

Helene

by Jake Barnes

Two of the women in my writing class at the Senior Center are ninety years old. One of them teaches the Yoga class. Neither of the old ladies has lost her marbles. The Yoga teacher is a poet. The other is a world traveler. Nothing stops her. She tells me she keeps a “bucket list.” I ask her what that is. She replies that it's a list of things she wants to do and places she wants to go before she kicks the bucket.

She goes all over by herself. Once my wife and I saw her on a BART train. Her stop was in a seedy part of Oakland. She has had all sorts of adventures, including getting asked to move at a hotel one time to make room for Colonel Gaddafi. Another time she was stranded at an airport in Israel, and she got a ride into town from Benjamin Netanyahu.

My little friend is no bigger than a minute. An even five feet tall, if that. She tells me she doesn't worry about either the past or the future. Today is all any of us have, she says. I tell her she's right about that, and after class that day, I offer to buy her lunch.

