

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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Sometimes I Want to Be a Sheep

BY PEG DAVIS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

HAVE YOU EVER REALLY THOUGHT about how many apps you can download on your cell phone that have to do with the security of your home and neighborhood? I had the Logi app, the Ring app, the Nextdoor app, and the Citizen app. Each has a specific purpose, all under the guise of keeping myself and those I love safe. The Ring app monitors who is at my door and watches over my precious packages deposited on my porch (or sidewalk, depending on the delivery person). Nextdoor keeps an eye on my neighborhood and any criminal element that may be hanging about. The Citizen app is for real-time information about criminal activity in my neighborhood. The Logi app was a camera that monitored my lovely old dog before he passed away. I used to have an app that provided calls to the Columbus 911 dispatcher. Do these apps make the world appear to be a terribly scary place?

A little bit about me: I have been a social worker since I was nine years old, and professionally for over thirty years, which is well over half of my life. I'm the type of person who rushes to a neighborhood to search for a lost dog, and takes food to people I don't know when word gets out about an emergency need; and I adopted two cats that someone dropped off in the middle of the street. When the pandemic hit I sewed hundreds of masks for my family and friends. As a social worker I am required to attend a training yearly to update my safety skills, among other things. At one of them I had a discussion with the presenter about all the information that can be secured almost immediately. He told me about a study where people can be lumped into three categories: Wolves, Dogs and Sheep. Wolves are the ones you perceive may harm you or your loved ones. Dogs are the protectors of the flock, yourself or your loved ones. And the Sheep are the ones who are blissfully unaware of the dangers around them. He told me I was a Dog (metaphorically speaking), always searching, making sure my home and neighbors are safe. I am always at heightened alert, scanning the horizon for danger.

Being a Dog is exhausting. So I have decided that after all these years I am going to turn off the apps and enjoy life a little. (I can't turn it all off, as we know, but maybe you can teach an old Dog new tricks.)

Sometimes I just need to be a Sheep.

Jewelrybox Etiquette, Lesson Learned

BY FRAN SCHNEIDER – COLUMBUS, OHIO

OH NO! THE SWELLING IS NOT GOING DOWN! Ice is not helping. This is what I get for trying on the stupid ring! And just wait until Abby, my older sister, finds out I was in her jewelry box.

The ring won't come off! Mom said ice should help, but it isn't. It's swelling more! Ah!!! It has to work. If it doesn't, Mom said I could go to the firehouse and they could cut it off. She said she would call first and let them know. She added that she was in the middle of fixing dinner, and that I was old enough to walk down by myself.

Such were the musings of my eight year old self, as I made my way to the dreaded fire station. It was only a half block away. I had been there many times. There was the time that I actually rode down the fire pole. My mind was exploding with dread. Cut it off?! With what?! I was terrified. I remember tears rolling down my face as I walked through the huge overhead doors, that were always open. A waxy aroma made its way to my nose (and probably contributed to my tears). Apparently the fire truck had just been waxed, and the smell was nauseating.

I looked around for Al. He was my friend, the one who took me down the fire pole with him. One hand grabbed me and the other grabbed the fire pole, and down we went. But that was a long time ago, I thought. I was a baby then, and now I am old enough to be here by myself. And old enough to have it cut off, I guess.

I looked at Al in disbelief when he said, "It'll be alright. It'll be off before you know it." A shudder shook me when I saw the big heavy pair of scissors. They looked like the ones that my Dad used when he cut tin. Yep, they would be up to the task, I guessed. Al told me to close my eyes and he would cut it off quickly! Ugh...

To my delight, when I opened my eyes, my finger was still there, and the ring was rolling around on the floor. I had mistakenly thought that they were going to amputate my ring finger. When I told Al, he just laughed and said I was silly, and handed me one of his famous suckers, which I readily accepted. On my way home, I was glad to think that the only thing I had to worry about now was how mad Abby was going to be. Oh well, I saved the ring; she can have it back.

Don't Fidget with the Inkwell

BY GEORGE A. CHAPMAN — MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

DID I LEARN CURSIVE WRITING IN SCHOOL? They called it penmanship and you were graded on it. Anyone can look at my current handwriting and say NO, I did not learn cursive writing in school.

I remember the practice sheets but I do not remember at what grade level this was first taught.

Entering the fifth grade was a new experience. We were going to the big kids' school on the hill after four years in an elementary building. The desks in the fifth grade room were a little more modern than the ones we had had for the first four years of school. As I recall they had an attached swivel seat and a top that opened — and they had an inkwell. Our earlier desks had a place for inkwells, but there was just an empty hole. The fifth grade desks had little black topped bottles inserted in the holes. They were empty.

As a slightly fidgety student, I got into the habit of removing the inkwell and playing with it when things got a little boring in class.

Now remember, this was the fall of 1944. Ballpoint pens were not in use and because of the war effort; probably were not being made for civilians. The big ballpoint pen movement did not come until few years later.

So we would learn to write with a “dipping” pen — a handle with a removable “nib” for writing. One morning we came into the classroom and as it turned out, it was a day when Miss Romano had filled the inkwells in preparation for our first foray into writing with a pen. You can guess what happened next.

Little Georgie took out the inkwell as he was want to do and discovered it was full of ink. Or it was full until he managed to spill most of the contents all over himself.

I have no memory of what happened next but I do know that Miss Romano sent me home to get cleaned up. We did not have a phone and so I showed up at the house unannounced and covered in ink. I don't believe I was punished; after all it was an accident. But it is an event that I have never forgotten.

Stop the Music

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

THE MAESTRO SUDDENLY STOPPED THE ORCHESTRA. “Does this sort of thing happen often?” a patron asked. I had to admit that I was as mystified as she was. During the first of several opera arias, the maestro marched off the stage.

But then a memory surfaced: I remembered a similar situation.

When I was a sophomore in college, I was a member of the band. My friend Gleean told me there was a terrific trumpet player from her hometown and told me to look for Dan. When I saw her after our next rehearsal, I told her, “Glee, there are two of them!”



As it turned out, there were three fantastic trumpet players in our mediocre band — and the conductor, not so subtly, let us know that. If there was anything that we had not played precisely correctly, Dr. Wise asked “The Three Gentlemen” to demonstrate for us. That became an annoyingly common occurrence. However, the three of them delighted audiences with “Bugler’s Holiday,” a piece requiring three expert trumpeters.

The following year the band was to play for the annual Christmas concert. By that time, Dan was no longer in the band, but the twins from southern California were — and Glee and I were dating them. I was “Mary,” behind a curtain so there was only a silhouette. Dr. Wise raised his baton, the piece started — and immediately the baton cut off the music. The twins glared at each other, and the baton went up again, but again the music was silenced. A little more glaring and some discussion before the piece started a third time. This time the twins began the same carol. Even though I was not even playing in the band, I was mortified for my boyfriend.

Following the unplanned twenty-five-minute intermission, the patron related to me that she had learned that a child in the audience made enough noise in the otherwise hushed auditorium to irritate the maestro. Obvious now to the entire audience, in an orchestra the conductor holds all the power.

Dream Big!

By KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

AS WE BEGIN 2022, perhaps the whole world is dreaming that this third winter will be the last that our lives will revolve around the COVID-19 virus. In order for something significant to happen, we must dream big.

A year ago, during the inauguration of Joe Biden as president, a young girl stood in her vibrantly colored coat and spoke words of encouragement to the entire nation. Twenty-two-year-old Amana Gorman later revealed that five years earlier, she had made a pact with herself that she would stand on that platform as poet laureate. She'd had a big dream and it was realized. At age eleven her dream was to be elected president in 2036. We still have a few years to see if that dream will be fulfilled.

Several years ago, I was traveling with a group in Tanzania. As is typical with OAT [Overseas Adventure Travel] groups, we stopped at a school. It was Christmas vacation, but several students were there for extra study. We asked the pupils their names and what they hoped to be as adults. The answers included doctor, lawyer, engineer, teacher, and even president. That was certainly a big dream for a child in rural Tanzania. As we left the school, one of my fellow travelers commented on the boy's dream. "That was no boy," I asserted. Based on the haircut, it appeared to be a boy — but *all* the students had a "buzz cut." There was not much water there, so hair was kept very short. "How do you know?" I was asked. I had looked underneath the desks: there were short pants on the left and skirts on the right. For a girl to think she could become president was an even bigger dream. I would love to know if her dream comes true.



Catarina, Diana, and Anna - I think it was Anna who wanted to be president.

Remember "Happy Talk" from *South Pacific*?

You gotta have a dream

If you don't have a dream

How you gonna have a dream come true?

What is YOUR dream?

Lying – for Fun and Profit

BY JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF LIARS. The first type is the person who lies maliciously to deceive or to rob. The second type lies because they don't want to take responsibility for their actions, like a child would. The third type is the hobby liar. This is the person who does it for fun, to make people laugh, such as an actor or comedian. That's what I am; no, not an actor or comedian, but a hobby liar. I enjoy deceiving people into believing something that I made up. Hopefully we both get a laugh out of it.

A recent example is with the company that installed solar panels on our new house a few months ago. Last week I received a phone call from them reminding me that they wanted to install the bird guard around the panels. I told her that they had already been installed so she asked me how they were working. I replied, "Great, except for the sparks on the roof. They are really spectacular at night and the neighbors sometimes come by to watch. On July 4th I really had a crowd out front. A lot of people said it was more exciting than the show on the strip here in Las Vegas."

She responded with, "I'm new here but I don't think that's right."

I was laughing to myself when I told her I lied. She laughed too upon finding out the truth.

I once wrote about putting on my fellow controllers in the control tower, telling them a pilot reported that a passenger had shot himself. Then one time I told them that because it was the *truth* – a passenger *had* shot himself – but because I cried wolf so much, they didn't believe me. Of course the laugh was on them when the ambulance that I had called, came whizzing past the tower, siren wailing.

Another time I wrote about flying home in the cockpit of an Eastern Airlines flight, something I could do because of my job. The captain asked if I would go along with whatever he said when Lars, the flight engineer, came onboard. The captain introduced me to him as an examiner and said I would be flight-checking him that day. The crew and I had a good laugh at Lars expense.

These are some of my experiences with "Lying for Fun."

Cat on a Shingle Roof

By MARK MECHLING — DUNCAN FALLS, OHIO

I NEEDED TO CLEAN OUT THE GUTTERS on our split-level home. I used our 12-foot extension ladder to get up on the first level of our roof. Within a couple of minutes I noticed Willy right next to me on the roof. He had used the ladder to climb up there beside me. He had an uncanny ability to climb up ladders. He could jump from rung to rung with ease and be at the top of the ladder in quick order. One time we discovered him on the roof of our neighbor's house.

But Willy soon became bored and thought he would go back down the ladder. He started down face forward – and slipped. Just before he fell, I snatched him by his backside. I held him tightly; I was afraid that he would try to go down again, or worse, jump off the roof ten feet down onto the brick patio.

I moved to a window on the front side of the house. From there I could pass Willy through inside to my wife, Nancy. I pounded on the locked window and patiently waited for her to come and let us in. Minutes ticked by. Willy squirmed while I continued to pound on the window. I imagine the neighbors thought, “What is Mechling doing on his roof, holding his cat and pounding on a window?” I went on pounding on the window for at least 30 minutes. Finally Nancy appeared and opened the window to let Willy and myself inside the house. I asked if she heard my pounding and why it took so long to let us in. She replied that she thought I was just pounding on the gutter and was not concerned. She didn't know Willy was on the roof with me.

Willy was a great source of joy and companionship. He passed away this spring at the age of 16.

Now, whenever I get on the roof to clean gutters or for any other reason, I always think of Willy and the half hour we spent on the roof, sitting on the shingles, pounding at the window.



Willy.

My Sunshine Twin

By KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

DIANNE IS RESPONSIBLE: I DON'T LIMP. In the summer before fifth grade, I was at a friend's house, carrying a pitcher of Kool-Aid. I missed a step, twisted my foot, and landed on it. Yes, a bone was broken — but I hadn't spilled the Kool-Aid! When the bone healed and I ditched the crutches, I tended to baby that left foot. When I jumped off the three-foot-curb between my classroom and home, I always made sure to land on the right foot. Dianne reminded me repeatedly, "Don't limp!" I listened.

We must have met in kindergarten, if not before: our grandparents were brother and sister. We basically grew up in each other's houses. Mom called her "Sunshine," because of her cheery disposition and her infectious smile. Together we were the Sunshine Twins. We played games of Clue or Monopoly that went on for days. We babysat her younger brothers. We rode our bikes all over our small town. A favorite winter activity was playing Toyland in the snow at the end of the football field. We had sword fights with the giant icicles that formed outside our fourth-grade classroom. In the summer we were the "Sewer Sisters," playing along a small creek that ran through a culvert. During the school year, we passed notes to each other.



Kathleen, left, and "Sunshine"

Dianne's family moved to Dubuque, sixty miles away, during fifth grade. In the 1950s, that was like halfway across America. We kept writing letters, and our parents arranged "play dates" when possible. Remember when we used to take film to the drug store to have it shipped off and returned as pictures? Occasionally I would ride to Dubuque with the "picture man" so we could get together. We never lost track of each other. Dianne became a valuable resource when my mother developed kidney disease. Her medical instincts in fifth grade led her to become a kidney dialysis nurse.

Last summer I visited Dianne. We read through some of the notes/letters she had written to me all those decades ago. Many were signed, "Your best friend forever" — long before "BFF" became popular. A childhood friend is a treasure forever; she certainly is mine.

My First “Real” Date

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

HER NAME WAS DINAH. We were in the same seventh-grade class. I spent all my part-time job money for a new pair of tailor-made pants pegged at the bottom and my three initials on a wide belt loop. This was the fashion. I also got a new orange sweater and white tee shirt to show thru the neck. Also, shined my good shoes.

I told all my friends about the date to come and they had all kinds of advice on how to get my arm around her shoulder. Buy popcorn, offer her some, handing it around her shoulder to her left hand. All the right moves at that.

I was able to set the whole thing up with Dinah for a Saturday morning. While getting dressed, my Mom kept asking me why I was dressing up for the Saturday movies. I kept evading because I was really nervous and didn't want to talk about my plans.

I rode a city bus to Dinah's neighborhood and walked to her house. I was sweating when I knocked on the door. Her Mom came and greeted me with a friendly invitation to come in. There was Dinah and she really looked pretty. I was anxious to go and we walked to the bus stop and rode downtown. This was Canton, Ohio, in 1956. There were three theaters downtown and they were really nice – the Palace (sort of nice), Lowe's, and the Ohio (so-so). We were going to Lowe's and I don't recall what was playing. It was not a monster movie. Got the tickets and worked our way in and found a couple of seats in the balcony. I was getting more nervous by the minute. I tried to look and act in control but the opposite was the case. I asked if she wanted some popcorn and she said Yes. I made my way down to the concession stand and ordered a small bucket of buttered popcorn. My nerves got the best of me and I walked out of the theater. Dumb-dumb-dumb. I never heard how long she must have waited for my return but it was such a “jerk” move I didn't even want to think about it. In class the following week, she acted like nothing happened. This was one classy young lady. I tried avoiding her for the rest of the year.

By chance I met her at a Halloween party later that year. She was dressed as “I dream of Jeanie” with the harem pants and such. She gave me a look like – see, this is what you missed. Yep, I really did.

I Was Given (!) a 3-Door '51 Hudson

BY BILL BOYS

DWAYNE SCHNEIDER COULD *NOT* BELIEVE IT! He was one of my sophomore college roommates and had been angling for years to get a car, one way or another. Oh, the unfairness of it! I hadn't even been looking for one, and out of the blue, my Aunt Edith Dornbirer gave me one, for free, without even asking.

It was a 1951 Hudson that she had been using in her home-based religious book and supply business, Trinity House. But she had to get another car because a drunk driver had run into it while it was parked on the street; besides, it was ageing. The left rear door had been smashed, she wrote me, so that would have to be replaced, but otherwise it was in decent running condition.

That was how I came to have a “3-door” car, stick shift, Hudson-green in color. The replacement door we found was from a black model in a junkyard, but so what? At some point I repainted the whole car baby blue, with a white top. I added a yellow running light on top of each front fender and tied them into the parking-light wiring. I replaced the headliner with white naugahyde, thanks totally to my Mom's help in sewing the pieces together and helping install it. Bought a spinner knob for the steering wheel. Curb feelers, too. I thought it was so cool. I even cut pieces of reflective red tape, shaping them to make up letters, and glued them to the trunk lid. They said, “Drive carefully – you might hit a Redlegs fan.” (You may remember that the Cincinnati Reds baseball team had to change their name during the McCarthy anti-Communist era.) With such a long slogan, you can appreciate that cutting up the tape to piece it all together was quite a task, and the letters really couldn't be very big, either. But it was cool, wasn't it? Even if it wasn't the famous Hudson Hornet model, just the Pacemaker, a lesser model.

The last two years of college, this car enabled me to get part-time jobs in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Not only that, it enabled me to drive to Lockport, Illinois, a few times, too, to visit the girl I had met at a church youth convention the summer before. (Yes, it was Ruth, now my wife these many years.) But when I started seminary it stayed home. When I was on internship, and then after Ruth and I married, the Hudson back home in Ohio eventually vanished, towed off to Hudson heaven. Sometimes I savor YouTube videos of Hudsons of that era. (What if by sheer chance I might actually see it!?)



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 — Please send me comments on any of the stories so I can pass them on to the writers. We all like that.

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.

“Beginner”? YouTube Videos on Writing

Have you shied away from writing because you consider yourself a “beginner” at it? I've viewed these short videos on YouTube and maybe they'd encourage you. Good ideas. Have fun!

“5 Writing Exercises For Beginner Writers - How To Write For Beginners,” by Neiko, Entivate channel, YouTube. (6 min., 48 sec.)

“Writing Skills: How To Begin Writing,” by Maggie Hammond, Videojug channel, YouTube. (2 min., 2 sec.) [She is the author of *Creative Writing for Dummies*.]