



# "I Go Where My Soul Takes Me"

Carolyn Newberger '63 spent decades forging a dual career in research and teaching. Since then, she's forged another as an artist and writer.

IN the spring of 2018, chasing after a newly adopted mutt named Lily, Carolyn Newberger '63 began exploring the "big, messy, seething forest" behind her home in western Massachusetts, a place connected to "hundreds of thousands of acres of forest stretching northward through Vermont, into Canada, beyond the Yukon, and clear to the North Pole," she later wrote.

Newberger found herself deeply affected, she says, by a "thrumming, decaying, regenerating power," and began carrying an art kit and notebook, along with a mushroom knife, into the woods. Now, she regularly emerges with bits of essays, paintings, and collages, as well as the morels that she slices into her breakfast omelettes.

"I go where my soul takes me," she says, "and the forest and nature, and my dog, and music and art are all contributors to where my soul goes."

After a career in research and teaching, Newberger has found a second one, in her late 70s, as a visual artist and writer. She often combines the two pursuits in music and dance reviews for the local *Berkshire Edge* news site, posting sketches or watercolors—drawn "real-time" during performances—along with her prose.

Though she'd taken only one psychology class at Sarah Lawrence, and disliked it, Newberger earned a master's degree and a doctorate in human development at Harvard. (To perhaps no one's surprise, she describes herself as "intense and driven.") She then spent decades teaching psychology at Harvard Medical School, while heading research in the child protection program founded by her husband, pediatrician Eli Newberger, at Children's Hospital in Boston. Her work



helped reframe the way health professionals respond to intra-family violence, winning her nationwide attention and appearances on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Sarah Lawrence presented her an alumni achievement award at Reunion 2003.

That was the same year a childhood love of art resurged, and Newberger went all in, studying, perfecting her craft, and integrating it with her writing. Likewise, in many of her essays, "I'm talking about the suffusion of art with all of life and nature," she notes. She's planning to publish them in a book using the same title as the online series: *Illuminating the Hidden Forest*.



Abundance flows from her, too—essays on current events, art exhibits, making music. In her husband's New Orleans-style jazz band, Eli & The Hot Six, Newberger plays a Zinc King Lingerie Washboard (the Stradivarius of washboards,

if you have to ask). On YouTube, she can be seen rapping away with her spoons, most of her 4-foot-10-inch form hidden behind the instrument, a giant smile on her face.

She can be lazy, too, she says, sometimes just sitting and staring out a window with Lily in her lap as sunlight fractures through the forest canopy. "We humans have permission to do nothing," she says. But "I have a good *corpus callosum*," she adds, referring to the nerves that connect the left and right lobes of the brain, "and I'm at a point in my life where I can see where these gifts take me. In my late 70s, I'm firing on all cylinders."

—John T. Ward

PHOTOS AND ART COURTESY OF CAROLYN NEWBERGER