

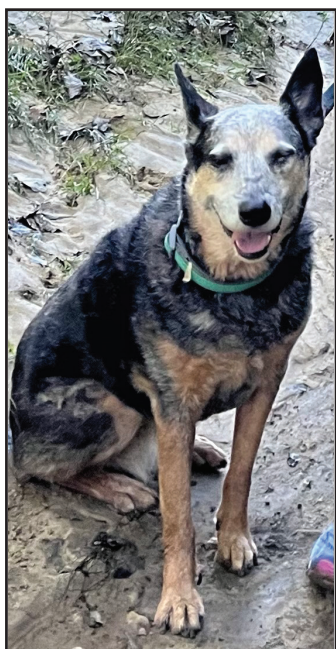
FALL 2025

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

— Stories by and for Riderwood Residents —

Bullet's Story

as told to Margaret Holley



My name is Bullet and I am a blue heeler, descended from a long line of Australian cattle dogs. I was born into a bad situation in Colorado, but fortunately, I managed to escape and get adopted by my human mother, Jenny. Jenny didn't have any cows for me to work with,

so I had to make do herding goats, horses, geese and other critters, along with the occasional human visitors she did have. They say I flew around like a speeding bullet, rounding up all those people and animals, so that's how I got the name, Bullet.

Jenny and I had a good life on the farm in Colorado and later on the farm in Texas. A few years ago, Jenny and I moved to Riderwood, a senior community in Maryland, along with

Jenny's red heeler dog, Oso Rojo, and her cats, Zorri and Arthur. Now I live with my Aunt Margy, Jenny's sister, in Forest Crossing. Zorri and Arthur live with Jenny down the hall. Oso Rojo has since passed away and gone to the Rainbow Bridge, a place where pets go when they die.

I have a good life at Riderwood. My daily meal plan includes a bowl of senior dog food for breakfast and another bowl for dinner, along with doggy dental treats for snacks in between. Once in a while, Margy and Jenny bring home something called signature dining and they give me a little bite of it.

Margy takes me for walks four times a day, so I can patrol the premises, smell all the smells and do my business. I like to walk around the Gazebo Lake and see other dogs and humans and bark at the geese and birds and squirrels.

Inside, I smell under all the doors of other apartments that have dogs, so I can figure out who's there and what's going on. Some people have statues of

— continued on page 3

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

Contents

Bullet's Story <i>as told to Margaret Holley</i>	1
America Has Changed <i>by Mike Brennan</i>	4
My Grandfather's Desk <i>by Ed Vilade</i>	5
Haikus <i>by Bill Gordon</i>	6
A Drop in the Bucket <i>by David Lassiter</i>	7
A Mystery Explained <i>by Betty Nordan</i>	9
The Sea <i>by Mike Brennan</i>	10
How a "Masterpiece " Painting Disappeared from our Door Front Exhibit <i>by Yona Sabar</i>	11
John Phoenix <i>by Roland L. Reed</i>	12
"Bulletin Just In..." <i>by Bob Kuhns</i>	13
Jug of Wine <i>by Bob Kuhns</i>	15
Roof-Top Faith <i>by Jim Huitema</i>	16
Rear View Romance <i>by Roland Reed</i>	18
Eulogy <i>by Anonymous</i>	19



EDITOR
Ed Vilade

PRODUCTION
Nancy Gehman

COMMUNICATIONS
Margaret Holley

Tales from Riderwood is published periodically by the Writers Guild, Riderwood Village, Inc., Silver Spring, MD 20904. All materials appearing herein are considered copyrighted by the authors and may be published only by their permission.

Bullet's Story *continued from page 1*

dogs or other animals on their shelves and on the floor in front of their apartments, which is confusing. They look like dogs or other animals, but they never move and they don't smell right. When I bark too much or get too excited and worked up about other critters, Margy tries to make me practice civility.

They say it's good for humans and dogs to learn new things to exercise our brains. When I was a youngster, Jenny taught me all the commands, using both English and hand signals. Now, Margy is teaching me the commands in Spanish, so I'll be trilingual. Sometimes people try to talk in code by spelling words so I won't understand what they are saying, but I have learned what O-U-T-S-I-D-E and D-O-G and D-O-G F-O-O-D mean.

Jenny comes to visit me at Margy's place every day and sometimes I go visit my kitty friends, Zorri and Arthur, at Jenny's place. We all like to sit on the couch and watch TV, but Margy says we have to be careful and not overdo it, or we'll turn into couch potatoes. I think it would be pretty boring to be a potato.

My favorite TV shows are commercials about dog food, and I

also like to watch westerns with lots of horses and cows running around. On Saturday mornings, we watch Lucky Dog to see shelter dogs getting rescued and trained and adopted. Margy and Jenny tell me I am a lucky dog, too. We get traumatized by ASPCA commercials that show animals being abused and mistreated, so Margy and Jenny turn the channel to something else.

When night comes, Margy and I get in the night-night bed. Margy reads a book and I roll around on my back and make funny noises and play with my toys. Then, Margy turns out the light and we go night-night.

Like other residents of Riderwood, I'm getting older and tired and hard-of-hearing, and I can't see as well as I used to, although I can still smell things a million times better than any human. I have arthritis and cancer and I don't like trips to the vet or cancer treatments, but they don't happen often or give me bad side effects.

I still enjoy my food and all my regular activities, and my last ultrasound showed no more cancer. My birthday is on the Fourth of July, so I hope to celebrate one or two more of those with some new toys and bites of signature dining before it's time for me to visit Rainbow Bridge. ■



America Has Changed

by Michael Brennan

Since I was a youth, in the 1950s
America has undergone a great many changes
I grew up in a small town in upstate New York
During college in summers, I worked at a paper-mill that sat on
the Hudson River

After college, I left this small New York town
The papermill closed in 2023
Since then many manufacturers, in many cities, have shut their doors
This has changed these cities and the people who live there

America has become different since I was young
A number of changes followed the Viet Nam war
The country lied to strengthen our involvement in Iraq
And it lived through a disaster in Afghanistan

Change in America was aggravated by 9/11
I don't think it has been the same place since
The country became more warlike with other nations
And very defensive against terrorism

I am not pleased with all this change in America
I have given considerable thought to the alterations
I should show courage and accept the alterations in the country
After all, there is really nothing new about change



My Grandfather's Desk

by Ed Vilade

The desk sits under a large window in our TV room — a room we almost never use. It is oak, I think, heavy and solid. The four drawers on each side of the kneehole have individual keyholes and built-up edges around the facing. The central drawer also has a keyhole, but the keys have been gone for generations.

The top is leather, which I notice lately is coming loose. At the back are rows of pigeonholes for sticking the types of bills that now come electronically. Atop the desk are pictures of my daughter and her husband on their wedding day and my wife with her sisters. My great-great-grandfather's citizenship certification occupies a place of honor. In the drawers are odds and ends — the flag that covered my

father's coffin, an issue of *Life Magazine* from the week I was born, and so on.

Decades ago, I sat regularly at the desk to write letters and do paperwork, but since computers, it is idled.

It was just as idle when I first saw it more than 70 years ago, in my grandfather's bedroom. I was staying with my grandparents and sleeping in a bed so high I had to be boosted up. I could see the desk from the bed, and it was in woeful shape — painted black and with a sheet of plywood nailed to replace a rolltop that had long since been ruined and removed. Atop the desk sat an enormous and somewhat scary tiger — emblem of my father's alma mater, Princeton. The room had been my father's until he went off to college, then war, then started a family. My aging and ailing grandfather then moved into the room and graciously gave it up for me whenever I visited.

As young children will, I explored the desk — quite carefully, considering my age. It was full of treasures — my grandfather's mysterious Masonic regalia, letters, cards and pictures attesting to his prowess in business as a younger man.

I can imagine now the desk

— *continued on page 6*

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

Grandfather's Desk *continued from page 5*

when new, brown as it is now, the roll-top and surface gleaming, my young grandfather sitting, working out how he would make his mark in the world.

For many years after he died, the desk sat, black, square and shabby, in a succession of houses and apartments occupied by my father. I sometimes wondered how it had looked when he was a boy as young as I had been, and if the sight of it ever took him back.

When he, in turn, died, it came to me. My wife had it dipped and refinished, with a new leather top and those pigeon holes no one ever filled. It moved with us around the country until she died, then accompanied

me to a new life, with a new wife.

And there it sits, unused but somehow necessary. Antique dealers will tell you that there is no market for brown furniture, and that refinished and altered pieces are even further devalued. So it's not worth much, except to me, as a link to a father, a grandfather, and even further back to a French ancestor who left his comfortable bourgeois life in Paris to move across the ocean. When I die, it will doubtless be trashed. But for now, it is staying where it is—where I can open the drawers every few months, touch that flag, and recall the tiger that once graced the top. ■

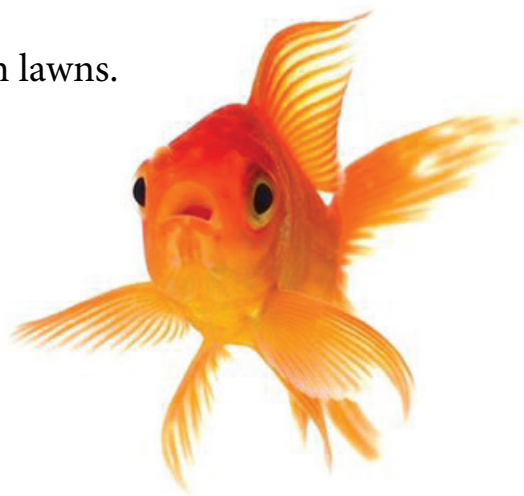
Haikus

by Bill Gordon

Downed power lines
Melt sidewalks and burn green lawns.
She left yesterday.

Oily blue green scum
Rings once crystalline pond.
The cancer has spread.

Jagged deep pothole
Tire buster—axle breaker
Now houses goldfish.



A Drop in the Bucket

by David Lassiter

Over the years, I've been fortunate to influence more lives than I ever imagined. How do I know this? Because life, in its own way, allowed me to reconnect with some of the people with whom I had once worked and they told me so.

In 1966, fresh out of college, I joined the Peace Corps. I was sent to South Korea to teach English in a rural, dusty middle and high school. "The toughest job you'll ever love," said the Peace Corps slogan and in hindsight, that was true beyond belief. As Volunteers, our individual efforts were part of a broader mission to help a struggling nation recover and rebuild after a devastating war. I gave it my all, did my best, and moved on with life, satisfied with my small contribution and grateful for how much I had grown from the experience. For years I believed I had received far more than I had given.

When asked to describe my Peace Corps experience I would say, with characteristic volunteer humility, that my efforts were just a "drop in the bucket." I was one of hundreds doing what I could in a small corner of the world. I truly believed that.

Forty years later the Korean government unexpectedly invited former Peace Corps Volunteers back to see how the country had changed. We were welcomed by high government officials and honored with receptions and ceremonies. But for me, the most powerful moment came when I returned to the school where I had once taught.

There, waiting for me, were a number of my former students. They rushed forward with wide smiles, big hugs, and heartfelt greetings. Alongside them stood several of my old colleagues, teachers who had taken me under their wings, helping a young foreigner find his way. I was deeply moved.

The day was filled with reconnections, memories, and laughter. The entire visit had been organized by one of my former students, now president of the school's PTA. Throughout the day, I listened in awe as former students shared what had become of their lives. One was now a school principal, another headed an international NGO. A third worked for the local mayor, while a fourth had been crowned Miss Korea and was now CEO of a national logistics company. And on it went.

They told me that learning

— continued on page 8

A Drop in the Bucket *continued from page 7*

English had opened doors educationally, professionally, and globally. And they credited the start of that journey to the time I had spent teaching them. It was joyful, tearful and humbling.

After my Peace Corps service, life moved on. I continued working with people in different ways, teaching, training, coaching, and consulting. Over the years, I helped innumerable individuals and organizations grow and become more effective. But I never fully knew the extent of the difference I was making. I kept describing my efforts the same way I had before, just another “drop in the bucket.”

Later, as a leadership consultant and executive coach I was able to connect with hundreds of people seeking to understand, grow and impact their organizations. One of these clients in his early career stood out particularly—he expressed a clear desire to become president of the United States. A surprisingly ambitious goal I thought. But he was quite sincere. At the time he was a minor political appointee in a major government agency. Over the years I followed his career as he returned to his home state and within a few years was elected to the executive position in his county.

He is now running for office in his state senate, his path forward undoubtedly still clear, his eyes still on the prize.

Now, as I reflect in the autumn of my life, I begin to see that those “drops” had impact far beyond my awareness.

It has been a gift to reconnect with people with whom I’ve worked and see where their paths have taken them. The greatest surprise has been discovering that my small efforts, those quiet, unremarkable “drops in the bucket”, actually made a difference, often far more than I ever imagined.

But here’s the bigger point: this isn’t just about me. It’s about all of us. Most of us move through life never fully seeing the ripple effects of our actions. We teach, we help, we listen, we care but we rarely get the chance to hear about or see the impact. A great number of our most meaningful contributions go unnoticed and unacknowledged. And yet, they matter.

Take a moment to look back on your own life. Think about the people you’ve mentored, supported, encouraged or simply showed up for. Your “drops in the bucket” may have

— *continued on page 9*

A Mystery Explained

by Betty Nordan

We found our way through the unfamiliar city, made our way into the unknown building, and arrived in the designated office, as scheduled, all before the crack of dawn. Soon my sister was sent to the area where she would spend her day. I went to the area where I would spend my day—waiting.

The wait was long. I finished the morning paper, went for coffee, more reading, lunch, more reading, and so on throughout the day. Occasionally, but not predictably, chimes would be played on the building's public address system. Strange, I thought. Oh well. As I looked out a window, unusual parking spaces beside the building caught my attention. Some were lined and painted in pink. Others were lined and painted in blue. Weird, I thought. Oh well.

Before the sun went down, Sis was moved to the intensive care unit where she remained for what seemed to be days and days. Then she spent more days and days in a regular care room. As I waited around the hospital, I would hear the chimes, unpredictably, both day and night. The doctors eventually declared that, between the

special surgery and the radiation treatments to follow later, the cancer is unlikely to recur. Whew.

And the chimes? I finally asked a nurse about the chimes. “That’s a lullaby. The hospital plays that lullaby every time a baby is born. This small hospital is primarily a maternity hospital. Secondly, the hospital provides specialty surgery for cancer patients such as your sister.” What a contrast I thought.

At last, discharge day. Yay! For the discharge process we didn’t get to use a pink or blue parking space. Those are reserved for the new baby and family who are going home. That was okay. Because we were going home, too. ■

A Drop in the Bucket

continued from page 8

changed someone’s path in ways you never imagined. Every kind word, every act of patience, every moment of generosity has the potential to spark something greater—even when you can’t see it, even when no one tells you.

Your efforts matter. They always have. And they probably shaped a legacy far deeper than you’ll ever know. What’s important is that you did it. And wouldn’t it be a blessing to one day find that out? ■

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

The Sea *by Mike Brennan*

The pelicans fly by in formation usually going south
They are often in odd numbers 5, 7 or 11 I am not sure where they are going
Maybe to roost, eat or mate
Some time ago we invited my mother down to stay at our house near
the ocean
My father died when she was 42
She never remarried
I wonder if she is thinking about him, as she stares out at the waves
The sand is wet and warm under our feet
Big eyes spring up occasionally attached to a sand crab
Life by the sea
For three years my family lived on the other side of the country It too had a
beautiful ocean
The whales would swim north in the spring, refugees from Mexico
The seals could be found year round sleeping on the cliffs below LaJolla
For a few years my wife and I owned a house on the Chesapeake Bay
We lived where the Osprey would breed
I often ran on the beach by the water
And kayaked and caught bass in the Bay
But ten years ago I fell on the floor, following a stroke
I flew in a helicopter up to a Washington DC hospital
I had four operations on my brain
I now, often dream about the sea, the pelicans, and the sand crabs with
the big eyes.



How a ‘Masterpiece’ Painting Disappeared from our Door Front Exhibit

by Yona Sabar
(Emeritus Professor, UCLA)

When we moved to Riderwood about three years ago, our then-fifteen year-old granddaughter brought us two gifts to decorate our front door: A figure of an old Chasidic Jew, with white beard, black hat and suit, who when you shake his right hand, sings for you the popular Hebrew song Hava Nagila “Let us Rejoice,” to cheer us up; and a painting that she herself painted. It is very dramatic picture of two burnt trees, their original leaves turned charcoal, dropping like dripping tears, probably inspired by the frequent fires in Los Angeles area, where we had lived for almost 50 years. I find the two trees facing heaven asking for salvation and the immediate green background as comforting future.

One evening after returning home from dinner at Glen, the adjacent dining room at Orchard Point, I noticed right away the missing picture from the front door “exhibit.” We assumed right away it was stolen. I called my son and sent email to Pheobe. we all felt sad about the lost picture but also felt “proud” that it



was stolen, like a precious masterpiece from a famous museum. Also we hoped that it would be perhaps returned after a day or two, after the thief began to feel remorse. I started thinking who the thief could be and remembered a lady once commenting to me: “what a lovely mysterious picture! I stop to look at it a couple of minutes each time I pass by.” I see the lady from time to time, and I began wondering how to tell her about the loss and motivate her to discreetly return it to its place.

A few days later our son Ariel came to visit us and right away started looking for the missing painting. He saw a pile of mail on a table and casually looked at it and lo and behold he noticed something hard; he turned over and saw it was the painting. How did it come inside from the front door exhibit? My wife brings the mail inside, but she doesn’t bother to check it,

— continued on page 12

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

John Phoenix

by Roland L. Reed

John Phoenix,
farmer, father,
husband to Lethe,
worked the fields
and his boys,
fed and milked
his adoring cattle,
stick and bled
at butchering time
the hogs he'd fed
and fed their
spring-offs for
a similar slaughter,
until he was
eighty-something,
still lean as a boy,
but hard and dry
as a seasoned stick.

Led the singing
Sundays, set us right
by infallible tuning
fork and precise
tenor;
trained us all up
with do to do
scale
so no piano
needed to hold us
all together,
upstanding,
full voiced
and gloriously
harmonic,
like the family
and the farm
he conducted.

Will it all hold,
now he has entered
the ground he tilled?
Nothing stays,
no one is fixed,
but example so
rich and fertile
must bear fruit
somehow,
we must believe
or cease
to strive.

How a Masterpiece Painting Disappeared *continued from page 11*

assuming since we retired in Riderwood, we don't get any interesting, personal mail; all we get is pleas for donations, like from an Indian college, etc. with a bunch of "free" gifts. It seems that the unframed painting fell on its front and got mixed in the mail that my wife brought in, thus "disappearing, getting stolen." Well, we were

overjoyed, but also a bit disappointed that nobody stole our masterpiece... However, we were consoled that a dear resident of Riderwood, Professor William Metcalf, asked me during its disappearance: "What happened to the painting that was here?" He missed it for it reminded him of his late mother's paintings. ■

“Bulletin Just In...”

by Bob Kuhns

San Francisco 1998—Bob Kuhns is seen alone at Planet Hollywood. Is he on the hunt? Not a chance. He just has several hours to kill in downtown San Francisco before his shuttle out to the airport for a gosh-awful red-eye connecting flight back home. He has tried walking in and out of several stores and has, apparently, no desire to shop. So, wondering, “What is the big attraction in Planet Hollywood?” he entered.

Please recognize that Bob has been in one Movie Theater in two years, but has visited several dozen times in National Parks, Forests, Wildlife Preserves, plus state and local equivalents in the same two years. This is NEWS!

Therefore, the Hollywood Pundits are trying to speculate on his unexpected visit to this massive home of Hollywood hype. The Pundits have observed him examining the many large TV screens all around the room running disjointed clips of recent movies, and worldwide openings of other Planet Hollywood restaurants. He looks disinterested and unmesmerized. Therefore, he is not here to evaluate the cinematography.

Across the aisle from his table is a glass enclosed display of an eight-inch high (cute-phase) gremlin from the movie “Gremlins.” Bob has studied it more than any other of the zillions of props, decorations and designs that flood the visual senses. So one Pundit has stated that Bob is here to arrange a photo session depicting a gremlin in some awesome setting to be used for the promotional posters of the yet unannounced next release.

The other Pundits say, “No way.” Bob is an expert at keeping secrets and would not telegraph his mission so obviously.

His dinner is now on the table and Bob shows one of his awesome skills to anyone who notices it. Bob picks up the brand-new ketchup bottle and deftly shakes out just the right amount on his french-fries, not by pounding on the end of the bottle, but by moving the bottle rapidly forward against his other hand with the open end aimed at the pile of stringy potatoes, letting inertia push the red sauce out onto the plate. No wasted motions. The Pundits all take notes.

One realizes that Bob has spent a lot of time studying the zebra patterned wall covering on a central column and as wall-to-wall carpeting.

— *continued on page 14*

“Bulletin Just In...”

continued from page 13

Is he getting ready to kick off a new environmental campaign to save the zebras? No, there are many recorded times at hockey games when he was clearly anti-zebra.

Now Bob keeps looking back and forth between two plastic palm trees nearby. Save the plastics?

The TV shows clips of Kevin Bacon in Kevin Bacon movies. This could be a long night.

Among all the cardboard cutout displays of Hollywood performers as they appeared in familiar movies, Bob only smiles when he sees C3P0, R2D2 from “Star Wars” and Sean Connery as James Bond from one of the very early episodes. Sean is with Ursula Andress. Nobody remembers the name of the character she played, but Bob remembers Ursula.

The TVs have moved on to clips from science fiction flicks and Bob seems riveted to the rapidly changing scenes. Whenever a “Star Wars” clip appears, Bob smiles. Counting movie theaters and television screenings, Bob has seen the series of three movies more times than any other film made. Therefore, it is no surprise that he



shows signs of recognition. Then a single clip in black and white of a sleek silvery robot walking out of a flying saucer brings a smile. “The Day the Earth Stood Still” was one of the first science fiction movies Bob ever saw.

The Pundits know these things about Bob and therefore discard them as clues as to why Bob is here. The place is noisy, Bob hates Noise. The place is disjointed visually; Bob photographs the organization in nature, even in abstracts.

It is too late! He has finished eating, paid his bill and is leaving. The Pundits all agree now. They will not publish anything about this special event, because they cannot explain it. ■

Jug of Wine

by Bob Kuhns

In the summer of 1969, during the last nine months of my enlistment in the U.S. Army, I was assigned to a small unit near Ankara, Turkey. I signed up for a multi-day bus tour of the historic Cappadocia areas. Volcanic ash deposits from long ago gave the residents a soft material of ash rock that could be easily carved into. There are many early Christian churches carved into caves, with amazing artwork, painted directly on the walls. A multi-level underground city remains invisible from the surface but walkable from obscure entrances.

At the end of the tour, we were subjected to a long evening bus ride back to Ankara. Soon after we started, the Turkish tour guide told the bus driver to stop at a roadside donkey winery. What's a "roadside donkey winery" you ask? A lone street vendor, leading a donkey with saddle bags totting jugs of home vintage wine for sale. The guide bought a few jugs of local wine, fresh off the donkey's saddle bags, to share with the passengers on the way home.

One by one each of us decided to take a swig straight from the jug. Perhaps the alcohol would kill any

pathogens from the previous imbibers. Inhibitions began to loosen.

The Turkish Guide eventually shared his feelings about Americans. "You Americans are so rude. You don't understand Turkish courtesies."

"For example, if you buy a new car, you will drive it over to your friend's place and offer them a ride in your fancy car. A Turk would never do that. Your friend may not be able to afford such a car. It's an insult to wave that wealth in their face." Ugly American!

"Also, suppose I invite you, my friend, to join me bar hopping together. We will go from one place to another having a good time. Then around 11 pm, you will look at your watch and say that you must go home now."

"A Turk knows that the host determines when the event is over. You accepted the invitation. Now you have committed to honoring the host with your company until he says it's over. You insult your host's plans by leaving early." Ugly American!

I plead guilty of being an Ugly American by his description. I have committed both transgressions. That was not the end of the conversations during that long, jug of wine bus ride. I may have been too lubricated to remember the rest. ■

Roof-Top Faith

by Jim Huitema

Dad was having the old shingles replaced on our house. The new ones were touted as being made of the newest and finest roofing material available, asbestos, guaranteed to last 50 years. Their only problem, as far as we knew then, was brittleness. You had to tread lightly on asbestos shingles. The reroofing was one of the first things Dad had done after the war, so I must have been ten or eleven at the time. The roofers, like most of the people Dad hired from time to time to do things that farming didn't leave time for, lived in the neighborhood and were known by most of the farmers. Some years later Dad would hire them again, this time to build an addition to the house.

I had been watching the roofers work from our yard. They moved about easily, almost casually, occasionally walking right down to the edge of the roof. Sometimes I caught snatches of what they were saying. I wanted to get closer, the better to see, the better to hear, and there was only one way to do that. My eyes focused on the ladder and followed its narrowing profile upward. Caution gave way to

curiosity, and I began to climb. Unlike the built-in ladders in the barn, this ladder swayed as I climbed, so I paused on each rung while the ladder and my nerves steadied. Once on the ladder, of course, I could no longer see the roofers, so I had to climb higher, and then higher still, higher than I had ever climbed in our barn, until my head cleared the roof line. Now I could see and hear the roofers. But why stop now? I was almost on the roof. I climbed one rung higher, then another rung, bringing my feet even with the edge of the roof. One of the roofers walked down to the ladder. I expected him to tell me to climb back down, but instead he reached out and helped me onto the roof. It was a heady moment.

Two stories is a long way to fall, so I moved about slowly and gingerly and kept well back from the edge. Though my head told me there was nothing to fear so long as I was careful, being up there was a scary experience, so after a few minutes I was ready to climb down. I was also worried that Mom or Dad might suddenly appear in the yard below.

I began to ease my way down the roof toward the ladder. The top of the ladder projecting above the

— continued on page 17

Roof-Top Faith

continued from page 16

eaves-trough looked tiny and unstable. I imagined that only a small bump could send it skittering away. I was considering how to hold it while simultaneously swinging my body around, off the roof, to plant a foot on a rung, when I became aware that one of the roofers was speaking to me. “Hey, kid,” he almost whispered, “did you know that if you had enough faith you could step off this roof and not fall?” I turned slowly around and looked at him in amazement. He was the youngest one in the crew, likely not long out of high school. He continued in an earnest tone to quote from various scriptures in support of his claim. He knew his Bible pretty well.

That should have been the end of it. Out on a farm there were many times when I would be on my own—walking to town for a piano lesson, for example, or exploring in the woods—and my parents had given me good advice for keeping safe. I knew not to get in a car with a stranger, knew that I should carefully weigh the risk when considering activities that were potentially dangerous, and knew that I should leave immediately and seek

safety if a stranger said or did something weird.

But I did nothing of the sort. Instead, I looked at the yard below and began turning over in my mind what the roofer had said. Had he simply told me to walk off the roof, I would have been on that ladder in a moment. But he had presented the act in terms of a test of faith, and somehow that made a difference. I had never thought about such a thing before, and I was far too young to understand the faith-issues involved, but now I actually felt some attraction to the idea of stepping off the roof. Presenting the act as a test of faith, a possible demonstration of faith, had given it a certain appeal. If I have faith, shouldn't I do something that shows it? And what might that be? In our local Methodist church, the importance of having faith was a major theme in both worship and Sunday school, so I knew about Peter, of course, and his attempt to walk on water; I was familiar with Jesus' admonition to his disciples about their lack of faith, and how they might move mountains if they had more of it; and I also knew the story of the devil tempting Jesus to throw himself off the roof of the Temple to prove who he was. Looking back, I can see that the devil's

— continued on page 18

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

Rear View Romance

a country & western legendary song
by Roland Reed

Rear view romance,
Looking back on our last dance
Wonderin', did we give it . . .
Did we give it a fair chance?

The last time I saw Billy
He was standing in the road
Hollarin' at me drivin' off
With my precious pick-up load.

The Silverado was a rockin'
As it jolted through the ruts.
The chassis trembled like the knockin'
Deep down inside my guts.

The rear view in the mirror
of Billy standin' on the hill
Clouded over with my tear drops
As the dust ate up my Bill

There on the seat beside me
Little Sally bawlin' too;
Not for her daddy left a standin'.
But 'cause her pants were full of poo.

She didn't know about that woman
Who'd horned in on Billy's heart.
But pick-up truckin' and a pamper
Would give us both a fresh new start.

All at once we were on asphalt.
The dust was left behind.
Though Billy's out of my rear vision
He's still standin' on my mind.

Roof-Top Faith *continued from page 17*

temptation was quite relevant to my situation, but at the time I simply felt a mixture of challenge, confusion, and uncertainty.

Perhaps faith is like the asbestos in the shingles I was standing on: some forms are beneficial while others are deadly. It took a long time for builders to learn that about asbestos; as for faith, I'm still in a learning mode. Back there on the roof I didn't take the young roofer's words for what they were, an incredibly thoughtless sugges-

tion. I couldn't sort it out, and in the end I fell back on my parents' advice. I got on that ladder and climbed down as fast as I could, wondering all the way, I must admit, if my faith was weak.

Naturally, I didn't mention any of this to my parents. Had I done so, it would not have gone well with me. Nor would it have gone well with the roofers. They likely would have lost any chance of doing more work for Dad. ■

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

Eulogy

by Anonymous

You left!

You are gone.

I didn't realize how important you had become in my life here until your abrupt vanishing made me think. Made me tally.

It surprised me how our many similar interests over time, knit together a friendship:

Monday meals and Sunday Brunches.

When we almost said in unison, "Want to get together and write?"

How we plotted and schemed to watch political debates as a community.

How you took me home with you for a holiday meal when I needed connection.

How you were always early, dependable.

How you were too lavish with gifts.

How dedicated you were to advancing racial truths, about righting wrongs.

How you read my scribbling and made it better with comments in the margins.

All of this happened between us in twenty-four months, give or take.

Your leaving like this must have deeper meaning.

What should this shock tell me about other fledgling friendships?

How do I appreciate them more, now, in the present, when everybody is still breathing?

Thank you, my friend.

You, a professor, teach as you take your leave.

You are missed.

Editor's note: The author of this poem wishes to remain anonymous. We honor their request, because the words reflect sentiments that most of us here at Riderwood have felt at one time or another.

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

Writer's Guild

The Writers Guild provides aspiring Riderwood writers a variety of opportunities to expand their writing skills through mutual aid and the promotion of activities of common interest. The group meets every fourth Monday from 3–4 PM in the Montgomery Station classroom. All are welcome.

Readings by Resident Writers & Discussion

The Writers Guild sponsors *Tales from Riderwood* available at Front Desks.

Hundreds of residents have chronicled in this publication the triumphs, challenges, influences, people and events that have shaped their personal and professional lives and experiences. For nearly 20 years their tales have entertained and inspired readers.

We invite Submissions for *Tales from Riderwood*

Personal Experience Stories, Memoirs, Biographical Sketches, Essays, Short Fiction, Original Poetry, Photos & Art

Length of Submissions: 850 words max for prose; 200 words for poetry

Send submission (preferably in a **WORD** document) via email to:
Charles (Ed) Vilade at evilade@icloud.com

The Editorial Board reserves the right to accept, edit, or reject all submissions.