

PLANET OBIT

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"Not all those who wander are lost." ~ J.R. Tolkien

The Obit Orbit

It's not just about deaths, although they keep coming from our increasingly long-lived artistic community.

It's also about transitions, like goodbye to **Trump** and hello to **Biden**, signifying a rebirth of promise we hope. It's about the troubling effects of madcap anti-maskers and vexing anti-vaxers that affects us all: "Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee," wrote **John Donne** – and when all is said and done, will the death toll rise again? Ask **Darwin**, as he views from on high the beaches crammed with crowds of rowdy revelers celebrating Spring Break.

Personally, **Melinda** and **I** got our Moderna "*Fauci-ouchies*" and feel cautiously safe, but we still wish there was a mandatory inoculation against stupidity, greed, term limits and the filibuster – and a booster shot that guarantees the right to vote, emblematic of the irreversible diversity of our society and insuring that we remain "America" and not "Amerikkka."

Focusing on decomposing makes composing this Planet somewhat problematic, but it's important to embrace that it's not just "the stars" among us who are composed of the stuff of stars; and even if you believe that the soul does not continue, the accomplishments of those who have influenced our lives for better or worse, lives on in our still beating hearts and minds.

Read on, then, and don't forget,
"It's positive to be negative."

THE FRONT FOUR

Counterclockwise from top left:
Biden, Darwin, Donne and Done.

"From what we get we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life." ~ Arthur Ashe



Sue moves on

CONGRATULATIONS TO SUE ZIZZA, EXECUTIVE Producer and Program Chair of the **HEAR Now Festival** and President of the Board of the organizational parent, the **National Audio Theatre Festivals** in Kansas City, who is stepping down after close to a decade of service to the voice-over community. Here are some excerpts from her moving farewell message...

"The choice is not an easy one, but it's time to turn my attentions in new directions and though I will miss being on this journey with all of you – as we built HEAR Now, the Corwin Awards, and more – I feel confident that what has been started will only continue to grow..."

THROUGHOUT THE 'PLANET,' CLICKING **DARK RED TYPE** OPENS A RELATED INTERNET LINK.

*"When I reflect back on the astounding accomplishments that we've made together, included, among them: giving space to special programs like the **Independent Audiobook Awards**, which supports and*

*showcases independent producers who might otherwise never get a voice in our 'star-studded' industry; the opportunity to feature incredibly and authentically talented artists like **Dion Graham, Julia Whelan, Jeff Hays, Phil Proctor, Bill Dufres, Ed Asner, Carol Monda** and so many others..."*

"Thank you for helping me light that ON-AIR light for so many others – now I can't wait to watch you all keep it lit. I look forward to watching you all take that light to the world."

*"Be good and you will be lonesome." ~ **Mark Twain***

All hail Hal

HAL HOLBROOK, BEST KNOWN FOR HIS amazingly accurate portrayal of **Mark Twain** for more than five decades, has extinguished his last cheroot at 95 after touring the world with his one-man show, which I had the unique pleasure of seeing when he brought **Mark Twain Tonight!** to Broadway in 1966.

One of my fellow actors from the short-lived Off-Broadway production of **Thistle in my Bed**, a Welsh folktale featuring **Sam Waterston** and **John Cullum**, was hired as Holbrook's dresser, and I was invited to sit in Holbrook's dressing room as he transformed himself into Twain, and then graciously allowed to watch the whole show offstage next to the stage manager.

As the curtain rose, the smoke from his 'seegar' was sucked into the packed auditorium and he ambled downstage to announce: "Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to present to you a man whose great learning and veneration for truth are only exceeded by his high moral character and majestic presence. I refer in these vague, general terms to myself."

I got to meet Mr. Holbrook again over the decades and always found him to be that same dear, generous man of enormous talent.

Curtain down.

EVER THE TWAIN ...

Hal Holbrook, above right, and as the author he celebrated for more than a half-century.

■ **CONTINUED**

The world is changed not by the self-regarding, but by men and women prepared to make fools of themselves.

~ P.D. James

Good Heavens

AT THE PEARLY GATE, ONE WOMAN TURNS to another and says, "Susan! You're here too? How'd you die?" And the other says, "Is that you, Beverly?! Yep, I'm dead. I froze to death. But it was quite peaceful. Once you get past the cold, you just fall asleep. What about you? How'd you die?"

"Oh, I had a heart attack," Beverly responds. "I was so certain my husband was cheating on me, I came home early to catch him in the act; but I just found him in the den, watching TV.

"But I was still so sure there was another woman, I ran around the house searching frantically – the attic, the basement, under all the beds, in all the closets. But I overexerted myself and keeled over from a massive heart attack."

"Wow. I'm so sorry," says Susan. "Too bad you didn't look in the freezer, we'd both still be alive."

"Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, where's is going to end?" ~ Tom Stoppard

Chick Corea

HAD THE INDESCRIBABLE PLEASURE OF recording *Stories from the Golden Age of Pulp Fiction* by L. Ron Hubbard in Chick Corea's

astounding *Alice in Wonderland*-themed studios, and although he will be forever acknowledged for earning an incredible 23 Grammys and the most jazz Grammys ever, I here share some selections from a heartfelt tribute by our friend, actor, director and impressive impressionist, **Jim Meskimen**:

"In reading some of the innumerable tributes this weekend to my friend Chick Corea, I see that my own experiences with him were far from singular; like many who knew him, I was always a little surprised that he cared enough to maintain the friendship, that this legend, this artist for the ages, would benefit from spending any time with me.

"I consider Chick to be the ultimate performing artist. I will marvel forever at the creativity, deliberateness and delicacy of his playing, but also at the intention; he never did anything in his art without a purpose – one statement of which was 'to ease the effect of time on the audience.'

"Chick could travel to any far-flung place on earth and have a wonderful effect on an audience, whether they spoke English or not. That, I realize, is a tremendous skill, born of a deep and honest desire to better the lives of strangers.

"Bon voyage, my friend. I know the tears of loss of today will be the tears of delight in future times."

READ MORE



A FRIEND'S FAREWELL

Chick Corea, Jim Meskimen, and Gayle Moran
Corea backstage in Clearwater, Florida.

"If God had intended us to fly,
he would have made it easier to get to the airport."
~ Jonathan Winters

The power of art

A sweet note from **Arnab Ghosh**, a fan in Canada:

MY SINCERE PRAYERS FOR A SAFE AND healthy 2021. Hope u r staying safe from Covid-19. Real Cinema and humanity conquers the barrier of geography, race, caste, creed, and religion. We all bask in the glory of the wonderful truth that brings relief to a disturbed soul – the soul which is never destroyed and changes from one form to another. I believe in the truth of incarnation and rebirth.

Your films and life are the healing touch to my desperately breathing soul with love and passion... I have been mesmerized by your true and heartfelt creations – **The Firesign Theatre, Zachariah, Monsters Inc, Tarzan, Toy Story, Toy Story 2** – to name a very few of your compositions from the vast house of immortal creations. The revelations cleanse my ruptured soul and mind and pump in real values to conquer my battle with dreaded disease.

I lost my parents when I was 2. I am acute patient of pancreatic cancer... I am alone in this world literally but not when I feel that magical touch when seeing your films over and over again on YouTube and DVDs...I am distressed but not drowned with my solitude. Sometimes I feel very, very frustrated that God has given me such a struggling life with so much for me still to explore. I can only pray to Almighty that you have time from your busy schedule to reply. (Bless him. I did)

"Faith sees better in the dark." ~ Soren Kierkegaard

A poem from the cat

*Thank you for the food you bring
and for my little squeaky thing.
I thank you for your friendly talks
and when you change my litter box.
I thank you for the naps we share
and putting up with tuffs of hair.
I thank you for these things you do...
enjoy this mouse I caught for you.*

– Lynn Miclea

"There is always light, if only we're brave enough
to be it." ~ Amanda Gorma

Testing, testing

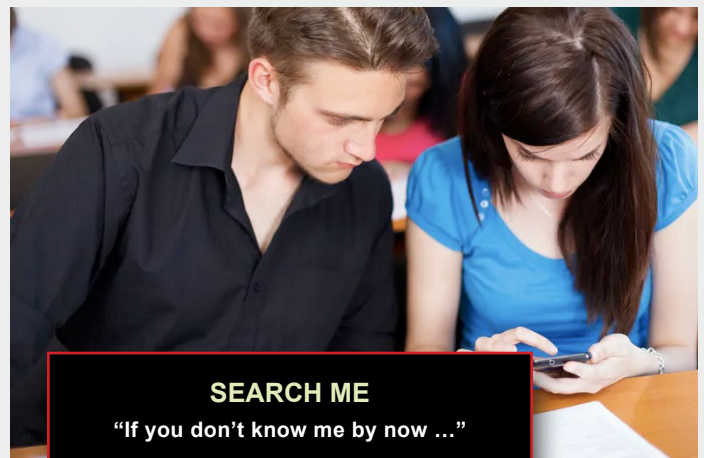
THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE SET IN last year's GED examination. These are genuine answers from 16-year-olds:

Name the four seasons: *Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar.*

What guarantees may a mortgage company insist on? *If you are buying a house, they will insist that you are well endowed.*

In a democratic society, how important are elections? *Very important. Sex can only happen when a male gets an election.*

What happens to your body as you age? *When you get old, so do your bowels and you get intercontinental.*



What happens to a boy when he reaches puberty? *He says goodbye to his boyhood and looks forward to his adultery.*

What does 'benign' mean? *Benign is what you will be after you be eight.*

What is artificial insemination? *When the farmer does it to the bull instead of the cow.*

How can you delay milk turning sour? *Keep it in the cow.*

What are the main 20 parts of the body? *The body is consisted into 3 parts - the brainium, the borax and the abominal cavity. The brainium contains the brain, the borax contains the heart and lungs and the abominal cavity contains the five bowels: AEIOU.*

What is the fibula? *A small lie.*

What is the most common form of birth control? *Most people prevent contraception by wearing a condominium.*

Give the meaning of the term Caesarean section? *The Caesarean section is a district in Rome.*

What is a terminal illness? *When you are sick at the airport.*

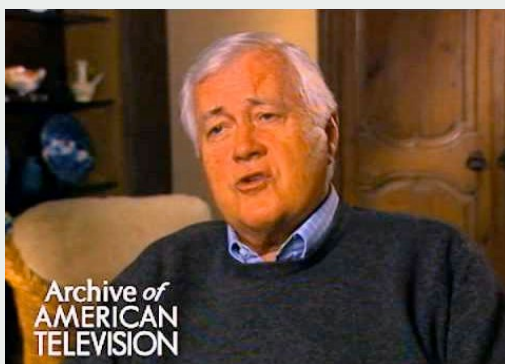
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"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." ~ James Baldwin

Feel the Burns

COMIC GENIUS ALLAN BURNS JUST GOT HIS last laugh at 86. He started as an NBC page, and then crafted Captain Crunch and greeting cards (like Firesign's **Peter Bergman**), until he was discovered by **Jay Ward** – who also worked with Firesign, by the way – and wrote for the cult classic "Rocky and Bullwinkle."

He went on to create shows like "He & She" with **Martin Mull**, on which I guest-starred, and then with writing partner James L. Brooks, co-created, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," and later "Lou Grant" (starring our **God Help Us** star **Ed Asner**) even though the network suits decreed that American audiences wouldn't tolerate "New Yorkers, Jews, people with mustaches and divorce."



The show went on to run for seven years winning 29 Emmy Awards and 22 Golden Globes. And, as **Michelle Obama** noted, "Mary wasn't married, she wasn't looking to get married. At no point did the series end with her finding a husband – which seemed to be the course you had to take as a woman."

His friend **Seth Freeman** added, "At Allan's core was a sense of social justice, which was reflected in everything he did. He was a mensch."

READ THE L.A. TIMES OBITUARY

"Racism and bigotry are among the deadliest social ills plaguing the world today." ~ Stan Lee

Don't ask

MARRIED 25 YEARS, I TOOK A LOOK AT MY wife one day and said, "Honey, 25 years ago, we had a cheap apartment, a cheap car, slept on a sofa bed and watched a 10-inch black-and-white TV, but I got to sleep every night with a hot 25-year-old blond."

Now, we have a nice house, a nice car, a big bed and a plasma screen, but I'm sleeping with a 50-year-old woman. It seems to me that you are not holding up your side of things."

My wife is a very reasonable woman, so she told me to

go out and find a hot 25-year-old blond, and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap apartment, driving a cheap car and sleeping on a sofa bed.

*"Our plans miscarry because they have no aim.
When a man does not know what harbor
he is making for, no wind is the right wind." ~ Seneca*

The Dying Wallendas

CARLA WALLEDA, THE MATRIARCH OF THE daredevil **Flying Wallenda Family** of high-wire walkers, who continued to perform past the age of 80, died at 85 on the ground at a rehabilitation facility in Sarasota, Florida.

Ms. Wallenda was the last surviving child of **Karl Wallenda**, who brought the family and its tradition of death-defying acts without any net to the U.S. from Germany in 1928.

Carla appeared as a toddler in a 1939 newsreel learning how to walk the wire; but she said her first time was much earlier. "Actually, they carried me across the wire when I was 6 weeks old. My father rode the bicycle, and my mother sat on his shoulders, holding me and introducing me to the public."

And I thought that being "born in a trunk in Pocatella, Idaho and carried onstage for the final bow" was untoppable!

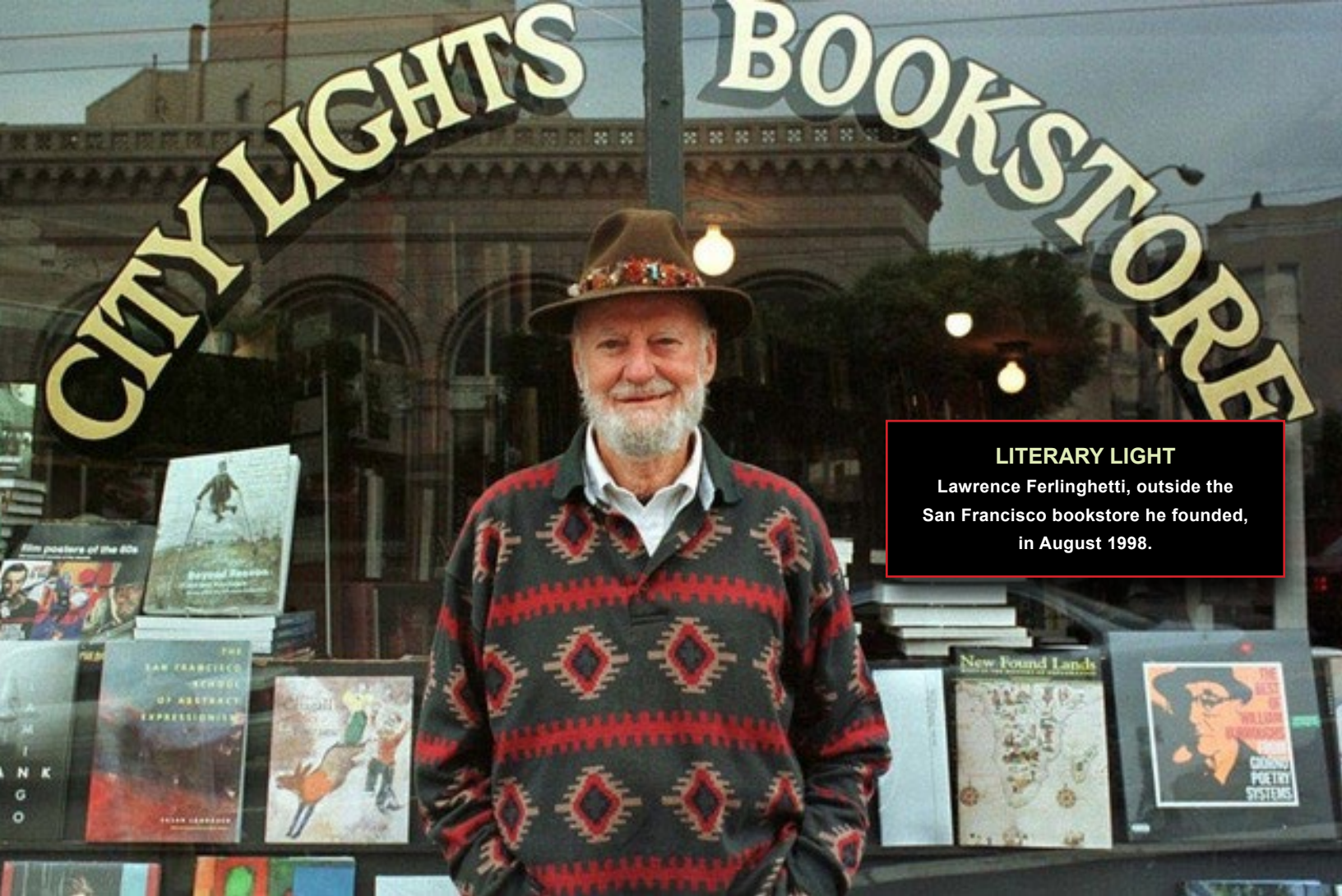
Regarding her precarious profession, Carla said,

■ **CONTINUED**



UPLIFT

Comedy's Allan Burns, top, and acrobatics' Carla Wallenda, above



LITERARY LIGHT

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, outside the San Francisco bookstore he founded, in August 1998.

"Accidents can happen anyplace. I have to make a living, and this is the only way I know or want to. I've done waitress work and hated every minute of it. Why should I go and do a job that I hate?"

"Character is who you are when no one is watching."
~ Phil's Phortune Cookie

City Lights shine on

LAURENCE FERLINGHETTI, WHO TURNED the page at 101, was, according to **Fred Kaplan** of *Slate*:

As responsible as any single other person for the rise of the Beats, the end of obscenity laws, and, not least, the transformation of San Francisco to a vibrant artistic center.

*He did all this through the creation and flourishing of a bookstore, **City Lights** – which, seven decades after its founding, in 1953, remains one of the country's great literary bookstores – and a publishing house as well...*

Throughout his life, Ferlinghetti was an activist in political as well as in literary causes and the roots of both may have been his time as a naval commander

in World War II" where he saw "the horrific ruins of Nagasaki after the dropping of the second atom bomb....

Norman Mailer, in a famous 1957 essay on beatniks and hipsters, wrote, "Probably, we will never be able to determine the psychic havoc of the concentration camps and the atom bomb upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years.... If the fate of 20th-century man is to live with death from adolescence to premature senescence," then the "only life-giving answer is ... to live with death as immediate danger ... to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self."

Howl on, Lawrence!

"Man only likes to count his troubles; he doesn't calculate his happiness." ~ **Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

What's the Rush, Limbaugh?

HE'S DEAD.

"All that you are is the result of all that you have thought." ~ **Buddha**

■ **CONTINUED**

His name is Mudd

ROGER MUDD JUST SIGNED

Roff for the last time at the ripe old age of 93, after being a major fixture in network TV news for over three decades. He was a frequent substitute for **Walter Cronkite** on the "CBS Evening News," anchoring the weekend editions in the late '60s - early '70s, considered as Cronkite's heir apparent.

Mudd, left, was also part of a Peabody Award-winning 1971 CBS documentary "The Selling of the Pentagon," which exposed the U.S. military's taxpayer-financed public relations effort to sell the Vietnam War.

"He was an inspiration to all of us in the bureau," said one of his colleagues, and was an irreplaceable and trusted part of our collective memory when "news was really news."

"It can only be attributable to human error."
~ HAL 9000

Call the Plummer

CHRISTOPHER, THAT IS (RIGHT), who exited laughing at 91. A multi-award-winning Canadian character actor of extraordinary versatility and charm, featured in many prestigious stage plays in London and New York and over 200 movies and TV shows, he still thought himself "trapped" in the "saccharine" role of Capt. Von Trapp from *The Sound of Music* – although, as he admitted afterwards, "it became easier

PLANETCLICK

Suckers

FIRESIGN

JONES

HAYLEY'S HUE

HARD

CREPITATION

DEATH CLOWN

ATOM DEATH

for me to fill a theater."

Among his many honors, at 82, he acquired an Oscar for his role in *Beginners* (although he wasn't done yet) and will long be remembered for his last screen appearance as the eccentric mystery writer in *Knives Out* and became the oldest actor ever to be nominated for an Oscar at 88, for stepping in at the last minute to replace Kevin Spacey as J. Paul Getty in *All the Money in the World*.

"I never want to retire," he revealed in 2015 to **Conan**. "I'm so sorry for people who actually want to retire; it means that they haven't loved what they do in life."

We loved what you did CC, so Bravo!

"There's a lot going on, and a lot of it is good, and I don't even know how to deal with that."

~ Rachel Maddow

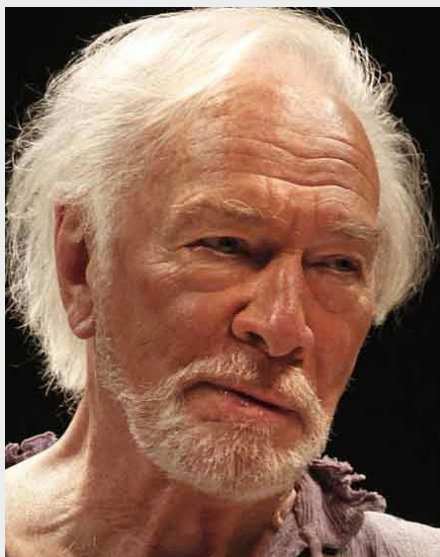
Seekers

Jamie Alcroft, Gretchen Steiner, Timm McCoy, Victor Kopcewich, Allison Barenbrug, Michael Simmons, and Gregg Oppenheimer, who is assembling another *Online Radio* piece for April 15 about the "George Burns and Gracie Allen Show" about George's income tax, starring **Brad Zinn** and **Alison Arnglim** and featuring

among others **David Ossman**, **me** as Gracie's psychiatrist, and my darling wife **Melinda** as her next-door neighbor, Blanche. More info in the next Planet!

And finally, condolences to our friends and travelling companions, **Lance** and **Bianca Rucker**, on the loss of Bianca's father, **Karol Geyer**; and a fond farewell to all the wonderful dead people I'm still alive to write about.

"The best advice on aging is this: what's the alternative?"
~ Whoopi Goldberg



"Science flies us to Mars; religion flies us into buildings." ~ Phil's Funny Phacts

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