

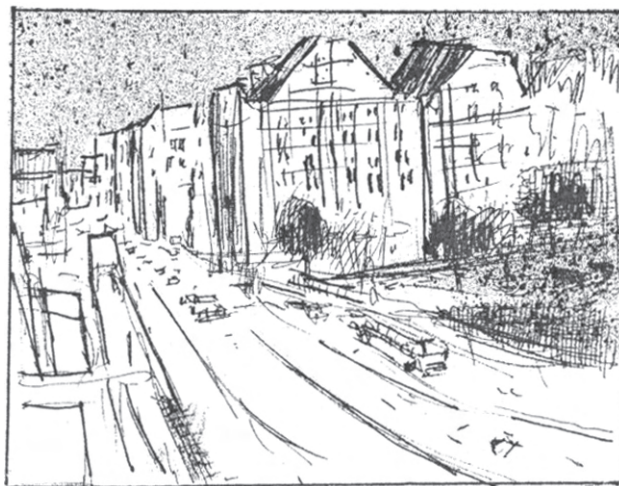
FROM THE EDITORS

September 2009. Summer officially ended just before this issue of *Feminist Collections* went to press. It didn't seem overwhelmingly summery this year in Madison, Wisconsin, or in my own life. First of all, we didn't have many truly hot days; in fact, I could probably count on one hand the number of times we used the air conditioning at my house. Sadly, I didn't swim even once, indoors or out, although I can't really blame the weather for that. My household didn't have a vegetable garden, because it's our first year in a new home and we hadn't finished planning where the beds will go. And I didn't take a real vacation.

On the other hand, I did manage to put a couple hundred miles on my bicycle, which at least got me outdoors on some days. I distinctly remember slapping a few mosquitoes, although it hasn't been a banner year for them. We cooked outside a few times at our house, sat on our back deck, and drank more iced than hot lattes. We and our hens were also a highlight of what has become a popular summer event in Madison — the Chicken Coop Tour. (*That day was sweltering.*)

And then, even though it wasn't a "real vacation," I did do something that millions of Americans do in the summer, despite the price of gas: interstate highway driving. In my case, it was more than 3,000 miles in my 2005 Toyota Matrix, with my trained therapy poodle in the back seat, on two weeklong trips to eastern Pennsylvania to help my very elderly parents — who, despite physical decline and dementia, continue to live by themselves in their own house on a beautifully gardened double lot. I have three living siblings, but none of us lives closer than a few hundred miles to Mom and Dad, and we all have jobs or

families of our own, or both. Still, each of us manages to spend a week or two with them every two or three months, at minimum, and the closest one has established an increasingly elaborate network of local assistance. My brothers and I, all over fifty, are part of a huge and growing demographic, that of "older" folks who are trying to care for their even older loved ones, often from a distance.



Miriam Greenwald

I don't resent and won't regret this phase of my life, which started about two years ago and will continue for as long as either of my parents — now 89 and 90 — is still alive. There are ways in which my relationship with them is better than it has ever been; and my brothers and I are communicating and working together with a level of grace I couldn't have imagined even a few years back. Being present for my parents' navigation of old-old age is joyful and meaningful even as it is heart-breaking and bewildering. It's also an enormous logistical challenge, and just plain exhausting at times, although I know of others for whom this phase must be far more so — those, for instance, who have no siblings, who live

with their parents full-time, or whose own health is not good. But whatever else this experience is, it is certainly rich.

I'd still like to go on a real vacation. Maybe that will happen in February or March — perhaps a non-family, non-work-related trip to a southern beach. Even if it doesn't, I can learn to be more creative with the situation I'm in — taking tiny vacations within a day at home or on the road, for instance, and taking more notice of the vacation moments I am already having.

I hope your summer was satisfying, whether or not it entailed what you consider "vacation." As you page through this "summer" issue of *FC*, you may find the content to be more in tune with the fall academic season:

the three feature reviews include one about the history, future, and essence of this thing called women's studies. After you've found out why Catherine Orr was "completely flummoxed" and how she responded to the text that caused her to feel that way, make sure also to read about women in the French Revolution, the workings of the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement, reference works on topics from science fiction to sex work, newly noticed websites on women and gender, and periodicals and other items of interest to scholars, students, followers, or critics of "this thing."

○ J.L.