

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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Aunt Mary's Lamp

BY GARY RHOADES

AUNT MARY WAS REALLY MY GREAT AUNT MARY and the closest thing I had to a maternal grandmother because my grandma died long before I was born. Aunt Mary lived with my grandpa in a small cottage in a very small town, Horatio, Ohio. Her room was above the kitchen and she cooked and cleaned for my grandpa in exchange for rent and tended a large vegetable garden behind the house to help supply their food.

Like my grandma, Aunt Mary was a member of the Old Order River Brethren Church, which to a little kid meant she dressed funny and always the same way. Later I learned that dressing plain was an outward sign of a simple, deeply religious life unhindered by the distractions of modern conveniences. She was soft spoken with a round face and age spots and she was a little round herself, I guess, because I remember her apron strings disappeared as they went around her sides and reappeared in the back to make a neat bow. Most of all I remember her loving eyes behind rimless glasses and a gentle smile which created an almost angelic aura, the kind I have since seen on some elderly nuns.

When we would visit, I would race up to her and ask for a cookie. After a quick look to check with my mother, she always smiled and nodded yes and I would have to get up on my tip toes to carefully take the lid off the large porcelain cookie jar with the big flower on the front and tip it to one side so I could reach in with my other hand.

She caught me once touching her glass coal oil bedroom lamp. Instead of being cross with me, she asked if I wanted it for my very own because she didn't use it anymore. That lamp has been a prize possession of mine for years and always gives me fond memories and a peaceful feeling like maybe Aunt Mary and my grandmother are together baking ginger snaps with a wood burning stove while watching over me and my family.



Surprise Gift

BY PATRICIA CHILDS CRANE

I WAS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS 2003. The last three years had seen many changes. Both of my parents passed away (one in 2000 and the other in 2001) so in 2002, after 41 years living in a wonderful town, my husband and I left children and friends to begin anew. We had no trouble adjusting; we loved our new community and jumped into volunteering and making new friends. However, three days before Christmas, my husband died and with no family nearby, I felt overwhelmed.

My sister, Carolyn, and I had never formed a close childhood bond. I was off to college as she entered high school, then I married, and never returned to my family home. We tried to keep up with each other and visit once or twice a year. It was important to make an effort so that our children knew one another, but even that was difficult. Our mother had spent her retirement years researching her family, so Carolyn and I continued to gather and share pictures, clippings, etc., about the family.

As we opened packages, one by one, that Christmas morning, I unwrapped one sent by Carolyn. As soon as I saw it, tears sprang to my eyes. What I saw was a 6" x 11" beautifully framed black and white photo of my mother sitting abreast a stately carousel horse and a five year old girl sitting on another horse, just behind her. My mother was holding (while the child was clinging) onto a vertical bar as the music was about to start, and our journey would soon begin. It was 1941, our family was new to the Washington, D.C. area, and my special treat was a ride on the 1921 Denzel Carousel at Glen Echo Park in Maryland. A beautiful poem, written by my brother-in-law, and attached to the back of the photograph, brought a further flurry of tears and so many wonderful memories.

I had never seen that photograph; it was probably taken with my father's treasured Brownie camera. My sister found the picture in a drawer, and to this day, we cannot figure out where it came from and why she was in possession of it. However, because of that surprise gift on that day I became more determined that our small family would have to continue to make the effort to stay in touch as often as possible.

Everything I Know – I Learned from Her

BY TOM DUFFEY

MY HANDS WERE INKY DIRTY AND HERS WERE clean and white. I was a pressman and she was in the art department. We worked at the same printing company in Arlington, Virginia.

I eventually learned her name was Susan. She had long blonde hair and a very nice smile. I was smitten. Here I am a single guy with no prospects and no money to speak of. First thing, I had to find out if she was single or attached. I then had a friendly supervisor deliver a note from me to her in the art department. It was rather simple. I was asking her to lunch.

There were four check boxes on the note. One: Yes. Two: I would like to but Three: Forget it. Four: Some other time. The note came back with number Four checked so I was very encouraged and I would ask again. I did and we ended up having a two-hour lunch when 45 minutes were allotted. Lots to talk about. All my co-workers wondered why I dressed up for work that day.

This was Springtime in Washington and the cherry blossoms were in bloom. What a nice time of year to find a new friendship that could blossom into a love story. For our first date she came to D.C., where I lived. I met her at the subway with a fresh bunch of yellow daffodils. As she was riding the escalator up to street level, I was waiting there to give them to her. We walked all over the place and ended up holding hands the whole time.

She was a graduate of George Mason University with Distinction. She spoke three languages, including Latin. I had to be thinking to myself – just plain Wow! My long-ago high school education was no match for her but she would patiently explain many things to me and I learned from her. We got married a couple of months later and her dear son Jim was my Best Man. I borrowed \$300 from the company credit union so I could bring some money to the marriage. This was OK by her. She had faith in me.

The year was 1985. Now in 2021, we will be celebrating 36 years together and as one lucky guy, I still love her.

Bold Women

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

“**B**RAVE, COURAGEOUS, AND BOLD.” This refrain from the Wyatt Earp theme song popped into my head as I considered the difference between bold and brave.

Frau Lutzer, a diminutive, white-haired German lady, was one of the boldest women I ever met, even though she didn't necessarily look like one's concept of a bold woman. Frau Lutzer took it upon herself to become my mentor by teaching me some German. As we got to know each other, she told me about her life. She grew up near Potsdam, in the area that would become East Germany following the Second World War. On August 13, 1961 she happened to be visiting Cuba — one of the few places East Germans were allowed to visit. After months of East Germans fleeing the country, over that weekend the beginning of a wall was built through Berlin, not to keep people out but to keep people in.

One might think that Frau Lutzer would not return to her country, in the grasp of the U.S.S.R. She was perhaps lucky to be somewhere else that weekend. But this bold woman willingly went back, knowing the consequences. Why? Her mother was still in East Germany, and she was her sole support. She felt she had no choice but to return. To me, Frau Lutzer was bold as well as courageous.

Years later, while waiting for my train at the main station in Prague, I came to a simple door with small hand prints in the window. Nearby was a plaque with these words:

**THIS FAREWELL MEMORIAL IS A SYMBOL OF
COURAGE AND LOVE OF PARENTS WHO IN
1938 AND 1939 REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEIR
OWN FATE AWAITED THEM, BOARDED
THEIR CHILDREN ON TRAINS AND WITH HEART-
ACHE AND TEARS IN THEIR EYES WAVED
GOOD BYE, SENDING THEM AWAY TO SAFETY TO
SAVE THEIR LIVES.
MOST PARENTS PERISHED IN THE HOLOCAUST.
WINTON CHILDREN**



These mothers (and fathers), too, were courageous, making the bold move of giving up their children to give them a chance at life.

My Memories of Die Mauer

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

“I’M GOING TO FLY TO BERLIN TONIGHT to help them celebrate!” So said our taxi driver on November 10, 1989. We were in England that week for my husband’s research, although that year we were living in Tuebingen, West Germany. After a visit to Stonehenge, my sons and I started back to West Germany for their school when our car made a huge bang and came to a stop. After our rescue, we were stranded in Oxford for several days. Tuesday night on TV we learned East Germany’s government had resigned — after a weekend when 18,000 people crossed to the West. Thursday evening we learned the check points in the Berlin Wall were open: 100 people had gone through in the first hour; the Wall was coming down. Friday morning we hailed a taxi to take us to the bus which would get us to our repaired car. The taxi driver could not just watch history on the “telly” but needed to be a part of it.

Our visit to Berlin took more planning than that. When departure day arrived, our visas hadn’t. What would happen when we got to the border? At first the guards, seeing a German car, waved us on, then noticing the U.S. passports we held up, stopped us. We explained, paid an entry fee, and continued. This soon after the fall of the Wall not even the border guards were sure of the new rules.

When we got to Berlin we visited the Pergamon Museum (with the bust of Nefertiti), and Potsdam (visiting a pastor, which was the purpose of the trip; the boys had a nightly adventure finding their way across the attic to get to the bathroom). We visited the Glienicke Bridge, as if we were in a spy exchange in the movie “Bridge of Spies.” On to Dresden; the rubble from World War II was still in the streets, and piles of coal for heating. But chipping souvenir pieces from the Wall, then standing on it, was by far the highlight.

We too were there, part of history!



Standing on die Mauer – the Wall.



Our pieces of the Wall.

A Bold Woman: Who? Me?

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

“YOU’RE GOING . . . ALONE?” Nearly two decades later I can still hear the incredulity in Bonnie’s voice after I told a group of church friends that I planned to go to Peru. My response to her was basically, “I live by myself now, and I really want to see Machu Picchu, so yes, I will go alone.”



Machu Picchu, Peru

“Bold” is defined as “showing an ability to take risks, confident and courageous.” I did not feel particularly bold. I would not really be going “alone”; I would be in a group of no more than sixteen people. There would be a guide, and all arrangements were included.

For years I had dreamed of seeing Machu Picchu, the “lost city of the Incas,” high in the Andes Mountains of Peru. I was not anything like the “brave, courageous, and bold” Wyatt Earp. I was merely fulfilling a dream.

The Peru adventure encouraged me to visit other places I had learned about in my history books. With my sister, I visited the Great Wall of China – and the giant pandas in Chengdu. With a friend I met in Peru, I toured the Taj Mahal in Agra, India, and saw the Palace of the Winds in the “pink” city of Jaipur. The next trip was more courageous: following the planned “Serengeti Safari” in Tanzania, I stayed an additional two weeks, working with the “Orphans of Kilimanjaro” – within sight of that famous mountain.

As I was approaching retirement age a couple years later, Jay, my supervisor, proposed an even bolder adventure: move to Utah and help him set up a new office and begin a new program. Not quite ready to retire, I accepted the challenge. There I met many new people and had the opportunity to visit Peru twice more, accompanying Jay’s classes.

In 2018, fifty years following my first solo adventure (spending my junior semester in Denmark), I decided to re-visit people and places of the preceding fifty years. That started with a fully-guided cruise on the Rhine with my sister. Then I launched MY trip, entirely choreographed by me. What an adventure! Hmm. Perhaps I am a bold woman!

Country School

BY JIM HEDGES

I STARTED OUT IN A COUNTRY SCHOOL, but my parents moved to a larger district later in my 2nd grade. Each Iowa township was its own school district: six miles square (36 square miles) with three numbered schools (eight total) on each side and a “center” school in the middle. No child had to walk more than 2 miles to get to a school.

Mother walked with me for the first week, until I learned the way, then I was on my own. The farm was on a paved road: half a mile of that, then another half on a graveled side-road.

The teacher would arrive first and light a fire. There was a water crock with a spigot, and some of the older kids would take a pail out to the well and pump drinking water for the crock. There was a board with hooks where each of us kept our own cup.

The “audio-visual” department was a wind-up Victrola with some records selected from the Victor school catalog, ca. 1920 (twenty-five years before my time). School Victrolas cost around \$125 new -- one for each of the nine schools would cost upwards of \$1,000, a big expense at that time. Records were about a dollar. They contained music for calisthenics, poetry and other readings for literature. Sousa’s Band recorded the calisthenics; the spoken records mostly were done by professional “elocutionists,” but I have one by James Whitcomb Riley recited in his own faint, cracked voice.

Recess could include sledding on the nearby hill, or we could build “grass forts” by stuffing dried grass into bushes and then playing hide-and-seek (the schoolyard was not mowed). One fall, we were each given a paper grocery bag and shepherded to the neighbor’s pasture, where we filled the bags with milkweed down for the war effort – to substitute for goose down in aviators’ vests.

On Halloween local teenagers would come at night and overturn the school outhouses. Parents expected that and would come before school the next day to set them up again.

School days in the old days often were rough and spare compared to those of modern days, but we studied and learned and shared many good times together.

The Sale of My Kelsey 9x13" Printing Press

BY JACK OLIVER

I STARTED INTO LETTERPRESS PRINTING with a Kelsey 6 x 10" press. This was my only press for about 15 years when I bought a 9 x 13" Kelsey from someone who advertised in a Washington newspaper. I liked the idea of being able to print an 8½ x 11" sheet of paper. Unfortunately it was just too hard to operate it as it wore my arms out pretty quickly. So I turned around and put an ad in the same newspaper looking for someone to take it off my hands.

I was surprised to get a phone call from someone who wanted to buy the press even before the ad ran in the paper. It turned out to be a newspaper employee who was able to jump the gun.

I lived in Waldorf (southern Maryland), at the time and it turned out that the buyer lived even further south than I. He was a bachelor who was building his own house in the hinterland some thirty miles from the District of Columbia, where he worked. I had to go to his house once and discovered that he was building a two story house, upper story first. The main floor was just studs while he lived upstairs.

Because parking in D.C. is very difficult, he told me that he would arrive in Washington about five in the morning so as to be able to take one of the few parking spots available. He had an old station wagon; one of the big ones from the 1960's that had an old mattress in the back so that he could continue his sleep while waiting for the time to go to work. He said this routine worked well for him.

He came to my house to purchase the press but advised me that he didn't have the full amount. Would it be okay to make payments? I accepted the deal as I was anxious to get rid of that piece of iron. We agreed on so much each payday, and that he would drop the money off at my house, which he did religiously. The unusual part of the deal is that he seemed not to trust women. Working shift work, I wasn't always home when he made the payments but he would put the money, always cash, in a sealed envelope with very clear instructions that the money was for me and that my wife was to insure that I received it. He paid it off in the time frame we had established but it was always the same routine about the envelope. I think he was a hermit wannabe. His house was way out in the woods, away from anything. Strange fellow, but upstanding in my book, because he was more concerned about getting the money to me than I was in not receiving it.

They Approached Me Warily

BY BILL BOYS

SO MANY FINE RESTAURANTS IN NEW ORLEANS! In the 1980's and 1990's my Naval Reserve chaplain assignments often took me to the Crescent City, the headquarters of the Naval Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve in those days. On one of those tours of duty I went out after work, in civvies, to dine at a restaurant upstream from downtown. Away from where all the bright touristy spots were. It was tucked in a residential neighborhood, actually, and not very far from the Mississippi River.

The food and wine were exquisite. After supper I wanted to find a spot where I could gaze at the mighty river flowing by, before heading back to my quarters. I lived in Knoxville, Tennessee, at the time and I knew well that the Tennessee River, which flowed less than a mile from my house, carried all its waters onward until they flowed through New Orleans, too – but in so much broader and deeper current. Here at New Orleans, it *truly was* Old Man River, in majestic surge toward the Gulf of Mexico.

Darkness was falling as I meandered my car toward the river. Since this area was not lit up well, especially along the riverfront, I thought I should be cautious about where to park and where to stroll.

By good fortune, I came across a police station right on the shoreline, with a lighted parking area, and even a large open wharf from which, I supposed, they launched river patrol craft. There were plenty of parking spots right near the station since it was after hours, and less than fifty yards' walk out onto the wharf. I knew this would be a safe place to gaze in contemplation, and so it was.

For fifteen minutes. Then a police cruiser slowly approached, stopping twenty feet away. Right after, a backup patrol car came, stopping behind the first. Both officers got out, but only the one nearest me approached. He asked, "What are you doing here, sir? May I see some identification?" I explained, and showed him my Tennessee driver's license, military ID, and also a copy of my Naval Reserve orders which, fortunately, I had put in my wallet.

"Next time," the officer advised, "go into the station first and let the desk sergeant know who you are. The one on duty had seen you park and walk out onto the empty wharf. She called it in, thinking a drug deal might be going down." (*Yes, sir, I will do that!*)

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.

You'll also find
some tips there for
writing one-page
stories.

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 – Personal Narratives

This month I have just discovered that the *New York Times* has a “Learning Network” of videos on YouTube! One of them is right on target for this journal: **“Personal Narrative Writing Advice From Our 2019 Contest Winners.”** It's only 2 minutes and 22 seconds long, too.

A different posting, designed for an English class by Jeremy Ferrero, the teacher, is titled simply **“Personal Narrative Essay,”** and runs to 9 min., 55 sec. It's written for middle schoolers, but it's enthusiastically straightforward about writing that connects with readers. Any writer can benefit from watching it. (For *One-Page Stories*, ignore the grading talk!)

–Bill Boys.