

# ONE-PAGE STORIES

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# How Not to Use a New Car

By MILT COLEMAN - ROCHESTER, N. Y.

**M**Y BEST FRIEND DICK, MY BROTHER BOB, AND I were home from college a few days before Christmas. (Dick is gone now, but my brother, now in his 90's, still survives.) World War II had concluded, and the first post-war cars had become available. Dick's father, an electrical parts distributor, had bought a brand new Chevrolet sedan. Naturally, we saw an opportunity to get in a couple of days of skiing before the holidays.

Dick talked his father into giving us the car for the trip. We drove north from Boston one morning, up Route 16 to Pinkham Notch, which lies on the east side of Mount Washington, the highest peak in New England. There was plenty of snow but no chairlifts or T-bars in those days.

So we trudged up through the snow to the little headwall ridge and to the Appalachian Mountain Club cabin where the guide gave us candy bars to fortify our joints and a lecture about being alone on the mountain. We skied and tumbled down the John Sherburne Trail back to the car at Pinkham, thoroughly done in.

After a night at Dick's aunt's in Lunenburg, Vermont, and a most satisfying breakfast, it was on to Wildcat Mountain for more skiing. Then, with the sun disappearing over the hills, it was time to head home. It was snowing heavily as we came to a steep grade where Dick lost control of the car, and we plowed into a telephone pole which snapped off and fell across the road. We scrambled out. Bob and I rushed to warn other cars — I went up the hill and Bob walked down below the pole. Dick stayed with the car.

Eventually the New Hampshire State Police rescued us, getting the car towed to a garage and installing us in an inn for the night.

The next day, with a temporary fix to the front end and with no defroster or heat, we maneuvered south and managed to get home without further difficulties. It was time to face the music. Amazingly, Dick's father seemed to understand what a New Hampshire storm could do, and we escaped further condemnation. The new car could be repaired, but it was a quiet Christmas in both families.

# Cars

BY JIM HEDGES — NEEDMORE, PA.

**M**Y STEP-DAUGHTER'S FIRST HUSBAND was a klutzy small-time crook. She married him, straight out of high school, because she "wanted an exciting life." They spent their honeymoon in separate prisons (which is about as exciting as it gets).

She then dumped him and found herself a blander but more rewarding mate. He, though, before they went to prison, fathered my wife's only grandson, and so my wife has kept track of him through some 25 years of jail terms and probations.

It's difficult, when one lives in the country, to survive without transportation, so my wife has grub-staked him to cars during his out-of-jail moments. Of the latest three, one was left with his mother when he returned to jail – she allowed the windows to be broken, then sold it for scrap (and kept the money). The next he left with a girlfriend, to whom he also gave his power of attorney – she sold it on his behalf (and kept the money). The current vehicle is now with us.

Only two weeks into his latest probation, Jailbird was re-arrested at the home of a reputed drug dealer. His mother and his girlfriend both tried to cop the car for themselves, but my wife has the bill of sale, the canceled check, and the title. And as he was being shackled, Jailbird had instructed the drug dealer not to hand it over to anyone else than her.

The day we went to the drug dealer's home to pick up the car was one of those days when you make sure your will is signed before sallying forth to confront whatever unknown dangers life may hold, but Dealer turned out to be one of the nicest old hillbillies we have ever met! He likes Jailbird as though he were his own son and wishes him well. Also, two of his customers had recommended us to him.

One striking thing he said, though, during our half-hour of cordial chit-chat, was that his telephone service included a special feature allowing him to accept unlimited calls from prisoners everywhere without having to pay the administrative fee normally imposed on prison telephone calls. The unspoken message was written clear: "I'm a nice guy to people who are nice to me, but ... see only what you are supposed to see, don't ask questions, and after you leave remember that you weren't really here at all."

# The Best State Fair – Part 1

BY LINDA L. SHIVVERS – DES MOINES, IOWA

**E**VERY STATE HAS THE BEST STATE FAIR, but the Shivverses are biased towards the Iowa State Fair. They've been going for all eleven days for the past 43 years. What's the best thing about the best fair? The people. Linda keeps a little notebook filled with daily fun facts, one of which is a count of all the people Melvin runs into. To run into even one person you know is a feat considering the 435 acres and daily attendance of 100,000. You see them while walking, tramping, sky gliding, or sitting on a bench. Or a stranger becomes a new friend.

You see and hear all kinds of things. Little kids are a good source of state fair commentary. Like the one at the Big Boar pen. A little guy points at the boar and asks, "Mom, What are those?" Very clever mom comes back with, "Those are the big boy parts, dear." Sitting on a bench near the horse barns a little girl is very interested in a pile of horse poop. Another little girl leaps over the pile. Then a little boy points and says, "A horse went poopy there." Outside the Agriculture Building a little boy points at the giant pumpkin, "Mom, mom! It's real!" Older folks come up with some good ones, too. Like the old guy on the tram, "Ever notice how some people's knees are nice looking and some are just plain ugly?"

Linda also keeps a log of t-shirt slogans. *"I'm Not Fat. I'm Fluffy."* *"Don't Flatter Yourself, Cowboy. I Was Looking At Your Horse."* One slogan got Linda laughing so hard she couldn't keep walking, *"I Didn't Ask You To Dance, I Said You Look Fat In Your Pants."* Melvin ran up and tapped the guy on his shoulder. He became a new friend.

The most favorite events for the Shivverses are the draft horse shows. Not only is it a thrill to see Belgians, Shires, Clydes and Percherons, it's an honor to get to present the winner of the six-horse hitches with a Blenko glass vase that Mel designed. After final judging, the Shivvers are escorted into the arena by the State Fair Queen. They walk between those enormous horses and present the trophy to the winner, then get a boost up onto that huge wagon for the victory lap ride. What a thrill to watch the drivers handle all those reins, and look down on all that horse power.

# War Boy

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PA.

“WHERE’S MY DAD?” I ASKED NO ONE in particular, coming down the stairs for my third Christmas. In my very young mind I must’ve thought that a normal family had a Mom and a Dad. The answer I got was “He died in the war, Tommy.” I asked, “What is war? Will it hurt me?” End of discussion.

That was the last I asked about him because I had never met him that I knew of. This changed 27 years later when my Grandma revealed to me that he was alive and in a V.A. Hospital in Chillicothe, Ohio. He suffered from “shell shock.” Now it’s labeled “PTSD.”

He did hold me as a baby before I was a year old, after he and my Mom were divorced. He was a tire builder in Akron, Ohio. After the divorce, he went into the Army and Mom took me back to her original home in Cambridge, about a two-hour drive south of Akron. She went away to work at Wright Patterson Air Base, in Dayton, on the western side of Ohio. Mom did make occasional visits back but they were rare. My grandparents become my grand parents for about five years.

Christmas toys were mostly wooden due to war-time metal shortages. I had no idea that scrap metal drives had been taking place. No new cars were being built in Detroit. The exception was that shiny new tricycle. It ended up with about 50,000 miles from trips up and down the brick sidewalk with Skippy running alongside.



*Tom, Skip and the tricycle.*

My precious dog Skip came to me that Christmas in the big side pocket of Grandpa’s railroad jacket. He was an engineer on the B&O Railroad back before I was born in 1943. He must have made pretty good money because they bought a Sears house in 1924. It came to town on a railroad flatcar. According to Grandma, they paid cash plus for the crew to put it together. It had a wrap-around front porch, a side porch and a back porch. The side porch also had an entry door into the dining room. I recall many mornings Grandma sitting with the Jewel Tea man. She also used the dining room window to display her signal for ice delivery. I looked forward to the ice man because he would always use his pick to give me a chip to suck on.

# Love for Tomatoes

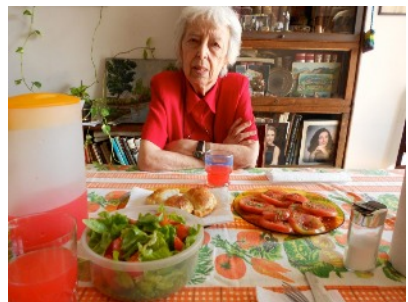
BY PATRICIA LORENZO – SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

**B**UENOS AIRES! – THIS WAS THE FIRST VISIT BACK to the motherland. I hadn't been in Argentina since the age of ten months, when we emigrated to Michigan. I had heard stories of Buenos Aires. As I listened to phone conversations between my parents and family members, I had created this magical place in my mind. It was filled with excitement, bustling streets, flower carts on street corners, fresh bakeries, coffee shops full of people and most importantly love from my family. I could imagine the stories of my parents growing up and living in a large, active city. When I was eight years old my parents planned our trip back to visit family, and I was elated to visit what was considered home to my parents for so long before emigrating to the United States.

After arrival in the airport, I saw a large group of people waiting with signs. I imagined they were all for our family and I felt as if we were finally home. I felt the warmth of family love almost instantly. The smell of old buildings still conjures the same memories.

Arriving at my grandmother and grandfather's small apartment, my grandmother immediately was hugging and delivering the past seven years of kisses and snuggles that had been postponed due to our long distance. My grandmother was not prepared for a group of people in her home despite knowing of our arrival months in advance but a fresh baguette and hard salami magically appeared as an arrival snack. I would later learn that fresh bakeries are less than a corner walk away. My grandmother sliced a tomato and served it with olive oil and oregano. My mother then began to complain of her children's distaste of tomatoes and other vegetables of the sort. I'm not sure what compelled me but I gladly ate the sliced tomatoes and they were more delicious than I had ever remembered. A grandmother holds a special influence that extends beyond time and distance.

To this day, tomatoes remain one of my favorite foods not only for their sweet and citrus taste but also due to invoking memories of my grandmother's love and small apartment in the middle of beautiful Buenos Aires.



*Grandmother Josefa Künzi.*

# Two Breakfast Bowls

BY RICH HOPKINS — TERRA ALTA, W. VA.

SO IT WOULD BE THE RIGHT AND HONORABLE thing to do to sit down at the breakfast table this morning and munch away on my bowl of honey nut Cheerios and savor the delightful snippets in Bill Boys' twelfth edition of *One-Page Stories*. But with a pair of tweezers?

Old Art Linkletter used to have a radio program titled, "Kids Say the Darndest Things." Well, I suggest a corollary to that by announcing "Senior Citizens Do Even More Stupid Things." Like eating their Cheerios with tweezers? Let me explain.

I'm not much of a green thumb when it comes to gardens and flowers, but four years ago I discovered I could coax morning glory seeds into breaking into fantastic vines filled with flowers in a big pot in front of my house. So it's come to be a ritual each Springtime to plant more seeds to see if, once again, Mother Nature would honor my planting with another bounty of color later this summer. The instructions with the seeds suggests one can hasten germination by soaking the seeds in warm water. So last night, I pulled out a small bowl, filled it with warm water and dumped in the seeds.

This morning, I pulled out a larger bowl and filled it with milk in anticipation of a breakfast of Cheerios. To the pantry I went to fetch my box of cereal and back to the countertop I marched, fiddling to get the box open.

I poured my Cheerios, picked up my spoon and headed to the breakfast table with bowl and spoon in hand. As I turned, I noticed something really curious sitting on the counter: a bowl filled with milk. "That's strange," I said to myself. "Did I do something dumb like pour myself two bowls of milk?" "Naw, I'm not that stupid."

I sat down with my Cheerios and started to eat when it hit me. "This is the small bowl I put the seeds in last night!" My first thought was to throw the whole mess in the trash can, but then I opted to scoop off the top layer into the milk, and then pick through what was left to remove all the seeds. So now I sit here with a bowl of sweetened water and morning glory seeds, preparing to go outside and plant the seeds. My only dilemma now is whether the honey nut sweetener which washed off into the water might somehow poison my seeds. Stay tuned. Later this summer I will have the answer.

# Skate Boy

By TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PA.

**O**UR COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS HAD A SKATING RINK at the edge of the entrance. It was about a two mile walk from my home in Canton, Ohio. I started going there in fifth grade. Once I learned to get around really well the manager asked me if I wanted a part-time weekend job. I immediately said “Yes!” The job was to help little kids put clamp skates onto their shoes. This was a sometimes-difficult job especially in the winter because they had wet soles and the clamp would not bite and stay put. They would flop off and the kid would sometimes trip and fall. When there were no skates to deal with, I could enjoy the main floor. Then would come the PA announcement – “SKATE BOY!” I had to hurry off the main floor and back to the bench where the kids would be waiting for skates to be put on.

This went on for a couple of years and then I graduated to floor guard. To me, this was big stuff. I got to have the police whistle on a lanyard and blow speeders and reckless skaters off the floor for a time out. This sometimes would cause them to be mad at me and want to beat me up after closing time. I always made sure to have a small posse with me in case things would get rough or tough.

The rink also had a section glassed in with an organ and a professional keyboardist would play music to skate by. He was very good with show tunes and some current songs from the fifties.

I was searching in my closet a while back, this being 2021, and found a new pair of skates never worn. I bought them about 25 years ago with intentions of trying again to regain my early speed and grace. The wheels are precision and smooth. My first surprise was I could not lace my skates. The "skate man" who ran the rental counter and is an attendant at the rink came over and did it for me. I gladly gave him a two dollar tip for his kindness because my frustration and embarrassment were getting the best of me. I spent two hours trying to regain my “sea legs.” I felt like I was on a sheet of ice. It was me hugging the wall the whole way around the rink for two hours. I did not fall. Being two years away from eighty, a fall would not be good. I look forward to my next go 'round.



# My Owners Have ADD

By "FOXY" BOYS / BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

I HAVE BEEN LIVING WITH BILL AND RUTH BOYS for almost three years. They are considerate and humane to me, considering that I'm the newcomer in their home. I try to be accommodating, therefore. Isabel, the cat, has been with them much longer, so she has seniority over me. She rushes over to my food dish and plows in ahead of me at mealtime. I hold back deferentially until she walks away to get her own food. But I know in my heart that is unfair for her to do that. So on rare occasions I softly utter a polite growl to let everybody know that I'm not a total pushover.

Isabel might even be senior to *them*, too. Bill built *her* a special cardboard feeding box with a hole cut out big enough for her to get in but too small for me. As a result I never get to sneak a few bites of *her* food. But *I'm* the only one who gets to go on walks with them.

Walks! I am joyous when we get ready for walks. I sprint ahead to the door, prancing and bouncing my two front legs up and down. When I get to the door I turn around and prance back toward them, and then prance back to the door again. I sing a little song as I do my choreograph routine. They laugh; they like it. They've even learned to join in the song, such as they are able. Such happy times. Bill even tries to mimic my prancing by raising and lowering his arms in harmony with mine. But he is too tall so his paws never make that pleasing percussion *thump* on the floor. Still, it's nice to know he enjoys walks, too.

When we start off I know that our first destination is the dog food store. They call it Brown Bag Deli, and there are several marvelous dog-feeders employed there. When I come up to the side door I politely do a sit and stare at the door. We all wait there until, sure enough, one of the dog-feeders opens the door and brings me my piece of bacon. I never miss stopping there, unless Bill pulls me away by the leash and harness, which fortunately rarely happens. But here's the sad, sad part – when we move on, they don't seem to realize that we should s-l-o-w down now. There are so many, many smells along the sidewalks, on the lawns, in the gutters, on the trees and bushes. But they can't seem to smell *anything*! I am so sorry for their plight! I seriously fear they have Aroma Deficit Disorder (ADD). But I reluctantly move on and tag along. After all, they're mine – and there's always the next walk to look forward to.

# Lost Bank Deposit

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

**A** STRAIGHT WALK OF 78 STEPS FROM MY DESK, out the back door, through the back yard, into the garage, to my car, get in, belt up and start the engine – and I lost track of a \$620 bank deposit I had right in my hand when I started!

Didn't I toss it on the seat when I opened the car? Did it slip off the seat? Between the seat and the center console? Slip off the passenger seat? Slip between the passenger seat and door? Slipped into the door pocket there? In the driver's door pocket? Between the driver's seat and the door? Inside the center console? Somehow slip onto the back floor? With my iPhone flashlight I searched all these places – repeatedly. How *could* it have disappeared?! I did stop on the way to take a bag of trash out to the bin behind the garage, on Concord Place. Maybe I was still carrying it when I put the bag in the trash and it fell out of my grasp and fell in, too? I looked several times. Pulled the bag back out and looked under it. Did I drop it on the ground, and afterwards a passer-by pick it up? Gosh, these were all NAPA checks, albeit safely endorsed "For Deposit Only."

Part of the walk through the back yard is closely bordered with big, sprawling ferns and hostas. Could it have slipped unnoticed out of my hand and fallen into them? *Swish, swish, swish* – four passes pushing all the foliage aside and peering in. Nope. But where *is* it?!

Maybe I didn't have it in my hand at all when I left the house? Retraced steps six times, looking even *under* furniture in case it fluttered down and out of sight. Used iPhone flashlight again. Did I stop in the bathroom? Look in there four times. Gave up for the day.

Next morning I asked my wife, Ruth, to help search. I even made up a facsimile packet of the checks and deposit slip, fastened with the same oversize paper clip, as a spotting guide to know what size and shape to look for. Found out it was thin enough to slip through gaps in the back porch planks if it fell perfectly edge-on. Awful idea! With garden clippers I trimmed back all the ferns and hostas to get a clearer field of view. Meanwhile Ruth looked in the car – and found it, fallen between the driver's seat and the very *front* part of the center console! I had missed it every time I looked!

In happy relief I drove straight to the bank and shoved the checks in! Mildly surprised that I didn't even have an accident on the way.

# Writing Personal Narratives

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

I USUALLY LEAVE THIS PAGE BLANK to remind any reader that I'm glad to consider one-page stories from *anyone*, whether they are a member of the National Amateur Press Association or not. Since many contributors write "personal narratives" I thought this description of the basic structure of personal narratives might encourage a hesitant contributor. (Well, I guess I'll see.)

## OPENING

Catchy introduction.  
"Hook." Set the scene.

You don't want to bore your readers. Make it interesting from the start. Set the scene adequately so the story flows from it.

## BODY

Beginning of the  
story.



Middle



End

What happened? Usually told in chronological order. Often rising tension or a problem to be solved, followed by the action to address it, and finally how it all worked out.

"Show, don't tell." Give specific details; involve the senses. Avoid vague language wherever you can.

## CLOSING

Outcome. Reflection  
or significance to me.  
Lessons learned.

Wrap up the story into a satisfying closing.

Scan the stories in this issue to see how we handled these points, not that they are commandments, nor that we are always successful in following guidelines, either. We're doing this for enjoyment, both ours and yours. We hope we give you an enjoyable or thoughtful story, worth the reading time. How did we do? Would you like to give it a try? See page 12 for how to.



## Write for ONE-PAGE STORIES?

You don't have to be a member of NAPA to submit pieces, although members are definitely invited. (Here's an easy place to practice and present your short-short story writing efforts.)

**HOW MANY WORDS?** About 350 to 400 words. Less if you have a photo or graphic to go with your story.

**WHAT KIND OF CONTENT?** Original prose – fiction or non-fiction. Personal narratives, anecdotes and memoirs would be especially welcome, but other genres would be considered as well, as long as they are your own original pieces.

**CAN I GET SOME EXTRA COPIES FOR MYSELF?** Certainly. Just let me know how many you would like.

**WILL I GET FEEDBACK?** I'll be happy to share with you any feedback I might get from others about your story.

**NOTE TO READERS** — Send me your comments on any of the stories so I can pass them on to the writers.

**WHERE DO I SEND A SUBMISSION?** To Bill Boys either by email at [williamboys@att.net](mailto:williamboys@att.net) (preferred, to save retyping) or by postal mail to 184 Reinhard Ave., Columbus OH 43206-2635.

## How Does One Write a Personal Narrative?

Three more YouTube videos I found helpful in composing the narrative on page 11.

“Structure of a Personal Essay,” by Essay-Academy.com, 1:16.

“Personal Narrative Controlling Idea,” by Rebel Writers, 9:47.

“Reflective Essay (Examples, Introduction, Topics).” by EssayPro, 9:49 (you can skip the first 43 seconds).