You also found that they don’t necessarily want to move in with their children when they can no longer live alone. I think we’ve all watched too many episodes of The Waltons. We envision a hazy golden past when generations lived together in mysterious harmony. And we berate ourselves because we think that we are too selfish or too geographically dispersed or too careerist or too feminist and that we don’t take care of our seniors the way we used to.

The direction over seventy years has been for elderly parents to not move in with their children as they used to. I found it really fascinating that two economists, one at Michigan and one now at Dartmouth, went through 100 years of census data and could pinpoint almost exactly when this historic shift happened: at the 1940 census, which is when the first Social Security checks were mailed out. And they controlled for many variables — was this because women were working? But it’s simple economics: as a nation, once we gave elderly people the financial ability to maintain their own households, they took it.

Assisted living sounds like a good option for elderly people who can’t manage on their own, but what are the limitations?

This was the great hope in the nineties, when the industry really mushroomed and overbuilt. It was a perfectly fine idea — it still is. But people move in when they are in their eighties, usually. They have multiple health problems. They’re taking multiple medications. They’ve stayed at home as long as they possibly could, so that by the time they’ve moved into assisted living, it’s probably wise to see it as more of a way station than as the last home that someone will need.

I still think assisted living is a good option, especially when it’s part of a continuing-care community, with an independent living component, assisted living, and maybe a nursing home. But it has limitations, and I think often families don’t realize that. At some point, if Mom is incontinent and can’t manage it herself, if her dementia increases, those kinds of things will lead to a discussion with the director of a facility, who will say, we can’t take care of your mother by ourselves any more. And then your choice is either hire aides in assisted living, which is a very expensive option, or a nursing home.

And nobody wants to live in a nursing home.

You sometimes hear children say, “I promised my mother I’d never put her in a nursing home.” But it’s not a promise that you can really make, because there can come a time when there is not a better option — unless you are an extremely wealthy person who can have home-care workers around the clock.

If your parent can no longer get out of bed and has to be turned every two hours to prevent bedsores, which are dangerous and painful, no single individual can be on the clock twenty-four hours a day. And at some point, having round-the-clock aides becomes an expense that most families can’t shoulder.

Plus, nursing homes are the only government safety net. The only government program that will pay for long-term care is Medicaid, which is meant for the poor. But it’s very simple for even a middle-class person to become poor, to spend down your assets, if you’re paying the average $7,000 a month for a nursing home. So you want to have the nursing home option, because for very sick people, where else can they go?

It sounds as though there is no single solution when it comes to caring for an aging parent.

That’s the reality. In the end, these decisions are highly individual and they change over time. And I think people have to make their peace with the fact that solutions are imperfect and they are not always long-lasting and everybody tends to grope through this period hoping for the best and doing the best they can. And sometimes that’s all you can do.
revised edition is part of the popular Then and Now series focusing primarily on America’s cities. The conceit is consistent: place historic images alongside contemporary shots from the same location. The effect is to give both photos a resonance, and context.

Kennedy, son of historian Lawrence Kennedy, looks beyond the tourist draws and includes some of Boston’s more, well, Boston ‘hoods — Dorchester, West Roxbury, and Charlestown.

The Massachusetts capital got its start as a Puritan settlement in the 1630s, hosting John Winthrop and his followers on an isolated 500-acre peninsula made of glacial, gravelly hills deposited 10,000 years ago. By the late seventeenth century, Boston was the largest community in the American Colonies; after the American Revolution, the population tripled.

“New neighborhoods were laid out in grid patterns, but separately, and at different times and in varying sizes, surrounding the colonial-era central district,” Kennedy writes in his introduction. “That explains the apparently jumbled patchwork of streets that bedevils tourists and even locals today.”

Through seventy before-and-after images, each accompanied by historical (and often quirky) insights, Kennedy transports readers through key developments in Boston’s timeline: the influx of Irish immigrants fleeing the Great Famine in the 1840s, the annexation of bordering towns, the work of architect Charles Bulfinch and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, the arrival of the rapid transit system and increased commercial traffic flow, and in this generation, burying the Central Artery.

“Boston has a rare combination of vitality and innovation with a healthy sense of heritage and history,” Kennedy writes. “It is made up of thousands of daily decisions by — and interactions among — a more diverse and peaceable cross section of folk than the city often gets credit for. Bostonians work, study, drink, eat, root, and celebrate in different ways, but really, it’s not such a big town, and we’re all in it together.”

**Fiction**

**THE ANNOTATED WIND IN THE WILLOWS**
Kenneth Grahame, edited by Annie Gauger (GRS’01)
W. W. Norton & Co.
In 1903, Kenneth Grahame, writing in the “baby talk” dialect he used with his family, sent a note to his wife, Elspeth, recounting his three-year-old son’s demand: “Now tell me about the mole!” In the letter, now in Oxford’s Bodleian Library, Grahame writes, “He missus nuffin — there was atory in which a mole, a beever a badjer & a water rat was characters & I got them terribly mixed up as I went along but ee always stratened em out & remembered wich was wich.”

That mole, of course, became Mole — the hero, with brave Rat, gruff Badger, and feckless Toad, of the children’s classic The Wind in the Willows. The new annotated edition edited by Gauger, a graduate of BU’s Editorial Institute, offers a revealing look at a happy period in the family’s life: when Grahame spun the tales that would become the book for his young son, Alistair, nicknamed Mouse. Gauger’s detailed edition includes the entire series of Grahame’s letters to his son and numerous illustrations from many earlier volumes. She also provides a personal and cultural framework that lends a new richness to the tale: Grahame’s curious creation of a seeing mole, for example, takes on new meaning in the context of Alistair’s blindness. Jessica Ullian

**NIGHT AND DAY**
Robert B. Parker (GRS’57’71)
Putnam
Voyeurism is alive in the small, sleepy town of Paradise, Massachusetts, where police chief Jesse Stone must investigate two cases involving the private lives of some of the town’s most prominent residents. One focuses on the local junior high school principal, who insists on examining her female students’ undergarments to determine their appropriateness (“Proper attire includes what shows and what doesn’t,” she informs a student). But the investigation is put on hold with the second case — someone begins terrorizing women, stalking them, breaking into their homes, and forcing them to undress as he takes photographs. “Night Hawk” must be stopped before he becomes more than a spectator. Throughout it all, Stone manages to play it cool, whether he’s questioning middle-school girls or the disgraced principal, who reports that Night Hawk is after her. This is the eighth in Parker’s Jesse Stone series and delivers the author’s trademark gritty feel. Amy Laskowski

**THE PHYSICK BOOK OF DELIVERANCE DANE**
Katherine Howe (GRS’05’10)
Hyperion/Voice
Connie Goodwin, a Harvard graduate student, has passed her qualifying exam and is about to begin writing her dissertation. But first, she must clean out her late grandmother’s abandoned home in Marblehead, Massachusetts. On her first night in the decrepit house, Connie finds a small piece of paper with the words “Deliverance Dane” tucked into the hollow shaft of an old key. The discovery sets off on her summer, as she pores over archives, probe records, and other historical documents in search of answers.

**WEB EXTRA**
Read an interview with Katherine Howe at www.bu.edu/bostonia.