

THE GREY PANTHER

Newsletter of the Emeritus and Retired Faculty of Chapman University



Letter from the Editor

The Grey Panther hopes to bring you articles from and about your former colleagues. This edition has articles that relate to living in retirement, dealing with the grief of losing a spouse, and thoughts about the decisions one must make in planning for one's death.

Barbara Tye shares with us how moving to a new community has brought her new like-minded friends and the comfort of never having to move again.

In Richard Turner's creative essay, he writes about the struggles of dealing with the death of a spouse and how country music has helped him rebuild his life.

Anita Storck's short essay discusses her decision regarding her remains once she is gone.

These articles point out that retirement frees us from fixed schedules, and gives us the option to explore new opportunities, time for reflection, and establish new relationships. I would encourage you to share your own stories of retirement. Please send them to kpreitz@gmail.com.

Coming Events

Annual Membership Luncheon
Friday October 18, 2019 – 11:00 a.m.
Argyros Forum 209C

Join us for our annual membership luncheon. Our speaker will be Harold Hewitt, Chief Operations Officer of Chapman. His previous positions include Chief Financial Officer of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Occidental College and Whittier College.

Holiday Celebration
John Koshak's Home
Sunday, December 8, 2019, 2 - 5 pm.

Celebrate with colleagues, spouses and guests at the Koshak's beautifully decorated home. Enjoy friendships, your favorite holiday cookies and beverages at this annual event.

Free Parking Passes

Thanks to President Struppa, all Professors Emeriti are eligible for free parking passes. To get yours, just go to the parking portal, <https://chapman.nupark.com/portal> and follow the directions. These passes are good until August of next year when you will need to apply again. For those of us who no longer use a Chapman account, there is an alternate way to get your pass, just email me at kpreitz@gmail.com to find out how.

Where I'm living now

Barb Tye

Three years ago—in the Fall of 2016—with a whole lot of help from my Chapman friends, I cleared out the house that Ken and I bought in 1988, and put it on the market. On December 7, I handed the house key to the new owners and logged in my grades for the last course I would teach for Chapman since joining the faculty in 1983. Then, ready for my new adventure, I headed north on the Coast Highway to my new home in Santa Rosa, in Sonoma County, an hour north of San Francisco. On the drive, I had plenty of time to ponder how it felt to be a widow—although Ken had died a year and a half before, I'd been too busy to really think about it.

The key to my cottage at Friends House had been in my pocket since the first of September, and I'd moved some of my things in over long weekends in the fall. The rest would arrive in a small moving-van load a day or two after I got there myself.

Because I'd been there off and on during the previous three months, I already knew many of my neighbors. That meant I felt at home right away—no “period of adjustment.” All the careful planning and organizing paid off—there are some advantages to being a Type A personality, after all!

Friends House is a small intentional retirement community founded in 1985 by the Quakers of coastal Sonoma County. It offers a continuum of care, from independent living (in cottages like mine), to assisted living, to skilled nursing. This is what I wanted—so I wouldn't have to move ever again.

Only about 20% of the 90 independent residents are Quakers, but the other 80% (of various faith groups, or none), more or less share the basic Quaker values of simplicity, community, integrity, unity, equality, and peace. It's a perfect fit for me—socially aware, politically progressive, and activist. Such interesting people! We've got artists, scientists, academics like me, all with amazing life stories. One 91-year-old Auschwitz survivor still tells her story in middle and high school classes around the city. Several women go to a certain downtown corner every Friday to stand silently in a peace vigil from noon to 1:00—the “women in black.” They've been doing it for over twenty years. An anthropologist my age whose special field of expertise is Chinese foot-binding practices, is still actively collecting data (oral histories) and was invited to return to China for four months as a guest lecturer last year. I was sorry to miss know-

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**Grievin' (On a Sunny Afternoon)
A Widower's Songbook**

Richard Turner

Sometime after my wife Sylvia died, my best friend Paul, who had lost his own wife over a decade ago, told me not to listen to any country western music. “In fact,” he said, “don't listen to any music at all, it's too emotionally draining.” Good advice, which I ignored and, as a consequence, often found myself breaking into tears driving on the freeway from Orange County to Los Angeles. My friend's good counsel notwithstanding, I have found in popular music a simple wisdom that has served me well in my three years as a widower.

Guess Things Happen That Way
Johnny Cash

God gave me that girl to lean on,
then he put me on my own.
Heaven help me be a man
and have the strength to stand alone.
I don't like it but I guess things happen that way.

You ask me if I'll miss her kisses.
I guess I will, every day.
I don't like it but I guess things happen that way.
You ask me if I'll find another.
I don't know. I can't say.
I don't like it but I guess things happen that way.

Whatever they may have meant to Johnny Cash, God and Heaven have never been important to me. For many years I have taken comfort in my belief that the nothingness that preceded my existence awaits me at the end of my life on earth. While my belief in oblivion has reassured me throughout my adult life, it did nothing to alleviate the impact of Sylvia's death. Nothing could buffer me from the appalling reality of her absence.

One of the aftershocks of that realization came a month after her death when I began to realize how much of what I considered to be “me” was actually Sylvia. Being married to a beautiful and accomplished African American woman who was the mother of our twin daughters had an undeniable cachet to it. For 48 years I basked in the reflected glory of my exotic wife and comely daughters. Now I was on my own. At the end of a conversation about the enormity of Sylvia's death

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ing George Houser, a conscientious objector in WW II, a close friend of Martin Luther King, and an original founder of the Congress of Racial Equality—but his widow, Jean, is still here.

The community is basically run by the residents by way of a vibrant Residents Association and many great committees that make things happen. The Programs committee arranges the Tuesday-night lecture series, other programs on Thursdays and, often, concerts on Sunday afternoons. The Film committee plans movies for Saturday nights. The Peace and Justice committee plans P&J events for Sunday nights. The “post card posse” gathers on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings to write get-out-the-vote post cards (to voters in districts where voter-suppression efforts are under way) for the national grassroots organization Indivisible. The Buildings and Grounds committee and the Health and Well-Being committee are deeply involved in those aspects of the community. The list goes on; but you get the idea. We reject the notion of an Activities Director! Also, there’s no golf course; no swimming pool; and no big dining hall with a dress code—just a small, modest café for those who don’t feel like cooking sometimes (most of us still cook for ourselves). What we do have is a 5,000-volume library, a gorgeous grand piano, a busy art room and exercise programs, and beautiful grounds for walking or just sitting, reading and/or talking with friends—visitors say it’s like a park.



Of course, Santa Rosa is a great resource too—a terrific community theatre, art museum, history museum, used book store, old town area sort of like Orange!—and, of course, the Russian River Brewing Company (!) and the Charles Schultz Museum (Santa Rosa is Charlie Brown’s home town). Lots of good ethnic restaurants. And an easy 45-minute drive through Sebastopol to the coast at Bodega Bay. The scars from the megafire that destroyed huge sections of Santa Rosa two years ago are

with Paul, the same Paul who had advised me not to listen to country western music, he joked “Well Rich, it’s been good talking with what’s left of you”. Only a good friend could have said such a thing.

What was left of me found comfort in Sylvia’s enduring presence in our daughters, Adrienne and Jennifer and, strangely, in the array of mysterious skin care products that lingered on her bedside table. Missing her kisses, I did, and still do, every day. As for being a man, standing alone and (possibly) finding another, that was yet to come.

September Song Willie Nelson

O it’s a long, long while from May to December
But the days grow short when you reach September
When the autumn weather turns the leaves to flame
One hasn’t got time for the waiting game

O the days dwindle down to a precious few
September, November
And these few precious days I’ll spend with you
These precious days I’ll spend with you.

I did not get to spend “these few precious days” with Sylvia. Her death denied us the shared pleasures of folding clothes fresh out of the dryer and the nights spent together on the living room couch watching episodes of *Downton Abbey* or *Seinfeld* reruns. Even now, three years later, I’m surprised by how it is these commonplace activities that most poignantly evoke her absence. Trudging across a parking lot with a bag of groceries on a weekday evening or emptying the dishwasher on a Saturday morning I am reminded regularly of how alone I am in a world without Sylvia despite the constant reassurances of my loving family and friends that she would, in some sense, always be with me.

Alone or not, at age 73 I didn’t have time for the waiting game. But what would I be waiting for if I did have the time? An online dating hookup, a platonic friendship, a long-term relationship? I didn’t know. And, if I did eventually establish a connection with a woman would it be a loving one? Having experienced love primarily in the context of my long and happy marriage, would I recognize love if it appeared in another form? Had I experienced enough love for a lifetime? Did I need any more love? Was I loved out?

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healing, though new housing is still in short supply. It's still a great small city.

I've got to say, for me one of the loveliest things about living at Friends House is that one very quickly experiences a shift of mindset—no longer seeing one's neighbors as "old people," but, simply, as people. Along with that, it is so helpful to see how differently people approach aging and end of life challenges. It's an ongoing learning experience; one can really think about what one wants one's last years/months/days to be like. The youngest resident is 68, the oldest is about to turn 104 and is still a spitfire. She's throwing a big party for the whole community next week and I won't be surprised if she dances on the table. I'd guess the average age here is around 80, but there's a whole cluster of us between 72-77. Some younger ones have health problems (breast cancer, arthritis, Parkinson's, early-onset dementia) and some older ones, like Leslee, 104, are still going strong and healthy as can be—you just can never tell by age alone. You have to get to know each individual.

My dear Chapman family: I do miss you. But I guess you can tell that I am truly happy here. Ken would have liked it, too. I could go on and on, but this has already been too long. So I'll end by saying: if you're ever up this way, please plan to visit. I mean it! Barring the unforeseen, I'll be using my Chapman e-mail (tye@chapman.edu) for the foreseeable future, so you can always reach me that way.

In Memoriam

Jackie Hendershot, a long time Chapman staff person, passed away in July of Alzheimer's disease. She was 77 years old. She was well known to many faculty members, as she dealt with them in her job in the Academic Affairs Office. She also worked in the President's Office and then in Athletics. She leaves a daughter and two grandchildren.

Whatever the case, I was determined to avoid what I saw as the destructive behavior that two of my close friends had engaged in after their wives died. I was not entirely successful. My neediness and fragility led to missteps that could have ruined a longstanding friendship.

Even though one of these friends told me that I would be "a good catch" for some woman, I didn't spend much time actively seeking out female companionship. For the first few months I kept myself busy dealing with the odds and ends that follow in the wake of a death of a partner. Organizing a proper memorial service, updating wills and trusts, obtaining multiple copies of the death certificate and taking clothing to thrift stores provided me unexpected solace for many weeks. The comfort afforded by these tasks eventually diminished to the point where I needed something more gratifying to fill my time. That was when I began working on designing a memorial to Sylvia that ultimately took the form of an exhibition in the gallery of the community college where she had been a faculty member and later an administrator for so many years. (Documentation of this memorial *Air Becomes Breath* is at turnerprojects.com.)

It was also during this period of time that I had my first inkling that life without Sylvia could be other than the bleak and empty experience it had been thus far. One evening during a trip to Japan with friends I found myself in a hot spring pool watching the steam drift across the dark surface of the water and listening to the cold rain falling beyond the overhang of the roof above. "If Sylvia were alive," I thought to myself, "I would not be here in Mishima luxuriating in this exquisite moment." What do I make of that? Should I be guilty or grateful?

You Can't Always Get What You Want The Rolling Stones

You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
But if you try sometimes well you just might find
You get what you need

So what did I want? I wanted my wife to be alive and well and for us to live happily ever after. That being an impossibility, then what did I need? In my eulogy for Sylvia I had acknowl-

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Chapman's Columbarium

Anita Storck

Chapman has a lovely Columbarium behind the All Faith's Chapel. You can enter through the Chapel or from the outside. As you walk by the Columbarium you will hear water running and see an iron gate and pathway into it. It is a peaceful place. Many Chapman people are there in the niches for their ashes. Even Huell Howser's ashes are there.

As I was getting older, I thought about where my remains would go. Cemeteries are often very lonely places, where not too many visit. Chapman has been a big part of my life and work, and at the Columbarium there would always be students and others walking around. I would also be amongst people I knew and worked with.

There is a wide range of prices, depending on the location of the niche you choose. The lower areas and center area are the most expensive. Huell Howser is in this location. I chose the wall that faces Glassell St., towards the top and paid \$5,000 a few years ago. The prices do increase yearly. I am on the wall with Bert Williams and his wife and the Wilkinsons.

If you haven't made a decision on your eternal rest, this might be an option!!

edged my appreciation for the "warm bodies and good food" that had sustained me during my first months of grieving. Now, over a year later, I thought that what I needed was companionship and intimacy. Everything else would be frosting on the proverbial cake. Reassured by the good counsel of Willie Nelson (actually Kurt Weil and Maxwell Anderson) and Messrs Jagger and Richards, I believed that my expectations for the future had some grounding in reality and that I was ready for a "good enough" relationship with a woman.

Here Comes My Girl

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

You know sometimes, I don't know why
But this old town seems so hopeless?
I ain't really sure but it seems
I remember the good times
Were just a little bit more in focus
But when she puts her arms around me
I can somehow rise above it
Yeah, man when I got that little girl standin' right by my side
You know, I can tell the whole wide world shove it
Here comes my girl
Here comes my girl
Yea, she looks so right
She's all I need tonight

Here I am once again on a California freeway, tears streaming down my face as I listen to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers greatest hits. This time it's the 15, not the 405 and this time I am shedding tears of gratitude not regret. The sweet rush of the chorus "Here comes my girl" that erupts out of the despair of the opening verse is how I sometimes feel when I see Mary, the woman who has come into my life, walk through the door. The innocence and immediacy of "Yeah, she looks so right, she's all I need tonight" appeals to me because of its presentness. My past has played itself out, the future belongs to others, this blossoming moment is all that I have. And if there is love to be found in this blink of an eye, then perhaps it will take the form of the love expressed in the words of Johnny Mathis "It's not just for what you are yourself that I love you as I do, but for what I am when I am with you." And what am I when I am with Mary? A man who is on his own but no longer alone.