

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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Edited & Published by Bill Boys, Columbus, Ohio

Alan Alda's 7 Questions

BY BILL BOYS – COLUMBUS, OHIO

DID YOU KNOW THAT ALAN ALDA, the famous actor who portrayed Hawkeye Pierce in M*A*S*H, has a popular podcast series about communication and science? I only found this out a couple of months ago. (Where have I been all this time!?)

Why I'm telling you this is because at the end of each interview with his guests, he asks if they are game to give answers to seven quick questions. The questions aren't always exactly the same, but pretty close, and I think they make great writing prompts if you're looking for topics to write about.



Here are the seven questions he posed at the end of his interview with Rabbi Steve Leder, author of *The Beauty of What Remains: How Our Greatest Fear Becomes Our Greatest Gift*.

1. What do you wish you really understood?
2. How do you tell someone they have their facts wrong?
3. What is the strangest question anyone has ever asked you?
4. How do you stop a compulsive talker?
5. Let's say you're at a dinner party and you're sitting next to someone you don't know, how do you begin a true, authentic conversation with that person?
6. What gives you confidence?
7. What book changed your life?

The answers given by a number of the guests that I've listened to so far are always interesting, usually very thoughtful, and sometimes stymying.

Of course I don't have room here in ONE-PAGE STORIES to give you Rabbi Leder's answers to this set of questions, but they (and the whole 45-minute blog) are available at:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/5Zw51nhgPKwiOFZ9TBGtea>
or you can browse for the blog title, "Making the End a Beginning."

A Trip to Remember

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

MY SUMMERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN quite enjoyable. However, they always came with a small tax: French camp. For one or two weeks, in exchange for an extra fun summer, we had to go to camp in France where they speak no English. I always thought, and still do, that this was an excellent deal, and my little sister was of the same opinion up until this year. The deal was that if we went to French camp for one week, we would get another week of fun stuff. I accepted but my little sister did not, and so it was that I had a week of fun with only my Dad in Ireland.

After French camp, we set off on a long drive from Tours, France, to Cherbourg. From there we took a boat to Ireland, my first ever overnight boat trip. Our cabins were very nice, and my favorite part was the buffet, where I stuffed myself possibly more than was wise, as my sea stomach was yet



MS Stena Vision

untested. Soon after we embarked, a violent gale struck, rocking the ship violently, and I, along with my Dad and for all I knew everyone else, possibly, too, was forced into bed, as it was rather difficult to stand with the swinging motion of the ship, and I was feeling slightly sick as well. The most amusing part was when the ship's captain stated over the intercom that there was an option to go to deck 8 for dancing with a live band: it was quite amusing to think of some poor soul attempting to dance there!

The next morning we drove across Ireland to the West coast, and had several adventures enhanced by the road quality in County Clare. The highlight of these adventures was the medieval banquet, a reenactment of an old banquet in an actual medieval castle. The food was presented in four courses, called removes, and there was plenty of mead (or in my case, fruit punch) for everyone, but the sole factor of enjoyment was the atmosphere, happy and enjoyable.



Me, at Bunratty Castle

And after everything enjoyable, there is some moral to the story and some lesson learned. This lesson would not be that the roads are bad in County Clare, or that the food is good on the MS Stena Vision, but that it is worth paying a small price for a larger reward.

Normandy

BY ANDREW JANTZ — ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

I MADE A TRIP TO PARIS FOR A MONTH in September, 2021, and while there, made a point of taking a small bus to Normandy to visit the American Cemetery, which holds the graves of those brave men who gave their lives on D-Day, June 6, 1944. When we arrived near the cemetery, we walked on a paved trail through a small wooded area, which suddenly opened up to the cemetery. Before us were thousands of white marble crosses, lined in perfect rows, standing in lush green grass, and not a blade of grass or weed encroaching on the bases of the crosses. I spent an hour walking around the cemetery, and as I am a veteran of the Naval Reserve, a number of times I stopped and raised my hand in salute to those thousands of men who lost their lives that day.



The cemetery is within sight of Omaha beach, down below, where most of the American soldiers landed, and thousands died. I followed a long path down to the beach, and just stood there for a while, taking it in. I turned around and looked at the bluffs the soldiers had to scale in the face of enemy fire. I turned again and imagined the soldiers, thousands of them, approaching in their small landing craft, and so many of them being mowed down the moment they left the craft. Those who survived had to stagger their way through the barrage to the base of the bluffs to take cover. I walked along the beach and came to a monument which commemorated that day's events. I continued along the beach, and at the edge of the water, stooped and picked up a small, smooth rock, which I decided to take home with me, as a small memorial.

Back on the bus, we drove up the coast to Pointe du Hoc, a steep cliff about 50 yards high. The American troops, under heavy machine gun fire and grenades from above, had to climb their way up, which with courage and guile, they did. Their mission was to take out the German heavy artillery at the top, but when they arrived, they found that the artillery was no longer there. So many men had died for nothing. My eyes welled up. After a while I had to leave. As we rode back, I was struck by the beauty of the villages and lands of Normandy, and how sick it was that thousands of men died in order to free them from an enemy that had no business being there.

His Nickname Was “Duke”

By AUDREY HARKONEN — COLUMBUS, OHIO

A CARDBOARD BOX TUCKED AWAY in a hallway closet, a 10 x 6 x 8” cardboard box – winter after winter, while we put on boots, coats, hats and gloves, the box with the black marker inscription “Dad’s letters” was neatly tucked on the back shelf.

After we grew up, my older sister, two younger brothers and I left for college, careers, lives of our own. Mom and Dad downsized and headed back to Mom’s hometown. Of course, “Dad’s letters” box went with them. Many years passed, and Dad eventually died of poor health; Mom moved to a senior citizen’s apartment. Then, somehow, I became the keeper of the box.

Several years later, after it sat on a shelf in my closet, I began exploring “Dad’s letters” box. Its history was about Dad and his aunt and uncle who had raised him, exchanged letters while he attended Arkansas State, then while serving in the Army and finally, during the first years Mom and Dad were married. Many yellowing pieces of paper, greeting cards, postcards, and a few photos filled the box.

One photo was my dad, about 23 years old in army uniform with a duffle bag over his shoulder. He was smiling, looking strong and anticipating the Korean adventure. But I don’t recognize this guy. Sadly, I mostly remember a quiet, shy, and reticent man who closed himself off with remorse, regrets, and alcohol. Many of his aunt’s faded letters began “Dear Duke”. And letters in my dad’s distinctive handwriting were signed, “Love and Kisses...Duke”. Letters and cards beginning September 1946, refer to “Duke”. Who the heck was Duke? My dad’s name was Eugene with soft blue eyes under thick glasses, blonde hair, and classic Scandinavian features. He was a civil engineer with no athletic abilities, an avid reader, collector of “Big Band” 78 rpm records, and a sweet guy, who quietly drank too much and, perhaps, wished he was more like a “Duke” character than I ever knew.



Making Friends on the West Highland Way

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

WHOMENOW KNEW THAT ONE COULD MAKE FRIENDS just taking a walk? Several years ago, a friend and I decided to walk in her ancestral land. After doing a bit of research, I proposed a specific 10-mile walk in northeast Scotland. Alice replied, “I suggest the West Highland Way”—from Milngavie (near Glasgow) to Fort William (and Ben Nevis) in the north. We left Columbus during “Red, White, and Boom,” 2001.

One of the first people we met was David, who walked the entire Way in dilapidated loafers. He had been “made redundant” so between jobs he chose to walk ninety-five miles. The next was Ho Hyun, who walked with us on various days, as we scrambled through the bracken. We came upon a “3-week-camp” of fishermen who shared a “blather,” a fire, and whiskey with us (after carefully rinsing out a glass in Loch Lomond!).

Many of the walkers, including us, used a service called “Easy Ways” to book overnight lodging, and another service called “Travel Lite” (which would transport our luggage from place to place, leaving us to carry only a day pack). At Rose Cottage, we met Carol and Irene who kindly explained to the hosts that Alice and I were late because we were probably taking pictures of the waterfalls. (They were correct!) One rainy day we found these two English women sitting beneath a bridge eating their lunch. We joined them for a wonderful conversation. At the end of the Way, Irene gave us a picture she had drawn: Kathy and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.

Frequently Bill (79) and Frank (72) were also guests in the same B&B. One day we came across them eating an EARLY lunch while beating back the sheep with their walking sticks. We enjoyed sharing meals and stories with them. I was surprised a few months later when I got a letter from them (after giving Easy Ways permission to share my address). They offered their sympathy on the horror of 9/11, and wanted to ensure we were safe. What delightful people we met along the Way!

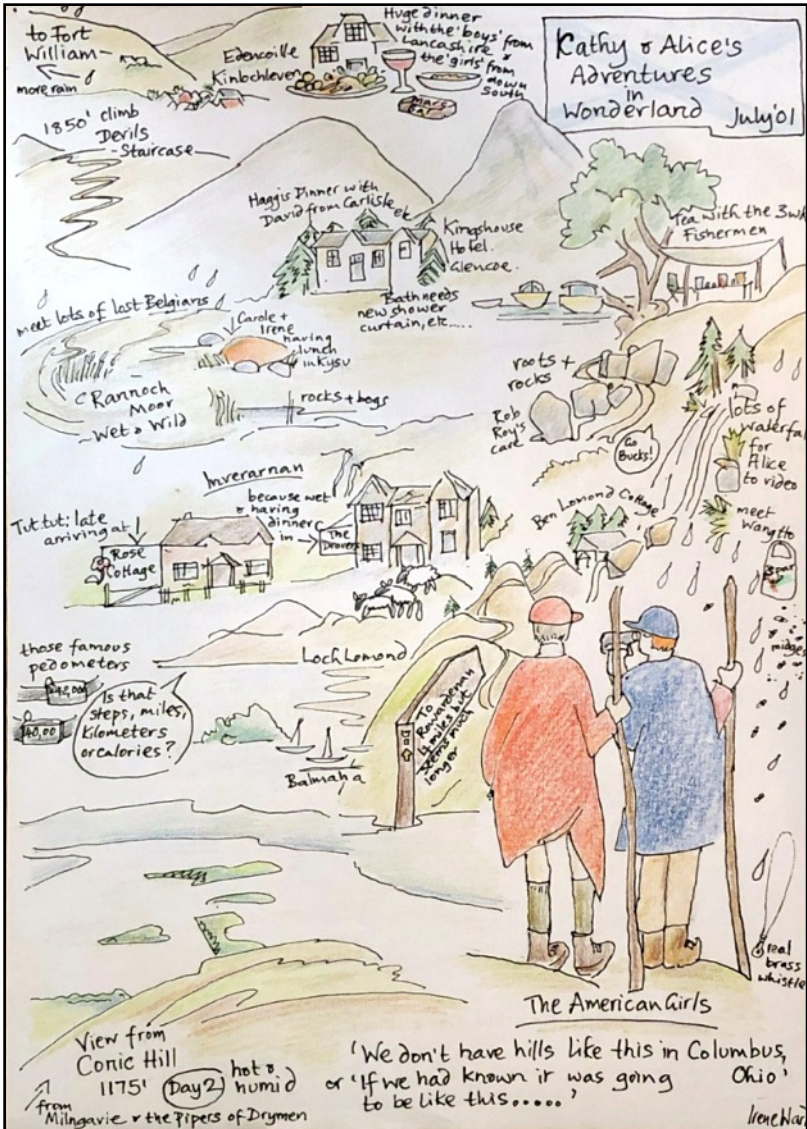


Alice and I at trail's end.

Irene's Map of the West Highland Way

BY KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

This hand-drawn sketch of my walk with Alice on Scotland's West Highland Way is amazingly detailed! Irene, a friend we met along the Way, accurately showed our attire: Alice's blue poncho and my orange plastic poncho and green knee socks. She noted our late arrival at Rose Cottage and a dinner we had with the "boys from Lancashire" (Bill and Frank). A fantastic memento!



Growing Up in the Bronx – Food

BY JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

GROWING UP IN THE BRONX, I took the food at the local restaurants for granted. The Golf served the best New York style pizza I've had up to now. My son managed a pizza restaurant and said that the secret to a good pie is the cheese. The Golf must have used the best. (This place got its name as it was directly across the street from a golf course. Yes, there are golf courses in the Bronx, not just apartment buildings.)

Also within walking distance was a kosher style delicatessen, where the pastrami, corned beef and other items were gastronomical pleasures. Likewise, the local Chinese restaurant was always on the list of places to eat. And don't forget bagels. Perfect for breakfast, I enjoyed them at other times, too.

I didn't realize how much I enjoyed New York style food until I moved away although I've discovered other tasty food items unknown to me growing up. When we, my wife and family, visited The City, I always tried to include some of these types of food. We always took one or two pizzas home for the freezer so that we could continue to enjoy the taste of New York until our next visit.

I recently watched a series on TV called "The Pizza Show." It featured a New York native sampling pizza in cities around the country and even as far away as Korea. He always said the pizzas were good, no matter the style. One segment featured him and four other New York pizza guys, who sampled pizza from some of the national chains like Pizza Hut. They couldn't eat any of them as they said they were garbage. I guess us New Yorkers are spoiled.

One of the surprises in watching the series was that Chicago, which is noted for thick crust pizza, also has thin crust like most of the New York pizzerias. I guess they're learning.

In Las Vegas, where I've lived more than twenty-five years, I've found a place that serves reasonable New York style pizza, but now my waistline doesn't permit me to enjoy a slice very often.

As good as The Golf was, I was surprised to learn that it closed some forty years ago and kosher style delicatessens have mostly disappeared too. I think Chinese restaurants will go on forever.

A Family Tragedy

By JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

ONE DAY, WHEN MY DAUGHTER WAS OUT OF TOWN, she happened to check her Ring doorbell camera and discovered that there were numerous police cars just down from her house. Upon returning home she contacted a neighbor to find out what the commotion was all about. The incident that was related to her was a parent's worst nightmare.

A neighbor's six-year-old child was running late for school and her mother got upset and started to drive away with her other daughter, twelve years of age, in the passenger seat. Meanwhile the younger one was screaming to be let in the car. Unknown to the mother, the six-year-old, desperate not to be left behind, grabbed the side of the car and was dragged a ways without the mother being aware of the situation. Unfortunately, the young child ultimately fell under the wheels of the car, to her death.

Upon investigating, the mother was charged with vehicular homicide and child abuse. It seems that years before, this mother was caught driving a golf cart type vehicle to a local store with this same young daughter in her lap. From what my daughter could ascertain, the child at the time was just an infant.

To lose a child is a terrible thing for any parent but for the child to die because of something that they had control over, has to be one of the worse things for a parent to be involved in. I can't imagine how this mother must feel and what about the father when he found out what had happened? Then you have to wonder how the surviving sister is going to be able to cope with this tragedy. All the people involved, including other relatives like the grandparents and any friend or acquaintances will all be touched by this sad chain of events.

I know that sometimes a parent just can't handle things because of what their children do or sometimes because they're having a bad day, and take it out on their children. Everyone being a normal person can "lose it," but being adults, we should be able to control ourselves or at least step away from the situation.

The legal outcome is yet to be determined but no matter what the courts decide, this family is scarred for life.

A Dachshund Family

BY LINDA L. SHIVVERS — DES MOINES, IOWA

1st Pair – Sandy and Poppy
2nd Pair – Molly and Emily
3rd Pair – Lacey and Amelia

WE GOT LACEY AND AMELIA by quirk of fate. We were in Marion, Iowa, doing one of our kids' activities at a community festival. I took a break to go through the art fair. I saw a lady with a dachshund puppy. Had to give it a pet. Went back to Mel to tell him what I'd found (we'd been looking for two years). By the time he got to where I said to look, the lady was gone. When the festival organizer came to see how we were doing we told her about the lady with the puppy. She said, "I know her. I'll find out who she got the pup from." She came back and said the puppy came from Manchester, Iowa, about 30 miles away.

We got to Manchester but weren't sure where to go. We had stopped across the street from the Police Dept., went in and told the receptionist who we were looking for. She said, "I know them. I board my dogs there;" and gave us directions. When we got to the farm a man was coming out of the house. We said we were looking for puppies. He went to a little building and came out with an arm load of puppies. He said they didn't operate a puppy mill and only bred the females every other year. We played with the pups, wondering how we'd ever choose just two. Didn't need to worry — they chose us.

They've been so much fun, chasing each other through the house, playing tug of war with their toys, cozying down at night, hogging the bed.

We lost Lacey in October due to liver cancer. She'd been fine the night before — played chase with Amelia, did the morning walk, then started getting sick. X-rays didn't show anything; vet said to bring her back in the morning. Lacey wasn't in pain, but couldn't get comfortable. We sat up with her all night on the bed — Amelia, Mel and I. About 2:30 a.m. Lacey took her last breath. Autopsy the next day showed the cancer, hidden inside the liver.

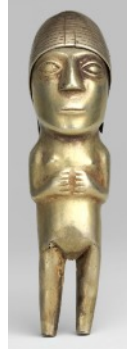
Amelia is doing fine. We think, since we were all together, it helped with Amelia's grieving process. Of course, she gets a whole lot of attention.

“Is God a Megalomaniac?”

BY BILL BOYS — COLUMBUS, OHIO

WHY DO WE WORSHIP GOD? That’s the question religion writer Debie [sic] Thomas asks in this month’s issue of *The Christian Century* magazine. Like Rev. Thomas, and I suppose many others of us Christian-steeped people, I never asked myself that basic, pointed question. In all my years in the ministry and as a military chaplain, no one else ever asked me that, either.

Why is the Bible loaded with commandments to worship God, and “correct” procedures to do so? Is God that needy, or what? Rev. Thomas’s view is: “... God ... commands my worship so that my heart can be softened into servanthood, gentleness, humility, and love. This is a God who offers me the practice of worship as a gift. Not for God’s benefit, but for mine.” That’s such a positive answer, especially if you are already a believer in God.



Inca huaca, 1500 CE, Metropolitan Museum of New York. (Public domain)

But I have wider historical and cultural curiosity through which I wish I understood “Why do we worship?” Worship of spirits, angels, daemons, or gods shows up so early in human history and in almost all cultures. Why all these variations? What do worshipers believe they are doing? Manipulating an invisible force to help or protect them in some way? Is fear and danger of harm at the root? Appeasing a stern law-giver and judge? Honoring a creator or tribal founder? Satisfying a bloodthirsty overlord? Obtaining fertility, or rain, etc?

From a historical perspective, I think all of those options also are “Not for God’s benefit, but for mine.” But I speculate that the origin of gods, spirits, and all such beings may also be partly explained from a long-dawning realization that we need something to help us recognize and regulate our natural selfish, proud, hardhearted lives. So over time a higher aspiration was also projected onto a god. Trying to wake us up to our “better angels,” as it were. Worship thus became a way to state, strengthen (and then, to enforce) the higher values of a tribe or nation. That is admirable in one sense, but would also explain how the enforcement angle could itself become oppressive, as sadly occurs all too often in religion, just as any human system of laws and their enforcement can work in two ways, for good as well as for evil. How do we keep the positive at the center, while avoiding the back-slide to oppression?



Contributors Welcome

You needn't be a NAPA member, but members are definitely invited. NAPA member Ken Faig said “*something worthwhile can be written in a short format like this.*” I hope the stories in this issue bear that out.

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT? Original prose – fiction or non-fiction. Personal narratives, anecdotes and memoirs especially welcome. Other genres considered except poetry. Must be your own original pieces, unpublished elsewhere.

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.

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