

The *Beacon*

SUMMER 2017



*A Collection of Art and Writing
from the Residents of Providence Mount St. Vincent*

Contents

Sylvia Dongieux.....	Cover	Sylvia Dongieux.....	9
Harriet Schulman	1	<i>Crow War</i>	
<i>It Was a Beautiful Day in Phoenix</i>		Terri Erickson.....	10–11
Joan Weeks	2–5	<i>India</i>	
<i>Acceptance</i>		<i>Our Time</i>	
Joan B. Weeks	5	<i>Spring</i>	
<i>The Home on the Hillside</i>		Jean Bullard	12
Joan Nilon.....	6	<i>Alaska – Sept. 1992</i>	
Alix Pye.....	6	Caroline Crabtree	13–14
<i>The Aging Drawer</i>		<i>Movie Review: “Some Like It Hot”</i>	
Rita Schneider.....	7	Harriet Schulman	15–16
<i>Down The House</i>		Biographies and	
Joan Nilon.....	8	photos of contributors	17
		Harriet Schulman	Back cover

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Spring 2017 Contributors:

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Harriet Schulman

It Was a Beautiful Day in Phoenix

Joan B. Weeks



The heat was beginning to be bearable and a small breeze lifted up the dried oak tree leaves as they rolled along for a small distance and then set themselves down again. I felt restless.

I found Wendy, my eleven-year-old daughter and told her I was going out to the air base to see if I could find something for supper. We had eaten spaghetti three times already this week. I grabbed my purse and the car keys, lowered myself into our small, dark green Toyota coupe and drove slowly along the narrow streets.

We lived in a “planned community” at the center of which was a man-made lake with a wide, smooth, pink tinted cement sidewalk meandering around its circumference. Two families of ducks paddled along gracefully as they moved atop the glass-like surface of the water. The lake was surrounded by white adobe style condos with dark-stained wooden gates opening into small patios which then led to a heavy front door. Three or four different style condos were grouped in what seemed random arrangements around the lake.

I drove around finally reaching the main road to the base; I turned right, picked up speed and was enjoying the late afternoon’s cool breeze when suddenly I heard a loud clackity, clack, metallic, ripping sound. I slowed down, looked in the rearview mirror and saw a large object in the middle of the road. I put my hazard blinker light on and slowly, carefully pulled to the side of the road, parked, put the emergency brake on and turned the car off.

I felt angry. Why did things like this have to happen when Dave was gone? It was difficult enough being left behind and having all the responsibility of four children... I didn’t need this on top of everything else!! Oh well, only a couple of months left of Dave’s year-long separated tour of duty and then he’d be home. I walked back to find the muffler, black and greasy, in the middle of the road. I breathed a sigh of relief, as there wasn’t any traffic, picked it up carefully, opened up the trunk and dropped it in. Luckily, I had a roll of paper towels in the back seat of the car...my hands were covered with the black, greasy dirt from the muffler.

I started the car again, pulled away from the curb and within a short mile I came to the entrance of Luke Air Force Base. I had Intended to go to the big commissary; however, I soon realized everything but the small PX was closed, as it was Veterans' day. How had I missed that? Oh, well, when Dave wasn't home and going to work every day, I simply wasn't on top of such things. I bought some ice cream for dessert in the small PX and then off I went, out the gate and back home, realizing we would have to eat spaghetti again.

It was getting late in the afternoon. As I approached the door, I could hear Wendy, sweet Wendy, reading a Peter Rabbit book to Tim. I went into the small kitchen and started to warm up spaghetti sauce when I heard a knock at the door. Good grief, who could be coming to see us at this time of day?

I opened the heavy wooden front door and standing there were four men in full dress uniform. One was the Chaplain, Father Quinn, one a pilot and close friend of Dave's; I didn't recognize the other two. Father Quinn said, "Joanie, I have some bad news for you. Dave is missing in action."

I froze: every pilot's wife lives dreading this moment and tells herself this will never happen; however, for me, here it was...internally I thought, David! David! Oh, my David! NO! NO! NO! you cannot leave me! NO, no, no, no!!...an explosion in my entire being. I felt I must scream; I wanted to run out the door, come back in again and redo this entire scene. I felt scared and threatened. Oh, my God, please, please make it not so!! David always said he was safer flying than I was driving.

Then, I heard Father Quinn saying, "Joanie, Dave is missing in action." So, what a relief. He wasn't dead! He was alive...they simply couldn't find him! Dave wasn't dead! I felt some relief. Yes, of course, they will find him!

After some small talk, they left, saying they would call as soon as they received any further information. At this point, all the children were standing around me: Wendy, eleven, Henri, thirteen and Jamie, fourteen years old. Wendy was holding Tim who, at that point in time, was fifteen months old. I knew I had to stay calm for the children's sake. Could I? I felt like screaming. I was in pain but I couldn't scream. I felt numb too. It was crazy. At the same time, I felt a tiny bit of confidence this would all turn out for the best. After all, everyone said what a good pilot Dave was. For sure he'll be found alive. I felt a whole gamut of feelings almost all at the same time: dread, fear, and a small feeling of hope.

I hurriedly made eggs, bacon and toast. After getting the bacon started, I grabbed the phone and called my best friends, Carol and Gary Ewert. I filled them in; they were shocked and reassured me they were there for me and would do whatever I needed them to do. These wonderful people had been there for me many times already.

As I put one foot in front of the other, I kept reassuring myself they would find Dave. Perhaps he might even be sent home early because of this accident. I decided we'd put Tim to bed and when he was finally sound asleep, we would go outside where it was cooler and wait for the phone call saying they had found Dave. The children all seemed agreeable and after we were certain Tim was sound asleep, we all went out into the night, spread a couple of heavy blankets out on the grass and settled down by the lake. I had had Wendy go upstairs and open the upstairs windows wide so we could hear Tim if he woke up. We left all the doors downstairs open so we could hear the phone.

The sounds of televisions and radios came to us through the open windows of neighboring condos and floated out over the lake. Henri went out in the small sailboat cousin Ann had given the boys last Christmas. I looked beyond the far shore of the lake to the mountains. On the highest mountain top was a blinking red light. On, off. On, off. It was like a talisman.

As time wore on and the deep darkness in the east became more and more light, while the phone remained silent, my feeling of hope was fading. First Henri and then Jamie said goodnight and went into the house to bed. Half an hour more and Wendy followed. I looked at my watch. It was 3:10 am. By 4 am the sky in the east had grown a lot lighter; the red blinking light was fading. I was weary. Finally, I too went into the house and tried to fall asleep. Our dog, Patsy, who always lay on the floor, climbed up into the bed and lay close to me. She was a warm and comforting body and I put my arm over her.

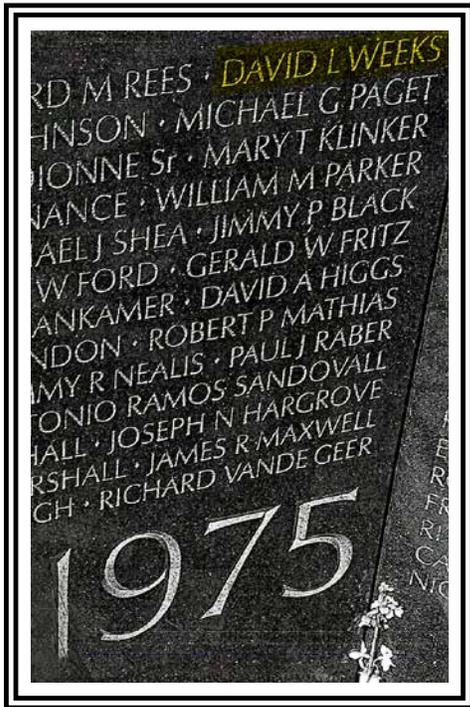
I couldn't sleep. I got up. Since I hadn't taken my clothes off, all I needed to do was get my shoes on again, straighten my hair around and splash cold water on my face. The house was quiet and I welcomed the few minutes alone. I was filled with feelings of dread and fear. I was angry at Dave too: he didn't have enough life insurance and only a few months ago, we had had a big fight over the fact that he needed more. He grudgingly purchased another policy but still it left me without enough. Oh, damn him, I thought!

After a cup of tea, I heard Tim and then Wendy, who brought him downstairs. The boys appeared. All they wanted was cold cereal and so I put all the boxes, as well as the milk carton on the counter and they ate quietly.

At 8:30 am there was a loud knock. I opened the door. There stood the three men. They seemed awkward. I ushered them in. Father Quinn, the base chaplain, spoke up first, "Joanie, I am so sorry but Dave is dead." I didn't hear much of the rest. I bit my lip. The dog was sniffing at these strangers. Tears welled up in Wendy's eyes. Someone mentioned they had notified Dave's mom. I tried to listen. There was one thing I found almost brutal: they admitted they knew yesterday afternoon when they first came that Dave was dead. I found it unbelievable they hadn't told me the truth when they first found out. "Why not?" I asked. Father Quinn explained it was an Air Force regulation that they tell the widow her husband is missing and then tell her the truth twenty-four hours later.

Acceptance

Joan B. Weeks



Tonight in the rain your death
Fits me like a friendly cloak.

The rain falls, fast drops. Its tune
Draws me into the softness of death.

The Black marble is soft, smooth like velvet.
The light on your name is warm and inviting.

You are there and so too are many others.
An officer's cap, the tiny flags and flowers.
Speak of how many weep and then smile.

Somehow your name engraved in stone allows
Me to go on. And you watch and move me along.
I can be proud now and so can you.

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The Home on the Hillside

Joan Nilon



Walk from the steady rain through the automatic doors to a charming lobby and scan the maze of hallways radiating from the reception desk. No one in sight, walk undeterred straight past shops, medical offices, a bank of elevators and ending in a chronic droning infrastructure room looming with huge machinery.

Back down toward the lobby; make a right turn past offices and rooms with computers, copy machines and phone cables, the administrative infrastructure.

Two other hallways are lined with sweet wreaths celebrating the season with ribbons and perky dry flowers. Silence in these halls.

Back to the elevators; one opens and out comes an ancient woman holding tightly to a shiny red walker with a basket full of treasure, looking confused.

“Where am I?” she mutters in a quivering voice. She looks right, then left and finally heads right. Follow her. And at a bend in the hallway, soft piano music, Panis Angelicus, echoes from a faraway place. A pale yellow light spreads across the hallway walls. It comes from a chapel at the end. A glorious golden altar sits under the flickering candles and stained glass windows. Follow her into the light.



Alix Pye

The Aging Drawer

Rita Schneider



My Dad was a quiet man who seldom showed his emotions. He loved Mom and his five children, but seldom told us so. He showed his love by actions and we had to guess about his feelings.

He was a very difficult man to choose a gift for. If we asked him what he wanted, he never gave us a satisfactory answer. A carton of Camel cigarettes were always a welcome gift, but he didn't want to encourage that bad habit, so we guessed. The gifts were usually items of clothing – mostly basic things like shirts and sweaters. When he opened his gift, he always thanked us profusely, and then the gift disappeared into a large drawer in his chiffonier to age for a period of time that ranged between one week and to as long as several years.

I and my siblings tried to figure out what determined how long a particular item would stay in the aging drawer, but it remained a mystery. I remember a pair of socks that I knitted him for a Christmas gift. I wasn't a very good knitter and one sock was slightly larger than the other. It was too late to re-knit and stretching the smaller sock didn't work. I decided to wrap them up and hope that one of his feet was larger than the other. However, because I felt guilty about giving him an imperfect gift, I explained about the slight difference in size. The hand knit socks stayed in the drawer for a surprisingly short time before they were put into service. I never knew if one foot really was smaller than the other or if he didn't want to hurt my feelings.

I thought that the aging drawer was a strange quirk unique to my father until I discovered, shortly into my marriage, that my new husband had a large drawer in the bedroom where he aged not only gifts of clothing, but other items as well.

Down The House

Joan Nilon



That was the command from Nana during the 1940's and 50's of my childhood for her family to gather at the old stone and brick house on Valentine Ave. in the Bronx where she raised her seven children and still lived with her one surviving daughter, Adelaide – Ad for short. Aunt Adda to us kids

I remember Nana so well, an older version of the Norwegian mother in the film, *I Remember Mama*. She had lively blue eyes, a tiny, beautifully shaped nose and white hair piled into a bun atop her head. She was of average height, round of body and wore what we called old lady shoes – black, with low heels and laces. As I got older, she had trouble walking.

Nana had exceptional organizational skills, not only in keeping the growing family members' names straight, but in raising her five sons and two daughters after my grandfather died in his early forties. In fact, she was the only grandparent I ever knew.

As I entered the house, up the stoop, into the small foyer with brass bells for the down and upstairs apartments, my parents reminded me to greet Nana before anyone else with a kiss to her cheek. Once inside and at the end of a long hall, was the door to the inside hall at the end of which sat Nana at the kitchen table taking in all who entered. She would go through the litany of names of her four daughters-in-law and eight grandchildren until she hit the right name. Her middle name was Johanne, hence my name Joan.

This routine continued through the 1940's and 50's and into the 60's with her great grandchildren even when she developed dementia.



Sylvia Dongieux

Crow War

Terri Erickson



Day 1: A Crow Squadron of Security Patrols, on duty over the Kelsey Creek Green Belt and Stream in King County between Skyway and Rainier Ave. (Lake Washington) include my home in their territory. One Spring day in 2007, a pair of Bald Eagles appeared flying over my house to an over 50 ft. tall Douglas Fir tree in the front yard. They roosted on a branch turning their heads to look in every direction and then flew to the Eagle Nest in a taller tree in the center of the Greenbelt. They settled comfortably in the Nest, when almost immediately a large Detective Crow landed in the Douglas Fir and then dived almost to the ground as he flew into the Greenbelt, hidden behind large Laurel Bushes that fenced my yard. He flew up near the trunk of a Cedar into its high canopy about 50 ft. from the Eagles and roosted there. He sounded one deep, long CAW, when immediately about 50 Crow flew into the area, roosting in a large circle around the Eagles. One of the Crow sounded a call, CAW, CAW, CAW and simultaneously, all the Crow Flew toward the Eagles, CAWing together, a very loud call. The Eagles seemed to fly upward and then to south Mercer Island, their sanctuary. Five or six Crow flew closely behind. Score: Crow 1, Eagle 0.

Day 2: I was sweeping my driveway, when a single Bald Eagle flew over my head. He was accompanied by six Patrol Crow who were plucking out his white tail and wing tip feather, dropping them to the ground. I shoed them away with my broom. The Eagle circled over the house, coming back to pick up a white feather. He dropped it on my doorstep. Total Score: Me 1, Eagle 1, Crow 1

Days 3-10: I parked my car in the carport next to the house. Every morning when I went out to drive I found Crow Droppings on the Driver's side window, door handle and door. The Crow Bomb Squad won! I was coming out the door carrying Simple Green and paper towels every day. Total Score: Me 1, Eagle 1, Crow 2.

Day 12: I come home to find that the Food Gathering Squad had eaten through the lid of my Rubbermaid Garbage Can and scattered the contents all over the front yard, lining up the lid fragments on the straight edge of the brick framing the driveway. The Crow now had 3 points to My 1 point.

Day13: I drove into my driveway, when to my left I saw an undulating black blanket of Crow CAWing loudly. It was the Terrorist Murder Squad! They were coming toward me. I closed the car door and stayed inside. The Crow that landed on the hood on the car CAWEd frighteningly, as they pecked at the windshield. The Crow above in the Douglas Fir dropped Fir Cones on the roof of the car, non-stop. I started up the engine and drove away to get some dinner. When I returned home, all Crow were gone. Now I had 2 points; they did not keep me away. After I went into the house, a Crow flew by my living room picture window looking me squarely in the eye. I went into the bathroom on the other side of the house. Did they just win another point in this War Game? I went to bed deciding I would decide in my sleep how to win the War Games.

Day 14: I woke up and took the bag of unsalted peanuts I had been feeding the squirrels, and put all the nuts in a large plastic bowl. I had a card with a Crown on it that was shadowed by the Salish Native Crow Symbol. I taped it to the front of the bowl. I shelled a couple of the peanuts and put the shells on a large plastic tray. Those Crow are not going to mess up my deck, I thought. They have to be smart enough to understand I want the shells on the tray. I put both items on the picnic table that sat in my deck and went off for the day. When I got home, I went out to see a mound of shells on the tray. Score 3 points for me, because there were also no bird droppings to be found anywhere.

Day 15: When I came home in the late afternoon, I found a Crow feather on my doorstep and one in the carport. The Crow and I had a Truce. I believed, I continued to feed them and they protected my Cedar siding from the Flickers who pecked away at the wood, making holes every Summer. The War Games were over. Now we shared territory, the Crow and I. The Eagles returned to their nest that spring. The Crow allowed them to hatch four eggs, feed the eaglets and allowed them to teach the young ones to take their first flight in the yard. Perhaps it was because I hung the Eagle and Crow feathers, that continued to be gifts on my doorstep and driveway, together at the center of a wind chime on the deck. Eagle, Crow, and Me all living in Peace!





India

Jean Bullard

In Jim Corbett National Park we were studying elephants while searching for wild tigers. Suddenly we heard a low growling sound.

“Maybe it’s a tiger,” said Padre Bill excitedly.

Then we heard a Plop, Plop, Plop.

“Daddy, our great naturalist doesn’t know a tiger’s growl from the sound of an elephant pooping,” laughed son Bill.

Our Time

Jean Bullard

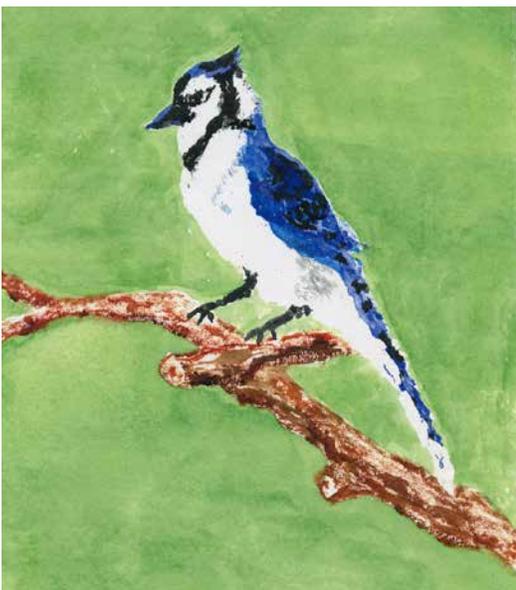
Take time for two

For me for you

Let’s walk every day

Let’s talk every day

As if there’s no tomorrow



Spring

Jean Bullard

Spring ahead

No more snow

Let the little flowers

Grow.

Alaska – Sept. 1992

Caroline Crabtree



Bonnie, Linda and I, Caroline, are on our way to Fairbanks, Alaska. We had a wonderful flight. Most of the trip was breathtaking. Lovely views of snow-capped mountains – glaciers – open water. All the time we were descending I was beginning to feel nervous when we came out of the fog and there was Fairbanks and there was snow!

We thought walking in the falling snow was delightful. The deciduous trees, Birch and Alder, were just acquiring their fall colors and the snow caught them by surprise. The leaves were lovely golden and pale greens and the white snow on them was just beautiful. However, as it continued to snow, the accumulation on the leaves became too much and the trees, for the most part, just gracefully leaned over like Weeping Willows. Also, flowers were still blooming in the snow although all of them were beginning to show the effects of the freeze. If we heard it once we heard it a half a dozen times, “This was all so unexpected, it took us by surprise.” Indeed on September 12th we saw a highway reader board that said, “No studded tires will be allowed before 15th of September.”

About midway on our trip, passing a large lake, we were now crossing the continental divide. All waters on the east side of the lake flow east and on the west, flow west.

Anchorage is a city, one of some beauty, and full of history as we discovered on our walking tour the next day. A modern city complete with skyscrapers. One of the newest is covered with glass and we couldn't help but wonder how that will fare in the next earthquake. We had been told somewhere along the way that Alaska has one thousand earthquakes a month.

We went to the Kenai Nature Trail to see what we could see. This is a large forest preserve where wildlife is safe from hunters and fisherman. We were warned we would see nothing if the animals know we are there. "So be quiet." As we started down the path we were greeted by a robin, who immediately blabbed, "People in the forest!"

A chickadee appeared in a nearby bush calling his heart out. He continued with his call and I whispered, "Blabbermouth!" As I continued to watch the noisy bird, I saw a flash of movement. Then the bird flew to the bench, then up into the tree. I looked down below the bench where the bird had been and there was a weasel looking at me! He was as curious about me as I was about him. He had his neck stretched up until it looked about six inches long.

As we came up the path leading out of the forest, there was the robin again. He was quiet but he escorted us out running along the path in front of us. He would go about fifteen feet and stop to see if we were coming, then run fifteen feet or so and stop again. Don't try to tell me animal life is dumb. I believe the birds were telling the other forest creatures where we were and only the weasel was curious enough to make his presence known.

Movie Review: "Some Like It Hot"

Harriet Schulman



Oh Billy Wilder! What have you done?

Up tempo music.

Opening – The twenties. A house with an office. Girls working.

Shooting, tires screech, shooting. Chicago 1929.

Funeral music playing. Pat O'Brien. Good bye Charlie. Shoves the gentleman into the chapel.

George Raft.

Jack Lemon and Tony Curtis playing in the band as men.

The whole town is up in arms.

Police whistle,

This is a raid Toothpick Charlie!

Jazz music playing.

Musicians, wise guys, Toothpick Charlie. Shooting. JL and TC escape in drag on high heels teetering.

How do they do these things?

Marilyn Monroe comes in shaking her hips. Leering at her.

You're in berth 7. (Train moves). Greetings all around.

Marilyn Monroe drinking alcohol. I'm Sugar Cane. I play the ukulele and sing. OK bourbon.

Playing swing music. Running wild. Never all alone. Running wild.

Marilyn Monroe drinking, playing her ukulele and singing in the train.

Toodle Do. Get a load of the rhythm section.

JL and TC, I'm a girl. I'm a girl, while ogling the other girls. Jazz music.

Daphne / Sugar sneaks into JL's berth. Drinking. Get the whiskey. The women getting the drinks. All the women in the berth. Chattering and laughing. Girls, break it up. I want to meet a husband.

Three weeks in in Florida. Well, happy days.

Florida. Down among the sheltering palms. Oh, honey wait for me.

Joe E. Brown interested in the "girls." Yacht. Deep sea fishing. Zowie.

You're going to meet a millionaire. I got pinched in the elevator. Steals yacht.

By the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea. TC doing a Cary Grant imitation. Sugar comes in.

You own a yacht? Jazz music. Real estate? Shell Oil?

Running wild. He's young and has a yacht.

She plays a Rudy Vallee record.

I want to be loved by you. Boop, boop be do. I couldn't aspire to anything higher.

I want to be loved by you. Boop, boop be do. Falling out of her dress.

Back into yachting clothes and on a bicycle. It's alright for a honeymoon.

Bon Voyage! I have no feelings for girls. It's so sad. Kisses, beauty, heavenly.

Don't fight it.

Joe E. Brown and JL kissing again.

Walking together into the sunset.

George Raft and Pat O'Brien. For he's a jolly good fellow which nobody can deny.

Gunshots,

gunshots.

I'm through with love. I mean to care for no one. So I'm through with love.

So hot. Not so cool.

The Beacon Contributors



Jean Bullard, a Contributing Writer and Artist, after graduating from Mount Holyoke College with a major in Zoology, became writer/editor for the National Park Service. She has also written several books.

Her husband, Bill Bullard, was a national park ranger naturalist and they raised their two sons and two daughters in national park areas, including Yosemite, Death Valley, Mesa Verde and Mount Rainier. After saving for seven years, they traveled to 36 countries with their children, 10 to 16 years of age. Jean also has six grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Skiing was her favorite sport, but writing is still part of her life at age 93.



Carolyn Crabtree, a Contributing Writer, was the Valedictorian of Holy Rosary High School's first graduating class. She has five daughters, seven grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren.

Over many years of traveling, primarily to Asia, she kept detailed logs of these adventures that enable reliving them and leaving a written legacy for her family.

She has lived at PMSV for ten years.



Sylvia Dongieux

"After my massive stroke, thoughts of art still come to mind."



Terri Erickson, a Contributing Writer, earned a BS in Biochemistry from Notre Dame College, Ohio and a MS in Biology from Fordham University. She began writing as a hobby in 8th grade and won a writing competition in 9th grade with a scholarship for a 3-month summer certificate program in Journalism at Catholic University of America. Upon completion she became editor of her high school newspaper and wrote celebrity interviews and feature articles for the *Cleveland News*. For 5 years working at Ohio Bell Telephone she edited an employee writing and art quarterly monograph.

Terri is the mother of 7 children, 16 grandchildren, and 1 great granddaughter. She was a caregiver to her husband Bill who resided at PMSV for 8 years prior to his passing.

"I write because I take pleasure in writing. I am just a beginner in art, but a visual form of writing is also what I am learning — to draw with brush and color."



Joan Nilon, *The Beacon's* Editor and Contributing Writer, earned a B.A. in Communications from Fordham University and a M.A. in Writing from New York University. She has published in several genres: Journalism, Newsletters, Fiction and Poetry and has taught both creative and business writing.

Joan has three children and three grandchildren. Her daughter, Cathy, is a Chaplain at PMSV.

"I write to reflect what I see and experience."



Rita Schneider, a Contributing Writer, graduated as a registered nurse from St. Louis University's St. John's Hospital School of Nursing. She has been writing since childhood and put her memories of the early days of living in St. Louis into a book for her family.

She has three sons and two granddaughters.



Harriet Schulman, a Contributing Writer and Artist, earned a B.A. in Art from Brooklyn College and has shown her work at Art/Not Terminal in Seattle. At a writing class at PMSV she was taught how to write succinctly, like haiku.

"I write to put into words what I am thinking. My movie reviews are for films I don't like."



Joan Weeks, a Contributing Writer, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Science from Oberlin College, Ohio, and did graduate work at Pennsylvania State University.

Joan married an Air Force pilot who was killed in Southeast Asia. They had four children, nine grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

"Writing has always been important in helping me to understand my life."



In Loving Memory of Alix Pye

1925 – 2017



Harriet Schulman

Contributions in support of resident programs and those in need here at The Mount are gratefully received and appreciated.

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