

ONE-PAGE STORIES

No. 36 — June 2023

A Cooperative Journal for the National Amateur Press Association

My Cousin Matt Ernst 2

BY BILL BOYS

Riding the Train 3

BY JACK OLIVER

I Will Never Be “Grandma” 4

BY MARY J. DEMPSEY

His Name Was “X” 5

BY TOM DUFFEY

Trail of Scars 6

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

Pause and Live 7

BY WENDY STOICA

Customer Service – NOT 8

BY MARY ANN THAMAN

Don’t Hand Me That 9

BY JIM HEDGES

My Fellow Tetrapods 10

BY BILL BOYS

The Ties That Bind 11

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER

Free Zine and Booklet Templates for Word ..12



Edited & Published by Bill Boys, Columbus, Ohio

My Cousin Matt Ernst

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

MATT AND KAREN GRACIOUSLY HOSTED my wife Ruth and myself in their home in 1997 while we were attending a discernment consultation in Charlotte, N.C., about whether or not to resign from my parish at that time. The following shortened account, taken from his obituary, was written mostly by his children.

Matthew Loy Ernst, proud son of Spokane, Washington and gifted Lutheran parish pastor across four states and six decades, died on April 21, 2023 of natural causes.

He left detailed instructions with his family that his body is to lie in state in front of the Heinz ketchup factory in Pittsburgh, then be present at a crab feast in the undercroft of the church where he served in Baltimore, Maryland; paraded through suburban Atlanta, Georgia, and Charlotte, North Carolina, where he also served, and finally be parked at the center of a “huge BBQ” in the picnic shelter at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina. His family is pretty sure he was kidding – especially since he left out any mention of a tie-in to Apple computers – but they’re not certain.

Matt was born October 28, 1939, in a snowstorm, to Henry J. Ernst, a detail-oriented optometrist, and Bertha Swinehart Ernst, a champion rose grower and Lutheran pastor’s kid. Matt had an idyllic youth surrounded by family, including his sister, Suzanne, and countless aunts, uncles, and cousins with golf, laughter, and church life. After high school, Matt graduated from Pacific Lutheran College and Wartburg Theological Seminary. In 1964 while on summer internship in Pittsburgh, he opened an office door that turned out to be the door to his future when he saw Karen Gerhard sitting at the Lutheran Social Services desk. Six weeks later, they were engaged. He always said the happiest day of his life was their wedding in July 1965.

Service and justice were part of Matt’s essence, from marching for civil rights in Selma, Alabama in 1965 to resettling Vietnam War-era refugees to serving unhoused and disenfranchised people throughout his life. His passion drew others into lives of service too. During Matt’s 25 years in Ocean Isle Beach, he volunteered with the Brunswick Literacy Council, Hope Harbor Home and the Meals on Wheels Thanksgiving dinner, among many others, and served as a hospital chaplain and regional supply pastor.

Riding the Train

By JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT LIFE IS LIKE RIDING A TRAIN. You get on when you're born, your parents are already onboard with usually an extended family. During the ride, the train stops at many stations during which time some people get off, while some new people get on.

No one knows how long the ride will be but everyone tries to make themselves as comfortable as they can. Some accomplish this while others suffer.

My ride has been a good one. Along the way I met many new folks, many belonging to NAPA, which made the ride so much more pleasant. I can see now, since I've been riding the train for so many years, that I'll soon be arriving at my destination. Not many friends still ride with me as so many have reached their destination just in the last couple of years.

My father reached his destination thirty years ago while my mother stayed onboard for almost another twenty. My sister got off the train five years ago. I miss them all but my wife and kids still ride with me and I hope that they will be with me to my final destination.

It's been a good ride for most of the way. There have been some bridges out, gotten off on a siding or two, track damage, red lights and some other disruptions but these have been repaired usually in a short time. The lights are green and the track appears clear for as far as can be seen.

I recently received word that one of my fellow passengers will be getting off at the next station. We've been riding this train together for many decades, for a longer time than most of the others. It's going to very hard losing this seat-mate. His baggage contains so many memories.

Illnesses have forced some stops along the way, but with the help of other passengers, I've recovered. I'm still waiting for the right passenger to board to help me with what may be the illness that forces me to disembark finally but there's hope that that person is at the next station. The distance is far so I can't see if he's there waiting. I can only hope that he has what I need in his baggage.

I Will Never Be “Grandma”

By MARY J. DEMPSEY — COLUMBUS, OHIO

I WILL NEVER BE “GRANDMA.” It’s one of the first things I thought of when my son was killed, in 1978. It doesn’t mean that I would not grow old. Oh, time will always march on.

But I *will* always be “Aunt Mary.” I have truly enjoyed that. I have brothers, a sister and cousins who have given me nieces nephews and cousins. I live through them. We are all family, very proud, Irish-American. And I have friends, school friends, work friends, neighbors. They are people you meet in life who become *like* family – loved very much, but not family.

Grief visits every day. I will not dwell on grief. I always try to think, “What will tomorrow bring?” I have pictures, poems, things that were his personal little bits of him. Things he created; maybe they were meant to be mine.

I have the coins from his pocket, that he will never spend. His house key, that he’ll never use to open our front door. The clothes that were cut from his body at the hospital by doctors trying to save his life. He lasted about ten days in the ICU while his brain “forgot” to maintain his temperature, forgot to breathe. I often wonder, was it a wood or aluminum bat? Maybe I didn’t want to know. How hard was the force to his head to cause retinas to detach?

I also have my memories; some things I will never part with. I do not have the grandchildren or children he would have probably had. I cannot show pictures like my friends have of grandchildren, great-grandchildren. I look at them and smile kindly, seeing how proud they are, thinking how nice it would be to see the next generation of what you created, to go forward in life, to make their own family. I go back to my memories of what I had at one time. I tell myself to enjoy what I was blessed with then in my life, to be thankful for “our time” here on earth. I may never be a grandma, but I’m not bitter to be “Aunt Mary.” I’ve lived my life mostly happy. Thankful for my memories, my family and friends.

Bake the cake! Call family and friends! Have a party! We’re all in the same boat. Make the most of what God has given us; we only go through this life but once. Make the most of what we have been blessed with.

His Name Was “X”

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

I’M NOT KIDDING. HE WENT BY THIS NAME during his time as a professional wrestler in the Akron/Canton area of Ohio. I went to all his matches because he would always give me a clutch of tickets for my friends and me. We would have a real good time when his match was alive with all kinds of antics. The big deal was his opponent trying to remove the mask and thus exposing his face. It never came all the way off. He was also thrown out of the ring many times. The crowd was always against him because he was the ‘villain’ in the black mask. He played this to the hilt. He would have the crowd on their feet yelling and screaming at him and his antics. He had a whole repertory of unintelligent animal noises adding to his badness.

His real name was Carl. His day job was Maintenance Supervisor at Perry Rubber plant in Massillon, Ohio. Perry Rubber was once the world’s largest manufacture of surgeon’s gloves. I was their Purchasing Agent (Buyer) for several years early in my working life, the middle sixties to early to mid-seventies.

It was always rather humorous when the company receptionist would page him for a phone call and one would hear the paging announcement, “X – line 2.” This would be true especially for an outside visitor to the plant.

When X needed a part for machinery, if he could hand-carry the part he would bring it to my office and put it on my desk. I had a bottom drawer where I would stow these gears, bearings and watcha-ma-call-its. After some years, there was quite an accumulation.

I had a friend who had a welding shop in his garage. When Carl was due to retire, my friend welded all these parts and pieces into a trophy about three feet high, then spray-painted it gold. It looked so avant-garde. I gifted this to Carl and he let me know that it was on his mantle at home in a place of honor. It made for a most unusual conversation piece.

Trail of Scars

By KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

AN *ENTEROCOCCUS FACEOLIS* INFECTION caused a speed bump in my quest for a kidney transplant, but it was rescheduled for May 19. I needn't have worried about missing my 3:30 alarm: I woke at 12:33 and didn't go back to sleep! I washed my hair and scrubbed my body for 5 minutes with Hibiclens, the second time in 8 hours. Sue picked up Wendy, and they arrived by 4:30 so we could all arrive at the Wexner Medical Center at OSU together to check in by 5 a.m. — and meet Wendy's friend Mary.

In the two hours before I was taken to pre-op, I was rather loquacious; perhaps I was a bit anxious about the surgery. In pre-op I met the anesthesiologist and various other nurses and assistants before being wheeled to the OR. I remember very little until I awoke in post-op. After the prescribed time/vitals, I went back to my room, 1054. I slept most of the afternoon, waking up occasionally to say a few things, but not coherently. My peritoneal dialysis catheter had been exchanged for a Foley catheter, which drains body waste (*everything* is measured).

On Saturday Dr. Alebrahim did an ultrasound: I *saw* my new kidney! I could see many colors showing the blood flow. Sunday, I was in much better shape. My room was a beehive of activity! My nurse Meghan was there, along with others. My surgeon too. Wendy made the trek from her room with her iPad. Dr. Alebrahim removed the dressing from all the incisions: 5 staples closed the “port hole;” 7 staples closed the scar that had been opened to remove the PD catheter, and 15 staples closed the “main event” — where the new kidney had been placed.

Lab results were impressive. My creatinine (a measure of impurities in the blood) is now 1.09 (down from 4.73 before the transplant). Conversely, my eGFR (estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate — you hear that term in medical advertisements on television), essentially a percentage of kidney function, had skyrocketed from 9 to 53 in just two days. (The decline had taken at least eleven years.)

I will be forever grateful to my “sister for life” Wendy Stoica for choosing to be tested and then become my kidney donor.



L. to R.: Kathy Zwanziger Faust, Wendy's sister K Wendy Stoica. The shav Wendy's shoulders were litch and Eileen Day, re

Pause and Live

BY WENDY STOICA — GROVEPORT, OHIO

ON THURSDAY MAY 18 I WOKE UP THINKING “Today is almost the big day. (Pause) Maybe.” The kidney transplant surgery had been postponed and I didn’t want to fall off that emotional cliff again. I intentionally switched up my activities and went to work. I participated in the normal Thursday morning weekly meetings, responded to emails and said goodbye (pause) again. I took Lambeau to board and, instead of going home, went to the monthly food give-away at church. When I got there, I walked to see who needed help bagging produce and saw Kathy helping to register people to receive food. My heart filled thinking “Kathy is here. (pause) And she looks good. Maybe we ARE having surgery tomorrow morning!”

The next very early morning Sue drove us to Ohio State University Hospital to be checked in for surgery. My best friend Mary at my side, we met the anesthesiologist from Iowa and resident surgeon from Cleveland, who recounted the 2016 World Series game 7 from his Indians’ fan perspective all the way to the operating room. When I woke up and arrived in my hospital room Mary said Kathy’s new kidney was functioning well. The nurses took great care of me but my constant questions were about Kathy and her new kidney. I can’t count the number of people who love Kathy. Does Kathy even know? How lucky am I to be the one blessed with the right blood and tissue type to donate a kidney to her?

Early mornings and evenings I look at Tim’s tree in my backyard. It was planted by caring neighbors in late May 2007. I’ve watched it grow from a sapling into a mighty oak tree. I talk to Tim’s tree a lot, about my day, the dog and cats, his parents and sister. I encourage the spring leaves to grow and comfort the autumn leaves as winter approaches. I cry that this tree is alive and Tim is not.

I donated my kidney to Kathy so she can be healthy and fully present with her family and friends. I want her to be with the people she loves and who love her for all the good times and sad times and ordinary times to come.



er, Kathy’s sister Chris
athy Cotnoir, and
vls around Kathy’s and
e made by Kathy Mim-
spectively.

Customer Service – NOT

BY MARY ANN THAMAN — CARMEL, INDIANA

I HAVE ENDURED SELF-CHECKOUT FOR YEARS. For a long time, self-service checkouts really didn't like it when you brought your own bags, even when they added a button to indicate you were using your own bag. I would need a clerk to clear whatever "error" I committed. The clerk always said, "It happens all the time." That seems to be fixed, but it took them a couple years.

But that still doesn't make self-checkout an enjoyable experience. I generally only use it when I have a few items. But lately, there are very few checkout employees, and some of the stores pretty much force you to self-checkout. If I buy a lot of produce that doesn't have a bar code on it, I have to use the "search by name" function. How the heck do I remember if my asparagus was organic or not? I just picked the asparagus that looked the best! And then there is alcohol. If you purchase alcohol, someone has to check your ID. Okay, I am fine with that, but who is monitoring the self-checkout? Of course, it is someone who is too young to check your ID and scan your bottle of wine and then he or she has to run down someone old enough. Not that I am fixated on purchasing alcohol, but when you go through a checkout lane with a real person, he or she can bypass the ID check, but not in the self-checkout lanes. I like the ID bypass, because I don't have to say my age out loud. My age is kind of creepy, even for me! And if they are looking at your ID anyway, why do I have to tell them my birthday? Can't they read?

The new annoyance is that they have added conveyor belts to lanes to make it "easier" to scan larger orders. Or perhaps allow them to operate with fewer employees?? Now, do you know what is stupid about these conveyors, aside from all the other self-checkout annoyances? Of course, you have to bag your own groceries, but if you have a big order to bag, the person behind you can't always start scanning until you are done bagging without running the risk of co-mingling your orders. They have installed a barrier than you can put down to prevent that, but guess what? It is very near the end of the conveyor and if you have a bigger order, well, the person behind you just has to wait.

Just to be contrary, unless I have an extremely small order without produce or alcohol, I have been going to the lanes with human beings! I am retired. I can wait!

Don't Hand Me That

By JIM HEDGES — NEEDMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

THE 45-ISH WOMAN WHOM I REFER TO AS MY God-daughter, whom my wife and I have known for about fifteen years, has had a hard life – the bluebird of happiness has left a lot of droppings on her plate. Three years ago she came to me all excited: she had re-ignited an old flame from twenty years ago. The two of them had decided that the cloud which had dampened the fire the first time had by now dissipated. Should she marry him?

Well, I'd never met the guy. I still haven't. They had no social life together. He had his family and friends, and she had hers. But she was so full of enthusiasm that I advised her to go ahead with it.

I told her wrong, damn me! He paid her attention only when he wanted sex (which was too often), wouldn't give her money for household expenses, wouldn't let her drive "his" car.

She got her own commercial driver's license, so they could go on the road together (he was a long-haul trucker); the resulting 24/7 togetherness only increased the friction.

Three years of that was enough. I, feeling somewhat responsible for the situation, grub-staked her to a divorce lawyer.

She owns the trailer and lot where they were living. In order to get him out of her house, she obtained a PFA order (Protection From Abuse). Sound strategic initiative on her part, but when the cop came to serve him with the protection order, he met the cop with a gun. Poor strategic response on his part.

The resulting stand-off involved twenty cops, a SWAT team, an ambulance, and a fire truck. And media attention. God-daughter watched all of this from the safety of a friend's house nearby, using the feed from security cameras.

Soon-to-be-ex came out peaceably after seven hours and was hauled off to jail. The next morning, he was bailed out, collected his stuff, and went home to his mother.

My Fellow-Tetrapods

BY BILL BOYS – COLUMBUS, OHIO

I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS ONE, but last month I learned I was born one, have been one all along and have no personal control over my condition. I am a lifelong tetrapod.

Anthony Martin is the man who made me aware of this. Not that I have attended personal psychotherapy sessions with him or had therapeutic conversations with him. In fact, he is Professor of Practice in the Department of Environmental Studies at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. He doesn't even know me, but he is one of the lecturers in The Great Courses DVD set my wife and I are currently watching, "Major Transitions in Evolution."

I could have guessed from the word "tetrapod" that I might possibly be one of that group. I took Greek in high school and college; the term is a combination of *tetra* ("four") and *pes* ("foot"). All four-legged vertebrates are categorized as tetrapods.

You're one, too. It's a huge group, including every amphibian, reptile and mammal on earth, and only you and I and others of our own species have become capable of talking about it that we *are* tetrapods and knowing what it means. (And how long did *that* take!)

Our line goes back pretty far. After the water-dwelling earliest tetrapods, the reptiles appear in the fossil record in the Carboniferous period, about 320 million years ago. They are among the first ones on the scene to develop enclosed eggs suitable for surviving on dry land.

That's a powerful long time ago, and I thought I was doing well to know one part of my ancestry back to 1732, almost 300 years ago. Our oldest tetrapod ancestors were – let's see – a million times further back than that. I wonder how many sheets of paper it would take to print out the whole lineage. The last time I printed out the immediate portion of my family tree that goes back just four generations to my great-great-grandparents, Isaac & Rebecca Zartman, it made a chart seventy-five feet wide. It's almost enough to exclaim, "Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle!" But actually all monkeys and their uncles are actually very close relatives on the tetrapod family tree, and so are all our cats and dogs, and birds and whales and . . . well, my fellow tetrapods, you get the picture.

The Ties That Bind

By KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

IN MY SMALL COUNTRY CHURCH in northeast Iowa it seemed everybody was related. My grandmother's youngest brother married a woman whose brother and sister married a sister and brother of my father. Try diagramming that family tree!

On Mother's Day, a professor from Trinity Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, preached her "farewell sermon" to our congregation since she has accepted a call to Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. I have many ties to both seminaries/cities. For starters, my parents were married at Wartburg Seminary, even though neither of them was a pastor. How did that happen?

My mom, Ethel Doescher, grew up on a farm in South Dakota. Her childhood wish to be an interpreter at the U. N. did not happen; instead, she began as a teacher in one-room schools in South Dakota. Later she served as a secretary to the head of the Youth Department at the church headquarters in Columbus – before there *was* someone in that position! Later, Marcus Rieke received that call.

My dad, Al Zwanziger, grew up on a farm in northeast Iowa. He served as president of the Iowa District Luther League, even while serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II. [Years later we children got a laugh at that: we assumed Luther League was only for high school students; Dad was 28!]

One day Dr. Rieke returned from a Luther League convention in Iowa and told Mom, "Ethel, I've met the man you're going to marry!" Her response was, "But I'm not engaged." "No, but you will be!" Dr. Rieke's premonition came true. The two met and eventually married – at Wartburg Seminary, conveniently located on a railroad line between Columbus and South Dakota. The first child born to the couple was named Marie Eleanor, after two of Mom's co-workers at the church office. The youngest child was named Mark, after Mom's boss.

Years later with the 1960 merger of several Lutheran churches, Dad's older sister left her job at the church headquarters in Columbus and returned to Iowa, to join the staff at Wartburg Seminary.

The words of the hymn ring true for me: "Blest be the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love."



What's Your Story?

You can submit a story, too. You don't have to be a member of NAPA, although members are definitely invited. NAPA member Ken Faig said, and I certainly agree — *something worthwhile can be written in a short format like this.* I hope the stories in this issue bear that out. Do you have a short-format story to tell?

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.

HOW MANY WORDS? About 350 to 400 words. (Less if you have an image to go with your story, and I encourage images.)

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

WILL I GET FEEDBACK? I'll 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 MY STORY? To Bill Boys, email at williamboys@att.net (preferred, to save retyping) or by postal mail to 184 Reinhard Ave., Columbus OH 43206-2635.

Read PDF back issues freely, conveniently
www.AmateurPress.org/the-monthly-bundles

Free zine & booklet templates for Microsoft Word

I just learned that NAPA member Sinoun Chea has posted free templates for zines and booklets in Microsoft Word on her website at <https://anatomicair.com/book-templates/>. Thank you, Sinoun! Writers who use MS Word regularly should find these easy to use to create their own zines and booklets.