

ONE-PAGE STORIES

No. 10 — FEBRUARY 2021

A Cooperative Journal for the National Amateur Press Association

The Family Banana Salad	2
BY MARK MECHLING	
Angel in a Jaguar	3
BY CAROL BENCK	
The Elegant Impala	4
BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER	
Crane Corner and Hippo Alley	5
BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER	
Farewell to “Deerhunter”	6
BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER	
Bridge Party	7
BY TOM DUFFEY	
Spouse Story - Part 1	8
BY LINDA L. SHIVERS	
From Widget to Widgie May	9
BY TOM DUFFEY	
A Cat Too Far	10
BY BILL BOYS	
[available page]	11
BY TBA	
Write for ONE-PAGE STORIES?	12

The Family Banana Salad

BY MARK MECHLING

YOU KNOW A MEAL IS CENTRAL at extended family gatherings. That was true when the extended Fred and Bessie Mechling family gathered for a holiday or family event – the cousins brought their favorite main or side dishes of meats, potatoes, casseroles, salads, rolls and most importantly, desserts of all kinds. Almost *always* someone prepared banana salad.*

It appeared simple enough to make but there were some subtle, perhaps unwritten, steps in the making. The dressing consisted of egg yolks, vinegar, mustard, butter, sugar and salt. These ingredients were mixed and cooked until thick. After cooling, whipped cream and sliced bananas were either mixed into the salad dressing or arranged in layers. The creamy mixture was topped with a thick layer of chopped peanuts. Several members of the older generation including Aunt Peggy Kose and Aunt Helen Hursey were skilled in making the dish.

One holiday at a family gathering when I was probably in my early teens, a large bowl of banana salad was on the buffet table. Likely Tom and David Kose and I were in the front of the line. As I grazed along the food table, I scooped a generous portion of the peanuts off the top of the salad. Others who followed in line started asking, “What happened to the peanuts in the banana salad? Who took all of the peanuts?” I was quickly identified as the guilty party who scooped the top layer of nuts.

Ever since and to this day, without fail, whenever the Mechlings, Koses, Hurseys and Uffners get together for an event, I am reminded about the scooping incident that occurred over fifty years ago. My enduring family legacy will be that I was the one who removed all of the peanuts off the family banana salad.

* I believe it was a Hursey dish. In my mom’s cookbook (*Recipes from the Kitchen of Annabelle Mechling*), she listed the recipe and attributed it to Helen (Mechling) Hursey, my dad’s sister.

Angel in a Jaguar

BY CAROL BENCK

AT 85 YEARS OLD, LONG-DISTANCE DRIVES are no longer my forte, but I was going on a bus trip with my daughter down to Biltmore Estate in North Carolina. I would have to travel from my home near the Pennsylvania state line to Montgomery County, Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C., to meet her.

I don't have a GPS so I was going to use my usual follow-the-landmarks mode of getting there. I did great until I got to Montgomery County and must have made a wrong turn. I was hopelessly lost. I went round and round past sites that looked familiar but didn't get me on the correct track. Eventually I pulled into a school parking lot and had a good bawl and then a fervent prayer to God to get me there because I was already very late.

I could have called my daughter, but my cell phone was home charging!

So I started out again with the brilliant idea that I would stop into a gas station and maybe they could help me out. I pulled into an Exxon station and went in to ask the attendant, who was sitting in a glass enclosure, if he knew how to get there. In a very thick Indian accent he told me he had just started there last week and had no idea. Being about ready to burst into tears, I turned to walk out the door when the next person right behind me spoke up. He was a very stately tall gentleman with white hair and glasses. His face was so kind and gentle, that when he asked if I needed help (in the kindest way), I poured out my story to him. He smiled and said, "Oh, I was just in that area earlier this week" and proceeded to give me very slow, detailed and clear directions. I thanked him profusely for his kind advice and went out the door.

He had to be the angel that God had sent in answer to my prayer, I am sure of it! But sneaking a look out of the side of my eye as I headed to my car, I could not help but notice his car – a very shiny silver Jaguar.

I made it to my daughter's perfectly. Thank you, Lord, for your angel in a Jaguar!

The Elegant Impala

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

MY FATHER DROVE A CHEVY IMPALA in my teen-age years, but the impala I encountered in Tanzania were far different. True, they too could attain a high rate of speed, but – in my eyes – were far more elegant.

As in many species, the young impala we saw in Tarangire National Park look almost cute and cuddly – as well as a bit curious. Their brownish color helps them blend in with the dry grass. The adult impala, still camouflaged, is fully alert, showing off his nicely curved horns and the black stripes on his rump. A couple days later I learned they are not always so calm.



Returning from a game drive, we had lunch and a rest period at our camp in the Serengeti. I finished writing in my journal, then went for a walk to the clearing near our guide's tent. Enjoying the peace and beauty, I glanced to my left



and saw three impala. Two started running my way, so I stepped behind a (skinny!) tree, hoping I wouldn't startle them. After they passed I stepped back into the clearing to continue my observation of the area. Hearing a "woof-woof" noise, I turned to see two impala charging back down the hill so I immediately returned to the tree until they had gone by. My guide came out of his tent and asked if I were OK. He explained the one was being chased out of the herd, so the "chase-er" could keep the females for himself. Evidently even a stately and elegant impala will fight to prove his superiority and keep his harem.

Crane Corner and Hippo Alley

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

LIONS, ELEPHANTS, WILDEBEEEST, AND RHINOCEROS in their native habitat – seeing these in their natural habitat intrigued me to join a travel adventure called Safari Serengeti in December of 2010. I was also interested in the habitat itself.

We camped three nights in the “endless plain,” known in English as the Serengeti. Serengeti National Park in Tanzania encompasses 5,700 square miles of savanna and grass-land. Our safari vehicles took us over miles of what could loosely be called roads, most often dry but in a sudden downpour could turn to mud. It didn’t take the six of us in my vehicle long to recognize one particular intersection close to our camp. We fondly called it “Crane Corner and Hippo Alley.”

One of the first times we came to that crossroads, there were gray crowned cranes waiting for us to take their photo. These regal birds had large black, gray, and golden bodies balanced on stick-like legs, with wild golden fluff crowning their heads.



Across the road was a lovely pool of water, dotted with large rocks – or so we thought. We stopped long enough to observe the rocks move: they were actually hippos, enjoying a day at the pool.

This intersection was visually appealing with the reflection of the acacia trees in the pond in the middle of the long grasses of the savanna – and it also meant we were headed back to our tents, hot showers, and another delicious meal.



Farewell to “Deerhunter”

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

I STOOD IN A PARKING LOT on Ohio State University's west campus one day in 2000 wondering why my key wouldn't go into the lock of my beige Camry. I finally looked in the window: this was NOT my car! I soon learned the car which looked so much like mine belonged to Suzanne. Both of us rode the bus to OSU's central campus where we worked. We turned up in an exercise room before work where we met a few other ladies. We soon started having dinner together once a month, calling ourselves “The Exercise Ladies”: Kathy, Kathy, Kay, Kay, Nancy, and Suzanne.

Over the years we got to know each other — and our families — pretty well. We laughed together; we cried together. We picked Goldrush apples together the last weekend of October. Suzanne met a man who taught her to ride a motorcycle and how to shoot a gun; she went turkey hunting as well as deer hunting. She got a new email address: “deerhunter”.

In 2012 I took a new job — in Utah. Suzanne volunteered to drive to Salt Lake City with me. Only a couple stops were pre-planned. We stopped where we pleased: in Nebraska to read about the Pony Express; in Colorado to explore Red Rocks Amphitheater; in Arches National Park to see the arches, and in Moab, Utah, to talk with motorcycle cops. We met them as we were leaving a restaurant and they were entering. Suzanne noticed their biker apparel and helmets, and since she had a motorcycle, she initiated a conversation with a very good-looking man. We talked for several minutes. He never confirmed that he was a “cop,” but from the things he said we assumed he was. She was a very gregarious person.

Suzanne helped me set up my apartment, getting some of the items at yard sales. She convinced me to purchase an immersible blender which I didn't think I needed but have come to rely on.



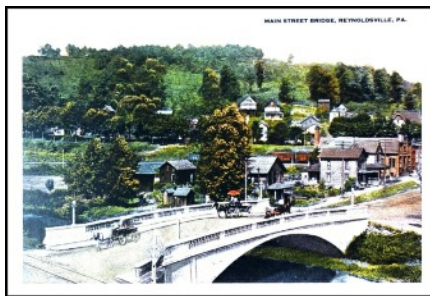
*The immersible blender.
I still use it.*

Today I received a message from Suzanne's daughter. She is in her final days of hospice care because of an aggressive form of cancer. Farewell, my friend. May God keep you in his love.

Bridge Party

By TOM DUFFEY

IN THE SMALL TOWN of Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania, a new bridge was built, dedicated and opened in 1913. It was a breathtakingly beautiful crossing of the Sandy Lick Creek. The architectural term is “closed spandrel concrete arch bridge.” There was a wagon works in town and many of their freight and



Historic postcard featuring the bridge.
farm wagons crossed that bridge along with finely tuned carriages that allowed for a smooth ride while shade was provided by gaily colored umbrellas – especially on a sunny Sunday morning on the way to a local church.

Please, come forward with me a hundred years to 2013. Plans were made to celebrate 100 years of use and service. Who could have thought that in later years, 18-wheel tractor-trailers would be crossing this very same bridge and extended flatbed trailers sometimes would get hung up at the high point in the center.

Since State Route 322 crosses the bridge, permission was granted to post a detour on a Saturday for a “Bridge Party.” The air was brisk. Elected officials (including my wife) and townsfolk gathered at the bridge, decorated with red, white and blue bunting. A boy who was two years old when the bridge opened was now the town’s oldest citizen, 102, and he was recognized. A Citizen of the Year award was given to our beloved retired fire chief, who was present in his wheelchair. Among the crowd was even our little white Lhasa Apso named Muffey wearing her quilted coat to keep her warm. The town solicitor had the honor of singing “God Bless America.” Our fire truck ladder was fully extended, flying a beautiful gigantic American flag.

After the bridge festivities, the party was invited to our fire hall for refreshments. Topping the bill of fare was a gorgeous (delicious) artistic birthday cake in the form of the bridge right down to the details of all four corners having flower urns and light poles.

All who attended were able to take home a beautiful memory of the “Bridge Party.”

Spouse Story - Part 1

BY LINDA L. SHIVERS

AFTER 40+ YEARS, ONE GETS TO KNOW one's spouse pretty well. Behaviors fall into categories: Old Men Stuff, Guy Stuff or just plain Mel Stuff.

One night he wanted to call a friend. He sat there waiting for me to give him the number. I'm waiting for him to pick up the portable phone. He's got the TV remote, holding it ready to poke in the phone number.

And, he's forever asking where things are. He'll stand in front of the open fridge or cupboard and wait for whatever it is he wants to jump out and say, "Hey, Mel. It's me, the mustard. Catch!" And, I'm always finding an empty milk jug or tea pitcher or pop bottle in the fridge. One time I went to get a baggie or wax paper out of a drawer and found a package of hamburger.

After you've been around someone for a period of time, your name changes to honey, or dear, or something like that. You never hear your name, unless there's a crisis. Like the night we were going to go out for dinner with friends who were going to pick us up. True to form, Mel was still in the tub when our friends arrived. We have two dachshunds, Molly and Emily. Emily is forever stealing something to chew on. Our friends and I are in the kitchen talking when we see this little brown streak and a flash of white go flying past the kitchen door. Then I hear this, "Linda! She's got my shorts!" By the time I catch up to Emily she's got a big hole chewed in the crotch.

One time we had to get a new washer. The stairway to the basement is narrow. Mel is on the down side, our friend Jeff is above. I'm standing by. The guys are having a time wrestling the washer and Mel's swearing like a dirt mover. Anyone who knows Mel knows things go better when he swears. I've learned a few things over the years. I could be a dirt mover. Anyway, he's swearing and Jeff is laughing. When one is laughing one tends to lose one's grip and Mel starts yelling, "Linda!" So what am I supposed to do? The thing got down okay. So did the guys.

From Widget to Widgie May

BY TOM DUFFEY

WE HAD JUST LOST OUR LITTLE MUFFEY DOG IN 2017. She'd come from the local shelter where we were faithful weekly volunteers. My wife put out the word that we'd welcome an older cat. (We're not spring chickens ourselves and wished to outlive this new family member.) So, we got a call that the shelter had "just the cat" for us. Zoom, we hurried to meet this one. In the cat room, a little black creature with a crooked tail stood on her hind legs as her front paws reached through the bars of her cage. "Please take me," she seemed to say. She was five months old.

The shelter workers bottle-fed her after the accident that had killed her mother and broken her tail. One sister, Digit, (one white toe), had died; her other sister, Fidget, had been adopted.

We held her and played with her – but she was just too young. The solution – find a "godparent" young enough to survive us. That would take a day, but we promised to go back for her. Her first couple of days at home were frantic. She jumped onto my sandwich I had plated. She got herself stuck inside a baby grand piano. She made her way into a section of a fake fireplace. We considered making "the call" to the shelter but instead gave her time to settle in.

We called her Widgie – after all she'd lost, she knew her name. My wife sent a donation to the shelter in honor of "the birthday of our beloved Widgie, May 11." Whoever sent the thank-you note missed that comma and wrote "in honor of Widgie May." Perfect.

Christmas shopping includes toys with enticing catnip inside. She conducts a one-cat wrestling match with these. She's our ever-present gentle, loving little shadow.

If you are ever looking for a beloved addition to your family, please consider your local shelter.

For the homeless ones like Widgie May, don't shop. Adopt.



Widgie May

A Cat Too Far

BY BILL BOYS

HE INSISTED ON WALKING RIGHT IN our back door. He had scruffy dirt around his face, like he had been rummaging in trash cans. After wandering around our apartment, he jumped onto my desk, curled up and went sound asleep.

He was still asleep when Ruth got home from her job at the Ohio State University Education Library. Sheepishly I explained that he just sauntered in on his own after I had taken the trash out. “Maybe he used to live here before? Honestly, I didn’t invite him in.”

Friendly stray animals without tags were not a rare sight around the fringes of such a huge campus. But pets were not allowed in our building, an old campus-area home that had been divided into four rental units. And it was *me* who was the new “manager” of this place, until such time as the Lutheran Campus Chapel next door might demolish it for expansion. I was supposed to enforce the rules.

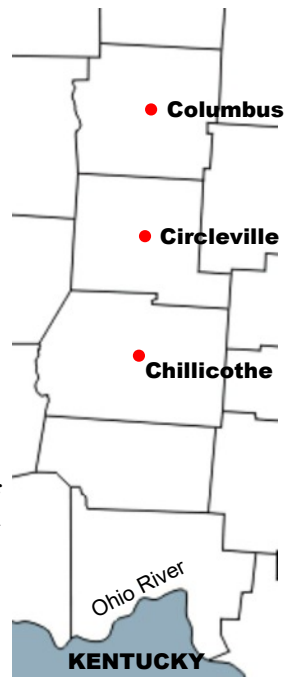
But I didn’t have the heart to toss him right back out. “He must be tired. He’s been asleep on my desk for hours. No trouble at all. Let him sleep. We’ll decide when he wakes up. He looks hungry, too.”

Well, you know how that turned out. He had found a forever home. But what to call him? He was a friendly cat, a sweet “pumpkin,” so we hit on “Circleville,” in honor of the town south of Columbus that had an annual Pumpkin Festival. (“He’s the biggest pumpkin of all.”)

One of my late Aunt Edith’s friends always made the charming error of misremembering his name as “Chillicothe.” She had the idea, clearly, that he was named after a town south of Columbus. She only thought a little too far south.



Circleville



Your One-Page Story Could Have Been Here

BY YOU

A personal narrative?

A fiction piece?

How about writing and
sending us one
for a future issue!

See p. 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 (preferred, to save retyping) or by postal mail to 184 Reinhard Ave., Columbus OH 43206-2635.

Tips on writing – How to Show, Not Tell

I hope my writing will benefit from knowing more about the difference between *telling* my reader something and *showing*. (I don't mean using pictures, though they certainly have a place.)

“How to Show, Not Tell: The Complete Writing Guide” is a YouTube video that pulls together examples of that difference. At 27 minutes it's five times as long as the ones I usually commend, but maybe you will not mind the investment. And, throughout, it peppers other resources you might want to look into.

Use the concrete, not the abstract; specific, not vague. But the video also mentions times when telling *would* be appropriate!