

# THE OLIVE PRESS

BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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## The Power of Poetry



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## Why Poetry This Month?

First, a staff-member-poetry-lover suggested it as a topic. Second, we need it. We need it as a way to go inside ourselves, to get away from the troubles of the world, or reframe them, or rage against them.

And third, I was reading that taxi drivers in Istanbul (and possibly Tehran), quoted poetry in conversation with their passengers. And I thought why is it that we don't have our personal poetic gems to sprinkle our conversations with? To enlighten, to console, to illustrate, to elicit our epic past, to extend an emotional hand?

Surely through prose, we have enough information, but do we need so much? Where is the balance?

Why is poetry good for us? "Writing poems is the perfect exercise for the brain... This activity can be one of the simplest ways to improve memory among the elderly ... It stimulates the brain, offers some mental exercise and can help prevent dementia or Alzheimer's in seniors as well." <sup>1</sup> Well, that's good.

And what about poetry for *human beings* rather than those identified by memory loss, age-as-an-untreatable-disease? How about poetry for everyone?

Let's choose poetry to express ourselves, using illustration.... so much more effective than using more prose.

Prose: Due to Covid, meals will be served on paper trays delivered to residents' rooms. Residents are ambivalent about the change of venue.

### Poetry:

"G-d, how I hate  
Meals on paper trays  
makes me feel like  
a traveler, a transient,  
a nomad, a nobody  
In my own home!  
Such ingratitude!  
Let's try remembering those savored paper-trayed  
lunches—portable feasts  
Among alpen wildflowering bluebells and edelweiss  
Nectarous meals on wine-colored Aegean seas  
G-d smiled, infinitely, gently, compassionately,  
and replied,  
"It's your choice"

## Why Poetry.....?

Poetry takes the prose of daily life and re-purposes it. Rather than providing information, it invites experience; rather than establishing distance and objectivity, it showers its readers with intimacy and unabashed subjectivity.

I found the poet that taxi drivers quote, the Iranian poet Sohrab Sepehri, and one of his poems—a poem that takes a mundane errand to the market and ...

### The Sound of an Encounter

Basket in hand, I went to the market square  
Early morning and the fruits are singing in the sun  
Spread out in banks, life dreams of eternal light, the shining perfection of rinds

The orchard's long hours of worry glittered in the shadow of each fruit  
Some unknown thing shone among the quinces  
The pomegranates spread their dark red across the country of the pious

Any thoughts I had about the people around me vanished before gleaming ripeness of oranges

When I returned home my mother asked, "Where is the fruit?"  
"How can this one little basket hold infinity?" I asked.  
"But I told you to bring three kilos of good pomegranate!"  
"I tried, but the basket could not hold the immensity of even a single one."  
"And the quinces?" she demanded. "What about our lunch?"

Oh, at noon the image of a quince reflected back from the mirrors and stretched from now all the way to end of time...<sup>2</sup>

No wonder people avoid poetry. It was not written to make you comfortable. In fact, it's no wonder poets were always suspect. Subversive. Provocateurs. Unreliable, unwilling to toe the Party line. So, many poets were exiled, or sent to Siberia, or shot. Reading and writing poetry is not about instant gratification. It takes courage, work, and patience with oneself and with the text to discover the many layers of meaning.

Maybe a poem will find you. Or you will find a poem that lends you that feeling of recognition and gives you the pleasure of meeting someone who knows you better than you know yourself. Sohrab wrote not only about himself, but for everyone. And we met through his poem. Surely we have a collective imagining.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.seniority.in/blog/10-benefits-of-writing-poetry-in-old-age/>

<sup>2</sup> *The Oasis of Now Selected Poem of Sohrab Sepehri*. BOA Editions, Ltd.  
Rochester, NY. 2013



## Employee of the Month—Derrick Nguyen



Derrick Nguyen, LVN, Lead Charge Nurse, came to RGP already experienced in assisted living nursing. He had previously worked at Brookdale in Danville as the Health and Wellness Director, but the stress, commute, and long hours made the job difficult. Derrick explained that there is quite a difference between a corporate or for-profit organization and a non-profit like

RGP. “There residents would be billed for an extra five minutes in the shower, and charged for the use of equipment. It was all about money. At RGP, our decisions are based on what the resident needs. It is certainly a more generous and humane organization. Our priority is to fill residents’ needs instead of looking at the bottom line.

“Adrienne is truly an inspiration for me. This is the first place that my boss is working harder than I am. Adrienne understands the stresses and dynamics that health services staff face in assisted living, especially with Covid. The staff is the best I’ve ever worked with; they are responsible, they come to work on time, they are compassionate. At none of the other places where I’ve worked did I ever see staff cry when a resident passed away. But here, because staff knows everyone so well, every passing is a loss.”



“I didn’t plan to become an LVN; life pushed me in that direction. I graduated from UC Santa Cruz with a BA in psychology and wanted to go on to graduate school. But there were no openings, and I had to give up on getting a graduate degree. After a somewhat complicated turn of events, I ended up in Oakland and attended the NCP College in Hayward where I received an LVN degree. I worked as a private care giver while going to school. As I mentioned, nursing was not my first choice. But I have learned during this period of transition that you need to find the good aspects of something, and you pull the pleasures out of it. I like the job security of nursing and I feel that people are grateful for the work I do. Now, it’s the people that make my job worthwhile. Luckily, I work the PM shift so traffic is not a problem. I live in Concord so the commute can be very difficult. I look on the bright side!

I greatly appreciate my wife for her support during my career change; for every success I have, I thank her. And my brother too, I thank him for being there to talk to and giving emotional support.”

## February Birthdays

Barbara Goldman	7
Paul Ekman	15
Walter John	16
Inga Altman	18
Gloria Abramowitz	21
Peter Balint	26

## Poetry Evening with YouthFirst

Wednesday January 26th  
7 pm

Zoom Meeting ID:  
574 608 1322

Join YouthFirst, JFCS Jewish values-based teen leadership program, for a fun evening of poetry reading and discussion! Contact Activities staff to help you get logged on.



Footnotes from page 8

1. “Mindful,” from *Why I Wake Early*
  2. “The Sun,” from *New and Selected Poems*. Volume 1
  3. “Heavy” from *Thirst*
- All collections by Mary Oliver



# Resident of the Month—Barbara Goldman



A native San Franciscan, Barbara's life and interests reflect San Francisco venerable institutions—the Giants, Temple Emanu El, and the JCC, although not necessarily in that order.

Barbara L. Goldman was born next door at Mt. Zion Hospital and lived in the Richmond and Outer Sunset districts. She attended elementary school at Lawton and Lakeshore Elementary Schools, Aptos Middle School, and Lincoln High School. Back then, Barbara related she had to learn how to swim in order to graduate from Lincoln High. Barbara said that she remembers the hippies in Haight Ashbury during the late 1960's.

In 1968 Barbara was introduced to her future husband through her fourth grade Sunday school teacher; she married in 1969. After marrying, Barbara worked at UC Hospital, the Hilton Hotel, Delano's Market and at other places. Although she worked in San Francisco, she lived in Pacifica, Hercules, and San Pablo and commuted. In 1996, Barbara got her Sheltie, Missy who she had until 2010. She moved back to San Francisco when her husband died in 1998. After living on Cabrillo, in the Outer Richmond, she moved to Rhoda Goldman Plaza in 2010.

Barbara has been a Giants fan since childhood, going with her father and brother to Candlestick Park to watch baseball games. Later, through her employer, she got Giants season tickets with a parking pass. In 2012 she was hired by the Giants and since then continues to work at Giants' games at Oracle (formerly PacBell) Park.

Barbara has been a dedicated swimmer for many years; She keeps the kind of exercise schedule that many aspire to but never make it out of bed early enough to accomplish. Up and at the JCC swimming pool by 8:00am, Barbara says that that is the best time to swim because the pool is less crowded, and she sometimes gets a whole lane to herself. She used to swim three times a week, but since 2007, she has scaled back to twice a week. During the pandemic, the JCC was closed, but as soon as it opened, Barbara was one of the first to swim.

Barbara has also been an active member of Temple Emanu El, San Francisco's oldest congregation since childhood. She has great respect for Cantor Rosalyn Barak whom she has known for years.

Having lived in San Francisco for many years, Barbara has seen many changes in the City. She remembers Frank Meyer's the Emporium, the White House, and the many stores located on Union Square—most of which have disappeared.

Barbara stated that so many restaurants have disappeared, especially since Covid. She said her favorite was Ernesto's on Clement; she liked to eat at Pasta Pomodoro, Rigolo, the Curbside Cafe, and Roam Artisan Burgers. But since Covid, some of these have closed. Mescolanza remains her favorite for creme caramel and chocolate mousse cake. She used to like to cook, and still likes to watch programs on the food network.

Favorite activities include outings to restaurants and museums.



## Health Notes

### Ode to a Stethoscope

Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN,  
*Assistant Executive Director*

There is both an art and a science to health care. My grandfather emphasized how important listening and observing was to medicine. Each person's story is unique and sometimes it is more important to listen than to offer prescriptions. Dr. Leonard Fair was one of the first MDs to be board certified in Family Practice. He was well known in his small Missouri town and was proud to be able to work with patients of all ages, assisting with everything from childbirth to hospice. He also knew his community really well—all the family ties, gossip, and intrigue.

Being on-call essentially 24/7 must have been an incredible burden for Dr. Fair. He was nevertheless always kind and funny with me and my brother. He had so many poems that he would quote to us, and I can easily replay his low-pitched, dramatic recitations in my mind:

*The fog comes / on little cat feet.*

*I'm Nobody. Who are you? / Are you—Nobody—too?*

*Whoopsie doodle, I'm off my noodle, I don't wear my truss anymore.*

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood*

*Faster than fairies, faster than witches, / Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches*

There is a certain poetry to each person's health journey. RGP Health Services is in a unique position to get to know each resident in their home. There are some things that are harder to pick up during a half hour doctor visit. The caregivers and nurses can see each resident following their daily routine – how they walk, eat, and socialize – when they might feel more tired or dizzy – what times of day they may feel more confused. We are in a unique position to describe residents' health to their doctors.

My original bachelor's degree was in English and French literature back in the 90's. Going back to school for a master's in nursing in 2006, I was surprised and pleased to find that language and communication was integral to the field. I find, for example, that I use creative similes and adjectives when describing the details of a wound to a primary provider.

Rather than writing a wound care poem, I instead found a great poem by listener poet Ravenna Raven from the Sibley Medical Center. The Good Listening Project ([goodlistening.org](http://goodlistening.org)) is an interesting initiative that was started in 2018. Poets listen to healthcare providers, give them space to express themselves, and from cathartic listening sessions, create unique works of poetry. What a fantastic project – and one I think my poetic physician grandpa would have truly appreciated.

#### The Art of Caring by Ravenna Raven

I want to celebrate  
the strength and resilience  
that is always within us.  
I'm a hardcore bedside clinician  
and I believe that  
medicine is a combination  
of science and the art  
of caring because you can't  
just treat an elbow,  
you have to get to know  
the whole person.  
And if someone says  
"Room 232 needs you"  
don't confuse me! Who is it?  
It's a privilege to be  
part of people's lives like this  
You can't just fly in  
and fly out again—  
  
you have to take your time.

#### Lines of poetry from:

*Fog* by Carl Sandburg; *I'm Nobody! Who are you?* by Emily Dickinson; *Whoopsie Doodle* Anonymous; *The Road not Taken* by Robert Frost; *From a Railway Carriage* by Robert Louis Stevenson



Candiece Milford,  
*Managing Director of Marketing*

## People As Poems

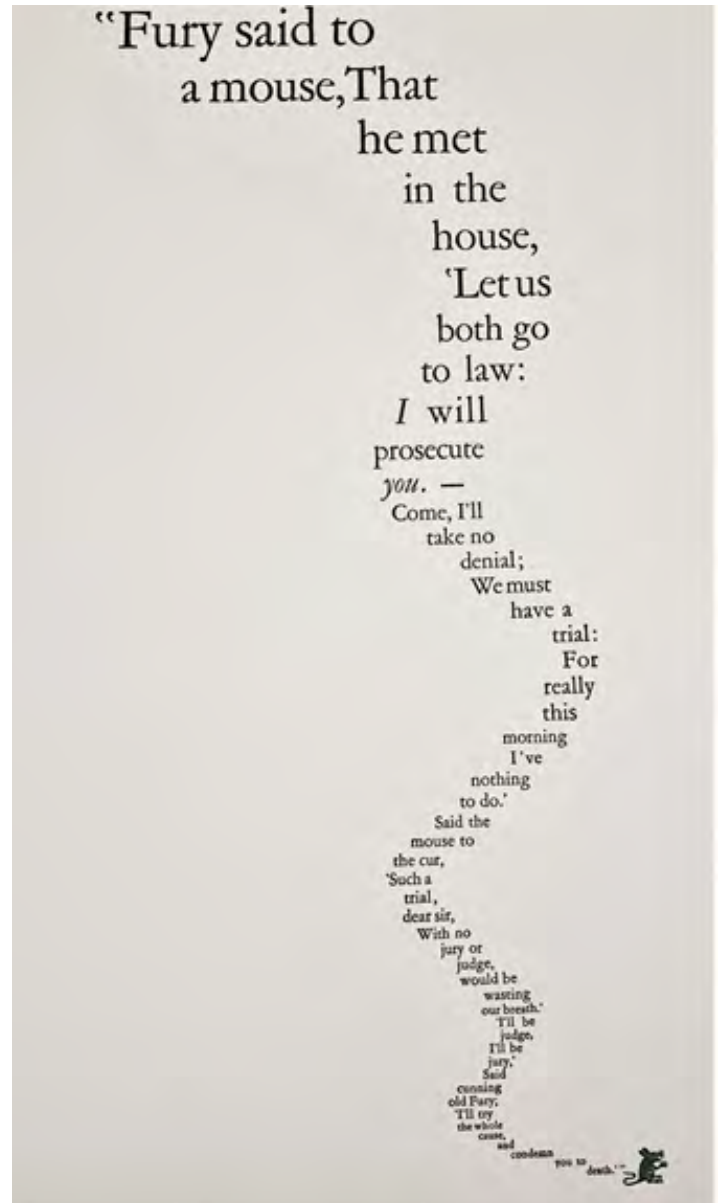
“For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress.  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.”

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

I have this poem taped to the bottom left of my computer screen where I can see it during the day. It is about aging, and the metaphors Longfellow uses delight and inspire me. I find myself seeking out more consoling poems in the last couple of years because of their unique way to remind me of that which is real and beautiful. While poetry grounds me, it also can provide amusement like the “Mouse’s Tale” from *Alice in Wonderland*, a graphically rendered poem that I also have in my office. (If you want to read it, please come see me!)

But what does poetry have to do with my work in Marketing? Poetry uses its varying structures and rhythms to reveal a new perception of the mundane, life’s joys and sorrows to help us think more deeply about the subject about what is being written. Or it may generate an insightful perspective about an issue, emotion, or an experience through its condensed thought form.

In a parallel universe, I have about one and a half hours on a tour with prospective residents, and during that collapsed time frame, I learn about them: their challenges and goals specific to Rhoda Goldman Plaza and even their personal lives. The stories that are shared are sometimes surprising, entertaining, sad and/or challenging, but always unique. Like poetry,



only with skin on! Their life journeys sometimes mirror my own, creating a richer exchange. This resonance is what helps people relax and envision a new perspective of how to live their lives. Some are “deep ponds” and need time to unravel what they really need versus what they say they want. Others yet, are concise and know precisely that which they are seeking.

Everyone is a nuance in the ever-changing whirl of life. My job is to interpret and guide, much like a poem coaxes our minds into a new view of life’s experiences.



Corey Weiner,  
*Director of Food and Beverage*

## Kitchen Poetry

Mind you, I've not spent my life reading poetry. Far from it. Or writing it either. I'm a food expert. So if you ask me what rhymes with broccoli, I'd say cheddar cheese sauce. Ok. Not exactly a rhyme, but you get what I mean ... So what rhymes with miso? Tofu! Getting closer?. Tiramisu? Not exactly....  
Steak.

Potatoes. Baked.

Good. Just call me the food poet.

Kale, pail, jail, nail, ... "Go on, you can do it," the editor encourages me. "You have years of food vocabulary and know the names of obscure dishes that must rhyme with *something*."

Is there poetry in the kitchen?

To my surprise, there are poetic processes  
The majestic event of "enrobing"—visions of ancient royal epic poetry? "to coat a candy..with chocolate... usually by pouring"<sup>2</sup>

Marrying? Such a poetic term!

"the concept of combining foods with complementary or contrasting flavors, textures to achieve a more interesting flavor"<sup>1</sup>

Rectification? A moral-spiritual redemption?

"purification, especially of spirits through repeated distillation"<sup>3</sup>

Metaphors apparently abound, albeit hidden

*Escalibada, escargot?*

Who doesn't go for *escargot*? (well, it's not kosher....)

Pasteis de grao (a Portuguese cake made from chickpea flour)

Potato, tomato

Alfredo

What more do you want?

I dreamt of round rolling sonorous (no, I wanted OOO's for pasta, but mixed up sonorous with somniferous—how one feels as after a huge meal) But found staccato blasts of pasta poetry. If only I could get the meter right.....

Bucatini, Spaghetti, Tortellini, Vermicelli

Linguine, Fettuccine, Radiatore, Rotelle,

Tagliatelle

Ditalini, Fusilli, Gemelli, Manicotti

Macaroni, Rigatoni

Ravioli, Rotini

Ziti

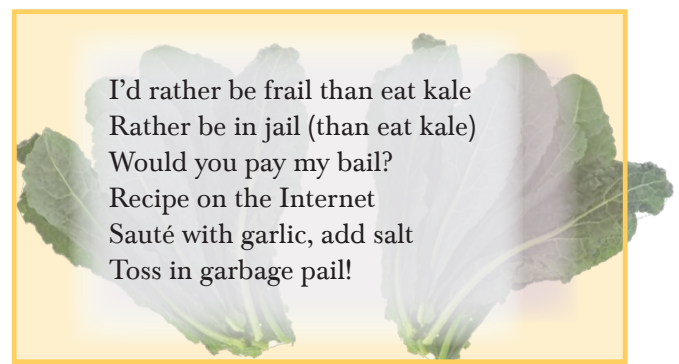
## Voilà!

<sup>1</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of Culinary Arts  
Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ; 2001. Page 286

<sup>2</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of Culinary Arts  
Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ; 2001. Page 158

<sup>3</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of Culinary Arts  
Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ; 2001. Page 382

*This article is a collaborative project between Corey and Kathryn*



I'd rather be frail than eat kale  
Rather be in jail (than eat kale)  
Would you pay my bail?  
Recipe on the Internet  
Sauté with garlic, add salt  
Toss in garbage pail!





Elizabeth Wyma-Hughes  
*Director of Resident Services*

## Life in Poetry

My daily interactions with residents through Residents Services bring me intimately into the lives of residents and their families. I often wish I had a poem at hand to bestow in times of happiness, of pleasure, as comfort in times of sorrow. Having become a poetry lover through my work here, I have discovered that poetry has the ability to enunciate emotions we often cannot name, intuitions that are wordlessly felt, and a feeling of recognition that others share our feelings. Poetry gives voice to the full range of life experiences.

Every day  
I see or hear  
something  
that more or less

kills me  
with delight..."<sup>1</sup>

I've been accused of being maddeningly cheerful, so perhaps it is no surprise that I am drawn to poetry that explores the many joys in life. My favorite poet, Mary Oliver, has a reverence for the majesty of the natural world that serves as a much-needed reminder to take in the beauty that surrounds us. The need for these reminders has been greater than ever, especially over the past two years. The news of the world often feels relentlessly pessimistic and the pendulum swing of Covid regulations is disheartening. It's easy to feel that we are being fragmented from ourselves and each other by daily doom. Poetry, on the other hand, joins—when it connects with the reader articulating undiscovered and often surprisingly shared emotions.

Mary Oliver's deep appreciation for Nature's beauty is a powerful invitation to everyone to make time to give thanks for the world around us, to make the mundane magic, express it.

"do you think there is anywhere, in any language,  
a word billowing enough  
for the pleasure

that fills you,  
as the sun  
reaches out,  
as it warms you".<sup>2</sup>

I find that the imagery and cadence of poetry has a resonance that can be insistent and demands response of the reader. In return, the reader has the opportunity to feel true validation. This capacity to steep a reader in shared experience is humanity at its best. But poetry does not always reflect joy. Mary Oliver's also wrote *Thirst*, a collection of deeply moving meditation on grief.

"It's not the weight you carry  
but how you carry it-  
books, bricks, grief-  
it's all in the way  
you embrace it, balance it, carry it

when you cannot, and would not,  
put it down."<sup>3</sup>

Poetry meets us where we are and gives us exactly what we didn't know we needed.

(Footnotes on page 3)

# MY GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

or

## The Day I Forgot My First Career And Found It Again

by Jeanne Halpern, Resident

I recall the day, just before Thanksgiving, 2020, when Katheryn invited me to write a monthly column for The Olive Press. Surprised, I responded, “Do you mean like the pieces Elizabeth and the other Admins write for every issue?” “Yes,” she explained, “we’ve been thinking it would be good to have a resident’s point of view, too.” Our chat meandered a few more minutes and then I said, abruptly, “Sorry, but no, I already feel too busy.” And then, I have no idea why, I added, “Anyway, I don’t think I’ve ever written a column before.”

As I got on the elevator, I wondered, Why on earth did I say that? It’s not true. Did I simply forget? Was I feeling overwhelmed by the choice – to column or not to column? How could I, who has essentially earned my living by writing, say I’d never written a column? As soon as I walked into my apartment, I pulled out from under my bed the box that holds samples of various kinds of writing I’ve done throughout my life. And there it was: the burnished gold-colored, three-ring notebook with the title: “Jeanne W. Halpern: Representative Journalism, 1954 – 1972.” Of course, I thought, still mulling over my silly answer to Katheryn, I must have blanked on everything I wrote before I entered the halls of academia. Here, in my hands, were column after forgotten column I’d written before my PhD. I couldn’t keep myself from reading through my rediscovered golden notebook, but first I wanted to reflect more seriously on my answer to Katheryn.

I tried to tunnel back to when I first thought of being a writer. In 8th grade, my English teacher, Mrs. Evelyn DeGolyer, was my writing champion. She taped my first poem about Blackie, my dog, to the whiteboard and encouraged me to keep writing. The next semester, I won my first writing prize, the annual DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) award, a five-dollar bill plus a dinner event at a restaurant. As time passed, writing became not only the thing I liked best but the thing I felt I did best. Like Latin, which

I studied for eight years, it’s something that’s really hard if you take it seriously and can be frustrating in the process, but it makes you happy when it turns out well. I smiled as I paged through my golden notebook of columns.



As an undergraduate at Elmira College, in Elmira, NY, one of my favorite jobs was writing a monthly column, “Famous Elmira Alumnae,” for the city’s daily newspaper, *The Elmira Star Gazette*.

One column I’d saved was headlined: “Fay Mitchell Kanin Is Topflight Playwright.” I’d enjoyed writing this particular column, I remember, because Fay Mitchell, nineteen years my senior, had majored in English as I did, and acting, as I did not. Though she moved to Hollywood, I moved to Manhattan. And she became famous. She and her husband, Michael Kanin, both wrote successfully for stage, movies, and TV. In 1954, when I was writing my column about Fay, Elizabeth Taylor was starring in the Kanins’ latest film, “Rhapsody.” After winning many film and TV writing awards, she was elected President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for four years, 1979-1983, only the second woman in its history, the first being Bette Davis who lasted only a month.

One of the useful things about having had that college job, besides the income, was having a handful of columns about people like Fay Kanin when I landed in Manhattan. I called myself a writer and was hired for a full-time job in NYC on *Parents’ Magazine*. It was – you guessed it – writing a monthly column for the magazine’s “Metropolitan New York”

section. Each month, I'd list and briefly describe venues that parents and kids from NYC or visiting families would be likely to enjoy – for example, the Bronx Zoo, the NY Stock Exchange, the Staten Island Ferry. And also each month, my wonderful editor, Lucille D. Kirk, and I would pick one site or activity we thought would be especially tempting for a family visit, and I'd write a major article. My final list and by-lined article, featuring the Metropolitan Junior Museum, appeared in January 1959, the month I married Edward Halpern, an assistant professor of math at the University of Michigan.



The first year of my life in Ann Arbor, MI, I became a football fan, got a Master's degree, and had a baby, my first son,

Andrew. (Instead of a magazine column, I regularly mailed our relatives and friends the xeroxed pages of "The Adventures of Merry Andy," with photos.) After that, during the Kennedy years, we had a second son, Michael, and I got involved in politics. By involved, I mean – you guessed it again – I wrote a column in *The Ann Arbor News* every few weeks for our fifth ward candidate and then Councilman, LeRoy Cappaert.

During the eighteen months, my husband Eddie, our two sons and I lived in Europe, I can't say I wrote a lot except in journals and letters, but I did publish when we came home. My journals turned into columns for the travel section of papers like *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*, several travel magazines, and also a longer piece for *Woman's Day*. After my husband's death in

1969, I landed a job on the University of Michigan's stand-out academic publication, *Research News*.

Though it was fun to research, interview for and write these long feature articles, I decided to change course. When my sons were in junior and senior high school, I began working on a PhD in English. While this degree led to many happy years of teaching at Michigan and Purdue University, I wrote, instead of columns, academic papers, articles, and books.

Which brings us back to that abrupt answer I gave when Kathryn invited me, in 2020, to write a monthly column. I realized I was wrong to say a hasty "no," based, perhaps, on a moment of panic when I apparently forgot my first career, journalism. A few days later, I said "yes," based, in large part, on the many reminders in my trusty golden notebook. But I think, now, having carefully gone through that notebook with you, I've discovered the real reason I forgot my columns: It's been half-a-century since I wrote them!

Now that I've written a year's worth of columns, 12/20 through 12/21, in *The Olive Press*, I'm again staring to feel too busy. Though I still find writing these columns rewarding, each one demands many drafts and many hours. So I've decided to write my columns much less frequently. I sincerely enjoyed my interviews with you, the research, the writing, itself, and especially working with Kathryn, but now I'd like to focus on three other things. First, I want to return to that box with my earlier writing and perhaps compile and add to the small cache of poetry I discovered. Second, I want to read more novels. And finally, I want to write, possibly by hand, more letters – of sympathy, appreciation, or simply friendship – that I've been neglecting for too long. Also, frankly, I'd like to spend more time on what RGP has to offer: the movies, the third floor garden, the papers and books in our library, and just sitting around in the cafe, chatting with you. Please join me.



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*Founded by Jewish Family and Children's  
Services and Mount Zion Health Fund*

# RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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The appeal of Rhoda Goldman Plaza is undeniable. Older adults and their families prefer our unsurpassed assisted living and memory care community enriched by culture and tradition.

Residents enjoy superb, “made-from-scratch” cuisine that is always well reviewed by our most vocal critics; our residents! While our dining selections please the appetite, accommodations showcase spacious, private apartments designed to maximize space and comfort. In fact, we’re re-defining your life as Living Well With Assistance—we believe our community is every bit as good as a five-star hotel. And, professionally trained, courteous staff promotes your health and well-being with choices of activity programs both on and off-site.

Our Terrace Memory program provides specialized memory care to residents through therapeutic activities that enhance physical, mental, and emotional health. Both privacy and companionship are afforded on our self-contained Terrace.

Living Well With Assistance is more than a promise, but a way of life for our like-minded residents and staff who share the vision of our upscale community.

Visit Rhoda Goldman Plaza today by calling 415.345.5072.

*Founded by Jewish Family and Children's Services and Mt. Zion Health Fund in 2000, Rhoda Goldman Plaza (RGP) was established as a non-profit assisted living facility to provide a better and more secure life for older adults.*



# RESIDENTS' AND STAFF POETRY

## Covid Haiku

Unmasked and un-vaxed,  
And denying proven facts,  
They fill the ER

*You've heard of haiku? How about some lowku?*

Can we really have  
New rules from the CDC?  
We cry out "What now?!"

Keep your hopes up high;  
Soon this plague will go away.  
Courage conquers fear.

Feeling down and out?  
Humor helps us see it through.  
Give laughter a try.

Hal and Dorothy Auerbach

---

## Well, You Needn't

Ah yes! Rhoda Goldman  
My home away from the T'loin  
A balsam from the cold North's Snowman  
A better side of the coin

Well, you needn't tell me otherwise  
Or show me the way out  
I'm certain this place fits my size  
And with that let's give a shout

After all, this is my final strut  
Upon the stage of life  
A major swipe or cut  
Against the angry swipe at strife

Well, you needn't turn me 'round  
Don't hand to me a stale soda  
Don't send me back downtown  
I'm staying in the arms of Rhoda

Bob Harris

## Why I Can't Read

I've taken to drawing conclusions,  
Figuring out how I got from there to here;  
What caused things to happen?  
For example, I figured out it's because of my sister  
that I can't read anymore. It's all her fault because  
she sent digital copies of the books I wanted, which I  
downloaded from her emails into my laptop.  
So now I must sit at my desk and do my reading on  
the laptop.  
I don't wanna read at my desk.  
I wanna read in my reading chair.  
I wanna sit in my reading chair and read books on  
my Kindle, which is light, portable, easy to hold, and  
I can make the font as big as I like.  
I need to get the damned files into my Kindle!  
I know there's an app to change the format and a  
USB wire that connects the devices, so I can transfer  
to my Kindle after I've changed the format, and I can  
then download....  
Excuse me, I need a nap.  
It's my sister's fault I can't read anymore.

By Carol Pearlman ©2022 Rhoda Goldman Plaza,  
San Francisco, CA

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## Look at All the Bad Things

That can lay you down low  
There is covid and cancer and colds  
That all begin with "C".  
Let's get rid of this  
Third letter in the alphabet or  
Call my son the Doctor

Sometimes I'm blue and sad  
Sometimes I'm red and mad  
Color defines my world

Anonymous

# RESIDENTS' AND STAFF POETRY

## The Good Life

Shit  
Wash  
Eye-drops  
Coffee  
E-mail  
Headline News  
Phone calls  
Inhalers  
Mix & drink Chinese herbs,  
Swallow lotsa pills  
Brush teeth  
Dress  
Email, business  
Floor Exercise  
Gym Treadmill  
Lunch  
Go outside, walk  
Read,  
Dinner  
Inhalers  
Pills  
Eye Drops  
Brush Teeth  
Bed  
TV  
Zzzzzzzzz

By Carol Pearlman ©2019  
Rhoda Goldman Plaza, San Francisco, CA



## Alone???

What is alone??? .....  
.....  
.....

That's alone!!!

By Carl Kerwick, 1979

## Wondering

Here I sit.  
Writing it.  
Wondering if I should?  
Wondering if I could?  
Write a poem.  
I did it! I wrote a poem!

By Carl Kerwick, 1979

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## Any Day Now

A day out  
Next day back in  
In out in  
What to do?

## Smart Guy

A long beard  
Beard disappeared  
What happened?  
Do you know?

Stephanie

# RESIDENTS' AND STAFF POETRY

## Limoncello

(In memory of Louis Prisco, 1939 - 2015)

Twisting the slightly sticky cap,  
leaving our fingerprints on the frosty bottle,  
releasing perfumed yellow butterflies into our glasses,  
we smell again the  
    spice of peel,  
    sourness of juice,  
    nearly cloying sweetness, like too many  
gardenias at a prom.

Sip after sip slipping slowly down our tongues  
makes us woozy in the late afternoon sun.  
Is it setting over  
    Ischia?  
    Capri?  
    Positano?  
then leaving the Bay of Naples after all?

Limoncello will do that – transport you  
    across an ocean on a Concorde,  
    across a bedroom on bare feet  
to taste again with lemony lips,  
those long gone Naples nights.

Jeanne Halpern

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## Water

Water is life  
A life we take for granted  
Turn on the tap  
The expectations are high  
When the grass browns and flowers wilt  
Anger rises  
How could this happen?  
We look outside for answers  
None Come  
Will we ever learn?



*Dr. Bill Newmeyer*

## Thanks for the Memories

Just like Rock Hudson  
I can never remember my lines.

Tried  
like Marlon Brando  
to tape notes on lampshades.

Tired  
by aging in place  
I am pasting post-its on doorframes.

Your Name  
Escapes  
me.

Tessa Marquis

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## Why Do They Stare?

They look, they stare, I don't care.  
I'm still the stranger in the room.  
I'm the one, who stares back at them.  
When our eyes meet, I hope to keep, their  
eyes engaged.  
Will I see if they have any hate.  
What do they know?  
What do they understand?  
What are their plans?  
Do they really know, anything about me?  
Do they really know, what I am thinking?  
Why they stare, I don't really care.  
Because I know, they are the ones' afraid.  
Because I know, who I am, and why I stare  
back at them, and smile.

By Carl Kerwick  
Mental Ramblings at 3AM on August 12,  
2021

# RESIDENTS' AND STAFF POETRY

## In the Garden of the National Archeology Museum, Athens

Shipwrecked, eroded to the color of mud,  
do these tall, once-proud marble men relive a  
million times  
the crash of an Aegean bow off Antikythera,  
the rush of sea, the slide into silty sleep?

Once handsome as Poseidon,  
now fingerless, earless,  
do they awaken here, after twenty centuries,  
among pink and yellow roses,  
and hear girls in high-heeled sandals  
clicking down the marble stairs  
toward men laughing in the garden?  
And do they yearn to touch them?

Jeanne Halpern



## P, H, E

Pandemic, a board game which not everyone had  
played;

Coronavirus Pandemic, but a nightmare that everyone  
has heard of and is eager to wake.

COVID-19, what a strange name that triggered the  
world's fear;

It brings everyone to stay 6-feet away that no one desires  
to come near. Handshakes, hugs, kisses, and close  
contacts,

None can be done;

Because you can't see the germs, nor know if the  
invasion journey to your body has already begun.

Each swab test carries a period of 3-day panic,

Whether a positive or a negative result could bring each  
family enough mental tragic.

How many healthcare workers have served days and  
nights to try saving lives?

We might have already lost count of the families who  
suffered the loss of soul's cries.

Complying all community guidelines can bring us a  
chance of containment;

Putting masks on, getting vaccinated and keeping social  
distance are our efforts to stay vigilant! COVID-19 has  
shaken our lives mentally, physically and physiologically.

Cheer up! And let's fight against this combat,  
courageously!

PHE no longer stands for public health emergency;

In hindsight, it has a new definition of patience, hope  
and empathy.

Zhong Shi Pan

Translated by Vivian Pan