

The truth is...we gather on the Third Monday of each month to practice our writing skills. We listen and share in each other's work. We are small in number and our commitment is strictly to produce and foster creativity among our members.

We started in July 1999 and consist of adults that enjoy writing memoirs, commentaries, essays, poems, and/or prose. Our simple method each month is to use a pre-selected word or phrase as the basis of a story, an idea, an opinion, a derivative of, or an implied essence of and write a document of no more than 1000 words (approximately 2 pages). We share our stories, comment, and in that way build up our writing skills through practice and presentation. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive, and the feedback is gentle.

Curious? Always wanted to try writing for fun, entertainment, or even profit? Come visit with us at any of our open meetings. Bring a sample of your work. Sit in and see what we do. If you like it, join us every month and become a member. Contact Nancy at nestewart@ameritech.net for information. [The Pen & Ink Writer's Group returned to the Eisenhower Library on July 18, 2022.](#)

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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March 20, 2023
Word: Life or Death

Speedy Spanish rice is easy, versatile and delicious
By J. Smetana

So basically you're saying he grew up to be Dean Stockwell
No, he always was Dean Stockwell--even as a little kid. He just got older but he was always Dean Stockwell.
You say that like it's a matter of Life or Death!

###

"1952 Cicero Bar Tours"
by M. Frank Avila

In 1952, in a third floor apartment building at 1142 South Ashland Boulevard, Chicago, IL; my Grandfather, Mother, two brothers, sister, and I are all sound asleep when my drunken Father barges into my bedroom in the middle of the night yelling, "Get up! We're going to Cicero!" My Father is a musician who plays string bass in various bars. I am 14 years old and I drive a 4 Door 1950 Green Plymouth with leopard covered seats that my Mom bought.

I anxiously and quickly dress while asking him, "Where in Cicero are we going?" My Father explains, "I was in a bar playing my bass fiddle with the band. When I went outside the bar to leave to go home, two men attacked me and stole my band jacket even though I put up a good fight against them. I need to get my band jacket back!"

In 1952, Cicero is Mafia-controlled. The main night club strip starts at Cermak and Cicero going west on Cermak for about two blocks. The other small bars were throughout Cicero. The bars are open all night with gambling, prostitution, and drugs.

I do not know quite what to expect in those bars. That night, we go into almost every bar in Cicero. Even though it is very late in the night, there is still a band playing in some of the bars; and, some people are still sitting on stools and drinking.

My Father and I enter the various night clubs and bars. My Father talks to all the bartenders, but he is very disappointed to never find out who stole his band jacket. To say the least, it is an eye-opening experience about the night life that my Father seems to enjoy.

I go home physically and emotionally exhausted. My Father wants to get sober, but he claims that the only way to get sober is to drink more beer. I have to go get him some more beer. However, my Father never gets sober that night or morning.

###

A Difficult, Painful, Beautiful Reminder **By Kelly Tansor**

My mom died last year. Being the creative person I am, you would think this would be fodder for all kinds of material. As a story writer, I could easily write an essay, short story, or even a novel about the experience. As a songwriter, I could probably write a whole album's worth of songs. As someone currently dipping their toes into stand-up comedy, I could throw in some (tasteful) dead mom jokes if I wanted to.

But that's the thing. I don't want to.

Every time I try to put pen to paper, the words just aren't there. Yet I've had all these thoughts swimming in my brain for the past year about caring for a sick parent and grieving the loss. But, as anyone who has ever grieved a loved one can tell you, it's hard to put those thoughts into a coherent form that most people would understand. It's also an extremely vulnerable topic to discuss with others, especially if you're as young as I am and none of your friends' parents have died – hell, most of my friends' parents are still married! There is this feeling that anyone who *hasn't* had the same experience just won't understand.

So, as creatives, we try to convey our thoughts in a way people *would* understand. But grief is personal, and everyone grieves differently. There definitely are songwriters out there who have

written songs – even entire albums – just about their parent’s death. I barely managed to squeeze out one song about my mom since she passed. I’ve seen comedians talk about their dead parents in their set – not to bad-mouth their parents (usually), but as a way to discuss what the grieving process was like for them. I thought about doing something like that, but if comedy equals tragedy plus time, there hasn’t been enough time yet for me to even consider that.

That just leaves me with story-writing. I’ll be honest, I had ideas. At first I was going to start this with a rant about “influencers” (a term that makes me throw up in my mouth) pretending to have cancer for...what? Followers? Sympathy? Money? But I knew writing about that would only leave me feeling more angry. I’m not going to purposely raise my blood pressure over these people.

I also considered writing about how my mom’s birthday was coming up, and a few weeks later would be the anniversary of her death. There is nothing really to say about that, though, except...well, I’m sad. And I’m dreading it. And I genuinely don’t want to talk about it. Again, it won’t make me feel better.

For a brief moment I considered writing about Mother’s Day last year and...look, you don’t want to know how my first Mother’s Day without my mom went. Movies and TV will have you thinking grief looks like crying balled-up on a couch. It’s not – it’s pent-up emotions, desperate attempts to distract yourself to no avail, feeling guilty in the brief moments when you’re smiling, panic attacks, nightmares, and lots of ice cream.

A strange thing happened last year, though. Exactly 6 months after my mom passed away, I found out I was pregnant with my first child. A boy, exactly what we were hoping for.

I had expressed to my mom before about the “right time” to start “trying.” Some women get pregnant right away, others take a few months, and some can’t get pregnant at all. For my mom, it took her a year to get pregnant with me (I am her first child). This was chalked up to needing time for her birth control to get out of her system. I had a feeling it would be similar for me, since I also was on birth control for quite some time at that point.

But no! It happened right away for us.

I’m not a very spiritual person – on the contrary, I’m quite cynical. But I can’t help but feel like, somehow, this is my mom looking out for me and bringing me good fortune however she still can. Or maybe I just got lucky – who knows? Still, this has been a difficult, painful, beautiful reminder that there is, in fact, life after death. I’m not talking about the afterlife here, I mean for the rest of us. My mom might not be here any longer, but I still am. I’m young. I’m healthy. I am still able to continue living my life – and creating more life along the way.

###

To Sleep or Not to Sleep
By Vicki Elberfeld

When I was a little girl, I never wanted to go to sleep. Even when it wasn't Christmas or Easter, and I wasn't waiting for Santa or the Easter Bunny, I nevertheless didn't want to be pulled away from my toys or my TV shows or from playing with my brother to go to my bedroom, slip under the covers, and face the darkness. My mother made me say a prayer to ask God to protect me during the night. This frightened rather than reassured me, for why would I need to ask God to look after me unless there was something bad likely to happen to me before morning came? And I knew even if I asked for protection I might not get it anyway. When we prayed in church we ended with, "...not my will but Thine be done. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen." So God would ultimately decide whether or not something bad was allowed to happen to me.

Now that I am old, I still don't like stopping whatever I'm doing in order to become unconscious. It's much more fun to continue answering my emails, reading my books, or watching TV. It's especially hard to sleep after watching TV, as the last shows I watch are always *The Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, both of which scare me and make me fear going into a sleep which just might result in nightmares. And now that I'm old, sleep doesn't come easily to me anyway. I need to play music or listen to hypnotic stories on my iPad in order to calm myself and allow restful slumber to sneak up on me.

Grandma always said that in our family, folks either suffered from migraines or insomnia. When I was young I suffered horribly from migraine headaches but had no problems falling asleep. When my years reached the half century mark, however, my migraines ceased and my insomnia began, so I guess I've been cursed with both of my family's weaknesses. My dad never had a headache but suffered from insomnia throughout his life. Grandma suffered from insomnia but only during full moons.

Lying in bed waiting for the thing that doesn't come, sleep, can be ultra frustrating and unbearably painful. I have no physical energy, but my mind is racing too, too fast to drift off into slumber. At such times, all of the areas in my life where I feel inadequate rise to the surface to torment me. I am behind in my writing. Taxes are soon due. My house is a mess. There isn't an empty surface anywhere in sight for tables, chairs, and counters are covered with piles of papers, and some of these paper piles have even migrated to the floors. Grandma always said, "You must have 'a place for everything and everything in its place,'" yet I don't have any space left for anything new in the house anymore, and objects occupy whatever space they fall into for the moment. A book entitled *The Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* appeals to me, yet the word "death" in the title puts me off. I appreciate the need to clean up one's mess and not leave clutter for future generations, but I feel a certain resistance growing in me to this title, and sometimes I think I have it backwards. Perhaps on a subconscious level I feel if I never clean up, if I never ever complete this "death cleaning," I'll never die.

And apparently there is rather a close connection between sleep and death or rather lack of sleep and death. As I struggle with insomnia, I asked my non-fiction book discussion group to choose

sleep as our next topic, and the particular book selected was *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker. At times Walker waxes poetic about sleep as a kind of miracle drug provided for us by nature itself that increases our longevity, improves our mood, boosts our memories, keeps our food cravings and blood sugars under control, and protects us from a host of diseases. Reading this book has given me a profound appreciation for sleep's many gifts. Yet I'd not have read the book at all if sleep weren't so elusive in the first place. And as the book progresses, the focus is less about the benefits of sleep than on the dire effects on any human getting fewer than eight hours of sleep nightly.

In fact, the takeaway for many members of my discussion group on Walker's book was "Sleep 8 hours each and every night or die!!!!" Sleep deprivation makes us more vulnerable to depression, colds, flu, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, traffic accidents, and even cancer. Lack of sleep even affects our cognition and puts us at a higher risk for Alzheimer's disease. The author concludes that sleep deprivation is so dangerous, we need to abolish it in prisoner interrogations, torture in other words, and that it is inhumane to continue to use it in sleep deprivation studies on rats, as they die so miserably. He graphically describes the sufferings and demise of these poor creatures.

Walker also shares the horrific details of a genetic disease called fatal familial insomnia. There is no cure, and it is very rare, but folks who carry a particular gene suddenly stop sleeping altogether. They begin to hallucinate and lack the ability to concentrate. They die within a period of 10 months, some much sooner, after losing the ability to walk, bathe, speak, write or communicate in any way. It's clearly quite true that a lack of sleep will kill us.

Sooooo.....sweet dreams everyone, and sleep well!

###

"THE DAUGHTER of the DEVIL"

by Sherry Avila

Some Catholic Nuns might say that I am the "Daughter of the Devil," because I am a Redhead. I am not sure why? How could I be the Daughter of the Devil? After all, my Dad has his issues, but he does not have a Pitchfork. He could not possibly be a Devil nor is he a Redhead although he has Red Whiskers if that counts.

In the 1980's, as I get ready for church, I peer into the mirror at my slender body wearing a store-bought, fashionable, off-white pant suit with a long-sleeved long jacket, matching blouse, and long pants that flare at the bottom, accessorized by a matching necklace and off-white high heel shoes. My Red Hair is neatly fixed. I feel proud, pretty, joyful, and happy. I feel comfortable. I am living the Good Life!

When I arrive at church with my husband Frank and our three children (two boys and one girl) ages from 2 years to 14 years none of whom have Red Hair, our Missouri Synod Lutheran minister approaches me lowering his head, squinting his eyes, frowning, and looking down his long nose glowering at me. He raises his arm wagging his pointed index finger at me and angrily growls.,

"Why are you wearing a Pant Suit in Church?"

"Ooh! Nooo! I must be the Daughter of the Devil after all!"

Is this a matter of Life or Death? What did I do wrong? What is wrong with my Pant Suit? Or, is it my Red Hair? I am stunned. I freeze. My mouth opens, but no sound comes out. My eyes open wide.

I think that a Pant Suit permits me as a woman to move around more easily and protects my legs from the weather. Only my hands and face are showing. What is the problem? I feel that I am decent and proper although there might be times when my husband Frank would say that I am the "Daughter of the Devil" for sure.

Is my minister judge and jury? Or, maybe is HE the SON of the DEVIL? He must be a Redhead who dyes his hair. Is he an IMPOSTER?

Did my minister read what the Bible says about what a woman should wear to church? "The faithfulness of a daughter of God is not ultimately measured by what clothing she wears but by her walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:16). After all, don't I walk in the "Spirit" when I sing in the church choir, teach Sunday School, and participate in all the church activities. The Bible emphasizes modesty, and for women, slacks are often more modest than a short skirt.

My Mom wore trousers when I grew up during World War 2 and when she worked at Caterpillar Tractor Company in the factory when I was in school which must have influenced me more than I realize. No doubt trouser wearing movie stars Marlene Dietrich and Katharine Hepburn influenced me.

Am I the "DAUGHTER OF THE DEVIL" for wearing a PANT SUIT in CHURCH? Naw! I am a married woman with three children who just wants to worship God in my church and feel comfortable wearing a nice Pant Suit that I could easily wear elsewhere.

As for the Pastor of my Church, is he the SON OF THE DEVIL? Nah! Perhaps he thought that since pants originated in non-Christian countries that they were unacceptable or heathen. Just look around that same church today in 2023. What do you see? The majority of the women are wearing trousers, even jeans as well as pantsuits with very few women wearing a skirt or a dress. In fact, today, I even wear red shoes, a red sweater, or a red blouse to church which does NOT make me a "Daughter of the Devil!" Wooo! Hooo!

A big THANK YOU goes to all those hard-working women of different cultures around the world and throughout the centuries who have paved the way by wearing trousers and pant suits way, way before I was even born. A big THANK YOU goes to former US Senators Hilary Clinton and Carol Mosley Braun who protested to be able to wear Pant Suits, and changed the law against women wearing pantsuits in the Senate. And, Hilary Clinton who chose to have her First Lady Portrait with her wearing a pantsuit to emphasize her education and ability on a level playing field! Surely, those women are NOT DAUGHTERS OF THE DEVIL but pioneers who wore trousers/pants/slacks that were practical, convenient, flexible, comfortable, for horseback riding, for sports, and above all for liberating our spirit.

YES, I continue to wear my Pant Suit and/or Slacks at church! I did not think of myself as a Rebel, but perhaps I am since I wore a pant suit when it was not acceptable. Does that make me a "DAUGHTER OF THE DEVIL"?

Where is my pitchfork? Is this a matter of Life or Death? ###

The Best Outcome **By N. Stewart**

This is Lisa Simms of Station KLOP, reporting live from the scene at Winchester and Lake Avenue in downtown Parkville. Just a few minutes ago a person was reported on the roof of the three-story building, threatening to jump. The police, fire and paramedics are on the scene. The fire department has inflated and secured a rubber mat on the ground below the person. According to the police chief, a negotiator has been dispatched and is already on the roof, currently talking with the person.

Here with me now is the Fire Chief. Chief, are you able to tell us anything about the unfolding situation?"

"Yes, I can tell you that he is 16 years old, local to the area, and had been on the roof for several hours before stepping onto the edge. We are prepared and hoping for the best outcome. His mother is over there, waiting."

"Let me move over to the mother and see what she has to say. Ma'am, I'm Lisa Simms with station KLOP and wanted to ask you a few questions, if I may. Do you know why your son feels he needs to end his life? Is there anything you can tell us about his actions? Do you why he is doing this? Tell us how it feels to have your young son standing on the ledge? How does that make you feel?"

"Please leave me alone, I have no comments to make, and get that mic out of my face," she said tersely and walked away.

Turning toward the camera, Lisa said, "That's all for now, returning you to the studio but I will continue to follow the story."

The red eye of the camera went out and Lisa looked up at the boy on the ledge. She thought about what at 16 would make someone choose between life or death and apparently have death win out by edging closer to it. The boy is beginning to live and has many adventures coming his way. Given that life has many ups and downs, and he hasn't experienced many, what made this no-hope-for-the-future the one to end all at such a young age. Was he bullied at school, did his father leave him or die perhaps, did a girl hurt his feelings? Will anyone really know what caused this.

Action was taking place all around and people began to mill about. An ambulance was brought to the front door. Suddenly, the door opened and the police negotiator came out and approached the mother. Together they both walked back into the building, reemerging with the son.

"In 5...4...3...2...(on air) said the director.

"This is Lisa Simms from KLOP and we are reporting live from the scene." A cheer could be heard from the crowd. "I am happy to report that the suicide attempt is over and the 16-year-old is standing with the negotiator and his mother at the door of the building, waiting to enter the ambulance. As the Fire Chief would say, the best outcome is achieved. This is Lisa Simms from KLOP returning you to the studio." ###

Life or Death

By Carol Karvon

It seemed like a lifetime ago but just a few months had passed since Tim had knocked on Alicia's door and introduced himself as her brother. She knew she would miss him if he disappeared from her life now. After the shock of their first meeting wore off, Alicia broke the surprising news to her husband, son and daughter and Tim was invited to meet his new family. His new brother-in-law, nephew and niece liked Tim immediately. Tim felt great affection for Alicia's family and told her how much it meant to him to be so freely accepted by everyone.

Everything seemed to be going along very smoothly and Tim and Alicia spent time getting acquainted with each other whenever he came to town.

Around this time, Alicia started feeling extremely fatigued and at the urging of her mother finally agreed to see her doctor for a complete physical exam.

The doctor had his nurse draw blood for the usual routine tests but assured her she was probably just fine and would contact her in a day or two with the results. He said she was probably just working too hard and he didn't think it was anything serious and certainly not a matter of life or death.

Alicia was surprised when the doctor called the next day with her test results. Her test results were all within normal ranges but the doctor suggested she might have developed an allergy and suggested she consult an allergist he recommended to get tested. It was possible allergies could account for her fatigue.

The doctor explained she might have developed allergies and needed to get tested to determine what she might be allergic to. If one or both of her parents had allergies, she might have inherited the tendency towards allergies. Depending on the specific allergen it might become a matter of life or death. Also, if she had any siblings, they could have allergies and should consider getting tested.

Alicia talked to her parents and neither of them knew of any allergies they might have besides sneezed a lot when exposed to dust. But they thought everyone did that and didn't consider it unusual or a cause for concern.

Tim called the next day just to chat and mentioned he was coming to see them the next week. He would be there on business. Alicia told him about her doctor's visit and his suspicion of possible allergies. She was following up with allergy testing the week following his visit.

"That's really curious," said Tim, "I've had allergies ever since I can remember and we never knew of anyone else in the family, (that is my adopted family), who suffered with allergies. I am very interested to learn what your tests show, especially if we turn out to have the same allergies. Please let me know as soon as you find out. For most of my life, I've had to avoid

peanuts and anything containing peanuts, even foods cooked with peanut oil. Even a minute amount hidden in food can become life-threatening to me.”

“In a strange way, I’ll be relieved to know the cause of my symptoms, especially the fatigue,” said Alicia. “It’s getting more and more difficult to get through each day. I’ll let you know as soon as I find out my allergy test results and we can compare notes. Maybe you can even give me some coping tips...”

###

A Sprite's Reluctant Journey to Chicago **By Mark Moe**

As another St. Patrick's Day approaches, Brigit the fair-skinned, fiery-haired fairy princess and Miles O'Brien the older Leprechaun met for a pint of beer at Sean's Pub. Brigit had transformed into her human form. However, as a human, she could not help the event of other patrons staring in awe of her almost super model appearance. Her head was a long mane of full curls and piercing blue eyes. Perhaps it had to do with the company sitting across from her, the 4'8" older Leprechaun, Miles O'Brien. He was a local at this establishment and mostly never brought company. When he did bring company, everyone took notice.

He saw the concern on her face and announced in a loud voice, "Before any of you start asking, this young lady is a friend of mine and we are not dating. Although, I would be so lucky if we were a couple, but alas we are not."

As Brigit looked around, many of the other patrons refocused their attention back to the sports being shown on several different televisions and their own conversations. The tension released from her face and shoulders as she refocused her attention to her friend Miles. "Thanks for that. I often forget how much attention I draw out in public because of my appearance. I hope I have not embarrassed you, Miles.

"Not at all. You have just given my friends here something else to gossip about besides my usual antics. So, are you planning on going back to Chicago to rejoin your dance team for the St. Patty's Day Celebration?"

As she was about to respond, Sean the owner personally delivered two pints of Guinness to Miles and Brigit. She thanked him and said, "Yes, I am going back to dance with my team for two different parades and a week of other events. My mother has given her blessing this time. Is it that surprising that my mother would come around or that I would go back?"

He stroked his brown-gray beard and responded, "No on both accounts. I have a favor to ask of you and it is in regards to someone one we both know. Remember Shayleigh?" He laughed as Brigit sprayed Guinness out of her mouth at the mention of Shayleigh.

"That little malevolent, pixie-haired, blonde sprite! The one that lives for pranking both the fairy and sprite kingdoms alike! I will not be helping the likes of her!"

He responded, "Normally, I would agree with you, but an older Leprechaun, Colm Meaney sought me out to ask for our assistance with her. Shayleigh's mother, the Queen of the Sprites is a close friend of Colm and she fears for her daughter's "life. " Apparently, Shayleigh has started targeting a powerful group of Banshees as her next victims of her abhorrent pranks."

Brigit's face regained much of the previous tension she had previously as she replied, "So in other words, she is signing her own execution, right? How are we supposed to help her? The Sprites main defense is their ability to become invisible and Banshees' magic can render that spell pointless because of the echo location from their sonic screams."

Miles responded, "Colm has a special shamrock bracelet that will allow Shayleigh to turn into a human much like fairies such as yourself can do. I will also convince her to have a change of scenery and join you in Chicago."

"Miles, I will not have time to show her around. I have a busy week. How would I stop her from turning the City of Chicago into her personal pranking ground?"

He laughed as he said, "I think you will be quite surprised."

Brigit nodded and replied, "Alright it is clear you and Colm have thought this through. Tell Shayleigh to meet at the Hawthorn tree near your favorite pub on Sunday, Mar. 12th at 9:00 a.m. Hopefully, I will see her there."

Miles replied, "I promise you will not regret this, Brigit. I will owe you a pint when you come back."

The day before Brigit was planning to leave, she packed a large duffle bag of her different dance outfits and some other clothes. She visited Miles to get more of the magic transforming coins that he had given her last time. "So, Miles, did you convince the blonde troublemaker to join me tomorrow?"

He smiled and said, "Oh, I think you will be surprised tomorrow. She will be there."

Early morning the next day, Brigit said her goodbyes and she arrived at the Hawthorn tree waiting for her pixie-haired charge. An extremely tall Leprechaun with a mostly gray beard, dark brown pants and shoes, a forest green vest covering a blue shirt and a brown golf hat asked, "Would you be Brigit, my dear?"

"I am. So where is Shayleigh?" He laughed as he produced a large emerald green Jameson Whiskey bag from his brown tote bag and dumped the contents on the ground in front of her. Besides more magical coins, there was a tiny, blonde, pixie-haired Sprite with a powder blue dress unconscious, but still breathing.

"Really? You had to knock her out to get her to come with me? Was that your idea Colm or Miles'?"

"It does not matter, my dear. It worked." He removed a tiny green shamrock bracelet from his pocket and placed it on Shayleigh's wrist. "Now when you and her teleport, her magic will be

linked to yours and she will be unable to regain her true form until you both come back together. She also will not have access to her magic. So that should help with her starting pranks."

"I hope this experience changes her the way you two hope it will. Otherwise, when we get back, you might want to stay hidden for a while. She might not be too happy with you two Leprechauns!"

###

Life and Death of a Rolling Stones Groupie By Pauline Bastek

Just got back from the funeral mass of my Grandson's Grandmother-in-law. She was only 73. I say only since 73 seems young when you're finishing the 80s. Her father lived well into his 90s and his funeral was the last time I had been in this church.

He was active to the end and was at my Grandson's wedding when he was in his 90s. His funeral was a pleasant occasion as we admired the hand carved wooden casket he had custom ordered from a Trappist Monastery well before his passing. He was buried from the church he still attended and the parish his five sons and one daughter had attended.

Her funeral was conventional, well-attended and the hymns and eulogy quite appropriate for a conventional Catholic lady of her age. However, she was not a conventional Catholic lady of 73.

I first met her when her Granddaughter and my grandson were at the local park having their picture taken at her Granddaughter's senior prom. I thought she was her mother. When the young couple's relationship progressed to their engagement and subsequent marriage we grew to know each other, or as well as you ever know each other's in laws. I found out that she had her daughter when she was still in her teens and that her daughter had her granddaughter when she was in her teens. Not the conventional Catholic road our family followed. I told her while chatting at some family occasion that I had mistaken her for her daughter the first time I met her and complimented her on looking like her sister, not her mother. She quickly whispered to me not to ever say that as it upsets her daughter. I agreed but said that her daughter should be proud to have a mother who looked like her sister. She looked me straight in the eye and asked if I had a daughter and I told her I had four sons and two grandsons but no daughters and was now overjoyed to have recently welcomed a granddaughter who was the joy of my life. My mother had been almost 40 when she had me and my granddaughter's mother was 40 when she was born.

I came to see that being a grandmother to her was being more of a friend to her granddaughters, than a typical grandmother. She lived with her daughter and son-in-law in a brick bungalow with her own area in the basement. She was part of her daughter's family and very close to her granddaughters.

She had a career as an event planner for a local hospital but she, not her daughter, was the baby sitter for the great grandchildren when they came. She never spoke of a husband, dead or divorced, and I never asked.

When I was told that she was taking her 18-year-old granddaughter to London to see the Rolling Stones in concert, I realized that having a mother who followed the Stones at concerts on both continents with her teenage granddaughters would be a hard act to follow, if you were her daughter. I realized that she likely was doing for her granddaughters what had not been done for her and possibly what she was not able to do for her daughter.

She was waked wearing a Rolling Stones T-shirt and jean jacket with a pack of cigarettes and lighter by her sides. But, I'm sorry they didn't play "You Can't Always Get What You Want" as that was the story of her life.

I found that out one afternoon when she asked me to visit her to discuss the possibility of purchasing her father's house after he passed away. She had been staying there and her brother who was the executor of the will had offered her the opportunity to stay as a tenant or to purchase it. As I was a Real Estate Broker, my grandson suggested to her that she discuss this with me. Her granddaughters were urging her to move out of their mother's basement which flooded on a regular basis. That afternoon I found out that being a young attractive grandmother who was a Rolling Stones groupie came at a high financial cost. There was no way she could purchase and maintain a property. She was at retirement age and the attractive career of event planner was at an end as the hospital had been purchased by a medical consortium that was not planning to host social events at any time as it would not enhance their bottom line.

I wondered if she thought that the cost of being a groupie was worth spending her life in a basement apartment, even after her son-in-law finally put in a flood control system.

It's been less than a year since she suffered her first stroke, followed by mini strokes. She never fully recovered and was reluctant to follow rehab that was recommended. She was placed in a nursing home as her daughter and granddaughters did not feel they were in a position to be caregivers. I don't think they ever came to see her as a grandmother who needed to be cared for.

Today, a Rolling Stones groupie was put to rest but did she come to terms with the fact that you can't always get what you want. Both her granddaughters have left their husbands, the fathers of their sons, and have found new partners, and I'm wondering if they still think they can get what they want. Maybe they will, even if she didn't or maybe she did.

###

Life or Death
By Edward Scheffler

Where lies this antithesis
Between separate worlds

If that Life onto Death were a transition
From one existence onto another.

Who isn't reluctant to change.
When change seems to arrive so suddenly.
Perhaps there is a need to grieve the departure of
family, friends, and pets.

Cherishing the memories we had together,
As living for the moment with an awareness to
ponder the majestic vastness of creation.

As wondrous expectations of a future
awaits us in the fullness
and richness
or eternity.

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