

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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Campsite Intruder

BY RUTH BOYS – COLUMBUS, OHIO (WITH BILL BOYS)

I SCREAMED. I HAD JUST REALIZED that someone had patted my behind, and it *wasn't* my husband! He was sitting right next to me at our campground picnic table, so at first I assumed it was him just fooling around. But then I noticed both his hands were on the table as we were playing an evening game of cards with his parents, seated opposite us.

This camping trip turned out to be a once in a lifetime event. We had never gone camping with Bill's parents before, and it never happened again. Living in different states, both Bill and I working full-time careers, they with their own lives to lead and dealing with some health issues – an opportunity just never seemed to arise to do a repeat. But as dusk fell that evening, we were enjoying a game of cards by the light of a Coleman lantern on the table. So it happened that in our little circle of light, behind all of our backs darkness was creeping across the campground.



Caesar Creek State Park in southwestern Ohio was relatively new in those days, the 1980's. Coincidentally, it occupies land leased from the Army Corps of Engineers. Bill's dad worked as a civilian clerk for them out of both Columbus and Cincinnati for many years.

I don't recall many other campers around; it probably was not the peak tent-camping season. Someone could have stealthily approached us from the trees behind us in the growing darkness.

My scream didn't attract the attention of any other campers at any rate, but it certainly startled Bill and his parents. Then I heard a rustling sound, moving away from behind us. I turned just in time to see something scurrying off with the bag of cookies that had been sitting right beside my hip. After it got several yards away it paused, looked back at us as if to check: were we going to give chase? In that moment, even in the dim light, we recognized those raccoon features. He had made a haul – a whole bag of cookies – and was getting clean away with it. And we just enjoyed a good laugh on ourselves.

“Reichen Sie mir das Salz, bitte”

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

I WAS STARTLED BY THOSE WORDS from my Grandpa August Dornbirer as we were having lunch at his summer cottage one summer in the early 1950's.

I didn't even process what he said as ordinary speech because we had always spoken only English until then. And he was fluent in English; he wasn't just off some immigrant steamship, by any means.

He was born in Weavers Corner, Ohio, on Nov. 24, 1865. His father was a Lutheran minister, who had emigrated from Switzerland. August, his first child, became one, too; an 1890 graduate of the Lutheran Seminary in Columbus. In 1907, after serving for a year in a two-point parish in Perry County (Hopewell and Glenford), where he met the girl he later married (1897); and then for six years with his father in Sandusky. He was called in 1897 to the specialized ministry of managing the Lutheran Book Concern, in Columbus.

He knew German *quite* well. I have some old manuscripts of his German-language sermons. He also knew English well. He was fluently bilingual, a perfect fit for his call to the publishing house, because especially up until World War I many Lutheran congregations still held services in German, though English was gaining in popularity. The switchover to English services accelerated because of anti-German sentiment in the war. The publishing house printed hymnals, worship materials, Sunday School books and other church-related materials in both languages, to meet all requirements over the years. He served the rest of his ministry in that capacity, retiring in 1940. By then the plant name was Wartburg Press. Later it was part of Augsburg Press, and still later that branch press was closed.

No, it was *me* – I didn't know German. Or at least I didn't know it well since I only started learning it as a freshman in high school in 1952. So there I was, having lunch with him this particular day when he sprang a German sentence on me. He was very cordial in translating for me when he saw that my spoken German wasn't yet up to conversational level and that I was non-plussed by what he said. “Reach the salt for me, please.” I was flattered that at least he tried me out, and that he thought I *might* be able to understand.

Speaking of salt, Grandpa Dornbirer himself was s. of the earth.

Mock Turtle Soup

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

NOW THERE'S A NAME FROM THE PAST! I hadn't thought about mock turtle soup since childhood, I daresay, until Ken Faig mentioned it in "Hot Soup – Is It Good Enough for You?" in last month's issue.

My mother served it when I was a boy, and I remember its fragrant, slightly sharp flavor with relish. Like Ken Faig, I too lived in the Cincinnati area for part of my childhood. Apparently it is a regional dish, and one that is not even readily available anymore. Campbell Soups used to make it – I've seen old pictures of their cans of it on YouTube – but evidently it's been discontinued by them for some time. Ken mentioned a brand which is still available and can be purchased online: Worthmore. It's a little pricey: \$4 to \$5 per can, but not exorbitant for just giving it a try. Kroger has it, too.

I wondered if there might be recipes for it available on YouTube or elsewhere online. The one I settled on was not on YouTube, but at soupaddict.com, credited to Karen Gibson.

Her easy recipe serves six, using 1½ pounds of ground beef, so every serving is indeed meaty – about ¼ pound per bowl! And it uses 3 ounces of ginger snaps, a cup of tomato ketchup, ¼ cup of Worcestershire sauce and 1 tbsp of sherry, besides more familiar ingredients like 1 onion, black pepper and about 8 cups of water. Plus a few hard boiled eggs as garnishment. (Since we had no sherry in the house, buying a bottle of that jacked the receipt total up, but that bottle will last for many, many more servings when you only use a tablespoon at a time.) I'd say that making this recipe at home comes in at less than \$2 per serving.

Ruth, my wife, who grew up in Illinois, had no experience of this soup, but she finds it very tasty, too. And *filling*. We enjoyed it with a hearty red wine, but I think a chilled dry pink rosé might go well, too, next time we make it.



We made this Mock Turtle Soup from Karen Gibson's recipe.

Night Train to Berlin

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

TO SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH A LADY FRIEND, her mother and son, I was in a reserved seat from Frankfort, West Germany, through East Germany for a visit to West Berlin. It was 1963 and I was in the Army. The Russians had blocked all roads and railways leading to Berlin. They wanted Berlin all for themselves. Things were also on high alert at Check Point Charlie in Berlin. My friend had taken a flight from Frankfort to Berlin, flying the 20-mile-wide air corridor through East Germany to Berlin.

This train was special. It was for U.S. service members only, required special permission from the Russians, ran only at night and had to stop at the border to switch locomotives with an East German crew and then just the opposite when we reached the West Berlin border. We made a couple of stops along the way and Russian soldiers would board the car and walk from one end to the other. We passengers tried to look straight ahead but still appear casual. Shades were pulled over all the windows. The soldiers would look under seats and anywhere a stowaway might hide. It was during these times that escape from East Germany could mean sudden death, as happened many times over with citizens making a run for it over the Berlin Wall. The soldiers wore extra heavy boots and heels to make a heavy impression as they walked the aisle. They also carried machine guns strapped on their shoulders. We all breathed a collective sigh of relief when the train pulled into the West Berlin station. This entire passage would happen again in reverse at the end of my week's leave.

During my visit, their tree was trimmed with actual lit candles on Christmas Eve. There was a bucket of water at the ready but it was not needed.

We walked along the Wall on Christmas Eve under a softly falling snow – how could something so white and beautiful be falling upon something so ugly. Tall buildings near the West side of the Wall had roof-top sequential signs showing greetings and short news clips for viewers in the East to read.



Occupied Germany after World War II. The night train from Frankfort to Berlin.

Old

BY PEGGY ZORTMAN — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'RE OLD? I went to my doctor complaining of some new aches and pains. She gently explained, "When a person enters their seventh decade . . ."

I don't feel old in spite of those aches and pains. I move a bit, okay a lot, more slowly. Days fly by fast and I keep track of them with my pillbox. But I don't feel old.

So what if a ten-year-old had to show me how to use my new smart (semi-smart to me) phone. I don't feel old.

The other day my favorite keeps-on-ticking analog watch needed a new battery. I no longer install my own battery. My fingers fumble and my eyes don't focus well on small stuff so I took it to one of those big box stores where if I buy it they pry it open and install that tiny battery.

I waited in line as a young mother and her son (about three or four years old) made their purchase . . . a battery installed into the back of a large digital machine that seemed to me to tell everything but time.

Then it was my turn. I handed the young clerk my aging time-piece. She turned it over and over in her hands — a look of astonishment on her face. "I've never seen one this old!" she declared turning to her companion. The even younger woman took it and, handling it carefully as if she had found an heirloom jewel, declared, "This is really old!" The young customer quickly returned to ogle my very plain piece of jewelry. Even her four-year-old boy had to have a look.

The clerk finally figured out how to open the back, install the new battery and reset the time. I found myself wondering what she would think of my even older wind-up watch.

But I don't feel old!



My Grandparents' Tenement Toilet

By JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

MY GRANDPARENTS DIDN'T HAVE A TOILET IN their tenement on the Lower East Side of New York City. But there was one on the landing between the floors for everyone of the six families living on the floor to use. My grandparents, who were very poor, emigrated from Poland in 1912.

As a kid I never looked forward to Sundays because I had to visit my paternal grandparents. It was an hour on the subway and we usually got home late. I resented having to go because I usually put off doing my weekend homework until then. There was too much fun available after school on Friday and all day Saturday to worry about schoolwork. On top of that I loathed that disgusting toilet and tried never to have to use it.



Not my grandparents' common 6th-floor tenement bathroom, but one similar (but clean). (Web image from a newspaper article about the Tenement Museum in New York City.)

I suspect that no one took the responsibility to clean the toilet and it smelled terrible, as did the neighborhood. The building and the neighborhood were old and dirty with strange people along the way to the tenement. (According to the 1930 census, their rent was just \$6. Shades of Baltic Avenue in the game "Monopoly.")

When I was about seven or eight, I was surprised one day to see a real bathroom in their small apartment. You can imagine how delighted I was! To this day I can't figure out where the room came from but it was surely welcome to this young lad. Perhaps having an indoor toilet was the highlight of their life even if it wasn't in their apartment for their first twenty years in this country. As best I recall, I think they lived the rest of their lives there. My grandfather couldn't speak due to a stroke, my father told me. Grandfather died in 1944; grandmother, who never learned English, died in 1951.

I ponder that my home today has three and a half bathrooms.

Conversation with a Goldfinch

By PEGGY ZORTMAN, REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

“PEEP!”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t see you there. I’m here to refill the feeder if you don’t mind.”

“Chip.”

“I see you’re still enjoying your breakfast. I can wait. You speak very clearly with a seed perched on your beak.”



“Tweet.”

“You’re changing to your summer wardrobe I see. You look very nice in yellow.”

“Chirp, chirp”

“You’re welcome.” It’s cold and windy today. You’re smart to shelter on the leeward side of the feeder. Many of your friends were here earlier. I’m sorry I scared them away but I know they will return.”

“Tweet, tweet.”

“Oh, I see . . . you would rather eat when it isn’t crowded. I don’t blame you; I’m not fond of crowds either.”

“Our little talk has been delightful, but it’s getting late and it’s rather cold out here, do you mind if I finish my job and go inside? Perhaps you could move over a little and I’ll work around you.”

Flutter, flutter, “Tweet, chirp, chip.”

“The water dish is a good place to wait. I’ll only be a moment.”

TWEET!

“Sorry to make you move again, but I need to clean and refill the water dish. The feeder is full now if you care to return.”

“Chirp, chip.”

“You’re welcome.”

With that the little bird resumed his breakfast. I picked up the feed and water buckets and started home. Halfway there, I turned to see that the flock had re-gathered. I straightened my shoulders and gave my little friend a heartfelt salute.

Biking at 88

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

NOT JUST ANY OLD BIKE – AN 18-SPEED RACER called a “Trek Navigator 3.0”. We’re talkin’ ’bout a downhill racer that clocks in at 35-plus miles per hour. It has no motor so the bike is really moving at this speed. Care must be taken the whole way down.

He is my wife’s cousin, named Lucius, but everyone calls him Lou. He retired several years ago and still rides a bike. He lives atop Murray Summit, elevation 1,712 feet which is on U.S. Route 322. Reynoldsville (the town) is about a mile downhill with a sharp curve entering the last of a series of curves. Braking is a very delicate operation so as not to lose control, take a spill, and cause an accident. Brakes must be applied at just the right time.

He then rides around town using various alleys and back streets. He would be hard to pick out when dressed in all the safety equipment and helmet. You couldn’t tell him from Lance Armstrong.

Here’s the hooker: On his return trip, he pedals back up the hill non-stop and does not get off the bike – back up to the summit using the lowest gear setting all the way.

He started this ride around 1990 so he knows every inch of pavement and road surface around town. Many townsfolk will wave or signal a friendly “Hello” during the ride and he returns the greeting to all who care. There were many times on my morning walk when I would be sitting on a guard-rail for a break. He would stop and pass a few friendly minutes.

He will ride in the mist but not rain. He rides alone and is very vigilant for cars and foot traffic.

Lou is also a Korean War Veteran. He was a young 18-year-old at the DMZ and values his freedom.

To be in such good shape he values his morning oatmeal. That is a breakfast he will swear by. Even in church with decent language.



Lou, suited up, ready for a ride.

Las Vegas Greenhouse Building

BY JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

THE SOIL IS TERRIBLE IN LAS VEGAS, like concrete, so most homeowners landscape their yard themselves or hire someone. I did the latter and had them install a raised garden with real soil as I enjoy growing things.

I moved locally last year and ran into the same problem but opted out of a garden. Instead I started things like tomatoes in containers in my house. This worked out well over the winter as we were able to enjoy enough tomatoes to eat and give away. Then I thought a greenhouse would be the thing. Bought a 6' x 8' from Home Depot but returned it when I discovered one at Harbor Freight that was 10' x 12' for about the same price.

I waited for my wife's nephew to visit before starting the installation as I knew he would be very helpful. Although he's 70 years old, he has completed several Ironman competitions. His visit was in April, which temperature-wise should have been a good choice but for the week he was here it was uncomfortably hot. He managed to install the base and a several corners mostly without my help as the heat was just too much for me.

Then my 19-year-old grandson visited and in one day had all the sides up. It was somewhat cooler that day and I was able to be helpful. After he left I got the roof structure up only to discover a missing piece. I contacted customer service who said the part had to be shipped from China and would take 20 days. This was fine as the store's return policy permitted me to return it within 90 days of purchase. I waited but when the 90 days started to close in without receiving the missing part, I felt it best to disassemble and return it.

By this time it was the end of May and the days were pretty hot but working in the late afternoon I was able to take it down in just three days, considerably less than putting it up.

Loading it in my station wagon, (Cadillac calls it a sport wagon), was a chore because of the weight. I drove to the purchase store worrying that it might fall out as I was unable to close the tailgate. The people at Harbor Freight were great, accepting the return with no hassle at all. I might buy it again but I'll wait until the fall as there's no way I want to work outside in a Las Vegas summer.

Writing Advice via David Brooks

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

DAVID BROOKS DIDN'T CREATE THESE BITS I'm calling "Writing Advice," but they were among the nuggets in his *New York Times* column recently. (If you want to read the whole column it's titled "The Greatest Life Hacks in the World (for Now)."

"The biggest lie we tell ourselves is, 'I don't need to write this down because I will remember it.'"

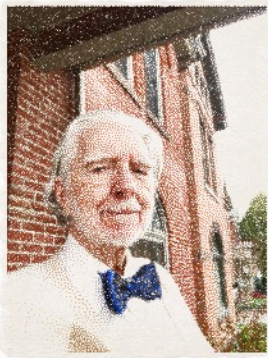
I really fall victim to this one, especially on short items that I think I won't need to hang onto for long – phone numbers, addresses, appointments I'll put in my calendar app "right away." Oh, yes, not to mention those one-page story ideas that waft by at 3 a.m. when I'm trying to fall back asleep after a trip to the bathroom.

"Take photos of things your parents do every day. That's how you'll want to remember them."

Too late for me, since both my parents passed away years ago, but I wish I had thought of this way back then. They would undoubtedly spark the writing of some swell stories of remembrance.

Sometimes we get lucky and someone else's remark will call up a long-submerged memory. That happened to me when Ken Faig's article on hot soups ran last month. It triggered my story this month, "Mock Turtle Soup," on page 4. (Thank you, Ken.)

"When you're beginning a writing project, give yourself permission to write badly. You can't fix it until it's down on paper."



I have become more aware that my usual writing process may be hindering me. If I spot an error, a misspelling, a better word choice, I usually go back and make the change right away, whether I've finished the sentence or not. (Not to mention whether I've finished the paragraph, or the entire piece!) "Freewriting," which I mentioned in the last issue, may help here. And be sure to check out the video tip, next page, bottom.

Freely read and download back issues (in PDF format) by using the QR code or go to www.AmateurPress.org/the-monthly-bundles.



Write for ONE-PAGE STORIES?

You don't have to be a member of NAPA to submit pieces, but members are definitely invited.

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 (preferred, to save retyping) 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.)