

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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High Country Encounters

BY DON BAUER

OUR PROPERTY WAS OPEN RANGELAND when we moved up here to Prescott Valley, Arizona, in 2002. There were few trees; only grasses and cactus. Martha lamented “we won’t have any birds.” Shortly after moving in, we saw from the kitchen window a flock of little birds popping up and down in the uncut grass behind the house. Having planted several trees, we have more than a few varieties of birds to watch – today we have a virtual aviary.

Shortly after moving in we had a garage built. The evening after the concrete was poured we heard strange noises outside. Looking to see what was happening, we found an assortment of cattle roaming about the property, including too near the fresh cement. Lesson: bovines pay little attention to someone ordering them off the property. They did, however, move on as they located the neighbor’s horse feed. They also paid little attention to the tin shed the feed was stored in. The incident caused us to ask about the cattle. We were told that this area was defined as open range, and if we didn’t want the creatures on our little piece of range, it was our obligation to fence it appropriately. I guess democracy includes large animals as well as humans. They were here first.

On the subject of larger creatures who share the surrounds, there is a herd of pronghorn antelope. Actually, as people continue to come, the antelope are being forced out. But we still have several to be seen periodically. For example, one Sunday as we returned from church we encountered about fifty of the creatures lounging in the grass across from our home. They are beautiful to watch. When they run as a herd, they look almost like a flowing stream. Unlike deer, when pronghorn encounter a cattle fence they crawl under it. Deer jump over. The fences are designed so that they can get under; very understanding of the wildlife people, don’t you think?

Skipping over the smaller characters: bugs, snakes, rabbits, etc., I will share an incident of several winters ago. It was early morning, illuminated by a full moon, when my wife heard the howl of coyotes. Looking across the new snow, we saw five of them hunting side by side, but about 50 - 75 feet apart. When one encounters prey, they all converge. Happily we were not witness to breakfast being served.

You just never know what you might find here in Arizona.

My Connection with Rudy Vallee

BY MILT COLEMAN (UNIVERSITY OF MAINE, CLASS OF 1950)

A SAXOPHONE STYLIST AND BAND LEADER, Rudy was born Hubert Prior Vallee in 1901 in the remote village of Island Pond of northern Vermont. The saxophone enabled him to move about the villages, entertaining folk with tunes picked up from village bands and other sources. He was formed as a performer at an early age, putting together bands for dancing and weekend entertainment. He was taken by the well-known saxophonist, Rudy Wiedoft, and, thus borrowed his name, becoming Rudy.

He extended his early musical development at the University of Maine, writing songs like "As Time Goes By," "You Oughter be in Pictures," "There's a Tavern in the Town" and "How Deep is the Ocean." Transferring to Yale, where he earned a degree in philosophy, he became one of the authors of "The Whiffenpoof Song," still sung at Yale today. After Yale Rudy formed a band of 2 violins, two saxes, a piano, banjo and drums; it was called the Connecticut Yankees and circulated throughout New England. From there it was on to radio where he achieved fame as the band leader of the radio program, the Fleischmann's Yeast Hour. Rudy was one of the first crooners and was very popular with women.

Always committed to the country's service, he enlisted in 1917 but was soon discharged because he was only 15. In WWII he conducted a 40-piece Coast Guard band.

It was at Maine that he wrote "The Stein Song," using a tune from E. A. Pensted. It became the only college song to become a #1 hit and in later years was adopted by the University as its alma mater. "Fill the Steins for dear old Maine, Shout till the rafters ring," In the 1940's we sang it at football and basketball games and, of course, at graduation in 1950. It is still sung at Maine today and with the advent of a pub on campus, steins can actually be filled.

One night I went to hear the Boston Pops Orchestra. I sat in the balcony, close to the stage. Arthur Fiedler, the conductor, had programmed a set of college songs. Suddenly they were playing "The Stein Song." I stood up as any Maine man would do; one of the trombonists, seeing me standing, also stood up. Soon several other players followed. Fiedler was of course mystified but it was a night I never forgot. "Stand and drink a toast once again, let every Maine man sing."

The Trouble with German Village

BY BILL BOYS

“THE GUY WASN’T ACTUALLY *DOING* ANYTHING WRONG, just hanging around Schiller Park in a suspicious way. Should I report this to the police?”

In our 233-acre historic neighborhood, with its 23-acre Schiller Park and playground, it isn’t too often that crimes or misdemeanors take place. But when they do, it’s news. Property crimes, vandalism, assaults sometimes occur. Or even just people who are walking their dogs and don’t have them under proper control. (Many have dogs, as do we.)

Our neighborhood is in the 11th Precinct of the Columbus, Ohio, Division of Police. From time to time the German Village Society arranges for the 11th Precinct Community Liaison Officer to come to the Meeting Haus to meet with anyone who wants to come and ask questions about what’s going on, or policing matters generally. These are helpful, informative meetings. We get tips about home security. Sometimes we get free things like ultraviolet marking pens for identifying our belongings. And we get to know our police. Often there is a light-hearted atmosphere.



Much-reduced artist’s map of German Village

But there are also serious questions brought up, like the time that an older lady resident asked that question about whether or not to report someone who seemed suspicious to her.

The officer replied, “Yes, you can report that. Don’t call 9-1-1 though – call the non-emergency number. If officers are available they can be dispatched to check it out. Most likely it won’t amount to anything but sometimes we find someone with an outstanding warrant that way. In any case it lets people know that residents are keeping an eye out for their neighborhood.”

He added with a smile, “The trouble with German Village, though, is that almost anyone is a suspicious character who’s not walking a dog.”

50-Year High School Reunion

BY LINDA L. SHIVVERS

WHAT DO YOU DO AT A 50-YEAR high school reunion? Remember old times . . . the pranks and rough spots.

In our town there was an all-boys school and an all-girls school. Never the twain shall meet, except for proms, homecomings, sporting events.

Lots of stories flew around at that reunion. Like the one about some brave guys, in the dead of night, climbing up and strapping a bra on the statue of St. J., which stood out front of the girls' high school building. Those guys had a very strict principal, Father B. He patrolled the halls to make sure no one was hiding out in the locker room to avoid some class. The fellas nicknamed him Bat Man because of the cape he always wore.

The girls' school had a circle drive where parents could drop off and pick up their girls who didn't drive. (Back then hardly any teen had a car.) There were times when some of the guys would attempt to pick up their girlfriends at that circle drive. The principal, Sister M., didn't want any of that and would go out, pen and pad in hand, to take down license numbers and report the boys back to their principal. One cheeky chap said, "Sister, I'll have a burger, fries and a Coke," and then sped off.

Kids have a tendency to do chancy things. No one in the group would've thought L. would be one of them. But she and some of her pals, guys and gals, took a walk through the park, ending at the railroad tracks. Oh, what fun it would be to walk the rails, over the embankment; not much clearance on either side of the tracks.

Halfway across they felt the vibration, then heard the whistle, then saw the headlight. Down the embankment they slid. Except L. She was awestruck by the enormity of that big engine and big light coming at her. One of the guys, P., ran back up, threw L. over his shoulder and hauled her down. One of the other guys waved at the engineer so he'd know everyone was okay.

The reunion weekend ended with L. and a couple girlfriends driving around town to their growing-up neighborhoods and favorite places, including the park – but not to the railroad tracks.

First Lesson for the Young Printer

By RICH HOPKINS

I WAS PERHAPS IN THE FIFTH GRADE in 1952 when I got hold of a used Swiftset Rubber Stamp Printing Press. Perhaps I picked it up in a yard sale? Nevertheless, it intrigued me and I was intent on learning how to use it so I could print my own newspaper. In my young mind that equated to power and influence and being a rather timid kid, I needed a crutch to help with my great ambitions.

So young Richard was sent to the basement where he could work to his delight without much care about making a mess and/or getting ink on everything.

The kit included a bunch of little rubber letters about a quarter inch tall. They were to be assembled into metal channels which, in turn, were inserted in rubber retainers around a tin cylinder which did the printing. A set of the crappiest tweezers imaginable were provided and after a few hours of fiddling, I had printed my first newspaper, consisting of perhaps eight lines of rubber type. I was delighted with my success and rushed upstairs to share my achievement with my parents.



Image: from an online site.

Mom was the “encourager.” She held the sheet in her hand and praised me for my marvelous accomplishment. Then the sheet was passed to dad, who had been watching television.

Instantly dad broke out in uncontrollable laughter. When dad was truly amused, he slapped his knee to punctuate his amusement. I stood watching with total puzzlement as he smiled, laughed, and slapped his knee. Finally, dad looked up at me and said, “Son, if you’re going to be a printer, you are going to have to learn how to spell.” My second line read “Published weakly.”

This all occurred about three years before I began sliding down the slippery slope to become a letterpress printer and amateur journalist. But dad’s lesson was well understood and to this day you will find a couple dictionaries, a thesaurus, and a couple other “writing aids” close at hand near my composing stand. They now are dog-eared from use.

Schiller Park Sculptures: A Sight to Behold!

BY NANCY HEBER

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE the “Stay at Home” directive was given due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was invited to ride with Rusty and Jo Crouse, mutual friends of Bill Boys, to view the unique sculptures that adorned historic Schiller Park, which is right across the street from where Bill lives. The exhibit is entitled: **SUSPENSION: Balancing Art, Nature and Culture.**



Gymnast with Balls

For anyone who knows me, I, obviously, brought along my camera. These photos are ones I took as I gazed at the breath-taking pieces of art. As I viewed the balance achieved by the artist, I couldn't help but wonder, “How was he able to do this? How are the sculptures able to withstand the winter weather of Columbus, Ohio? How was the decision made as to the placement of each sculpture between the existing trees?” And my questions continued to swirl through my head as we drove around the park.

Nineteen pieces of balancing life-sized sculptures are suspended high between trees. The artist, Jerzy Kedziora, is from Poland. His gravity-defying sculptures have been installed in public spaces around the world. Kedziora has developed his own technique to cast the sculptures made of epoxy resins from a clay mold.

Originally the sculptures were to be displayed at Schiller Park from October, 2019 to the first of March, 2020 because they are in the United States on exhibit-only “visas” and cannot be sold. An extension was applied for to have the display remain on this site until September, 2020.



A Broken Circle

The sculptures have been so popular, a fundraising campaign has begun to commission five new gravity-defying suspended sculptures by Kedziora for the park that is located in German Village in Columbus, Ohio.

Columbus to SoCal

BY MICHAEL BERTKE

IT WAS APRIL 2014. I was finishing up graduate school at The Ohio State University when my good friend Eric came to me with a proposition – take a road trip from Columbus, Ohio to Huntington Beach, California. I was hesitant initially because it was more than 2,000 miles from Ohio to Southern California, however, it didn't take long to decide I was in. I would have 3 weeks between graduation and the start of my first full time job, so the timing was perfect.

The day was May 6, 2014 and it was time to hit the road. Eric, one week from starting a new job in California, and I were both ecstatic to see this great country.

After 11 hours of driving we arrived at Kansas City, Missouri. We were tired after a long day but still managed to remain competitive at The Flying Saucer's trivia night. The next morning, we set out for Denver, Colorado where we would stay with our friend. Between us and the Rockies was the flat state of Kansas where there was no shortage of blue skies and windmills. After a night in Denver catching up with friends over bison burgers, our next stop was Utah – or so we thought. That day, I-70 West was shut down about 2 hours west of Denver so we had to decide: take a 4 hour detour through the mountains or wait it out at a local bar until the highway reopened. We chose the latter and found ourselves at The Yacht Club in Wolcott, Colorado where we got to know Ritter and Mustang Troy, a couple of locals.



The Yacht Club, Wolcott, Colorado: L. to R.: Mustang Troy, Eric, me, Ritter.

The delay forced us to stay in Grand Junction, Colorado that night – a quaint town near the Colorado-Utah border. Next up: Las Vegas, Nevada – I hear what happens there stays there.

Finally, we were on to California where the sunshine and beaches made the end of the trip a little more tolerable. While I was excited to get back to Ohio to begin the next chapter of my life, it was bittersweet to have such a great experience come to an end. To those who have the opportunity to travel across this country – go for it. The sights, sounds, and people you meet along the way will be worth way more than the price of gasoline.

Three-Cent Stamps and Twice-Daily Mail

By VALDEN FARNHAM

I REMEMBER WHEN A STAMP COST 3 CENTS and the mail arrived twice a day — because I trudged through the snow to help deliver it one holiday season!

During the weeks leading up to Christmas in 1942, I worked as a temporary route carrier for the U.S. Postal Service in Toledo, Ohio. I assisted our home mail carrier, Irv Friedman, on his route, which meant I had to be at the post office by 7 a.m.



Before I left the house, I packed my lunch and made sure I was well insulated with the proper jacket, gloves, and scarf. It was a 20-minute walk to the streetcar line in the bitter cold, followed by a 10-minute street car ride and another short walk to the post office. Upon my arrival, I removed my jacket and joined Mr. Friedman in the sorting of the morning mail. I had to put the mail in the order that I walked the route. Once the mail was sorted, I slipped back into my winter gear and headed outside.



In the time it took me to get back to Harris Street, where my route began, a mail truck had dropped my lot in the neighborhood corner boxes. Routes then were organized away from and back to a location nearest the streetcar terminus. As soon as I completed the morning circuit, I returned to the post office where I ate my lunch and repeated the process of sorting mail for the afternoon delivery. At the end of the second delivery, I walked home.



It was a cold, snowy, and windy experience, but I became better acquainted with the people in my Home Acres neighborhood, and I added money to my Toledo University college fund — the bill for one semester of college was \$75.



Adam and Eve, Alternate Ending?

BY BILL BOYS

“WHAT THE ... ?! What is all this around me? Most things stand still, but some move. A blue firmament is above all. Who am I – and what am I – to suddenly be conscious of all this?

Said a VOICE: **“Thou art Man. Thy name is Adam. I have formed thee from the ground thou standest on. I am very pleased.”**

“You created all this? You formed me? Why? Why am I here?”

“Thou shalt tend this Eden. To help thee thou mayest choose any of the animals I have created. I shall bring them so thou canst name them and choose thy helpmate.”

After a long search, the VOICE spoke again: **“As wondrous as all these are, I see that thy excellence is of such high order that no helpmate has been found. I shall form another being, just for thee. Take thy sleep now, and I shall draw her forth.”**

[. . . .]

“Here now is thy helpmate, of thine own flesh and bone,” said the VOICE. **“She is Woman. Her name is Eve.”**

“What perfection! You set us in true companionship and love! A divine gift! What would you have us do?”

“Be fruitful and multiply. Till the earth. Steward the animals, the plants, and the creatures in the sea. I have planted the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden. Ye may eat of any other plant, but not that one tree. Now I rest from My work, seeing that everything at last is very good.”

[.]

“Adam, Adam, where art thou? Have ye eaten fruit of the tree which I commanded thee not to eat?” the VOICE asked.

“Yes, we have. Eve is not to blame. I defend her by saying” *

* Erich Fromm, in his classic work, *The Art of Loving*, pointed out that when Adam defended himself by *blaming* Eve it shows that they had not yet learned to love each other. Fromm speculates: “What if Adam had defended Eve instead of blaming her?” [*Can you imagine a defense you think Adam might have offered? I would be interested to read your transcript of it – WilliamBoys@att.net.*]

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 (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.

Three sites on YouTube I recommend looking at, even though they are oriented toward fiction stories. (Still good advice if you want to make a non-fiction piece inviting and interesting.)

1. "5 Quick Tips for Writing (and Revising!) Flash Fiction,"
By Anthony Barra (and analyzing one story's drafts). 6 minutes.
2. "Crafting Flash Fiction with Joy Baglio," 6½ minutes.
3. "Writer George Saunders Reflects on Engineering Short Fiction,"
A PBS interview by Jeffrey Brown. 7 minutes.