

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

On walks through the Beech Forest, there is an item not all people notice, and many who do notice think it is not part of the Beech Forest and is non-living. It is a round parchment-looking beige ball—it is a gall. A gall is a tumorous growth occupying all possible parts of plants and are numerous on our oak trees. They are formed by the plant or tree in response to the excretion of hormones by the wasp larvae inside. The gall is another type of insect home. The gall is filled with widened, dried tissue—the very center holding the nutrients. The larva lives in this sphere, eats the shed skin of each molt, uses the gall as cocoon, and when mature exits the gall. What is left is that beige ping-pong ball which children delight in smashing with their pounding feed—a cap-like noise results.

Our oak gall is not the only type. There are 75 varieties of insects who develop in galls. Galls are a separate branch of science known as Cecidiology. The science is complex as the relationship of each insect species to each plant necessitates specialized variation. The large wingless female emerges in winter even in freezing weather. When sobered, they climb the tree and lay eggs into the winter buds. As the larvae hatch, they form the rounded and chambered galls—from these galls both mature males and females will emerge in summer. The eggs of this population are laid into the roots of the oak tree. Their galls are on the forest floor awaiting young feet to pop them. A gall wasp's condominium cast off and finally smashed. The oak smiles with relief, but too late; the damage is done. The parasite achieved its aim, the cycle of life.

A sizeable amount of the Provincetown population as well as the ratios around the world will be observing the Mayan Prophecy of the Flowers from August 16th through the 24th. The entire world will be observing the end of an age and planetary shift according to the Mayan calendar. From sunrise on the 16th to the New Moon of the 24th, the celestial and global timing will be critical. In the planet lineup, there will be seven fire signs. Jupiter and Saturn will be releasing energy. Sirius, the Dog Star, and Cancer will be focusing on anchoring energy. The New Moon of the 24th will be in Virgo, and with the appearance of this moon will come the end of the ninth 52-year cycle of the Mayan calendar.

In ancient times, there were thirteen 52-year cycles,

less light, more darkness, and finally a rain so long and steady as to cause a deluge. The great flood! This coming Earth destruction is said to be from scientific abuse, and the end will be in fire and explosion. The projected final point of this destruction is a 25-year span and will be December 21, 2011—Winter Solstice of 2011 A.D. It is then that the Mayan calendar will end. This will be the Age of Flowers; flowers will be our medicine. People will have rainbow-light dreams. At the end of Earthly timing, we will be in harmony with the divine. Celebrations and observations are planned world-wide. Mountain tops, rivers, plains, deserts, city streets, houses of worship, stadiums, amphitheaters, individual homes, and our dunes will be places where the phenomenon will be observed. Observation, preparation, respect for predictions long ago foretold, will set the tone of many peoples' time for these set days, and for the next 25 years if they live through all this time. This Mayan Prophecy of the Flowers put me in mind of Shakespeare's poem, "with fairest flowers while summer lasts and I live here." In this nuclear age, many of us share this less than eternal feeling.

As we gathered for a tennis board meeting in the East End, Irving Lefson and his brother, Leon, passed on the way for a swim in the bay. I chatted with Leon and Irving, wished them a good swim, and joined my meeting. "That man will be 89 years old tomorrow." Gaping mouths asked, "Really? And how old is his brother?" "Not much younger, I suppose." The reason for the gapes was that you could not detect 89 years. No feebleness, no slow movements, no arthritic stops to the limbs, and clear, precise, and riveting conversation—no small talk. The conversation is always art. Irving didn't know, but he would be honored by a surprise birthday party the following afternoon.

Irving Lefson was born in Minsk, Russia, on July 25, 1898. When he was four, his parents emigrated to America. They had four children with them and would have six more in America. Irving's father was a Rabbi. The family lived in Pennsylvania for a while, and then moved to Brooklyn. Most of their lives were spent in New York City. Irving went into commercial art as a career. He was an illustrator for clothing catalogues. This was before the age of photography, and all advertisements of clothed models were hand drawn. Irving developed a technique whereby he could turn out five copies at once. He flourished in his field. The daring to experiment is the style of Irving Lefson. At 89, to be swimming, biking, and creating a personal artform seems not to be experimenting but to be just the daily routine. That's because you would never guess that Irving is 89—late 60's, early 70's, you would think.

Gerontologists would have good reason to map Irving Lefson's life and lifestyle. He is in league with the Hunzas of the Caucasus Mountains in Russia. There, octogenarians are the "kids." People 100 years old ride horseback, drink vodka, smoke, and still talk of love. They live without stress in the purest mountain air with the same systematic undereating of the freshest foods and lots of yogurt. Irving has lived an American life.

PROVINCETOWN MAGAZINE 59

The stress of Manhattan business, deadlines, and the aggressive behavior needed in Capitalism. His strength is inner, he is exceptional rather than the rule. Gerontologists would have a singular case to study here, not a group.

Irving Lefson retired to Provincetown in 1965. He left his studio in New York and came to join so many of his artist friends, among them, Joe Kaplan—a fellow Russian emigre', too. Irving came to Provincetown also because he said "it is different than any other place, and once you fall in love with Provincetown, you must be here." Irving and his wife, Cathy, live in the East End summers. Winters they live in Oceanside, California. Irving works and shows on both coasts. He has been represented at twenty-nine group shows and twenty-two one-man shows. He has received the Modern Maturity Award. Irving's photographic work of a southwest Indian woman grinding maize will tour the country as part of a four-year-long show. It will also appear in *Modern Maturity*, the retired person's magazine. His work hangs in many museums, galleries, public buildings, and private collections. This is Irving Lefson's twenty-seventy year of full-time creative photography. The technique which evolved and developed was praised and sought after by Ilford Laboratories, and his work was included in their Cibachrome exhibits for trade shows. To explain Irving's treatment of photography, his own words are best. He feels that his work begins after the film has recorded the image. "The magic begins with chemicals as colors are juggled and juxtaposed, eradicated, changed, or intensified for space and design. Some are burned into to extricate bursts of light. Images are mandated one over the other, seeking through combinations to develop expressionist compositions." After this process, the artist etches on the slide. The photograph becomes other than the "shot," other than the original image. It becomes a personalized interpretation and lives beyond its realistic dimensions. It becomes an Irving Lefson.

You can see Irving's work in Provincetown at the Heritage Museum, the Art Association, Town Hall, and at the Provincetown Monument. In your museum travels elsewhere, you may come across Lefson's work. You will always recognize the unique style.

And so the crowd gathered to celebrate Irving Lefson's 89th birthday, and to wish him "Mazel tov"—good luck. His wife, Cathy, bustled around and fed us well. Sister, Hazel, brother, Leon, and his wife, Emmy, always attend the event. Harriet Fraser's father, Roy Hall, at 98 was another tribute to human endurance. Mimi Steig, Claude Jensen, Tamsin Hapgood, Alice Boogar, Grace and Ray Rizk, Joel O'Brien, Grace and Bill Hall, Juanita Macara, Mary Spencer Nay, Boris Margo, and so many others, were regaled by Jewish humor, true life stories, and Irving's interpretation of Howard Mitcham jokes. Ninety-five degree food, drink, laughter, presents and not a wilt—looks like year 90 will be right on schedule and as rich as the past - Happy Birthday, Irving.

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