

# Village Voices

In Our Own Words

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## MARY & HENRY LYNCH by Iseli Krauss

My parents had traveled from Knox, population 1,100, in northwestern Pennsylvania to the New York World's Fair in 1939 and enjoyed it so much they decided to go back in 1940, this time with me, then six, in tow. We were to stay in an elegant hotel on the Upper East Side of Manhattan managed by Mary and Henry Lynch, close friends of my mother's from when she was running her aunt's gift shop in Estes Park, Colorado. I was to have my very own room in the hotel.

The first evening, we ate dinner in the hotel dining room at a table set with beautiful china and heavy, polished silverware, lots of it. Both our hosts were lively, witty, and, to my mind, the most sophisticated people I ever knew. I didn't know enough to be intimidated by them or by the setting, but I did know to avoid embarrassing my parents. I watched them for etiquette cues.

Mary's dresses were all print shirtwaists, silk, I think. At one point, Mary's napkin slid off her lap to the floor. She said to Henry, "Henry, my napkin." Henry snapped his fingers, and a waiter appeared immediately. He was told that Mrs. Lynch's napkin had fallen. The waiter unobtrusively swooped up the napkin and shook out a clean one, which he draped on Mary's lap. This procedure was carried out at least three times—maybe four—during the evening, always with the seriousness the situation demanded. My father and I rolled our eyes when each new napkin appeared. My mother glared at us and kicked us gently under the table to let us know not to laugh. We did not laugh.

Mary and Henry showed us all over New York. From the terrace on top of the Empire State Building, we could see the Cunard Line ships, the *Queen Elizabeth*, the *Queen Mary*, and the *Rex*. My father kept directing my attention to the ships that were in the harbor for the World's Fair, and I kept directing his attention to the double-decker buses on the streets below, not the reaction he had hoped for. They took us to Jones Beach, Mary in her silk dress, sunglasses to match, and a broad-brimmed hat. Henry was wearing a

white linen three-piece suit and a Panama hat. At the beach! My mother was wearing a brown wool two-piece bathing suit; my father, a gray wool one-piece one with a white belt; and I—I don't remember what. If ever I felt like a country bumpkin, it was then.

Six years later, in 1946, my father was discharged from his medical service in the Army Air Corps, and we started our long drive back to Knox, Pennsylvania. Doc, as most people called him, would be picking up his medical practice and buying an X-ray machine for his new office. But first, we were to spend a mini-vacation with Mary and Henry in Sebring, Florida, where they managed a luxury resort.

As we pulled up to the resort's doors, the engine in our two-door Chevrolet stopped, just stopped dead. Waiting for us were not only Mary and Henry but several bellboys in uniforms just like the ones in the "Call for Phillip Morrris" ads, chin straps and all. My mother and I were very embarrassed, but my father just laughed. He opened the trunk of our car and brought out a case of toilet paper, lots of toilet paper. Because of the post-war shortages, Henry had asked us to bring along as much toilet paper as we could from the base's PX. What an entrance we made, perhaps the most memorable of my life.

My room was right above the main entrance to the beautiful grounds of the resort. The only balcony was outside my room, and what a view I had over the lush gardens and regulation croquet greens. The interior public rooms of the hotel were dark and a welcome retreat from the outside heat. The resort was a wintering place for Northerners, including the Wrigleys—the Chicago Wrigleys. Mary pointed out other notables, but only that one name has survived in my memory all this time, maybe because I liked both gum and baseball.

There was entertainment each evening; the best was horse racing. Staff would place a fabric race track on the floor with six toy horses at the starting gate. People placed bets on one or another of the horses, and they were off! A toss of a die determined which horse would advance by one length. The closer the horses were to the finish line, the more boisterous the crowd became. Everyone was caught up in the excitement as they urged their horses to go faster, faster! It did not matter one bit to me that I never won.

Of course, my father and I were anticipating the napkin situation. We were surprised to see that our napkins that first evening were in napkin rings with our names on them. Henry explained that guests got a clean napkin each evening and used that one for breakfast and lunch the next day. I remember jerking my head to the right where my father was sitting. Would Mary lose her napkin again? Would she have a clean one placed on her lap?

We didn't have long to wait. Predictably, Mary's napkin slithered to the floor, and she said as before, "Henry, my napkin." Once again Henry snapped his fingers, and a waiter responded immediately. Henry told the waiter that Mrs. Lynch had dropped her napkin. With a practiced gesture, the waiter picked up the napkin, shook it out, and laid it back on Mary's lap. My mother kicked us both under the table, harder than she had in New York, and neither of us dared laugh. I imagine that my face turned purple, but without photographic evidence, I can't prove it.

At that time, restaurants were not to raise their prices for the "duration," so ways to save money were very important. Besides the obvious savings realized by the free toilet paper and one-napkin rule, there were other signs of shortages, of butter and sugar for instance. Guests were to select one dessert only. During one dinner, Mary pointed out to Henry that a guest several tables away ordered two desserts. Mary became visibly angry but, in an aside to me, whispered that I could have as many desserts as I wanted. I was that important, or at least for that one moment, I was important.

Mary and Henry visited us once in Knox either before or after the war, I'm not sure which, but I do remember that visit, or rather, the aftermath. Henry told us later that

Mary said when they were probably 15 or 20 miles away, "I surely wish I had Helen's piano with us." When Henry asked Mary why she wanted the piano, she said it was because she had left her ring on it. My father retold that story for the rest of his life.

Mary and Henry later managed the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park. Though I never saw them again, when I was married in 1957, they sent me two very delicate glass bowls, with the smaller bowl inside the larger one. Two very small toothpick holders hung on the side of the large bowl. I sent them a note thanking them for the beautiful chip and dip present. My mother got a phone call from an agitated Mary, who asked her, "Helen, doesn't Iseli know a lobster bowl when she sees one?"

Mary, apparently I didn't, but I do now.

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## **OVERHEARD ON THE STREETS**

**by Max Gross**

Some time in the early 1960s, while walking in the vicinity of the University Club on 16th Street in Washington, D.C., I heard Bobby Baker ask the manager of the club: "I'll be going away for awhile. Can I get a discount on my club dues?"

**Editor's note:** During the 1940s and '50s, Bobby Baker worked variously for Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic National Committee, and the Senate. He was accused of bribery and arranging sexual favors, and in the '60s, went to prison for tax evasion.

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## **AT CAMP**

by **Betty Aptaker**

It was 1969—the summer of Woodstock, Chappaquiddick, and Neil Armstrong's pioneering walk on the moon.

It was also the summer that I, along with four of my five kids and our Cocker Spaniel, Sandy, spent at Camp Kokosing, a kids' camp in Thetford, Vermont.

I'd had a long stretch of years of heavy-duty demands made on me as wife, mother, and caretaker of dependent elderly parents. I was also toying with the idea of entering the job market at a time when I had limited employable skills.

I needed a break, and opportunity came in the form of a position for me as the camp's office manager in exchange for my kids attending as campers at a greatly reduced rate.

My oldest son, who had just graduated from high school, was occupied by summer theater. My husband remained at home

but traveled to Vermont for weekend visits.

The camp job was ideal. My then 15- and 13-year-old sons and my 10- and 7-year-old daughters could have an overnight camp experience. I could be near enough to keep an eye on them, while, for the most part, they were separated from me.

I was mostly on my own.

Things about Kokosing that appealed to me: it was an interracial camp (unusual at that time), and there were a number of inner-city kids there on scholarship.

The counseling staff was drawn from countries around the world. Another plus! Because the office needed to be staffed from morning to night, there were two of us who covered it in shifts. My young coworker liked having her evenings free for socializing, and since that held no allure for me, I happily took the late shift, giving me most of the daylight hours to myself. What an indulgence! I spent my days lazing, reading, kayaking, and lazing some more.

Snapshots of the summer: Josie, a black girl from the projects, gleefully water skiing on the lake; the scent of pot wafting down to my room from the room above mine that was occupied by some of the younger staff; skinny-dipping one night with a few of the female counselors and having some of the male counselors steal our clothing; Kalu, a counselor from Liberia, giving a

demonstration of balancing a basketful of stuff on her head as she made her way around camp; the fun and novelty of weekend dates with my husband when he visited; my distaste for the parents who violated camp rules against sending sweet treats by mailing them concealed in the cut-out pages of books; anxiety about the number of counselors and older campers who stole away to Woodstock; near panic when the camp owner, returning from a field trip with a truckload of campers (including my son David and my niece Rosanne), veered to avoid a collision and miraculously stopped just short of a steep drop.

Friendships and memories in abundance for me and for my kids (and maybe even for Sandy).

I'd tested my wings, and I ruled it a successful summer. Still it was seven years before I made a new working experience for myself with the advent of the women's movement.

But that's another chapter.

## SALPIGLOSSIS by Glenna Follmer

I could not say your name  
But you stopped me in my tracks  
So exquisite, the colors of stained glass

There are no identifying tags in this  
college conservatory

The Botany major, friendly, cautiously  
re-potting a chubby cactus,  
Must look you up in a musty reference  
volume.

You—on your bed of rounded rocks  
Who thrive here in your temperature-  
controlled clear palace  
Are blessed with a sky of heavenly light  
Sheltered in your glass cage, poised for  
visitors.

“Velvet trumpet flower,” she says, or  
“Painted tongue,” or  
“Scalloped tube tongue.”  
All your attributes . . .

At home I search for you:  
Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds,  
World Wonders Gardens,  
Renee's Seeds,  
W. Atlee Burpee Company—  
And there you are. Maybe you are not  
so extraordinary  
But where have you been all my  
gardening life?

I will order your seed packet in  
January—  
(There may be a rush, who knows,

royalty is popular again)  
I will be your ambassador bearing  
you from Chile  
I will pose you for pictures . . .  
and finally touch you.

I can not wait for your majesty's  
appearance at Pennswood

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## **GRAVEYARD IMAGES** by Kathy Hoff

When I was young, a favorite place for family outings was nearby Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford, Connecticut. Cedar Hill is one of those elegant nineteenth-century park-like burial grounds that invite pleasant leisurely strolls without undue reminders of its ultimate purpose.



Immediately inside the imposing stone gatehouses at the entrance stretch introductory acres featuring lawn, shrubbery, trees, a pond—without any graves at all. I have many pictures of me as a toddler under flowering dogwood or peeking



through the railings of a rustic bridge in this first part of Cedar Hill.

Past the pond and on up the hill, the burial monuments begin. And many are indeed way too elegant and imposing to be called gravestones. Mother and Dad guided my early education in art, architecture, and history using the towering angel-topped column memorializing Samuel Colt or the massive catafalque-shaped polished rose granite block above J. P. Morgan. They pointed out the monument of Horace Wells, pioneer user of anesthesia, with its bronze bas relief of an angel, ministering arms outstretched, flying above a recumbent sufferer. The favorite angel of my childhood, though, was a life-size winged statue barring entry to the mysterious locked metal doorway of an imposing pink-granite pyramid. Altogether I grew up finding cemeteries fascinating and happy places.

Many years later, then, when I began preparing an American Studies course in folklore, it seemed natural to go back to graveyards and study the images used across centuries to represent death. Colonial gravestones I photographed

from Maine to New Jersey were meant to educate in far less comfortable manner than Cedar Hill. Headstone images carved in enduring slate or red sandstone, often shaded by an adjacent church, were traditionally winged soul effigies or skulls intended as a *memento mori* or reminder of death and the flight of the soul to judgment. Sometimes the wings disappeared in favor of an unadorned skull and crossbones. And sometimes, too, these grim images were reinforced by equally grim epitaphs, for example:

PREPARE TO DIE FOR DIE YOU MUST  
AND SLEEP BESIDE ME IN THE DUST.

Puritan images and words cautioned visitors to be mindful of their immortal souls, given humanity's mortal bodily condition and the Last Judgment.



With the weakening of conservative Puritanism and the coming of the Age of Reason, the grimness softened. Markers in nineteenth-century cemeteries like Cedar Hill trend away from the traditional headstone and footstone representing a bed-like resting place (the deceased's head facing east toward the rising sun in anticipation of

awakening at the Resurrection) to classical imagery and architecture—for example, cinerary urns, columns, obelisks. Alternatively, nineteenth-century stones display sentimental Romantic motifs: weeping willows, little lambs, roses with broken stems. Often, like the pyramid with guardian angel I admired as a child, the imagery mixes periods and cultures—Romantic willows weep over classical cinerary urns. The size and elaborateness of granite monuments to the wealthy, such as Colt's and Morgan's, denote secular success rather than religious rigor. Middle-class markers of the period tend to be easily-eroded white limestone, their memorial words and images of willows or little lambs melting over time into insignificance.

As in earlier eras, current gravestones reflect the taste and temperament of the times. By the late twentieth century, laser etching democratized gravestones by making it possible to customize granite for ordinary folks. Cemeteries in upstate New York where I summer contain many stones etched with sylvan scenes of deer and trees. An undertaker commissioned an image of his Queen-Anne-style funeral home; the family of a teen who died in an accident, his fatal red car (color, too, now being available). Even further from Cedar Hill's Victorian angels or Colonial Puritan winged skulls, several summers ago I came across a plastic angel waving her solar-powered wings hopefully above a young man's grave. I have yet to see the latest technology—a gravestone with a digital

QR code that can, via smartphone scanning, open a whole file of memorial photos and biographical information.

My parents chose to be buried at Cedar Hill. On a slope downhill from the ridge where the Colts, Morgans, and other luminaries reside, Mother and Dad lie near a line of trees in an area of modest modern gray granite markers with simple or no imagery, just plain incised names and dates. (Cedar Hill regulations forbid colored imagery and plastic angels.) But I don't visit them there. A couple of years ago, my brother sent pictures of their shared stone and of live, not etched, deer he photographed at Cedar Hill during his visit. I responded in a thank-you e-mail: "Thanks for the photos of the marker and the deer. Many happy memories of Cedar Hill Cemetery. I'm glad that Mother and Dad are at rest there. I don't think much about the gravesite, though, as they are so alive many times a day in my memories."

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## A SWISS SUMMER by Kay Silberfeld

In 1961, I went to Zurich for the summer to learn how to restore polychromed wood sculpture. I was a painting conservator, but the man who had trained me thought it might be a good career move for me to add a more unusual specialty.

On one of my first days, the conservator I was working for, who was from Germany, told me, proudly, that his father, a reporter, had been sent by his Bonn newspaper to Israel to cover the Eichmann trial. In response to my saying, "That must have been a difficult time for your father to be in Israel," he replied, "Oh, not at all, they were very nice to him," an indication that our relationship would not go well.

Partway through the summer, Pierre, a local Swiss painting conservator, came to meet me and suggested I come and work with him. I accepted, and I suspect the sculpture conservator was glad to see me go. It occurs to me now, that perhaps the two of them had arranged this switch unbeknownst to me! In any event I certainly benefited, and the rest of the summer was a pleasure—partly because I was much happier working on paintings and partly because I enjoyed Pierre and his family.

Pierre's studio was on the ground floor of an old, narrow, four-story house on a square of old houses, each looking as if it

had come out of one of my childhood fairy tales. Pierre and his wife and his parents lived on the upper floors. After I'd worked there for a while, Pierre asked me if I would like to meet his bedridden father. This gave me an explanation for an unhappiness I had sensed in the house. Since I knew Pierre's brother who lived in New York, Pierre wanted me to meet the father, who had also been a painting conservator, and report back to his brother about the visit. The visit went better than I had anticipated. Even close to death, the father had what I now knew was the family-wide charm.

Aside from restoring small (easel) paintings, Pierre also directed the restoration of large paintings hanging in public buildings throughout Switzerland, including churches. I went along with him and one of his assistants on an overnight inspection trip to check on the work being done by his staff. That night away, we had a delicious dinner of cheese fondue and a lot of wine. Pierre was a fast-and-loose driver, and after dinner, he drove us up a small mountain. Near the top, we sat on a bench outside of a farm house, overlooking the view down into the valley. The house and barn were in one building, a not unusual situation, so that heat generated by the animals would help warm the house. As we sat there, we heard the sounds of the animals moving around, including the

mooring of the cows. And then came the wild ride careening back down the mountain. The whole evening was wrapped up in Swiss wine, and I have no memory of any of the restoration projects we inspected.

Unexpectedly, it turned out to be a wonderful summer: going to the picturesque house every day, working on paintings, being a guest of that family, and especially, going with them on picnics in the spectacular Swiss countryside.

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## AT PENNSWOOD

by Henry Martin



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**WHAT TIME THE  
LUNKER\*?**  
by John Wood

(Venue: Lake Luxembourg,  
Core Creek Park)

The wind judged 15, give or take,  
Measured by the tossed-up hair and  
ruffled surface of the lake.  
Fishermen, enticing lures or worms  
for bait,  
Sport shiny rods and reels,  
Brand-new you think or postulate  
Right out of L.L.Bean's and up to  
date.  
Some place their rods in fashioned  
Vs aside the lake,  
Then settle down and wait.  
Others, hip-booted, with optimistic  
nets,  
Step in the water's edge,  
Looking for advantage,  
To cast their favored bait.  
Each shares a common fate:  
They have arrived, if not too soon,  
too late.  
The fish, they find, prefer another  
time to dine.  
Just so, each knows, that when they  
come again,  
And come they must,  
It will be lunker's dinner time.

\* Fisherman's term for a fish of  
considerable heft.

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