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## Stella On Life & Love

February found us once again on the West Coast, this time in Oregon, where we spent ten days with my youngest grandchild while his parents went to Seattle on business.

And what a business trip it was! My daughter recently launched her own company, the [Ever Pollen Print Shop](#), where she creates and sells imaginative stationery and home décor. She was invited to collaborate with the Northwest Flower and Garden Show, where visitors enthusiastically purchased her creations.

Meanwhile back in Oregon, my partner and I had fun adventures with the three-year-old grandson, including visits to the [Gilbert House Children's Museum](#) in Salem and to the [Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum](#) in McMinnville. And we also caught the grandson's cold. He was not that sick, but we've been knocked for a loop after all that pandemic isolation.

Yet even though I'm sneezing and have a voice like a frog, I'm so grateful for this old body, for my beating heart and breathing lungs. Just as we were leaving for Oregon, two women also in their seventies whom I greatly cared about died within two days of each other. I'd last seen my friend Lisa when we were in Oakland, California in January. Lisa, who founded the [Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Fellowship](#) in the island city of Alameda, was terminally ill with cancer and was so gracious and kind. "Old friends are the best," she said when I took her hand at the end of our visit, and "I love you." We had never said those words to each other, and I understood in that moment that we were saying our goodbyes. I hope I face the end of my life with any semblance of her serenity. Three weeks after my visit, Lisa's family brought cake and gifts to celebrate her birthday. After the party, when the children and grandchildren went home and it was just Lisa and her dear husband, Lisa took her last breath.

Two days after Lisa died, Janne breathed her last at her home in Portland, Oregon, attended by her loving family. Janne's career as a Unitarian Universalist minister spanned many decades. When I first knew her, Janne and her husband were co-ministers at a church in downtown Oakland which had just eight members when they arrived and hundreds of members by the time they left. They were charismatic and totally committed to their work. Their three children, who lost their dad to cancer last year, remember their mom as fiercely devoted to their family, and an inspiration to be their best selves.

Janne's husband Rob was fond of quoting these lines from Blake in his sermons:

*Joy and pain are woven fine*

*Clothing for the soul divine.*

And those lines capture our February: The joy of playing hide-and-seek with a three-year-old, woven fine with the sorrow of losing old friends. The joy of remembering wonderful times with those who have gone, woven with the sorrow of getting on a plane and flying home, far from children and grandchildren.

As the Buddha said, "The problem is, you think you have time." The more of my contemporaries who pass, the more deeply I realize we only have right now. Memo to self: Make this day the best it can be. Repeat for as long as possible.

Our legacy will be the words and the silence that we leave behind. I close with two lines of my own:

*In love with words, her lover was a ghost;*

*But silence was the one she loved the most.*

And so into March, and springtime, and rebirth.

All best wishes,



Keep Clicking Those Keys!  
Stella,  
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**From the blog this month**



3 Crones To Watch Out For

## Three Crones to Watch Out For

**Stella Fosse**

The subject of “super-agers” came up in a recent [Old School Office Hours](#) (which, in case you aren’t familiar with it, is a weekly Zoom gathering of folks interested in anti-ageism, convened by the esteemed [Ashton Applewhite](#)).

You know who we mean by “super-ager:” The eighty-year-old who climbs a mountain. The ninety-year-old who runs their first marathon. Nothing against these elders; it’s great that they are living their best lives. But when they show up in the press, they become the equivalent of what’s called “[inspiration porn](#)” in the disability community: The shining example held up to shame able bodied folks for not doing more (and, I suspect, to discourage other people with disabilities from asking for accommodations).



The Vista Of Years

## The Vista of Years

**Julia Nunnally Duncan**

In this decade of my life, I find writing about my childhood in the 1960s to be comforting. I don’t write exclusively about that era; many of my personal essays chronicle more recent years with my husband and daughter and our rural life in Western North Carolina. But I often find myself recollecting my early years in my hometown, Marion, North Carolina, where I was born and still live. My childhood home was a two-story wood frame house with gray asbestos shingle siding in a working-class neighborhood. This neighborhood was still very rural at the time, with fenced pastures, barns, vegetable gardens, and abundant flowers in neat yards. Many homes, including my family’s, had front porches where people peeled apples or strung green beans on summer days and rested on summer evenings.

The super-ager in the public arena sets up an either/or stereotype: Either an older woman is exceptional, or she is "[Frail, Frumpy and Forgotten](#)" (the memorable title of a report from the [Geena Davis](#) Institute on the portrayal of older women in the media).

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Our sloping street was quiet then, with little traffic, so we kids could play dodge ball there, or on snowy winter days slide down the street on makeshift sleds. Most families had dogs; I had a collie, Laddie, and a horse, Thunder. The neighborhood was friendly.

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