

voices

ISSUE FOUR | WINTER 2021-2022



"Cat Nap" by Georgia Gong

Cover Art: “Cat Nap” by Georgia Gong

Contributing Editors: Deborah Dickerson and Melinda Rowe Williams
Design/Layout by Melinda Rowe Williams

CONTRIBUTORS



Lauren K. Chard is a native New Yorker, Paul Smith's College graduate and lover of the Champlain Valley mountain ranges. She enjoys photography, gardening, and cooking, all while living in pastoral Bridport, Vermont with her very talented and loving husband, Tom.



Thomas A. Chard returned to his art studio, A Far Shore, in western Addison County, after raising four children and successfully completing a 30 year career in Veteran programs with the State of New York. He is a juried artist, as well as poet and photographer. Thomas has exhibited in solo and artist group shows for many years throughout Saratoga county in NY and many locations in the Adirondacks. He is known for always saying "Keep your brushes wet."



Deborah Dickerson has had poems appear in Voices, Zig Zag Lit Mag and Tiny Seed Journal.



Abigail Gong is eight years old, and her favorite show is Avatar: The Last Airbender.



Georgia Gong likes to dance as the last rays of the golden sun filter through the leaves and the trees bow their leafy heads as the monarchs swirl around, adorned in color and light.



Sandra James submitted poems written by her grandmother Gracie Weaver Burch who began writing at 63 years old in 1940. Gracie took up the pen name Delight Weaver.



Kathleen Smith Kathleen enjoys dredging up memories and working them into stories. She loves sharing music with others, playing with her grandchildren and camping with her husband of 44 years.



Melinda Rowe Williams Creating things and making music all her life, she worked as a graphic designer, now teaches piano to 22 students, has "craft days" with friends, and shares a home with the ever faithful dog, Maggie.

Snow

by Georgia Gong

Tonight the snow shall fall to earth and settle on the trees
and fall upon the nests of the sleeping birds and bees.

It falls upon the rooftops and it glistens in moonlight.
It settles on a thousand sleeping villages tonight.

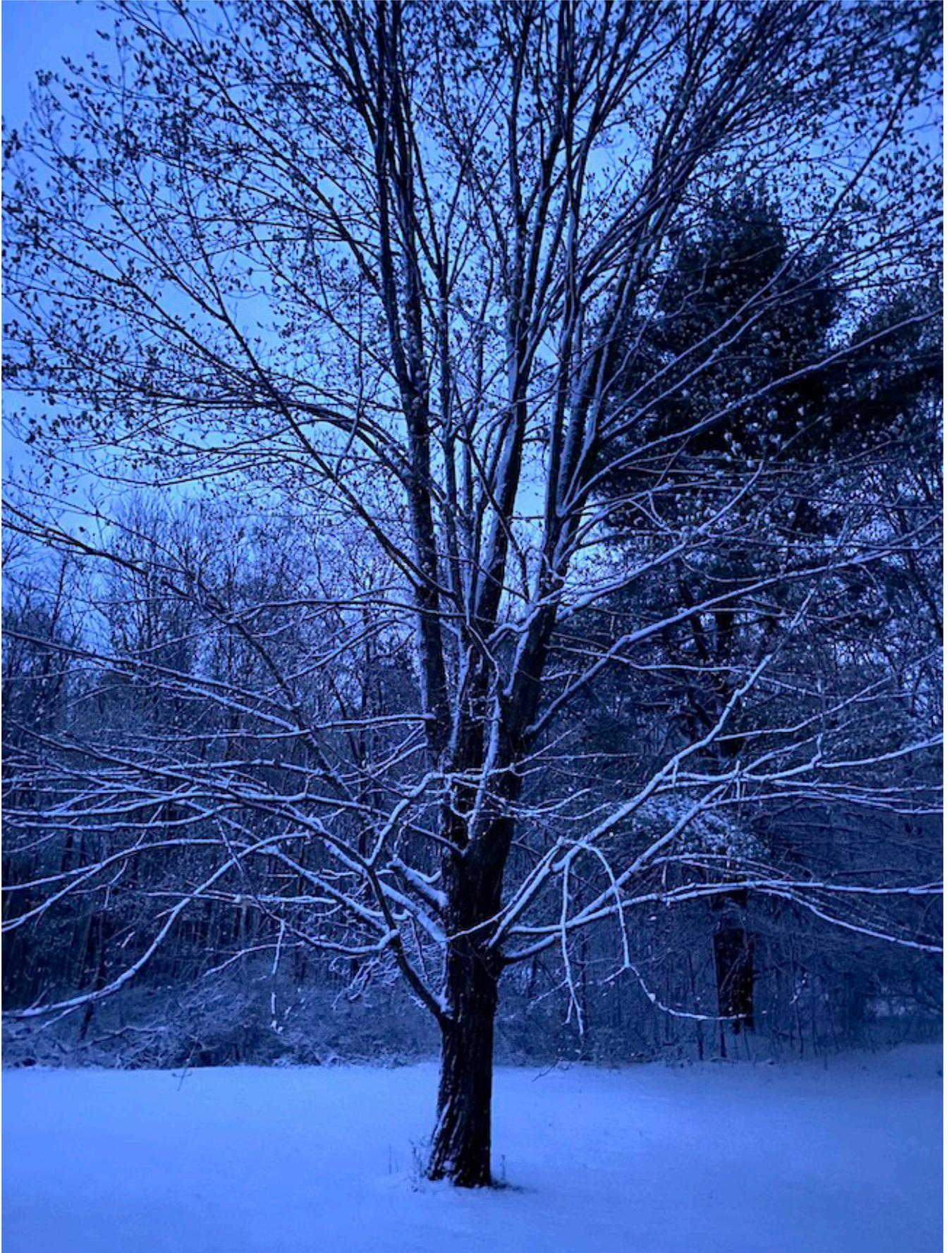
It might keep falling through the eve and even through the day
and every child will grab sleds and skis and run outside to play.

So when the winter looks dark and bleak and when you're feeling sad
just look out at the falling snow and know you'll soon be glad.

January 15, 2022



Trees at Sunset by Abigail Gong



Photograph by Kathleen Smith

Hungry

by Deborah Dickerson



The suet and seeds are set in feeders.
I wait for the first chickadee to alert
the banditry. And they will come to feast

in these hungry times. The garden sleeps
under a blanket of snow. The chipmunks sleep
burrowed beneath our shrinking woodpile. The sun
skims naked maple crowns and hemlocks
holding their thimble-sized cones. Paper birch
shiver in their sleep. And I wait
for the first chickadee, that evangelist
to spread the good news. Come. Eat.

The next morning brings the beating of wings that
echoes the beating of my heart. The birches below
my window blossom and sing with chickadees,
titmice, blue jays, and four species of woodpeckers.
The female cardinal waits in the apple tree for
the vermilion male to bring her a seed and place
it in her beak with a kiss, their courting ritual.

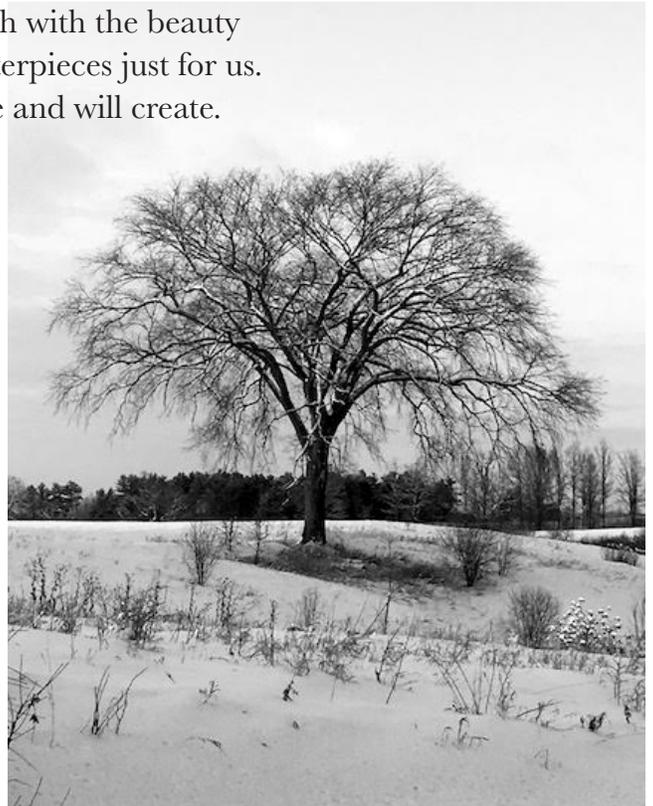
I read thank you notes left in the snow: the distinct
typeset of bird feet and the cursive of a mouse's tail
trailing between tiny paws.

Two Psalms by Thomas Chard



I Daisy and iris blooms are just a memory on this quiet winter day. They await God's call to make His painting of spring and summer come to perfection. For now the beauty of winter, it's snow and crispness will fill my being. What a gift to experience the glory of God's hand on a new canvas. He paints with love and touches each with the beauty of his creation. He displays his masterpieces just for us. Thank you my Lord for all you have and will create. I love you.

The Shanty
Photograph by
Thomas Chard



Bridport Elm
Photograph by
Lauren Chard

II Gray skies dominate while peace and love sing their song through winter's cold. Yet, I am warmed by the love of my Lord. He will carry me through these Covid times and heal and strengthen me. My faith is in Christ Jesus. I will cling to Him and remain steadfast in His love. For I know He will sustain me. He is my strength through any test or hardship. My spirit soars at the mention of His name. May we all feel His enduring love as it was, is and will be forever. God has blessed me and I will dwell in His house. Forever.

NOT IN 'KANSAS' ANYMORE

by Kathleen Smith

It's ragged and worn now, this pincushion cleverly made from canning jar rings, steel wool and two scraps of blood red velvet fabric. Masking tape, a length of fancy ribbon and a small plastic ring held it all together and gave it a dual purpose as a Christmas tree ornament. Mary softly explained that she had made it. "It's not the gift, but the giver," my mother used to say. It was almost Christmas and there was no Secret Santa gift exchange that I was aware of. I had not considered giving my co-workers even a token gift, let alone a handcrafted one. I was at a loss for words as I inwardly squirmed.

Mary was an elderly woman who worked with me at Hancock Fabrics in Houston, Texas. It was my first job after leaving Vermont at age 19. Living in a sprawling, fast-paced city like Houston was like moving to a different planet; I truly felt like a

I would discover another "ist" deep inside my heart when a group of foreigners came into the store one evening.

hick. But that didn't show up in the fabric store. I was confident using patterns, choosing fabric and notions, and wielding the large shears at the cutting table. There wasn't much I needed to learn to perform well at this job except how to work with others, especially Mary.

There was a gap of about fifty years between Mary and me. I inwardly groaned when she and I were on the same work hours, especially if it was a Saturday and even more so when we had a big sale. It was hard to keep up with the demands of the customers and Mary was oh-so-slow. She was also hard of hearing and her head bobbed a bit. "Just my luck," I sometimes muttered,

three deep at the cutting table and Mary, oblivious to the back-up, unable to hear me call her name, slowly folding remnants nearby. Mary didn't have a mean bone in her body and didn't seem to – or chose not to – notice my impatience with her. Perhaps she thought my attitude was characteristic of being a Yankee which, scout's

honor, was said of northerners like me who were moving into Houston by the droves; carpetbagger was another label for us. It was a boom time in the mid-1970s and thousands of people sought economic riches in this hot, humid city.

The squirming feeling I got from Mary didn't go away but I learned how to ignore and conceal it. Conceited in my adolescence, the problem wasn't me, of course, but the situation. I would discover another "ist" deep inside my heart when a group of foreigners came into the store one evening.



It was about ten minutes before closing when a co-worker told me to keep an eye on some odd- looking people fingering our most expensive fabrics. They were known to steal. The women had long black hair and were dressed in layers of gem-colored clothing, mid-calf length full skirts, vests, blouses, shawls. The man was clean-shaven and had on cloth pants, shirt, vest over which he wore a long heavy coat with patch pockets. I walked over to the area where the women were draping a length of creamy white satin over a younger woman. As non-chalantly as I could manage, I kept an eye on them while I tidied up bolts of fabric and listened to their strange language – guttural yet musical. I had taken Spanish and Russian in high school, but this didn't quite fit either. They were easy with one another and laughed, maybe at me? A movement out of the corner of my eye directed my scrutiny to the man now standing with his back to me at the large remnant table several rows away. Had he just put something in his coat? Summoning up my thin authority as an employee, I walked over and pleasantly asked, “May I cut that for you?” An expression of surprise briefly crossed his face but he quickly opened his arms, palms up in an expansive gesture to show me he had nothing to hide. I could not hold his gaze and busied myself with my receipt pad and pen. He sauntered back to his group at about the same time that the cashier at the front of the store turned off the radio signaling closing time. The women never paused but when the man joined them, they slowly moved toward the door. No purchases were made. Feelings of relief intermingled with curiosity as I left the store and got in my car. I drove past them getting into an old pickup, the man catching my eye ever-so-briefly. Decades later I would encounter Roma people on a mission trip to Romania. My experience would not be so benign but my heart was better prepared by then.

I left my job at Hancock Fabrics in the spring and was sorry to say goodbye to Mary. Her beautiful pincushion is the only treasure I've kept from those years in Houston. ☹

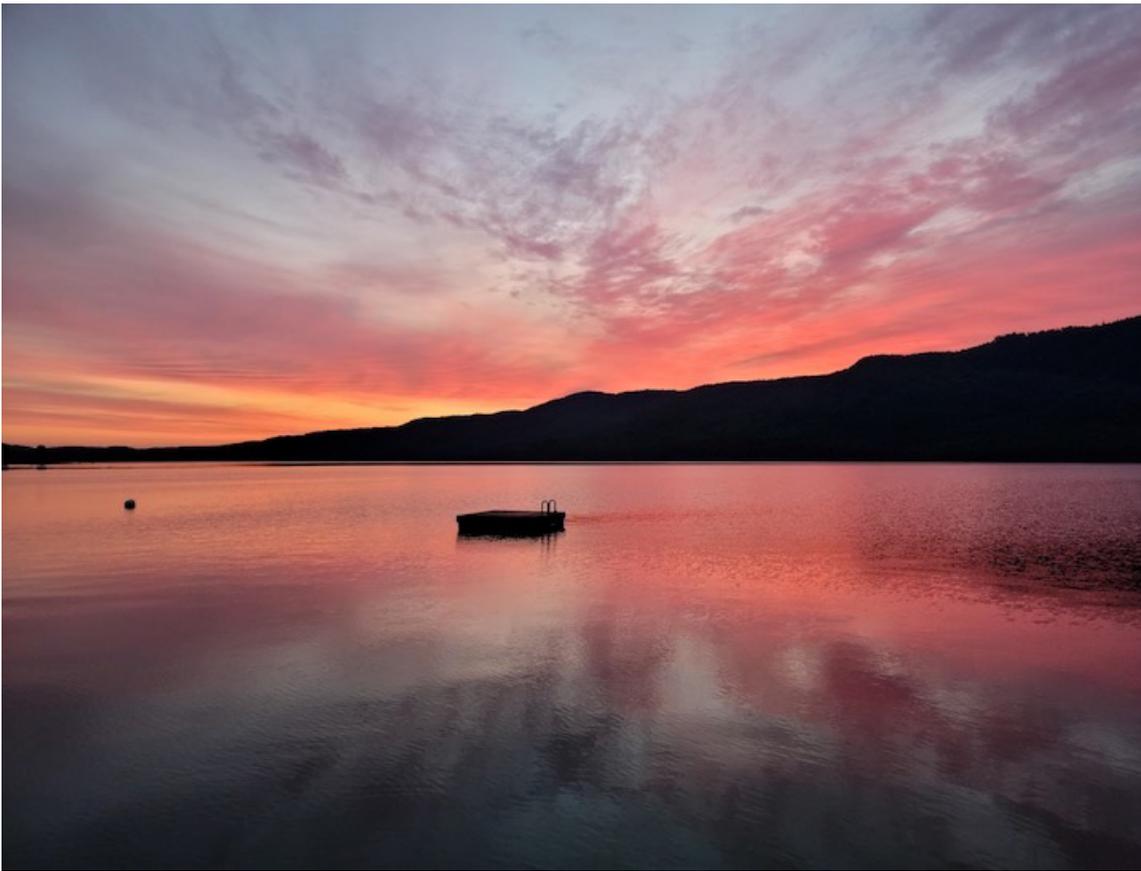


Kathleen in 1979

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR HUSBAND ALBERT BURCH

by Delight Weaver, grandmother of Sandra James

I dream of you at night time
When my eyes are closed in sleep
I think of you at daytime
And my dear so often weep
I'm longing for you always
Though I know you're far away
When my eyes are closed in death dear
I'll be with you that glad day
So through all my life my dearest
To you I will be true
And in my thoughts no other
Will be there, only you



Photographs by Kathleen Smith





Guest Book
made by
Melinda
Rowe
Williams
for
her son's
wedding



BEFORE SPRING ERUPTS by Deborah Dickerson

The drab beauty of early spring is seen
in brittle, brown oak leaves
fanned out on the forest floor,
in deciduous trees haloed with
ruddy buds' promise of fresh greens.

The buck's unburied bones are white,
gnawed and pecked clean of flesh,
the duff is pushed aside
by the earliest flowers—
hepatica and spring beauties,
plus the spiraled fern heads.

The drab beauty of early spring is seen
in the dirt, rocks, stumps, funguses,
in tractors and manure spreaders afield,
the dull olive of the female cardinal,
the tufted titmouse plucking desiccated
insects from my window screens.

All of this before yellows and purples erupt.



Photograph by
Kathleen Smith



Beautiful Day

Photographs by Lauren Chard

Breakfast

SUNRISE ON THE FARM

by Delight Weaver, grandmother of Sandra James

In the early morning, away up on the hill
Just about daybreak, when everything is still

The sun comes up in glory
In silver streaked with gold
It's a sight that you'll remember
And beautiful to behold.

But don't forget you must be up, before the night is gone
If you would see the beauty of the early morning dawn.



Still Life Study oil on canvas by Thomas Chard