

# ONE-PAGE STORIES

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# From Rose Garden to the Altar

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

**A**N ANONYMOUS DONOR GAVE ME a ticket to the 1958 summer youth gathering of my church body. Well, okay; with no other plans, why not? I was just under age 20.

It was Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. I bunked in an all-male dorm, but the dining hall was coed. Toward the middle of the second and final week, I screwed up enough courage to speak to a cute blonde, named Ruth, who had caught my eye. Would she like to go for a walk in the campus rose garden? She said, “Yes.” When the gathering ended, we agreed to write. She lived on a farm near Lockport, Illinois, and was a rising senior, age 17. I was an entering junior at Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, Indiana. We corresponded regularly, but didn’t phone much because pay phones cost a lot, even after 7 p.m. (Once I lost track of the time and had to pay the operator by robbing from my coin collection.) By good luck I had just been given a used ’51 Hudson by my Aunt Edith Dornbirer, so sometimes I could visit Ruth and her family on weekends.

When Ruth graduated from high school she attended Joliet Junior College, then Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois. At the same time, I finished college and so on to seminary. We were serious, but couldn’t get engaged until Valentine’s Day, 1963, because of our schools’ policies. I had to prove to my Dean of Students that we had enough money to live on till I graduated in 1964 before we could marry in August, 1963 – over five years after we walked in that rose garden.

It was the *only* youth gathering either of us went to. At some point I learned that I was lucky I was just shy of 20 when I met Ruth, or her mother would have *disapproved*. And I also learned that my mother was the anonymous donor of my ticket. She probably reasoned that I might meet a nice girl there, but knew that if I knew she was arranging it all, I’d have stubbornly *refused* to go! Oh, my, so it goes.

Cupid negotiated lots of obstacles to get us to the altar!

# A Bizarre Encounter with Type

BY RICH HOPKINS – TERRA ALTA, WEST VIRGINIA

**H**EAVY WINTER SNOWFALL – I live in Terra Alta, W. Va., which is known for that. Next, you must know that I am an amateur typefounder and often I get my metal by melting down old type. So I often have 5-gallon buckets sitting around filled with old, pied type. Third, you must know this was around 1972, before front-wheel-, or four-wheel-drive vehicles were in vogue. And most larger vehicles were not yet equipped with seatbelts.

We were having a particularly nasty winter – well over two feet of snow on the ground. When things get that way the Department of Highways goes into emergency mode, meaning they make one pass on as many roads as possible, and wait until later to finish the job. My wife Lynda and I were driving home from work in a big old clumsy blue Chevrolet van. Being rear-wheel drive, it had virtually no traction in snow, especially when not loaded. Snow had been on the ground a couple days and I figured I could improve traction by putting a couple buckets full of type metal next to the rear wheels. I speculate that the idea was helping to a limited degree. So we were moving at a nice pace toward home when suddenly a car appeared, coming toward us. Being only one lane wide, we were doomed to a head-on collision unless I acted quickly. I turned into the snowbank on my side of the road. Surprisingly, the van climbed the snowbank ending almost at 45 degrees, very close to turning over.

The oncoming car squeezed past my van and was gone in a flash. When I gained my senses I glanced in the direction of the passenger seat and was shocked. Lynda wasn't there. It was dark outside so I didn't see her that instant, but in the shadows there she was, sitting on the floor almost in a fetal position. "Are you all right?" I asked. She looked up at me and with much hesitation said, "I think so." Since it was fairly dark, I couldn't see her well enough to anticipate what she said next: "I guess I am OK but I am covered with type!" Then I noticed one of my buckets lying empty on the floor. It had gone airborne and scattered its contents on Lynda during the altercation. I broke out laughing. Lynda was not at all amused.



# Growing Up in Iowa Winters

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

**S**NOW DAY! WHAT WOULD I DO with an unexpected day with no school? Would my sister Chris and I go skiing down the football hill? Or would my “Sunshine Twin” and I go to “Toyland” at the end of the football field where there was a wide ditch that often drifted full of snow? Dianne and I pretended that the chunks of snow that broke off were toys and played with them until they broke. Or perhaps we could go behind our fourth-grade classroom and break off a couple of the huge icicles that formed there and have a “sword fight.” There was also the possibility of ice-skating in front of the bus barn that was just across the street from my house. The possibilities seemed endless when I was in grade school.

After Dianne moved out of town, the choices were somewhat curtailed. Then one of my choices might be to go with Dad when he delivered bottled gas to farmers in the area. On one of those occasions, maybe fifth or sixth grade, I stayed in the truck, little realizing the cab would not hold enough heat for me to keep warm. My life dealing with cold feet began.

My senior year in high school, we left for a Lenten service at St. Sebald, six miles from town, in warm coats and our school shoes. When we left the service, there were several inches of snow on the ground. We crested one hill, slid down the other side, and ended in a ditch. We walked to the nearest farmhouse where we were warmly welcomed — soon our feet were close to the fire and warming up. A milk truck suffered the same fate and soon the two drivers joined us in the Jim and Clara Brown home. Our hosts graciously made us all feel comfortable. The next afternoon, we walked across a forty- or fifty-foot snowdrift to meet Uncle Walter who came from town to ferry us home. Now the road has been leveled and there are snow fences along that stretch of road.

Winter in northeast Iowa could be a great time of building snowmen and ice skating on the frozen streets, but it could also be dangerous.



*Snow as high as the wires! My dad, a sister, brother and me.*

# My Vacation to Montana

BY LINDA L. SHIVERS — DES MOINES, IOWA

**M**Y FIRST VACATION WAS WHEN I WAS ELEVEN. Rosie and I grew up on the same street way back in 1948, and to this day we're still friends. In 1959 Rosie and her parents drove all the way from Des Moines, Iowa, to Red Lodge, Montana, to see Rosie's grandparents, and I got to go, too.

For the first time ever, I stayed in motels and ate in restaurants. Rosie helped me with the restaurant menus for breakfast. There were so many things, I didn't know what to choose. One time I tried poached eggs, but went back to cereal and donuts. As for staying in a motel, I couldn't fall asleep right away because of unfamiliar noises like voices in the hall, doors slamming and cars pulling into the parking lot.

One day we stopped at Hell's Half Acre, a place like the Grand Canyon, only not so grand. Rosie and I stood on the very brink and Rosie's mom took pictures of us. I was scared the wind would blow us right off the cliff. I never saw anything like it before. (Going to *my* grandparents' place in Iowa, we only saw cornfields.)

There were mountains everywhere – even in the backyard at Rosie's grandparents! Everyone tried to get me to see “the camel.” It was supposed to be in the mountain we could see from the dining room window. They said, “Look at the trees.” I tried and tried, but couldn't find that camel.

One day, riding along the side of a mountain, we looked across what Rosie's dad called a gorge, to the mountains on the other side. A coal train was going in the other direction. It was so long I gave up counting the cars, and just watched. I looked down into the gorge, and between the trees I could see a fast-flowing creek, all bubbly and foamy white. Rosie's mom said, “Its from snow melting high up in the mountains.” I didn't know how much higher that could be! We were already *up in* the mountains!

I finally found the camel the day before we left. I looked out the dining room window one last time. The shape of the camel was in the grassy *space* where the trees *weren't* growing.

# Fun or Foolish?

BY PEGGY ZORTMAN — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

**M**ONDAY'S STORM WAS BRUTAL — cold, forceful winds and heavy, blowing snow. Tuesday brought blue skies and rising temperatures. With the strong, constant sun and above-freezing temperatures the snow began to soften. By afternoon the mountains of plowed snow had shriveled and the snow had become a perfect packing snow . . . perfect for building a snowman.

The more I thought about it the younger I felt until finally I told my disbelieving husband, Bill, of my intention, and headed for the front yard. “Just a little snowman,” I promised myself.

The first snowball rolled easily picking up lots of wet snow as I bent, lifted, and rolled — until I realized there was no way I could lift it. I stopped. Now he needed a belly. I made a good size snowball and started rolling . . . bend and lift — pat and bend — roll and pat. I was puffing. When I tried to lift the belly ball I struggled, but I managed to heft it up and drop it into place.

My huffing and puffing was becoming more pronounced but my snowman still needed a head. I rolled one more layer and triumphantly placed it on top of the others. A series of snowballs formed the arms — but I wasn't done.

Dark colored stones dug from the frozen driveway became his buttons and eyes — his smile, a branch dug from the deep snow. Bill contributed a carrot for the nose and found an old straw hat for the snowman's head. My red scarf became his scarf — now I was done.

My feet were freezing, my gloves so wet I dropped them in the snow and finished adjusting the scarf with stiffening red fingers. I was happily exhausted. I stood back to admire my work just as Bill arrived with the camera and a very unimpressed dog that sniffed it, marked it and walked away.

Fun or Foolish? It's all in your attitude.



# Luck or Coincidence?

BY LINDA L. SHIVVERS — DES MOINES, IOWA

**D**O YOU HAVE A PET? A DOG? How about two dogs? That's what the Shivvers have: two Dachshunds. Long in the back, short on the legs, and tails that go whippet-whip. Why two? They keep each other company when their people are away. They know doggy play like wrestling, tug of war with a sock, or chase — two little brown streaks going through the house. They are litter mates, Lacey Anne and Amelia Kay. Yes, they have middle names.

Where did the Shivvers find them? In a town about two hours from Des Moines. Linda and Melvin were conducting one of their children's creative activities at a festival in Marion, Iowa. Linda took a break to go through the craft fair. She saw a lady carrying a Dachshund puppy, went up to her to get a better look at the adorable little thing. Then hurried back to tell Melvin. He went in search of the lady, but couldn't find her.

At day's end, the festival organizer checked on the Shivvers. They told her about the lady with the puppy. She said, "I know her. I'll call her and see what I can find out." When she came back she said the lady got the pup from a farm in Manchester, about thirty miles away. The Shivvers decided to go right then. They got to Manchester, but weren't sure where to go from there. As luck, or coincidence would have it, they had stopped in front of the police station. They went in and told the receptionist who they were looking for. She said, "I know them. I board my dogs with them." The officer on duty wrote out directions.

The Shivvers found the farm. The farmer said the officer had called to say we were on the way. "Hang on. I'll go get some pups." He went to a little building and came back with an armful of pups. It's not easy picking out two puppies from a pile of them wrestling and tumbling about. The Shivvers think the two pups chose them.

And it's a good thing the Shivvers didn't go home and come back a day or two later. The farmer's wife came out of the house and said that some other people were on their way to see the pups.

Nine years later Lacey and Amelia still act like pups, rule the house, and hog the bed. Wouldn't have it any other way.

# Dandy Lion Salad

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

**T**HERE USED TO BE A BARBER in our little town of Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania. When my wife Susan and I moved back here 20 years ago “Don the Barber” was 70 years old. He started his shop after serving during WWII. It was a one-chair shop, striped pole out front and a picture window looking out on Main Street. I used to kid him by saying “Your Mafia name was ‘Don the Barber’.” He would laugh.

Don was the leader of a local band named “Country Pride.” I thought it was somewhat incongruous because Don’s father was from Rome and he had a large Italian family. But he loved Country Music. He was a mean bass player and had appeared in some Country shows with Loretta Lynn, Linda Ronstadt and other well-known stars of Country Music. These shows were down in West Virginia.

I was walking past Don’s shop one evening and his band was practicing. I noticed they didn’t have a drummer so I stopped in and asked if they could use one. Got a big fat “Yes!” I started to practice with them and was able to line up regular gigs at local nursing and personal care homes. Our one big gig was the Jefferson County Fair once a year with a Main Stage and sound system.

The band was made up of five people including me. We all made friends for life. One Summer afternoon there came a knock at our home and it was Don carrying a large dish of Dandelion Salad with his secret home-made dressing. So delicious it was. Italians just seem to love this salad.

Forward twenty-some years, Don had retired and was not doing well. He had moved in with his daughter who was helping to care for him. I went out and picked a big dish of “Dandy Lion” greens and delivered them to Don and his daughter, Annette. She in turn, made them into his favorite salad using Don’s secret dressing. So appreciative they were to relive a taste of days gone by; I was glad to do this. It wasn’t long after this that Don was moved to a nursing home to spend his last days. He had his share of 2,000-piece puzzles to spend hours of trial and error.

This coming spring, I intend to pick a bowl of greens and give them to Don’s daughter to enjoy in his memory.



# Night Rider

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

**B**LOWING THE CALENDAR BACK IN TIME to the '50's, I was remembering my first motor cycle. I was fifteen at the time. Saved paper-route money to make the buy. It wasn't in very good shape but at least the motor ran okay. It was a 125cc two-stroke. This meant you had to mix oil with the gas. Kind of like some lawnmowers. It produced about 3 HP and top speed was not over 50 MPH. I could be outrun by a Sears Moped.

When running, it sounded like a monster mosquito. It had a three-speed foot-activated gear box. It also had a kick starter which took a lot of jumps to get going. I took the front and rear fenders off and it looked like a stripped-down dirt bike. I would ride it in the fields and dirt roads that were still in their natural state behind where we lived in Canton, Ohio, in the 1950's. When there was rain, or wet, I had a solid line up my back from the back tire.

The area behind our house became well known as an ideal parking area for couples who wanted some "alone time."

Some evenings after dark, I would fire up the bike and ride over to this area. I had no light so would need a nice full-moon night. I have to mention that the muffler was in bad shape, which doubled the sound of the motor. I would then make a few passes up and down the road where there were cars parked. It must have irritated quite a few because they would flash head lights and sometimes blow a few toots on the horn to let me know I was not wanted. The air would turn blue from curses. I was kind of nervous because if the bike were to quit on me, I am sure some would have come after me and give me a thrashing. This never happened however. I was just a dumb kid being a pain. I should have known better.

I was only a year from getting my driver's license so the bike went up for sale. My first car was a '38 Plymouth Business Coupe. It was painted canary yellow and had red rims (no hub caps) and thick white-wall tires. I should have paid attention to the color because it was the biggest "lemon" I ever owned. It quit running after one month.

# Beulah Laughed, I Bawled

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

**T**HIS “THING” SCARED THE BEJESUS OUT OF ME when I was a young guy about 75 years ago. Mom and Dad would take me along to Meyer’s Lake Park, a large amusement park in Canton, Ohio.

I didn't know the meaning of the word automation back then but I actually wet my pants when they dragged me in front of her. She had a maniacal laugh and her oversized head shook with every sound. Her fat arms would gesticulate on both sides. I knew I was lined up for nightmares for



the night. To Mom and Dad it was funny. I would scream and try to pull away. The fear factor was off the charts. Look at the YouTube video and you will see what I mean.\* Plus ... I was so embarrassed by wearing wet pants for the evening. Not a good memory but that’s how it goes. Also, she was used as a threat if I were to misbehave. That would get my attention really quick.

She’s now a highlighted part of a permanent exhibit at the William McKinley Presidential Library and Museum, also located in Canton, his hometown.

“Beulah” was built by the Old King Cole company in Louisville, Ohio. She was a larger-than-life papier-mâché creation. “She terrified people,” says museum curator Kim Kenney. “People talk about how scared they were of her when they were little. Even kids who see her now are a little nervous to walk by her.” Although Beulah, who famously doubled over in laughter, can still move, she doesn’t. Instead, she is carefully preserved in a museum display case.

I will be sure and stop there on our next return trip. Nothing like a nice stroll down memory lane, is there?

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\* Just key in "Laffing Lady Meyers Lake Park" on YouTube for an interesting video – with sound!

# Con Man

BY JIM HEDGES — NEEDMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

**F**LINT-HEART THAT I AM, I'm pretty resistant to appeals for money. I budget each month for charities, but almost always to organizations, not individuals.

One group of exceptions is jail birds. I used to have a listing in *Poet's Market*, and some of the responses came from prisoners. And I did print some poetry postcards for them. Some became pen-pals; when they later came up for parole and needed a grubstake for civilian clothing and such, I would send a bit of money to their J-Pay accounts. My wife and I have also assisted local friends whose lives detoured behind bars. So although I've never slept a night in the hoosegow myself I've had vicarious exposure to that environment.

To attach the other wing to this story – about half of my “Facebook friends” come from the tiny west-African nation of The Gambia. I haven't figured out why, but for every friend request I get from the rest of the world, I also get one from Gambia. One of these guys (nearly all of them are young men) made a pitch to me for money to buy medicine for wounds from a motorcycle accident. He was, he said, a jobless teenager caring for younger siblings.

He had a great spiel about his life there, and his English was excellent. Well, okay ... and I sent him a few \$\$ for some salve.

His next angle was to tell me that his landlord had put him in jail for non-payment of rent. That sounded fishy. He said he was in jail but he was using a smart phone, and prisoners usually are not allowed to have personal telephones, at least not in the USA. One of my other Gambian pen-pals is a prison guard. I asked him if prisoners there were permitted to have telephones. “No,” he said, “never.”

When I confronted this guy, whoever he really is and wherever he really may be, he confessed to being a fraud. He's an interesting character nonetheless. I told him I'd keep on being his friend – I also told him that the gravy train has run off the rails.



*Flag of The Gambia. Their public relations slogan is “The smiling face of Africa.”*

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## Write for ONE-PAGE STORIES?

You don't have to be a member of NAPA to submit pieces, but members are definitely invited. (It's a good place to hone and present your short-short story writing.)



**HOW MANY WORDS?** About 375 words.  
(Less if you have an image 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 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.

## The Value of Your Stories

I wish I had stories, from my parents and others now passed away, like the ones that you and I are writing. Just glimpses into their lives from their own viewpoints. Remembrances of them, bringing them warmly to mind again.

They perhaps would have said, "There aren't earthshaking things about my life. Why would anyone care?" Well, I do.

You, too? Think there are people in your circle of life who would be glad to have your stories to recall in the future? Ask them, and if they encourage you, how about writing a page?