

Table of Contents

December 14 th , 2022.....	2
A boy is born.....	2
Forty years later.....	4
Guns.....	4
Tom Unkefer, Quaker.....	5
Warm nights.....	5
Amnesty International 112.....	6
AIUSA Member-led Initiatives Guide.....	6
Berks.....	6
Right for Writes. Write for Rights. Write for Rites.....	7
Wednesday Meeting for Worship.....	7
December 21 st , 2022.....	8
Happy Solstice.....	8
Dinosaurs.....	8
Academy of Natural Sciences.....	9
Diplomats.....	10
Amnesty International 112.....	11
Write for Rights.....	11
Wednesday Meeting for Worship.....	12
December 28 th , 2022.....	13
Hoping your holidays are happy and safe.....	13
Cats.....	13
Puerto Rico.....	14
Frau Dr. Claudia and Paradise (c) SJ Dodgson 2001, 2022.....	15
San Juan, Puerto Rico, January, morning.....	15
Six months later.....	19
Amnesty International 112.....	20
Write for Rights.....	20
Wednesday Meeting for Worship.....	20

December 14th, 2022**A boy is born**

“At 6am, in the dark, I leaped out of bed on Friday, Dec 17, 1982, walked down the hall to the kitchen, turned on the kettle, walked to the bathroom, showered and dressed, changed Angus' diaper, dressed him, sat him in his high chair, gave him breakfast while I made his lunch and my lunch and drank a cup of tea.

By 7.30am I had bundled Angus in his snowsuit, struggled into my winter coat, hat and gloves, and walked slowly with Angus down from our 3rd floor apartment to the front door to our car parked on Walnut Street at 44th, strapped Angus in his car seat and driven him about 1 mile to 48th and Florence, where I dropped him off with the babysitter. Who looked at my 9 months pregnant belly and shook her head.

I gave Angus a kiss, and drove to 38th and Market to a vacant lot, parked in a snow drift and walked north across Market Street to Presbyterian Hospital, to my obstetrician's office. Ray met me there, he always left home earlier than me to see patients, assist in eye surgery, study for his boards. Schieie Eye Institute is physically next to Presbyterian Hospital. The obstetrician told me that if my baby did not come before Dec 26, she would induce it on that day. In 9 days. Urgh.

I walked back towards 38th and Baltimore, dropping off my coat and my briefcase on my desk in the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine Physiology Department at 37th and Hamilton Walk, and walked into the Physiology office, asking the secretaries if I could talk to the Chairman, my boss and mentor, Dr Robert E Forster II.

He looked at me, still no baby, and gave me the final draft of a manuscript that we wanted to send out to the Journal of Biological Chemistry. In it was work I had done mostly in the summer with a bright and manually adept student. We had tested the hypothesis that the enzyme I had discovered and characterized in mitochondria, mitochondrial carbonic anhydrase, had a function in metabolism. That this enzyme enabled the body to rapidly eliminate carbon dioxide from the body by fixing it into urea. Urea is the main component of urine.

We had multiple copies made, I collected the photographs of the graphs from the print shop, I signed the letter the secretary had typed, and shoved everything into an envelope and mailed it.

I was not hopeful that the American publication, the Journal of Biological Chemistry would publish it. The manuscript had already been turned down by the British Biochemical Journal, with the comment "if carbonic anhydrase is in mitochondria what else would it be doing but making sure it fed carbon dioxide fast enough to produce urea."

However, the Americans loved it, and published it, and 3 years later this work was the basis of a grant that paid most of my salary and lab expenses for 5 years.

That day, after sending off the manuscript, I was in serious Christmas party mode, and went with a colleague, Ron, to a party of the respiratory physicians in the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, where I was expected to give birth sooner or later. And made plans to attend a winter solstice party that evening with Angus and his father Ray.

I walked back several blocks to my car in the dark at 5pm. My car would not start. And then it did. Phew. I collected Angus and brought him up to our 3rd floor apartment.

A young woman from the second floor knocked on my door, could I please drive her through the snow to the center of Philadelphia to mail a package? I piled Angus back into the car, dropped off the young woman, drove back home, gave Angus dinner and a bath, showered myself, and then got ready to go out. By this time Ray had returned and by 9pm, we were driving through Fairmont Park to a huge house filled with Winter Solstice revelers.

Ron and his wife saw me as we came in, and started talking about how Winston Churchill was born in a closet at a party, and he and Ray traded stories about how they had delivered babies when they were medical interns.

Angus ran around for a bit, but soon fell asleep, and we all chatted about science and travel and listened to music and ate and drank until midnight.

When we got home, Ray and Angus sat in front of the television while I went to bed. Which was when I realized I was in labor and Ray needed to take me to the hospital immediately. Ray told me I was wrong, go back to sleep. Hm. Ray's an ophthalmologist. I bundled up Angus, took him downstairs to our Indian neighbors, picked up my bag and told Ray we needed to leave immediately, and if he didn't drive me, I was going to walk through the snow.

Ray drove me to the hospital, I got myself admitted and he joined me in the labor room. It was now 3am, and at 11.45am I gave birth to my second son, to a robotics engineer. He was 9lb 13oz, a head full of black hair, and huge blue eyes. Which stayed blue, sapphire blue. Miles Conrad Dodgson Pekala, aka Milesy.

Four days later, we all went to the annual egg nog party given by Ron, and in the days after Christmas I was in the lab for a few hours in early mornings and late evenings, working on a report for the drug company Johnson & Johnson, in between breast feedings and taking care of Angus, when Ray was not fixing patients' eyes.

The Johnson & Johnson report was made on work I did in the days leading up to Milesy' birth, and formed the basis of a relationship with Johnson & Johnson that lasted another 25 years, that led to 6 grants, a medical writing contract and even me testifying in court on their behalf. Topiramate. Scary stuff.

Happy birthday Milesy! Well done! No pressure, but I have no grandchildren.”

Updated from Snow, the winter solstice and my most productive day ever. SJ Dodgson. MJoTA 2013 v7n2 p1217. <http://www.drsusanna.org/mjotatalksweather/20131217snow.html>

Forty years later

Anyone living or working in West Philadelphia in the last 40 years will recognize changes from my report of 1982. The vacant lot was developed with affordable housing; a contract which is all these years later expiring, with tenants being evicted into a cold winter with less rental properties available.

I have observed this reduction in rental housing everywhere. What causes it? Increased number of jobs that are paid hourly, with poverty wages and no benefits. The rise of AirBnB which gave landlords the possibility of asking for triple the rent by renting out rooms and apartments for a few days, or even a month. This only works. The short-term rental market I thought would collapse during the pandemic shutdowns; apparently non-repayable loans kept landlords afloat and the AirBnB business continues to regulate itself in most areas, and happily put out of business regulated family-run hotels.

Guns

The first day I was home from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania with my firstborn in March 1981 was the day a gunman decided to shoot the president of the United States, who was then, to our long-term economic and social detriment, Ronald Reagan. After he survived, and Pope John Paul II survived another gun attack two months later, some changes were made to laws, but not enough, and whatever changes were made then have been removed, and guns made more available. Gun shows. Automatic rifles. Ghost guns. Technology is not always on the side of tiny children.

Tiny children were massacred at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut ten years ago today. Out of that came *Moms Demand Action*, which is active in Camden County; last year there was a big turnout of ladies in red tee-shirts at the funeral of the local chapter founder, Shirley Conroy, who died far too soon from disease.

The CDC published a report this year in its weekly MMWR: *Vital Signs: Changes in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates — United States, 2019–2020*, May 13, 2022 / 71(19);656–663, with part of the summary: “In 2020, coincident with the COVID-19 pandemic, the firearm homicide rate increased nearly 35%, reaching its highest level since 1994, with disparities by race and ethnicity and poverty level widening. The firearm suicide rate, although higher than that for firearm homicide, remained nearly level overall but increased among some populations.”

So how many deaths were caused by guns? Hard to determine. Firearm deaths in 2019 were not the most frequent killer, which was diseases of the heart, or second most frequent, malignant neoplasms. However, deaths from injuries came in third, and some of these injuries were certainly from firearms.

The date for 2019, which is the most recent set of data completely analyzed, separate gun deaths thus:

- Intentional self-harm (suicide) by discharge of firearms
- Assault (homicide) by discharge of firearms
- Accidental discharge of firearms

Other institutions are calculating rates of gun deaths, for example, the Gun Policy Institute, which you can link to on <http://www.drsusanna.org/mjotatalksgunsstuns.html>. A statement from them:

“Generating more than 200,000 pages of news, data and comparative charts, and visited by a million uniquely identifiable users per year, **GunPolicy.org** is the world's most comprehensive and accessible Web source for published evidence on armed violence, firearm law and gun control.

“**GunPolicy.org** is hosted by the [Sydney School of Public Health](#), The University of Sydney. The School provides internationally recognised leadership in public health by advancing and disseminating knowledge — in this case, supporting global efforts to prevent gun injury. A close partner organisation is the [Centre for Armed Violence Reduction](#).”

Tom Unkefer, Quaker

We had a death in our Quaker community this week. Ralph Thomas Unkefer, whom we knew as Tom Unkefer, and the other half of Tom and Jane Unkefer. I have read a little about him, I had no idea he was 91, and I learned he was quietly helping in every good cause in Philadelphia, and in Haverford, after a career of doing good. He was a veteran too.

Tom lived for the last 13 years in the Quadrangle, a set of self-contained units on gorgeous grounds in Haverford. My mentor Dr Forster also lived there, and when Dr Forster celebrated his 100th birthday, Tom drove Ron (the same Ron from the first story), my daughter Patience and I from Haverford Station to the Quadrangle.

The Unkefers and the Forsters were good friends for decades, and holidayed together. Wonderful.

I walked around Radnor Friends Meeting property and burial ground a month ago. Tom's cremated remains are to be added to the Radnor Friends Burial Ground; a lovely place, <https://youtu.be/3Ms554XG8q8>

--

Warm nights

The winter solstice comes with cold nights in the Delaware Valley, but further south the Atlantic Ocean is warm, and nights and days lovely. Three videos from December in San Juan Puerto Rico:

I walked straight into a protest of workers being paid sub-poverty wages to build vacation homes for billionaires: <https://youtu.be/vhsxHw2EczY>

Next to the protest site is a park with statues showing the wind of the sea. Love how the girl is holding a cormorant. In the video you can hear the protest continuing; this video was made 6 days after the first one, the protesters are not going to stop, good for them. Being paid sub-poverty wages needs to be illegal, <https://youtu.be/vv8l791Hz9E>

A third video of night falling and a cormorant being gorgeous: <https://youtu.be/w3aiVPRQYTk>

--

Amnesty International 112

From Patrick Gregoire (Community Program Specialist; Amnesty International USA, communitynetworks@aiusa.org)

- **NEW W4R 2022 Spotlight: Spotlight Chow Hang-tung - Hong Kong**
- **NEW Anniversary of Guantánamo Opening, Jan 11**
- **Priority Campaign Updates:**
- **Afghan Adjustment Act**
- **End Gun Violence**
- **NEW 2022 Write for Rights AIUSA Speakers List**
- **NEW Propose a Campaign or Spotlight**
- **AIUSA Member-led Initiatives Guide**
- **NEW ACSC Communications Review**
- **Inviting all Local Groups to apply for the AIUSA 2022 Hironaka Award**
- **GOOD NEWS DHS Not to Renew Contract with the Berks County "Residential Center" Immigration Jail**
- **GOOD NEWS DHS Grants Extension of Temporary Protected Status for Haiti**

AIUSA Member-led Initiatives Guide

From Patrick: “The Grassroots Leadership and Engagement (GLE) unit, which houses AIUSA’s Member Leaders, Human Rights Education, Grassroots Advocacy, Community Program, and Youth & Student Program, can offer support to member-led initiatives by providing resources and guidance to members and member leaders; see the [Member Led Human Rights Initiatives Resource Guide](#).”

Berks

Berks County “Residential Center”, which was really a jail for refugees and asylum seekers, will close. That is great; local Pennsylvania activists have been protesting to have it permanently closed. From Wikipedia:

“Berks County Residential Center (BCRC), also known as Berks Family Residential Center and as the Berks County detention center, is a 96-bed [immigration detention center](#) in [Leesport, Berks County, Pennsylvania](#), operated by Berks County on contract with [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) (ICE). The center operated as a [family detention center](#) from March 2001 to March 2021.”

Right for Writes. Write for Rights. Write for Rites.

This annual initiative is continuing, and for all of the above. I was glad to see that the US Congress and President Biden has protected families by legalizing marriages between any two humans of legal age.

I have so far completed half of the Write for Rights actions, tomorrow I will complete the second half and also look to what other actions we need, and go through Patrick's list. Join us at 7pm for the December Write for Rights, and tell us whether you would like a physical potluck gathering on December 23rd. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>

December 15th: 7pm, on Zoom, all welcome,

--

Wednesday Meeting for Worship

All are welcome to join us after 5:30pm for a check in, chat, tell each other concerns, and are welcomed to a safe Quaker space. We are quiet from 6 to 6:30 when you worship in your own way that you have to connect with the Light; at 6:30 we come out of our worship space and greet one another.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81331805733?pwd=SnF1WE5waUZ3ZDdleEw1SVR4Wjdsdz09>

Meeting ID: 813 3180 5733 Passcode: 190526

December 21st, 2022

Happy Solstice

This is the bottom of the year in Philadelphia, or the top of the year for my brothers in Australia. I remember Christmas in Australia as being a time to eat mangos, preferably on Bronte Beach, and read books that I was given. I remember being 11, and looking at a passenger on a train between Sydney and Austinmer, which for three months was my daily trip to school, and feeling sorry for them because they were eating without reading anything, or even talking to anyone. What a waste of food. If you cannot learn anything when reading, what was food for?

Food, shelter, water. I hope you have all you need, and share what you don't need with those who do. I am going today to the annual service for the homeless who have not survived, it is held by Project Home across the street from the Christmas Fair where abundance is on display. Last year I held a candle for someone called Sincere Taylor, I never found out who that was, or even if the person was male or female.

Why has my life given me everything I need, and other lives are full of despair, and want? The eternal question. We can all only do what we can. Or as I heard Dr Samuel Quarteay say: "Do what you can. Can what you can't." <https://youtu.be/b8nepn4vYaQ>

Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah, Happy Solstice: may you always turn towards the Light, always hope, and rejoice in big and tiny victories over the dark.

Dinosaurs

The Times, Nov 28, 2022

"The Natural History Museum in London is preparing to host the biggest dinosaur it has ever put on show, one of the largest to walk the Earth.

The titanosaur, Patagotitan mayorum, lived 100 million years ago, during the Late Cretaceous period. It would have weighed about 57 tonnes, was 37m long and about 5m tall. That would have made it about four times heavier than Dippy the Diplodocus, the sauropod that for decades was the museum's centrepiece.

Professor Paul Barrett, a dinosaur expert at the museum, said: "Patagotitan mayorum is an incredible specimen that tells us more about giant titanosaurs than ever before. Comparable in weight to more than nine African elephants, this star specimen will inspire visitors to care for some of the planet's largest and most vulnerable creatures, which face similar challenges for survival, and show that within Earth's ecosystems, size really does matter."

I love dinosaurs, and am immensely proud of being based for 4 decades in the town where the first decent set of dinosaur bones were found. Hadrosaurus foulkii lay in the marl pits in Haddonfield, New

Jersey for 73 million years or so. Long before Earth's 5th extinction event which wiped out all dinosaurs along with 90% of all species 66 million years ago.

Edited from Wikipedia:

[William Parker Foulke](#) was an attorney and amateur paleontologist affiliated with Philadelphia's [Academy of Natural Sciences](#). In 1858 he was in Haddonfield he learned of large bones found in 1838 on the farm of Joseph Hopkins. Marl was being quarried when workers uncovered bones resembling [vertebrae](#). Dr Foulke directed an excavation around Hopkins' marl pit, giving altogether 80 bones to Dr. [Joseph Leidy](#) for analysis. Hadrosaurus is believed to have only eaten plants during the Cretaceous era, over 73 million years ago, and was 7 meters long, and weighed 2.5 tons. Dr Leidy published an analysis in 1865, and in 1868 oversaw the creation of its reconstructed skeleton.

I posted some relevant videos in July, when I went looking for Haddy. The name Hadrosaurus translates to big lizard, with a wave to Haddon. Very cute.

Site of discovery of Haddy: <https://youtu.be/JvL-0yB39Uk>

Academy of Natural Sciences dinosaur hall: <https://youtu.be/w7PUaehh2Ds>

Hopkins Pond on November 1st: <https://youtu.be/SiTYQBXQAyg>

Haddonfield July 4th parade: <https://youtu.be/31amerTRtws>

Academy of Natural Sciences

The academy was founded in 1812, and is a faithful steward of all things dinosaur. And insects. When Patience and I visited Oxford in February 2020 we walked through the Oxford Museum of Natural History, which is in a gorgeous building and has a lot of interesting exhibits, and a lot, a lot of insects on pins.

I was wondering if the collection of a relatives ended up there, my Dodgson great-grandfather's cousins Henley Grose-Smith, was a butterfly collector when he was not being a lawyer. Oxford claims to have 5 million specimens.

No, Henley's specimens went to London, and the Grose-Smith estate, which was the Priory on the Isle of Wight, was sold, turned into a gorgeous hotel, which it is to this day. The sea already has washed the church into the Solent. The Priory, a Cluniac Monastery for 300 years until the monks could no longer sustain political fights, was claimed by the sovereign of England. In 1467 an English king handed it over to Eton College. Eventually Eton's lack of interest, and huge interest by the Kings Bench Judge Sir Nash Grose led to him buying and restoring it, when he was not busy commuting death sentences to transportation to Australia. Sir Nash was on his way back to it in 1814 when he expired. A year later, Sir Nash's only son Edward was killed on board ship in the last days of the Napoleonic Wars so the Priory went to Sir Nash's nephew Edward Grose Smith, then to Edward's son Edward, who died in the Priory while working as an Anglican priest, then to Edward's younger brother Henley Smith, Queen's

Counsel. Henley married the daughter of Captain Thomas Rigmaiden, a ship captain who sailed between Africa, Jamaica and Liverpool, and who was by all accounts as evil as can be. Their daughter was my Grose Smith great grandmother and aunt of the last Henley Grose Smith.

So where did the Oxford collection come from? A huge hobby in the 19th Century was insect collection. I guess it got them outside and they didn't have to ride and shoot anything. Insect collection also allows current scientists to understand which species are lost, and under which climates they thrived.

We know we have already had 5 extinction events, and are currently living through the sixth. Will 90% of species be destroyed this time, including us? What is the likelihood that any of our bones will remain, or the elaborate graves and temples to industry, sciences and the creator that we build? Scientists who study these things tell us that a figure of 9 to 20% is the number of species that leave a single clue behind. What will our clues be?

I visited the Natural Academy of Sciences on Saturday, I love walking through the dinosaur hall and looking up, up the leg bones of their tallest dinosaur, who was 15 stories tall. My goodness. How likely was the enormous appetite of huge animals a cause of species extinction? I bet they did a good job of chewing bones, whole bushes, tree trunks. The pictures of dinosaurs daintily picking off a banana from the top of a tree does not really work for me.

At the top of the stairs is a collection of photographs that were made for the Oxford Natural History Museum. The photographer went through the insect collection and picked out an assortment of photogenic specimens, and after curators and researchers had carefully restored the specimens, he made up to 10,000 individual photographs to produce 15 feet photographs of them. Do go see them. The dinosaurs that were here and so huge, and the insects that will outlive us, so tiny.

Website of the Academy of Natural Sciences, <https://ansp.org/about/academy-history/>

Website of Oxford Natural History Museum <https://www.oumnh.ox.ac.uk/>

Most species that disappear today will leave no trace in the fossil record. Science, 15 Mar 2016 by Patrick Monahan. <https://www.science.org/content/article/most-species-disappear-today-will-leave-no-trace-fossil-record>

Diplomats

The Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia claims to be the oldest of its kind in the continent, which makes sense if you ignore the systems and structures of the nations that we took the continent from, and know a little history about Philadelphia. However, we must work with what we have now, and essential for any functioning government is its ability to talk with other governments about trade, disputes, and emerging and current needs.

We are lucky to have a diplomatic corps made of career diplomats who are based in New York, and honorary diplomats living in Philadelphia communities, altogether over 140 nations are represented. The honorary diplomats do not issue passports or visas as I understand their roles, maybe some do, but I am not aware of who these are. They represent their nations in times of happiness and sadness, to make immigrants know their country of origin has not forgotten them, and are happy to help with ethical business ventures.

I imagine the consul for Argentina, based in Washington, has been very busy the last few days: well done Argentina, winning the 2022 World Cup! And the honorary consul for Ukraine, based in Philadelphia, has been overwhelmed since the February 24th genocidal invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The talk of heavy weapons and the cost in money and environmental damage is horrific; international laws and behaviors broke down to permit this, and need to be restored. The statement from the Consular Corps:

Solidarity and Support for Ukraine

The Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia shares the world's horror and outrage at Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We condemn the brutal attack on the population and on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We admire the inspired courage of the Ukrainian people and are hopeful that a unified response from the U.S. and its NATO allies can lead to a peaceful solution. CCAP member countries are already providing humanitarian relief and our colleague Iryna Mazur, Honorary Consul of Ukraine (info@uaconsulphila.org, 215-364-1200) welcomes your support and assistance.

Everyone in Philadelphia today associated with the Mayor's Commission on African and Caribbean Affairs and any of the various British Commonwealth organizations is thrilled to learn that our own Hon Christopher Chaplin, honorary consul general for Jamaica, has been elected the president of the Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia.

<https://www.consularcorpsofphiladelphia.org/jamaica/>

Raising the flag at Philadelphia City Hall: <https://youtu.be/QPv9-oWJ7I8>

Amnesty International 112

Write for Rights.

This annual initiative is continuing, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>
December 21st: 7pm, on Zoom, all welcome, <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81659253839?>

--

Wednesday Meeting for Worship

All are welcome to join us after 5:30pm for a check in, chat, tell each other concerns, and are welcomed to a safe Quaker space. We are quiet from 6 to 6:30 when you worship in your own way that you have to connect with the Light; at 6:30 we come out of our worship space and greet one another.

December 28th, 2022

Hoping your holidays are happy and safe

I am working hard to put together a talk on the rise and fall of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, which was started by Quakers in 1821, and am finding all kinds of amazing documents.

Following is a description of holiday accidents from the Philadelphia Medical Journal, January 6th, 1900. A reminder that everything changes and nothing changes.

White fur? OK, I don't understand that part.

Holiday Accidents

“Every holiday brings its large number of accident-cases to the hospitals and to physicians’ offices. Most of these accidents are due to drunkenness, for a certain proportion of our population feel that they must celebrate every holiday by getting intoxicated. But there is something distinctive in the character of accidents occurring on certain holidays: On Independence Day we expect gunshot-wounds and injuries; during Christmas week, even past New Year, there occur many burns of a peculiar origin. Those who have read the daily papers during this festive season have no doubt noticed reports of these accidents resulting from the common custom of decorating Christmas trees with candles and cotton ornaments. The number of severe burns has been unusually great this year, and at least one child was burned to death by te catching fire of cotton used to imitate white fur.”

Cats

I have co-existed with cats most of my life. I don't remember house cats in Manchester or Belfast, before I was marched on board the SS Southern Cross with false promises of a much happier life in the South Pacific -they did not tell me that being taken away from grandparents and uncles and cousins was a terrible idea – but I guess cats were so much part of these houses that I did not notice them. My English father's parents in Eastbourne were dog people, specifically corgis named after types of alcohol. Brandy, Whisky. Was there a Rum? A Champagne? Probably.

Cats were a big part of my mother's later life in Australia, after all the dogs we had were run over, although one gorgeous little terrier was found stabbed, what was that about?

Mum had a cat called Arthur, his name was another one of those inside jokes that does not sound like a joke. The feeble joke was that the initials of Mum's surviving children were RSPC, which she wrote on lottery tickets she bought every Friday, so the cat had to be an A. Of my mother's grandchildren, half have names starting with A. RSPCA is the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I was Society, the legal writer was Prevention, the traveler was Cruelty (that is not fair), and Arthur the cat was Animal. As he was indeed.

Over my forty years living in New Jersey, cats have come and gone. Most were outside cats, which means they sheltered in the garage or in window overhangs during cold and wet weather. Not a good idea to bring these cats inside, once when I did, to shelter from a hurricane, he chewed through electrical cords. When a cat decides he is more comfortable outside, and sees everything inside as prey, and every floor his toilet, he needs to be outside.

The cat with whom I share living space is bi-habitable. Sir Lancelot, aka Lancey, is equally comfortable inside and outside, and tells me by knocking, and yelling, when he wants to pass between the two states. I have been observing him carefully for five years, wanting to become more like him, and constantly being astonished at his ability to take care of his needs, his wounds, and not be fussed by anything. Like clothes, trash, and the price of energy.

Lancey had a huge lump on his belly last year, which burst the day after I noticed it, giving him a massive wound that broke through several layers of skin. I called around veterinarians, none of whom could see him for a week or so, and I told him to stop licking his wound. He stopped licking it in my presence, but I could see blood on his mouth when he slunk back into my view.

Amazing, to me, was the wound kept shrinking. Two days before the veterinarian's appointment the diameter of the wound had shrunk from two inches to a quarter-inch, so I canceled the appointment. They were not going to be doing anything better than Lancey, who clearly had accurately prescribed the best possible wound treatment. Licking. Within two weeks the wound had closed, within a month his clothes had grown back, and Lancey was bossing me around as usual.

Yes, I want to be a cat. Dinosaurs came and went, we will come and go, but cats will be around until the sun burns out, I am convinced.

Puerto Rico

I have owned a condo in Condado, Puerto Rico, since 1996, which I bought over the mistaken belief that I had a job, a career, in San Juan. When that all fell apart, I counted my blessings: I had a condo in Puerto Rico!

Not being of the wealthy persuasion, I kept costs low by renting it out to university faculty and medical and nursing students well below market rates, who passed it on to one another, with the understanding that anything that needed fixing, they would fix, and send me the bill. This has worked brilliantly, and then in December I went back for the first time in 15 years, and will be returning again soon to decide when I should rent it out again. Walking along the beach, watching and hanging out with cats and chickens, oh my yes.

Puerto Rico is achingly beautiful, and it will break your heart. So many good, decent people, and the local government does not have the ability to pay them enough to keep them on the island. Puerto Rico was hit by a double whammy in the 2010s: Hurricane Maria in 2017, and debt default in 2019. I can see

so many improvements since 2007, when I was last there, but I am told most progress is backwards. Buses were fewer than I remembered, seemed like every normal sized house was for sale or being pulled down for condo towers. United State Post Office and the National Parks Service bring federal money and I am assuming, decent wages. Puerto Rico now has trains. Looks like to me that Puerto Rico was on an upward trajectory, and then its legs were cut from beneath it. I do not know enough about what is going on; these are just my observations. Should Puerto Rico become a state, or completely independent? I do not have the right to have an opinion, I am hoping the good citizens of Puerto Rico and the diaspora can bring back an economy that pays decent wages to everyone.

Below is a story I wrote which is fiction, and like all good fiction, based on things that happened, on places that exist. I wrote it in 1997, probably in my husband's house in the Back Forest, looking out over fields and forests to Feldberg, and dedicated it to Dr Richard K Orkand who died in 2002.

Dick was a neuroscientist who was responsible for me once teaching respiratory physiology to dental students at the University of Pennsylvania. After Penn he became the director of the Neurosciences Institute in San Juan, and brought in a lot of grant money, which made him a lot of enemies. I am not sure why.

The institute is on a cliff, along the coast between a cemetery and fortification walls that separate it from the neighborhood of La Perla.

Frau Dr. Claudia and Paradise (c) SJ Dodgson 2001, 2022

San Juan, Puerto Rico, January, morning

The Neuroscience Institute is not part of the ocean, but Claudia often liked to think it was. Her laboratory had two large windows framed in hard wood; through these windows Claudia often watched large cruise ships move slowly in and out of San Juan Harbor, seagulls in flight, small sailing boats, rain storms and the blue Atlantic Ocean.

At the moment Claudia faced the side wall, away from the window, away from the large hard-wood door. She was watching a blue flame burn oxygen inside a white box lit inside by ultraviolet light, and she heating narrow glass tubes over the flame. She gently rotated and pulled each end of the small hollow tube, waiting for the middle to melt, when she pulled the tube into two. She carefully laid what were now sealed, pointed electrodes into racks inside the fume hood, picked up a new, whole tube and repeated the procedure.

She was preparing her seventh and eighth electrodes when she heard the broom knock against the door. Still watching intently the blue flame she spoke softly in Spanish, "I'll just be a few minutes, OK?"

A male voice she did not recognize answered in English, “A thousand apologies, Doctora. I didn’t mean to disturb you, what you are doing is so beautiful. So blue, so white, so hot! You are sculpting glass!”

Claudia blushed without turning her head towards the voice, “Oxygen is always beautiful. When we breathe it, when we burn it. And glass. Fire and ice and air. Who are you?” Now she turned towards the voice.

“Doctora, you speak English as beautifully as you work with glass. I am no-one, just the janitor. I come to transform your discarded fragments into earth and into fire,” The janitor winked, swooped up the trash can in one hand and the broom in his other, and left the room.

Claudia breathed in deeply, shut off the oxygen and the natural gas, closed the hood, draped her white coat over her stool. She grabbed her notebooks, ran down the corridor and up the stairs to the balcony overlooking the ocean for her morning conference with Riley.

Riley was waiting, balancing a laptop computer on his knee, typing away happily behind a potted palm. In the ocean displayed in front of him a small boat sailed past, its occupant waving cheerfully at the Institute staff working behind the large plate glass Institute windows. Riley pressed send, sighed, grinned at Claudia and pointed her to a chair obscured by the potted palm, “So. It looks like we’ll get the grant. Which means you’re still employed for the next two years. Unless your work is absolutely dreadful - what do you have to show me?”

Claudia shrugged and unobtrusively sweated, “My work is always dreadful until you pull out the pearls. The equipment works, the computers behave, I have one or two more experiments to finish the memory studies. Mostly I calculate data and work on the manuscript and presentation of the manuscript. For the conference in Finland in a half year.”

As the sun heated the air the conversation continued. Riley poked around Claudia’s notebook and data files, and grunted at her graphs and sketches. More sail boats passed the front of the Institute, which had been a US defense building, passed the island fortifications and into the harbor. Claudia occasionally glanced at the sails and the sea, telling herself that she should never forget that she was in Paradise.

After two hours Riley nodded, stood up and walked with her to her laboratory, talking all the time of an extraordinary finding that had been reported simultaneously in the world and scientific press that morning, “I just think you need to drink more alcohol. We always thought that once you wiped out a brain cell, it was gone, but my friends found that you can grow more! So maybe it’s a good thing to lose some brain cells.”

“Like cleaning the glassware and instruments with alcohol? Kills germs?” Claudia did not smile, she found Riley’s interest in alcohol childish.

Riley squeezed Claudia's arm with his free hand, "Claudia, I predict a spectacular career! You get it! If you're around tonight I'll round up the noscenti and take you to dinner and we can test our theory, OK?"

"Um, well, yes. Of course," Claudia frowned. As soon as Riley left she shook her head, what a nuisance, she had a lot to do and had planned to work late. She adjusted her bean-stuffed hippopotamus next to her African violets on top of her computer and was soon hard at work.

After dinner in the old section of San Juan, Riley walked his staff around the old fortifications, through the huge stone gate to San Juan. They walked past the cats slinking, sprawling, hunting all around the stones, oleander, and hibiscus bushes. As the sun set they watched the cormorants dive for fish in the harbor, and then they strolled over the grass inside the fortifications, passing the graveyards back into the Institute.

Claudia walked with Lily, her direct boss and a professor from Venezuela. Lily was carrying a tiny girl in a purple shoulder sling. Once or twice the tiny girl squeaked and so Lily sat down and put her to her breast. When they were sitting they talked about the tiny girl and then moved on to discuss the topic of brain repair, which had excited the whole institute all day.

"I understand this could mean that someone who was rather stupid can be educated into being smart." Lily stroked her daughter's head and kissed it.

"Lily, I hope to be a great example of that," Claudia smiled at Lily, and at the smells of the flowers all around them, "So much more beautiful than Frankfurt, or even Freiburg."

"It is," Lily looked from her daughter's face to the outline of old Spanish buildings in the darkening night, "However, do not forget that everywhere is beautiful when life is new."

The next day Claudia planned an experiment. She arrived in the institute shortly after dawn and had set out glassware, solutions, biological materials by the time she heard the maintenance staff rolling the trash cans and banging the brooms and mops in the halls.

"Hello, Frau Doctor!" The janitor's cheerful face poked through the doorway, "Such lovely glassware! I have seen glass in chandeliers hanging from the ceilings of palaces, I have seen glass sparkle from the champagne in Paris in New Year's Eve, I have been watched from eyes that must be made of glass by men whose hearts must be made of ice. I'll come back when you have finished your experiment, yes?"

"Yes, um, later. Please," Claudia smiled as she added acid-sensitive dyes to the cultured cells, "I am busy," she looked around at the janitor and smiled again, directly into his eyes.

The janitor chuckled as he left the room, "Frau Doctor, your eyes are like the tops of volcanoes. Until later!"

The rest of the day Claudia did not once look out of the window, did not once notice the orange and gray kittens playing with a fish that had plopped on the rocks below the Institute. She recorded observations and constants from the reactions taking place in the electrodes in and around cultured cells and was about to print voltage changes when she recalled the conversation with the janitor. She shook her head, she had not realized. The janitor had spoken to her in her native tongue, he had spoken flawless German.

That evening Claudia went dancing with Mark, a professor in the anatomy department. Their relationship was intimate but not close, and he left her sleeping before the sun had risen over the ocean into yellow and blue skies.

After her morning swim and breakfast she sat at her computer underneath a window in her laboratory. She was reading an email from Mark with the subject line, "It was great!":

Dear Claudia,

I have to tell you that you are my best friend in Puerto Rico. Which surprises, because I do not like Germans. I return to Sweden today, to my home to Uppsala. I return in three months, which means I can snow ski, what I like very much. As you know, I have a large experience working with diabetes in mice. Therefore, the Swedish government gave me money to work on diabetes in the cows.

I wish all women were sensible like you are! You behave like a man but have the body of the woman. That is best. I enjoy your body extremely much for my half-year in Puerto Rico. My wife ordered me to Uppsala for her birth in 2 months. I am so pleased to have such a good friend in Puerto Rico, and will see us when I return. Have a nice day!

Mark

Claudia had never had any illusions over the nature of her relationship with Mark but his producing a pregnant wife was a shock. She had no desire to ever come between a man and his wife. His email plus the marginal success of the experiment from the previous day: these were too much to bear. She sat in front of the computer, letting tears fall down her cheeks, trying to clean out Mark and the experiment, trying to clean away the distractions sticking onto her plans for a spectacular future.

"So beautiful and so sad, Frau Doctor. Rain showering over a volcano."

Claudia sighed, she had cried long enough. She looked up towards the door, "I'm sorry?"

The man with the buckets and brooms and mops walked towards her, "May I take your trash away, Frau Doctor? Sweep your floor? Wash and polish away the dirt and the stains?"

"If only you could, um?"

"I am the janitor. Everything on earth stays on earth. So too with trash, all I can do is move it from one space to another." He stood a few feet from Claudia, his hands clasped behind his back, "Nick."

“Nick. Nicholas. I thought you were Puerto Rican, but you’re not? Why do you have such a terrible job? Who are you? I mean really?”

“Frau Doctor, N, Nick, Nicholas, janitor, whatever you like. I was a member of a European family that has been downwardly mobile since 1917. At least that is how my father sees our lives. I am sometimes a sailor, I am sometimes a painter, I am sometimes a sculptor, I am always an artist. I was the son of a prince, maybe. Being a maybe prince means nothing because I have no fortune and no country to lead. I wanted to work in the most beautiful building in the world but I am not a scientist, so! So now I am the richest man in the world because I keep this beautiful building clean, and I see you work with fire and glass. In the afternoons I draw and paint, but always, I see.”

“And you lived in Germany.”

“Yes, and now I live in paradise. I saw you last night dancing with a man with glass eyes. One day maybe you will dance with me.”

“I have to do my experiment again. It didn’t work very well. The electrodes kept breaking,” Claudia shrugged, sniffed and sighed.

“I will wait for you, Doctora. I am in paradise so what does it matter if I wait one day, one week, one month, one year, one lifetime. I have your trash so now I must clean the windows in Professora Lily’s laboratory. When she comes to work I want her to see the ocean sparkle.”

Six months later

After the Neurosciences’ conference in Finland, an American scientist came to Puerto Rico to work for a few weeks at the Institute with Riley.

The following Sunday Riley took his visitor to a champagne brunch at the end of the island next to palm trees bent from hurricanes off the Caribbean Sea.

On the way back to San Juan Riley talked about his staff, “I’d say the institute is doing well. Claudia, my post-doc, you met her? She went to Germany after the conference. Lily told me this morning that Claudia has returned from her honeymoon. Unbelievable. I always thought she was pretty, but she’s made of ice. I have never seen any evidence of a boyfriend. What’s really strange is that she married the janitor.”

Amnesty International 112**Write for Rights.**

This annual initiative is continuing, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/> please get on with it, it will take 30 minutes, perhaps 10 minutes, perhaps all day if you read every case and print and mail letters. Do what works for you, but please do help Amnesty International advocate for good humans whose rights have been taken away.

--

Wednesday Meeting for Worship

All are welcome to join us after 5:30pm for a check in, chat, tell each other concerns, and are welcomed to a safe Quaker space on Zoom. We are quiet from 6 to 6:30 when you worship in your own way that you have to connect with the Light; at 6:30 we come out of our worship space and greet one another.