

Spring
2011
Issue No. 25

"Lies! Lies! All of It, Lies!"
Jericho High School
'69-'70-'71-'72-'73
Online Newsletter

Welcome to the 25th newsletter of the JHS classes of '71, '72, and '73, and now '69 and '70

The Welcome Wagon
Hello, classes of '69 and '70!

Yearbook to Facebook
Ellen Weinstein ('72), Kerri Smilowitz Kelly ('70), Jeff Rathaus ('73), Leslie Axman ('72), David Kass ('69), Kelly Celenza Jobson ('73), Marty Itzkowitz ('71), Philip Zederbaum ('71)

Nooz About Yooz
Randy Ringler ('72), Evalyn Block Merrick ('71)

Catch Up With ...
David Fiveson ('71)

In Tribute
Mr. Emil Voigt

Q&A with
Author Ellen Meister ('75)

Takin' Care of Bidness — Jerichonians at Work
Monica Medina ('73)

Cartoons by Dan Clurman
('72)

First Person Singular
Sharon Honig Citrin ('70)

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About ...
Kathi Blatt Thonet ('69)

Faculty Lounge
Mr. David Martin

Rachel Glickman's New York New York
Concept: a girl, a camera, and the greatest city in the world!

Official Propaganda Tool of '69-73 JHS Alumni

Welcome to the JHS Classes of 1969 and 1970! Nice having you!



Upon hearing that they'd been added to the newsletter, the classes of '69 and '70 reacted much as you might have expected, erupting in uninhibited, joyous celebration ...

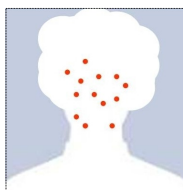


... Doffing their tops and all manner of footwear, refusing to shave or wax their legs, voices merged in glorious song ...



... While for other '69-'70 alumni, becoming a part of the newsletter was more of a profoundly spiritual, Aquarian, psychosexual experience.

Or something like that.



Yearbook 2 facebook



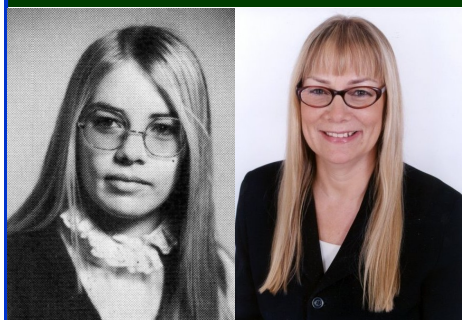
In our travels around cyberspace, we frequently come upon photos of former classmates, especially on Facebook. Can you *believe* how good everyone looks?!

Maybe they're all robots. Yep, that must be it.

Leslie Axman ('72)
New York, NY



Kerri Smilowitz Kelly ('70)
Syosset, NY

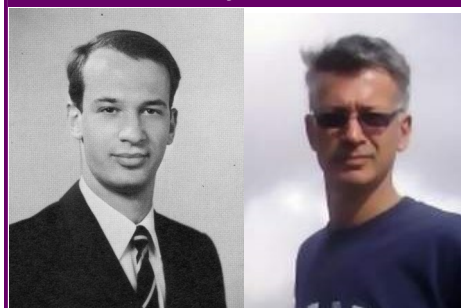


Jeffrey Rathaus ('73)
Beverly Hills, CA



Photo by Monica Medina

David N. Kass ('69)
Roslyn, NY



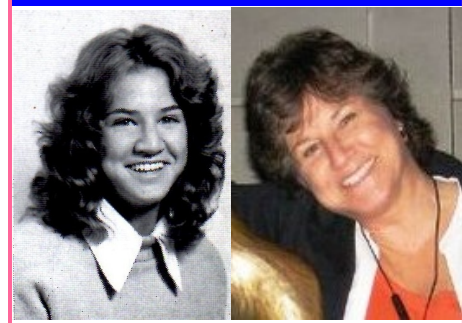
Kelly Celenza Jobson ('73)
Tarzana, CA



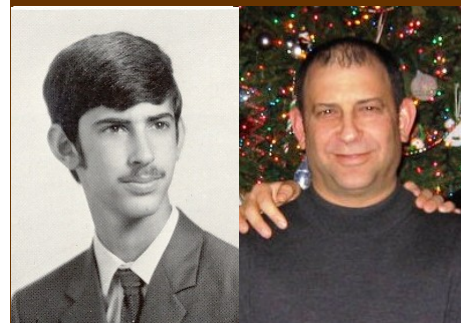
Marty Itzkowitz ('71)
Los Angeles, CA

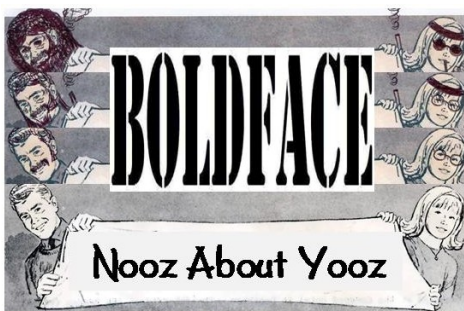


Ellen Weinstein ('72)
Newport Beach, CA



Philip Zederbaum ('71)
Fort Mill, SC





Do the clean-cut young folks above look familiar? They should. Their images graced the Jericho School News newsletter that was mailed to your parents to let them know just what it was you were supposedly doing on weekdays.

Update: Evalyn Block Merrick ('71)



Last issue (summer 2010, no. 24), we featured the class of 1971's **Evalyn Block Merrick**, who was running for her third term as a representative in the New Hampshire

State Legislature. We're happy to report that despite a dismal election for Democrats nationwide, Evalyn won handily. She describes the victory as bittersweet, however.

"Although I was reelected, Democrats took a blood bath in this state, and it means that we will lose all the great programs and services put in place in the last four years. With a legislature of 400 representatives, we held on to only 102 of the seats," says Evalyn, a survivor of multiple myeloma who lives with her husband, **Dr. Rick Merrick**, in Lancaster. "It will be a frustrating, albeit interesting, two years."

Evalyn, incidentally, is the second Merrick to serve New Hampshire: Son **Scott** was a two-term legislator at the age of eighteen. ■

Update: Randye Ringler ('72)

Yep, that's **Randye Ringler** (from the class of '73 (she graduated early, in 1972) with the Say Hey Kid, **Willie Mays**, in Arizona.

Randye, by the way, achieved something in baseball that forever eluded the great center fielder, who finished his career back in New York in 1972 and 1973: a Mets World Series ring. A lifelong Mets fan (her favorite player growing up in West Birchwood was Tom Seaver; her father's favorite, Nancy Seaver), Randye worked for the Mets for many years, including the 1986 World Championship team of Gooden, Strawberry, Hernandez, et al.

"Say," said Willie, enviously eyeing Randye's ring, "I'll teach you how to make an over-the-shoulder basket catch in exchange for that thing." But Randye was firm. No dice.

Actually, that's not true, although Randye *did* show the baseball legend her ring.

Randye travels to Arizona every spring for spring training. "It's baseball nirvana," she says. "You've got weather in the seventies and low eighties, it's dry, and I was able to see four games in two days, because all the teams that train in Arizona are centralized around the Phoenix area." From there it was off to Colorado to visit her mother and older sister, **Meredith Ringler** ('70).

In the summer 2007 newsletter (no. 17), we told you about Randye's involvement as a board member of First Pitch: The US-Manipur Baseball Project, which partners with Major League Baseball to help promote America's national pastime in the small Indian state of Manipur, by improving the caliber of play and coaching as well as the quality of equipment and playing fields.

Although India is best known for its love of cricket, baseball has been popular in this isolated state on the India-Myanmar border ever since World War II, when US Army troops stopped off there en route through Myanmar (then Burma) and China. "Our soldiers used to play ball for fun," says Randye, "and the game caught on." Manipur, forced into becoming part of India in 1949, is not only impoverished but strife



Photo by David Lutzker



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Catch Up With ... David Fiveson ('71)



“I was able to attend the University of Houston Law School as an in-state student, so my tuition was just \$200 a semester—including textbooks!”

Moving to Jericho in 1969 was the best thing that ever happened to me.

I grew up in Plainview, but then my parents divorced, and I wound up living in the Fairhaven Garden Apartments on Broadway. I was probably the poorest kid on the block. But in Jericho, in contrast to Plainview, I met more people who were self-motivated and geared to being professionals. Although I was at Jericho High School for only my junior and senior years, it put me in a better frame of mind, because at my old school, I was kind of mixing with the wrong crowd. Plus, at Jericho, I made best friends for life, with Fred Schlusssel and Moss Kaufman, and also Paul Rosen and Steven Penn.

It goes to show you that when things look terrible, change can be a blessing.

From Jericho, I went to SUNY Cortland for a year, then I spent my sophomore year in a student exchange program in Germany and then in London. When I came back, I transferred to SUNY Stony Brook, where Fred was.

Then in 1975 I went to law school at the University of Houston. I have to tell you, I moved out to Texas with some trepidation, but I really liked it there. And I

was able to go to law school as an in-state student, so my tuition was very cheap: \$200 a semester, including textbooks! I graduated in 1978 with zero debt, passed the Texas bar, and, to tell you the truth, intended to stay in Texas indefinitely.

Except that I met the gal I wound up marrying. She wanted to come to New York, so that's what we did, the very next year. I bought a home in Scarsdale, passed the New York bar, and went to work for a family law firm, doing trademark litigation. Shortly after that, I joined the firm that I'm still with to this day: Butler, Fitzgerald, Fiveson & McCarthy. As you can probably tell from the name, I'm one of the principals. We specialize in commercial litigation. I

don't need to work as hard as I do, but I've got to tell you, I happen to really enjoy what I do. My associates and I are in court almost every day.

Plenty of lawyers came out of Jericho. I cross paths with Richard Kaye ('71). And I see Ira Greene, who was a history teacher when I was there, all the time. Also from my class, David Pepper. He'll look at me, know he knows me but can't quite place the face, then figure it out.

Hey, Weren't You Voted the Class Flirt?

The class flirt! Oy, God! Yes, I was. Although, actually, I had a steady girlfriend much of the time that I was at Jericho: Joan Regan Wyatt, from the class below me.

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David (second from l.) with JHS pals Fred Schlusssel, Moss Kaufman, and Paul Rosen at Frank's Steaks last October.

David Fiveson

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David and son Eric, 25.

In 1998 my wife and I separated and eventually divorced. It's a funny thing: When you're single again, word somehow spreads. Joan found me on AOL—this is long before Facebook and the other social networking sites—and we got together in Florida, where she'd been living for a long time. She was divorced too.

We went out to dinner, and although we hadn't seen each other in twenty-five years, we had an unbelievable time. She's remarried now, but Joan was my first real heartthrob.

AOL is also where I met Susan, the woman I've been living with for thirteen years. We had a first date in a coffee shop, and that was it. She's a doctor, originally from Flushing, but was living in New City at the time. We live in the house in Scarsdale, which I renovated, and my son, Eric, lives nearby in White

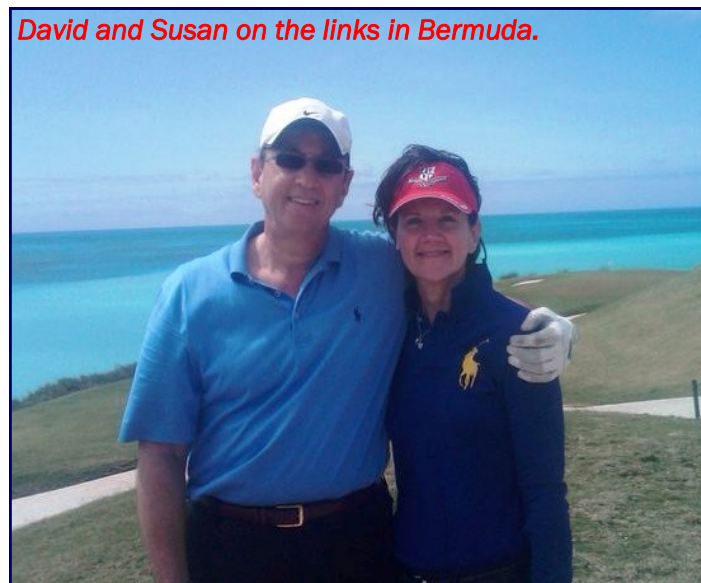
Plains. He's in information technology and is doing well—a good kid.

Stay Close to Your Friends

There's an old saying: Stay close to your friends, because as you get older, they don't make 'em anymore. There's a core group of guys from Jericho that I've always stayed in touch

with: Fred, Moss, Paul, and Steven. In fact, I play golf, and last year, Steven drove over from Connecticut for a day of golf at my golf club. We had a great time. He was one of the first friends I met after transferring to Jericho High School at the start of eleventh grade. And Paul and I once had summer jobs at the same pool club in Westbury. He and I reconnected after one of the reunions, and I'm close with him and his wife, Nancy.

At one reunion—I'm going to guess it was the twentieth, in 1991—I went back to the high school. It was homecoming weekend, and I remember telling the kids there how lucky they were to be in Jericho High School, although they probably wouldn't appreciate it until later, after they'd been out in the world. I certainly realize what a great life we had—even growing up in Fairhaven Garden Apartments. ■



David and Susan on the links in Bermuda.



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ridden, as Indian police are constantly battling insurgents. "The people," says Randye, "are caught in the middle, making daily life there very treacherous."

A documentary, *The Way Home*, about Manipur's passion for our American game, should be released later this year, but you can sneak a peek now by going to www.bbdman-ipur.com.

"The film did not start out to be so political," explains Randye, "but after coming face to face with what is happening there, the director [Mirra Bank] had to take that route, because that's what she saw." In fact, much of the time the small film crew had to work protected by armed security. ■



Play bawh!! "Lefty," Indian goddess of the diamond.

In Tribute

Mr. Emil Voigt

Mr. Emil Voigt, social studies teacher extraordinaire, passed away in November.

Mr. Voigt taught at Jericho until 2001 and was president of the Jericho Teachers Association from 1970 until his



retirement. Current district superintendent Mr. Henry Grishman wrote in an email, “He was a strong leader, a great teacher—a truly great man.” Not long after retiring and relocating from Jericho to Florida, Mr. Voigt suffered a major stroke, in 2002. He soon moved back to Long Island to be with his family.

On the following pages, a number of Jericho alumni share their memories, including Mark Russo ('72), Isabelle Flaherty ('69), Larry Levinson ('69), Michelle Martin Gonzales ('69), Ed Green ('69), and Philip Bashe ('72).



Mr. Voigt with Mrs. Karen Schwartz at the Maine Maid Inn in 2008 prior to that year's JHS Alumni Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Mark Russo ('72)

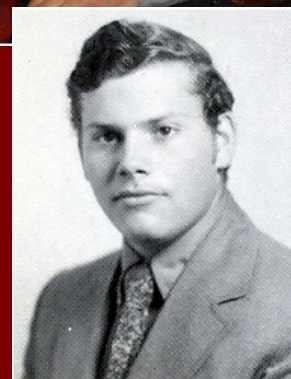
I actually never had Mr. Voigt as a teacher. But I knew to be scared of him at the time because of his reputation. One day in ninth grade, I was writing on a desk in a social studies classroom just down the hall from the House B office in the junior high school.

As fate would have it, Mr. Voigt just happened to be walking down the hall and caught me doing this very bad thing. He stopped, walked in, and addressed me in that stern, loud, potent voice. He kept me after school and strongly encouraged me to clean all the desks in that room with some Ajax and paper towels he had brought me.

While I scrubbed away, he worked on his paperwork at the teacher's desk. When I was about halfway done, Mr. Voigt looked up at me and said with a smile, “Go home now, and don't you ever let me catch you writing on a desk again.”

“Not me!” I promised. As I left the room I thought to myself, *Phew!*

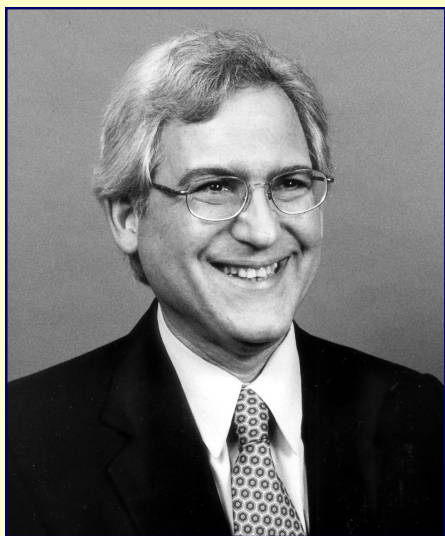
He truly was a great person!



Mr. Emil Voigt

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Ed Green ('69)



We were fortunate at Jericho to have many stand-out teachers. But Emil Voigt? A person no one can ever forget.

Like Larry, I remember many specific assignments. I'll mention just one: to research the country of "Nova Zemlya" and then report back on what we learned about it.

Easy! I thought.

But I searched one book after another and couldn't find it. I remember desperately going through every relevant book in the school library trying to figure out where on earth Nova Zemlya was—only to find out at our next class that Zemlya (notice the y) was simply the Russian word for "island."

"New Island": invented by Emil Voigt to perplex students and goad them on.

And that was his great quality: he knew student psychology better than any other teacher at Jericho. The whole purpose of that assignment was "bibliographical": to have us learn what resources a library

Larry Levinson ('69)

Emil Voigt was the greatest teacher I ever had. He taught me how to write reports—in Mr. Voigt's words, to "get rid of the great god Zulu encyclopedia," and do research and use the library. He made me love to write, which gave me the talents I use in my career as an attorney.

He demanded that we *think*. In ninth-grade social studies, he gave us an assignment: Every person in the class had to pick a developing country in Africa and become an expert on it and write a report. I chose Rhodesia (now known as Zimbabwe). This was *fun* education, something unheard of in the 1960s. I actually have eight-millimeter movies I took of Mr. Voigt in his classroom; I'll have to locate them.

Good life, Emil!



might have about geography. Imagine if (dull, dull, dull) he had simply said, "Get acquainted with what the library has on the subject." I, for one, would have spent five minutes and mainly looked at the book covers. I certainly would not have scoured the place and emerged with a pretty good sense of how to research such things in the future. I have a sneaking suspicion that he told the librarians ahead of time what his fiendish plan was. How they kept a straight face with all of us asking about Nova Zemlya, I don't know.

At the next class, Mr. Voigt explained that there was a big island in the Arctic called Novaya Zemlya, which in English and Dutch was spelled *Nova Zembla*. So part of the assignment was to have us pay

attention to the slight differences. That was how Emil prepared his students for the rigors of college. And adulthood. He knew what was ahead for us, and he wanted us to be ready for it. He was no pushover. He was tough. He wouldn't allow sloppy thinking. He would question every assumption you made. His classes were hard.

But that's only half the picture. Studying with Mr. Voigt was *fun*. He was an enthusiast of the first order: about education, about history, about life itself. He made you feel that hard thinking and hard research were exactly the same thing as having pleasure to the max.

With Emil, none of this was a speech, put on for our benefit. He *lived* that way—a man who loved

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Mr. Emil Voigt

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life and really cared for people. And because of those qualities, his energy seemed limitless.

One last memory, on how he went, again and again, way beyond the call of duty as a teacher. Certainly he was fantastic in the classroom, but Emil was also the most “extracurricular” faculty member at Jericho. If a student was excited about anything, Mr. Voigt’s ears would instantly prick up, and he’d do everything he could to deepen that enthusiasm, whether in or out of class. Right away, he’d engage you on the topic—whatever it was—and then come up with something really surprising to do.

For example, I once mentioned something about the Revolutionary Era in American History. Within seconds, he said—with that twinkle in his eye—“I’m going to a convention of coin collectors this Saturday. There’ll be coins from that period there. Do you want to come?” And he actually took me and two other students to it. On his dime, as they say. This was the real thing: the generosity of spirit that marks a great teacher.

And not a touch of professorial superiority. If the phrase wasn’t so hackneyed, I’d say he was a true “big brother.” Hey: Mr. Voigt was the only teacher in 1969 with whom I could have (and did have) lots of long conversations about Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock. And, for that matter, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. He was a lot more interested in it than the music faculty.

I join Larry in saying, Good life, Emil. And thank you for the big role you played in making mine good too.

Isabelle Flaherty ('69)

I liked Mr. Voigt a lot. Strangely, what stands out most in my limited memory bank isn’t that he taught Asian-African studies or that his class was different, it’s the time that he *arm wrestled* Drew Sicora!

To the amazement and surprise of the rest of us fellow students (was a teacher really having an arm wrestle with a student?!), Drew literally popped open the cloth of the shirt he was wearing at his bicep as their muscles bulged and strained. Honestly, I don’t remember who won the match. Could that have been when I first started noticing bulging biceps? Ninth grade? It certainly made a lasting impression, obviously.

If you look deeper than my youthful impressions, there was a method to Mr. Voigt’s “madness.” I’ll explain:

If I am not mistaken, Drew passed away some time a lot closer to our high school graduation (so we can now imagine him and Mr. Voigt in a rematch if we like and if our religious beliefs swing that way). With all due respect to Drew, I recall him as a kid who had other things on his mind besides schoolwork and studying. Teachers would often be chastising Drew. But then there was Mr. Voigt, who zeroed in on one of Drew’s strengths (literally!) and gave him a chance to display it in class in front of his fellow students and gain some respect.

As I said, I can’t remember who won. My guess is that Drew won, but not because Mr. Voigt *let* him win, although I don’t suppose we would ever know that. But the important thing was that Mr. Voigt was *willing* to lose to Drew. Unlike most teachers of that era, he was willing to be the loser in front of his class.

I don’t think I ever saw Drew smile before that day. My best recollection is that he was a pretty serious kid, though someone who knew him better than I did could speak to that. These are just my observations as seen through my own memory screen. I will say, though, that day in class, after the arm wrestling, he was grinning from ear to ear even as he blushed from all the attention.

I’m guessing here, but I would imagine that if Drew completed any of his assignments in school after that day, they probably would have been for Mr. Voigt’s class. Now, to me, *that* is a great person *and* a great teacher.



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Mr. Emil Voigt

Continued from page 7

Philip Bashe ('72)

I always tended to like the teachers who made lots of kids quake in their Earth Shoes; the ones who were often thought of as “tough,” like Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Tobin—and Mr. Voigt. They forced us to think critically and not merely parrot back what we’d just read.

Mr. Voigt did this brilliantly one day in his ninth-grade Asian-African Studies class. He began by taking us to task for our allegedly lousy note taking.

Certainly he was talking about me. To this day, if I’m at a meeting of some kind, I’ll jot down what I think are the pertinent details, only to find the next day that I can’t decipher any of it.

By ninth grade, I might have appeared to be taking notes, but more likely I was drawing cartoons, designing new bass-drum logos and mock album covers for my rock band with Andy Romanoff, George Ploska, and, later Mitchel Forman—the Doom; changed upon Mitchel’s arrival to Tubas in the Moonlight (a vast improvement). And if I wasn’t doing that, I was painstakingly plotting out the New York Yankees roster for the coming 1969 baseball season. The previous year, Ralph Houk’s team had finished above .500 for the first time since 1964, so I had high hopes for the coming campaign. Even if the Bombers struggled, at least a Yankees fan could take heart that they’d fare better than the lowly, laughable New York Mets. Why, for them to even escape the cellar in ‘69 would take a ... a ... *miracle!*

Anyway, Mr. Voigt ordered us to whip out our loose-



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To read a 1968 *Newsday* article about Mr. Voigt’s snake-filled classroom, go to the “Arty-Facts” wing of our website, and click on “The Janet Rhoads Collection,” page 6.

Michele Martin Gonzalez ('69)

I had the great pleasure of running into Emil at a function in Queens in 1993 or 1994. I was at a dinner given for the principal of my school, who was receiving an award that night. In the midst of the party, a booming voice and this big laugh behind me yelled, “I’d know that face anywhere!” and, as I turned around,

“Didn’t you graduate from Jericho High School?”

There was Emil Voigt standing behind me with his arms outstretched. We were very happy to see each other, laughed a lot, and he thought it was very funny that I wound up being a teacher-administrator! (So do I, even twenty-seven years later!) He was dating a beautiful young teacher who was new to our school that year! I was always so impressed by his brilliance and his presence.

I have one very funny memory of Emil in the classroom. I know it was Junior High School and I think I had him last period. The class was particularly loud and unruly that day. All of a sudden, Mr. Voigt was standing on his desk, bouncing a basketball and warning us at the top of his lungs that the next person to talk would get a basketball upside their head. I forget who it was, but someone sitting behind me got it right in the noggin! Whew! I was glad it wasn’t me. Then there was Emil going on and on about how the Voit basketball company might be a distant relative of his or not. It’s funny, the things we remember so many years later!

And *that* is what is so striking to me about all these memories about Emil Voigt: How many people have a job where people even remember them forty-five-plus years later? It brought it home to me that even though teaching is not very profitable and is a really difficult and hard job—particularly in the urban ghetto, where I teach—I get to have the opportunity at any moment to make a huge difference in a child’s life!



Mr. Emil Voigt

Continued from page 9

leaf notebooks as he launched into the history of some ancient conflict known as the “Funk & Wagnalls War.”

Funk & Wagnalls War? I thought, then shrugged and starting writing. Being a history buff, it sounded vaguely familiar to me. The reason why, I’d realize later, is that the TV show *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In*, then in its first full season, had a popular catchphrase: “Look *that* up in your Funk & Wagnalls!”

Mr. Voigt circled the room as usual, causing the more nervous students to shudder whenever he passed behind their desks, reading aloud in his booming voice. Kids are writing furiously, trying to keep up with him; they’re wincing in pain, developing carpal tunnel syndrome in record time.

Me? After my usual half-hearted attempt at diligence, I drifted back to designing the cover to our band’s twenty-fourth LP, *The Doom Live at the Great Wall of China or Best of The Doom*—hadn’t decided yet. Since we were *destined for eternal greatness!*, it seemed prudent to get a jump on the artwork to future releases. Or maybe I was figuring out the hierarchy in the Yankees bullpen, so that when a panicked Ralph Houk called me from the dugout sometime that ‘69 season and gasped, “Young Phil, Most Loyal of All Yankees Fans! Who should I bring in for the ninth? Lindy McDaniel or Steve Hamilton?” I could calmly instruct the Major on the appropriate strategy. *Hey, stop laughing! It could have happened!*

After about twenty minutes of holding forth about the Funk & Wagnalls War, Mr. Voigt stopped, closed the book he was pretending to read from, and asked us to show him our notes. Naturally, the usual ass-kissers (sorry, but there’s no polite way to say it) shot their still-throbbing hands into the air, waiting to proudly exhibit page after page of crucial details about this historically important conflict that, oddly, no one had ever heard of before.

That’s when Mr. Voigt snapped, “There *wasn’t* any Funk & Wagnalls War!,” and basically (and rightfully) called us a bunch of idiots—not in that language, of course, though it would have been fitting—for not having stopped him after a minute or so to question the veracity of that day’s lecture.

What began ostensibly as an exercise in note taking turned out to be about something far more significant, of course: the importance of thinking critically. It remains one of the most ingenious examples of teaching I’ve ever experienced. I saw Mr. Voigt several times in recent years and always reminded him of the day he scammed us in order to make a bigger point. He’d never say anything—just smile. ■

In Tribute

Mrs. Florence Boroson



We’re deeply saddened to report the recent passing of Mrs. Florence Boroson, the wife of everyone’s favorite math teacher, Mr. Louis Boroson. Mrs. Boroson was an administrator at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Although she

never taught at Jericho High School, she and her husband did colead what had to have been one of the first women’s consciousness-raising groups. Wendy Foxmyn (’72), who attended the after-school discussions, remembers her as “a wonderful woman. This exposure to feminism had a profound influence on my life and the direction it has taken.”

We extend our sincerest condolences to Mr. Boroson, the couple’s two children, and their grandchildren.



Q&A



Ellen Meister ('75)

The Author of "Secret Confessions of the Applewood PTA" and "The Smart One" Publishes Her Third Novel, With Yet Another on the Way

Is it fair to say that this is the most fun you've had so far in your career as a novelist? It seems like the general response to *The Other Life* is even bigger than to your first two books.

This book has definitely gotten the biggest response, both in terms of reader feedback and media attention. Most exciting of all, HBO optioned it for a TV series! That's the most exciting career news that I've had since learning that my first book, *Secret Confessions of the Applewood PTA* (2006) got bought by a major book publisher.

Applewood PTA and *The Smart One* (2008) took place in dear old Jericho. What about for *The Other Life*?

The setting is sort of generic Long Island. I didn't specify which town it was, though it was sort of vaguely North Shore. But in my next book, *Farewell, Dorothy Parker*, which I've already finished, I did put in a specific town. My brother, Stephen ('72), and his wife, Melissa, live in Mill Neck, and I was inspired by their house. So Mill Neck is mentioned; Smithtown, too.

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Monica Medina ('73)

DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND GRANTS
 KPBS—PUBLIC RADIO, TELEVISION, WEB
 SAN DIEGO, CA
WWW.KPBS.ORG

I WAS ELEVEN WHEN MY family moved from Queens to Jericho, just in time for me to start sixth grade at Cantiague Elementary School. I remember my homeroom teacher, Mrs. Fitch, who always wore a lab coat in class. Our house in Jericho was the very first one you saw when you drove in the entrance of West Birchwood and made the left on Rockland

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Ellen Meister

Continued from page 11

There is something a lot of fun about choosing a specific town, because you can envision the details, and the place has real dimensions. However, it also ties you to reality. If you create a fictional town, you can play fast and loose with the geography, and have it take fifteen minutes to drive into Manhattan, if you want. Fictionalizing the towns gives you a little bit more creative license.

How long ago did the concept for The Other Life and the characters come to you? Did it strike you like a bolt of lightning, or did the details emerge gradually over time?

I thought about it for about a year before I actually started writing it. The first spark for the idea of a portal came when I was sitting at home working on my second book, thinking about how I escaped into my fiction. I thought, What if a woman had an alternate-reality portal? Somebody

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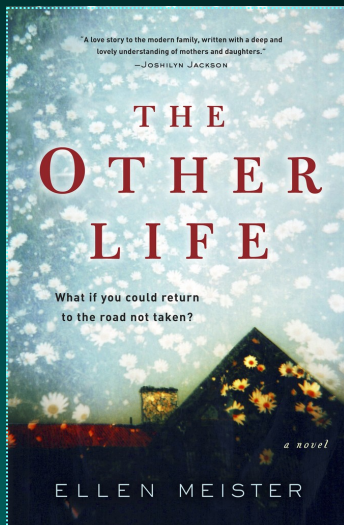
Monica Medina

Continued from page 11

“It’s hard enough to be a newcomer, but even harder when a kid at your new school looks at you and asks, ‘Are you colored?’”

Praise for The Other Life

- "I was so drawn into the story and the characters that I devoured the book in two days ... an engaging read, one that strikes deep in the heart." — *Rated Reads*
- "Absolutely riveting. I picked it up ... and did not put it down until I turned he last page. Rating: A." — *Lonely Friday*
- "A resonant story about the importance of mothers, both having one and being one ... making for a riveting tale of love and choices." — *BookPage*
- "Meister magically makes the impossible believable and keeps the reader guessing right to the end ... a stunning love story." — *Southern Pines Pilot*
- "An exciting and suspenseful novel of choosing one's path in life, highly recommended." — *Midwest Book Review*
- "This is a powerful, moving, and emotional story. Five stars." — *Book-Finds*



Drive: 1 Rockland. It had been one of the original model homes, and it had a big, open backyard, with an empty lot behind it.

Growing up in Queens, I never had a bicycle because everything was within walking distance or accessible via public transportation. So it was in Jericho that I learned how to ride a bike, and once I did, I spent most of my years there riding all over the island: Eisenhower Park, Roosevelt Field, and, of course, to school. I remember that one time Jeff Rathaus, David Lutzker, and I rode our bikes through Old Westbury, where we explored old, abandoned homes. It was great fun, and afterward we stopped at the Friendly's on Jericho Turnpike for chocolate Fribbles.

It was also in Jericho that for the first time I encountered not so much racism but a naiveté about race. *Diversity* was not a word we used back then. My parents were from Venezuela, a country most folks in Jericho had never heard of. It's hard enough to be a newcomer, but even harder when a kid at your new school looks at you and asks, "Are you colored?" I was mortified by the question, but over the years, I came to understand

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Everybody's Got a Story to Tell — Even You!

How about sharing it in the pages of your JHS Classes and 1969-1970-1971-1972-1973 Online Newsletter? Feel free to write it yourself or, as is usually the case, feel like a real big-shot and be interviewed over the telephone. Interested? Get in touch with Phil (philipbashe@optimum.net).

Monica Medina

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what a different time it was then and how uncommon it was in Jericho to see olive-skinned people of Hispanic origin. I never forgot that encounter, and all I can say is, thank goodness we have become a more diverse and tolerant society.

In junior high, I met Lynn Goldman (now Lynn Mathias). Lynn was a good influence on me, inspiring me to read more, study harder, and aim higher. I'll never forget that. Without knowing, she helped me improve my GPA. When we were just thirteen, the two of us used to go into the city together. We'd take the LIRR to Manhattan, spending the entire day there, riding subways, buses, and walking. Both of us wore glasses, but we'd leave them behind, tormented by the idea that people would see us wearing them. So we'd end up squinting a lot, trying to read the street signs.

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Monica in 1970, the year that her family moved to Caracas, Venezuela. "But I missed home [meaning Jericho] so much that my parents let me come back—on my own."



Ellen Meister

Continued from page 12

like me: a suburban wife and mother. What if she could slip through a portal to the life she would have had if she'd never gotten married?

It was almost a silly concept, and I had no idea whether I could actually work that into a book, because it's very tricky. I didn't want it to be science fiction; I didn't even really want it to be paranormal. So I thought about it for a long time: the story elements, the main character, and what could happen in her life that would be emotionally dramatic enough for my protagonist to be willing to consider crossing over to another life. There had to be something on the other side that had such an emotional pull that she could actually feel conflicted. One day it occurred to me that in this life her mother had committed suicide, but in the other life, her mother was alive. I got the chills when that idea came to me. "Okay!" I said. "I now have a book!"

But then I had to sit down and write chapter one. I still didn't know if I could really make the idea work with the tone that I wanted. But once I finished the first chapter, I was confident that I could do it. That was a pretty heady feeling.

So from that point, with all systems go, how long did it take you to write The Other Life?

Well, next I wrote a book proposal for my literary agent to sell. (That's how it's done in the publishing world, folks.) Generally, in a proposal for a book of fiction, you need to write only three chapters, but because I wanted to get to a certain point in the action, I wrote seven chapters, plus an outline about what happens in the rest of the story. I sent it to my agent, and then I waited nervously, because it was so different from my first two books. I knew that I loved it, but I didn't know what she would say about being able to pitch it to editors at the major publishing houses. She might say, "Gee, this isn't as much light fun as your other books; this is higher concept, it's darker. This isn't the kind of author you are."

Two weeks later, she called. Not only was she doing backflips over my proposal, but all the other agents at the agency read it and felt the same way. From there, things moved pretty quickly. She showed it to my editor at Morrow/Avon, which had published my first two books, and they were definitely interested in buying it, but so were some editors at other companies. The book

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Monica Medina

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Other friends of mine included Leslea Newman, Mitchell Sugarman, Robin Bergman, Carol Sloane, Vicki Monaco, Jon Hirsch, and Laurie Hulzman. Carol had an informal babysitting service and got me some very lucrative gigs. Laurie gave me a copy of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell-Jar*, which I read over and over. The book inspired me to write. All my friends made me laugh. Good times.

Last fall, for the first time since high school, I saw Jeff, who lives not too far from me, in Los Angeles. It was great seeing him. In seventh grade, Jeff invited me to his Bar Mitzvah, the first one I'd ever attended. After going to the "Intergalactic Space Party" reunion at Milleridge Cottage last October, I discovered that a couple of other classmates from '73 live in my area, like Andy Wilensky and

Vicki Monaco. I've been able to meet up with Vicki a couple of times.

When I was fifteen, I left Jericho and moved to Caracas, Venezuela. My parents had always hoped one day to return and live near family again. But I had a hard time there and missed home so much. I was allowed to return to Jericho—on my own. My mother and sister, Regina, stayed in Venezuela. My brother Rafael (JHS '70) was attending school in Boston, and my father was working and living in the city with my oldest brother, Cesar ('68). So, with our house having been sold, I needed a place to stay in the school district. Which is how I met Mrs. Levine.

Me and Mrs. Levine

Mrs. Levine was the mother of Richard (Richie) Levine (JHS '70), a friend of Rafael's. Now that both her kids had moved out, she was planning to rent a room in her home. (Richie,

incidentally, was one of the first guys to attend the formerly all-girls school Vassar; I had such a crush on him, but he didn't know, so please don't say a word!) The Levines lived in Westbury, near the Howard Johnson's restaurant and lodge. So that's where I spent most of my sophomore year.

At first it was like living alone, because I never really saw Mrs. Levine. Soon, though, she and I gradually started doing things together, and I grew very fond of her. In the fall, my mother and sister returned from Venezuela, and, along with my father, we moved into a new house: still on Rockland Drive, about a block away from the first house. My parents remained in Jericho until 1992, when they retired to Boca Raton, Florida, where Cesar still lives.

In high school, I tended to hang out a lot with the theater kids. I loved singing and drama, and once tried out for a play—*How to*

Succeed in Business without Really Trying—but, alas, it wasn't meant to be. I was in the chorus for several years and loved singing my heart out, once even getting a solo!

Creative writing was my favorite class. I loved to write (I now write my own blog—more about that later), and I found a lot of opportunities there for expressing myself, with Ms. Estelle Stern (now Estelle Stern Rankin) and Ms. Barbara Murphy. I was also involved with the Free School; anyone remember that? I wrote a play while in the Free School. I feel very fortunate to have gone to Jericho High School. It was ahead of its time and helped to make me the independent person I am today. The administration gave us a lot of leeway, and, all in all, the teachers were pretty cool.

After living in Jericho, where practically everyone was either Jewish or Ital-

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Monica with Jeff Rathaus ...



... and with Anne Havrilla and Lynn Goldman Mathias.

Monica Medina

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ian—and Caucasian—I encountered culture shock at Brandeis University, which is ironic, since it was founded as a Jewish university. I was assigned to live in a house on the edge of campus comprised of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans. It was the first time I ever got into a fist-fight. It was a real wake-up call for me, but as a result of my experiences, today I feel comfortable traveling in two worlds.

At Brandeis I met Gary, the man I would later marry. I graduated with a degree in American Studies, but—realizing that I had no idea what to do with such a degree—I decided to go for my master's. Since I enjoyed writing so much, going to journalism school seemed an obvious choice. I was accepted to a two-year master's-degree journalism program at the University of Maryland.

After graduation, in 1979, I moved to Seattle to join Gary, who was working in a genetics lab and preparing to enter a graduate-degree program at the University of Washington. We were married in 1981, and, in anticipation, I converted to Judaism.

I loved Seattle—the rain, the mountains, and the relaxing atmosphere—a world away from Long Island. I started looking for a job. Since we lived near the university, I walked to the employment office there to peruse the job listings, which is where I struck up a conversation with a woman who was also in search of a job. She asked me if I'd considered applying at Seattle's public television station, KCTS, which was located right on the university campus. She was gracious enough to walk me there, and I was lucky enough to get hired on the spot.

I started work the very next day as a part-time assistant in the station's communications department. It involved a lot of grunt work. This was way before computers, so I was typing everything, such as press releases and program listings that were sent out to the media. I was also interning in the public affairs department, right around election season. Very exciting times. Within six months, they offered me a full-time job with benefits! I stayed there for eight years, working until my oldest, Joshua, born in 1985, was two years old.

A Move Back to Maryland

In the summer of 1987, we moved to Columbia, Maryland. Gary had completed the graduate program in Seattle and had been accepted to a post-doc program in Baltimore. I was offered a position in station relations for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), in Washington, DC. That was interesting for me, because I got to see public broadcasting system from the national level. This experience helped me decide that I much prefer working at a station at the local level. Public TV and radio stations are independent. When you're working at a station, you're concerned primarily with what's in the best interest of your station and your community, whereas at CPB, I was looking at the big picture, dealing with government bureaucracy and getting a bit involved in the DC machinations and its influence on public broadcasting. This was during the Reagan-Bush years. It was a very political, stressful environment. But there were some plusses. Our offices were right next to the Soviet embassy and down the block from the White House. One time Mikhail Gorbachev spent a week in Washington, staying at the embassy next door. The Secret Service blocked off the entire block, except to those of us who worked there. They also took over the roof of our building. We could get in and out, but security was tight. Another time, a reception for Fred Rogers (of Mister Rogers fame) was held inside the Soviet embassy. It was the first and only time I got to go in, which was pretty cool.

In 1991 the opportunity arose for us to relocate to San Diego. So, just

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Monica having lots of good fun that is funny with the Cat in the Hat at a KPBS event that she planned in partnership with the San Diego Old Globe Theater to launch a new PBS kids series, The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!

TOONS CARTOONS CARTO OTOONS SCARTOONS SCART



By Dan Clurman

About Dan:

"I have been a coach and educator for the last twenty-five years, delivering training and classes in nonprofits, universities, and corporations.



"I assist professionals, business people, couples, and students to more skillfully navigate life transitions, as well as improve their communication and presentations. I also have a small practice as a Feldenkrais® practitioner, a movement-based form of education.

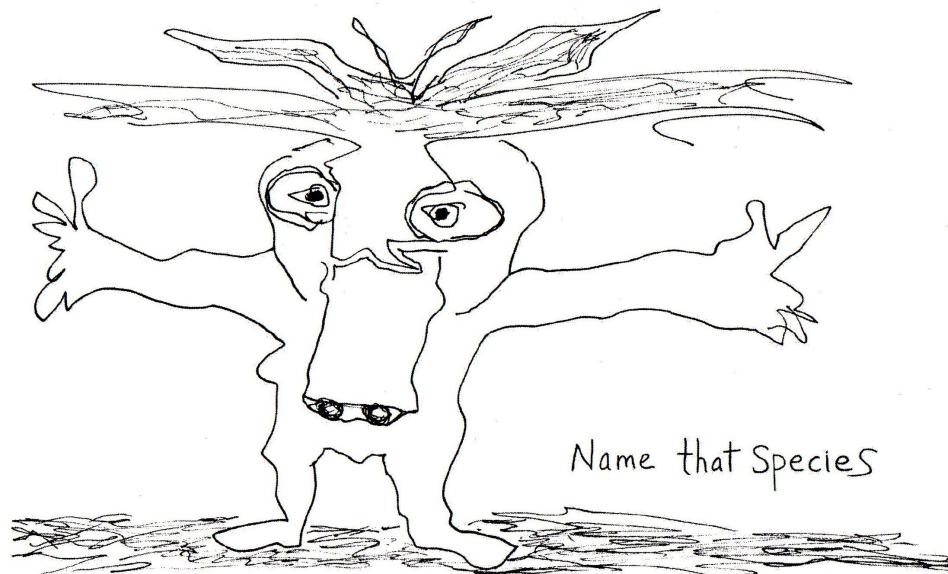
"I've cowritten a few books, *Money Disagreements: How to Talk About Them* and *Conversations With Critical Thinkers*, as well as a book of poems and drawings, *Floating Upstream*."

These toons are part of Dan's just-published book *You've Got to Draw the Line Somewhere*, available for \$15 at <http://www.dantoons.com>.

Daniel Goleman, best-selling author of *Emotional Intelligence*, has this to say about *You've Got to Draw the Line Somewhere*: "impish but pointed, edgy and astute, wise, and just plain funny."



Over time, it all evens out



*First Person Singular***Sharon Honig Citrin ('70)****A Life in Three Acts:
Art Instructor, Entrepreneur, Cantor**

My family moved to White Birch in 1956, when I was four years old and my brother, Les (JHS '73), was about a year old. We were just the fifth family to move into the neighborhood. It was so new that the Robert Williams School was still four years away from being built. They used to move us around to a different school every year. In kindergarten, we were at Cedar Swamp; our classroom later became the high school principal's office. For first grade, we went to the George A. Jackson Elementary School. In second grade, we were moved to the Robert Seaman Elementary School. Finally, in third grade we started at Robert Williams.

One month before my Bat Mitzvah, we moved all the way across the Northern State Parkway and the Long Expressway to East Birchwood. The reason why was that my parents had always wanted a ranch house, and one became available. I remember having the reception for my Bat Mitzvah at our brand-new home, even though we had no furniture yet. It certainly was spacious. Nevertheless, everything was perfect, with all the kids in the basement and the adults upstairs. I don't know how my parents made it work, but they did.

I'm not sure if people know this about me, but I was a serious piano player, growing up. I played classical music; mainly Chopin, who was my favorite. I was very shy, though, and didn't really like to perform in public. However, I was part of a folk-rock group at our synagogue, the Jericho Jewish Center. The cantor at JJC, Israel Goldstein, started it around 1968, which was pretty revolutionary, when you think about it—especially in a conservative temple. I played electric piano, we had a couple of guitars, maybe

a bass guitar, brass, woodwinds, and singers—more than two dozen of us in all. It was so much fun. We actually went on tour, playing in different synagogues in the area.

My other main interest was art, with the goal of becoming an art educator. I was a very, very motivated kid. I knew exactly what I wanted, and I believed that if I wanted something badly enough and worked hard enough, it would happen. For a good part of my life, things actually worked that way. But as life has gotten so much more complicated, it doesn't seem to work that way anymore. I don't know what happened!

I wanted to go to one college and one college only: Kirkland College. It was a small liberal-arts all-women's college, and the sister school of Hamilton College, in upstate New York, near Utica. It was getting close to April 15 of our senior year, and I hadn't heard anything yet, and I was practically pulling my hair out in frustration.

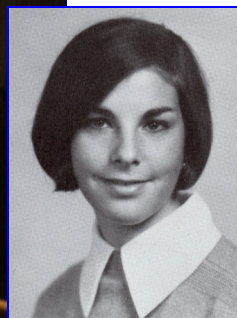
One morning, just before spring vacation, I went to my guidance counselor—I'm pretty sure it was Mr. Andrew Chagalasian—and begged him to call Kirkland College, just to find out what the story was, good or bad. I remember sitting in Mr. Bob Hoffman's economics class when my guidance counselor knocked on the door and asked to see me out in the hallway.

"You're in," he told me with a grin. I was so excited, I couldn't control myself. The school turned out to be everything I'd hoped it would be. I loved my four years there. As a bonus, Kirkland was only about two hours away from Cornell University, which my boyfriend from Jericho, Jon Harmon ('70), was attending. Jon and I dated for more than four years, breaking up just before our senior year of college.

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**Sharon (l.)
with longtime
pal Meredith
Ringler ('70)
at the Inter-
galactic
Space Party.**



Sharon Honig

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Prep School? What's a Prep School?

To be honest, I'd figured all along that my post-college plans would depend on where Jon would be. Now my life was totally open ended, and I didn't know what the heck I was going to do after college or where I was going to be. With graduation less than two months away, I walked into the school's career office one day and asked if they had any career ideas for me. They pointed me to a book of teaching positions.

I came across an opening at something called the Taft School, in Watertown, Connecticut. My first thought was, *This looks interesting. And it's not too far from Long Island.* When I asked a career counselor about it, she looked at me and said, very seriously, "Oh ... this is very prestigious position."

"Really? Tell me about it."

It turned out to be a boarding school. Now, coming from Jericho High School, what did I know about prep schools? Nothing. According to the career counselor, something like 250 students had applied for the position, including Hamilton College's valedictorian, and it was still available. Now I was *really* interested, just for the challenge of it, you know? I applied and got a call back asking me to come in for an interview with the headmaster—the very next day. I didn't have a car, so how would I get from Clinton, New York, to Watertown, Connecticut? More importantly, where was Watertown?

Luckily, a friend of mine was able to drive me to the Syracuse airport for a short flight to Albany. From there I took an even smaller plane—it might have sat five, including the pilot—to Hartford. Someone from Taft then

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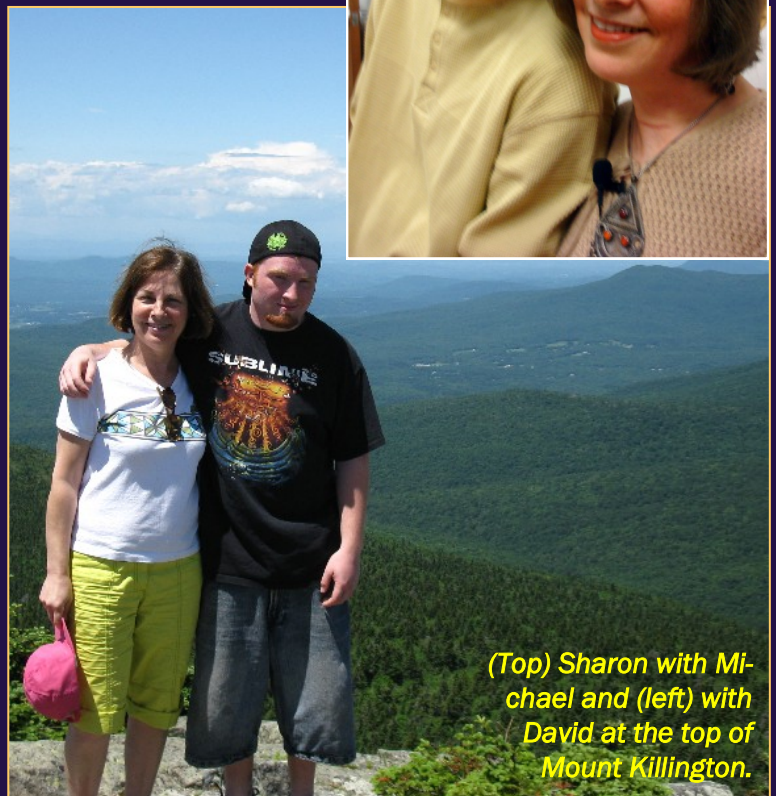
Different Destinations Call for Different Paths

I've learned a lot about the world from my sons Michael, twenty-one, and David, who just turned eighteen. Like most kids in Jericho, I went from high school, to college, to career, and to marriage. Right? That's just what you did. There was an order to things.

Both of my sons have chosen different paths in life. Michael tried college and found that it was not the thing for him at that time. But I am very proud of him, because he is living on his own. He shares an apartment in Waterbury with three other young people, and he is understanding about responsibility and having to pay the rent and utilities, and this has been life changing for him. He's also finding out how difficult it is to get a good job without a college education. It's tough. This is a kid that I didn't believe could be independent, but he's doing it, and, you know, I feel like he's going to be okay.

As for David, he did go to college, but not in the way that I would have expected. He was a challenging kid, and he went to a boarding school for high school because he was not a kid who followed rules. David should have grown up in the sixties; he is totally *there*. To his credit, he graduated early and started college in January at New England College in New Hampshire. He, too, is doing okay and making me proud.

What I've learned over the years—often through making mistakes—is that, as parents, our kids do not live *our* dreams. And what worked for us might not work for them.



(Top) Sharon with Michael and (left) with David at the top of Mount Killington.

Sharon Honig

Continued from page 18

picked me up and drove me down to the school. I got the position, which, considering all the applicants, was one of the proudest moments of my life.

I would have made a career out of it, but over the Christmas break, I met my future husband on the ice skating rink at the Concord Hotel. He was Israeli and from Forest Hills, Queens. Just three weeks later, he proposed. I hesitated at first, but he presented me with an engagement ring on Valentine's Day (he was a master jeweler), and we were married in June 1975.

I got a job as an art teacher at the Hebrew Academy of Nassau County in Hempstead, while living in Queens. After a few years, we moved into Manhattan, and, you know, when you live in the city, you want to stay in the city, not reverse commute to Long Island. I then got my dream job, as curator of the Gallery of Prehistoric Paintings, which at the time was located right around the corner from our apartment on East Eleventh Street. I had studied prehistoric art in college—went to France and visited the prehistoric caves—so this was perfect.

In 1979 I fell into my next career by unknowingly starting the first natural

pet snack company in the world. By the late seventies, I was following a macrobiotic diet, and, given my mind-set about food, no way was I going to feed our dog and cat commercial canned foods. So I did a lot of research about pets' nutritional requirements and started cooking and baking food for them from scratch. One day, I got the crazy idea in my head to make a business out of it.

Actually, I first came up with a name for these dog biscuits I was making: Sweet Treat Doggie Biscuits. Once you give some

thing a name, it exists, you know? So once I had the name, I became very excited about starting a company, which I called Cher Ami Natural Pet Foods Inc. One of the first things I discovered was that FDA regulations prohibit you from cooking out of your own kitchen and selling it. My first step, therefore, was to rent space in Long Island City. My next step was to fly down to Washington, DC, for a meeting with the Pet Food Institute, because there was some question about whether or not I could include the word

sweet in the product name. They were sweetened not with sugar (God forbid!) but with dehydrated carrots.

Now, I'm not a microbiologist. I have no degree in nutrition. And I had to sit around a table with these people and convince them that the product was sweet despite containing zero sugar. I'd had the biscuits tested and analyzed nutritionally and everything, but the PFI wasn't convinced. So what did I do? I simply passed around samples of dehydrated carrots and asked them to taste them

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The folk-rock service for the Jericho Jewish Center, November 1968: Sharon stands in the top row, second from right. Also in the top row (l.-r.): Eric Hendelson, Michael Lichter, Larry Levinson, Jordan Lampert, Kenny Kopelman, Jayne Roberman, Neil Hinikes. Second row from top: Cynthia Slovis, Debbie Kornblum, Carol Etkin, Iris Wernikoff, Faith Forman, Rita Corwin, Bonnie Siber. Second row from bottom: Helene Milman, Ann Schwartz, Lynn Silber, Jan Millner, Claire Sauerhoff, Ellen Lewis, Sharon Lerner. Bottom row: Ned Roberman, Todd Weisman.

Sharon Honig

Continued from page 19

and describe the flavor. Well, you eat dehydrated carrots, and they taste practically like candy. The members munched on a few and conceded, "They're sweet. Okay, you can go home."

I had no business experience, either, but I just took everything as it came, and within a year, the product was on pet food store shelves. One of my most exciting moments was the day that I called my mother in East Birchwood and said, "Mom, I want you to go to Waldbaum's this afternoon and walk down the pet food aisle, and call me back." She found Sweet Treat Doggie Biscuits right next to Milk Bones. That was absolutely incredible.

At our peak, when I operated a small manufacturing facility, I had fourteen Russian and Polish women packing up my biscuits. My mother-in-law was the supervisor, believe it or not. No one spoke the same language! My mother-in-law was from Israel, so she spoke Hebrew. Then you had Russian and Polish.

Everyone more or less settled on some combination of Yiddish with a little bit of extremely broken English. It was really funny. I

owned a pit bull terrier at the time, and he'd sit under the table and happily catch all the crumbs from broken biscuits.

We soon outgrew that facility and moved to a contract manufacturer, and this I can say now, thirty-plus years later: It was an Italian bakery. They would do it, because all the ingredients in our biscuits were natural: corn flour, wheat flour, corn oil, and the dehydrated carrots. But the bakery didn't want it known that it was making dog biscuits in the same place where it was making canolies.

The company went public in 1985, and about a year after that, I sold my shares and moved on. By then, there were other companies making similar natural products for pets. It just seemed like it was time for something else. My next company, SGC (my initials) Executive Services Inc., began even more accidentally than Cher Ami.

A colleague from the pet food business had recently retired at age fifty-five, and he was telling me how he and his wife were going to spend a good part of the next year sailing the Caribbean. "Wow, that's really exciting," I said. But then I wondered aloud, "How do you do that? How do you just leave? I mean, what do you do about your mail? How do you pay your bills when you're on a boat?" This was before the internet made it possible to conduct business from all over the world.

"Good point," he replied, frowning. "I really have to think that through."

The next day, he called me. "I gave a lot of thought to your questions, and I have the answer."

"Great. What are you gonna do?"

"Well," he said, "you're going to do it."

"Sure, I'd be happy to."

After all, he was a friend.

"No, no, no," he interrupted. "You don't understand. This is a *job*."

"O-kay ..." That's how I started, initially, as a kind of bookkeeper-accountant. (I wasn't trained to do that, either!) We were living in Pound Ridge, New York, and it occurred to me that there might be a lot of people there who could use this service. It's a very well-to-do community, where famous people go to hide. I placed an ad in the local paper, and somebody called me right away. She did not give

me her name and insisted that we meet at a coffee shop. She wanted to know everything about me, including who were my clients. Of course, I only had one client. I mentioned my friend's name, and it turned out that the woman's husband had gone to prep school with him.

For the next eighteen years, while I was raising my two sons, this was my business. It was really very interesting work, because these people trusted me enough to let me into their world, which certainly wasn't my world. I had to be very discrete. I would take care of bills for husbands who didn't want their wives to know what they were doing, and vice versa.

From Businesswoman to ... Cantor?

While growing up, my family was observant, but not

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At age fifty-six, Sharon was ordained a cantor. Here she is at her graduation and ordination at Hebrew College, in Boston.

Sharon Honig

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orthodox or anything. I mean, I went to Hebrew school, we kept kosher, and when my grandmother was with us, we observed the Sabbath. My decision to become a cantor took root when we moved to Woodbury, Connecticut, and my sons were attending Hebrew school at the local synagogue. I basically volunteered to develop a new, improved curriculum for the school, and it became my life. At the same time, I started working for the Anti-Defamation League, directing its Confronting Anti-Semitism Program for the state of Connecticut. We helped Jewish kids feel proud about their Jewish identity and empowered to stand up to anti-Jewish stereotypes.

Our congregation had a student cantor—a woman! That was a revelation to me, because when I was a kid, you didn't see female cantors anywhere. After listening to her sing, I was smitten. I'd always sung, in elementary school glee club, and in choral groups during the summer. Does anyone remember the Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, in Amityville? I was a camper there the very first year it opened. It was an amazing place. One time Leonard Bernstein conducted there. The Joffrey Ballet and the Juilliard String Quarter both performed. These were the kinds of daily assemblies that they had. In addition to painting, I joined the camp choir and learned a lot about singing. Later, I was in the Hamilton-Kirkland College Choir.

The student cantor became a mentor of sorts to me. She would give me music to learn and teach me how to chant Torah. One day, she was supposed to officiate at a Bat Mitzvah but had to cancel due to personal reasons. So I filled in for her.

It's a Small World, Part 1

I loved Cantor Israel Goldstein of the Jericho Jewish Center. I understand that both he and Rabbi Stanley Steinhart were there for something like forty years, until they were well into their seventies.

Just a few years ago, I attended a recital at Hebrew Union College, in Manhattan, by a student cantor colleague. At the reception afterward, I was sitting with someone from my temple, when he said excitedly, "Look! There's Cantor Goldstein!"

I said, "That wouldn't be Israel Goldstein, would it?"

"Yeah. He was my cantor when I was a kid."

"How could he have been *your* cantor? He was *my* cantor!" It turned out that before Cantor Goldstein came to JJC, he spent a few years at another synagogue, in New Jersey.

Although he was now in his seventies, I recognized him right away. I hadn't seen him in thirty-one years, since my wedding in 1975.

I went up to him and said, "I can't imagine that you'd remember me, but I'm Sharon Honig." And he said, "Ohmigod!" and gave me this big bear hug. He totally remembered me. He was just so warm and wonderful. But when I told him that I was studying to be a cantor, he looked at me quizzically and said, "I didn't know you could sing!" I guess he remembered me more as the pianist in the folk-rock group. It was very gratifying for me to be able to let Cantor Goldstein know that I was now following in his footsteps.

The more I learned, the more I loved it, and I started thinking about possibly studying to become a cantor.

I struggled with that decision for quite some time. Part of me felt *completely* unqualified to pursue this. I mean, how could I presume to be in that role of clergywoman, leading the congregation in prayer? That just seemed so presumptuous. However, my father's uncle had become a cantor at the age of seventy-five, believe it or not. So I had that as a kind of model, that it could be done against the odds. Still, I harbored all these doubts.

Here's what convinced me to go after my dream: At the same time, a very, very close friend of mine was wrestling with the same kind of conflict, but over whether or not to become a rabbi. When she applied to rabbinical school, it gave me the courage to become a cantor. Unlike her, however, I took baby steps, first

earning certification in Jewish music and then in the cantorial arts.

One day I was talking to another student cantor. I explained to her my reservations, but also my intense desire to take the next step. "Should I do this?" I asked her. She said wisely, "This is what you need to do: You need to imagine yourself being a cantor for thirty days. And then *not* being a cantor for thirty days. Then you'll know what to do."

You want to know my first thought? *What is she talking about?!* But she was right. While sitting in a prayer service, this flash went through me, and I realized that I couldn't imagine myself not doing this. Within a week, I applied to enter the cantorial program. This was in 2006. There years later, I was ordained.

Cantorial singing is very different from the kind of singing we do in the

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National Bestseller

**Everything you
always wanted to
know about
Kathi Blatt
Thonet ('69)***

*** But Were Too Self-Absorbed to Ask!**



I have two daughters: Hannah, who just turned thirty, and Rebecca, who will soon be twenty-eight. The advice that I gave to them was, "There are so many doors open to you, but it's up to you to walk through them." Because I didn't. I was painfully shy and insecure while growing up in Jericho. I never made overtures to other people, and if they made overtures to me, I thought to myself, *Why are you doing that?* It's too bad, because I really dug myself into a hole.

I think I was just a nice person. When I look at my yearbook and everyone's signings, they all say, "To the nicest girl ..." Maybe that's why I majored in social work, because I'm a very empathetic person, and I guess that's how people perceived me.

I grew up on Mellow Lane in East Birchwood. I remember standing at the bus stop with Celeste Reif, Joel Breslauf, and Leslie Edelman, and Mitchell Klein, Steven Hahn, and Larry Levinson lived around the corner. It's funny: I attended the "Intergalactic Space Party" reunion last October at the Milleridge Inn, and when I went to drive by our old house, it took me awhile to find it! My parents sold the house and moved to Muttontown on graduation weekend in 1969—they wanted to remain in the Jericho School District with my sisters Randi ('72) and Allyson ('76)—while I went off to Syracuse University to study social work. So it had been forty-one years since I'd last been by the house.

Syracuse is where I met my husband, John Thonet, who's originally from Baldwin, Long Island. He was a sophomore, and I was a freshman. We started hanging out around the time of the Kent State shootings, in May 1970, which turned our worlds upside down. Most, if not all, college campuses, shut down for the rest of the year, including Syracuse. It was the first year of pass-fail grades, and

due to the unrest, the administration canceled finals and told everyone to go home; see you in September. John and I started dating during that three- or four-week period where everyone was on strike and there were no classes. We got married two weeks after I graduated, on May 14, 1973, on the lawn at the house in Muttontown.

Our family has something of a history at Syracuse: My mother and father are both from the class of 1951; they wed before they even graduated. Randi was a freshman in 1972, my senior year. (She'll deny this, but let me tell you who wrote all her English papers! The funny thing is, she's a top college science textbook editor now.) Both of my daughters graduated from SU as well, and we have a bunch of cousins in the family who also attended Syracuse.

No, you won't find a "Blatt Hall" there, but in 2000, for my parents' fiftieth anniversary, we decided to throw them a big party back at the place where it all began. My mother and father have always been big donors, and Dad is still on the board of trustees. The Department of Alumni Relations worked with us to put together this fabulous party, which included many of their friends from all fifty years of their marriage. We booked rooms at the Sheraton hotel right on campus, and the university actually allowed us to play on Coyne Field, where the football team practices. Then they helped us to design authentic football jerseys, all bearing the number 50 and the name Blatt on the back. It made for a hysterical photo: something like one hundred people all wearing the same jersey. It did make playing touch football a bit difficult, though: "Fifty! Go long! You, the other fifty! Go short!" We all had just a fabulous, fabulous, weekend.

John was finishing up his master's degree in forest engineering

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Kathi Blatt

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at Syracuse, so we stayed there for a few more months after my graduation. We moved to Bayside, Queens, briefly, and then lived on the West Side of Manhattan from 1975 until 1980, a few blocks away from the Dakota. Shortly after we moved to South Orange, New Jersey, because John and I were planning on starting a family, John Lennon was murdered in front of the building. I can remember watching it on the news from South Orange, which might as well have been a different planet.

Hannah was born in May 1981. We chose not to learn her sex beforehand, so we painted the baby's room nondenominational yellow and referred to him/her as "Buttercup." Same thing with Rebecca, who was born in September 1983.

We moved to a larger house in 1987, in the same town, and then, when Hannah graduated from college in 2001, we found this house that we absolutely adored way out in Pittstown, New Jersey. Or as Rebecca put it at the time: "OmiGod, they've moved to Pennsylvucky!" If you go west on Route 78 and just keep going and going until you're about fifteen miles from Pennsylvania, that's us. Exit 15. About an hour and a half from Jericho in the middle of the night, and if you go any other time of day, you're looking at a three-hour drive.

It's absolutely beautiful out here. We have seven acres. Right now, I'm watching twenty deer romp across the lawn in front of me. And no traffic lights! So when I drive for fifteen minutes, I've traveled fifteen miles.

We kind of did things backward, in that our kids left, and we went out and bought a bigger house, instead of downsizing. But we have a close family, and the house is really ideal



At last year's reunion, Kathi and John at right, with sister Randi Blatt Rosignoll ('72) and, at far left, Luise Halberstadt Linder ('72).

for large get-togethers. My parents always used to have Thanksgiving at their home in the Berkshires in western Massachusetts (They also have a winter home in Vero Beach, but they really don't like Florida much, because it's such a red state), but I'm taking it over, and the house has the kind of open layout where you can have thirty people at the table, and they're all facing one another. That's the best thing at all.

The Years of Living Vicariously

Although I graduated with a degree in Social Work, I never worked in the field. After my children were born, I got heavily involved in the PTA; for fourteen years, from the time the first one was in kindergarten until my youngest graduated, I was either president or vice president. I did start back to school for a master's degree in guidance counseling, just as the school-age population began

to dip and they started closing primary schools all over. So my master's degree never happened.

John, an environmental engineer and planner, started his own company, Thonet Associates, in 1981, and I've worked with him ever since as an administrator-secretary-bookkeeper. Civil engineers call him a tree hugger, but what he mostly does is work on ways to prevent or at least minimize the environmental impact of development. For all my orientation toward working with people, I'm a good manager. I'm good at organizing and at identifying problems and coming up with solutions. So many times, in general, people react to the *symptoms* of a problem but not the underlying cause or causes.

I have the best kids, and I'll be the first to tell you that I live vicariously through them. Hannah, a journalism major, lives in Manhattan and

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Kathi Blatt

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is a media coordinator for the Committee of Interns and Residents, which is an advocacy organization that represents something like thirteen thousand medical interns and resident doctors. It looks to improve working conditions and salaries, and, in the process, improve patient care. On October 2, Hannah and her fiancé, Miguel Bermudez, will be getting married on the lawn of our house, just as John and I did thirty-eight years ago.

As for Rebecca, she started out in speech pathology but then became an AuD, a doctor of audiology. She lives in Summit, New Jersey, and works for two different ear-nose-and-throat practices. We're lucky in that both of our kids live fairly close by, as do my sisters. Allyson is in the city, while Randi lives in Scarsdale.

I credit Rebecca with getting John and me into dancing. In high school and college, she was a star member of the marching band and color guard, with an amazing ability to dance, twirl a flag, and so forth. Her Columbia High School marching band once won a competition at the Meadowlands Arena; there was our Beck, on the Jumbotron screen.

One summer when she was home, she discovered this small dance studio about fifteen minutes away. "Why don't you come with me?" she said. John and I decided to



Daughters Hannah and Rebecca.

go, we really had a blast, and we've been going ever since. We do ballroom dancing: the waltz, the American tango, Argentine tango, the foxtrot, salsa. It's the best aerobic exercise you could possibly do; you sweat until the salt stings your eyes.

In January I had surgery for severe spinal stenosis, among other things. It started around four years ago, with shooting pains going down the leg. Over time, it got progressively worse, until just standing up straight became incredibly painful. The surgeon performed what is called a spinal decompression; I call it getting Roto-Rootered. Basically, they open the backs of the affected vertebrae and drill them out. Then, because the discs in between had degenerated and the vertebrae had shifted out of alignment, they reposition the vertebrae, replace the degenerated disk with the bone slurry taken from the "Roto-Rootering," and fuse everything together with titanium rods.

It's a long recovery, but I'm getting there. I started dancing three weeks post-op. The neurosurgeon told me

I could begin walking, and I thought, *Well, waltzing is sort of like walking. Just backward. And on my toes. But that would help with strength training and balance. So I started with one forty-five-minute session, which I barely survived. Now I'm dancing an hour and a half five days a week. Pilates starts next week. And I intend to get back on my horses by June.*

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In 2000, Kathi and her sisters threw their parents a big fiftieth-anniversary party at their alma mater, Syracuse University. Kathi is easy to spot: That's her wearing football jersey no. 50. Whoa—wait a second ...

Kathi Blatt

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I've loved horses from the time I was a kid. I have two, both of them dressage horses. Dressage is like dancing. Macho is a fourth-level dressage horse, while Gable competes at the Prix St. Georges level.

Back when I was in my twenties and early thirties, I competed in eventing, called combined training, at the lower levels. It's like a triathlon for horses: You do your dressage, then phase two is cross country, and the third phase is stadium jumping.

After I had my children, though, I thought to myself, *Jeez, you can die doing that! Forget it!* I had one really big fall with the horse. Well, *the horse* actually fell, but, obviously, you can't not fall when he comes down. I wound up in the hospital for five days. That was right after my forty-seventh birthday. I had a major brain concussion, and my nose was practically sticking out the back of my head. When I came back to riding, I really started taking up dressage. You can still get yourself killed if you try, but you're doing it on softer ground and at a slower pace.

On Turning S-S-Sixty

Having been born on November 23, 1951, I was

one of the youngest members of my class. I don't know exactly where I stood at Jericho High School, but at George A. Jackson Elementary School, only Janie Bloom was younger than me. I'm kinda liking that now: Everybody gets to turn sixty before I do!

Honestly, the idea of aging has never bothered me, perhaps because of the example set by my parents. They always seemed very young, and still do, at ages eighty-three and eighty-two. My mom and dad play tennis every day, they swim, they kayak, they travel. They've just always been so active that it's irrelevant to me what your age is. It's how do you act and how do you feel? Some people gave it up early, and some people never give it up.

One thing I certainly inherited from my parents is my interest in politics. I've always been active in the local political scene. Although I was a shy child, I always had a strong sense of right and wrong. One day, probably in the Cold War days of the late 1950s, we saw a film in school about the Young Pioneers, the Soviet version of the Boy Scouts. The film, with an obvious bias, showed the boys in their uniforms and their red neckerchiefs, singing around a bonfire and standing and saluting the hammer and sickle and pledging their allegiance to the Soviet Union and Nikita Khrushchev.



"Hi-yo, Silver!" Actually, that's Kathi atop her horse Chaver Sheli (Hebrew for "my friend"), known as Jay, at a combined training event. Kathi was a member of the Eastern States Dressage and Combined Training Association (EDCTA), which won its division, while she and Jay claimed individual championship honors.

When it was over, I raised my hand and said that I really couldn't see much of a difference between the Russian Boy Scouts and American Boy Scouts, other than the colors of the uniforms and the neckerchiefs. I said, "We're standing here pledging allegiance to the United States of America, and in the front of the room is *our* flag and a picture of President Eisenhower."

I can't remember if I got in trouble for that, but I definitely got in trouble for refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance in high school. I wasn't being anti-American, or anything like that. I just felt that it was very hypocritical the way that most of us mumbled the words, hands over hearts, while passing notes, giggling, or finishing

an assignment. Most of us had memorized the pledge when we were little, long before we could have understood its meaning. And so I decided that the whole thing was a crock. I sat down and decided that I would not stand and recite the pledge.

And the shit hit the fan! I got kicked out of homeroom, I was sent to the principal's office, and my parents were called in. After I explained myself, my parents said that it seemed like a valid reason to them. So for the rest of high school, I had to stand in the hallway during the pledge, then come back into homeroom. It seemed to me that they were creating more of a spectacle than by just ignoring me. Those were the times we lived in, where people

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Kathi Blatt

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—especially young people—were questioning the conventions of society.

As long as I can remember, I've always had this strong moral center, which boils down to a simple philosophy of "Do the right thing." And by that, I mean do what's right for everybody, not just what's right for you or yours. ■

An All-Too-Memorable Twelfth Birthday

John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, the day before my twelfth birthday. I guess I was in eighth grade, and I remember the rumors swirling around the school as we were getting ready to board the buses for home.

I, of course, had no access to a radio and couldn't fathom how someone might have knowledge that I didn't. Somebody on the bus said that the president had been killed, and I dimly remember saying, "Don't be ridiculous!" And then I got home, and my mother was in front of the television, crying.

I was supposed to have a pajama party the next night for my twelfth birthday. We talked about calling it off, but then decided to have it anyway. It was probably the only preteen girls' pajama party ever where all the girls sat around the television, crying their eyes out.

Ellen Meister

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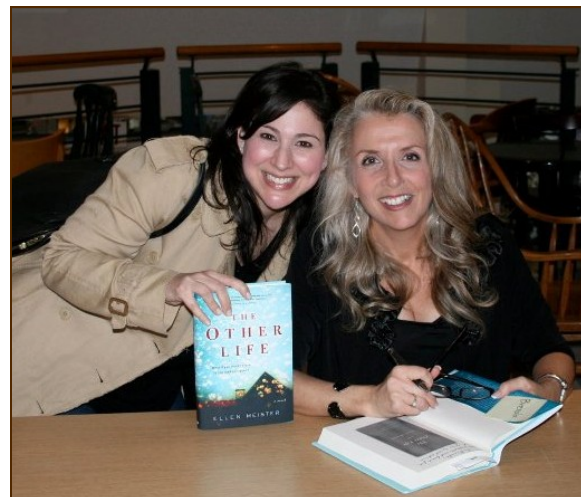
wound up being sold at auction, as it's called, and in the end, it landed at G. P. Putnam's Sons, which was pretty exciting. I think it's a great house.

Five years ago, I interviewed you for the newsletter about Secret Confessions. Back then, you had one son in middle school, and two other kids in elementary school, and you had to sneak in your writing at five in the morning. Has that changed any for you over the years?

Yes and no. I'm still in the habit of getting up at five o'clock in the morning to write. I used to have this lovely two-hour chunk. But now my youngest, Emma, is in middle school, which means that she has to be up by six. An hour is not really enough time for me to get into the writing "zone," especially since I don't exactly go from zero to sixty in the morning; I need to have my first cup of coffee and let the caffeine kick in.

With one middle schooler, a high schooler, Ethan, and my son Max in a program for young people with Asperger's syndrome at Nassau Community College,

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Ellen at the February launch party for The Other Life, at the Book Revue bookstore in Huntington. With her at left is friend and fellow L.I. author Brenda Janowitz.

Advertisement

An advertisement for Wella Balsam. On the left is a black and white portrait of a man with long, dark hair and a prominent mustache. To the right of the portrait is the text: "Now that your hair is longer, you need Wella Balsam." Below this text is a bottle of Wella Balsam. The bottle is white with a black cap and has the Wella logo and text on it. At the bottom right of the advertisement is the Wella logo and the text "© 1972 The Wella Corp."

Ellen Meister

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I do a lot of my writing during the day when nobody's home. Still, having three kids, my schedule is crazy.

Your first book came out just five years ago, so this is all fairly new. What do your children and your husband think about their mom/wife being a successful novelist?

They're fantastic. They celebrate every success and are really proud of me. My husband, Mike, can't get over it. He's been tremendously supportive. However, he's not a writer, so he doesn't want to read my work when it's in progress; he doesn't know how to offer input or what to say. But for that I have writer friends who serve as my "beta readers."

Do you have a favorite character in *The Other Life*? Was there a favorite character to write?

Well, I love my main character and I love her mother. That's really the relationship that's at the core of the book. Some of the more emotionally unstable people are especially fun to write, like Eugene, her ex-boyfriend, who is very neurotic. When you're featuring someone like that, who's so ... *irritating*, the drama occurs almost naturally, and scenes really come alive. Sometimes it feels like the character's personality emerges on its own. I also like to have fun with my minor characters. For instance, there's a neighbor named Georgette who writes erotica, and she's fun and interesting.

It's hard to play favorites, though; I love all of my characters.

Because Secret Confessions of the Applewood PTA was set in Jericho, a



Proud family: Left to right, Max, Mike, Emma, Ellen, and Ethan. Ellen lives in West Birchwood, the same neighborhood where she grew up, but on a different street.

sort of guessing game ensued over whether or not certain characters were based on real people. What about with *The Other Life*?

I haven't been getting those guessing games from neighbors this time around. I guess when you write a book where a woman crosses through a portal to an alternate reality, people finally start to understand that it's *fiction*!

The Other Life was officially launched at the Book Revue book

store in downtown Huntington on February 18, which happened to be the same day as the class of '75's most recent mini-reunion. Did many Jerichonians show up for the book signing?

Yes, there were a few Jericho friends there, and that was really nice. Michael Sammis, who organized that get-together, is such a sweetheart. He put out the word, and people came. All told, we had about one hundred fifty people. That was in-

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**Wanna learn what some of your former teachers are up to?
Then drop in, pull up a chair, set a spell, but most of all —
NO TALKING! — at the ...**

Faculty Lounge

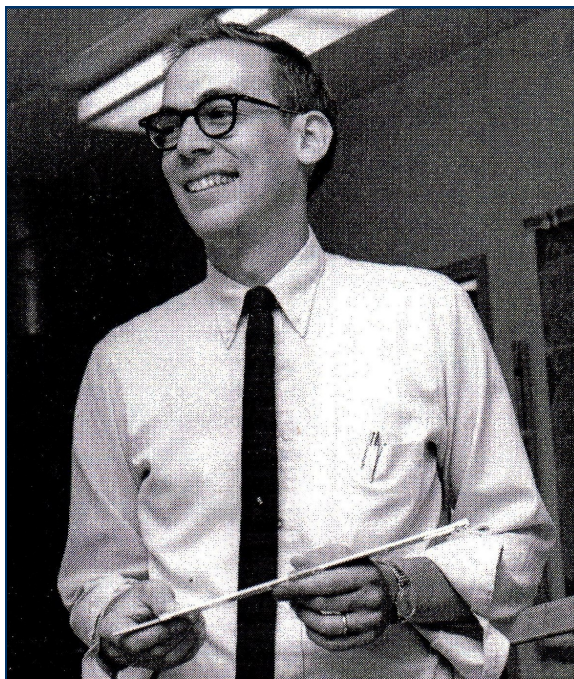


Mr. David Martin: Smooth Sailing

Mr. David Martin's mother, Polly Martin, was the first woman to have a radio talk show in New York, on WHN, beginning in the late 1930s. "Polly the Shopper," they called her. She used to interview celebrities from show business, politics, and so on, including Ed Sullivan, Gypsy Rose Lee, and Sen. Hubert Humphrey, who became a family friend. His father, Perry Martin, was a professional musician and entertainer. He, too, had his own radio show and later was on television.

Immediately after Mr. Martin was born, his parents moved back to Minneapolis, their birthplace, thinking that New York was no place to raise children. Their house was two and a half blocks from Lake Calhoun, which, he recalls fondly, "was a great spot for swimming, fishing, and sailing."

By the mid-1950s, music work was drying up in



Minneapolis, so the family moved back to the New York area—this time to Long Beach, Long Island. Long Beach High School at that time was "similar to Jericho High School," he says. "It was a fabulous school, and I remain good friends with people from my class."

Like his father, Mr. Martin was drawn to music, "but after seeing the way that professional musicians, including my dad, sometimes got treated, I decided that was not the career for me." His other big interest was physics, thanks largely to a physics teacher at Long Beach High. Mr. Martin entered the Long Island Science Congress, winning a grand award. "I decided that I wanted a career that would allow me to work with both my head and my hands," he explains, "and, in that sense, physics was perfect."

A Lucrative Sideline

Mr. Martin wanted to go to St. Lawrence University in upstate New York because of its excellent physics department, and he was accepted there. "But I was making so much money playing keyboards in bands, I couldn't afford to leave Long Island. So I went to Adelphi University instead." He'd started the music sideline as a high school sophomore, playing weddings, bar mitzvahs, and so forth, and kept at it for the first ten years that he was teaching science at Jericho High School, through about 1972. "In fact," he says, laughing, "playing music enabled me to buy my first house!"

Jericho was Mr. Martin's first teaching job: He came to the high school in 1962 and retired thirty-six years later. As he recalls, "The Adelphi placement office said, 'Well, there's an opening for a physics teacher in Jericho, but they want

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Mr. David Martin

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somebody with five years of experience. But you might as well go over and interview.” His interview was with the high school principal, John Heller, who happened to be a physics instructor. “He decided that I was the one, and I was hired right away,” says Mr. Martin, who also taught at Pace University later in his career.

He actually wore a second hat at Jericho, as coordinator of the district’s computer program. “That goes all the way back to 1969, when computers were ‘the future,’” he recalls. “Sort of like plastics, right?” He went to England on a Fulbright teaching exchange in 1967, and the school there had a time-shared computer. “It was so cool that I got deeply involved in it, and when I came back to Jericho, I introduced computers to the high school with the help of the new principal, Robert Mannheimer, and Superintendent David Nydick. And from there, the program just grew and grew and grew.”

Mr. Martin originally settled in Levittown. (That, incidentally, was the house for which his musical activities provided the down payment.) He didn’t stay long, though. One day he went to the Levittown Public Library, which is the Nassau County science library. When he went to check out a book, the librarian told him, “You can’t use this library.”

“Why not?”

“You don’t live in Levittown.”

“I thought, *What is she talking about?*” he remembers. He showed her his driver’s license. There it was: Levittown, New York.

“No,” she insisted, “you don’t live in Levittown, you live in *Island Trees*.”

Mr. Martin laughs. “I had no idea. I said to her, ‘In that case, my house is for sale.’ You probably don’t remember, but in the mid-1960s, there were book burnings going on in the Island Trees school district, and all kinds of craziness. My son was going to be starting kindergarten soon, and no way was I going to let him go to school there.” So he sold his house and moved to Sea Cliff, where he lived for thirty-five years.

Retirement Spent on LI, in FL, and on the Water

Upon retiring in 1999, he and his sec-

Below: Mr. Martin’s mother, Polly (“The Shopper”) Martin, a radio broadcaster on New York station WHN.



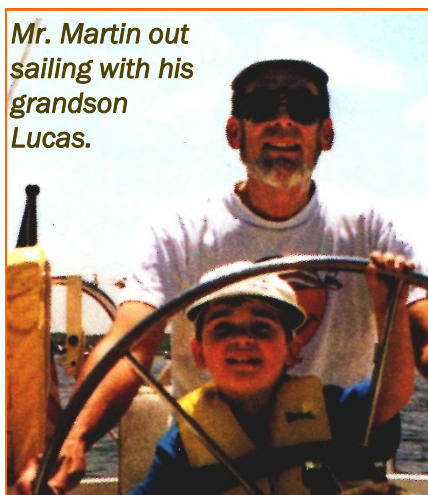
Above: His father, musician Perry Martin. These photos probably date from the late 1930s.

ond wife, Florence, sailed from New York down to the West Coast of Florida. There they bought a place in Punta Gorda. Boating has been a lifelong passion of his. “That boat is now for sale, though,” he explains, “because I’ve had knee surgery and really can’t be cruising anymore. But we do have a smaller boat down in Florida and use it for day sailing.”

Likewise, the couple downscaled their New York home, “because a big house for two people who are getting on in years becomes a bit much.” They now have a condo in Glen Head, just two and a half miles away from their old place. “In fact, we didn’t even have to change our phone number.” New York is where they spend most of their time; like true snowbirds, they head south for just three months out of the year.

Sailing, reading, and music take up most of Mr. Martin’s time. He still plays for fun in a local jazz society, and for friends—and goes to jazz and classical concerts a lot. “Books are still important to me,” he says. “After retiring, I formed a ‘hard sciences’ book group, which now also includes an electronics engineer, a mechanical engineer, a computer guru, a neurologist, and one of my old physics professors at Brooklyn (now New York) PolyTech. We usually have dinner together and then discuss books and politics. We would be happy to have other interested folks join us.”

Mr. Martin likes to spend time with
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Mr. Martin out sailing with his grandson Lucas.

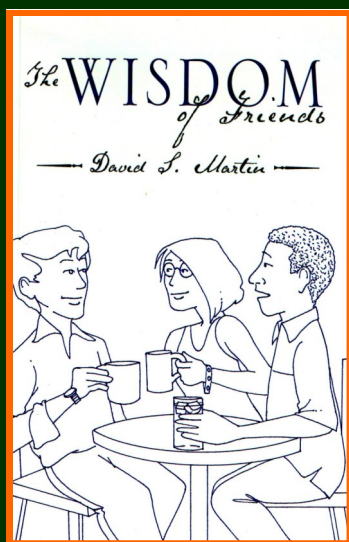
Mr. David Martin

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his son and daughter and four grandkids. His son is a business manager for the Annapolis Fire Department, in Maryland, while his daughter is the human resources director for the Esprit clothing outfit in New York. They each have two children.

“Sailing, music, and family,” he says. “It works for me!” ■

Mr. Martin's New Book: *The Wisdom of Friends*



“I’d coauthored books for students, such as *Barron’s How to Prepare for SAT II Physics*, and several books on computer programming. Three years ago I published a very different kind of book, titled *The Wisdom of Friends*. It contains the wisdom I’ve picked up over my life from a variety of sources, from my parents, to Will Rogers, to Jericho Schools superintendent David Nydick. It came about mainly because I wanted my children to have this background; because of their mother’s and my divorce, I was concerned that they’d missed some things they shouldn’t have missed, so I put it all down in a book. All told, I worked on *The Wisdom of Friends* for seven years. You can see it at thewisdomoffriends.com.”

Sharon Honig

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Western world. For one thing, there are many different scales. The melodies sound foreign to most Western ears because Jewish music makes great use of a flatted seventh note and also the *freigish* scale. (Think “Hava Nagila.”) That’s what makes it so Eastern sounding. However, I’ve always connected to that kind of music. It’s part of me: in my blood and my soul. You put that music on, and I’m dancing from the inside out.

I’m the cantor at Beth El Synagogue, a conservative temple in Southbury, Connecticut. The rabbi, too, is a woman. And you know who it is? That friend of mine who went to rabbinical school, inspiring me in the process. She was such a model for me.

Pastoral care is part of my job, to the extent that I want it to be. It’s something that’s very important, I feel. And it’s very close to my heart. In 2000 my husband and I divorced after twenty-five years of marriage. I subsequently was in another relationship for eight and a half years, and he died of cancer a little over two years ago. So I’ve been through personal loss, in marriage and as a caregiver, as well as having a loved one die.

Our congregation has a large senior population, including members who are sick, dying, or who are homebound and feeling very isolated. I started a caring committee. We have about eight women, and they do things like knitting comfort shawls. This was something that was really important to me, because when my partner was dying, somebody came around during the day and wrapped a hand-knitted scarf around his neck, with a beautiful prayer attached to it.

It was extremely meaningful to me. After he died, I wore the scarf, and it brought me a lot of comfort. Someone else knitted me a full-sized shawl, which they called a prayer shawl. The minute I put it on, this warmth—this very physical sensation—started emanating from the shawl. It was just incredible. I said, “We have to do this.” So we have these women who knit these magnificent shawls, and I deliver them, and I put them on the people and sing a prayer to them, and it is transformative. They feel enveloped in love.

Coming Home

Woodbury, where I live, is the antithesis of Long Island, beautiful and spacious. There’s a mountain in the background, and I look out my windows and see nothing but trees. It’s so private and peaceful that I can take a walk and not bump into anybody. I feel very much in my own space, and I like that. Nobody cares how much money you make or what you do for a living, and I feel most comfortable in that type of environment.

Having said that, it was great to grow up in Jericho. Last fall I attended the class of 1970’s forty-year reunion, and I have to say, it was such a fabulous, wonderful time. There was such a genuine

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Sharon Honig

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warmth, and people really felt connected to one another, even if they weren't especially friendly back in high school.

One thing that struck me was that, in Woodbury, where there are few Jewish people, if I tell somebody I'm a cantor, they usually don't know what I'm talking about! Other religions have what they call cantors, but it's not a clergy position; it's usually more like a music director. So when I went back to the reunion and people asked me, "What do you do?" and I said, "I'm a cantor," they knew! They understood. I didn't have to explain. And I felt a sigh of relief, like, You know what? I'm home.

This is home. ▣

It's a Small World, Parts 2 and 3

People talk about there being six degrees of separation. I'd say it's more like two degrees.

My mother—an artist, a college art professor, and also the arts administrator for the Oyster Bay School District—passed away ten years ago. Of course, we miss her very much. My father, believe it or not, is still working as an electrical engineer at age eighty-three! In fact, my brother Les's son, Daniel, an engineering student at Cornell University, interns at his grandfather's company during all of his school vacations. Dad spends the weekends in North Shore Towers, and during the work week, he lives in an apartment in Chelsea. He walks to work. I'm very proud of him; he's amazing.

My father's companion is Mrs. Ellen Jacobs, who was my first-grade art teacher at George A. Jackson. She and my mother were very good friends. She was at Mom's



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side a lot during her illness, and a great support not only to my father but to the whole family after she died. So Ellen and Dad ended up being together, and we're all family now. It's fantastic.

There have been a lot of full circles in my life, I feel. All of these loose ends, they seem to just ... connect.

Now that I have finished writing this, I have some very sad news to share. My father, Erwin Honig, passed away peacefully at home on May 7. If you had the privilege to know him, you'll remember that he was the kindest, gentlest man. He was the calm, steady presence in my life, and I miss him dearly. It turns out that the rabbi who conducted the funeral service at Temple Emanuel of Great Neck is very close friends with none other than Cantor Goldstein. So, unexpectedly, the cantor from my childhood co-officiated at my father's funeral. And the cycle of life comes full circle.

Monica Medina

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two months after the birth of my daughter, Sarah, we headed west again, and I've lived here ever since. Unlike Seattle, it's incredibly sunny and colorful here. There were some things that took a little getting used to at first, like living in the midst of a drought and moving here at the start of rattlesnake season. You'd see it on the news: "It's rattlesnake season, so be careful where you step." That was my indoctrination. That and earthquakes, although there haven't been too many. Oh, and fires. I was evacuated during the 2007 fires for about three days. It's very scary stuff to helplessly watch fires burn thousands of acres of land and homes.

Here in San Diego, we also have our share of coyotes and cougars. One time, a female cougar had a baby in a field across the street from Josh's school. She became very protective, so the children weren't able to walk home through the field like they normally did. These aren't the sorts of things you worry about in, say, Jericho.

When I moved to San Diego, I decided to take time off from work to stay home with my kids. It was a challenging time, as my mother had recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She died in May 1994, and my father passed away just five months later. On top of all that, my marriage began to fall apart. The divorce was finalized in 1995, the same year that I returned to work in public broadcasting, this time at the San Diego public TV and radio station, KPBS. With that, things started getting better and better. I found that every time I took a step toward my independence, it felt exhilarating. The people at KPBS are terrific, and I made friends right away.



Monica with son Joshua, twenty-six, and twenty-year-old daughter Sarah.

Despite the divorce and everything, my kids have turned out okay. Sarah just finished her second year at Northwestern University in Chicago. She's majoring in economics. Josh went to UC Santa Barbara and stayed in that area after graduating. But he recently quit his job and moved back home temporarily while he figures out his next move. Which is ironic because when he left for college years ago, I decided to repaint the whole house. I asked him if he had any color preference for his room. He told me to paint it any color I wanted because he no longer lived there. Well, the chickens have come home to roost ...

Thirty Years (Give or Take a Few) in Public Broadcasting: Suck It, Newt Gingrich

I've been in public broadcasting since 1979, and at KPBS for over fifteen years. I am director of diversity, engagement, and grants. In my position, I write grant proposals for the station, and convene special community events, as well as screenings and dialogues. The funding from grants helps finance station activities and program content. In my diversity role, I help identify the impor-

tant stories in diverse communities and convey them to our news director for possible reports and features on our media platforms. I also get to go to many galas, such as the GLBT, American Islamic, the American Indian, as well as galas for the San Diego Asian Film Festival and the San Diego Latino Film Festival. I meet interesting people, including a few of the San Diego Chargers, who give back to the community. All in all, I have been able to forge some exciting new partnerships for KPBS.

Right now, we have a partnership with the California state emergency management agency to develop a media awareness campaign on earthquake preparedness. We also have a new project that we call "Speak City Heights." City Heights is a low-income community where more than fifty different languages and dialects are spoken. People from all over the world live in this tiny little neighborhood within San Diego. We're telling their stories and reporting on health issues of concern to the residents, in partnership with other media organizations and with funding provided by the California Endowment.

Our most significant initiative is "One Book, One San Diego," a com-

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Monica Medina

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munitywide event where everyone is encouraged to read the same book. Now entering its fifth year, we have an advisory committee that narrows the book selection down to three. Then we post the selections on our website, and everyone gets to vote. In partnership with our local libraries, we invite the author to San Diego for several events and book signings. It's so much fun, and we've gained enough recognition that now the publishers come to us to pitch their books.

During my tenure, I've been honored with an Outreach Professional of the Year Award, the SDSU President's Top 25 Leadership Award, and the Puzzle Place Diversity Award. Times have changed dramatically in the world of public broadcasting, now known as public media. I think you're seeing public media focus more and more on the local stories, because that's the wave of the future and the key to our survival: localization. Let the national news media

tell the global stories. Here we're focusing on Southern California, including our border with Mexico.

As Congress debates next year's budget, public media faces a big test. There are hundreds of public radio and TV stations across the country, and you're going to see some of them merge (as New York's WNET and WLIW did) and others fold, which will be necessary in order for the system to survive. One thing I love about KPBS is that we're mavericks, not encumbered by a management heavy in bureaucracy, as some other stations are. We see an opportunity and take it. We're not afraid of change, and we've been on the cutting edge within our system in so many ways.

At KPBS, we're all very passionate about what we do. We're hard workers. Even after all this time, I love my job. And I've gotten to meet some really cool people, like Mister Rogers, Chris Botti, the late senator Edward Kennedy, Congressman Bob Filner, Elmo (and Kevin Clash) from *Sesame Street*, and Garrison Keillor. ■

Monica's Tangled Web

Last summer I rediscovered my love of writing and started my own blog: Monica's Tangled Web. The name comes from a quote one of my English teachers (I think it was Ms. Stern; does anyone remember?) used to say a lot: "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." I write about my keen observations and ironic musings in a nutshell and with humor. It's been so much fun, although it's also time consuming. I update it twice a week. Pay me a visit, at <http://monicastangledweb.com>. Many of my posts are drawn from my life, so you'll find stories about family, divorce, the empty nest, and, of course, my overindulged Cavalier King Charles spaniel, Henry.

Ellen Meister

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credibly exciting, as was my being interviewed on National Public Radio. For one thing, I'm a huge NPR fan, and it was my dream to be interviewed there. But also, NPR rarely covers fiction; it tends to focus more on nonfiction books. So my radio appearance was a real "get."

One aspect of publishing that's still relatively new is the advent of promoting the book through Facebook and other social media. Publishers expect a lot more involvement from their authors—especially their fiction authors—than in the past.

It's both a blessing and a curse. Promoting your book calls for a tremendous amount of work, and it cuts into your writing time, but you have to consider it part of your job. I have my own website, blog, Facebook, and Twitter, and other social networking sites. I also do blog interviews, and so on. My dance card is very, very full these days!

When is Farewell, Dorothy Parker due out?

Right now it's scheduled for spring 2012, but that's subject to change. I already finished it and submitted the manuscript to Putnam's.

That must be a nice feeling, to have a book "in the can."

Yes, but I'm already thinking about writing the proposal for my next book! ■

Ellen on the Web

Visit Ellen's official author's page at www.ellenmeister.com. Stop in to read her blog, Side Dish, at <http://ellenmeister.blogspot.com>, where you'll also find her interviews on NPR, *Psychology Today*, and elsewhere. In anticipation of her next book, she's also started a Dorothy Parker page on Facebook. That should keep you busy!



Concept: A girl. A camera. And the greatest city in the world!

- 1 Cold town, winter in the city: Mayor Mike's pothole museum.
- 2 January 2011: Snowstorm, 1.; sled, 0.
- 3 Betty White's 89th birthday at Le Cirque. Betty rocks!
- 4 Day after Christmas at Saks—taking my life into my hands!
- 5 Spring arrives in Bryant Park.
- 6 But you really know that spring is here when the baseball season hasn't even started yet and already the Mets continue to take a beating!

