

FROM THE ROOFTOP

The Newsletter of The Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning

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STILL WATCHING FOR SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT

Another Fromm, a second cousin of the family that founded our Institute, once said that a “Mother is the home we all come from. She is nature, soil, ocean.” How true these words of Erich Fromm are as mothers are indeed the universal source of mortal life.

More than nature, however, our mothers are also our nurture and their love, or lack of it, has a tremendous effect. Our mothers give us our first lessons in enthusiasm, compassion, respect and reality. Whether their personal mantra was “Wait till your father gets home,” “Saints preserve us,” or just plain old “Oy vay,” these women are our counselors, our guardians and our wardens.

Because we’ve all shared in the kisses and the kvelling as often as we were the recipients of the hard knocks they provided, mothers are a limitless source of literary inspiration. Here, in a “*Rooftop*” tribute to all of our mothers, is a celebration of one woman named Rosy who must have done her job pretty well. Scratch the surface of our collective memories and stories like Helen Liggett’s emerge from most of us acknowledging that no matter how old we are, from somewhere out there, our mothers are still watching for signs of improvement. Happy Mother’s Day to you and yours!

Rosy

By Helen Liggett

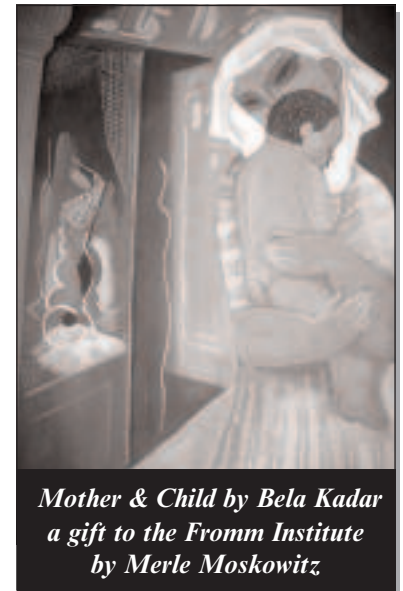
She was always in a hurry. Even in Morrisania Hospital, she only stayed one night before she died the next morning. I couldn’t believe it when they called me in the morning to tell me. She looked so ruddy when I left her. She even joked with the tall young doctor when he asked, “Rosy what day is it?”

“I don’t know,” she answered. “I can’t even tell you what I ate for breakfast this morning, but I can tell you everything that happened fifty years ago.”

He smiled at her and told me to go home and that she would be alright.

She was always in a hurry. I can never remember her sick in bed. The only time I’d catch her in bed was when she was taking a nap.

“I just fell asleep ten minutes ago,” she’d say as she jumped off the bed quickly. It was as though she had been caught doing something wrong. I don’t even remember her ever being sick, except when she had those headaches, and she’d make a headband out of a small kitchen towel soaked in cold water and alcohol. My father would come home from the factory, take off his hat and coat and very quietly, very sadly say to me, “You’re killing your mother and she’s sacrificing her life for you.” I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t want to kill my mother. The part about “sacrificing” her life for me I only



*Mother & Child by Bela Kadar
a gift to the Fromm Institute
by Merle Moskowitz*

understood many years later and after a few children of my own.

She died as she lived...quickly. Maybe because she was the only girl born into a family of ten brothers. If you didn't move quickly you'd be trampled on. She had the look of a little warrior, not even five feet tall, large bosom, full body, black wavy hair, and piercing blue eyes. Her "uniform" was a starched very clean flowered housedress with pockets. She wore black shined shoes with a Cuban heel. She always looked angry. Warriors don't smile much. She'd never learned how to show affection. "A slap from your mother is better than a kiss from a stranger," she'd tell me. It was a time when compliments were not told to a person directly, there was always the danger of the "evil eye." Even new-borns in the carriage were greeted by spitting three times and told they were the ugliest of babies. Good things were only told to closer relatives behind closed doors. One time I listened at the door and heard my mother say, "Alright your Moiche is nice looking, but did you ever see anyone so beautiful as my Chaya and she's smart. Her teacher told me. Did you know she skipped the second grade? And look how tall she is...like a young tree."

She told me how I was born after five miscarriages. How she nursed me 'til I was almost two. How she massaged my body with bone marrow so that my skin would be soft. How she would carry me when I was four and five so that my feeseluch (little feet) wouldn't get tired.

So what I'd say, "I don't remember, and anyway you're supposed to do that. You're my mother. I didn't ask to be born." You see, I'd learned how to be a warrior too.

Our life together became an endless war. "Why does she play handball with boys? Why doesn't she stay in school instead of looking for a job at 15 years old? Why does she stay out 'til 12 O'clock at night? What is she doing? Wait Sam, she'll come home pregnant. You'll see. I can't hit her anymore, she's taller than I am. And you Sam, you never hit her, you just chase the flies off her. Before you look around, she'll be 17. If only she would meet a nice boy and get married."

She always looked angry. Warriors don't smile much. She'd never learned how to show affection. "A slap from your mother is better than a kiss from a stranger," she'd tell me.

So I married and divorced three times. "What's the matter with her Sam? There are no divorces in our family."

"But Rosy, look at our wonderful grand-children!"

"Yes, but she even made them yussims (orphans) divorcing their fathers.

They have to go to 'nursery' while she has to run downtown to go to work to support them. And when she's not working every night, she's running to her meetings. You know what she told me? She's trying to make a better world for them! I can't understand her. What's wrong with her Sam? Tell me."

Her energy was boundless. When my father was out of work during the slack season she cooked for Jewish weddings. She opened chicken stores and appetiser stores. She took in boarders so we could pay the rent. She could fix everything from a plug on an iron to an antenna on the roof for our radio.

It was on Friday nights that the hurrying stopped. She'd put the small silk scarf on her head, light candles, and say some prayers, which I didn't understand. Her eyes were always wet when she finished. I never understood why. Was she crying for how hard life had been for her? Why didn't I ask her? Then we'd eat the cold gefilte fish with the red spicy horseradish.

"This horseradish is buring hot," I'd say.

"Eat it." She'd answer. "Maybe it'll burn the badness out of you."

My father looked up at me and shook his head a little from left to right, saying silently, "Don't answer." We ate the golden chicken soup with home made noodles, and the chicken with it's brown velvet gravy, and then the hot tea in which I would dip the rugaluch fat with raisins, nuts, cinnamon and sugar.

Also on Yom Kippur the hurrying stopped. My mother would sit by the window and cry. My father would say quietly to me, "Ah you know it's the holidays, don't aggrevate her." He'd sit in the hot Schule all the next day with her, an atheist till the day he died. The both fasted on Yom Kippur, but he'd grab something from the ice-box when they got home and my mother was in the next room. "I hear you Sam, can't fast for even one day."

My father would swallow quickly and open his hands palms up, hold his head a little to the side and smile silently saying, “What can I do, huh?” and give me a little hug.

When all the soups she would bring him in the hospital didn't help and my father died, my mother would come to my house, stay 15 minutes to see the kids, then want to leave.

“Where are you going? What's the hurry? Stay.”

“I don't know.” She would say, her eyes shifting around the room looking for something. “I can't find a place for myself.”

After the pain in her back, a small stroke Dr. Sevin explained to me, I begged her to stay at our house. Joe said it'd be OK, we could set up a bed in the kid's room. We slept in the living room. Finally, she said yes, but she'd have to bring her bird. OK. And the plants. OK. I worked part time.

“Listen to the radio,” I told her. “I'll be home at three after I pick up the kids.” She used to pick up Lucy and Joey from day care without telling me. “Don't you go. OK. Wait for me.” I made her some fish before I left.

That night we had to bring her back to her house, with the bird and the plants. “I miss my house. I miss my Sam.” she said.

It's almost fifty years since she died and she's still with me. Like her, I still can't find a place for myself, that special place that she had in my life, in my heart. She creeps into my thoughts, into the dishes I cook, the stories I write and tell my grand-children. What a tragedy it was that we couldn't open our hearts and share our thoughts, our fears, our dreams, our love for one another.

Were you so angry because you were sent away from home at 11 to work in someone's kitchen and your mother cried and your father said, “What use is a girl on the farm, she'll only be trouble.” How would you know how to show love or kiss me. Who ever kissed you?

And why couldn't I tell you that without your help I couldn't have made it when I was raising Lucy and Joey alone? And for the car you bought for me with the \$500 savings you had, so that I could drive the children to the day care center before going downtown to work. How you called me *vilde Chaya* (wild Helen) and then helped me sell the *Daily Worker* that cold winter night so that I could get home earlier, and the boundless love you gave your grand-children teaching me how it was done. Instead we became warriors with each other, and did what warriors do...fight. What a waste, when we had such a deep love for one another.

Five months after she died I gave birth to a daughter. I named her Rosy.



Helen Liggett is a frequent contributor to "From The Rooftop"

FREE CONCERT TICKETS FOR FROMM INSTITUTE STUDENTS

Heralded as “One of the keyboard geniuses of our time” by *Piano Le Magazine*, come hear **Cyprien Katsaris**, French Pianist and Composer on **Tuesday, May 23 - 8:00 p.m. at Herbst Theatre** – San Francisco, 401 Van Ness Avenue (at McAllister) near Civic Center BART Station. The program will be works by Leopold Mozart, Franz Xaver Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Frederic Chopin, and Johann Sebastian Bach.

All students and staff are invited to order one pair of free tickets per person by e-mail at fourseasons@juno.com by May 15 (or sooner to ensure availability) or by fax at 510-601-6183. Please give your name, address, and telephone number. Your tickets will be held under your name at the Herbst Theatre Box Office to be picked up the evening of the concert from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Your guest must be age 6 or over!

For more information on Cyprien Katsaris go to www.cyprienkatsaris.net. For more information on Four Seasons Concerts go to www.fourseasonsconcerts.com or call 510-601-7919.

The W. Hazaiah Williams Memorial Concert is offered by its Sponsors Free to the Public. Tickets must be reserved ahead of the concert. Limit of two tickets/order.



CALIFORNIA WRITERS READ

EXPERIENCE SAN FRANCISCO WITH DOROTHY BRYANT

This **Wednesday, May 10, in McLaren 252**, visit San Francisco through the words and phrases of Dorothy Bryant. Ms. Bryant has a provocative background. She is the daughter of Northern Italian immigrants; was an English and music teacher for 23 years; is author of twelve novels, five historical plays, and two nonfiction works; and, with her husband, is owner of an independent publishing company, *Ata Books*, in Berkeley. Her seasoned fans would say she is biographical and graphic, political and investigative in her writing. She transcribes reality based on attention, extensive research, daily experience, and a touch of the fantastic.

In Ms. Bryant's highly acclaimed novel, *Confessions of Madame Psyche*, for example, the young Chinese protagonist Mei-Li reacts to a story about the jealous water goddess who lived in the San Francisco. If young girls weren't good, the goddess took them away from their mothers. "Instead of being frightened by [my mother's] story, I was delighted and begged my mother to invent one story after another of my disobedience and capture... The high point of each story was the terrible task imposed by the envious water goddess... Sometimes it was to clean out all the Butcher Town slaughterhouses between the tip of Hunter's Point and Potrero Hill... [another was] swimming across the bay, climbing ashore at Benicia, then walking on a single track of the railroad all the way to Sacramento to bring back a pinch of gold... [another was] catching all the flies that swarmed around the tanneries on Third Street... [or] counting all the shrimp laid out by the oriental fishermen who worked on the shore..."

This is a vibrant, imaginative character set against the lively backdrop of San Francisco in the early twentieth century. A daughter of immigrants living in Chinatown who later becomes a medium is metaphorical in a way to Ms. Bryant's own life. She was first in her family to get a higher education, none-the-less, to become a researcher, storyteller and writer. Ms. Bryant is in fact a kind of 'medium,' a time traveler, a prolific writer/goddess of Bay Area dramas, a pioneer of women's consciousness. You won't want to miss her reading about San Francisco along with discussing scene, plot, and character development this **Wednesday, May 10**.

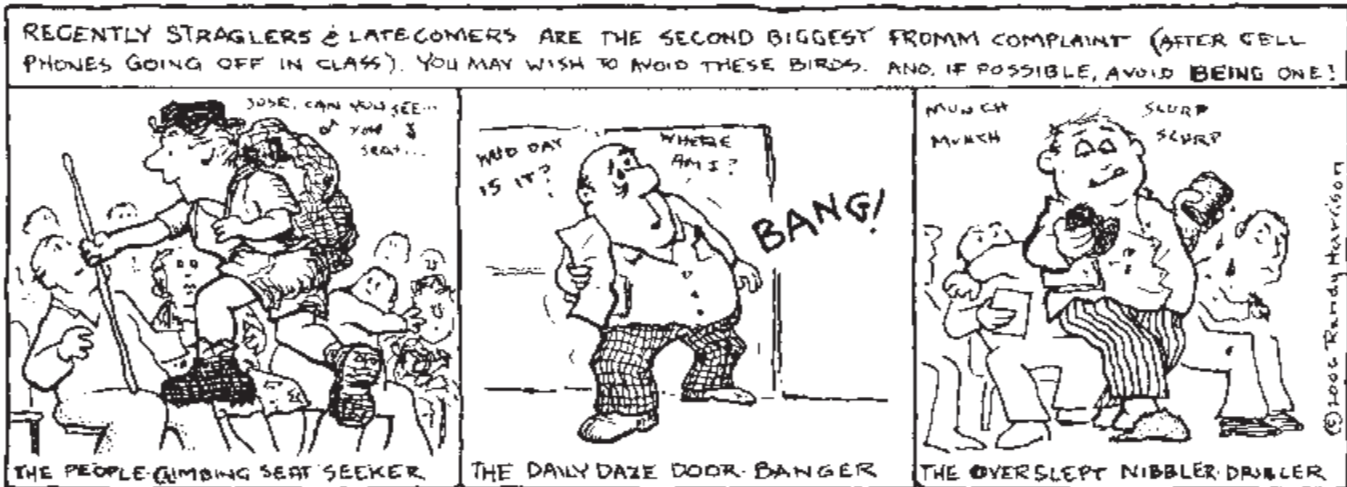
Next **Wednesday, May 17, same place same time**, come meet the biographer and critic **Jonah Raskin**, the fifth reader in the California Writers Read series.

Please note that at all readings, books from the authors will be available for purchase and signing.

"Sometimes it was to clean out all the Butcher town slaughterhouses between the tip of Hunter's Point and Potrero Hill... [another was] swimming across the bay, climbing ashore at Benicia, then walking on a single track of the railroad all the way to Sacramento to bring back a pinch of gold... [another was] catching all the flies that swarmed around the tanneries on Third Street..."

BY RANDY HARRISON

FROMMTOONS



TOUR AND TRAVEL NEWS

ROLLIN' SUR LA RIVIERE



Susan Kennelly

For a different way to cruise, try a rivership on two of Europe's most enchanting and historic rivers, the Saone and the Rhone flowing through Burgundy and Provence. On **A Connoisseur's Provence**, you'll board your deluxe vessel at Lyon, the gastronomic capital of France. With only 130 fellow passengers and all outside staterooms, you'll sail right into the heart of such cities as Chalon, Macon, Avignon and Arles. Enjoy la vie sur la riviere and you'll know why the light of Provence drew Van Gogh, Monet and Cezanne to one of Europe's loveliest

areas. Our special group price for the August 16-24 journey has a deadline of May 20 and space is limited. The ship does have other sailing dates, so if this doesn't work please be contact me about alternate times and prices.

Remember to "Brown Bag" it next **Monday, May 15 at noon in McLaren 251** for a preview of Europe's prime "new" destination, Croatia. Dates for **The Alps To Dubrovnik** are now Oct. 10-23 with great cost savings of only \$1,799 per person land. Air additional \$1,310. Please inquire. Registration deadline will occur during summer break, so now's the time to plan.

Here's another option for fall travelers: **The Best of Spain and Portugal**. This 16-day journey features the culture, history, art and spiritual life from Oct. 6-21. The itinerary includes Barcelona, Zaragoza, Madrid, Avila, Segovia, Toledo, Granada, Seville, Cordoba, Lisbon, Evora, Obidos and Fatima. Roundtrip air from San Francisco, first class hotels, festive dinners with music, all for \$3,995. For details contact me at 707-257-1804 or spk@napanet.net.

Ashland Shakespeare is Sold Out, as always. Smart folks who reserved early will meet on **Monday, May 21 at 3 p.m. at UC 400** for travel documents and socializing. Happy Travels, *Susan Kennelly*

COMMAND PERFORMANCES

MUSICALS! MUSICALS! MUSICALS! & SF LYRIC OPERA

Hope you'll be sure to join us for the *San Francisco Symphony* student "Brown Bag" at **noon, Monday, May 8 in McLaren 250**, with Mary Goto. This is your chance to renew and ask any questions about subscriptions. If you miss it, be sure to look in your classrooms for the *Symphony* Student Brochures. If you have any further questions, please seek me out Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday while I'm on campus.

Are musicals your thing? If so we have the new season brochures for two organizations that do nothing but musicals. *42nd Street Moon* is an amazing little organization which only does old musicals that you never get to hear anywhere else. All of their musicals (5 in the new season) are done "in concert," and yet so amazing in their minimal staging and maximum enthusiasm that I know you will love them. They have great student discounts, with Saturday performances beginning at 6 p.m. for those of you who like an early evening. They begin with "L'il Abner" (1956) in July. Also in your classrooms, you'll find brochures for *Broadway by the Bay* in San Mateo. They just ended "Seven Brides For Seven Brothers" with good reviews from your fellow students.

For opera lovers (I know there are many of you at the Fromm Institute) I have been telling you of the *San Francisco Lyric Opera* that performs at the Gould Theatre at the Legion of Honor. Coming up for this weekend is Benjamin Brittan's rarely performed "The Rape of Lucretia." I'm very excited about seeing this opera for the first time. This company has an orchestra, supertitles, and the theatre is truly perfect for intimate opera. They offer great prices for Fromm Institute students. *San Francisco Opera* summer brochures for the 3 operas in June are now in your classrooms. While they do not offer you as Fromm Institute students season discounts, you can get day-of-performance student rush tickets for \$25 cash (2 per student ID) if you plan ahead.

Look for more brochures coming in each week, and more in my next column in two weeks.

Bob Morgan



Bob Morgan

A CHALLENGE TO MOBILIZE AGAINST GLOBAL POVERTY!

Join Catholics throughout the United States and around the world in San Francisco this October for a landmark gathering to mobilize against global poverty. The conference will bring together scholars, students, church and business leaders to discuss ways to eradicate global poverty, and will hopefully launch many varied efforts toward this end including student led campaigns across Catholic campuses, new course development by faculty, new research projects and advocacy opportunities for the general public. The conference will be held on October 27-28 at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco. **For more information or to register for the event, please call 415-614-5567 or visit www.pointsevennow.org.**

[RE] mark USF STUDENT ART SHOWCASE

The Thacher Gallery and the University of San Francisco presents the 7th Annual Thacher Student showcase featuring Juniors and Seniors in USF's Arts Programs. The show is up at the Thacher Gallery from May 5 – July 16, 2006. There will be a film screening, a guided walk through the show, an opening reception and an awards presentation held on **Friday, May 5 at 4 p.m.** Thacher Gallery is located in the Gleeson Library/Geschke Center on the first floor behind and to the left of the circulation desk. **For library hours call 415-422-2044 or, for more information on library events, call the library events line at 415-422-5178 or visit their website at www.usfca.edu/thacher.**

GENERATIONS "BROWN BAG" THIS WEEK!

Remember, this week on **Wednesday, May 10 at noon in McLaren 250**, **Dr. Lisa Wagner** from USF's Department of Psychology will discuss and display the results of her research with Fromm Institute students over the last few years. Joining Dr. Wagner will be Fromm Institute Professor **Bernice Goldmark** reuniting with the intergenerational "Communication Between the Generations" classes that were held in the Fall of 2004/2005. The usual tables and chairs, beverages and dessert will be provided. However, this research fair/reunion will also encourage you to move around McLaren 250 to listen to USF students present their findings.



TIME CAPSULE DEDICATION

At the end of USF's Sesquicentennial Year on **Tuesday, May 9, at 12:30 p.m.**, you're invited to **Harney Plaza** to join USF President Stephen Privett, S.J.; members of the sesquicentennial steering committee; and faculty, staff, and students at the dedication of a USF time capsule that will be opened in 2105, the 250th anniversary of the founding of USF. Celebrate USF's history, discover what's going in the time capsule and have some free food and drink. For further information, contact Alan Ziajka, Special Assistant to the President/Director of Institutional Research, at 415-422-2846 or Alison Richardson, Director of Student Activities, University Life, at 415-422-6434.

SIGN-UP FOR SPRING LIBRARY CLASSES



An added feature of this year's springtime curriculum is the Library Instruction offered to our students by our University Librarians Noah Butter and Joseph Garity. Designed for all levels of library users from the occasional to the frequent, these classes have benefited hundreds of Fromm Institute students in the past, enabling them to get the most out of the resources that can be found within the Gleeson Library/Geschke Learning Center.

This year another slate of classes is planned for four days over the next two weeks and all you have to do to attend is come to the Fromm Institute Office, University Center, Room 538, and put your name on the list. All of the four classes noted below will take place in the library facilities from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. on the date specified.

You must sign up to participate and you may sign up for one or two of the four classes listed below. Once you have reserved your place, your attendance will be expected. Only 23 students can be accommodated in each class so make sure that you will attend on that date and time before signing-up.

Here are the classes being offered. All meet at the Circulation Desk in the library promptly at 3 p.m. Remember, to enter Gleeson Library you must have a valid USF ID card.

TUESDAY, MAY 16

HOW GLEESON LIBRARY WORKS

In this session, you will tour the library building, learn how the books and periodicals are arranged, visit the Rare Book Room, and then do some hands on practice using Ignacio, the USF library catalog, to find books in the library.

THURSDAY, MAY 18

LIBRARY COMPUTER BASICS

Intimidated by the library's computers? Do you feel uncomfortable using them? Wish the library still had an old card catalog? This session is a very basic introduction to using the computers in the library. You will practice using the mouse, see what is important on the screen, and understand how the library arranges the computers. We assume no prior knowledge of using computers or the library. This is a hands-on session.

MONDAY, MAY 22

HOW GLEESON LIBRARY WORKS

In this session, you will tour the library building, learn how the books and periodicals are arranged, visit the Rare Book Room, and then do some hands on practice using Ignacio, the USF library catalog, to find books in the library.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24

FINDING NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES ON-LINE

Gleeson Library subscribes to magazines both in print and on-line. In this session you will briefly tour the library's Periodicals Department then you'll do some hands-on practice to find magazines on the library's computers. You'll look at some newspapers on the web, and some magazines that the library subscribes to in electronic form. There are thousands of newspapers and magazines available on the web and the library subscribes to databases like LexisNexis, which has over 5,000 news sources. In this hands-on session, you will look at many of them.

Fromm Institute Events & Reminders

Monday, May 8
Noon, McLaren 250

Command Performances presents
SF Symphony “Brown Bag” with Mary Goto

Wednesday, May 10
10 a.m., McLaren 252

California Writers Read presents Dorothy Bryant
author of A Day In San Francisco, Ella Price’s Journal, and
Confessions of Madame Psyche

Wednesday, May 10
Noon, McLaren 250

USF Department of Psychology’s Lisa Wagner presents
A “Brown Bag” of a different sort, see page 6 for details.

Monday, May 15
Noon, McLaren 251

Tour and Travel Brown Bag
“The Alps to Dubrovnik”

Wednesday, May 17
10 a.m., McLaren 252

California Writers Read presents Jonah Raskin
author of Out of the Whale, For the Hell of It, and
American Scream

ONGOING:

Jack Bray joins the Fromm Institute once again with another Mid-Day Stretch exercise program! Join him on Wednesdays this session at 12:20 p.m. on the library lawn. Attire: comfortable clothing and shoes.



**The Fromm Institute
For Lifelong Learning**

at the University of San Francisco
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