

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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Our June Power-Outage – First 20 Hours

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

“**P**LINK,” AND OUR POWER WENT OUT at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, June 14th, the first day of a three-day heat wave. Oh well, it happens in the diverse infrastructure of German Village. It’ll probably be back on in a few minutes or at worst a couple of hours. I reported it to AEP (American Electric Power) by iPhone, which still had a connection to the 5G cell network. But as a precaution we decided to keep the freezer and refrigerator doors closed.

In an hour or so, I checked our house’s main circuit breaker, in the basement, with the flashlight from my iPhone, just to make sure we weren’t disconnected. The switch was not easy to read; I threw it one way, then saw *that* was “Off.” I tried to move it back on. I couldn’t budge it. Oh, great, now if the power came back on, we’d still be blacked out. Well, time to go to our neighbors, Ken and Tim, and see if they were without power, too. They were. Tim kindly came over to our house and shoved our main breaker back to “On.” Tim said he’d been notified the outage would last til Thursday midnight.

By evening, still in the mid-90s, we walked Foxy quickly and got back indoors. By 9 o’clock dark we decided to turn in. Our bedroom (on the 2nd floor) was 86°. We gave up on sleep by midnight and came down to the 1st floor, getting fitful sleep in the reclining love seat where we usually watch TV. At least it was under 80° there. Both our iPhones were in low power mode by now.

Thursday morning we again walked Foxy quickly. On the way home we noticed that our neighbors Jerry and Brooke Smith had power (City of Columbus Power) and had an electrical outlet in their covered but open-air parking space behind their house. We knew from Peg Davis, another neighbor, who was watering their flowers for them, that they were away. I decided to walk to Peg’s house to ask if she thought they would mind if we charged our phones at that outlet, but as I was on the way I came across Jerry and Jules, their dog, in the alley. They had come home just last night. Jerry not only welcomed our phone-charging request, but also invited us to stay in their house that day since their air conditioning was working. We gladly accepted, and phoned our veterinarian to ask if Foxy and Isabelle, our cat, would be safe in our house while we were away. They said yes, as long as they had water and shade. So ends the first 20 hours, as we move over to Jerry and Brooke’s.

Our June Power-Outage – The Next 10 Hours

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

AHHH – ELECTRICITY! AND AIR CONDITIONING! As soon as Jules had barked us into Jerry and Brooke’s house and been petted, we had our phones charging, and were relaxing in their family room with glasses of water that had actual ice in them!

It turned out Brooke was leaving soon for work, and Jerry was too, as soon as the thermostat technician arrived. The technician came early, fortunately, while Jerry was there in person – a good thing because it was far more complicated than a mere swap-out. The warranty on his old one expired three months ago, of course, and they don’t carry that model any more. An upgrade to the newer, better, wi-fi-connected Eco model was recommended. Newer pricing of course. And they don’t let those models go out on their trucks without an order in hand. But they did have one back at the shop, so Jerry said “Yes,” the technician drove back to get it, returned and set about installing it. It didn’t cover the old spot on the wall, so an unpainted section sticks out around it, and would require repainting someday. (And Jerry and Brooke had houseguests arriving for the weekend.) In the midst of fitting the new thermostat in place, the technician had to go back out to his truck to get a tool. No sooner was he out there than we all heard loud angry voices. Jerry rushed out to see what was going on. The technician had found a guy inside his van trying to steal tools. The guy claimed “the Mexican” had told him to get them – a lie, of course. The technician restrained himself from beating the guy up in the street; the guy ran away, but the technician followed close enough to get a picture of the car (and license plate) he escaped in. But at last the new thermostat was installed and Jerry had gone to get a wi-fi connection (yes, his was down, too) and get a proposal completed before 5 p.m.

Ruth and I ordered a sandwich from Brown Bag Deli for lunch. They still had power, but no wi-fi for online orders. Then we had had a standing appointment with our pastor for a home call this afternoon, so we redirected him to Jerry and Brooke’s address, and had a nice, air-conditioned visit. Toward the end of it, Kris, who with her husband, Tom, had taken in Jules while Jerry and Brooke were gone, came in and chatted, too.

We went back home for “supper,” came back to watch PBS in the evening, but it was off the air, so we went home. Power came back on at 11:30 p.m. A hot time in the old town was had by all!

“My Diary”—The Start and Early Years

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

MY MOM KEPT A DIARY; perhaps I was emulating her. Or had I merely been given “My Diary” for Christmas my junior year in high school? I don’t recall why I started keeping a diary that January — and the initial entry does not provide a reason; it just says, “gave Chris a permanent today — looks pretty nice!” Perhaps I just enjoyed writing the travelogue of a family trip west a year or two earlier and wanted to continue the process. A couple years prior to that I had written about our trip to Colorado when Mom attended a convention of the women of our national church. Along the way, I kept track of the number of horses we saw! I also made sure to note the mileage either at the start or the end of the day. Possibly because my father kept a very accurate accounting of the money spent in our household, at the end of my journals there is generally a list of what I spent on my purchases. For example, on August 5, 1963, Mom and Dad’s 19th anniversary, we kids took them to dinner at a pancake house (which had a pool!) and paid for the hotel (a Coka Cola [sic] Bottling Works was right behind it — the night was not very restful). My share of the bill was \$3.91. I also kept track of the photos I took, probably realizing I might not remember what the subject was.



I do not recall if I ever was intentional about keeping my diary private in those years. Perhaps my sisters were also keeping a diary and we just respected each other’s things. Or maybe they knew me well enough to figure out it wouldn’t be all that interesting. None of us did much dating, so there was certainly nothing enticing to look for. A year or so ago while looking through a box of old letters (mostly from my “Sunshine Twin”), I found “A Night to Remember,” written about a teenage crush. I don’t remember all the details, but since I tend to write facts rather than fiction, it is most likely true.

Some of what I wrote was lost in the several moves. One of my treasured early writings was an autobiography written in eighth grade. I was heartbroken when as an adult starting a journaling workshop I could not find that autobiography — I had even taken some photos out of my childhood photo album to supplement the story. Imagine my joy when I opened a scrapbook a couple years ago and found “From Tiny Tot to Teenager”! I photocopied the pictures and returned the originals to their home.

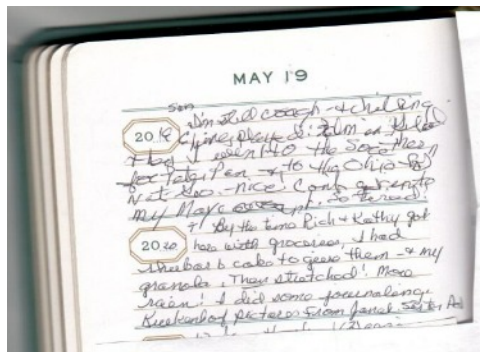
My Diary – An Adult Perspective

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

WHY STILL KEEP A DIARY AS AN ADULT? Once I begin a project, I like to complete it. That is probably the main reason why I have kept on with a diary all these years. Every five years I went to a Hallmark store and got a new one. For some time I had to plan ahead: the only place I could find one was England. Fortunately, an English graduate student was familiar with them and supplied me with two. Then a friend (and later my daughter-in-law) visited England and bought one for me. Since journaling is popular now, I can find diaries in the USA.

Perhaps another reason is that I have been interested in history since I was young. I don't tend to share whole diaries but will share an entry with someone to illustrate a point. When younger son Eric called once and asked if I remembered the name of the town in Germany where we had the "four seasons pizza" and that had lots of *Fachwerk* (open-beam architecture) on our way to Potsdam, I had to confess I did not. I researched in my diary and called him back in minutes: Melsungen. Several weeks ago, after reading my story "Growing Up in Iowa Winters" (Feb. 2022), my sister Chris and I discussed it. She was sure we had stayed with the Browns for a few nights; I thought only one. I looked in my diary: one night. Reading further, I was reminded it was only two days later that our grandfather died. During the pandemic I looked at the slides I had taken during my junior semester abroad and took pictures of a few to share with my friend Janet, whom I met that year. She asked the names of the other girls in the photos. I did not remember but my diary provided the answer. Even today when I come to some blank lines in a diary while looking for a special event, I will go to the appropriate travel journal, then jot a few words in the diary to remind me what happened those days.

I enjoy reading previous years' entries – this is the fourth year in the current diary. I see the nearly illegible top lines and am reminded of the pneumonia, cellulitis, and bronchitis of that year. In many ways, "My Diary" is simply "My Life."



My East New York

BY L. J. HUTCHINSON — COLUMBUS, OHIO

IT WAS ONLY FIVE BLOCKS TO P. S. 64, the first school I attended in the East New York section of Brooklyn, N. Y. Sometimes my mother would walk with me to or from school. When I transferred to P. S. 171, which was about a mile from home, there was no direct bus route, so I walked. That lasted two years as I completed 7th, 8th and 9th grades. Then on to high school at Franklin K. Lane in the '50s, a little further from home but still walkable. School bus service was available.

P. S. 64 and Franklin K. Lane are gone now and East New York had become a different world than the one I knew as a child. I visited my grandmother who lived in the adjoining area of Brooklyn, called New Lots. I loved her pool room with pool table, music box, phonograph and player piano. Also, I became accustomed to the fly paper that hung above her kitchen table. I explored the open lots that surrounded her home. Coming upon blackberry bushes was a “find” in the empty lots of dirt and weeds.

After high school I rode the elevated train and later the underground. I took the “A” train to Manhattan for an hour to one of my jobs while attending City College on 23rd Street and later, New York University in the Village. Some days, classes ended at 10 p.m.; still I was on the “A” train, heading home. Few friends and neighbors understood my quest for an education since I was a woman.

In the '60s all that began to change. The Gaskills, Moores, Mottolas, Gans, Cassanos, and other neighbors from different ethnic backgrounds moved to Queens or further east to Long Island as large apartment complexes were being built in the open lots of East New York and New Lots. The Sunday pushcarts on Blake Avenue disappeared. Grandma's home was demolished to make way for the high rises and commercial ventures despite the fact that the house was a sturdy, well-kept two-story home. Eventually, houses burned due to the new residents' frustration or the expectation of lucrative insurance settlements. After experiencing break-ins, Dad sold his home for “a song and a dance” as houses burned around him. He moved to Queens for safety.

I moved on with a fine career but remember the fly paper, blackberries and breeze from Jamaica bay just a few miles from Grandma's house, saddened by the fact that I can “never go home.”

The FBI Investigates My Aunt Edith

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

WE HAD NO WAY TO ANTICIPATE the consequences of our backyard play. My brothers, Terry (8), Eric (6), and I, (11), were visiting Aunt Edith Dornbirer and Grandpa August Dornbirer at their home in Columbus once during the infamous McCarthy era and Red scare of the late 1940s and early '50s. We were bored with grownup conversation in the house, so we asked Aunt Edith if we could play in the backyard. Could we use her flags-on-dowels set of United Nations flags, stick them in the ground and play “war” with them? She said okay, just don’t get them dirty because they were used for displays honoring the United Nations by various churches who were customers of her in-home religious book and supply business, Trinity House. Permission granted, we went out to play in the backyard.



It was conveniently divided in two unequal grassy areas, separated by the brick sidewalk out to the garage. An alley ran behind the garage. Since we boys regarded most of the U.N. nations as “good guys” and the Commies as “bad guys,” most of the flags were poked into the ground in the larger grassy area between the house and the garage. The Soviet Union and Communist China got stuck on the smaller patch. Probably East Germany was there, too.

But only that narrower side of the backyard was visible from the alley, while the rest of the U.N. flags were hidden from view by the garage. A neighbor passing along the alley glanced into the backyard, saw just the Commie flags, and like a red-blooded American he called the FBI district office in Columbus and reported this highly suspicious display of Communist sentiment hidden surreptitiously in the home-owner’s backyard.

Soon thereafter Aunt Edith answered the front doorbell to a gentleman in a suit who identified himself as an FBI Agent. He stated he was following up on a report of suspicious activity in the backyard at this address. So Aunt Edith explained to him why she had a U.N. flag set for her business, and that we boys had been playing with the full set of U.N. flags in the backyard, and just by coincidence we had planted the Communist flags in the only patch of grass visible from the alley. The agent thanked her and left. No arrests were made.

The Amazing Ucks – Yuck?

BY KEN FAIG, JR. — GLENVIEW, ILLINOIS

As for the Uck family, we have B, D, F, L, M, P, S, T, Y. (H[uck] Finn doesn't count—he's a proper noun.) If we allow a prefix of more than one letter (so long as the resulting word is still monosyllabic), we get additional Ucks like PL, ST, STR or even Curly Stooage's famous rejoinder NY (usually spelled nyuk). Some Uck nouns can turn into adjectives by adding a -y suffix: e.g., L-y. We don't decline nouns in English but they can at least be pluralized: e.g., B-s. Uck verbs can sometimes be turned into nouns by adding an -er suffix: e.g., T-er. They can also be conjugated through various verb forms: e.g., D-ing or D-ed. Some Ucks (e.g., D) are both nouns and verbs; a few can even be combined to make a compound word: e.g., ML.

Sometimes there's a sporty note about the Ucks—e.g., you need a P to play hockey. The Uck family also enters the world of finance — e.g., you'll need lots of B-s to become rich. Or even life advice: e.g., if you have enough PL, you'll go far.

However, the reputation of the Uck family is most impacted by its ugly duckling (D diminutive) members F and S. One source suggests that F did not originate with the Anglo-Saxon, as many of us presume, but with Dutch, German and Swedish words meaning to strike or to move back and forth. Used in the sense of having sex, the first occurrence may be in the margin of a monkish manuscript of 1528. In any case, Uck family member F was in full flourish by the 17th century. Uck family member S history is both ancient and modern. In the sense of what babies do with their mothers' teats, it traces all the way back to the Latin *sugere* and there are cognate words in other languages. In the sense of oral sex, however, S dates back (in English) only to 1928. In the sense of being contemptible, S dates back (in English) only to 1971. The “giant S-ing sound” dates back to Ross Perot (and NAFTA) in 1992. In polite society, Uck family member F was long taboo. It had to be represented in print with inventions like f\$%k. In a way, it's strange that an activity so essential to the continuance of our species (and so emblematic of the oneness of lovers) became so taboo in speech and print. But our society is becoming desensitized. Today even grannies say “that S-s” when something offends them.

My wish: to hear (and to read) Uck family members F and S less frequently. My prediction: yucky or not, the Ucks will remain part of our vocabularies for a long time to come.

Grandpa Got Angry at Me

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

HE GRABBED ME BY THE EAR AND TOLD ME to get outside and mow the backyard!

Grandpa August Dornbirer was a very good man, as I've shown repeatedly in earlier one-page stories. But this incident in his retirement years – really the only time I actually knew him – shows that even good grandpas can have impatient days. When those days coincide with a pre-teen grandson's bad day ... well, read on.

It was a hot summer day in Columbus once when my family was visiting Grandpa's house. I was about eleven at the time. The backyard lawn needed mowing, and somehow that chore fell to me that day. No! I didn't want to do it. It was so hot I didn't even want to *play* outside, let alone trudge behind a push-type reel mower.



The backyard I was sentenced to mow is the same one mentioned in “The FBI Investigates My Aunt Edith,” page 7 in this issue. With super mapping tools available today, I figured the grassy area to be mowed was about 1,450 square feet, omitting the sidewalk, vegetable garden and garage, which were all there in the backyard, too. So today that amounts to less than a third of an acre of grass. When I was eleven, it was more like five acres! And the heat! I hadn't heard about climate change back then, but if I had, I'd have known it was severely impacting their backyard. Maybe it wasn't “global warming” yet, but it was certainly “Bryden Road warming”!

So I whined and complained to Mom and Aunt Edith about cruel and unusual chores, and apparently I had them stymied because there I was, still standing in the kitchen-dining area with them, until suddenly Grandpa's hand reached my right ear and grabbed it good and hard as he said “Get out there and do as you are told!”

So I was compelled to get out there and mow. But I knew what I would do to show my resistance and anger: I would slave so hard, push that mower so ruthlessly, and sweat so profusely in that baking sun that I would pass out right in the middle of the job, and boy, would they be sorry then! – Alas, I failed to manage that; never fainted even once. The lawn just got mowed, end of story.

My Minute on the Magnum

BY MAXIMILIAN SEBASTIAN SCHWARZ-WRIGHT — WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE MAGNUM LOOKED TRULY FEROCIOUS. We were at Cedar Point amusement park. My sister, Lexi, didn't want to ride on any major roller coasters, but after a few rides like bumper cars and the carousel, we got to ride some real roller coasters. Well, I thought they were real ... until I ran into the Magnum X-L 200.

When we first saw it, we were told that it was old, wild, and relatively rough, but I was feeling daring after having just gone on the Power Tower. I got in line but got cold feet when I was in the front of the line and saw that the only people that seemed to be going on it were daring teenagers or roller coaster veterans like Uncle Hans, but at that point it was too late to back out.



"The Magnum" roller coaster, Cedar Point, Ohio.

As the ride started, there was a great rumbling and clattering and we shot off. We turned a sharp corner and the wheels shrieked. We twirled around, went up and down. It was only the beginning, but it was as wild as some roller coasters' climaxes. Then we began slowly ascending a tall hill. This had happened on all roller coasters, but it was never so loud, never so long, never so suspenseful. I kept thinking, "Why did I do this?!" Then my friend Javi's voice floated into my mind. "You're OK man. You're OK." I repeated this thought over and over again. I saw a little flag over the head of the person in front of me. It was only a few yards away. I gripped the handle. Then, I heard the people in the front scream. I had 3 seconds before we started racing down the vertical hill! Faster and faster!

The sound of the wind was rushing in my ears! I was being thrown out of my seat! I was slammed up against the padded body bar that was the only thing between me and being catapulted straight through the air! I was not alive, I could not feel myself, only my head existed! The old tracks made an excruciatingly loud noise! It sounded as if the noise of death was rushing towards me! As we were jolted sharply into a tunnel, the noise grew louder! In that moment, I thought I was going to die! And before I could recover, it happened again except with no time to prepare, no uphill! It happened again and again, and by the end of it, I had to search for my legs. I stumbled off and could not believe that I had survived the Magnum X-L 200.

Poignant Glimpses of the Past

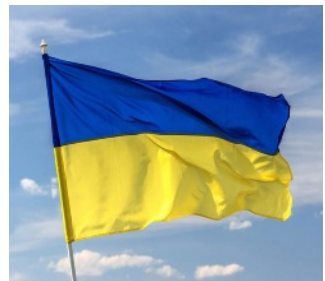
BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

HOW COULD THIS BE HAPPENING AGAIN – people being forced to leave their country to save their lives? Fathers' hands pressed against train windows to meet the hands of wives and children fleeing Ukraine reminded me of a door in Prague's train station with handprints on the window.*

Many people assumed Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February would be over quickly, and Ukraine would be back under the control of Russia. However, Volodymyr Zelensky has rallied his people, as well as most of the world, to stave off a much larger army to keep his country a democracy. The scale of this war is so large, I cannot comprehend it. I understand much better on a personal level. I am grateful for friends who have been helping in much more personal ways.

Julek and Marcin, sons of my Polish friends, Stan and Teresa, have each, even with two children of their own, hosted refugee families in their homes. Teresa supplied lunches for one family when they were able to leave Cracow to move in with relatives further west. As the recipient of one of Teresa's lunches for my own bus journey years ago, I know the lunch consisted of much more than one tiny sandwich and a piece of fruit. It would have been sustenance for a long journey and given with love.

German friends Sebastian and Susi helped refurbish a “janitor's apartment” in Susi's school in Frankfurt as an apartment for a Ukrainian family. One of the children from that family will be a student in Susi's classroom. From what I have heard on news programs, these are only two of the hundreds of families who have opened their hearts and their homes to help the displaced Ukrainians. I am grateful to all who have participated in the outpouring of humanitarian aid in this crisis. I sincerely hope that peace will soon be restored, and the Ukrainians will be able to return to their beloved country, even though their homes may have been leveled by the invaders. Long live Ukraine!



*See “Bold Women” in ONE-PAGE STORIES, No. 12, April 2021.

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Write for One-Page Stories?

You needn't even be a member of NAPA to submit pieces, though members are definitely invited, too.

HOW MANY WORDS? About 375 - 400 words. (Less if you have an image to go with your story.)



WHAT KIND OF CONTENT? Original prose – fiction or non-fiction – previously unpublished. Personal narratives, anecdotes and memoirs especially welcome, but other genres welcome, too.

DEADLINE: End of the month, for the next month's issue.

CAN I GET 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 or by postal mail to 184 Reinhard Ave., Columbus OH 43206-2635.

“How to Start Writing”

Only 2 minutes long – yet this YouTube video packs a lot of useful advice into that short time.

If you don't write but might like to give it a try (say, for contributing a one-page story!), I recommend this one. (The speaker, Maggie Hammond, is the author of *Writing for Dummies*.)

“Writing Skills: How to Begin Writing,” YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT5hAEMZedk>, Videojug Corp. Ltd., c. 2011. (2 min., 2 sec.)