

# ONE-PAGE STORIES

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# What Was My Mother's Name?

BY KEN CLEVINGER

**P**OIGNANT? EVEN SAD? Or at least a problem of some kind and, perhaps, a scar? Well, no. It is not what that title might suggest. My late mother, "Mama", was clearly named Dorine Winifred Menear by her parents. I have her birth certificate. But in life she did not trumpet that Winifred. Indeed, I have an "Aunt Winnie", Mama's late brother's wife; so being a Winifred would have caused family confusion, even if Mama had wanted to use it.

So she was Dorine. And she married, in August of 1946, a now deceased Naval aviator, who flew PBT Catalinas and then B-24s in the Pacific in World War Two. Pop was a Clevenger, like me. He went by "Larry" instead of any of the given names on his birth certificate. So, when I knew her Mama was Dorine Menear Clevenger. Even now that name seems overly formal and perhaps a bit grand for Mama. She was not formal. At her best when stringing fences, working at the cattle auction, square dancing, or rescuing stray or abandoned animals, rarely did she appear as formal or grand. And to everybody she was just "Dorry."

Dorry was how she would introduce herself. It was on her business cards. My parents were, kind of, ranchers, inter alia. That Latin tag might tell you that I became a lawyer. You do not have to staple up much barbed wire or stack many bales of pangola hay in the heat and humidity of central Florida before realizing that an indoors career with air conditioning looks attractive.

In addition to giving me that valuable insight, my parents introduced me to the works of P. G. Wodehouse. I am now an obsessed fan and collector. When settling their estates I frankly looted the bookcases of the remaining few Wodehouse books which I had not already "borrowed" during their lives. And I found one I had never noticed before. It was missing its spine, so looking at it on the shelf one would never know it was a Wodehouse book. But it is a great collection of Wodehouse's writings. Entitled *Nothing But Wodehouse*, it was first published in 1932. Ogden Nash was the editor and added a Foreword. My parents' copy was a 1946 reprint. Note that date. This was a new book in 1946, the year they got married. On 27 February 1947, it was my father's twenty-third birthday. His first as a married man. This book, mine now, is inscribed on the flyleaf: "Dory says For Larry 2-27-47". But who is this only one r "Dory"? And what *was* my mother's name?

# Saturday Night Gazette

BY LINDA L SHIVVERS

**W**HAT DO YOU DO IN SMALL TOWN ANYWHERE? Go to town. Where in town? The town square, of course. What's on this town square? The courthouse for one. There is a lovely lawn and flower beds, and benches to relax on after you've been around the square. Why go? Well, to get your groceries for one thing. Then there's the hardware store. What fun to look at all those tools and gadgets and wonder what the heck do you do with some of those things? If you're a kid, you don't care about the clothes or shoe stores, or stationery shop, or barbershop, and definitely not the doctor or dentist offices. The five-and-dime store was the best for looking at toys and getting penny candy. The drugstore is fun only because it has a soda fountain with twirly stools to sit on while you eat your ice cream treat.

Sometimes Dad would get a parking spot on the square, sit on the car fender and talk to folks who passed by while Mom shopped.

The real reason for going to town? To find out what was going on. Mom would never admit to that, but my friends and I knew better. We'd sneak up and hide in the bushes behind the bench she and her friend were sitting on and get an ear full.

You see? The real reason for going to town is who you meet up with, what you talk about, and who you talk about. Some of what you're told wasn't supposed to be told, but got told anyhow. Like when we heard Mrs. Minor tell mom that Mr. Clarke was seen in town with another woman, not his wife. He was seen frequently with her. It created a lot of talk. Turned out – it was his sister come to visit.

We didn't always just sit on a bench. Or hide behind people sitting on a bench to hear the gossip. Mostly we behaved, but sometimes we found irresistible things to do. Like filling the drugstore basement stairway in the alley with piles and piles of leaves. We got caught, of course, and had to dig them all out. You see, we were never far from someone we knew, or who knew us, and our folks.

We were always reminded to behave, or else we'd find ourselves written up in the Saturday Night Gazette.

# Heroes Abound

BY NANCY HEBER

**T**O SAY THAT 2020 WILL BE A MEMORABLE YEAR is an understatement! A word frequently heard on the daily briefings by government officials and newscasts is “unprecedented.”

No one would dispute that our front line medical professionals, our first responders, and a host of other folks that take care of our basic needs – food supply including grocery stores and food banks, trash collectors, mail carriers and the list goes on – are ALL HEROES as they do their jobs day in and day out. For them we are indeed grateful!

When I was growing up (in the 40’s) Superman and Wonder Woman were portrayed as heroes. Now it has become evident that there are other kinds of heroes: people who follow the “stay at home,” “social distancing,” “wash your hands,” and “don’t touch your face” guidelines. They are true heroes, too, because by following those guidelines they protect others in their home and communities, unlike those who blatantly continue to have lawn/beach parties, or demonstrations/protests without noticeably following the physical distancing as they make their demands.

Another type of hero who seems to have been receiving attention recently is what I would call “PERSONAL” heroes: those that do grocery shopping for a neighbor who is unable due to age or a health condition to do it themselves. Displaying acts of kindness without any thought of reward..

My very special heroes are my daughter and son-in-law. They are going to the “nth” degree to help and protect me from COVID-19. Grocery shopping, supplying meals, fixing things at my house which I am unable to do, daily calls and many other ways. I could not survive this pandemic without them. Oh, and did I mention, that they have a multi-handicapped, medically fragile 34 year old son who lives with them, who has needs that must be taken care of 24/7? For me, they are heroes with halos!



# For the Love of Books & Football

BY ANN (GREINKE) FEMRITE

**D**URING OUR HOLIDAY WEEKS at home in Obot Idim, my sister Sara and I spent the hottest hours of the day indoors curled up with lots of good books, procured from the Uyo Library. Uyo is a large city close to our compound. Its library is a seemingly endless cement building that holds rows and rows of towering metal shelves full of new and interesting experiences awaiting our discovery! The tall louvered windows seem to go up to the sky! I loved the musty smell of the books crowding each other on the shelves – procured from many years of donations and orders placed from Britain. It was there I discovered Mystery series by Malcolm Seville – I love a good mystery to this day! Trips to the library meant coming home with stacks of stories to explore.



The Uyo Public Library, today merged into the Uyo University Library, Nigeria.

I still remember the heavy silence of those lazy afternoons – the only sounds cutting through the thick air were the occasional cooing of a mourning dove, the distant rumble of a car engine or motorbike, and the voice of a nearby villager calling out to a neighbor. I would be immersed in the latest adventures of Malcolm Seville, Nancy Drew or Trixie Belden until dusk.

Each evening at dusk, we would assemble for the nightly backyard football match. The teams consisted of our family, the Mattsons (also 4) and any other guests or passersby who wanted to risk it! The “field” was outlined by fruit trees, bushes and clothesline poles, so the boundaries were often open to debate!

I was usually goalie for my team (myself, Aunt Ruth M., Danny M, and my Dad). My mom, Betty, was the goalie for the opposition (Mom, Uncle Dan M., my sister Sara and Anne M.). Competition was fierce and it was never quite clear who actually won. The game was called when no one could see the ball, two or more of the adults pooped out, or some form of unsportsmanlike conduct occurred!

Our reward afterwards was a refreshing cold shower we took in turns before the generator came on heralding lights and supper!

# Petrified!

BY ANN (GREINKE) FEMRITE

“**T**IME FOR YOUR GAMMA SHOTS!” Those words struck fear into the core of all the ELM House kids. Gamma Globulin vaccinations were our best defense against Hepatitis. Our House Parents **NEVER** told us in advance when we would be getting them, due to one incident where it took an entire day to administer the vaccinations because **ALL** the kids – even the older ones – were running away and hiding!

The shots were always given after school dismissal. We would all pile onto the bus, chattering happily and anticipating the hours of swimming that awaited us at the dorm, when instead we turned up the road that led directly to the door of the Dispensary -- where Aunt Flo (the school Nurse) was waiting with her **NEEDLE!** There was no escaping it. We were all marched single file into the tiny little hallway outside the “shot room” to await our turn. Then the dreaded question... “Who wants to go first?” In my older and wiser years, I learned to volunteer right away and get it over with – the waiting was too agonizing!



The Dispensary.

If you’ve ever had one of these shots, you will be able to commiserate! The dosage is proportionate to your weight, so the skinnier you are, the less you need of the vaccine. However, the skinnier you are, the more you can feel the cold, heavy liquid making its way like molasses from your buttocks all the way down your leg. Just when you think you can’t stand still for **one more second**, Aunt Flo says “All done!” after which we bolted out of the building and ran a couple laps around it to make the heaviness in our leg dissipate a bit!

We were subjected to this routine every six months. I much preferred the meningitis and cholera shots, which were given to the entire school using a “gun” which propelled the vaccine straight through the skin without a needle, so you hardly felt a thing! It was a huge responsibility for the school staff, house parents and missionary doctors and nurses to guard all of us against disease. I am ever truly grateful for their efforts – but I still cringe at the memory of those Gamma shots!

# Abak

BY ANN (GREINKE) FEMRITE

**A** FAVOURITE OUTING WHILE ON HOLIDAY from boarding school was going to Abak stream with our neighbours, the Mattsons. Everyone donned swimming suits and beach towels. We also loaded lunches packed in coolers. Our families had matching blue VW buses with “Lutheran Church of Nigeria” on the doors. As we jogged over the potholed tar roads, the rhythm lent itself nicely to the choruses we belted out. We knew we were almost there when we smelled the pig farm! Upon arrival, we leapt out the sliding doors and raced to the stream, shrieking “I’m in first!”

The water was refreshing on a hot, soggy day in southern Nigeria. We took turns catapulting off the enormous, moss covered log that stretched to the stream’s center – seeing who could jump the farthest! The dark, velvety green moss was extremely slippery, making it quite treacherous if you ran too fast along it – which was inevitable for Danny! When the novelty of the log wore off, we coaxed our parents into playing a lively game of water volleyball. The stream’s current was pretty fast, so we had no fear of contracting schistosomiasis (snail disease). The only nuisance was tiny black seeds dropped by the overhanging trees that stuck to the bottom of your feet – they were absolutely everywhere!

Next we carried our inner tubes (made from lorry tires) upstream to float back to our picnic spot. We waved cheerfully to the village ladies doing laundry on wooden washboards at the water’s edge as we passed, leaving a clear trail through the scented suds.

Back at the mossy log, we joined our parents for a well-earned lunch: Kokorito luncheon meat sandwiches, fresh fruit (usually pineapple from Dad’s garden), and chin-chin (a locally made sweet fried dough). Then it was a parent-mandated rest on the picnic blanket. Danny, Anne, my sister Sara and I lay side by side, gazing into the canopy of trees; listening to squealing pigs and the monotonous hissing of water beetles.

After resting, we played a couple games of Marco Polo before – soaking wet, wrapped in fluffy towels and so very happy – we climbed into our respective buses and headed home. Sara and I would always need to be shaken awake upon arrival – definitely treasured times at Abak!

# The Uninvited Guest

By PEGGY (MECHLING) KOSE, WITH BILL BOYS

**T**HE WEDDING WAS TO BE A SMALL ONE – just Peggy and Paul, the bride and groom; her parents; his parents; Don and Helen Hursey, the bride’s older sister and her husband; other family members; and the minister and his family. About 30-40 people.

The date was August 19, 1945 – a Sunday, and a hot one. Peggy wore a good wool dress because wartime rationing made wedding dresses unavailable, even in Columbus. Paul, in his uniform, was only recently back from the U. S. Army in Europe. The place was the parlor of Peggy’s family home, nestled in a tiny glen in rural Perry County, Ohio, along State Route 204 between the villages of Glenford and Thornville.

Less than a mile away, up a short gravel lane, was the summer retirement cottage of the Rev. August Dornbirer. His late wife, Mary Estella (Mechling) Dornbirer, and Peggy, the bride, were first cousins once removed. Mary Estella’s family lived just a bit further east along S. R. 204, and both families had been close all their lives.

So it was not at all unusual that Rev. Dornbirer decided to take a walk that Sunday afternoon along S. R. 204 to visit with Fred and Bessie Mechling and their daughter, Peggy. Tagging along was Rev. Dornbirer’s six-year-old grandson and two-week summertime houseguest, Billy Boys.

But Rev. Dornbirer did not know that this small wedding was going to take place there that very afternoon. When he and Billy arrived, they were welcomed and invited to stay because, it being a small wedding, there was room for them to be part of the happy occasion. But Rev. Dornbirer was appalled at the idea of being a guest at so special an occasion without wearing his suit coat. So Don agreed to drive Rev. Dornbirer back to his cottage to retrieve his suit coat, and after they got back the wedding took place. Little Billy’s memory is of sitting on the floor behind the couch and peeking out at the proceedings from that vantage point.

Almost seventy-five years have passed since that day. Only a few are still alive – Don in a nursing care facility, Peggy in an assisted living center, and Bill(y) in a house with his wife, Ruth – all living in near isolation because a novel coronavirus roams our country – an uninvited (but definitely *not* welcome) guest. May it soon leave!



# The Fruit Cellar & the Mason Jar

By VALDEN FARNHAM

**T**HE TYPICAL MODEST HOME built before World War II usually had a fruit cellar. In 1922, when my father and his friends began digging the basement of our home in west Toledo, Ohio, a fruit cellar was already in the plans. It would occupy the rear four feet of the basement, partitioned from the rest of the basement with a wall and latched door made from leftover wood. A window built into the back foundation wall had a screen to allow any cool, outside air to circulate inside.

With ample shelving, the fruit cellar provided much needed storage space for mother's canned fruits and vegetables. My father, an avid hunter, also had room for his jars of canned rabbit. Along with the canned vegetables that came from our backyard garden were homemade jellies and corn relish, as well as walnuts and hickory nuts we gathered from the side of the road.



During harvest season, we drove to a farm in Oak Harbor to buy a bushel of peaches. Canning that many peaches was no small task. When you placed the rubber gasket and metal lid on the last Mason jar, you breathed a sigh of relief. The peaches were sealed and ready to be stored. Pouring paraffin on top of mom's jellies to seal and preserve them was a lot less tedious.

Remember! The refrigerator was not a household item before the war. The iceman came each week to deliver a 25- or 50-pound chunk of ice that was placed into an ice box at the foot of the basement stairs.

After the stock market crash on October 29, 1929, my father awoke the next day with only the money in his pocket. Throughout the remainder of the Great Depression, the fruit cellar proved a great asset. With little or no money, you could not go to the store for your edibles. Ah! But we treasured mom's many Mason jars in the fruit cellar filled with last year's bounty. If you had a cracker or a piece of bread, there was grape and strawberry jelly to spread across the top.

Warning! Don't get into dad's home-fermented elderberry wine and apricot brandy!

# Baseball Memories

BY VALDEN FARNHAM

**A** NEWSPAPER ARTICLE about the current state of baseball stirred me into writing about the game and the team I once loved, the Detroit Tigers.

I listened to Ty Tyson and others broadcast the games on the Atwater-Kent radio. In my memoirs, I probably can find the box scores I kept during the 1934 and '35 World Series. Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Hank Greenberg, Bob Feller, and Dizzy Dean are among the many greats I once watched play. During most of my 96 years, baseball has been America's favorite pastime, and management made every effort to provide the fans with a respectable lineup.

As a youth, I played in the Toledo Knothole League and attended Mud Hens games at Toledo's old Swayne Field. I loved the game. Major league baseball, win or lose, had its glory years during the early years of my lifetime. However, when I see what has happened to the Detroit Tigers the last couple of years, this once-loyal fan has elected to turn off the MLB broadcast. I no longer have a baseball hero or a reasonably priced seat at the ball park. In fact, noting many empty seats at last season's later games, it is apparent that other fans, like me, are beginning to revolt.

After all these years of loyalty to the Tigers, I wonder, what is happening to baseball? The champion Detroit Tigers of a short time ago are now the worst team in baseball. They replaced their stars with Toledo Mud Hens players who can't hit or throw a curve. What could have been Detroit's hometown heroes are now doing well in Houston, Washington, Boston, and elsewhere. They say they are building for the future, yet they dumped two of their brightest young prospects. One went on to hit over .300 for the Chicago Cubs.

Then there is the problem of greed on the part of management and the players. Those increasing, multi-million dollar contracts are an affront to the Detroit auto workers who are making less or are out of work. Sadly, the situation is similar in other sports. The powers-that-be even dupe the local populace into new stadiums, which in reality cost double the estimate. Some teams have reduced their prices and tendered specials to entice their fans back, but dime-a-dog nights are not going to cure these ills, and one day the bubble is going to burst. In the meantime, this nonagenarian will instead watch his great-grandchildren play little league and softball.

# Your One-Page Story Could Have Been Here

BY YOU

Send 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. First-person stories, 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. No charge.

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

**And a NOTE TO READERS** — I welcome 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.

## Tips on writing short, short stories

Short stories are challenging. But check the web – particularly YouTube has videos by various authors and coaches, often less than 15 minutes long, and they're free to watch. Your library would have books on the subject, too.

One formula that I found on YouTube ran this way –

Find your key emotion. The revelation, the heart of the matter, the core meaning – all the same thing when it comes to short story writing. ...

Start with a hook. ...

Write the story. ...

Write a strong ending. ...

Reread your story. ...

Edit yourself. ...

Ask others for editing help.