

ONE-PAGE STORIES

No. 6 — SEPTEMBER 2020

A Cooperative Journal for the National Amateur Press Association

Negotiating Customs Abroad	2
BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER	
Summers at EWALU	3
BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER	
Bat in the Bedroom	4
BY BILL BOYS	
Breakfast-in-Bed University	5
BY BILL BOYS	
Christmas on the Steam Grates	6
BY TOM DUFFEY	
Ocracoke Getaway	7
BY BILL BOYS	
A Haunting Melody	8
BY DON LUCK	
Speaking Japanese	9
BY DON LUCK	
Possible Defenses of Eve by Adam?	10
BY DON LUCK	
[available page]	11
BY TBA	
Write for ONE-PAGE STORIES?	12

Negotiating Customs Abroad

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

“*EIN ECHE POLNISCHER MANN noch gibt die Hand-kuss.*” Perhaps we had been discussing customs that differed between our countries. One custom that was similar yet very different comes early in a relationship. An American man will simply extend his hand and say, “Hi, I’m Frank.” A German lady will click her heels, thrust out her right hand and announce her last name in clipped syllables: “Klingenberg.” But a true Polish gentleman, according to Frau Lutzer, would still (in 1989) kiss a woman’s hand.

At our weekly Tuesday morning “coffee” I regularly witnessed the German women coming to attention and clicking their heels as they introduced themselves to the foreign women — American, Norwegian, Russian, Japanese. The German ladies who sponsored the gatherings spoke English, and most of the foreign women could understand and speak a little German or English. Unfortunately, my neighbor Teresa could understand neither; she only understood her native Polish. Frau Lutzer had grown up in the eastern part of Germany which for a time belonged to Poland; she was able to speak with Teresa and make her feel welcome in the group of wives whose husbands were studying at the University of Tübingen.

Teresa and I became friends, even though we didn’t necessarily understand each other’s words. We lived on the same floor of the *Studentenwohnheim* (“student living quarters”); her two sons were flanked in age by my two sons. Teresa and I had to manage our relationship with much pointing and other gestures. One day, thinking I had finally learned how to say her last name, I introduced “Teresa Leszczyński” to some of the other women. “No, Leszczyńska”, I was informed. Then her husband came by and I introduced “Stan Leszczyńska.” “No, Leszczyński.” OH! There are masculine and feminine forms of surnames in Polish, just as in Spanish.

Teresa and her sons returned to Poland shortly after Thanksgiving. However, Stan made the trip between Krakow and Tübingen fairly frequently throughout the rest of the school year. He often joined our family dinners. In early summer as our time in Tübingen was drawing to a close, Stan came one more time to say goodbye. What a surprise to me when, as a parting gesture, he did indeed kiss my hand. According to Frau Lutzer’s definition, he was a true Polish gentleman!

Summers at EWALU

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF MY SUMMERS was attending Bible Camp. The name for a new camp in eastern Iowa was EWALU – for Eastern Iowa Lutheran Bible Camp.

Early that first spring (1960) a wind break needed to be planted. My sister Chris, a cousin, and I were enlisted to help plant hundreds of seedlings during Holy Week. For years whenever we drove to the camp, Chris and I would take special note of how “our” trees were doing. From the beginning, this camp was special to me.

At the tender age of 13, I was registrar for the two weeks of camp. There were no permanent buildings – everyone slept in tents. A small cabin was brought in as a kitchen. When a permanent building was completed, the cook-shack was no longer needed; it became the canteen. I became the first manager and had to be available any time the campers had a break. That was also where I lived for the summer, as camp rapidly grew to ten weeks annually.



The multi-used building.

It wasn't long until there was an addition: a bookstore to sell sweatshirts, tee-shirts, jewelry and trinkets. I was responsible for ordering and managing the inventory. I was quite proud when I was allowed to drive to Decorah and purchase some of those items from the Luther College bookstore.

That was my job several summers. I loved being at the camp and feeling that my part was important. Some of my friends de-tasseled corn and earned more in two weeks than I ever dreamed of earning during ten weeks of camp. I loved my job. I could work in my own “office,” interact with the campers and counselors. Outside the canteen/bookstore hours, I would sometimes go on the garbage run with one of the handymen, hauling our garbage to the dump closer to town. Sometimes I would fill little squares of perforated cloth with flour to be used by the campers in a game. I would often join a counselor and her campers on a night under the stars. On a weekly basis I assisted the cook in preparing food for the Friday night luau.

I couldn't imagine a better way to spend my summers!

Bat in the Bedroom

BY BILL BOYS

I AWOKE DROWSILY AROUND MIDNIGHT and thought I caught a sidelong glance of a tiny dark shape flitting by just beyond the foot of our bed.

Must just be my eyes. But it reminded me of a bat we'd had four years ago. But the bat experts had come, sealed up an old fireplace opening. We hadn't seen one since.

Moments later, it flew by again. No mistaking it. Can't open the window because it's behind the whirring floor fan, swiveling away. No bat would fly through that. Let it go til morning.

Morning – no sign of it. Oh, well, he'll be back when it gets dusk. I'll let him out then.

Then Ruth went upstairs in the afternoon and found him cuddled between her bedroom slippers. She was about to put them on when she spotted him. They're black and so was the little form snuggled between them, no bigger than a silver dollar. Do you suppose he picked them rather than the nearby gray sneakers because they matched his black coloration? A fashion-conscious bat?

I called the bat experts again. They came by as soon as they could, 6 o'clock that day. By then the bat had climbed up the side of one of the sneakers. The pro picked it up. They're very docile, he said.

He said he'd go to his truck to euthanize it, and bring his body back in a plastic zip-bag for us to take to our board of public health.

What?! Can't you just release him outdoors? Bats are valuable and they're under pressure in nature. No, he said. It's state law that a bat retrieved from inside an occupied dwelling has to be put down and tested for rabies, of which there was a 3% chance. Besides, it was highly probable, even if he drove it to Cleveland to release it, the bat would return to our house.

With a heavy, distressed heart I let him carry out his duty. That poor little thing. And a few days later we got the report that he did not have rabies. I get the health law's point, but I still grieved for that tiny, wasted life, just because he found a new way into our home, and to his death.

Breakfast-in-Bed University

BY BILL BOYS

IT ISN'T ENTIRELY OUR PETS' FAULT, but I get up at five to feed them – if they're on twice-a-day meds, then their evening feeding isn't so late. Once I'm up, I thought why not make breakfast in bed for us? It's not fancy – couple of pieces of toast, coffee, maybe a clementine.

Well, while we're eating why not also watch something on TV? (No, too many ads.) DVD or VCR movie? (No, too long.) Then we discovered The Great Courses. Subjects taught by college professors, engaging teachers who've won teaching awards. Hundreds of topics. Divided into about half-hour segments – just right for our breakfast in bed. When the segment is finished, we get to go back to sleep until time for our own meds.



Some courses we get from the library. We only purchase courses when they're on sale, and regularly they are.

The courses are often so interesting that we re-watch them. One of our favorites is completely out of our normal fields – “Everyday Engineering: Understanding the Marvels of Daily Life,” by Prof. Stephen Ressler, Emeritus Professor, U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Great demonstrations throughout. Here are a few more:

“The Secrets of Great Mystery and Suspense Fiction,” by Prof. Stephen Schmid, Univ. of Buffalo. Surprised us how interesting.

“America in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” by Prof. Edward T. O'Donnell, College of the Holy Cross. Echoes of *today's* scene!

“A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts,” by Prof. Robert Bucholz, Loyola Univ., Chicago. Clever lecturer; big topic.

“The Secret Life of Words: English Words and Their Origins,” by Prof. Anne Curzan, Univ. of Michigan. My, what I didn't know.

“Writing and Civilization: From Ancient Worlds to Modernity,” by Prof. Marc Zender, Tulane University. Historic, epochal story.

We *do* like our breakfast-in-bed university – engaging *and* educational. The pets? They usually sleep through class.

Christmas on the Steam Grates

BY TOM DUFFEY

WE HAD A YEARLY TRADITION OF VISITING the National Tree on Christmas Eve. During the 1980s my wife and I lived in the Washington, D.C. area, in Arlington, Virginia. At that time, there was widespread concern in the nation's capital about homeless people living downtown on sidewalks, huddling for warmth under blankets on steam grates, in full view of sightseers from everywhere. The powers-in-charge hated the impression that this situation left with visitors and D.C. residents, alike.

In 1986, the National Tree was decorated on the Mall as in years past. That year was different, however, because an organization named the Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) wanted to erect their own creche next to the Tree. This group proposed a life-sized sculpture of a homeless couple and their young child huddled under a blanket on a grate. The symbolism was clear: No room at the inn—or anywhere else. Many District and Federal officials opposed this addition because it presented a grim reminder of the stark reality in the city they represented.

The issue became a front-page story in the *Washington Post* and was picked up by national news media. Also popular that year was the movie, “Samaritan: The Mitch Snyder Story” (with Martin Sheen in the title role). It told the tale of Mitch Snyder, a Vietnam War veteran and the public face of the CCNV in its struggle over the creche. He also staged a 33-day hunger strike that ended when the Reagan administration offered to convert a dilapidated, rat-infested building, just three blocks from the Capitol, into a modern 800-bed homeless shelter and to provide the funds to keep it running. Because of the efforts of Snyder and the CCNV (and the ensuing publicity), the Secretary of the Interior eventually granted permission for their creche to be positioned alongside the National Tree.

That year, we visited the Tree and met Mitch Snyder, who was standing next to the creche, draped in an Army-style blanket on that very cold night. We had an enlightening talk with this very “real” publicity-savvy, dedicated veteran.

Mitch Snyder hanged himself in his room at CCNV on July 6, 1990. He was 46. He doubtless helped to save many lives before taking his own. R.I.P., Mitch.

Ocracoke Getaway

BY BILL BOYS

OUR KIND OF VACATION PLACE! An island. On the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. No direct land access; 2½-hour ferry ride from Swan Quarter, N.C. Most of the island is in Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Wild ponies. A National Park Service campground near the beach. Lighthouse. One small harbor and a calm, charming village.



We used a cabin the first visit. The beaches (all on the Atlantic) were beautiful and spacious. The big tourist spots are on the barrier islands to the northeast, and we were glad to bypass them. We enjoyed the sunshine, the wind and surf, the ocean’s swell and waves. And the quaint working-fishery village. But I did meet one beach pest: green fly. To this day there’s a one-inch darkish round spot on my ankle where a green fly bite swelled into a blister. Eventually I had to have our doctor lance it after we got back home to Knoxville. But that was the only literal fly in the metaphorical ointment.

We bought shrimp directly from the fishermen when they returned to harbor. We visited the picturesque little lighthouse, on the island’s highest point – only 7 feet above sea level. At that time I was just starting my series of “cinderellas” – hand-drawn stamps from imaginary countries, including this watercolor trio of the lighthouse, worth “10 N.C.” in the country of “Ocracoke.”



Three watercolor Ocracoke “cinderellas.”

There wasn’t a single fast food restaurant on the island. Breakfasting one day at the old Island Inn, I was enjoying scrambled eggs with shad roe. Where but a place like Ocracoke would you ever find *that* on the menu?! We couldn’t help overhearing a nearby family with a young teen daughter and a boy about ten. At one point the mother finally said in exasperation, “Elizabeth, if I hear one more McDonald’s comparison . . . !” Ah, yes, definitely our kind of place!

A Haunting Melody

BY DON LUCK

SHE HAS AN AMAZING GREEN THUMB. Our senior residence employs no grounds crew, just a mower of grass. Maintenance has the job of clearing away fallen branches and leaves and doing the heavy digging, but tending to the several beds of flowers that beautify the grounds is left to the residents. It's an avocational outlet for retirees who otherwise would miss their love of gardening and, apart from providing an annual budget for some annuals, a source of savings for the management.

There are less than ten volunteers in the Garden Committee with varying degrees of involvement; Ella is one of the more active ones. The massive mound of day lilies, the tasteful planters at the main entry and her own fairy garden thrive under her care.

In the course of chatting about our common interest in gardening, I discovered to my surprise that her origins lie in South Carolina. She carries not a trace of a southern drawl. "Why ma deah," I said, adopting one – and an air of mock horror – "ya'll have become thoroughly Yankeeified." "Well, I've lived most of my life in Ohio and I like living here," she replied. So to celebrate the discovery, I sang a few bars from "Nothing Could Be Finer Than to Be in Carolina."

Over the next few times we met, I'd sing it again. My serenading has pretty much stopped but the tune has not. I find myself singing it to myself every day. It will not let go of me. Far from being an unending nuisance, it has become an occasion for continuing laughter. And it has for Ella too when I told her about it and I give her a running report of its showing up again.

A few weeks later, I came across a crossword clue asking for the name of this phenomenon. I worked the puzzle out and discovered what it is: "earworm." Now I can visualize how it worked. A long thin string of notes with accompanying lyrics channeled its way up to my ear canal, slipped under my ear drum and spun around my cochlea where it transformed into neural impulses that planted themselves in a corner of my cerebellum. There the earworm waits, wriggling out unexpectedly each day playing some sort of aural peek-a-boo.

There's a song that notes "I've *GOT* Georgia on My Mind." In my case, the obsession lies just across the northern border.

Speaking Japanese

BY DON LUCK

THE TWO BOOKS WOULD BE WELCOME COMPANY on the long flight over the Pacific. And sweetly appropriate. My son Geoff shares my delight in things Japanese – the food, the traditional architecture and art, the gardens, and the aesthetic principle of *wabi sabi*, celebrating impermanence and imperfection.

I was on my way to spend sabbatical time doing research at the East Asia center for Buddhist/Christian studies housed on the campus of Nanzan University in Nagoya. So Geoff gave me a copy of Arthur Golden's novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* and a Japanese phrase book. The novel was a delight not only because was it an absorbing story but also because it provided images of the world of the geisha and the setting of Kyoto. I intersperse its chapters by memorizing some basic phrases including "*Sumimasen. Nihongo hana seimasen. Egoga dekimasu ka?*" ["Please excuse me. I do not speak Japanese. Do you speak English?"]

When I'm abroad and come to a new city I like to stroll around and get a sense of the place and an accompanying sense of direction. And as I ambled along a wide boulevard I came across an art gallery with lithographs and serigraphs by major 20th Century European masters displayed in the window. And while I am no expert I am an aficionado and know more than the average layman. The prices were beyond my reach but I wanted a closer look so I stepped inside.

Framed sale items were hung from the ceiling and angled so they could be fully viewed when one walked down the center aisle. A bell jingled when I opened the door and a middle-age woman had emerged from a back office. As I moved down the aisle I spoke the names of the artists represented: "Miro, Chagall, Buffet, Kolowitz, Picasso, Kandinski" On hearing me she started chattering excitedly. Clearly I was knowledgeable and appreciative, unlike wealthy patrons who made purchases merely for the sake of boasting they owned something significant and valuable. But I was ready for her.

"*Sumimasen. Nihongo hana seimasen. Egoga dekimasu ka?*" Her bright smile vanished, her eyes dropped to the floor. And shaking her head ruefully she replied, "*Nai, nai.*" She didn't speak English. But she knew a little. Her smile returned and her gaze came back to me and she said, "You no speak Japanese *very good.*"

Possible Defenses of Eve by Adam?

BY DON LUCK

[Editor's Note: This train of thought began with a footnote to the article "Adam and Eve, Alternate Ending?" in the previous issue of *One-Page Stories*. It stated: "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?*)"]

NOW AS TO FROMM, I HAVE A FEW alternatives for defending Eve.

[Sexistly physiological] "Don't blame her. She is a creature of little brain, a creature whose head is full of straw and sweepings from the fireplace. And, ahem, *you* are the one who designed her."

[Condescendingly sympathetic] "Poor thing. She is so sweetly naïve and trusting. She never thinks ill of anyone and can be manipulated by cunning knaves. And, ahem, *you* gave her that fundamental character."

[Biblically literalistic] "To be sure, you said, 'You may eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.' But I recall the conversation very clearly. You said that to *me*, not her. It was before you created her out of a rib of mine. (By the way, I still feel twinges of pain when the weather turns damp.) Don't take my word for it. Check the written record. [pause] Chapter 2. [pause] Verses 15 through 17. [pause] You know, the J writer. [pause] Earlier than the account of our joint creation in E's 1:27. [pause] Sir. [longer pause] Sir?

[Spuriously logical] "Just one minute, sir. Even though, somehow, you made your wishes known to Eve as well, she is not at fault because warning us to steer clear of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by itself assumes we *already* know the difference between the two. It's implicit in telling us if we even *touch* the fruit we will die. Somehow we must have *already* known that to do so is an *evil* thing and that *not* touching it is a *good*. Right? Or am I wrong?"

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.

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.