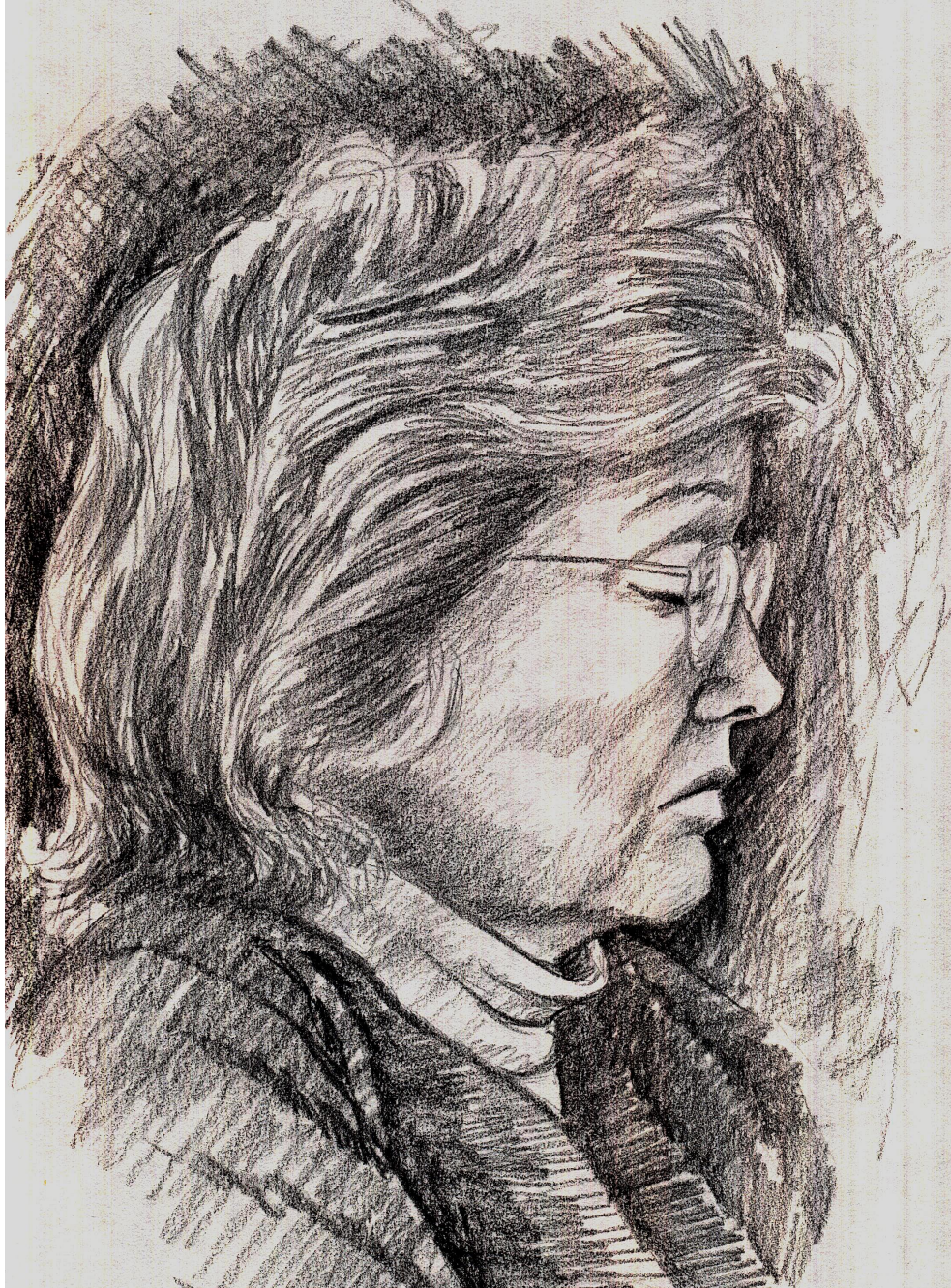


*Does Love Exist?**

My daughter Nola – sweet little darling that she is – came over to give Kay (my wife whose lovable disposition makes her ‘she who must be appreciated’) a hydrangea plant on the occasion of her having just gotten out of day surgery for a severed Achilles tendon. Kay is beginning to recover from not being able to go to Vale, Colorado with the girls this week for their annual ski trip thank you very much.



* The article was published in *Gift of Fire*, issue 85, 13-14 (May 1997).

One of Nola's little Italian greyhounds began coughing profusely after a bit and Nola said that she had been doing that ever since this morning when their neighbor had come over and asked if the dogs wanted to come out and play with her new dog. Well, the upshot is that the dogs went out and Gena (the coughing dog) got freaked by the new dog and other noises and took off at a greyhound's pace the hell outta there! So Clay, Nola's husband, yells for Nola to come out and help catch Gena. They run for all they're worth till, coming around a corner and looking two blocks down the roadway to where it turns off the main highway, they see Gena in the middle of that major thoroughfare. Brakes screech, Gena stops, cars in both Eastbound lanes skid to a stop to avoid hitting her and a Blazer trying to make it between the two stopped cars hits them both! Nola yells for Gena and she takes off again and this time loses both Clay and Nola in a short time. The neighbors go down to the accident, not having seen how it happened and when they see nobody is hurt, ask, "Has anybody seen a little Italian greyhound?" Well you can figure out the rest of that conversation!

The upshot is that Nola decided to take Gena to a veterinary clinic around here and asked if I wanted to ride with her. Of course! Why wouldn't I? So we get there and as we're waiting for the vet to finish with an earlier client, I pick up a magazine – I think it was *Time* with the image of a bearded Yahweh on the cover. I read a few excerpts concerning peoples' reactions to prayers being (or not being) answered. For example, someone in Ohio needed a kidney and prayed and prayed about it because without it the loved one would most surely die. The story got carried in the news media and someone in California read the account and was so touched by the plea that they had their blood type checked, etc. and found that they could be a donor and they did it. And the one who prayed is convinced that God answered the prayer. It's sort of like my mother setting down at the dinner table, sweat running down her brow, and my father genuflecting, "We thank Thee Father for this food which Thou hast prepared for us!"



Enough of that! I turn the page. I see Carl Sagan's name. Well, I had just that morning received an E-mail from a Society member who had suggested that it had been in bad taste for me to acknowledge Carl's death in issue #82 (his being a dishonorable man and all?) to which I had responded that I hadn't been particularly fond of him myself (although I'm sure for different reasons) but considered him of some import. At any rate, he was on my mind, so I read a little on that page serendipitously. It seems that a friend of his, Joan Campbell, in environmental work happens to be very religious which he was not. Evidently, he had even written quite antithetically on the subject. He and Joan had disagreed for years with regard to this subject, and she was recounting his having said that he didn't believe in God because there was only anecdotal evidence which is at best unreliable. She recounted how she had asked him if he believed in love and he, being very in love with his wife and children, said something to the effect of, "Yes, of course!" To which she cleverly (or should I say perkily?) countered, "Can you prove that Love exists without anecdotes?" And of course, "No," he could not!



Wait!

Was there trickery behind the autistic gnostic who coined the phrase, “God is Love?” Was it just to bait a trap for Carl Sagan some two millennia later for Christ’s sake? Carl didn’t say he didn’t believe *Belief-In-God* (which is analogous to *Love-of-Family*) *exists*, now did he? That phenomenon most certainly does occur. *Loving happens!* I do it. You do it. Anecdotes may actually *prove* it. Didn’t I just demonstrate that at the outset? E. E. – a very clever bombastic friend, Ed Rehmus – help me out here! How are *exist* and *happens* or ‘occurs’ related? They are different verbs are they not? Naturally Carl wasn’t convinced either, but an egocentric Joan didn’t explain whatever cleverness he might have used to secure his own position; she probably wasn’t listening. Maybe she was incapable of distinguishing between objects that *exist* (or don’t) and the events which comprise anecdotes that *occur* (or don’t).

But here I am arguing the weak position (without Carl’s or E. E. Rehmus’s help) that the reason that “booleeons and booleeons” of zealous individuals (including – I assume – a fair percentage of those who are smart enough to know better) believe in God is because they are committed to a fallacy of logic that is very analogous to adding seven apples and thirteen oranges to get nineteen fruitcakes! It’s as if they had not heard of the mathematical theory of types and can’t add very well either!

And, however unlikely it seems, I *believe* (or may I just say, am convinced of) that!