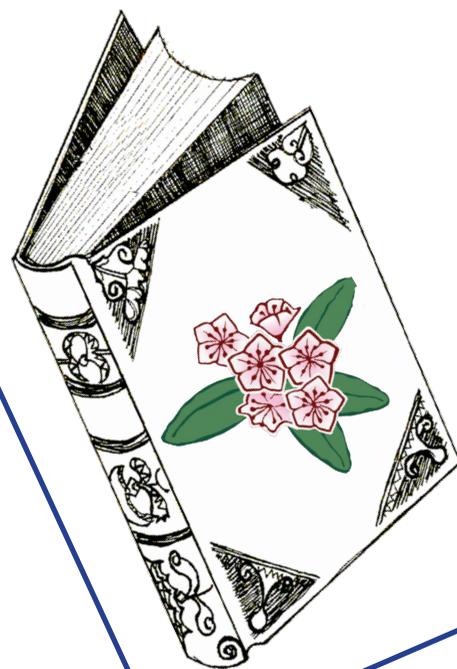


LAURELMEAD JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2019
VOLUME IX, ISSUE I



THE LAURELMEAD JOURNAL

**FEBRUARY 2019
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The aim of the Laurelmead Journal is to enrich the enjoyment of living at Laurelmead by presenting articles about the history, governance and setting, with profiles and memoirs of both residents and staff.

While editors retain the right of selection, we urge all residents to offer any stories, poems, articles, letters-to-the-editors or memoirs they wish to submit.

Please send your submissions to nickynichtern@gmail.com
or put in Rosemary Colt's mailbox or send to rosemarycolt@gmail.com

Articles should not exceed 600 words in length.

The Editors:

Editor:
Rosemary Colt

Associate Editor:
Martha Sherman

Proofreading:
Elaine Hoffman
Judith Bachmann

Cover Art: Ruth Samdperil

Production and Design: Nicky Nichtern



October 10, 2018
Eulogy for Mom

Our mom was many things.... a mom, a wife, a grandmother, a daughter, a feminist and an artist.

And lucky us....she excelled in all her roles. And because she excelled in all, she was able to bring out the best in us, her childrenthe four of us....Stephen, Terry, Karyn...and especially me.

She was a strong mentor for me, as an artist...in the way she created and the way she lived. She modeled for all of us the importance of all of the arts, especially the visual arts. In fact, her first language of expression and communication was through her drawing. She would have each of us sit for her often so she could draw us, and she was so good at capturing our essence.....and sometimes that essence was our impatience.

Mom considered herself a feminist and she valued and embraced difference. She fought for equal rights, she protested in Washington for peace during the Vietnam war and hosted fundraisers for Vietnam Vets. She cooked fresh broccoli, in the time of frozen peas.

Her painting studio was down in the basement of our home...next to the washer and dryer. We all observed her multitasking...oil painting and folding clothes, painting and folding - addressing the two biggest passions of her life, her family and her art. She'd share her love of looking and seeing.... and take us all on trips to "the big city"where we were dragged from museum to museum to museum.

My sisters and brother and I observed our parents loving each other and loving so many friends. Their gatherings and parties were the place to be. I remember one night when I was about 15, they were having a party upstairs while I was having a smaller party with my friends downstairs. They were having cocktails, and we were having.....well..use your imagination. At one point my mother came down the stairs, stood in the middle of the room and burst out singing her own special rendition of Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar." I was soooo embarrassed as only a teenager could be....but she gave me this incredible memory and story that my friends and I talk about ...clearly.....to this very day.

She was a free spirit, but she had certain rules. We were never allowed to use coloring books because she wanted us to create outside the prescribed lines. She only allowed us to watch educational TV, she insisted that we use lots of sun block, and that we always drive extra, extra, extra carefully.

She was always colorful...particularly in her choice of eyeglass frames. There was the Gloria Steinem look, the Elton John look. She was generous of ...heart....of her timeand of her belongings...and she had many belongings. In fact, certain stores would send her holiday cards because of her frequency of shopping.

And I want to point out something very interesting that I don't believe is a coincidence...we just learned that on Monday, in the afternoon of Mom's

passing - that Nordstroms her favorite dept. store.... decided to close its Providence branch store. No joke. ...Connection? We will never know.

She would give you the shirt (that she bought at Nordstrom) off her back-literally. If you said that you liked something she was wearing, she'd say "here, it's yours...take it!"

She had a very small ego. In fact she never quite succeeded in making herself her own priority....not unlike many women of her generation. She studied tap dancing during her Shirley Temple years and later left RISD to marry her high school sweetheart and raise a family.

She became a grandmother at age 47. She always felt too young and hip to being called "grandma". It just wasn't fitting and so she became forever known by everyone as NAN.

After 54 years of marriage she lost the love of her life. With great trepidation she started a new chapter and although she felt too young to move to Laurelmeadwith some strong encouragement from all of us -she did ...and began a new adventure. It took a little time to adjust but we eventually saw her thrive in her new community. She became the editor of the Laurelmead Journal, she was active with friends playing Bridge, seeing films, going to symphony and theatre. Forever young....then a young older person...then eventually an older old person but always with a very young soul. We will always love her deeply and forever miss her.



Better Than Diamonds
by Constance R. Risica

For many years we lived near the beach in Buttonwoods – Warwick.

On my trips to the beach I picked up bits of blue glass and kept them in a bowl.

When John began jogging in the ‘60s he would come into the house with the same words – “Which hand?”

I would always say “Right – I always pick right.” And he would say “Wrong – try again.” I would then pick left and there was the prize – blue glass!

How did this 6’2” man jogging down the beach spot this glass? My reaction when I look at this glass is always the same.... “Better than diamonds.”

You can see the jar of blue glass outside my door at #412.

A Lost Opportunity
by Rosemary Colt

A recent magazine article about the British novelist Anthony Powell included a photograph of Powell and his wife Lady Violet, both of them now dead. It was taken in the library of The Chantry, their house in Somerset in Southwestern England. Powell, a book in his hand and a black cat on his lap, is lying on a red-velvet Empire sofa while his wife stands behind it gazing down on him with a bemused expression. There are bookcases behind them, on top of which are two classical busts carefully placed between three portraits, rather bad ones, of what look to be men of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. It’s hard to know whether to take this image of the English upper classes at face value or to read it ironically, which would be fitting given Powell’s literary identity.

This identity rests on *A Dance to the Music of Time*, his twelve-volume comedy of manners set between 1921-1971 and cited by the Modern Library as the 43rd greatest English language novel of the 20th century. While not exactly a *roman à clef*, its narrator, Nicholas Jenkins, shares his creator’s background, schooling and military service. Moreover, some of the characters have easily identified real life counterparts while others are an amalgam of some of Powell’s contemporaries at Eton, Oxford and later in London. Powell always denied that he relied on real life-models but there are some very close likenesses.

One hot July day in the mid-1980s my husband and I visited the Powell’s at The Chantry and saw that library for ourselves. I was writing a doctoral dissertation on *A Dance* that explored the extent to which so many of the characters’ reflected certain aspects of the English upper classes of the period in question. The visit came about through no fault of my own but rather because of my parents’ friendship with the Powell’s. The four of them had met in the late 1950s, when my father, a professor of English and a critic, was endeavoring to spread the word about Powell in the US.

I was introduced to them in the 1960s during a visit to London with my parents. The Powell's invited us to dinner at the Travellers' Club, a venerable London institution founded in 1819 as a "meeting place for gentlemen who had travelled abroad." In awe of both the company and the surroundings, I remember little about the evening except for the unfortunate orange dress I was wearing. At the time I'd just returned to college to complete the undergraduate education I'd abandoned for marriage and a doctoral dissertation on any subject—let alone Powell—was far in the future.

But eventually I did go to graduate school and so eventually—inevitably—I had to come up with a dissertation topic. My passion was nineteenth-century British novels, but that field had been so well covered there seemed little left to say. Then *A Dance* came to mind. I was genuinely interested in the extent to which it reflected the political and social attitudes of the upper classes during the fifty years it covers; I also knew I would be able to talk to Powell. None of my professors showed any interest in this proposal but somehow I managed to convince them it was viable, in part by pointing out the advantage of access to the author. Yet my real reason for choosing Powell was my father's admiration for his work; generally speaking, what he admired I admired and I felt sure I was making the right choice.

We went to The Chantry that July day so I could talk to Powell about the dissertation. We drove there from Bath, where we were staying, and I was almost ill with nerves by the time we pulled up at the front door. The Powell's, however, greeted us warmly, gave us a tour of house and garden and fed us a delicious Sunday lunch, which relaxed me. After coffee Tony suggested he and I might retire to discuss my dissertation which was my golden opportunity to be able to cite the author's input in my dissertation: "Powell believes, Powell says that, etc., etc." But did I seize the moment? No. Instead I said that wouldn't be necessary, adding that I had my own theories and they would have to do or something equally stupid.

Even as I spoke I was painfully conscious of the emotions fuelling this dismissive response to Powell's offer. Already I knew—even if I hadn't fully admitted it—that I'd chosen his novel as a subject largely because of my father's admiration for it, not my own, and I was terrified, that a one-on-one with Powell would expose my critical inadequacies as well as my reservations about his novel. Further, I knew he wouldn't like my approach because he believed in literature for literature's sake with no nonsense about social and political issues, a stance that had put him at odds with many of his fellow writers in the 1920s and '30s. And here I was, proposing to argue that his novel's value lay primarily in his characters' embodiment of those issues; anything he had to say would have contradicted my approach.

As we drove away from The Chantry that day I knew I'd missed an opportunity to quote from an interview with the author in my dissertation, whether he agreed with me or not. In the end what I wrote was adequate but pedestrian because I didn't believe in the implications of my argument. While I continued—and continue—to believe in the reciprocal relationship between literature, society and history, I knew all along that great fiction exists in and of itself. Moreover, I didn't—and don't—think *A Dance* does that. If the novel is read a hundred years from now it will be because the characters have a life independent of their historical context, like Proust's, with whom Powell is so often compared. His novel may serve as a primer of the behavior of post-World War II British upper classes as the world falls apart and the Philistines take over but I didn't have the courage to say that either in the dissertation or, heaven forbid, to Powell, although I suspect he would have been fine with it.

SNOW IN NOVEMBER

The snow settled snugly
on every tree,
in every shape and form.
And still the birds came.

Last night.
Overhead.
Canadian Geese

Where do they go.

We looked out
at trees with antlers.
The quiet of winter.

Chilled air,
forsaking.
we know not what.

It is time to sit by the fire
To remember the tops
of snow capped mountains.

All our steep
and slippery
descents.

As now with care
we negotiate,
the paths we know.

Lowell Rubin



ADAPTATIONS

By Nicky Nichtern

When I was sitting at the computer about an hour ago, about to upload a book to be printed onto a website that I'd been using for over 10 years now, I was faced with a problem that continues to escalate and infuriate. A program I was totally familiar with decided to sell out under the guise of "improving" their services. And now, faced with my own deadline, I don't have a clue as to how to conform to the new guidelines. Yes, yes, there are instructions – all so nicely designed and filled with click here and click there – but I feel as if I'm lost in a maze and the clock is ticking, and there is a growing sense of panic that I won't be able to either find my way out to my goal or even my way back to the beginning.

Why does the world keep doing this? I can't help but think about the many, many, gadgets that worked fine, and then they got "improved." Going way back when I was a kid – about 60 years ago. It sat atop a cabinet and was plugged into the electric socket. When I was of a mind to listen to it, I'd walk up to it, turn a knob to the right, and lo and behold a voice came serenading from the object itself, filling the room with song, or talk, until I'd had enough, and then I'd either turn the only other knob to change the channel, or go back to the original knob and turn it to the left, this time to silence it until I was ready to listen again.

And then someone decided we should be able to access music wherever we were – and yes, I did indeed love my “transistor” radio. I carried it around when I went out to the playground after school to hang out with my friends. And it was kinda cool to be able to bee-bop-a-lu-la anywhere – not needing to be plugged in to access the magic of bringing the outside world in to my world.

But then there were more changes – and now, except when driving in my car where there is still an actual radio, I have to turn on the TV and go cruising through hundreds of channels until I land on one – can’t listen in the middle of the night without lighting up the room with the glow from the TV! Or get music through my iphone, or ipad, or ipod, or I don’t know what else – too many choices and too much technology dragging me along at a pace too rapid and too unnecessary for my skill set.

And now that I’ve calmed down a bit from where I’ve begun, I stare at the trees outside my window, a fierce wind blowing, and push myself backwards in time to remember another blistery Saturday night. I was 14 years old and my best friend Janie was having a Sweet 16 party. It was to begin at 8:00 and for 2 hours we were going to dance, eat pizza, laugh, flirt, and at 10:00 all go home. Janie’s parents had rented a dance studio in the neighborhood. It was mid-January 1959 and a snowstorm was turning the streets of Manhattan into a “quiet zone”. One wall of the studio was all windows, facing First Avenue, which normally would be filled with cars on their way uptown, but now was devoid of any traffic. And since we all lived within walking distance of the studio the party was not going to be postponed.

Most of the girls had brought their small boxes that held their ‘45’s – small records with our favorite hit song on the A side and not quite hit song on the B side. There was a little plastic doo-dad that fit in the big

hole in the center so that we could play these records on a “grown-up” Victrola that had been designed originally for 33’s.

But on this night not one adapter could be found! A sense of panic slowly began to spread from one girl to another. The “boys” in the room were still fixed on the pizza, and just hanging out together, but we girls wanted to dance! And so I grabbed my coat and asked Janie’s mother for a dime so I could go down to the corner telephone booth, call my Dad, and ask him if he’d bring us the record adaptor that was sitting on our Victrola in the living room.

She did. I did. And he did!

OK. Back to trying to figure out how to “adapt” to this new computer program. First, I’m gonna click on Spotify, and find some good ol’ rock ‘n roll to keep me in the zone!



My Friend Is Back

By Marguerite Dorian Taussig

He is back, my old friend of last summer.

Lodged mysteriously in a floor crack under the garden window, he quickens the June night with his saw-toothed song. He keeps at it steadily; my typewriter does not disturb his work and he doesn't disturb mine. On the contrary, we borrow from each other's energy and courage. When I pause, he pauses too, slightly puzzled. His silence questions me amicably: "Well?" Then he senses that I am in need of comfort. His song resumes, swells encouragingly, forges ahead, and the night vibrates like a cut crystal glass.

His Latin name is, appropriately, Gryllus – with a vibrating double l in the middle, like a pair of sensitive antennae, and his family, this Meister-singer community, is called the Gryllidae family. I have an old and tender friendship with the crickets.

But – is he the same cricket I had in my room last summer? Do crickets come back? Do they live more than one season? Or is this the next generation – his son, who, not unlike myself, alas has taken up his father's occupation and vocation and is now my partner in the late toiling hours I keep? For sometimes I think I detect a slightly delayed phase in the vibrations of his song, a mild occasional discordance in our working rhythms. I used to fall into step so naturally and happily with my last summer cricket.

Perhaps he IS the son – Gryllus fils – and what I perceive as a slight quivering impatience in his voice is only a most natural generational gap – alas, I am of his father's vintage!

But, father or son, I am glad to have my cricket back. Consider a summer

without crickets: What would we do without the cheerful insomniacs once the birds, these respectable citizens, have gone to bed early and virtuously, deserting the night writers, the late readers, the lovers? Who would enliven the darkness under the imperial Copper Beeches? Who would make solitude sensuous and luxurious? The summer stars with their cold gaze magnified by stillness would intimidate us; the restless quests summer nights cause – the mystery of our existence, the unknown course of this world – would terrify us without the crickets cheerfully and modestly sawing away in the cool grass. The crickets make infinity intimate; they dismantle the immensity of summer nights into domestic segments; they tame our fears.

I can tell the progress of summer months without a calendar, just by listening to the crickets' voices. Gay and still naïve in June, knowledgeable and self-asserting through mid – July, their equanimity acquires a mature ring past this term. And with the prime of the ravishing red-headed petunias, the crickets' choir grows passionate. Night after night of orgy, their song swells frenetically in the tall grass, under the bushes, until dawn. The garden looks disheveled in the morning, the Black-Eyed Susans have dark circles under their eyes. Summer is at its most uncontrollable.

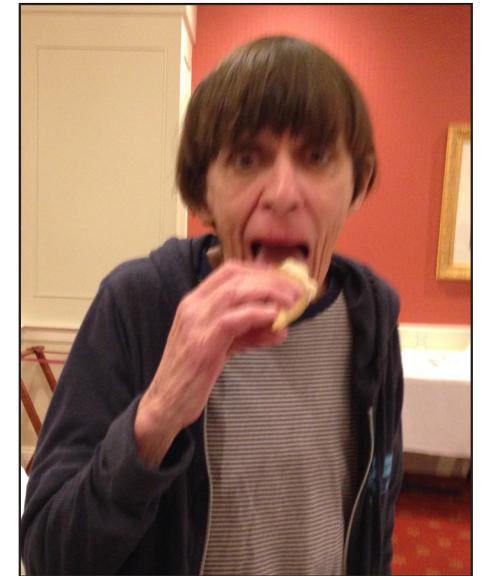
It is always at this point that, without reason and quite suddenly, a cricket rises out of this dissipation and, driven by who knows what fever of imagination, by what longing, wanders away by himself into someone's room to become a hard-working artist and soloist.

A few such lucky dreamers happen upon writers immortalized as paragons of irresponsibility, the irremediable artist – bums, dreamers with no savings accounts. Now his summer spent, our cricket must go begging to his neighbor the ant who has toiled all season long.

Past mid-August, that vibrant ardor in the crickets' voice dims and, once in a while, I would catch my house cricket dozing on the job. He

grew fat and sleepy. On some nights he would lag behind, the pauses between his stanzas would increase and he would be less alert at my need to be comforted. A sadness would creep into his song - perhaps a disenchantment with art – perhaps a doubt about immortality. With time at its heels, the season would follow its assigned orbit and the night would grow chilly. Impatient to shed their green and tell openly of the real passion they hide under it, the trees would start waving here and there a scarlet sleeve. And the inevitable would start to happen. The crickets' choir would thin out. Every night I would step out into the garden and shivering in the middle of the lawn, with my back to the lucid Fall moon and my shadow across the driveway, I would listen to the death of the crickets, conjuring them to hold on awhile longer. But every night there would be fewer left; eight, then five, then three, sounding tired and dizzy with the growing chill: two, then one, groggier every night, then....

But now, my new cricket is in splendid health and we have a whole summer of work between us. True to cricket philosophy, let us not think about the fall now.



**I Scream You Scream
We All Scream
For Ice Cream**



“Governance at Laurelmead”
From the Laurelmead Journal
June 2011

By Phyllis Brown

As you all know, Laurelmead is a cooperative in which we own shares of stock. In other words, we are shareholders in this enterprise. Our by-laws, thoughtfully put together by our earliest residents, call for a board of directors whose members manage the business of Laurelmead. All are shareholders of Laurelmead and are elected by the residents. The members of the board elect their president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The board hires an executive director to run the cooperative on a day-to-day basis. The director is in charge of hiring managers who in turn hire and train their staff.

Unlike a business, whose sole goal is to make money, Laurelmead has two goals: 1) to keep our residents happy, and 2) to make enough money to cover expenses and keep us solvent. The financial director puts together both an operating budget and a capital reserve budget, which are painstakingly reviewed by the budget and finance committee. The board then goes over these budgets before finally approving them. Our capital reserve fund is to cover capital expenses, so that our buildings and grounds will be well maintained over the years.

Laurelmead is a democracy in which each resident has a stake. The resident committees allow our voices to be heard. Members are voted in by the residents. Committees are advisory only. This does not mean that the committees do not instigate and promote change. Proposals passed by committees are brought to and acted upon by the board. The board's responsibility is to balance all concerns it receives and to act in the best of the cooperative as a whole, that is, in the best interest of

all the residents. Thus not every proposal is accepted. For example, a committee might propose a project that could be useful to some residents, but for which not enough money is available in the budget. Sometimes one committee may vote for something but another committee may vote against it. The board is continually juggling to keep Laurelmead solvent and to do what is best for the well-being of the residents. Just because a committee's suggestions are not adopted does not mean that the time and advice of committee members are wasted or useless. Laurelmead has changed over time, but it is a slow process, an evolutionary, not a revolutionary, one.

No organization can be run effectively by 175 people. It must have a structure in order to function. I believe that at Laurelmead we are doing an excellent job of operating according to our bylaws, working for the interest of the cooperative as a whole. If changes you would like are not made, or are not made fast enough, please be patient and reflect on how our organization operates. To me, it is a wonderful example of democracy.

I think we are a model for anyone interested in the governance of a cooperative. I am proud of our residents who put so much time and effort into committees and meetings, and I am proud of our staff who carry out our wishes and try to make each of us safe, active, healthy, and happy.



Photograph: 2005 Graphique de France

No Kissing in the Business Section

There's a time and a place for all things
such occasions give life its wings
miss that connection - miss it all
You have put your plane in a stall

Take a martini just past five
(P.M. of course) in some small dive
That's the way to extend a day
To renew yourself for some play.

On the weekdays when stock trading starts
My passions switch to other parts.
Kissing in the business section
will only lead to rejection.

So take my advice and steer clear
(as much as I love you my dear)
of kissing when and where you can't
at times and places when you shan't.

Remember that pleasure deferred
heightens the pleasure - that's the word.
Deferral leads to perfection
hooray for the business section!

Written by Peter Lisle
2009 - on the occasion of his 16th Wedding Anniversary
to his beloved wife Kay.



**A Few Stories about Life
as a Doctor and a Mother
in a Small Town**

By
Charlotte Brown
as told to Rosemary Colt

Charlotte began by pointing out that in a small town like New Canaan, a doctor's patients are often her friends too. The first of her tales was about five little girls who'd come for their school physicals. Just as she was about to begin, the girls clad only in their brand new panties, there was a knock at the door. It was Charlotte's son Rush with the news that his pet alligator Greenwood was sick. The little girls were out of the room in a flash, their mothers in tow, and watched as Greenwood was administered a shot of brandy with a turkey baster. He seemed to perk up and they returned to the examining room. But about ten minutes later Rush knocked again to report that Greenwood was dead, so out shot the girls again to have a look at a dead alligator.

Charlotte's daughter Katherine sometimes went along with her on house calls. One day a frantic grandmother reported that her grandchild was sick. Daughter Katharine, age 4, was with Charlotte. The child turned out to be fine—it was only a nervous grandmother—but Katherine fell down the cellar stairs and skinned her face quite badly. When asked about it later, she replied that she “just fell on a house call.”

Charlotte was also the director of health in New Canaan and Wilton and part of her job was to check out septic systems, some of which belonged to houses situated in swamps. On one call she took Rush along with her, who announced firmly that the site didn't “look seeped up.” When he was with her at another house his eye lit on a pretty feather duster. How sad, he said, to have killed such a pretty bird to get the feathers. His hostess assured him they were actually plain ones dyed and then asked him if he knew what “dye” meant, to which he replied, “Yes, it's what my mother and I put in people's toilets and watch it come up in their backyards,” hardly the usual definition.

Charlotte had one last anecdote about Rush that reflected the influence of his mother's profession. They were visiting her parents and at supper that night—her sister was there too—everyone was talking about how much they liked kidneys—fried or stewed, lamb or calf—etc. Rush, unable to stand it any longer—announced that he thought “kidney was a sickness.”



LAURELMEAD

355 Blackstone Boulevard, Providence, RI

www.laurelmead.com

401.273.9550