

JENNIFER



PASTILOFF

# THE MANIFEST-STATION

On Being Human

FAMILY, GUEST POSTS, HOME

## HOME

AUGUST 18, 2016

By Pam Munter

It takes some planning to get into the correct lane for the right turn off busy Sunset Boulevard to Hartzell Street in Pacific Palisades but I've been doing it since I was 16 so it's automatic for me – even now. Hartzell is one of the “alphabet streets,” part of a grid developed early in the history of the Palisades, all of which were named after the founding Protestant missionaries.

I haven't lived there in more than a half century. But whenever I'm in the area, I feel an irresistible cosmic pull to make the pilgrimage to the house where so much of my childhood and adolescence unfolded, the repository of my earliest self. Now when I drive the four blocks up Hartzell to the house, I hardly recognize the street. Almost all the cute little bungalows in this formerly working class neighborhood have been converted into multi-story McMansions. Luxury cars are parked on both sides of the street, allowing only one car to move through at a time. Gone are most of the prolific eucalyptus trees that proudly stood guard, no longer flooding the area with their rich, herbal redolence.

The house has been updated over the years but many of the external changes were accomplished much earlier by my handyman father – filling in the front porch to create a dining room, adding a large wing with a bedroom, bath, laundry room and garage. Subsequent owners have had a better eye for landscaping, which was an area that never interested my father.

Whenever I make that right turn on to Hartzell, I feel my heart start to race. It unfailingly takes me by surprise. When I was coming home to visit from college, it was due to hungry anticipation for a square meal. After I married and drove cross-country from Nebraska for vacations, it was longed-for relief from the fatigue. But even now I feel that jittery twinge of – what could it be – anxiety? Apparitional dread?

\*\*\*

The family home was built in 1924, a small, two-bedroom Spanish-style house. My parents bought it

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ABOUT JEN PASTILOFF



**People Magazine says:** *Jennifer is changing women's lives through her empowerment workshops.* **Cheryl Strayed**

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*Dear Jen, From you I have learned to alchemize fear with love, to redistribute love through compassion, to enter a room with others. Jen leads her signature*

**Manifestation Workshop: On Being Human** all over the world & online. Her workshops are a unique blend of writing and some yoga. She has developed a massive

and moved in a month before I was born. Somehow, they had saved enough to be able to purchase the lot next door as well, all for \$1400 on the 30-year installment plan. The year was 1943. As a kid, I remember playing in the dirt in the empty lot across the street and looking for construction “nickels” as I climbed around the foundation beams, inhaling the intoxicating smell of fresh wood.

After my father died in 1969, my mother stayed in the house for another few years. Before she sold it – for \$69,000, a fortune to her – she had asked if my husband and I wanted to keep the house and move in there. We lived out of state by then and it would have been far too life interrupting. I wasn’t sure I was up to the emotional cacophony of reliving my often troubling history on a daily basis, either.

Over the ensuing decades, I’ve driven by the house on my way somewhere else, convincing myself it was merely idle curiosity, open to experiencing whatever feelings and memories might arise. This time, I had made a trip into Hollywood from my home in the desert two hours away to buy some books and plays. I had ample free time before heading home so I pointed the car west, turning right down the familiar Sunset Boulevard route toward the Palisades. It’s still one of the prettiest drives in Los Angeles. One end is filled with the specter of Hollywood’s glamorous nightclub history; moving into Beverly Hills, the mega-mansions take over the landscape, nearly invisible behind high walls and iron gates covered with expensive plantings. Rolling by UCLA on the left, the foliage becomes predictably denser, the road curvier. As I passed my junior high, I sang the alma mater anthem aloud, laughing at my weird selective memory, the only school song I remember from the many I attended. I pulled into Hartzell and proceeded up the street. Already, the central nervous system was accelerating, right on schedule.

With the oversized homes on such small lots, the neighborhood looked crowded, almost claustrophobic, as if it were a rumpus room with overstuffed furniture and too many toys. I recalled riding the big blue municipal bus that used to be able to make its way up Hartzell many times a day with ease, stopping at each corner. That was clearly no longer possible.

I pulled over a couple of times to let other cars pass, giving me time to mentally rehearse the names of those who had lived in each of the houses on my block. As I approached the house, I slowed, then stopped for a minute to get a better look. The house was much like it had been the last time I cruised by, perhaps two or three years before. Check. I was about to pull out when out of the corner of my eye I could see a woman getting out of a car parked at the curb directly in front of the house. Our eyes met; I grinned. When she closed the car door and started walking toward me, I wondered what she wanted, what was wrong. Was I blocking the driveway? Did I spook her by staring at the house? I lowered the passenger window. She seemed to want to say something.

“Can I help you?” The accent was thick, indeterminate, maybe Middle Eastern. She looked to be in her 70s, fashionably dressed.

“Hi. I used to live in this house. I was raised here. This was my family home for 30 years.”

“I live here now. I’ve lived here for 30 years, too. Why are you here?”

A fair question, I thought. I wasn’t sure how to answer that. Why was I there? Dredging up old memories? Checking on the latest architectural assaults? Exorcizing ghosts? Habit? Yearning to board the time machine?

“I was just driving by to see the changes. I happened to be in the area.” I hoped this casualness and profession of happenstance was a satisfactory explanation, innocuous and unthreatening.

“Ah. I see. Would you like to come in and see it?”

The inside of my head felt like it might implode. I had experienced vivid and repetitive dreams of being

*following based on her writing & workshops. A London workshop attendee says, "A space to show up and be human. A fusion of yoga and singing and writing and sharing, with laughter and tears mixed in! To be held and encouraged so beautifully by Jen, who won't flinch....but stay connected to us all through the journey. She creates a strong container, sits on the edges of our yoga mats listening to the stories that weave us together as human beings. She gives us the gift of attention, space and time. It's a space for connecting, for intimacy...you leave in a different place from where you arrive...It's a chance to show up, to own our fears and our dreams, our deep yearnings and the things we'd love to manifest in our lives. A chance to be wholeheartedly present and come back home a little more to ourselves."*

**Jen also leads retreats with Emily Rapp & Lidia Yuknavitch. She is also the guest speaker at Canyon Ranch three times a year. All info is at the top under Retreats/Workshops. Donate below to our scholarship fund to help send someone to a workshop/retreat who can't afford to attend.**

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#### UPCOMING EVENTS

SUN

18

**Manifesting Under The Tuscan Sun: Jen Pastiloff's 2016 Tuscany Retreat.**

September 17 @ 5:00 pm - September 24 @ 10:00 am  
*Locanda Cugnanello Siena Tuscany Italy*

OCT

01

**Jen Pastiloff in London 10/1. The Manifestation Workshop: On Being Human.**

October 1 @ 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
*Lumi Power Yoga London United Kingdom*

OCT

09

**Online: The #OnBeingHuman Series. Don't Be An Asshole: How To Forget Perfection & Be Human.**

October 9 @ 8:00 am - November 2 @ 5:00 pm  
*Online*

inside this house again – since I left it, really. Those dreams inevitably elicited tears, as if I were mourning something longed-for, unreachable, lost. In some of the dreams, the house was the way I remembered it; other times it had changed in some convoluted, dreamscaped ways. In either case, I would awaken with moisture on my face and pillow. The emotion was raw and powerful, if inexplicable.

Now, incredibly, I was awake and it was actually happening – without any planning or emotional preparation.

“Oh, that would be wonderful,” I heard a voice say from somewhere far away. I told myself to keep breathing and act nonchalant and friendly.

I carelessly parked my car behind hers, making certain to turn off the engine and engage the parking brake, hurrying out of the car before she changed her mind or I woke up. She had gone in ahead of me and apparently told her husband what she had invited me to do. I deliberately walked up the familiar front stairs savoring each step. A stocky, white-haired man came to the open door in his undershirt. I looked up and saw him smiling at me. He warmly shook my hand as if he had been expecting me and, with a wave of his large calloused hand, invited me inside.

\*\*\*

I took a few steps into the house and stopped, sensing this journey of a thousand emotions needed to begin with a single deep intake of air. I looked past the man to the place in the living room where the turquoise sectional had been, the place my mother would often be sitting, gossiping, smoking and drinking coffee with the neighbors when I came home from school. And when it wasn't there it suddenly seemed I was in another house where nothing was familiar. The wall between the living room and kitchen had been removed. The gestalt had changed.

“Step in,” the woman said from behind me.

I looked down the newly-extended hall, the one that used to end in my brother's bedroom, drawn by the shimmer of the bright blue swimming pool now visible from the front door.

“You've made lots of changes. And for the better, I think. The house seems more open this way.”

I found myself falling into the self-protective role of the architect, examining and appraising the removed walls, the enlarged kitchen, the dining room that was now integrated into the living space. I was trying to take photographs with my eyes, to be poured over later when I had more time to reflect, when I was alone.

The original kitchen had been the scene for several notably excruciating moments, the dining room the site of my first emotionally eruptive experience with live music. We had had our Christmas mornings in there and had entertained my junior high school band teacher at a nervous dinner in that room. Neither were recognizable except by their location in the house. My feet wanted to move in several directions at the same time but I didn't want to intrude on these kind people or look as if I was snooping. I was intensely present but caution dictated the need to remain a step removed. There was so much going on inside my head.

To my right was the fireplace, with the door on the left of it leading into the den where my parents spent their leisure time and slept. I thought about what the living room looked like before the den had been built by my father, and flashed to a moment when he had spanked me for some infraction.

OCT

22

### **Jen Pastiloff in Dallas. The 10/22 Manifestation Workshop: You Are Enough.**

October 22 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
The Yoga Movement Dallas Dallas, TX  
United States

NOV

05

### **Restore & Renew: Women's Retreat to Bonaire.**

November 5 @ 5:00 pm - November 10 @ 11:00 am

DEC

30

### **Ojai New Year's Retreat With Jen Pastiloff**

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Defiantly planted on the hearth, I had stifled my tears and vowed to myself with six-year-old bravado, “He’ll never hurt me again.” The memory fragments kept coming.

The woman pointed toward the den. “Would you like to see?” I nodded and followed her in. They had transformed the room into a real master bedroom dominated by a king-sized bed, not the utilitarian multi-purpose room I had remembered. Along with my parents’ sitting room and bedroom, the room had been the setting for our many neighborhood performance evenings. It didn’t take much imagination to envision walking into that room so many times, seeing them glued to their familiar positions on the separate sofa beds so popular during the ‘50s and ‘60s. They’d be watching television and puffing on their filtered Kents, seldom talking to each other. I don’t remember lingering in there with them for very long. The trip was always purposeful: “Can I go to the movies tonight?” “What’s for dinner?” Or, “Jacquie and I are taking the bus into Santa Monica. I’ll be back before dinner.” Though it was the middle of the day, it was dark in there as it always seemed to be. I looked around and noticed the couple hadn’t done much with this area at all and wondered why, considering all the other renovations. It felt gloomy in there. Or was that due to the lingering ghostly memories?

We walked outside through the door that contained the rubber flap that allowed Shirley, our Belgian shepherd, free access to the backyard. I looked up expecting to see the original wooden ramshackle garage my father used as his workshop but I was momentarily shocked to see it was no longer there. Instead, there was an expansive garden full of multi-colored flowers. Most of the fruit trees my family had planted were thriving and in bloom. It looked like it had been professionally landscaped. It was breathtakingly gorgeous.

“Do you still get peaches and nectarines every year?” I asked. They both nodded. My attention drifted over to the wall at the back of the house, the location of the basketball hoop my father had put up for me, the one where I spent time nearly every night, mastering my hook. Like the garage, it had probably been dismantled long ago. It was the same wall against which I had practiced throwing a baseball and hit tennis balls. Those were the better memories, the times I was alone, feeling in control of my life.

When I turned around, I realized that the outside configuration had changed so much that I was momentarily disoriented. With no garage there to guide me, I paused and let them lead me up the steps on the left to the deck around the pool, a more familiar sight. At 13, I had begun a fierce and persistent campaign to get that pool. I’d climb on the roof of the garage and imagine just where it should be, then walk into the den and describe it in detail to them. Two years later, my parents gave in and had it installed. It became the site of regular social events, almost nightly BBQs in the summer and some of my most contented moments, floating around in the water alone. But here, now, the pool seemed to me as vibrant as a Warner Bros. cartoon, sparkling in the bright sunshine. Gazing into the water, I remembered those warm summer nights when I’d wander out there in the dark by myself, turn on the pool light, sit and just think about my life.

The man walked over to a three-foot concrete sculpture on the other side of the pool, propped against the far wall.

“Do you know where this came from? My grandchildren always ask about it.”

“Yeah. My father made that. He always told us it was modeled on the statues on Easter Island. There were three or four of them, I think. Maybe more. It’s lasted all these years, huh?”

“Yes. We have two now. He made those himself?”

“He did. He was very handy and liked to make things.”

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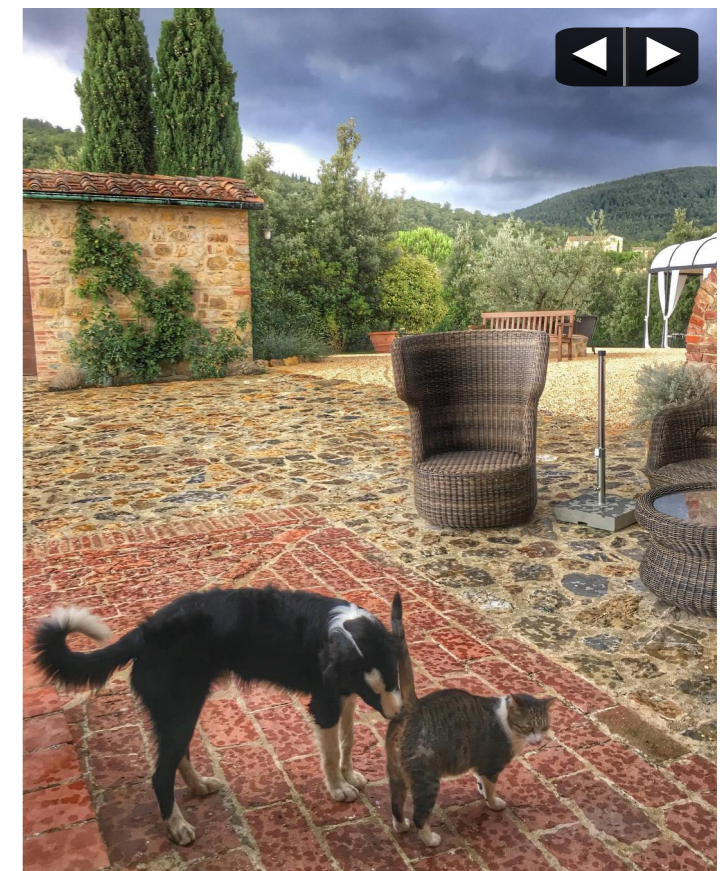
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## INSTAGRAM SLIDER



by [jenpastiloff](#) 1 day ago  
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## CONNECT WITH ME

I pointed to the area where the garage had been.

“I used that as a clubhouse when I was a kid. My dad partitioned off the back part of the garage. I had baseball cards tacked all over the walls.” As the stories started backing up in my head, I wanted to tell them – or somebody – about the house and what had been here before, what had happened there, how my sense of self was influenced inside that perimeter. But it was more important now to see the rest of the house, take it in before my time was up. This was a one-shot deal, my only opportunity to recapture a unique environmental snapshot of myself as I once was.

We walked back into the house through the new entrance, heading down the hall toward the living room. I stopped and looked into my brother’s now reconfigured room on the right, informed them what it had been, then turned to look into my old bedroom to the left. It’s a cliché, I know, but it seemed smaller than I had remembered it. How could I have spent so much of my childhood sequestered in there? I didn’t go in, though. There was already so much percolating inside my head about the past and present that I was afraid walking in there would push me over an edge I didn’t want to experience. At least, not there.

I glanced down toward my feet to see the floor furnace grate still there between our bedrooms. For a couple of years, my brother and I would scare the shit out of each other by tossing a discarded metal popcorn can lid on top of it when the other least expected it. The metal on metal created an alarmingly explosive sound. We each had our own cache of them hidden in our rooms. It unfailingly makes me chuckle when I think about it. I sensed the couple wouldn’t get the humor if I told them the story and could tell they weren’t interested, anyway. When I’d relate something about the house during those years, the man would interrupt to tell me how he had changed or improved it. They didn’t want to hear any house history and or anything about my life there. I understood that.

We returned to the living room for a few minutes while the man lectured me on his version of the history of the house. He was getting things wrong but it wasn’t important.

“The house is almost 100 years old. How has it held up for you?” I asked.

“It’s expensive to maintain. It’s too big for the the two of us now. We’re going to put it on the market next year. Maybe you’d like to buy it.”

That made me laugh for so many reasons. “I looked at its value a few months back on Zillow. Houses in the alphabet streets are selling for close to three million dollars. Probably a little outside my range.”

The woman was getting ready to leave. She moved toward the door.

“Sorry, but I have to go. I have to pick up my daughter at the doctor.”

That was my cue. “I don’t want to keep you any longer. I can’t thank you enough for letting me see the house again. You have been very generous. It means a lot to me.”

“You’re welcome. Come back any time. Just give me a call.” The man pulled out a business card and handed it to me.

We shook hands and I peeked over his shoulder for one final look. I walked down the steps toward my car, a little reluctant to leave. There was an eerie finality to it all I couldn’t quite identify, like putting the last period on a lengthy history book. To my surprise, there was a conspicuous absence of the tearful emotions that had invaded those upsetting dreams. Had the house changed so much that it no longer



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evoked the expected catharsis? Or was I just surfeited with so much affective information that I needed time to sort it out? Pulling my car away from the curb, I realized that most of the infiltrated memories during that short half-hour had been good ones. And the negative ones had thankfully lost their impact. Turns out it wasn't so awful to rewind the figurative home movies and watch them again through my adult eyes.

It wasn't the house that had appeared in my recurring dreams but, even so, I seemed to remember so much that had happened in it over the nearly three decades I lived there. After all, it was the existential cocoon in which I had been shaped, prodded and molded. That visit, the day I paid homage to my childhood, was a confirmation that all the subsequent years of sometimes traumatic exploration had created another, safer, cocoon from which a healthier person would emerge.

**Pam Munter is in the MFA program at the University of California at Riverside, Palm Desert. After many years of writing about dead movie stars she is now writing about her own adventures in a deconstructed memoir. She is a retired clinical psychologist and former performer, traveling all over the country singing in jazz and cabaret clubs. The MFA will be her sixth college degree.**

Join Jen Pastiloff in Tuscany Sep 17-24, 2016. There are 2 spaces left. This will be her only international retreat in 2016 and is her favorite retreat of the year. Email [barbara@jenniferpastiloff.com](mailto:barbara@jenniferpastiloff.com) asap. More info here. Must email first to sign up.

Join Jen Pastiloff at her Manifestation Workshop: On Being Human in [London Oct 1st](#) and [Dallas Oct 22](#). Click the links above to book. No yoga experience needed- just be a human being! Bring a journal and a sense of humor. See why People Magazine did a [whole feature on Jen](#).

Check out Jen in [People Magazine!](#)

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FAMILY HOME MEMORIES PAM MUNTER



**THE MANIFEST- STATION**

The Manifest-Station was created by Jennifer Pastiloff. Angela Patel as editor and full-time badass.



These two beauty-hunters curate content that will move you, make you think, and remind you what it means to be human. Jen leads her workshops (The Manifestation Workshop: On Being Human) all over the world & online. Check the tab at the top under retreats/workshops. Jen is also the founder of "Girl Power: You Are Enough," to remind young women that yes, they do have a place in this

world and they are enough. No matter what. Jen is represented by Adriann Ranta at Foundry Media. For queries please contact aranta@foundrymedia.com. And remember: Don't Be An Asshole. To contribute to our scholarship fund to help send a woman to a workshop/retreat please donate here:

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### 5 COMMENTS



KATHY WISHARD

August 18, 2016 at 12:54 pm

Reply

I loved this article by Pam Munter! My cousin posted it on my Facebook time line thinking it would interest me because I grew up at 710 Hartzell Street (corner of Sunset and Hartzell). My family has owned the house for 57 years. My Dad passed away there in 1997 and my Mom in 2009. Since that time, my sister and I have been leasing it but recently, and very reluctantly, we sold it.

Pam's article really struck home with me because I have really been suffering "Seller's" remorse and crying myself to sleep at night over the whole thing. I won't have the ability to do drive-by's on our house because it is being torn down and that's the saddest part. I guess I will have to continue to "visit" the home my parents built when they first moved to the Palisades in 1946 on Marquette Street! We lived there until moving to Hartzell when I was 6 years old. Not quite the same, but it'll have to do!

Thanks you so much for your article, Pam. You put into words so well what was in my head!



PAM MUNTER

August 18, 2016 at 4:57 pm

Reply

You're very welcome, Kathy. I've been surprised and very pleased at the responses.

BARBARA POTTER

August 20, 2016 at 12:06 am

Reply



What a lovely story. I understand the feelings you experienced. Thank you.



JADE ROBINSON MYERS

Reply

August 21, 2016 at 4:51 am

A family house is so much more than a structure. Perhaps it is not as common for “the family home you grew up in” to exist anymore. I can relate, in a unique way though, to Pam’s memory-evoking visit to the past. The new and “old” intertwine pleasantly and with conflicting emotions in Pam Munter’s important story. It beautifully weaves “you can’t go home again” with a sort making peace and moving on. Pam has a new cocoon, a new life. I love that she pays homage to the entirety of the old cocoon by facing and embracing it. It is the past. Thanks to Pam Munter for letting readers briefly accompany her home again.



PAM MUNTER

Reply

August 21, 2016 at 7:09 am

Thank you, Barbara and Jade. It’s very satisfying to know that my words have affected you so positively.

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