

Our

Collective Voice



Spring, 1998 • 15th Anniversary Issue

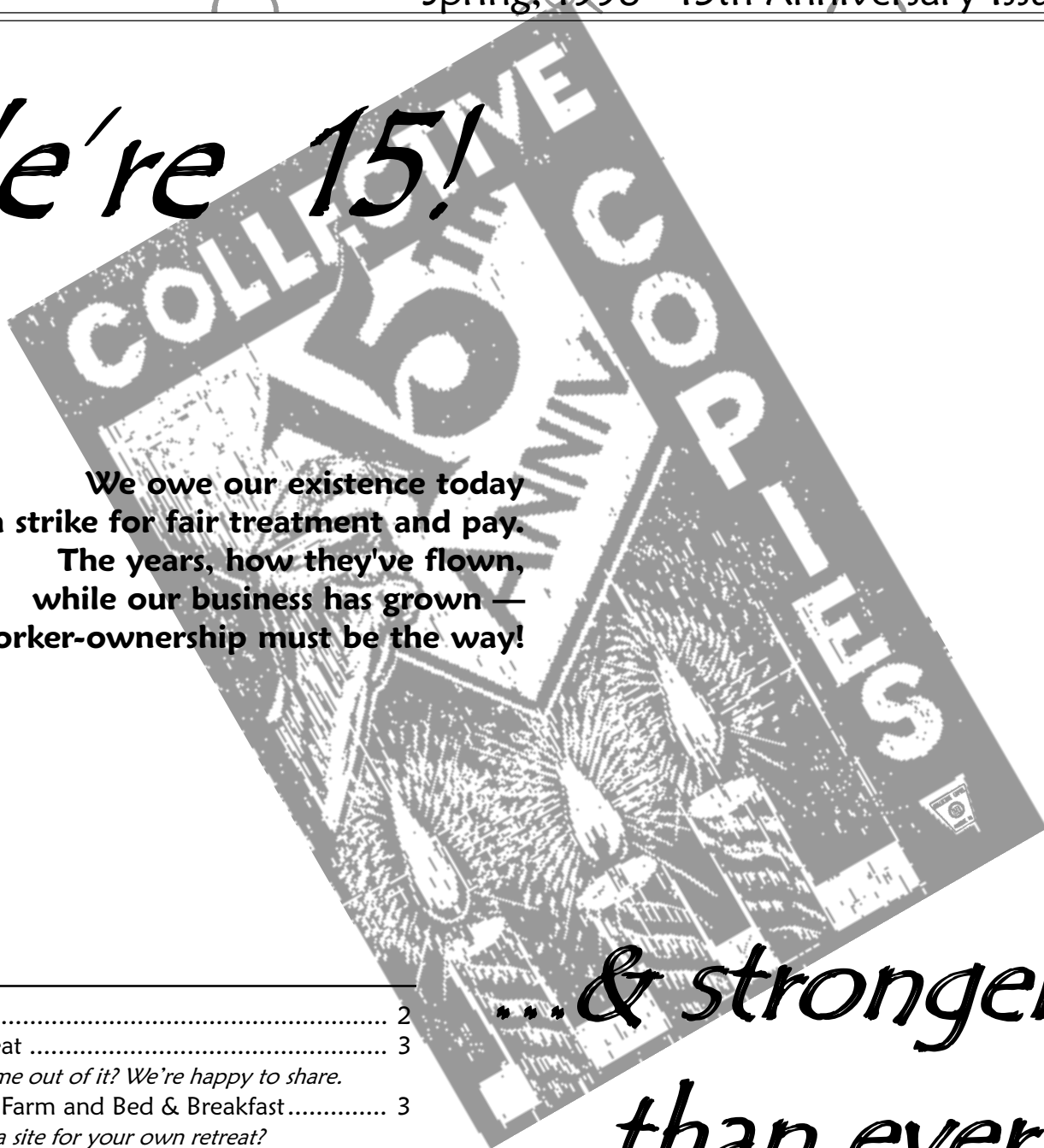
We're 15!

**We owe our existence today
to a strike for fair treatment and pay.
The years, how they've flown,
while our business has grown —
worker-ownership must be the way!**

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**...& stronger
than ever!**



New Stuff

If you've been by much lately, you've been noticing some changes, hearing about some new services. We'd hate for you to miss anything, so here's a rundown of some of the additions, expansions and changes over the past several months.

The Xerox Docutech

is at the heart of many of the new things we're able to do for you. This is a digital machine with an output speed of 164 copies per minute. What's that mean for you? Well, it's fast — but the digital technology means that the reproduction quality is crisp, clear and faithful to the original, with rich, solid blacks and offset-quality reproduction of photos. It also means we're able to digitally store the documents you run often and reprint them for you on demand.

For example: Your company regularly produces a product manual. It's full of photos, and has colored insert pages. You want numbered pages. The covers are printed on your own logo stock. It needs to be bound. The master you've been using has seen better days, and you're tired of running it over here every time you need a few more. We can scan your master, (even clean-up the rattier pages), scan, size and crop your photos, program the placement of colored inserts and covers, set the pagination and print as many tape bound copies as you'd like.

And the next time you need some? Call us. With digital storage, it's ready to be printed exactly as the last batch. Suppose you want to change a few pages or replace some of the photos? Bring us the new material and we'll make the changes on your file. We can even store both versions.

There's more. Your organization is putting out a member directory. You've got all the material typed, but it's all on 8.5"x11" sheets and you don't have the time or patience to put it all in booklet form and dimensions.

With one mouse click, we can scan your pages at the proper reduction size and automatically order them so they come out where they're supposed to when your booklet is folded.

Let's talk flyers. You want to put a photo somewhere on your flyer? Maybe place it faintly in the background with the text on top? Sure. All we need is the text page and the photo. Any size. You don't have to mess with getting scans or halftones or stats...just the photo, thankyou.

With the digital editing capabilities of the Docutech, we can crop images, merge images, mask, resize, stretch and rotate images.

Scanning is not limited to the docutech. With our new scanner, we're able to scan photos, art, logos, even pages of text for storage on disk, placement in your documents or B&W prints.

Those **Prints** will look better than ever now, too, with our new 1200 dpi laser printer. We thought the resumes we were printing looked awfully good — until we were blown away by the difference 1200 dpi makes.

We've added a **Zip drive** to our

computer system so now you can bring us your IBM formatted Zip disks for printing.

Posters & Banners are a great option for promoting your event. Using your 8.5x11 original, we can enlarge it to an 18x24 poster or an 18x48 banner in a wide variety of colored card stocks.

We now have an 11x17 **bulk rate**. The docutech makes it possible for us to cut our prices for 11x17 copies, so we have. The new pricing brings them in line with our bulk pricing on 8.5x11 copies and...

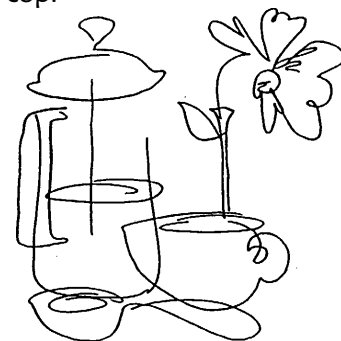
We've expanded our 11x17 **paper** selection. Now you'll find fibertones in this size — great for newsletters.

Tree-free papers have been a popular addition. We currently carry papers made from kenaf, bamboo, sugar cane and recycled blue jeans and we're always on the lookout for more. We also offer a few 100% post-consumer recycled papers.

You may have noticed the **Fed Ex** drop box (it's hard to miss). We've made peace with a corporate presence in our space, as it seems to make people so happy.

Customer Feedback

Over the past couple of years, your feedback has led to a new and bigger store, a larger staff, a color copier, high-quality photo reproduction, an oversize enlarger, a scanner, more self-serve copiers, 2-sided self-serve, self-serve copiers with document feeders, a second register for student course packets, T-shirts, mouse pads and mugs, a postal scale, more bind types, and a Federal Express drop box. In the near future, look for mailing services, a network server, online services and a wheelchair ramp...but we still won't be offering coffee. Your feedback gets heard. Keep it coming.



Planning Retreat

During the final weekend in February, with our business still growing, our customers coming to us with ever more novel requests, and technology roaring on into the 21st century, Collective members closed-up shop and headed for the quiet of Delta Organic Farms (see the side-bar) to do some serious thinking about our business over the next five years. What can you look forward to? One of the first things to come out of our efforts is a mission statement. We found it useful to clarify what we're about when we set about visualizing where we're going.

5 Years ago, we set goals that seemed pretty ambitious at the time. We met them all. With that in mind, we once again set the bar high with plans ranging from an improved computer network to just short of world domination. Not all of what we'll be doing will be visible from the

other side of the counter, but some of the things that will be included: additional staff, new document-feeders in the self-serve area, wider desktop publishing and scanning capabilities, added equipment for things like

booklet-making, a second fax machine, expanded oversize copying, on-line networking, pickup and delivery, mailing services, new carpeting in the customer area and a really cool web site.

Mission Statement

We are committed to achieving success in business by...

Serving our customers to the very best of our ability and resources.

In the service of this goal, we apply our knowledge, creativity and experience to communicating effectively, foster an atmosphere of mutual trust, kindness and respect, and continually educate ourselves and our customers.

Fostering a fun, safe, free, creative, trusting and respectful working environment.

We commit ourselves to taking the time to celebrate one another's successes, console our losses and promote personal growth.

Minimizing our environmental impact.

To this end, we will continue to seek out alternative fiber papers, recycle, minimize our waste and our use of waste-producing materials and methods, and explore promising alternatives to such materials as they become viable.

Contributing to our community and supporting local business.

We return 10% of our profits to the community that sustains us. We resolve to implement ways beyond this by which we might be of help to the community. We will promote, frequent and assist area businesses how and whenever possible.

We strive to empower all workers and to be a model/resource for positive and profitable worker-ownership.

We create secure, empowering and financially rewarding jobs for our own workers, and strive to facilitate the creation of similar opportunities for all

We're looking to offer educational workshops and materials to help customers who do it themselves do it right, and to organizations wanting to know more about collectives and our business structure.

Behind the scenes, we'll be scheming away to find more space, restructure the space we have and make our space more enjoyable with a 25 disc CD player. We'll be interviewing prospective collective members and training ourselves on the many new technologies available to us. We'll be upgrading our computer system

and organizing our donations procedure. Work on our website is nearing completion and we hope to have it up this Spring!

Delta Organic Farm

We held our retreat at this nearby farm Bed & Breakfast and Conference Center and want to express our thanks and appreciation to owners, Jim and Penny. Our stay was pleasant, the conference room comfortable and sunny. Coffee, tea and fresh fruit appeared throughout each day as if spirited there by elves. And the food! We opted for vegetarian fare and the meals, prepared in the Delta kitchen from their own organic produce, eggs and even maple syrup, were out of this world. We give Delta our enthusiastic recommendation. Delta Organic Farm Bed & Breakfast & Conference Center, E. Hadley Rd., Amherst, MA. 253-1893

*How could I possibly
overthrow the government
when I can't even keep my
dog down?*

- Dorothy Parker

Once Upon a Time...

A Collective History

The Strike

"Nothing worked". One employee summed-up the problems of the late Gnomon Copies in this way: "The space was tiny, the air quality was terrible, the pay was lousy, the machines didn't work half the time, and management just didn't care." In mid 1983, workers at the shop decided to take steps to change the situation; they unionized. By the end of that summer, they were on strike.

The strike dragged on through the fall, with workers collecting strike pay — a fraction of their already low pay. One employee got through the season on the fish he was able to catch from local streams while the rest of the striking workers found other forms of local sustenance; the Amherst community solidly supported the strike, community members joined the picketers and boycotted the shop, and a handful of area journalists made sure it wasn't neglected in the papers.

Days after negotiations were successfully concluded, Gnomon was given an eviction notice. By mid-December, the strike was finished...and so, it appeared, was the shop.

The Vision

In March of 1983, a new copy shop opened in Amherst. Pooling their knowledge and experience, obtaining the loans necessary to get them started, the old Gnomon workers launched their new enterprise in a

space upstairs from Wootton Books. To the casual observer, it couldn't have looked like much of a triumph; the space was tiny, the air quality was still not great and the copiers, though an improvement over Gnomon equipment, sometimes seemed as close to collapse. (One of those original machines is, nevertheless, still in operation as a production machine!)

The crucial differences were not so readily apparent but they were profound -- the shop that emerged from the preceding autumn's strike was owned entirely by its workers and run by collective decision-making.

The business was pretty straightforward; no frills B&W copies and aca-

demical course packets were its almost singular offerings. Over the years, it moved a few times (many are the customers who still recall the ascent up dark, narrow stairs to what often felt like a secret club) and continually added services and staff.

15 years later, it's a different business in many respects: The business has prospered, the surrounding community has come to rely on our quality work and our civic involvement, and our workers have benefitted from a business that thrives on and rewards our efforts. What has not changed is our absolute commitment to the vision we began with. We've taken the collective ideal, too often derided as an unworkable experiment left over from another era, and proven by our ongoing example that it works. What's not to love?

The Unstrike

On May 1st (May Day) you'll find us picketing out in front of our store! Really. And you're invited to join us. To commemorate the strike that started it all, we'll be holding an **Unstrike** (Yes, this does mean we'll be closed for at least part of the day because we'd all like to be there.)

We'll have on hand a supply of "15th Anniversary" T-shirts bearing Nancy Haver's print (see cover), and some of the folks who came out to support and serenade the original strikers will be coming by.



Stephen is not exactly dwarfed in our first space (above). At left, the 'Hole-in-the-wall' look.

No plans are set in stone yet but some of the ideas we've kicked around are: a "rescue" of some downtown Amherst workers, a party on the common, and a not-so-serious march down Pleasant Street. We're even hoping we can persuade some area musicians to make it a date. Whatever happens, we're looking for this to be a lot of fun and we welcome your thoughts and suggestions on how to make it just that.



Helping Out

As most of our customers are by now aware, we earmark 10% of our profits to be returned to the community. This only makes sense to us; without the patronage and good will of the community, we wouldn't still be here. So, throughout the year, we accept requests for help from a staggering range of organizations and projects. Each request is considered by all the collective members and each donation is based on our unanimous support. We don't say 'yes' to every request...but we come close.

We'd thought it might be nice to do a comprehensive list of organizations and projects to which we've contributed over the years, but it became clear to us that such a list would require more space than the whole of our newsletter. Instead, we've opted for a list of contributions covering a shorter span of time. Here then, is a list of some of our donations this quarter :

Dakin Animal Shelter
Ghana Health Care Mission
Western Mass Prison Issues
Hadley First
Human Rights office - Amherst
Alternative Spring Break - UMass
National Child Rights Alliance
Friends of M.N. Spear Memorial Library
Peacemakers' Summit/Peer Mediator Conference
Hitchcock Center

Mass. State 4-H Teen Conference
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Girls' Day in the Lab
Pioneer Valley Performing Arts
Charter High School
Greenpeace
Special Olympics
Amherst Area Education Alliance
Hampshire Gymnastics School

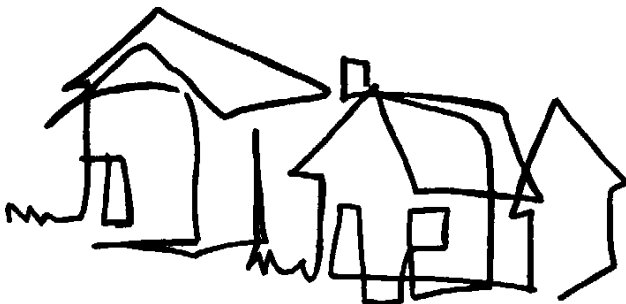
*I asked a man in
prison once how he
happened to be there
and he said he had
stolen a pair of shoes.
I told him if he had
stolen a railroad he
would be a United
States Senator.*

-Mother Jones

We've noticed an alarming trend in Amherst and, for that matter, much of the surrounding area: Businesses are disappearing. True, new businesses are opening all the time, but a number of the businesses that have closed-up or moved-out in the past couple of years had been around for years. Some were new but promising; some were practically institutions.

The fact is, there are a lot of reasons that small businesses fail and we realize we can't fix them all...but we can try. We're pledged to buy locally whenever possible (and we don't mean the local branch of a chain) and to directing others to local resources and suppliers.

Some of you may recall seeing in recent newsletters, a shameless promotion for the Italian bakery, Donatello's. We found it, we liked it, and we wanted to see it get a fair chance. So, we let you know how much we like it, and told you where to find it. Expect to see more of this sort of thing from us. And, if you know of an area business that deserves a pat on the back or a neighborly boost, let us know.



Collective FAQs

What is a collective?

Basically, a collective is any enterprise, owned and operated by its workers, in which decisions are made collectively.

What's the difference between a collective and a cooperative?

Well, the lines can be pretty blurry but the overly simplified answer is: a co-op is owned by its customers, a collective is owned by its workers. Co-ops are sometimes worker-owned or require members to do some work — but co-ops are usually formed to enable consumers to control quality and to enhance their buying power. They may be run by a board of directors or an administrative committee empowered to make the major decisions. Collectives are characterized by collective decision-making and a commitment to empower the people who do the work.

Who's the manager in a collective?

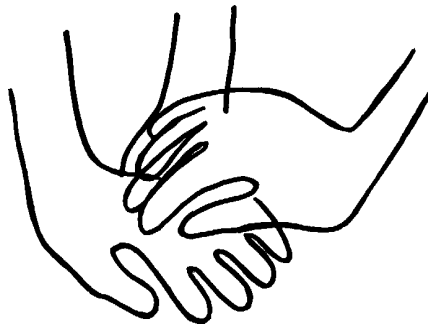
In some collectives, there may be a collective member whose task it is to act as office manager, another who does bookkeeping, another who does the inventory ordering...each of which might in a traditional business be regarded as a managerial position, but in a collective, these tasks are usually distributed in such a way that no one member holds a superior rank. A collective doesn't really have a boss — it runs counter to the collective philosophy.

If there's no boss, how does anything get done?

When you go to work in the morning, don't you find that you already know what you need to do? When

you run into a problem, need a hand or want a sounding board, are you more likely to go to a supervisor or a coworker? The day to day stuff is easy because we know our jobs.

As for decision-making that affects the business, each collective has its own approach, but consensus is key. Major decisions, like what products to offer, what to charge, what equipment to invest in, involve all the members. We do, of course, defer to the recommendations of individual members with special expertise in some matters, but we all have input and equal deci-



sion-making responsibilities. Smaller decisions — placing a charitable ad, what accounting software to use — may be left to the discretion of the member who handles that area.

How do you decide what to pay yourselves, what benefits to offer, stuff like that?

We're not only the workers, but also the owners; we decide on the basis of what we'd like, what seems right, and what the business can actually manage. One of the incentives to be responsible in this area is the year-end distribution of profit shares; if we've been profligate, there's not much left for this much anticipated bonus. One thing we won't do is destroy our business in the long-run trying to get more for ourselves in the short-term.

How does the business manage-

ment end of things get done?

Again, each collective will approach this in their own way. In our case, in addition to our usual daily work, each of us takes on an administrative task on the basis of skill or inclination. Our tasks are categorized as follows: Accounts payable, accounts receivable, supplies ordering, paper ordering, marketing, payroll/vacation, sales tax, machine maintenance & repair, new equipment & services research and physical plant. At certain times of the year we add to these copyright clearance.

How does hiring and firing work?

There's no special trick to getting hired at a collective, though getting fired takes some doing. When we hire, we naturally look for the usual qualifications — printing/xerography experience, computer proficiency, retail experience — but we're also looking for the qualities we'll need in an owner. A new hire begins training as an apprentice. The apprenticeship lasts six months during which time, as a non-member, s/he may not vote, but does earn a share of the profits. At any point during these six months either of us can decide it's not working. An apprentice who's survived the six months is either given a little more time, or offered membership.

It's true, our job security is pretty high — no one member has the power to unilaterally dismiss another. Firing is regulated by a system of checks and balances, formal reprimands and a probationary period. It is resorted to only when all other alternatives been exhausted. As with all other major decisions, firing is undertaken by consensus and requires strong grounds.

Stephen Roy — *since the dawn of time*

Stephen is a founding member of the collective, with a degree in computer engineering. Service technicians occasionally stop in to pay amazed homage to what is surely the last surviving Xerox 8200. Its continuing operation as a production machine is due to Stephen's skilled attention and stubborn refusal to let it die.

Nancy Haver — *member since 1991*

Nancy is the collective's only part-time member and carries the additional distinction of being perhaps the nicest person on the planet. She somehow manages to juggle her busy illustration business with the constant demands of the collective to unfailingly accommodate her co-workers' pleas for this or that day off. She is an avid runner, reader and outdoorswoman, who enjoys painting, drawing and printmaking.

Erin Rice — *member since 1993*

Erin is the collective member most insanely devoted to long hours and extra projects. A refugee from a national copy center chain, her vision and animation are largely responsible for the shape of the business today. Erin and her partner of five years are founding members of the Bingville Garden Club and their astonishing garden was on the 1998 garden tour. They have 2 dogs and five cats.

N. Leigh Dunlap — *member since 1995*

Leigh is a graphic designer, artist and author with 13 years of xerographic experience. Her particular genius is for cajoling machines to perform creative tricks their designers never thought of. A perpetual student, she likes heavy books and uphill climbs. Leigh and her partner of 11 years have a studio for Judaic ritual artwork which they share with a dog and four cats.

Jen Gallant — *member since 1996*

Jen is a Harvard grad (who can resist?) and natural-born facilitator with a background in human services. Chronically cheerful, she is the acknowledged morale officer with a flair for silliness and mischief — but you'll hear from her if your check's overdue. She and her partner are parents to a virtual petting zoo which includes a dog, a cat, a turtle and a four foot iguana.

Steve Strimer — *member since 1997*

After 25 years in offset printing (as a founding member of the collective Commonwealth Printing), Steve sated his mid-life wanderlust with a move...to another collective. This is the man to see if you like to 'ooh' and 'ahh' over beautiful papers and print quality details others just can't appreciate. He and his partner and their 2 cats live in Amherst, where he's working on a book which should be finished, any time now.

Alexandra Yeski — *member since 1997*

Alex is the collective's 'wood chipper' — with zero tolerance for idle time, constantly on the prowl for more work to do, and tearing through it with dizzying efficiency. With her superior capacity for turning chaos into order, she works magic on hopeless (and sometimes frightening) messes like the staff kitchen, the donations log book, etc., transforming them into things of beauty. She lives with her fiancée and 2 cats, and is on the lookout for a dog.

Tom Pelissier — *member since 1997*

Tom is a licensed contractor and one of those pesky labor agitators — he joined the collective after leading a successful drive for a union at one of the colleges. He has studied aquaculture, anthropology and architecture, and may yet work his way through the rest of the alphabet. Originally from nearby Westhampton, he now lives in Amherst with his partner and their 2 kids, along with 2 dogs, 1 rabbit, and 1 partridge-in-residence.

Erratica

For a long, happy life, breathe through your nose and keep
your mouth shut.
—Yiddish folk saying

Hindsight, usually looked down upon, is probably as
valuable as foresight, since it does include a few facts.
—Grace Paley

Imagination is more important than knowledge.
—Albert Einstein

Expecting life to treat you well because you're a good
person is like expecting an angry bull not to charge you
because you're a vegetarian.
—Shari Barr

Try to learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly
live long enough to make them all yourself.
—Sam Levinson

How did it get so late so soon?
It's night before it's afternoon.
December's here before it's June.
My goodness how the time has flown.
How did it get so late so soon?
—Dr. Seuss

To laugh often and much;
to win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children,
to earn the appreciation of honest critics and
endure the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate beauty,
to find the best in others,
to leave the world a bit better
whether by a healthy child, a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;
to know even one life has breathed easier
because you lived.
That is to have succeeded.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Whenever you see food beautifully arranged on a plate,
you know someone's fingers have been all over it.
—Julia Child

... And the lion shall lie down with the lamb.
But the lamb won't get any sleep.
—Woody Allen

What is lofty can be said in any language.
What is mean should be said in none.
—Maimonides

A wise word is not a substitute for a piece of herring.
—Sholem Aleichem

If you're going to be able to look back on something and
laugh about it, you might as well laugh about it now.
—Marie Osmond

