Sister Mary Constance '40 – and the first faculty contribution, "Walt Whitman and German Poetry," by Heinrich Rommen, professor of Economics. In 1953 the first photograph of, an image of the icon "The Presentation in the Temple",<sup>2</sup> embellished the contents followed by the first drawing, entitled "The Dream," by Margaret Van Gelder in 1954.<sup>3</sup>

From 1954 to 1958 the staff of *Interpretations* sponsored an essay contest, the winning results of which were published in the Spring issue. The 1955 contest had as its theme "Thoughts, Personalities, and You," and the winner was selected by a faculty committee of judges.

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<sup>1</sup> *Interpretations*, Winter, 1945, page 3.

<sup>2</sup> Op cit., Spring, 1953, page 7.

<sup>3</sup> Op. Cit., Winter, 1954, page 12.

From time to time, *Interpretations* set aside its mixed content of poetry, plays, short stories, and essays in order to publish selections about a single subject in a single format. The Winter, 1957 issue, for instance, was based on the *Confessions of Saint Augustine* and the Winter, 1960, edition was entirely devoted to the short story because it is “the most accessible form for the beginning writer,”<sup>4</sup>

Until 1971 the magazine was published twice a year, winter and spring. In that year the tradition of a single edition began with a 25<sup>th</sup> commemorative issue containing selected contributions from the past 25 years. It was dedicated to Sister Maria Ancilla Sullivan, a Founding Sister of Saint Joseph College and former chair of the English Department. A second commemorative issue appeared in 1982-83 on the occasion of the College’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In 1978, *Interpretations* staff responded to a recommendation of the Student Academic Affairs Committee and included student research in the text. This new dimension did not, however “exclude publication of creative writing and art work to which *Interpretations* [had] traditionally been devoted.”<sup>5</sup>

During its long history, many issues of *Interpretations* have been dedicated to members of the Saint Joseph College community, and others, who were recognized for their contributions to literature and society. Among them are Sister Mary Joan Cook ‘47, English Department faculty and *Interpretations* advisor, 1969-75 and 78-86; Francis

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<sup>4</sup> Op cit., Winter, 1960, page 6.

<sup>5</sup> Op cit., 1978, page 1.

Braceland, psychiatrist-in-chief of Hartford's Institute of Living and Saint Joseph scholar-in-residence for his contributions to the healing profession of psychiatry; Dr. M Paton Ryan, Saint Joseph college president 1984-91; and Salman Rushdie, Indian novelist and essayist.

For a brief period *Interpretations* had an editor-in-chief but returned to its original process in which “each manuscript submitted [was] read by at least two of the editors, and the contributions to be published [were] finally determined by the entire board.”<sup>6</sup> English Department faculty had always advised the publication. And the on-campus members of the college community have always been its audience. With the exception of the yearbook, no other Saint Joseph College publication has enjoyed the longevity of *Interpretations*.

Diana R. Barnard  
O'Connor Archives, Saint Joseph College

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<sup>6</sup> *The Targe*, November 3, 1944, page 1

**Diana and The Moon (1945)**  
**By: Jean Markham '45**

CHARACTERS  
DIANA  
HER BODY  
PRINCE OF HER DREAMS

*Scene: A space in a wild forest. It is early evening and the forest is in darkness except for soft rays of silver moonlight which dance among the shadows. A narrow path leads through the trees off-stage center.*

*(Diana enters from the right, leading Her Body by the hand. Diana wears a flowing silvery gown, and her long golden hair is tossed over her shoulders and glistens in the moonlight. She is young and happy. Her Body, dressed in black rags, is an ugly old woman and remains untouched by the moonlight. She carries a staff and a bundle of sticks.)*

DIANA:

Oh, linger but a moment in the forest,  
And see the silver moon above the trees,  
Slipping and rising through the ebony branches,  
And beckoning to us from its dizzy height.  
If I might only touch it-ah!

HER BODY:

I see by this that you are young tonight,  
My foolish heart, but I am old, too old,  
Once I too used to glory in the moonlight  
And such like nonsense. That was long ago.  
Now am I old and weary and I wish  
That you knew all that I have learned from life.  
My feet are sore. I cannot dance with you.

Forget your dreams and come back home with me.

*(Her Body tries to pull Diana forward, but Diana draws away and passes airily among the trees, stopping in circle of moonlight. Diana laughs and Her Body sinks down in the shadows beside her.)*

DIANA:

I only want to bathe here in the moonlight  
Till I am soaked with all its magic luster  
And perfumed with the fragrance of its being.  
Then shall I go with you.

HER BODY: *(nodding with understanding)*

Well, I can wait.

You cannot stand forever in the moonlight.  
When I am rested you'll have had enough  
Of moon-dreams and will come along with me.

DIANA:

Enough of moon-dreams! There are not enough  
In all the world to satisfy my heart!  
But hush a moment .... Do you not hear  
Music softly whispering through the forest?  
Is someone singing?

HER BODY:

There is no one here  
For miles around except for you and me.  
There's no one else that would be mad enough  
To wander through the forest. You hear nothing.  
Or else you hear the rustling of the wind,  
And in the mood which you are in tonight  
You'd make a song of that. Come! Let us go.

*(Her Body starts to rise, but Diana motions to her to stay. They are silent, Diana expectant, and Her Body patiently waiting. Faint sounds of someone singing grow louder as the Prince of her Dreams approaches. He enters, singing.)*

PRINCE:

I am of the forest.  
I am of the breeze.  
I am of the moonlight  
On the trees.  
I am of the lilting  
Lyrical tune  
That floats to you  
From out of the moon.

*(As the Prince of her Dreams sings, Diana watches him. She approaches, followed slowly by Her Body.)*

DIANA: *(shyly)*

I heard the music faintly as you came,-  
Walking so lightly through the silent woods

*(turns to Her Body)*

It was no wind that whispered in my ears.

It is a man as real as you or I

Who stands here.

*(The Prince of her Dreams laughs and bows deeply.)*

PRINCE:

Oh, yes, I am real enough,

Perhaps more real than you. But who can say?

And who would even truly care? But tell me,

How is it that you happen to pass by?

HER BODY:

Indeed we come through this place every night,

Gathering fire-wood. But it seems tonight

Diana here must linger on a while

And drink the silver whiteness of the moon.

PRINCE:

Tonight you see the forest in its glory,

Veiled with the dimness of the evening light.

In all the shadows you can scarcely see

Where one branch meets another, or where the path

Winds through the forest, following the moon.

And half that is is only in your mind.

I do not wonder that you paused to grasp

The splendor of it all.

HER BODY:

I paused to rest.

I only stopped to wait until Diana

Will go with me as finally she must.

*(She sighs.)*

I little care for all the cold, dark forest,  
Or for Diana's dreams. I am too old  
To shiver in the chill and damp night air.  
My joints are stiff and I am very tired,  
And we must walk another mile tonight.  
Diana, come along now.

DIANA:

Yes, I shall,  
In but a moment. Wait a little more.

*(to Prince)*

But who are you who saunter through the woods,  
And break your way before you with a song?  
It's true that we pass through here every night,  
And yet I never saw you here before.

PRINCE:

Who am I? I could tell you in a word,  
But think that you must know me since you called me  
To come to you as you were dancing here.

DIANA:

I called you? Oh, I fear you are mistaken.  
I do not even know you, though I wish  
That I might know you. Do you have a name?

PRINCE:

I do, but never mind it. I shall leave you,  
Since I've made a mistake.

DIANA:

Oh, please don't go!  
I really don't believe I could have called you,



But I'm so glad you came, for we can talk.

*(She nods toward Her Body.)*

Although she means well, she is easily tired,

And is poor company for me tonight.

Do you have your home here in the forest?

PRINCE:

Oh, I live here and there and everywhere,

In tree-tops, in great cities, in the ocean,

In mountains, in the clouds, or in the moon.

It all depends on what you wish, my dear.

*(The Prince of her Dreams bows again, and kisses the hand of Diana, who stares at him in wonder, and then turns to Her Body.)*

DIANA:

How strangely does he speak! And yet I think

That I have heard him speak so many times;

Unless I dreamed it. For I never saw him

Until tonight. Or do you think perhaps

We may have met him in some strange disguise

Before this night

HER BODY:

I'm sure that I don't know him.

And since you're always with me, I don't see

How you can know him either. It's little matter.

It must be that he's just a lunatic,

Let loose and running wildly through the woods,

Hither and yon. His talk is mad enough.

I think we'd better say good-night to him,

And leave him here alone. He may be dangerous.

DIANA:

Dangerous? Oh, no, he is too beautiful  
To be of harm. Just see his silken hair  
And silken garments. See how he smiles at us,  
And see the kindness shining through his eyes.  
He will not harm us.

HER BODY:

Hmph! How do you know  
That's kindness in his eyes? As for his smile,  
He's smiling straight at you, and not at me.

DIANA:

Hush! He will hear you and will be offended.  
*(to Prince of her Dreams)*  
Have you ever passed this way before?

PRINCE:

Oh, many times, and often have I seen you  
In the evening, gathering your sticks,  
But never till this evening did you call me,  
Although I often looked upon your face  
And whispered out your name.

DIANA: *(in surprise)*

Can this be so?  
Then do you know me?  
Why, I think you must.

PRINCE:

I know you well, and also you know me,  
Or should know me at least. For I have been  
Inside your dreams.

HER BODY:

Well, then, you are not real,  
For dreams are only shadows; they are not real.

PRINCE:

And do you think a shadow is not real,  
Because you cannot hear or smell or touch it?

HER BODY:

I do.

PRINCE:

And yet it is not so, because  
The shadow's often truer than the substance.

HER BODY: (*shrugging her shoulders*)

Well, as you wish it. It's all one with me.

PRINCE: (*to Diana*)

There is a lonely stream that runs nearby,  
Winding like a ribbon through the trees,  
And noiseless as the stars.  
And it is said  
That if you look into it by the moonlight  
It shows your image as you've never seen it.  
It is a magic mirror. If you like,  
I'll show it to you.

DIANA: (*to Her Body*)

Will you come along?

HER BODY: (*rising slowly and painfully, and speaking skeptically*)

Yes, I shall come, for I should like to see that.

DIANA: (*eagerly*)

And so indeed should I.

PRINCE: (*pointing right*)

It's over yonder.

*(He takes Diana by one arm, and Her Body by the other, and leads 'them to the far right of the stage, near a clump of trees. As they walk, the Prince of her Dreams hums the tune that he sang before. He points to the ground, behind the trees.)*

PRINCE:

There is the stream, as silver and silent as always.

Now look, and the reflection that you see

Shall be as true as life itself.

*(Her Body bends stiffly down to look into the stream. After a moment of silence she rises, and turns to the Prince of her Dreams with an expression of bewilderment and joy.)*

HER BODY:

And do you say

The image that's reflected here is true?

PRINCE:

It is indeed.

HER BODY: (*elated*)

Well, shall I tell you then

What I saw gazing at me from the stream?

DIANA:

Oh, tell us, do!

PRINCE:

Yes, do.

HER BODY

Well, then, I saw  
What I have never seen in any mirror!  
*(to Diana)*  
I saw your face in there!

DIANA: *(incredulously)*

You saw my face?  
*(to Prince)*  
But didn't you say-

HER BODY: *(in triumphant glee)*

I say I saw your face,  
Smiling at me through the running water!  
Your face is truly mine!

DIANA: *(frightened)*

But that can't be! I know we cannot look alike, for you  
Are old, and I-

PRINCE: *(soothingly)*

Why, you will hurt her feelings  
If you speak so. Come, look into the stream  
And see *your* image there.

DIANA:

I am afraid.

I do not want to look. I am afraid  
Of what the stream will show me ... But I'll look  
Because I cannot help myself. I must.  
*(Diana bends down and gazes into the stream. The Prince  
of her Dreams and Her Body watch her expectantly. She  
rises slowly and turns to face them.)*

HER BODY: *(impatiently)*

What did you see, Diana?

DIANA:

Must I tell?

Must I express the picture there in words?

PRINCE:

Whatever you have seen is true, Diana,  
Although it may not seem so. What was there?

DIANA:

*Her* face was there! Yes, it is true, I tell you!

*(to Her Body)*

I saw your face as clearly in the stream  
As now! I knew that I should not have looked.

*(to Prince)*

If there is any magic in that stream,  
As you have told us, then it is black magic,  
And I could weep for having looked upon it!

PRINCE: *(gently)*

Do not grieve so, Diana.

HER BODY:

No, Diana,

You must not grieve because you look like me,

Ugly and old and careworn though I am;  
Because I also look like you, Diana,  
And you are beautiful and young and gay.  
Therefore, since I beheld you in the stream,  
In seeing my face there you see yourself.

DIANA: (*hesitantly*)

I cannot understand.

PRINCE:

No more can she.  
You cannot know the mystery of truth.  
Only accept the truth, for it may be  
That you and she are somehow one.

HER BODY:

It may be.  
I should not be surprised to find it so  
For we have been together many years.  
And I have heard it said among the wise  
That when two live together in such closeness,  
They look and act and think and are the same.

DIANA:

If it is true that you and I are one,  
Then am I part of you, and you of me?

PRINCE:

And would you wish it otherwise, Diana?

DIANA:

Of course I wish it otherwise; and yet

That does me little good.

HER BODY:

Yes, little good,  
For I have learned to wish is not to have. I wish it were.

PRINCE:

Tonight it shall be so,  
And if you want to leave her here, Diana,  
And come with me, then you shall have it so.  
You may be happy beyond all your dreams,  
In the new world that I shall take you to.  
You shall eat the shining, sugary rainbows  
And drink the golden sunlight. You shall wear  
A dress the color of the morning sky,  
With pointed stars for sequins.  
You shall have  
The round white moon to play with.

DIANA: (*running into the arms of the Prince*)

Take me then!  
Take me now before I can awake  
To find that this is all a living dream.  
We shall walk upon the wooly clouds  
And dance around the moon.

(*to Her Body*)

And you shall see  
That you can get along without my laughter  
When I am gone away; or, if you will,  
Come with us on our pathway to the moon.

HER BODY: (*in patient resignation*)



No, I shall stay here. I have no desire  
For stars or sun or moon or smiling rainbows.  
Besides, what should I do there? Go with him.  
I'm happy as I am and shall not need you.  
Good-bye, Diana.

DIANA:

If you will not come,  
Good-bye, then. Only do not grieve for me.  
*(Diana kisses Her Body, lingers regretfully for a moment, and then turns to the Prince of her Dreams. He takes her hand and they walk on the path off-stage center, the Prince again humming his song. . . . Her Body tries to rise from the ground, but sinks down again, still holding her bundle of sticks. She sighs wearily . . . Diana enters from the center, running and breathless. She kneels beside Her Body.)*

DIANA:

I've come back.

HER BODY:

What? Then aren't you going with him?

DIANA:

I cannot. Oh, I long to, but I cannot.  
In all my selfishness I said you'd find  
You didn't need me. But I never knew  
How much *I* needed *you* until I left  
And tried to find what I have always wanted  
Without you. But I see it can't be done.  
Forgive me if you can. I'm truly sorry.

*(Her Body strokes Diana's hair.)*

HER BODY:

Of course I do forgive you. I know well  
The achings of your heart. I do not blame you.  
Let us go home now.

DIANA:

Yes, let us go home.  
The night is damp and it is growing late.  
It is too dark to wander through the forest  
With only moonlight pointing out the way.  
*(Diana stands and helps Her Body up. She takes the  
bundle of sticks from Her Body and carries it. Arm in arm  
they go out left.)*

### **Out of Season (1950)**

**By: Joan Cassidy Vayo '52, DAA '98**

He had been a bad boy. A very bad boy. And now he was paying for it. He hadn't really meant to tease the cat, not really, but she had laughed at him with her great green eyes and purred him onward. And she had a beautiful tail: it was long and soft like a fuzzy rope. He had just wanted to feel it. Somehow it just wasn't fair. Princess had a full saucer of cold milk, and he had nothing. Nothing but a long night to be spent alone in his room.

The room was like his mother, dark and dim. There was only the tiny lamp on the bureau, but he had been forbidden to turn it on. Afraid of the dark! At his age! Lights were alright for babies he was past that stage. At least that was

what his mother has said. Only sometimes he wondered. Sometimes, on nights like this, when he couldn't go to sleep.

He could feel his mother in the room: in the tightly wound rag rugs, in the woolen blankets stretched formally across his bed. Her hands were busy now, straining the shades for darkness, pulling the straight white curtains to the proper angle. Once he had wanted to bring the new sled up to his room, to keep it there just until the snow came. She had said no. The runners would be rough and clumsy to her shining floor. Pleading had done no good. So it had stayed in the cellar, growing old before there was even snow to prove its steel.

The pillow felt cold and smooth as he tossed, smooth and cold like his mother's hand. She had placed it on his forehead only yesterday, testing for the fever. But there was none. And so she had left him alone again.

The moon was coming out at last, titling its frozen dome at the top of the hill. He could hear the train now, mourning long and low. Going somewhere. Maybe Alaska even. He really didn't care. He only wanted to be on it, going someplace where there was snow, and someone to turn on the little light in his room.

## **But Had Never "Done" Anything (1984)**

**By Ann Nelson '92, M '98**

"Anna", the usually slightly hoarse voice on the other end of the line broke. "Ma? What's the matter?" I said, sensing the ominous tone in her tentative voice.

"Anna", she paused, "Grandma's gone".

How many times in the past ten or fifteen years had I received a call from Mom or my sister, Rose Mary, that swelled with the feeling of bad news? Just as often I had thought, "It's grandma, isn't it?" And it never was.

Now, this woman, just three and a half weeks past her ninety-third birthday had died on the birthday of another sister, Tilda.

The overwhelming feeling of sadness that swept over me was something I never anticipated. And when a well-meaning and good-hearted friend (who, often, seems to say

the wrong thing at the wrong times) made light of her death, in view of her advanced age, I truly wanted to slap him.

To me, grandma was always old. She came to live with us when I was four or five and she was in her early sixties. She was a part of my life for thirty years, and how large a part I did not realize till after her death.

I still remember the day she arrived from Italy. She was sitting on the couch, smiling and talking animatedly in Italian to my mother and great-aunt Laura. The only one who understood her, I'm sure, was my mom. While her manner was friendly and I understood her non-verbal entreaties to come over to her, I was afraid of her and stood safely on the other side of the ever-present playpen in the middle of the living-room floor.

As I look back, I wonder if I really remember all these things or if hearing these stories repeatedly while growing up has made them seem like memories. In either event, I seem, to recall hearing, for what seemed like a long time before her arrival, all about this grandmother who lived "overseas" and received the many packages my mother sent.

In my four- or five-year-old mind's eye, this grandmother lived right by the sea. In fact, the boat would deliver the packages to her door! This grandmother had snow white, short, soft, curly hair and a pretty "grandmother" face.. She wore a lovely smile as she received her package.

This lady, seated on the couch, bent forward with elbows resting on knees unceremoniously apart, trying to coax me toward her was not "my grandmother". Her face, while friendly, was not pretty. Her "salt and pepper" grey hair was not curly, but wavy and pulled up to the crown of her head in a small bun. And her smile was sunken where teeth should have been. When she stood, her somber-colored dress hung unevenly over a bent little hunchbacked frame.

It has been a year and a half since her death, but I still feel a sadness when I think of her. In the days immediately following, I felt intense sorrow because she had lived ninety-three years but had never "done" anything. As my grief pro-gressed along the normal course, the understanding, and, with that, reverence for her came.

Of her early life, I know nothing. She may have told me of incidents in her childhood, but I can't say I recall any. This may be due to the fact that, while she lived with us for thirty years, she never learned to speak English and I never spoke very much Italian.

Her marriage, in the old-world tradition, was arranged. She was matched with an older widower with two children, the attitude being, who else would want this deformed girl? This kyphosis was with her from an early age. Now this deformity, common in early adolescents, is prevented with a Milwaukee brace. Again, I feel a sadness for her, seeing how relatively easy this is treated now.

In addition to caring for her two step children, grandma bore six children and saw four of them die in infancy or childhood. She saw a financially comfortable business sink into bankruptcy. And, stoically, without shedding a tear, I'm told, she watched her husband die of a cerebral hemorrhage.

My memories of grandma that came flooding back to me at the time of her death, were those of common place, every day activities. I see her ironing, cooking supper, sewing these wonderfully artful patches on worn knees and helping to care for the succession of new babies who arrived approximately every two years. I remember her "spoiling" all of us at some time, rocking Rita, one of my younger sisters, for hours it seemed, or taking the part of a scolded child -- a source of understandable annoyance to both my parents at times, at times.

She made wonderful homemade pizza, gnocchi, and priest hats, a pasta in the shape its name suggests. She would love to "sneak" us a meatball before dinner. We all loved them, breaded and fried, before they went into the sauce for Sunday dinner. Her face would beam with delight at that stolen pleasure.

We would chuckle at her excitement while watching T.V. westerns. She seemed to enjoy especially the barroom brawls - of all things! We had to conceal our amusement as she scolded the scantily-clad chorus girls for their indecency, when they were presented on certain variety shows.

We had to laugh, so that we wouldn't cry when, as her age advanced and her senses failed, her responses

became inappropriate, and her movements slow and uncertain.

Her strong faith was her mainstay, I'm sure. Daily afternoon prayers with my mother, time when we knew not to disturb, ended only when nursing home care became necessary.

As my grief matured and completed its course, I reflected on my notion that my grandmother had never "done" anything. Whose standard was I using? I see her life now, as a testament to everyday, the ever-constant. She was accepting and resigned to the will of God but never defeated in the face of adversity, which she saw, even up to the last months of her life -- a fractured hip followed by a leg amputation. She was not Mother Teresa or Catherine the Great. She was stubborn and angry at times; she laughed and she cried. But her life, so inextricably woven into the fabric of my own, was a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit.

I can never forget her.

### **Pumpkin Pop**

**By Stacey Giguere '92**



Pumpkin Pop is my father. A jolly, jack-o-lantern with a wide smile and deeply carved dimples. Humor is the flame that illuminates his face and warms others. Just as a pumpkin's life is short, so was my father's. Although he is dead, images and memories of him are very alive.

Pumpkin Pop has always been there for me. He supported my endeavors such as worm collecting, mud pastries, and writing. When I attempted to sell my story, "Elly the Elephant," he was my first customer. Although I only charged two cents a copy, he gave me a quarter. At ten years old twenty-five cents is a fortune, so I invested it wisely with fifteen pieces of bazooka bubble gum. During my adolescent years, my dad concocted a remedy for my moodiness— a gentle dosage of antagonizing that annoyed me so much, I forgot about my pimples or boy problems.

Despite his sixty hour work week, he ironed, cooked, and cleaned. Although he only made pancakes, scrambled eggs, and frozen waffles, they were the best around. This was due to the entertainment that accompanied dinner such as gracefully balancing a cup on his forehead. His other specialty was making dessert disappear faster than anyone—a trick I've inherited. Pumpkin Pop was always there, until he got cancer.

When my father was diagnosed with cancer, my family hoped a few zaps of radiation would destroy the malignant cells. Instead it was destroying our lives. Night after night, I was awakened by vomiting, coughing, or crying. I thought it was a dream until I saw my father with broken blood vessels and my mother with mascara smothered eyes.

Despite the pain, my father treated his illness lightly. For instance, a daily conversation included”

“Dad how do you feel?”

“Like hell,” he’d reply.

“I’m sorry Dad, can I get you anything – water, juice, a hug?”

“A Cure,” he’d say teasingly. “If you can’t find one, I’ll take a hug.”

At times his detachment and humor angered me. I wanted to shout, “Dad don’t joke around. It’s all your fault. It was all the damn fruit loops you ate at breakfast and purple popsicles you sucked until your mouth turned gray.” I wanted to blame everyone for any reason. My tongue was a snake ready to slash venom at my family. In the name of love, I bit my tongue. We all did; then we cried about the pain.

After five months of cancer my father rarely joked or even spoke. His deflated body was a sour lump on the couch occasionally mumbling for water, juice, or a cough drop. He became particular about everything. “I wanted four ounces of juice in a Celtics glass, not seven ounces in a Mickey Mouse Mug!” he whined. My mother, sister, and I never knew how to respond. What do you say to a man who experiences endless pain? A man who is lucky if he vomits four times a year instead of eight.

At thirty-eight years old my father needed a cane to walk and a toupee to cover his naked scalp. He was stripped of pride when he became too weak to work and support his family. He was no longer the jolly man with a squirt gun threatening to drown you if you didn't clean your room. He was a stranger. Cancer was a thief stealing his health, hunger, and personality. My mother, sister, and I were all he had left. Yet for months, none of us wanted to be near him.

It is saddening that my father had to ask for our company. The man who was there for everyone, was deserted in front of the VCR. My contribution to his loneliness was, "Dad, I bought you a movie, *Rocky Two*. I know you've seen it four times but it will keep you busy."

"Will you watch it with me?" he pleaded.

"Sorry Dad I have homework," was my most common excuse. Why? Because it was easier to hide in my bedroom behind a book than face my father's illness.

My mom, sister, and I fled from cancer, while my father had to face it. We may not have handled it well, but we handled it in the best way we knew how. After ten months of suffering, we gracefully welcomed my father's death. It was the only cure for his pain.

When my father was dying, my mother, sister, and I slept overnight in his private hospital room. For eight hours I watched his skin wither and gray, like a drying rose. Although my father could not speak or see, salty tears streaked his face as a sign he heard our good-byes.

Occasionally he stopped breathing and we realized it was really going to happen. We didn't know which breath, minute or second would be the last. The four of us were dangling off a cliff by our fingers. With each heavy, labored breath we grasped tighter. My dad tried the hardest to hang on. Privately, in our own words we told him to let go. I cried, "Dad I love you, you've been the greatest father, and because of that I'll be okay. You have suffered enough." When he "let go" the room was filled with a silent peace and great relief. His suffering ended.

We could have plugged my father to the artificial umbilical cord of a respirator to prolong his death. Instead we chose to let him live spiritually. It was the greatest gift we ever had to offer my father. Just as he was beginning a new life, so were we.

When a loved one dies it is a blackout of the heart. It is dark, like being in a strange new house during a power outage. All light disappears and everything is unfamiliar. Eventually you feel around the room and recognize furniture and faces. You realize it is the same house, the same people and the same life, but with a new perspective that a deep experience brings.

My jack-o-lantern Pumpkin Pop is no longer lit around me. Although it is darker outside of me, I am enlightened inside. The memories of my father are a bunsen burner that ignites my soul. I know I have healed when others are warmed by that light. In that sense, my father is very much alive.

## **Roy G. Biv**

**By: Dennis Barone**

He wanted to write something beautiful but he didn't have paper pretty enough for the thought. So he stopped writing altogether. Until one day a magician came to town who offered him endless reams of a very special stock if he promised to write only during the morning hours. He considered the magician's offer, leafed through some of the paper, and then he accepted his offer.

He went home and tried to go to sleep, but it was very difficult because he anxiously awaited the morning. After tossing and turning for quite some time, he was asleep.

He woke early, but did not rush right to his desk where he had stacked some of the magician's paper the night before. Rather, he acted cool and reserved. He showered and shaved; sat down to a meticulously prepared breakfast. Then he went to his desk.

He sat in his desk chair, put his hands together—fingers intertwined, and leaned forward, stretching and extending his arms, turning his palms outward. He was ready now. With his right hand, he took a pen from the holder atop his desk and with his left hand he brought a piece of paper down from the stack and on the center of his desk blotter. He paused and took a deep breath.

Then he began to write the thought that only this paper was pretty enough to contain. But, much to his amazement, nothing appeared on the paper as he wrote. He shook his pen and tried again. Still nothing. He grabbed another pen and another, but there was nothing on the paper, not even indentations from the pens' pressure, and he feared he would soon lose the thought.

He dropped the pen and held his head in his palms. This was too much. He almost started to cry, but just then he began to laugh. He looked up, and he saw that the entire room had changed. Everywhere were all the colors of the rainbow. Walls that were once somber gray were now alive with red and orange, yellow and green, blue and indigo and violet. He looked at his hands and saw that they too had changed. He glanced out his window and saw that the fog had lifted, and all that he could see had been transformed.

Now he knew the meaning of his name and why he had to write every morning. And now he knew too that he would never forget the beautiful thought.

**Voyaging (2007)**

**By: Joan Cassidy Vayo '52, DAA '98**

Once we collected  
clothing furniture  
books and music  
pictures for our walls and albums  
letters and receipts

This late rainy Sunday  
we empty one box  
remembering people places  
old songs on the radio are playing  
and we are back  
while going forward

**Letter Home**

**By: Dennis Barone**

I wish you were here. That's the way a letter begins, right? But I know you'd like it here: the park, the Duomo, the restaurants, the high fashion. True: it feels so much larger than Rome and more international: too many bankers and diplomats. Yet when the soloist struck the notes of Paganini all criticism evaporated in the sonority of the concert hall. I wish you could have heard it – played on a period instrument made in the sixteenth-century in nearby Cremona. And then we were off to the trattoria that the journalist had recommended. Late, true, for residents of Connecticut but the wines of Piedmont and Umbria soon revived us. And now I sit here in the breakfast room – *sala colazione* – and write to you this simple message – espresso in hand: I wish you were here.

**Beavertail Park, R.I.**

**By: Barbara LaButis**





**People Watching in Niantic**

**By: Sarah Keane**

A spontaneous trip to Niantic  
We stop for a bite to eat  
A stroll through the festival streets  
Then it's off to the beach.

So many people scattered, late for such a rush.  
I involuntarily have my eye on a select bunch.

The first ones to catch my eye are a young couple to my  
right a couple feet ahead  
on their towels of orange and red.

The dark-haired pale girl clad in a blue bikini quietly  
reads a book as her boyfriend lays beside her peacefully  
sleeping.

When he eventually wakes, she nestles her head into the  
crook of his arm, still engrossed in her novel.

They are the ones I continue to glance at and is it  
coincidence seeing as I love sweet love, my heart filling  
with a combination of joy and envy as I do not have one to  
call my own.

The sisters sitting in a hole, digging in the sand with  
their shovels.

The little boy who continuously scoops up sand in his  
shovel to dump it on his poor brother, the sandy haired  
child laying there nonchalantly, surrendering to the torture,  
which later turns into a full burying, his mother snapping a  
picture at the silly sight as her elder son continues to pile on  
the sand, clearly enjoying torturing his little brother.

The group of people noisily enjoying a game of  
kickball/volleyball.

The two little tykes who managed to escape their  
families, a young man rushing to retrieve each one just in  
the nick of time as he nears the exit of the beach.

I smile as the second man playfully runs up behind the boy, swooping him up into the air.

As I observe these groups and the countless screaming babies, the sweet, strong scent of hazelnut coffee wafts through the humid air, the culprit a woman drinking a Dunkin Donut's coffee directly behind me, the smell lingering even after she's gone, no doubt because she has dumped it into the sand, the sweet liquid seeping into it.

My heart warms when my attention returns to the young couple for the hundredth time, a change of scene, the boy endearingly planting gentle, playful kisses on his girlfriend's exposed stomach.

As time passes and the sun lowers in the cloudy sky, the beach gradually clears out more and more. The two sisters, then the two brothers, the buried one finally free of his sandy prison.

Shortly after the boys and their mother have left, a pair of female friends takes their place, leaning against the hump of sand, once a prison, now a place of rest.

They smile as they pose for a selfie and quickly become acquainted with the family who has just posed for their own family photo in front of the now slightly pale pink sky.

Two little boys suited up in orange floaties swim in the water and soon notice their father's absence.

The older one goes to find him, calling out to him, "Daddy come swim with us!" in the cutest little voice.

I think back now to how I had wished I had brought something to read, a little envious of the girl with her nose in a novel and don't regret neglecting to bring a book, I don't regret it now,

For if I had I would have surely missed all the sights and sounds.

We're too wrapped up in our own little worlds that we don't take the time to observe the world around us.

If we just look around we can find joy in the simplest things by just watching life happening.

### **Flying Colors**

**By: Devon Roberts**

In a world painted in grayscale,  
Sorrow was written on the people's faces.  
A little girl, she would wail,  
When she saw her colorless image.  
Streams of tears flowed into a river of blackness.  
Intriguing the girl to go on a pilgrimage.  
Trudging alongside the endless river,  
A piece of sea glass caught her lifeless eyes.  
When she saw her reflection, her lip began to quiver.  
Just as she was about to set it down.  
The sun's rays glistened on the sea glass,  
And color washed over her frown.  
Startled by the foreign rainbow before her,  
The glass falls to a shatter.  
Causing an eruption of colors to stir.  
The black river turned a crystal blue.  
And what once was a colorless world,  
Was now a little girl's muse.

