

# The Objects of Our Lives

## Installment 6

February 22, 2021

**Judy Wood, Patty Perreault Bennett, Walter F. Curran,  
Gene Garone. and Rich Barnett**

We say “things” are not important, it is the people and experiences of our lives that make it rich. But is that always true? This is the question we put to Guild writers, asking them to craft a story—fiction or nonfiction, prose or poetry—about an everyday object that represents an



Photo by Jim Tegman

important part of their life. The project was inspired by a *Harvard Gazette* essay by Leslie Jamison (read it [here](#)).

We are overjoyed by the number of writers who participated. Rather than creating one large document, we are serializing these pieces. Several pieces will be posted each week for our readers to savor and contemplate.

**“Oh, to be young again. The objects in this week’s installment remind us of our younger selves.”**

*Maribeth*  
RBWG Executive Director

## **Yellow Mustang Convertible with Black Top. 1966. Judy Wood.**

Maybe I loved it because it was my first. Or maybe because sitting behind the wheel with the top down, the sun shining, the wind blowing and me, wearing jeans, a bright blue halter top and the chicest black sunglasses on the planet, I felt transformed. Driving into adulthood. College bound. Leaving all my baby stuff behind. From the moment I pulled out of our driveway, executed a casual wave and a quick toot of the horn, I was set. My new car. My new life. We were in this together. Suitcases stowed in the trunk.



Backpack and books on the back seat. Pack of Marlboro Lights tucked in the glove compartment. Diet Coke ready. I steered with one hand on the wheel while I turned up the radio dial and sang along with the Four Tops.

Since that day, I've taken many road trips. Some with a purpose, many with no destination in mind. The cigarettes are long-gone; the Diet Coke is bottled water. My grandchildren take charge of the radio and when I know the words, I'll still sing along. These days I keep both hands on the wheel and I prefer backroads to highways, but going somewhere, anywhere is always a treat. Once in a while as I pull away from the curb, I remember my young self, driving that sexy yellow car on my first glorious adventure.

## **My White Boots. 1976. Patty Perreault Bennett.**

These boots were made for cheering. That's just what they've done.  
They've given me some heartache, but also lots of fun.

I remember their debut in August, '76.  
They cartwheeled over one of the Patriettes' youngest chicks.

Her heel got tangled in the Astro Turf, twisting her ankle in two.  
They pushed me to continue. My cartwheel was all I could do.

The Seattle Seahawks game: gusty winds and pouring rain.  
Water running down our legs, into our boots. What a pain!

Oakland Raiders wore silver and black. Huge men, looking scary and mean.  
The ball bounced toward the sidelines. A Raider dove into me. I screamed.

December 5, 1977, in Foxborough. My last game.  
My 27th birthday. Fav'rite tailgaters had cake iced with my name.

At halftime they passed out big letters, on placards in red, white and blue.  
No cell phones back then, so no pictures: H-A-P-P-Y-B-I-R-T-H-D-A-Y-P-A-T-T-Y-T-O-Y-O-U!

When cheering was over, I kept my white boots for something we called "play."  
My husband would ask for the boots to appear. I knew it would be a great day.

I continued to age, and arthritis pain plagued my knee.  
Jumping on cement in high-heeled boots wasn't best for me.

The surgeon knew I was 57, but the MRI put my knees at 71.  
Total replacement in 2007. White-boot adventures surely are not done!



## **A Little Man. 1976. Walter F. Curran.**

I found my little friend at a low point in my life, March 1976. Having taken a job in Baltimore, I left my wife and children in Saugus, Massachusetts to follow at a later, undetermined date. An optimist, I was beset by pessimists.

Lonely living arrangements, a motel room in Towson. Longer commute, more traffic than before, though the drivers were more polite than the typical “Masshole” driver. New job on the waterfront where, despite being called “Hon” by everyone, strangers were shunned. More so, the stranger was the supervisor.

No one seemed able to make a decision. All ran to me, no matter how trivial, cluttering my life.

Late on a Saturday afternoon, I found my little man in a curio shop at the Inner Harbor, and named him “Attitude.”

I left him on the front of my desk so anyone approaching saw him first. When they hit me with their problems, I held him up, smiled a snarky smile, then attacked the problem. Pretty soon fewer problems were being posed. Those that still approached started with, “I don’t want to spoil your day, but.” UP went the little man.

I took a Polaroid photo of him and taped it to the back of my hardhat as a rearguard action.



## Guitar with Broken String. 1970. Gene Garone.

Once I was a great guitarist  
with notes that never cease.  
I'd open up a songbook  
and play my songs of peace.

The strings are tight and made of steel  
in tune six side by side.  
I made each note resound with joy  
echoing with pride.

I'd strum the strings and play each chord  
in days when life was young  
never ending, never caring  
sweet melodies I've sung.

Many years have now gone by  
in life with no regrets,  
my hand too stiff my joints too weak  
I'll never reach the frets.

This guitar, a broken string  
like me, is frayed and old  
Now angels sing and play for me  
in heaven I am told.



## Garbanzo Beans. 1990. Rich Barnett.

No one where I grew up ate garbanzo beans. Folks in my Southern hometown served baked beans at cookouts and slow cooked green beans with Sunday dinners. In fact, I'd neither seen nor tasted a garbanzo bean until the spring of 1990.

That was when my boyfriend Michael and I began renovating a turn-of-the-century red brick row house in DC's fast expanding gay ghetto. With the unbridled energy of youth, we'd knock old plaster loose during the day and at night step around yellow police tape on our way to swank cocktail parties with witty handsome men who all seemed to smell of drywall dust and Armani cologne. Gentrification was not yet an ugly word. White privilege hadn't entered our consciousness. White tulips in crystal vases, however, were très chic. And funny-sounding garbanzos were the fashionable hors d'oeuvres; mashed up, spiced up and reinvented as hummus and paired with toasted pita bread and bottles of Chilean red wine.

I might venture to say the garbanzo beans were like us, an expression of modern worldly city life and a far cry from the chip-and-dip places from whence most of us hailed. That sounds slightly pretentious. Nevertheless, I occasionally think about those exhilarating days, usually when I'm adding the humble beans to one of my "everything but the kitchen sink" vegetable soups and then settling down to binge watch some latest greatest Netflix series. And you know what? I'm okay with it.

