

ONE-PAGE STORIES

No. 29 — November 2022

A Cooperative Journal for the National Amateur Press Association

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Election Day – 2022

By KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

THE ALARM CHIMED AT “0:DARK 30” and I jumped out of bed. It was Election Day! I condensed my morning routine, skipped exercising, fixed my oatmeal, then sat down to rest for 5 minutes before taking my blood pressure. Oatmeal slightly cooled, I ate and was ready. Lunch and reference materials had been packed in the car the previous night.

At 5:30 most of the PEOs (Precinct Election Officials) were ready to begin the day. We quickly followed our checklists (picking up from where we left off Monday evening) to complete setting up for the voters to arrive at 6:30 a.m. We were not disappointed: there was a line of citizens when the doors opened – which continued most of the day. After processing a voter or two, I was back in the groove. Training and a review session, in addition to working for the past few years, made me comfortable with the process.

“May I have your ID, please?” A quick glance at the proffered license told me that this was an Ohio citizen, the photo looked like the man standing before me, the name matched what he said, and I noted he lived on my street. Then I looked at the expiration date. I looked again. “Sir, this expired last month.” “What? I just renewed it!” He took his license back and looked at the date. “Oh, no. I threw the wrong one away. Worse yet, I shredded it!” I felt badly for the man and said, “That will cost you!” He chuckled and agreed. I asked if he had another form of identification. He pulled out his military ID, and I was able to continue processing him. He thanked me for alerting him to the error and went to the ballot marker to vote.

In contrast, another voter came in and handed me a license with an address in north Columbus. Scanning his license, the iPad confirmed my assessment – he was in the wrong location. I explained to him he would need to vote in his own precinct, but he was adamant that he had “always voted here.” The VLM (Voting Location Manager) heard his complaint, came over and reiterated that each person must vote in their own precinct. He stormed off, but eventually returned and got the address of his correct location.

A PEO meets all kinds of people, including current and former neighbors. It’s fascinating to catch up in the few minutes of interaction allowed.

General Election Day – 2022

BY MARK MECHLING — DUNCAN FALLS, OHIO

IN THE WRESTLING ROOM in Philo High School I served as a Precinct Election Officer for Wayne Township, Muskingum County, Ohio. Twelve election officials (including three Philo HS seniors) and a location manager were assigned here, where three precincts voted. I arrived at 5:25 a.m. and we started getting set up.

The first voters came at 6:02 a.m. I explained that the polls didn't open until 6:30 a.m. The armed deputy sheriff assigned to our location arrived and was positioned in the hallway just outside the voting room. He remained in place until we left 14 hours later.

Among the small incidents that day – At 8:01 a.m. one voter, recently married, had not changed her new name with the Board of Elections (BOE). She was given a provisional ballot and a form to fill out to update her name change. At 9:13 a.m. one scanner would not accept a ballot. Upon examining the ballot, it had been torn on a corner and the scanner would not allow it to be tabulated. The voter was reissued another ballot and the torn ballot was put in the “soiled” folder (not counted). At 11:25 another ballot was not accepted by the scanning machine. The voter had filled in outside the ovals on the ballot and the scanner rejected it. Another ballot was issued and the rejected ballot was put in the soiled folder. At 12:15 p.m. a voter forgot his glasses and could not read his ballot. The location manager loaned his glasses to the voter who was then able to complete his ballot. At 2:05 p.m. a provisional ballot was issued to a voter who had recently moved and not updated it with the BOE. At 2:42 p.m. a voter told us that he would not use a sharpie to fill out his ballot because it would bleed through the ballot and his vote would not count. He wouldn't believe us when he was told the ballots were designed to not be impacted by the sharpie's bleeding through the paper. He was observed later to be using the sharpie when he voted. At 2:55 p.m. all three poll book stations had issues – the first had an address problem, the second station indicated that the voter had already been issued an absentee ballot and the third one found that the voter came to the wrong polling location. All three situations were resolved before the line backed up too far. By day's end, 743 voters had cast their ballots.

I always enjoy seeing neighbors and friends at the polls. The day was chaotic at times but there were no major problems or incidents.

“Let’s Get Some Beer to Celebrate”

BY HELEN WANG — COLUMBUS, OHIO

“HELEN, YOUR GREEN CARD HAS BEEN APPROVED.” The secretary of my employer’s attorney broke the news to me. (This was in the fall of 2001.) I took the next day off and drove all the way to Pittsburgh just to get that precious piece of paper. It was a happy trip.

Back to the office the following day, my coworkers congratulated me. It was indeed a big milestone for the long immigration process. One of them said: “Hey, let’s get some beer to celebrate.” I thought he was serious. During the lunch break, I grabbed a 12-pack of cold Bud Light and different flavors of pop, and brought them back to the small kitchen in our office. “Help yourself!” I told my coworkers.

Just by coincidence, one of our clients showed up that day. He probably saw the beer. He’s in his late 20s, and didn’t fuss about it. About 30 minutes later, the project director came over to my office, and informed me: “We can’t have beer in the office.” I had to hide them in the corner, and planned to take them home after work.

That puzzled me.

Why not?

When I was working in Beijing earlier, we had parties in the office many times. Beer, Sprite, and Coke were the regulars. When eating out for lunch during the workdays, sometimes we had a bit of beer. It was never a problem. In China, alcohol is not a big issue. At that time drunk driving was rare, as few families could afford cars. Bicycles still dominated the roads. There is no drinking age there. At some buffets, beer is there for anybody and everybody. That’s all you can drink. Actually, only some choose beer; many prefer tea or pop.

My coworkers explained to me about the sensitivity toward alcohol in America. That’s some lesson I learned. It was embarrassing in a way, but I didn’t feel too bad.

My boss took off early that day. He stopped at the kitchen, took one Bud Light, waived at me with smiles, put it into his briefcase, and walked out of the building. My boss always had my back, with no exceptions.

Hold Back the Sunrise

BY DON LUCK — COLUMBUS, OHIO

I'VE NEVER BEEN A MORNING PERSON and at almost ninety there isn't time to mend my wayward ways. Besides, I don't *want* to. Moreover, one of retirement's perks is: I don't *have* to. I know; I know. Rising with the sun is supposed to have its own special charms. I remember a neighbor tell my mother how he relished an early morning walk with his dog when little traffic disturbed the sound of birdsong, the air scented with dew evaporating from vegetation, and one had the neighborhood all to oneself.

"Yeah," I thought to myself, "What about six o'clock on a dark winter morning with the north wind blasting you and your blasted* Samoyed who wants to pull you farther and farther from shelter?" [*That's supposed to be a play on words.]

Sure, there were moments of acceptance, even appreciation. Like our family joining another for an early morning breakfast at Long Island's Jones Beach: the sun just climbing above the Atlantic's horizon, the sounds of surf and seagulls, the smells of coffee and sizzling bacon rising from my father's charcoal-fed cooking, and the salty air enhancing the flavors of fruits and juices and muffins.

But for all of those lovely moments, I'm not a morning person. You can't call it being "counter-cultural." That means smoking pot, frolicking at Woodstock and dissing up-tight types — like Republicans. Right? And it's not being "anti-social" which means wishing one could curl up in a fetal position when surrounded by a crowd. What would you call it? "Anti-majority?" "Non-in-sync?" Maybe "counter-current." Whatever you call it, it means starting off slow and ending on a high. The world starts off with high levels of energy and despite mid-morning and mid-afternoon infusions of caffeine, gradually one fades to evening collapse in front of the TV followed by a prized pillow. But not me. The later it gets, the higher my level of energy. So it's early evening, not 8:00 AM as I am typing this.

But exigency has forced me to buck my natural rhythm. For example, I carefully arranged my college curriculum to avoid eight o'clock classes. But then I had to give up my counter-current ways. I became a professor and had to *teach* them. And so, for the bulk of my career I was forced to be "*pro-current*" — or at least go with the flow. But hold back the sunrise 'cause I might be up until two.

Our Balinese Cottage by the Sea

BY DON LUCK — COLUMBUS, OHIO

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT THE ISLAND is a tourist Mecca: beautiful beaches, flowers everywhere, modestly priced hand-crafted goods, and unusual Hindu customs with uniquely Balinese twists. It is approximately one and a half times the size of Long Island and its shoreline is fringed with accommodations ranging from clusters of small cottages to lavish hotels – including, when Sandra and I were there, one of only two 5 star hotels in Asia.

The traditional Balinese cottage that housed us at Shanti Desa had a high-pitched roof that swooped down in an inverted arc to cover our bedroom, bath and a lovely tiled porch where a statue of the elephant god Ganesh, the god of wisdom, stood. Each morning we woke to discover he had been lovingly bathed and adorned with fresh flowers.

We had delicious coffee [“Java,” remember] brought to us there each morning, as we looked out on coconut palms, flowering shrubs and a large pond bubbling up from a spring and sporting magenta-colored water lilies. The site is considered very auspicious because its fresh water flows directly into the sea.

We loved the view except the time we saw a lizard the size of a German Shepherd complete with flickering forked tongue and trailing tail come lumbering by, push through the shrubs and slip nonchalantly into the enchanting pond. Sandra shrieked, and even though later she was assured by Mrs. Oka that this neighbor of ours was harmless, her vision of unspoiled paradise was compromised.

We were lulled to sleep at night by soft waves splashing on the shore just beyond the sea wall, but the intense humidity made us wonder how sweaty Balinese got in the mood to produce successive generations. Perhaps our Nordic genes were not designed to flourish best in the tropics. But nightfall brought with it a fascinating solar phenomenon. I had read about it but I was delighted to see it myself. Because Bali sits almost on the equator, the sun is directly overhead. At sunset it drops below the horizon in an instant. There is no changing colors of clouds, no fading of light, no twilight. But then something lovely happens. For a while the sky turns a deep beautiful blue, “midnight blue.” When I saw it I realized why the Waterman ink I used to fill my high school fountain pen was called “blue black.”

Pagerwesi and Monkeys

BY DON LUCK — COLUMBUS, OHIO

WE WITNESSED AN EXOTIC RELIGIOUS RITUAL in Bali, thanks to the good fortune of it being included in a half-day tourist package. We entered an outer temple courtyard through a traditional *candi bentar*, a tall elaborately carved split gate made of stone but we did not enter the temple itself. Seating was arranged around three sides of a square and the fourth was a decorated wall that served as a backdrop. Its dominant feature was a checkerboard pattern of black and white squares that represent the presence of good and evil in the world. The upcoming ceremony represented the struggle in life between these two forces and the ultimate triumph of good.

The ritual itself took the form of chanting and an elaborate dance performed, if I remember correctly, by men — or predominantly by men. It was accompanied by the sounds of the traditional gamelan indigenous to Balinese, Javanese and Sundanese people. Gamelan is an assembly of gongs, drums, metallophones and other instruments that produce a mellow sound something like a mixture of marimbas and xylophones. I remember suspecting the production was staged for tourists but later I learned it was a genuine yearly observance called *Pagerwesi* and was being observed that day throughout the island.



A gamelan ensemble. (Musement)

But an obvious tourist destination was the Sacred Monkey Forest. A troop of Balinese long-tailed macaques established itself in a forest next to the village near Ubud. The villagers soon appointed themselves as patrons and protectors of the monkeys. When we arrived, a monkey suddenly moved towards me, leaped onto my shoulder and having snatched off my glasses, ran off with them. But he did not go far or up into the trees. Instead he sat down near a villager who proffered a banana toward me and indicated I could have it for a dollar. I got it. The two of them were in cahoots. The villager got the dollar, he and the monkey exchanged the banana and glasses, and the latter were returned to me. The monkey got a banana, the villager made a bit of income, and I got a laugh and a story to tell. Win, win, win.

Flying to My First NAPA Convention

By JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

A SPECIAL PERK AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER had was that we could take familiarization (fam) trips on commercial air carriers with our choice of destination. This program was designed so that we controllers could see the other side of pilot/air-traffic-controller conversations and handle questions, both ways.

I had taken a few of these trips, which always worked out as advertised, when I thought I could take one to Cleveland, Ohio, for what was to be my first NAPA convention. I submitted the necessary paperwork (it's the government you know), which was approved. I don't know if any were *not* approved; certainly none of mine were.

I got on a United flight at Washington National Airport the morning of the convention, and entered the cockpit. As I always did, I introduced myself to the captain and showed him my paperwork. I had done this a number of times and although to me it was just a formality, the captain refused my request to ride the jump seat (an extra seat in the cockpit for an observer). So I deplaned and went to United operations to see when the next flight was and if I could get on it. Fortunately Cleveland was a well traveled route for United – there was a flight most every hour of the day, and I got one.

I met the captain, told him my problem, and unlike the previous captain, this one was glad to accommodate me, even apologizing for my experience. But there was a possible problem: the wind. My added weight might limit how much tailwind they could take off with. Airplanes take off into the wind for the additional lift, but Washington National didn't have the longest runways so the tailwind that day could be an important factor. I called my coworkers in the tower and asked about the wind and whether they were planning to change the takeoff direction because of it. "No," I was told, "but that might change."

As it turned out, the tailwind was light enough for the flight with me on it and I arrived in Cleveland only an hour later than I had originally expected.

It was a very pleasant experience with this second crew as I could only imagine what it would have been like flying with a captain who didn't like controllers.

I Always Enjoyed Gardening

BY JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGA, NEVADA

DIRT-FILLED CHEESE BOXES WERE MY FIRST EFFORT at gardening. I grew up in an apartment in the Bronx so I didn't have a yard to plant things. Instead we used to go the small cheese store and ask if they had any cheese boxes. Back then, 1940's, some cheese came in a wooden box approximately 3 x 10 inches and perhaps 4 inches deep. I'd go to the vacant lot, just past the next apartment building, and fill it with dirt.

Cheese boxes were handy for all kinds of juvenile activities besides planting things. One of the big ones was cutting slots in them when marble season came around. Trying to get a marble in a slot, to win more marbles was my first taste of gambling, I suspect.

Every year our elementary school sold bulbs, which I guess was a way to raise money. I always bought some and although they grew I don't remember ever producing a blossom. They also sold seed packages and once again they had an eager participant. I'm not sure how my parents felt about the expenditure of money that never produced anything as times were hard.

One of the problems of trying to grow anything was that our fire escape, the only place to put cheese boxes, didn't get any sun so I guess it was kind of futile.

When I was fourteen we moved to a larger apartment facing the front of the building but I had other things on my mind by that time then growing things. Years later, after I moved into our first house, I gave my mother a potted tomato plant assuming that with the sunny fire escape, she'd have all the tomatoes that she wanted. Alas, shortly after, someone climbed the fire escape and stole the plant. After all this is New York.

My first house in Waldorf, Maryland, had a half acre backyard, plenty of space for this young farmer wannabe and I took full use of it, growing everything I could think of. It was exciting but short lived for we moved to Virginia and then all around the country finally settling in Las Vegas where the ground, (it can't legally be called soil), is concrete hard. At my previous house, we moved last year, I had an above ground garden put in and had some results but everything comes to a standstill once the temperature hits around 100.

The Project

BY LINDA L. SHIVVERS — DES MOINES, IOWA

THE SHIVVERS HAVE LIVED IN THEIR HOME for more than 40 years. Apart from the usual upkeep of a house nothing major had been done. Even though one idea had been talked about a few times nothing got done until the architect (Melvin) decided to do this thing all at once. The “thing?” The front porch. The idea was to make this space all-season, a part of the house – a library. Technically the area is part of the house, full width, windows all around. However, it could only be used part of the year either because of the blistering summers, or the freezing winters.

If any of you have attempted even a small project, you know that one thing leads to the next.

Sometimes you start to do one thing only to find out you have to do something else first. Then there’s the scheduling of the crews, surprises, and delays. Then there’s Melvin. There is no one better to have on a project for knowing what to do and how to do it, but, he has a way of over-directing. Linda had to repeatedly say, “Mel, I can do this, or I can do that, but I can’t do both at the same time,” such as unload tons of brick from the van, spade up hostas on the south side of the house (to make way for the cement truck) or lay brick along the path and rake and grade the dirt. No lie.

Living and working with Melvin: it’s the difference between a 45 r.p.m. record or a 78. For example, Linda enjoys making lunch and sitting down to eat it. Melvin is cooking, and eating at the same time – down the hatch and out the door!

Most of the renovation work took place in the 90-degree heat and humidity of summer. In patched shorts, old t-shirts, hair tied back unbecomingly, sweaty, dirty, and plying shovel, spade or trowel, or hauling all manner of heavy objects, Linda nevertheless was called “sweetheart” or “pretty lady” by the hardworking crew who were installing windows, pouring concrete, hammering, sawing or hauling stuff away. Could be they were saying those nice things in order to get lunch.

The end product? A lovely space with hand-built wood ceiling, beautiful book shelves, gorgeous desks on either end, and its own furnace and air-conditioner for year-round comfort.

Why I Learned Russian

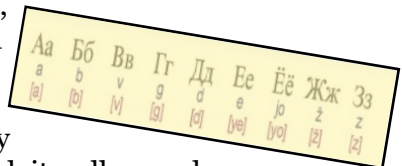
BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

LUTHERAN MINISTERS DON'T LEARN RUSSIAN, right? But odd as it sounds, I did.

When I enrolled in 1967 for post-graduate study in Linguistics at Ohio State University, Columbus, you had to pass reading tests of at least two modern foreign languages. Well, I only had one: German. German is not unusual for a Lutheran minister to learn. After all, the historic reformer, Martin Luther, was German, so German was part of my training from freshman year in high school. But the other languages we studied – Latin next, then New Testament (Koine) Greek, and finally Biblical Hebrew – were all “dead.”

You may well ask, “Well, why were you enrolling in graduate Linguistics study anyway?” I was evacuated from my work in the Nigerian mission field due to the civil war in Nigeria. “But they don’t speak Russian in Nigeria,” you say. Yes, but my work there was to start analyzing a language called Eket, with an eye to literacy work. The unexpected time back home in Ohio allowed me a golden opportunity to learn a lot about linguistics. I knew that would benefit my work among the Eket when the war was over and we got back.

So then, I had to learn some second modern language at O.S.U. “Well, why didn’t you take Swahili or better yet, Bantu, the language family of which Eket was a part?” Answer: because I was simultaneously a chaplain in the U.S. Naval Reserve, and I figured Russian might do me some good. (These were Cold War years, remember.) There was a Navy program where Reservists could earn participation points by translating Russian material for the Navy Office of Scientific and Technical Intelligence, and in those days I would need ways to earn points in the mission field since I couldn’t do the typical “weekend warrior” drills at a Reserve Center, or the annual two-week active duty for training. And unless I kept up my participation somehow, I would soon be out. So, Russian it was. And I did get accepted into that translation program. Was I a whiz at it? Hardly. I had to have a Russian-English dictionary practically glued to my desk. But I did slog through it well enough that I have a frontispiece credit as one of the translators of a Russian history of World War II titled something like *The Great Patriotic War for the Motherland*.



Write for ONE-PAGE STORIES?

You don't have to be a member of NAPA to contribute, but members are surely invited.



HOW MANY WORDS? 350 to 400 – less if you have a photo or graphic to go with your story.)

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT? Original prose – fiction or non-fiction. (No poetry.) Personal narratives and memoirs would be especially welcome, but other genres would be considered as well, as long as they are original pieces.

CAN I GET SOME EXTRA COPIES FOR MYSELF? Certainly. Just let me know how many you would like.



Awards Announced for Four O-PS Stories

The National Amateur Press Association just announced Laureate awards for 2020 and 2021, and four stories that appeared in ONE-PAGE STORIES were recognized:

2020-21 Fiction Laureate, for “Mysterious Lights,” by Michelle Klosterman, in issue 4, July 2020.

2020-2021 Fiction Honorable Mention, for “Kepler-62e,” by Erin A. Brosey, in issue 17, Sep. 2021.

2020 Misc. Prose Honorable Mention, for “First Lesson for the Young Printer,” by Rich Hopkins, in issue 5, Aug. 2020.

2021 Misc. Prose Honorable Mention, for “Bronx Park When I Was a Kid,” by Jack Oliver, in issue 19, Dec. 2021.

In addition, ONE-PAGE STORIES itself was awarded the Editing Laureate for 2020, the Editing Honorable Mention for 2021, and the Printing Laureate for both 2020 and 2021.

Thanks to *all* our contributors, NAPA members or not, and congratulations to those who are members of NAPA and were recognized with their respective awards.