

Memoir from page 25

meant few tithes and extra jobs for him, like selling encyclopedias and working part-time at a funeral home. He did not have many chances to watch me. My brother had left home for basic training at seventeen and he was not around to watch me. My sister was nearing the end of her high-school years, and was working to save for college – again, not able to watch me. And then there was my mom.

My mother had always had a tender place in her heart that longed to help and care for the elderly. When I was eight years old she was employed at a residential care facility in the picturesque village of Casco, Maine. The men and women she cared for had all types of special needs, including patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Anyway, it was late June, no one was home to watch me, so off my mother and I went each morning to spend the day with old people.

The Casco Inn was a nice enough place, located on a stretch of Route 121 that was home to a variety of small businesses. It was located near the center of town and saw a lot of hustle and bustle, including the locally celebrated Casco Days – a three-day event in July full of carnival rides, town parades, footraces and fireworks. The well-landscaped building was also almost a stone's throw away from the serene, oblong-shaped Pleasant Lake. Despite all the busyness and prettiness going on outside, most of the days for both me and the residents were spent inside.

The majority of the elderly occupied their days in their bedrooms watching television, or just sitting around. My hallway jaunts would witness strange and uncomfortable sights for a young boy – wrinkled and bent-over people walking around in their flannel pajamas asking me where they were, or sitting in corners crying for their parents. Days quickly became either boring, or troubling, or both.

Thankfully I had submarine sandwiches waiting to rectify my day. Lunch time was the moment I anticipated like Christmas morning, and because of the combination of boredom

and weirdness, my mother allowed me to do that which is disappearing from commonplace these days – I went out on my own.

It was an adventure, plain and simple. My mother would place an order with the local sandwich and ice-cream shop, give me some money, and send me on my way. Walking on the sidewalks of Casco for me was akin to being like one of King Arthur's knights traveling through dangerous swamps and wastelands, encountering villains and fair maidens, participating in all sorts of quests all the while holding onto the main objective of recovering the elusive Holy Grail.

My personal quests were detours to the Casco Public Library to discover abridged versions of the classics and save them from their shelves – it is no wonder that I became an English major at a college in New York's Hudson Valley, not far from Washington Irving's resting place and the former stomping grounds of the headless horseman and Rip Van Winkle. My favorite conquest, however, was checking out the tales of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table. Book in hand and money in pocket I would bravely walk down Route 121 to the sandwich shop and retrieve the mouthwatering submarine.

My afternoons at my mother's workplace were ones of imagination, literature, adventure, empowerment and deliciousness. Each bite from my Italian represented one of victory and independence, and as I sat in some wing-backed chair stuck in a dusty corner of that nursing home I disappeared from all the uncertainty and sadness around me to sixth-century England and to the round table, and ate heartily alongside brave and determined knights, right next to one of the most beloved legends of history.

Every time I enjoy a tantalizing sub I am taken back in time to my days in Casco, Maine, with King Arthur. There are theories that Alzheimer's skips a generation. My grandmother had Alzheimer's, as did many of the Casco Inn's residents. The summer I ate Italian subs with King Arthur and his knights I will not soon forget, but may...eventually.

**Kearsarge Chorale
Features Anastasia Robinson**

**November 19
and 20**

Press release

Saturday, November 19 at 7 PM and Sunday, November 20 at 3 PM, Anastasia L. Robinson will appear with Kearsarge Chorale as guest soprano soloist.

Ms. Robinson, currently a resident of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, grew up in Springfield, New Hampshire. Equally at home with opera, oratorio and art song, she is thrilled to return to New Hampshire for her solo debut with Kearsarge Chorale. She will be featured, among other works, in Francis Poulenc's Gloria.

The concerts will be held at Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church at 724 Main Street, New London. A silent auction to support the Chorale will be held before and after the Saturday evening performance. Tickets (\$10. each or \$30. for a family of three or more) will be available at Tatewell Gallery, Mor-

gan Hill Bookstore, from any member of the Chorale, and at the door.

Andover residents Margo Coolidge, Judy Fox, Helen Wickham, and Nancy Tripp, as well as Andover business owner Linda Barnes will be singing in the concerts.



**Mona Rooney, D.V.M.
Colrain Balch, D.V.M.
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