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## **CML News**

In the almost 56 years that CML has been reaching across the 'periodical divide' and providing its listeners with a rich assortment of magazine writing, we have been supported and looked after by our legal counsel and Lucerna Fund board chair William B. O'Connor, Esq. He was the voice of reason in all matters—whether bringing important legal information to our attention, or approving financial decisions within our small nonprofit—Bill was consistently on task, on point, and on time. But he was also beloved for his stories of the early days of CML and those who joined LuEsther in the pursuit of her dream. In November, we were saddened to learn of Bill's passing. We will miss his keen intellect and dry wit, but dearly miss his devotion and dedication to CML's longevity and vitality. Ever thanks, Bill.

## **Highlights**

Poetry, fiction, music, art, natural history, the future of technology—even hilarious suggestions for fixing the blighted New York subway system!—all converge in this issue of Choice Magazine Listening.

A poem by **Ilyse Kusnetz**, “How to Build a Stradivarius,” reimagines the magical moment in which Antonio Stradivari (“absorbing Heaven’s vibrations”) was inspired to create his unique instrument. The long and colorful career of another great musician, Arturo Toscanini, is revisited in “The Perfectionist,” an in-depth review by **Tim Page** of Harvey Sach’s new, and definitive, biography of the famed conductor.

Master artists and athletes amaze us in this issue: **Walter Isaacson’s** “How Leonardo Made Mona Lisa Smile” reveals the secrets of Leonardo da Vinci’s most famous painting; **Barrett Swanson**, in his piece, “Pistol Pete’s Homework Basketball,” lays bare the mind-boggling technical wizardry of basketball legend

Pistol Pete Maravich. **Mike Sager's** "Dinosaur Cowboy" shows us what it is like to be a semi-professional hunter of dinosaur fossils, while the touching short story, "Palomino," by **Bret Anthony Johnston** portrays another kind of cowboy, down on his luck, selling used cars in Texas.

This issue also considers some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity: "Dark Factory" by **Sheelah Kolhatkar** investigates the changes robots and automation are bringing to the American labor force; **Molly McArdle**, in "A Disappearing Pile of Sand," laments the effects of climate change on a beloved stretch of North Carolina coast; and **Julie Orringer's** short story, "Neighbors," explores paranoia and mistrust in an age of terrorism.

### Top Picks

It is always difficult to pick the best from so many strong pieces, but we at CML especially recommend "The Death and Life of John Shields," by **Catherine Porter**, an exacting account of the hard choices made by a man facing the reality of an agonizing and immobilizing disease.

We were moved by **Joanna Hershon's** short story, "Saint Ivo," which breaks up traditional narrative sequence to convey the fragile life-balance of a struggling writer who has, in addition, lost her beloved daughter to a religious cult. Another work of fiction, "The Art of Loading Brush," by **Wendell Berry**, is a wistful meditation on the vanishing values of hard work, attention, frugality, friendship, and community.

We were humbled by the prolific literary output, vast knowledge, and sense of place embodied by author John McPhee, the subject of **Sam Anderson's** profile, "The Angler," and charmed by **Greg Delanty's** life-affirming poem, "Earthworm."

Not to be missed is **David Sedaris's** outrageously humorous—but ultimately heart-breaking—memory of a family vacation, "Letter from Emerald Isle." And for laughs, we started you off with a piece from *The New Yorker* that we hope you will find as funny as we did: "Million-Dollar Subway Fixes," a list of, shall we say, *imaginative* ways to improve the New York subway—just to get your journey started.

**And Special Thanks To...**

**Catherine C.**, from Wilmington, NC who said, "I just have to tell you that having great material to read like CML, has brought back a sense of joy to my life. Thank you. Thank you."

**Happy New Year from Annie, Jay, Mike, Raquel, and Alfredo!**