

ONE-PAGE STORIES

No. 13 — MAY 2021

A Cooperative Journal for the National Amateur Press Association

Attack by a Water Monster	2
BY TOM DUFFEY	
Confessions of a Teenage Poseur	3
BY TOM DUFFEY	
Scab	4
BY TOM DUFFEY	
Main Street in the Middle of Brooklyn	5
BY DON LUCK	
Wartime Memories	6
BY DON LUCK	
Unexpected Brooklyn	7
BY DON LUCK	
Mom's Serenity Prayer	8
BY GARY RHOADES	
First Time Away from Home	9
BY BILL BOYS	
Last Visit to Old Ironsides	10
BY BILL BOYS	
Give It a Try Yourself?	11
BY BILL BOYS	
Write for One-Page Stories?	12

Attack by a Water Monster

BY TOM DUFFEY

I WAS WEARING A SPORT COAT, WHITE SHIRT AND TIE. I was driving my Middle-Aged-Crazy Car, as my wife, Susan, called it – a Dodge Shelby Daytona, Turbo Z. It was tricked out nicely with a T-top, mag wheels, high speed cam. I was in my mid-fifties. I was on my lunch hour from an office job nearby. The location was a Shell gas station in Manassas, Virginia. The year was 1996.

On my way back from lunch I decided to stop in for a fill-up and grab a car wash which, at the time, was complementary with a fill-up. So, after gassing I got my code to punch into the wait area machine prior to going into the wash. No problem. There were a couple of cars ahead of me so the wait time was not that bad.

I finally got to the front of the line and my code was flashing. I pulled ahead to allow the conveyor chain to hook under the car. The hook-up was made. I felt the jerk.

I pressed the button to roll my window up – it would only raise about a third of the way! Yikes! I tried grabbing with both hands to help jimmy the window the rest of the way closed – no luck. Now the water spray was at the front of the car and the apparatus was making its way along my side of the car. It was picking up velocity and spraying like mad. I was belted in the bucket seat and had nowhere to go. Tight quarters.

As the water was spraying in the window, I was getting soaked and all I could do was bend down over the middle console but this did little good. There was somewhat of a reprieve as the water gantry made its way around the back of the car and up the other side.

Now that the car, and myself, were totally soaked, here comes the soap spray. It came squirting right into my window. My coat, shirt and tie were totally soaked. I felt like it was man verses machine and the machine won.

Confessions of a Teenage Poseur

BY TOM DUFFEY

“A PERSON WHO PRETENDS TO BE what he or she is not; an affected or insincere person” – POSEUR. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th Edition).

I was a senior in high school and trying my best to make up for three wasted years. Misspent in every direction. One of my classes had me behind (what I thought) was the most beautiful girl in the world. Grecian goddess comes to mind. More eye-catching than Annette Funicello of the Disney family.

Her name was Brenda and she wore the most delicious perfume. A good name for it could have been “close your eyes and enter Shangri-La.” The hairs on the back of her neck were black and silky. She also was the girlfriend of the roughest guy in school. This being 1961, he drove a new Pontiac Bonneville convertible. White top, white leather interior, chrome dual exhaust out of both sides built into the chrome back bumper.

He was so tough that in our shop class you had to pay him to not have your furniture damaged when nobody was around.

I went into the Army a month after graduation. He and Brenda married and started a family. I took with me into the Army a wallet-sized photo of Brenda. After duty hours, when with my group, talk of home would come up and stories of girlfriends left behind. I would flash Brenda's photo to a chorus of “Oh, Wow!” And “Oh, la la!”

I heard when plans were afoot for the 50th class reunion that Brenda was now a widow with two grown children. I was able to find her number and called. All those past years from the Army left me with somewhat a load of guilt. I was looking to confess.

She was glad to hear from me. Said it did wonders for her ego. I told her my story. She said “If you come to the next reunion, I will be your date for the evening.” This was back in 2011. I didn't go. I was very happily married.

I was shocked and saddened to read Brenda's obituary in July of 2019. I read it through teary eyes. It was just like her to request that donations be made to an animal shelter in her memory.

Scab

BY TOM DUFFEY

THE WORLD'S LARGEST MAKER OF SURGEON'S gloves was where I worked in the sixties – Perry Rubber, a union company in Massillon, Ohio, twenty miles south of Akron, the rubber capital of the world. I was salaried and worked in the office. Akron was also home to the United Rubber Workers Union.

During contract arbitration the union called a strike. Picket lines were set up. The next day the company had a tall chain-link fence installed all around the property to include a large parking lot. There were only two entrances and that was where the biggest crowds would congregate. I could pass through with no problem and, as a side note, I was friends with many of the hourly workers. The plant VP wanted to start up a production line. There were ten total in the plant. The company called for “volunteers” to help man the line and I, being fairly new, quickly signed up. So, I went from white shirt and tie to scrubby work clothes.

During my time on the glove production line a request went out for a volunteer to drive a truck through the picket line. It was a tanker truck full of natural latex from a plantation in Malaysia. The truck was pumped full from a ship in New York harbor. The driver advised that he would bring the truck within ten miles of our plant and no farther. I had a little experience with truck driving in the Army and sometimes drove a “deuce and a half.” I thought I could be a hero since they were running out of raw material in the plant. Things went good on my drive to the plant. Then, there were also teamsters on the line along with the Rubber Union. I got to the line and pickets were blocking me at the gate. They were in front of the truck and I was really nervous. Truckers were climbing on the back of the cab, which I had locked, to unhook the air hoses for the air brakes on the tanker. I was sweating my way forward by inches. Finally, clearing the gate and going beside the plant, the tank got pumped into the plant.

That same evening I received a phone call at home. The deep voice said, “If you ever try that again, you will find your legs six feet from your body.” Click.

Main Street in the Middle of Brooklyn

BY DON LUCK

THE DEPRESSION COST MY FATHER the loss of his diner, located a few miles north of New York City. So shortly before World War II, we moved from our Dutch colonial rental in Mamaroneck to start a new life in the top floor of a rented two-family house on Troy Avenue in Brooklyn.

Our lives as war-year kids were pretty much shaped by six inner blocks found on Avenue J between King's Highway to the east and Flatbush Avenue to the west. Only six. And the shorter sides of city blocks at that. But it served as a comfortable, comprehensible Main Street for us even though, by itself, Brooklyn was the third largest city in the country. Almost the entire pattern of my sister's and my lives occurred in that narrow compass. It was something like cozy small town life.

For us kids, the candy store mattered most — and was only one block east of our street. Candy stores don't exist anymore. I suppose their bloated slick counterparts today are convenience stores. But candy stores had only a small soda fountain and sold only limited items like tobacco products, newspapers and magazines, school supplies, novelties and the like. Most important to us was the large tiered glass-fronted display case holding individual candies on glass dishes. Most cost a penny each. Others like chocolate-covered maple creams tempted me to splurge and spend 2 cents.

A bit on was a shoe repair shop with strange machinery and the rich smell of leather. A bar was next whose windows advertised Schaefer beer, sponsor of the Dodgers, and at that time America's oldest extant brewery — founded in 1846. Farther west was the Bohack grocery, filling a space only the size of a classroom. Shelves of canned goods reached up to the ceiling behind a store-length counter for meats, dairy and delicatessen items. Clerks would pull cans off upper shelves with clamps attached to a long pole and have them drop into a waiting hand. The only outlet for hand-packed ice cream was a drugstore across from Bohack's. And then, three blocks before Flatbush Avenue, our Sunday School venue: St. Paul's Lutheran Church. At its corner, a turn south onto East 39th St. led to P.S. (Public School) 119. Apart from movies at the Marine Theater six blocks away, it was more than enough of a world for a kid.

Wartime Memories

BY DON LUCK

MY FIRST MEMORY OF WORLD WAR II is lying on the floor of the sun porch looking at the centerfold of the *New York Daily News* showing an aerial schematic of the damages done at Pearl Harbor. I was on the cusp of nine when the war began for Americans.

We began doing our part on the home front including my planting a vegetable “Victory Garden” in our half of the back yard and my first delight in the magic of harvest. We recycled all we could. We kids cut off the second ends of tin cans, placed them inside with the first and flattened them with our feet. We even separated the thin layer of aluminum foil from its adhered paper found inside cigarette packs, rolling them into a larger and larger ball.

There were limited signs of potential danger. The top halves of car headlights were painted black to reduce visibility from the air. There were total blackout practices with block air raid wardens patrolling each street to make sure no light escaped from blanket-covered windows. Two tugs sat in the “Narrows,” where the Verrazano Bridge now stands, holding anti-submarine nets in place that they swung apart to let ships pass through. A more ominous sign were the globules of oil we found and avoided that stained the sand when we went to the beach at Riis Park. They were evidence of merchant ships sunk off the coast. We wore Bakelite name tags around our necks never realizing they were there to identify us if we got separated from home — or were killed.

Small white red-fringed banners featuring a blue star for each member of the family in military service were hung in front windows. And we kids were consciously sobered to see the blue star replaced with a gold one when Jack Warner’s older brother was killed at Anzio.

We never much noticed the limitations of rationing in part because generous allotments were reserved for children. Besides, we didn’t care if coffee was hard to come by. We were obviously fortunate to be shielded from deprivation — and the horror.

Unexpected Brooklyn

By Don Luck

MANY KNOW BROOKLYN AS THE HOME for the original Dodgers, Coney Island and Nathan's hot dog eating contest. But more exotic phenomena have their roots there.

A glossy-leaved southern magnolia planted at 677 Herkimer Street in 1887 as a North Carolina sapling miraculously survived northern winters, city smog and even a proposed parking lot. This rare tree now towers above the three 19th Century brownstone houses that it shades. Though not the tree of Betty Smith's famous novel, thanks to local intervention it became a city landmark in 1970.

A hilly section of Brooklyn was landscaped in 1838 with lakes, ornamental trees, gardens and winding paths to create Green Wood Cemetery. It became Frederick Law Olmstead's inspiration for Central Park. In the 1860's it was a New York tourist attraction second only to Niagara Falls. When we made joint visits to our maternal grandparents' grave, my cousins, sister and I loved wandering past beautifully ornamented sepulchers to explore a water-lily-topped nearby pond. But Green Wood now boasts more than golden koi and iridescent dragonflies. In the 1970's Argentinian monk parakeets escaped from JFK airport to nest in the cemetery's ornamental neo-gothic entrance. They now number over 100.

One of the oldest continuously functioning Protestant congregations in America is the Flatlands Reformed Church, established by Dutch settlers in 1654. And Brooklyn uniquely had a *public* school holiday called "Anniversary Day" so Protestant kids could march to rallies celebrating the first ecumenical agency in church history, the Brooklyn Sunday School Union, created in 1816. Catholic boys let out from public school for the day vied to pull the float that carried our Sunday School's youngest members so they could share the ice cream that awaited us afterwards. En route we waved so-called "Christian" flags modeled after the colors and design of its American counterpart that are now standard for most American—and some overseas—Protestant congregations. It features a white flag with a red Latin cross inside a blue canton. It was designed in the early 20th century by a Methodist minister from Brooklyn.



*Flatlands
Reformed Church*

Surprised?

Mom's Serenity Prayer

BY GARY RHOADES

SHE LIVED TO BE OVER 100 AND WAS THE LAST family member of her generation on both sides of her family. This prayer hung in my Mom's kitchen for as long as I can remember. When my older sister passed – a little over a year and a half ago after a four-year battle with cancer – and I became the last of my generation, I became acutely aware that there are people and stories that only I remember. That fact, coupled with this pandemic, has brought a new insight and urgency from Mom's Serenity Prayer.

Being fully vaccinated means to me that I can hug my 14 year old granddaughter and spend time with her like before. I did that this week and I saw first hand the toll she has paid for this pandemic. There is a lot we will have to accept, but one thing I can do is to tell and retell her about the people who came before her and remind her that she is a testimony to their physical, emotional, and spiritual strength. People like Christian Keller who lost everything on the trip across the Atlantic and was indentured for seven years, but earned his freedom when his master was drafted into the Continental Army and Christian went instead. People like Hiram Rhoades who carved the fertile farm where I grew up out of a marshy rock-infested woods. People like my mother, Leah Givler Rhoades, who accepted the things she could not change better than anyone I have ever met including burying her husband, a son and a grandson whom she had raised. She had learned better than most to love people while they were here, grieve for them when they died, and then let them go.

My granddaughter needs to learn about her ancestors who lived a simple life and denied themselves “modern” conveniences in an attempt to have a closer relationship with God. Most of all my granddaughter needs to never forget that she comes from strong pioneer stock and when things seem overwhelming and too much to handle, she can find serenity, courage, and wisdom within herself.



First Time Away from Home

BY BILL BOYS

SUMMER CAMP. FOURTH GRADE. I had never been to one before, and I don't even remember if it was run by the YMCA, or the Boy Scouts, or more likely by some other gang like the Marquis de Sade Campers. It was on the shore of Indian Lake, in northwestern Ohio, even farther from home than Bellefontaine, which I had never, as far as I can recall, expressed a desire to visit. But I don't recall having any choice in the matter, either.

You might surmise that it wasn't on my top ten list of things to do that summer. It was only two weeks at most. Maybe even just one. But how l-o-n-g it lasted!

It was so weird living in a cabin with other boys my age whom I had never seen before. We had to keep our cabin in the sanitary zone, like cleaning the toilets, showers and wash basins – and we had to do it *ourselves*! We ate our meals on trestle tables outdoors. Some of the other inmates were repeat offenders from prior camps. I knew because they already called our mealtime drinks “bug juice.”

I suppose there were activities designed for the entertainment, physical training and moral indoctrination of us little squirts. I have suppressed them. All but one. One of the wardens took us out to the shore of the lake and told us we were going to learn to swim. In the water. In that lake. I had an inkling that some people swam, but I certainly didn't, period. It's *wet*! Kids drown in lakes, don't they?

Even the beginner drill, like wading into the water up to your waist, was a fright. And the idea of putting your face down into the water and blowing bubbles was the next horror. Afterward, back in the cabin, I scribbled a desperate note to the swimming teacher on my father's behalf that “Billy doesn't need to learn to swim.” I must have handed it in, because when my parents came to visit a few days later, they knew about the letter. So that escape hatch slammed shut.

Thus I learned about homesickness. I don't recall when the camp concluded, but it was a once-only experience for me. I never went to any summer camp again. On the bright side, years later, I did learn to swim, even passed the Swimmer test from the Red Cross, and learned how to plug up a leaking hull and bandage a burst pipe in Navy training. (In the USS *Buttercup*, a landlocked mock-up!)

Last Visit to Old Ironsides

BY BILL BOYS

SHE IS STILL IN COMMISSION, with a Navy crew of 60 officers and enlisted on active duty. Berthed at Pier 1 of the former Charlestown Navy Yard, at the water's end of Boston's Freedom Trail, she is a living, serving memorial.



2012 U. S. Postage stamp.

Ruth, my wife, had a business meeting in Boston in late August, 1993. We took our RV since we were to head on to Maine for a vacation, so Truda, our black labrador, was along. My status as an active Naval Reserve chaplain came to an end while we were there – August 31 was my transfer to retired status. How fitting to conclude that role with a farewell tour of USS *Constitution*. My only other visit had been 31 years earlier, during Chaplains School. From the conference hotel to the Charlestown Navy Yard was two miles. The route went through Boston Common, including Faneuil Hall. Truda was well-trained on walking on a leash; and it was a sunny summer's day. Off we two went.

At Faneuil Hall there was an outdoor patio serving lunches, so we stopped for a bite. A kindly waiter even brought a bowl of water for Truda. She eagerly lapped it up. When we reached the Yard, we entered the grounds and were pleased to find a shaded grassy slope where we could rest from the walk. Old Ironsides was afloat at its pier within easy sight; visitors aboard, walking the deck. I knew I couldn't take Truda on board with me so at the visitors center I asked if there might be a place where I could safely leave her while I toured the ship. There wasn't. We went back to our grassy slope and thought it over. Tie her to a bush at the edge of the grassy slope? Would she be safe? Might someone steal her? Or someone report an unattended dog, and she be taken in custody by one of the visitors center staff? All things considered, I decided to be satisfied with sitting there with Truda, viewing Old Ironsides from our shady lawn. It would suffice. After a while we walked back to the hotel.

So the visit hadn't turned out entirely as I expected. A minor disappointment. We all have those. But those builders of Old Ironsides – how many would have thought their handiwork would be part of a national historic ship, still afloat 200 years later and still in commission? Outstanding beyond all expectations.

Give It a Try Yourself

BY BILL BOYS

WANTED – A STORY FROM *YOU!* I know everyone who reads this journal is a living, breathing human being. You have had experiences. You could build a one-page story on any of those experiences, the kind of story called a “personal narrative.”

Personal narratives can be as simple as small and meaningful happenings that were significant only to you. People are interested in stories like that, believe me. That’s what I hear back from readers of the earlier editions in this series. They are glimpses into the hearts and minds of people like you who are living this adventure that we call Life.

Very few personal narratives in *One-Page Stories* so far (like zero!) are stories of events that altered the course of human history. If you have that kind of a story it deserves an entire book, and wouldn’t fit on one page anyway, right?

Did you write personal narratives when you were in school? I’ve been impressed at how many YouTube videos are provided by elementary and high school teachers, helping their students write their own personal narratives. Lots more school kids are getting lessons about that these days than I would have guessed.

Think your life experiences aren’t worth writing about? Go to any number of those YouTube videos for a second opinion. Also for ideas on what to write about, if you want a prompt or two. (Launch your web browser, type “YouTube personal narrative writing” in the search bar, and you’ll see *dozens* and *dozens* of videos listed!)

Many of them offer solid tips on how to compose and structure your story. That’s important for writing a personal narrative for a space as short as these one-page stories.

If you’d like to give it a try I’ll be glad to give what editing advice I can, too, as I format your story for my layout.

See the back cover for specifics. Give it a try! I would like to have a story from *you!*

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 and I will pass them on to the writer.

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 – YouTube Resources

I've enjoyed editing and publishing *One-Page Stories* for over a year now. I've also been glad to find YouTube videos to recommend for contributors who want to polish their writing skills.

As I mention on page 11, the personal narrative writing videos on YouTube are a wide-ranging and free resource you can use for tips on your own writing. If you are interested in other genres of writing, simply change the wording of your search accordingly, say for example, "YouTube short fiction writing," and you'll see plenty of choices.