

About the Writers Guild of Virginia

The Writers Guild of Virginia is a 501(c)3 organization. Our mission is to nurture writers of all abilities in the craft of writing, publishing and marketing of their work. We offer a series of tuition based and free half and full-day workshops and multi-week courses throughout the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Williamsburg areas.

We hope you will visit us on our website to learn more about us and join us at one of our events.

Thank you for your support!

How to Reach Us

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We believe in:

- second chances,
- the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America,
- and the right to free expression.

The contributions to the journal this year reflect the diverse culture in The Writers Guild of Virginia. Some you will agree with; some you won't.

When we say it is never too late to write, we mean that. Our member's diversity includes age and life experience.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal.

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On The Cover:

“Sunflowers”

by

Deborah Stone-Richard

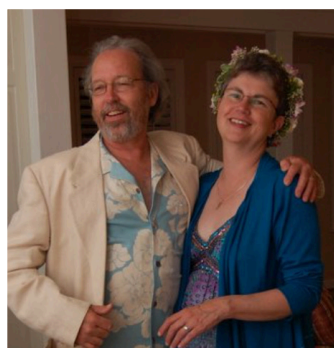
“A non-election, political statement”

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Our Cover Artist

DEBORAH STONE-RICHARD is a creative



professional who studied fashion design at Harper College in Illinois. Over the years, she did alterations, made bridal gowns, designed motorcycle luggage and eventually opened her own sewing workroom in Virginia Beach, VA. She specialized in bedding

slipcovers and custom window treatments. After 12 years, the economy slowed to a crawl, forcing her to close the workroom. She then worked various administrative jobs that were a 180 degrees from her ideal career. In 2011, she decided to follow her dream and create a business called Revamp and sew only original garments and accessories made from recycled clothing. She has expanded her line to include greeting cards, art dolls and mixed media art. She was an art major at Eastern Michigan University and 50 years later lives across the street from the university in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

In 2016, she took an oil painting class and fell in love with the medium. Recently she added watercolor painting to her skill set. Deborah has three bird centric volunteer positions: a bird rehabilitation center; the Safe Passage organization where she monitors the EMU campus for bird deaths due to window strikes. Her favorite job at the ornithology division of the University of Michigan Research Museums Center, where she does taxidermy for the onsite bird collection. To date, she has made over 450 face masks in her spare time.

Deborah created our cover art using a tutorial by MazArt Studio. Her work has been sold in galleries in Michigan, Virginia, and New Mexico. It is also in a pop-up shop in Newport News, VA each spring and during the winter holiday season. She can be reached at dlstone33@yahoo.com and www.revampreuse.com

P.S. - in 2010 she had another second chance when she and Michael Stone-Richard were married. They met just prior to their 40th class reunion and felt instantly connected.

HONEYSUCKLE SUMMERS

I remember summers
filled with sweaty days
braiding clover chains,

warm nights chasing
lightning bugs through
soft, damp lawns.

I remember summers,
smelling lavender
and honeysuckle,

dreaming of dresses
of ivory and small
lilac-scented soaps.

I remember summers
rolling down the grassy
hill of a dear friend's

home, canna lilies
shooting skyward from
her rounded gardens.

And I remember summers
when Mama was young,
reading to us before

the buzzing fan's
whirring as my little
brother and I fell asleep

daily to the hum
of songs, whimseys,
and fairytales.

SOUL WHISPERS

Throughout the journeys, the ebbs
and flows of the rhythms in life,

the crescendos and crashes
of the waves of living,

there is a voice that speaks
at 3:00 a.m., at dawn,

in the afternoon,
at midnight—

the quiet soliloquies
that temper our existence.

Prophets, poets, dreamers
recognize the soft tones,

the still, small murmurs,
tranquil sounds, silent prayers,

heartsongs, heartcries—
the whispers of the soul.

HONEYSUCKLE SUMMERS AND SOUL WHISPERS

JAN HOFFMAN

My Love-Hate Relationship with Lawrence Welk



H. SCOTT BUTLER

I don't recall when I first became aware of "The Lawrence Welk Show." But by the early 60s, I was definitely conscious of it as a representation of the older generation's cheesy tastes. Compared to the expressive vocals of rock-and-roll groups celebrating or anguishing over teenage love, Welk's "champagne music makers" sounded politely detached, as if they'd had a few sips of bubbly before going on. The languid singers were augmented by Arthur Duncan, the sole African American whose tap-dancing duties regrettably reinforced his token status; Myron Floren, master of that most un-champagne-like of musical instruments, the accordion; and of course Lawrence, possessing all the animation of a town-hall clock figure and speaking in a heavy yet nonspecific European accent that tended to stick an "ah" onto the ends of words. And if all of this wasn't off-putting enough, the costumes and sets were so kaleidoscopically garish they seemed designed to distract from the blandness of the performers.

The powerful rock of the late 60s and early 70s, serving as a Greek chorus to riots and assassinations and war, only deepened my contempt for Lawrence's show. When my wife's parents praised it as "good, wholesome family entertainment," implicitly setting it against their view of the drugged out, semi-naked savagery of the rock scene (never mind the Beatles), I managed to insult them by calling it soulless. Then somehow forty years went by, taking my forbearing in-laws with them, and Lawrence as well. But his show, which had preceded him in death, returned in reruns that still haunt the airwaves and have come to haunt me a little too. If while channel surfing I happen upon Lawrence and his crew, many of them no more than video ghosts at this point, I find myself lingering in their company, and not entirely to

make fun. The hokey character of the proceedings--the witless scripted jokes, the cast members gamely playing clowns or babies, the pink and yellow and raspberry suits and gowns, the abundant sculpted hair, the relentless smiles, the competent but surface-skimming voices, the Tin Man leader--now seem graced with a certain modesty of intention, especially in contrast to the present age of excess, when concerts have become extravaganzas of strobe lights and billowing smoke and our president daily commends himself in superlatives. I experience "The Lawrence Welk Show," in other words, much as my in-laws did, as a kind of respite.

My change in attitude extends to Lawrence himself. The child of German immigrant farmers, he conducted an orchestra of pitchforks and buckets in

the family barn, and from this humble beginning, and despite his clockwork mannerisms and peculiar accent, he went on to achieve his dream. Moreover, in achieving it, he provided jobs for a number of singers and musicians who otherwise would have spent their prime immigrating from low-wage musical venues to other lines of work. He guided them to the un-promised land of a livelihood in the arts, and there a number of the survivors remain. I've learned, too, that in making an African American a regular, he bucked the bigotry of the period. Even if Arthur Duncan didn't dance or sing with his white female co-stars, his continuing presence on a variety show was a first.

The music also has its charms. Taken mostly from traditional American song, Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and the movies of the time, it's good stuff performed well if rather impersonally--which has the virtue, at least, of valuing the composition over the performer's ego. And as part of the jumble of memory, it evokes my lost youth no less than the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan do.

Finally, there are those aging former cast members who host the repeats, one of whom told the story of the young Lawrence and his pretend orchestra. An old timer myself, I feel a kinship with them. I sympathize with the personal trials they recount, the illnesses and the lost loved ones, and I admire their seemingly genuine gratitude for their careers. I'm happy, too, about the way they've grown old, continuing as recognizable versions of themselves--though it may be that some have died and so are ghosts introducing ghosts. Though I once scorned them, what we share now outweighs other considerations. Like those bubbles released at the beginning of each show, we'll all soon be vanishing in the bright lights of existence.



Lawrence Welk and singer Norma Zimmer - 1961



Welk in Chicago, 1944



Thin Air

H. SCOTT BUTLER

Bradford Dillman,” said Emma as George pulled the car into a parking space.

They’d been trying to remember the name on the way to the grocery store. He’d brought it up because a newspaper story of a murderous pair had made him think of the movie “Compulsion,” and this had reminded him that an actor playing one of the killers had just died, but now, though he’d seen the name in print only a few days ago, he couldn’t summon it. So he’d asked Emma, who couldn’t either, and they’d played their little game. “I’m thinking Brandon de Wilde,” she said, “but I know that’s not right.”

“And I’m thinking Bill Pullman,” he said, “but it can’t be him. Way too young.” They’d each suggested a couple of other not-its before Emma came up with the answer.

“Ah,” George said. “Hoorah.”

They unhooked seatbelts and climbed out into the cold, which sliced through his trousers like blades. Yesterday’s eight-inch snowfall had been plowed into mounds and ridges in the parking lot, but there was still the danger of slipping on ice, so he held Emma’s arm. Of course, if he slipped, the more likely occurrence given his arthritic knees, he would need the presence of mind to let go of her; otherwise, he’d take her down with him. He concentrated on this possibility until they made it to the entrance.

The store was crowded. It was a Friday afternoon in a university town, and the student population, or that portion of it with credible IDs, was stocking up on beer for the weekend. Usually they avoided this time, but Emma had noticed they were out of eggs for their Saturday pancakes.

Picking up a handbasket, she said, “We might as well get a few other things too.”

A bad sign. If she ran true to form, their egg dash would turn into a real shop, and they’d have to upgrade from the basket to a wheeled cart. Also, though he’d used the bathroom before leaving home, the cold had stimulated the urge to pee again. He could hold it for the short trip he’d planned on but not for wandering up and down all the aisles.

“I need to use the john,” he said. “You go on and I’ll catch up.”

The john, as he well knew, was down a hall near the entrance. He went in and relieved himself, but had trouble getting the faucet to come on. He waved his hand in front of where the electric eye should be, but nothing happened. Behind him the stall toilet flushed, and a young man appeared at the other sink and washed his hands. When he left, George, having feigned washing to save face, moved to that sink and encountered the same difficulty. Was this somehow a consequence of old age? he wondered, wiping the liquid soap off his hands with a paper towel. At a certain point did the universe begin turning against

you? He looked at himself in the smeared mirror. A tall, grizzled, baggy-eyed figure stared back, its goatee and black leather jacket utterly failing to create a compensatory air of distinction. He'd noticed recently that Emma, who looked younger although they were both seventy-six, and who enhanced her advantage by dyeing her hair its original dark blonde, was the one store clerks addressed when they were out together, as if he were deaf or non compos mentis. Even his height--once useful, especially for an English teacher, as a means of projecting authority to unruly twelfth-graders--failed to induce any respect.

Emma had headed toward the fresh produce section, but he didn't see her among the bins. She had a way of disappearing on him in stores. If he stopped to look at something and then turned in her direction, she'd be not ahead of him but gone, as if possessed of some secret power of acceleration.

Or as they walked along, he'd realize he was talking to nobody, and though he knew she'd veered down an aisle, her sudden invisibility was always a bit unnerving.

But then he did see her, on the other side of the orange and grapefruit bins--a winter bounty that always struck him as too good to last--and keeping his eye on her in case she darted away, he joined her there.

She was putting apples in a plastic bag, the basket looped over her arm already holding grapes, oranges, and bananas. "I thought we could have cooked apples with the pancakes," she said.

"Good idea."

"We should get whipped cream to squirt on them."

Since the cans of whipped cream were on the other side of the store, she had her rationale for reconnoitering all the aisles in between. To set up a potential tease, he said, "We need anything else from this section?"

"Well, I thought maybe some fresh vegetables."

"Okay. You get them, and I'll fetch the whipped cream and meet you up front."

"No, that's all right."

"I don't mind."

"No, I--" She looked at him. "What's your hurry? You went to the bathroom, didn't you?"

He shrugged.

She gave him a little punch on the arm and headed toward the broccoli and cauliflower. He followed, and shortly her basket was full. "I guess we need a shopping cart," she said. "And don't you say anything."

He put up his hands. "Who, me? I'll go get one."

He walked back toward the foyer but spotted on the way a seemingly abandoned cart. It was between aisles in front of a battery display, and he looked down the corridor toward which it pointed. There he saw a young couple near the entrance. The boy, tall and thin, was examining a piece of paper in his hand as the girl, a pony-tailed blonde, squatted in

her tight jeans before a shelf of flour bags.

"You didn't indicate either one," the boy said to her.

"Well, maybe we should get bleached then," she said. "That sounds more...safe."

He assumed the cart was theirs but asked anyway.

"Oh, yeah," the boy said. "Sorry. You don't happen to know which kind of flour is better, do you--the bleached or the unbleached?"

"No, but I think my wife prefers unbleached, if that helps."

The girl, looking up at him with a serious expression, said, "You don't think it's less safe?"

He smiled at her. "I'm still here."

He left them to their deliberations, about which they were as earnest as children playing grown-up. Newlyweds, he expected, or lovers newly moved in together, and probably as earnest in their love-making as in their shopping. He proceeded to the foyer, pulled a cart from one of the stacks, and went in search of Emma.

She was no longer in the produce area, of course. He pushed the cart to the back of the store and started moving past the aisles, glancing down them

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as he went. A kiddie-car cart exiting from one of these almost collided with him, the tiny boy in it giving him the evil eye, and after he and the mother had exchanged apologies, he saw Emma. She was standing near the far end with her face close to the shelf. A former math teacher, she liked to calculate price comparisons in her head, even when there were signs that did it for you. She was so immersed in this activity that she didn't notice his approach, and he found himself admiring her figure, insofar as her blue jacket revealed its general proportions. It was fuller than it had been, though not by a lot, and in fact he liked the augmentation. He remembered the first time he'd seen her, talking with some other girls in the university's student union. Her blue eyes and cute nose had made an impression on him, and so had her shapely rear end. He'd objectified her then, to use the current parlance, and he objectified her now. At the same time, he saw her as the mother of their three girls and the companion of his days. The girls were scattered now, with children of their own to worry about, and in a sense he and Emma were back where they started, though not playing grown-up this time. They knew it was a futile aspiration. You only grew older, not wiser.

"So which is the better deal?" he said, surprising her.

"Oh. Neither. Anyway, I think we might have a can of salmon."

"I seem to remember one, too," he said.

He picked up the basket lying on the floor and placed it in the cart then followed her around the turn into the frozen food section. It was almost as cold here as it was outside.

Coming toward them was a couple apparently older than they, both in black wool overcoats. The wiry woman held a cloth shopping bag with one hand and gripped the man's arm with the other. Her companion, gaunt-faced and vacant-eyed, advanced in tiny steps, like a comedian's version of an elderly person.

"Poor thing," Emma whispered when they'd passed them.

"Which one?" he said.

"Both."

Emma put some frozen peas in the cart, and they rounded the next corner into another frozen foods aisle. When she paused before the breads, he pushed ahead to the fried potatoes. She no longer bought them out of concern for his cholesterol, but if he could smuggle some to the check-out, she wouldn't make a fuss. He plucked a bag of curly fries from the locker, slipped it under the other bags in the cart, and glanced over his shoulder. But instead of Emma he saw a lone male shopper. Staying where he was, he waited for her to come back, and when the wait grew to a couple of minutes, he went looking for her.

Unless they were accidentally missing each other, she wasn't in this part of the store. He knew he'd find her somewhere, and yet what could account for her having gone so far, so quickly? He thought of a movie

He knew he'd find her somewhere, and yet what could account for her having gone so far, so quickly? He thought of a movie they'd once seen in which a husband and wife stop at a gas station, and while he fills the car, she goes to the restroom and disappears forever.

they'd once seen in which a husband and wife stop at a gas station, and while he fills the car, she goes to the restroom and disappears forever.

He cruised past the aisles again and finally found her, back in produce of all places, talking to a woman he didn't

know. Keeping his distance, he readied himself to scurry after her and also to shout her name, if need be. But when the woman left her, she turned and saw him.

They met midway, next to the avocados.

"I remembered the whipped cream," she said and held up the can. "And while I was getting it, I saw Claire, the woman I was talking to, down this way. I don't know her that well, but she's a library volunteer too. She's the one I told you about whose husband died suddenly. A fluky thing--a bad fall."

He nodded.

"So I thought I should speak to her."

"Okay," he said. "Are we done?"

"I guess so."

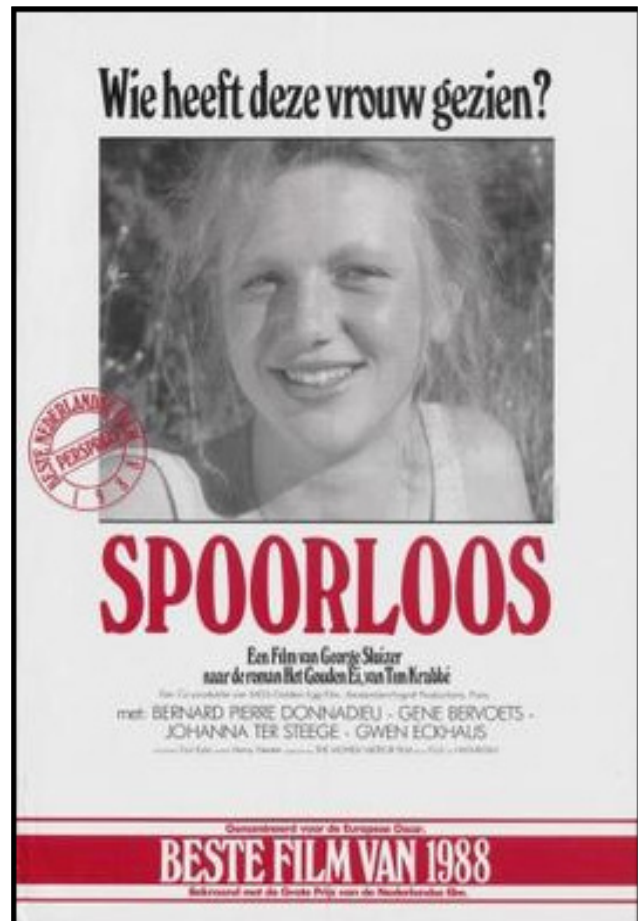
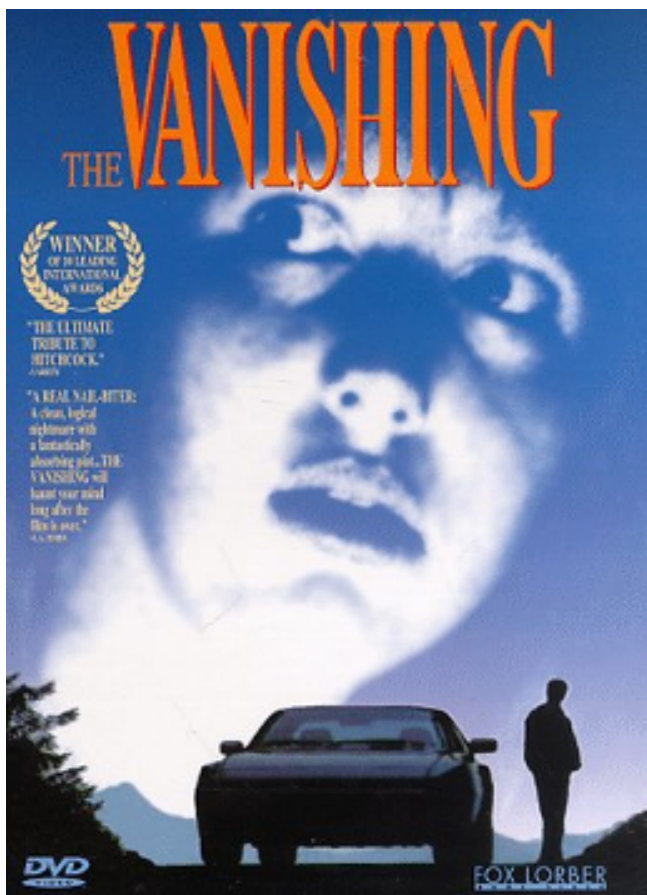
She put the can in the cart, and they went to the

check-out counter with the shortest line. He placed the things on the rolling mat, paid with cash, and let her push the cart into the lot, so she'd have something to hold onto. As she climbed in the car, he put the bags in the trunk. Then he rolled the cart to the nearest return slot and gave it a shove. His breath rising cloudily before his eyes, he gazed up at the gray sky that seemed to hang low over the lot. The thought at the back of his mind, ever lurking there these days, came to the fore: Would it be better if he went first or last? First would mean she'd continue on, and how could he wish anything else for her? But last would mean he'd be there to comfort her and then to bear the burden of loss and loneliness.

When he got in the car, Emma, looking at him, said, "Everything okay?"

"Yep," he said. "What's the name of that movie where the wife disappears at the gas station?"

She gave him an appraising stare. "I'm sorry I ran off."



"No, it isn't that," he said, starting the engine. "Well, circumstances may have suggested it, but I really can't remember the title."

"Was it 'Into Thin Air'?" she said.

Knowing her--who better?--he recognized in her tone a kind of tender complicity. "Shorter, I think," he said.

"The Disappeared?"

"Something like that. The 'the' sounds right."

"I know," she said. "The Vanishing."

"Hoorah," he said.

And they headed home.

THOUGHTS ON GLOBAL WARMING

H. SCOTT BUTLER

It's their fate, not ours.
We'll fade in a dream
Of gleaming tubes
And hushed voices.

Everything goes.
Parents, typewriters, nations
This most excellent canopy
The universe.

And who's to say
If doom is disinvited
Some other doom
Wouldn't smash the party?

Sadness requires leisure,
Which is ours, not theirs.
They'll be too busy
Reaping the whirlwind.

Though some lifting eyes
To the night's imperial glitter
May sense it drifting free
Of all our fables.

This is a story about the world...
a world in chaos,
a world in pain,
a world that hopes.

John Lewis crossed the Edmund Pettus bridge for the final time today, while his followers marched in streets across our land, carrying his message of hope.

Our president orders schools to open but teachers march and send their last wills to governors, demanding safety for themselves and their students. Hope.

People around the world mourn their dead as scientists lock hands to find a vaccine for a virus that threatens millions. Hope unites them, propels them forward.

Joblessness and hunger ravage families, while farmers and strangers join in massive efforts to move unsold crops to those needy, waiting hopefully in miles-long food lines.

Displaced refugees wait years in tent cities, praying some country will accept them, give them an opportunity to live, raise their children. They refuse to give up hope.

This is a story about our world today...
a world that survives despite chaos,
a world that attempts to heal pain,
a world that continues to hope.

HOPE

SHARON CANFIELD DORSEY

BENEATH THE BEAUTY

DAVE CARIENS

To a great extent, the terms liberal and conservative are relative depending on where you live. I learned that as a young man in college in the 1960s. It was the height of the anti-Vietnam War movement, and I was a liberal at Ohio State University. But when I moved to Berkeley, California for graduate school, I was, by their standards, a conservative.

Late in life I am experiencing something similar. More than twenty years ago, I was living in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. where I was, by most people's definitions, a moderately liberal Democrat. When I retired in 1997 and moved to a part of rural Virginia known as the Northern Neck, many folks in this part of the Old Dominion saw me as a wild-eyed liberal, a socialist, or even worse, a communist.

Most people don't know or even care to learn the differences between a socialist and a communist; they just intuitively think they are all "bad people." And, somehow these two groups of "bad people" are, in their minds, lumped together as "liberals."

I thought I had found a retirement paradise, and in many respects I was right. My wife and I bought a beautiful historic farmhouse built in 1889. It is a two-story white frame structure with a two-story double porch on the front—a place to sit on warm mornings with coffee and biscotti and survey more than four acres of bucolic splendor. It is also the house I thought would inspire me to write my "great

book."

We live close to the Chesapeake Bay, so just a few minutes' drive from our farmhouse we can take long strolls along pristine beaches and listen to the pounding surf. And, there are two nature preserves nearby, where we can watch the herons and numerous species of waterfowl.

As a city boy living in the country, I've developed a new appreciation for nature—the trees, flowers, and wild animals. Bald eagles nesting in tree tops across the road or foxes running through the fields are magnificent sights I will never forget and feel so fortunate to have seen. I have come to understand the Buddhist philosophy of compassion, meditation, and reverence for all living things, both plant and animal.

My wife and I have gone so far as to name the black snakes who live on the property, most notably Sweet Sue and Black Bart. The former got her name when she climbed up the side of the house, looked in the family room window and became mesmerized by the movement on the TV screen.

I was sitting on the sofa in front of the window when my wife told me to turn around slowly and look at who was staring in. There she was. Sweet Sue had been looking over my shoulder. As the characters on the TV screen moved, her head tilted from one side to the other as if trying to make sense out of what she was seeing. She had an inquisitive look on her face.

For those of you who have never looked a black snake in the face, I assure you she was expressive and she was sweet—hence the name.

That was and is the Northern Neck I came to love.

But there is a dark side to life here in this pastoral and forested wonderland; a deeply troubling and disturbing side that runs counter to American values as I understand them. It is a suspicion of anyone or anything different from the world the locals know; it is a lack of intellectual curiosity or respect for others who hold different views and thoughts. The most repugnant representatives of the dark side are a small but vocal percent of the population—they are openly racist. They pass out KKK literature, call a friend of mine “Jew boy,” and even threaten those who do not share their interpretation of their “God-given,” conservative rights to do anything they damn well please.

In summary, what is lacking from this small, at times loud, minority is a recognition that we are all in this life together; there are limits on all our rights, including the right to own weapons of war—automatic and semi-automatic weapons.

The legacy of slavery also lurks in the troubled waters of the Northern Neck. On the surface there is a genteel politeness, but everyone knows his or her place. That place is usually determined by the color of your skin. This intolerance for people whose skin color is brown or tan is real and often converges with an intense dislike for those who do not share their version of Christianity, or even worse, are not Christians at all.

Following the election of Barack Obama as President, the dark side of the Northern Neck surfaced. All you had to do was sit in the local barber shop and listen to comments. “Are they serving chitterlings and grits at state dinners now?” or “The darkies are going to try and get more free rides at our expense” or these words of a man who came to the local library during a book expo and was told food was available for purchase on the second floor. “Who’s serving?” he asked. When he was told it was the Shiloh Baptist Church, he responded, “Oh, coons serving coon.”

This malevolence rears its ugly head in other insidious forms including attempted voter suppression and intimidation. Some African Americans are discouraged from voting by their white supervisors. The president

of the Northumberland County NAACP reported a number of managers or business owners have told African-American employees they would be fired if they voted.

In the over twenty-two years I have lived in the Northern Neck, I have worked at the polls in all but three or four elections. I can testify to the hostility expressed by some toward anyone who isn’t a Republican. The cat-calls, threats, and intimidation of Democrats are standard fair. The intensity of the belligerence ebbs and flows, but all the time it rests on a bed of underlying suspicion and hate. In recent years, as America has been more deeply divided and as the far-right has staked claims to be sole proprietors of patriotism, moral values, and truth, the open expression of contempt for Democrats has increased exponentially.

I live in the mother-county of the Northern Neck, Northumberland County. Formed in 1648, it is rich in history. Because of the county’s historical significance, some of its residents believe they have a sole right to interpret the words of the founding fathers and the Constitution. Woe be to anyone who disagrees with them.

It is not uncommon for signs supporting Democrat candidates to be removed from people’s lawns. If that were the only problem, I would be less concerned.

The truth is polling stations in Northumberland County and elsewhere in the Northern Neck are fertile ground for violence. With the intensity of political polarization and the gap between left and right wings widening, the county I live in, or some other part of the Northern Neck, could easily become the next Charlottesville.

An atmosphere of hostility, intimidation, and verbal bullying aimed at anyone who is not a conservative is fast reaching a boiling point. This animosity surfaces every year as elections approach and in the past has ranged from destruction of signs to physical threats. Given the impeachment inquiry and trial of President Trump in the Senate, emotions and nerves on both sides of the aisle are raw.

My personal experiences include a man trying to hit me with his car while I was handing out sample Democrat ballots at the polls; being yelled at by people calling me names; having a woman scream

and raise her hand as if to hit me; and being told to get a job. I had just returned from Bosnia where I was working in support of the peace-keeping force and had dealt with land mines and snipers on a daily basis.

The rhetoric is moving far beyond political hyperbole and is now crossing all boundaries of respect and decency. A recent email from the editor of a Northern Neck monthly newspaper to the head of the local Democrats implied that Democrats were “baby killers.” These words are similar to those latched onto by an unstable man in Pittsburgh prompting him to kill peaceful worshipers in a synagogue or another crazed individual to massacre Hispanics in a Walmart shopping for school supplies.

My wife and I also experienced harassment when President Obama first ran for office. We live on a country road (maybe ten cars a day use it). We had stopped at our mailbox at the end of the drive. A police cruiser pulled up, and the officer told us we were blocking traffic—there were no cars on the road. The very large “Obama-Biden” sign on our fence was what annoyed him. The officer’s actions and words were harassment.

I have witnessed other Democrat poll workers being harassed, yelled at, and threatened. In one case, a woman came within an eyelash of slapping a fellow Democrat and candidate just because he was talking out loud to me about his chances in the election for the County Board of Supervisors.

If “loose lips sink ships,” then those same lips (and words) can, and have, led to violence. Incidents at polling stations as well as words and signs implying Democrats are communists are playing a role in turning this part of Virginia into a tinderbox of hatred.

In one instance, a truck with two men and a gun rack stopped in front of the home of the chairman of the Northumberland Democrats. The men warned him something could happen because he had a “Clinton-Kaine” sign in his yard, “You ought to be careful about the signs you put in your lawn.”

An incident on November 5, 2019 at Wicomico Church voting station was particularly disturbing. As I worked at the polling station, a man accused me of being in league with the devil and part of Satan’s

plans; he called Democrats the “spawn of Satan.”

This type of incendiary language is a chilling reminder of recent violence. Who can forget that Dylann Roof wrote of his racial hatred for blacks on his website and in a manifesto before murdering nine African Americans at a prayer service at Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina?

Even in subtle ways, it is clear Democrats are considered second-class citizens. For example, officers from the sheriff’s office make the rounds of the polling stations on election days, and there should be some comfort in that. The problem is the uniformed officers almost always stand with the Republicans in what could be a sign of endorsement by county employees from an office that is supposed to be non-political. It is also a subliminal message that the officers are present to protect Republicans, not Democrats.

Words and actions matter. The slinging of untruths and insults at Democrats in letters to the editor, or a prominent elected Republican screaming at a Democrat constituent during a county board supervisor’s meeting, could provoke unstable individuals to resort to violence.

Any one of the incidents I have cited alone does not represent a major threat, but taken in the aggregate they add up to a real danger.

I am concerned for my safety and the safety of my fellow Democrats when we work at the polls November 3, 2020. Open disdain for Democrats in the Northern Neck may explode. Violence is a very real possibility.

I live my life in widening circles
that begin and end in the same place.

Food shopping was once a fast trip to
the grocery store or farmer's market--
in the car and back home in an hour--
food on shelves and into drawers – done!

Now it's a treasure hunt with online providers,
questionable results, and estimated delivery
dates as elusive as the coronavirus itself.
My circle of possibilities widens each week.

Instead of lunch in a cozy corner of my favorite
restaurant, I've now become fast friends with
GrubHub and DoorDash. It's an around-the-
town culinary experience in my pajamas.

There's also the matter of communications.
Names from my past are turning up in emails
and on Facebook with all-caps, urgent messages,
“Are you all right???” My question is, who are you?

Where have these people been for the past forty
years of my life? The circles keep widening, but
is that really a good thing? Do I want to rehash
old memories with these long-absent voices?

I've also been receiving, “love you” notes and
funny cartoons from younger friends who are
convinced I'm depressed in my isolation. They
can't believe I'm actually relishing this rare gift

of quiet time -- where the widening circles of my
new life begin and end in the same place...home!

WIDENING CIRCLES

SHARON CANFIELD DORSEY

I believe all authors are so involved with their writing that their final draft is often one step shy of where it should be. So, now the draft should go to a professional editor. Good editing can bring your writing to life; your writing can be reborn in a new and more poignant form. The story about T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound is proof of the positive impact an editor can have on writing.

The value of a good editor cannot be overstated

YOUR WRITING REBORN: THE VALUE OF EDITING

DAVE CARIENS

Whenver I hear of an author not seeking or accepting candid feedback or editorial changes on his or her work, I say to myself, “Too big an ego to be an author.”

I am a writer, and I have been an editor. With my editor’s hat on I can tell you that when given an excellent, solid first draft, I can usually see immediately how to turn the work into something better. It is the high quality that turns on my creative juices. I like to think that many times I have helped a writer improve both the quality of the piece in front of me and the writer’s future work.

One of the best examples of the value of a good editorial scrub is T.S. Eliot’s poem, “The Waste Land.” Eliot’s work is considered one of the most important English-language poems of the 20th Century and the best example of early 20th Century Modernism in English literature.

“The Waste Land” would never have reached that height had it not been edited by Ezra Pound. Eliot apparently knew his work could be better, and he gave the draft to Pound who made detailed editorial comments and significant cuts. The poem would not have achieved its standing in the history of English literature had it not been for Pound. Eliot recognized Pound’s contribution in raising the quality of his work and dedicated the poem to Pound.

Unfortunately, many authors, particularly when starting out, think their words are golden, pristine pure, and cannot be improved. However, there is no written draft that cannot be improved. My recognition of this fact came from having my work bludgeoned by editors at the CIA when I wrote for The President’s Daily Brief. It took only a few drafts for me to realize I was not as good as I thought and had a lot to learn.

When thinking about the editorial process, every writer should begin by confessing that editing hurts. When you write you are exposing a great deal about yourself—your level of education, your intellect, your logic and thought processes, and, perhaps most importantly, you expose that you care about the reader and want your work easily understood.

It is not just new writers who resist editing. Some writers who have been moderately to highly successful in their careers resist editorial changes. People who were previously open to critique now object to any oversight or comments about their drafts, unless of course, it is praise.

Unfortunately, there is something that happens to some otherwise basically nice people when their written work is praised—not only do they believe the flattery, their minds embellish it. And if you point out any flaws in their writing, you challenge them in ways they find intolerable. They can come unglued.

The failure to welcome feedback on drafts is particularly unfortunate because writing is a continual process of growing and learning. Writers do neither when they close their minds to other's ideas and reactions.

A significant challenge for authors comes when they try to switch genres. If you are a successful nonfiction writer and try your hand at mystery or any form of creative writing, the adjustment may be bumpy. A good editor can ease this transition. Remember, not all writing is based on the same principles. You will have to disregard perfectly good rules and habits you used previously and adopt new principles. Understanding the myriad writing principles and how they apply to different genres, then, is important.

A friend of mine who wrote a successful book was repeatedly told he should write a script and try to sell it to Hollywood because the story would make a great movie. That might have been true, but my friend knew he had no idea how to envision the interaction between his narrative and cinematography. He needed training in the art of script writing. Someday, he says, he will learn script writing and maybe his book will be turned into a movie.

In the extreme form of nonfiction writing, the goal is for the reader to be unable to see the author in the work. This form of nonfiction writing is designed to persuade the reader of a point or argument based on evidence and objectivity. If the writer's bias can be seen on the pages, the case is lost.

If you are that type of nonfiction writer, you have been told to practically eliminate adjectives and adverbs. You have spent years writing that way. Now you want to try your hand at a novel or memoir. In creative writing, adjectives and adverbs are the fiction author's bread-and-butter because you are trying to describe scenes and characters, create mood and arouse emotions. The switch in writing genre can be jarring.

Writers also need to remember there are two types of editors: content and line. On occasion you can find an individual who is skilled at both. That was my experience with my first editor. She was good at line editing: grammar, spelling, tense, and punctuation. Perhaps most importantly, she was a superb content editor who tried to edit so the changes would be

consistent with my style and sound like me. More than once, she deleted a whole paragraph because it did not sound like I wrote it; it was out of step with the rest of the chapter.

Finally, I believe all writers, including those who object to editing, know when their manuscript is flawed or weak. A writer can spend hours pondering what needs to be done to correct a problem, and yet will never see it—only another set of eyes can do that.

In my classes about non-fiction intelligence and crime analysis writing, I teach the standard **Four Sweeps Editing**, but change it to **Four Sweeps, Plus One**. The editing process begins with the author's continual review and revision, but the **Plus One** is by far the more important step. This approach to self-editing is done before you turn your work over to a professional editor:

Sweep One—Read the draft for flow, message, focus, and organization.

Sweep Two—Read the draft to check logic and clarity as well as grammar and punctuation. Do not rely on MSWord. The grammar and punctuation tool in MSWord is only about 45% accurate.

Sweep Three—Read the draft for word choice and spelling, and make sure you have used the correct English word. MSWord will tell you only that what you have written is a correct English word—it may not be the correct word in your context. Remember, English has more words than any other language that are pronounced the same way, and may or may not be spelled the same way, but have different meanings.

Sweep Four—Do an in-depth read of the draft to make sure the message on the paper is the one you want to convey. Look at the style of your writing. Is it consistent? Examine paragraphs and sentences. Are they clear?

Plus One—This last step is the most important. Give up the draft to at least one person who can identify any remaining problems. I try to always have someone look at my drafts, and I ask them to brutalize what they see. I want to know all their reactions from content, to spelling, to grammar and punctuation. I would rather be embarrassed with one reviewer than have my flawed writing go to print and be embarrassed to a broader audience.

MOUNT RUSHMORE...THE TRUE STORY

SHARON CANFIELD DORSEY

An army once again invaded Indian Territory on Friday, the 3rd of July, 2020, led by the president of the United States, against the expressed wishes of Julien Bear Runner, president of the Oglala Sioux Nation. People may become ill or die as a result of this act, demonstrating again, a total lack of respect or concern by our government for these First People of our land.

President Trump invited thousands of people to participate in a political rally/patriotic celebration at Mount Rushmore in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. He announced there would be no social distancing and masks would not be required. What's wrong with this picture?

President Julien Bear Runner was fearful of a spike in illness and death on the Pine Ridge Reservation where numbers of infections were already rising. The Oglala people gathered to protest, willing to risk their health and lives to voice their objection and anger at this, another invasion of their sovereign territory.

Mount Rushmore is located on Sioux land. The president was urged several times by tribal leaders not to come. The White House refused to even respond to the pleas of the nation that owns the land. That ownership is clearly stated in a sixty-seven-page Supreme Court decision from 1980: *The United States versus the Sioux Nation of Indians*. The Court

ruled at that time that the United States had acted in bad faith, practicing deception that led to tragedy, dislocation, and unnecessary deaths when they seized the land in 1874 because gold had been discovered in the Black Hills. In 1980, the government offered \$102 million to compensate for the take-over of Sioux territory.

The Sioux refused, quoting Lakota chief, Crazy Horse, "One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk."

That settlement has appreciated to approximately \$1.3 billion today, representing only a fraction of the gold, timber and other resources already removed from the Black Hills. The Sioux will not accept any payment for their land. They do not want money. They want their sacred mountain back, as originally promised in a treaty in 1851, and again, in the thirty-six-page Treaty of Fort Laramie, signed May 25, 1868, one-hundred-fifty-two years ago. During the Fort Laramie negotiations, thirteen tribal nations spoke their truth. Seven government peace commissioners listened and signed before thirty witnesses. These treaties are on exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, along with many others dishonored and disregarded by the United States government.

The mountain into which the heads of four U. S. presidents are carved, is sacred to the Sioux. The Six Grandfathers Mountain (Thunkasila Sakpe)

was named by Lakota medicine man, Nicholas Black Elk, after a vision. "The vision was of the six sacred directions: west, east, north, south, above and below. The directions were said to represent kindness and love, full of years and wisdom, like human grandfathers." The granite bluff that towered above the hills remained intact, carved only by wind and rain, until 1927, when Gurzon Borglum began his assault on the mountain.

In the 1920s, South Dakota state historian, Doane Robinson, saw Six Grandfathers Mountain as an opportunity to increase tourism throughout the Black Hills area. He renamed the mountain, Mount Rushmore, after a wealthy New York lawyer and commissioned Gurzon Borglum to create the memorial. For fourteen years, Borglum blasted, chiseled and filed the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln into the granite mountain. For the Lakota, this was just one more violent act of colonization.

While these presidents were leaders of the United States, each with notable historical significance, their faces carved on this sacred mountain was a final act of conquest. Washington and Jefferson owned slaves. Roosevelt coined the phrase: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Lincoln, one day after he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, ordered the execution of the Dakota 38+2 at Ft. Snelling in Minnesota.

In 1861, the Dakota Sioux lands had dwindled to a 150-mile span. This violation ran deeper than the theft of the physical property. Land is symbolic of motherhood to Indian people. Having their land torn from them meant a loss of sustenance, culture, language and life itself. It meant relocation and separation of families. When the Dakota became desperate and hungry in 1862, they fought back. More than two thousand Dakota were captured and imprisoned, mostly women, children and elders who were unable to flee, plus thirty-six men who claimed they had not participated in the battles with the army. Chief Wabasha was promised his people would be spared and allowed to relocate if they left their villages and surrendered. Instead, they were imprisoned at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota and were forced to watch thirty-six of their husbands, fathers, and sons hanged on December 26, 1862, as ordered by President Lincoln.

It was the largest mass execution in U. S. history.

The men took their places on the scaffold, grasped each other's hands, and sang a Dakota song as white coverings were placed over their faces. Two other males hanged that day were later found to have been mistakenly killed. One was a white teenager, lost in the wilderness and raised by the Dakota. The other was a child--thus the Dakota 36+2. The bodies were thrown in a shallow mass grave. By morning, most had been removed and desecrated.

Mount Rushmore is known as a shrine to democracy. Its image is synonymous with freedom and patriotism.



However, the true story of Six Grandfathers Mountain demonstrates the lack of understanding and respect shown to the Native people who inhabited Paha Sapa (Black Hills, in the Lakota language) for generations prior to European arrival in America in the 1400s, and even before the Norse explorer, Eric the Red, in the year 985. The Black Hills are considered by the Lakota to be the sacred center of their universe, where their culture began. The most recent invasion of Indian Territory tells us that the long-standing lack of respect for Native people still continues today.

SHARON CANFIELD DORSEY is a descendant of the Cherokee Nation.

IT'S THE MEMORIES

GWEN KEANE

In front of the Cathedral in New Orleans at Jackson Square, there were groups of musicians playing for tips. For my husband and me, New Orleans was our favorite city, and we traveled there many times during our more than thirty-one years of marriage. It was during our last trip I noticed a particular group of young musicians. One played his horn with total heart and soul. It sounded wonderful. But upon closer examination, I realized his horn had been broken and his fix was duct tape. That made me smile because in the 1970s my mother depended on duct tape to fix everything. She used her duct tape to hem jeans and to install curtain rods. If my mother were alive today, she would be pleased to see how her little secret has been discovered by the world.

Standing there in Jackson Square, I found myself staring down at the young musician's horn that lay on the sidewalk while he took a break. This musician had found a solution to his problem. While it didn't look great, the makeshift repair didn't seem to affect his playing ability. So I asked myself, "Why couldn't caregiving solutions be that simple? For me, the answer was because before you can create a solution with a single fix, something else breaks. It's like trying to knock down those moving ducks at a carnival. Even a good shot misses from time to time. It all becomes so very frustrating.

When our life is broken, not even duct tape can fix it. The older we get the more we become aware that

our loved ones are beginning to break, and then it becomes us, the caregivers, who have to hold ourselves together to provide comfort and compassion.

During the five years my husband suffered after a stroke that left him with cognitive dementia, some days were so difficult for me as the caregiver that I became consumed with my desire to fix it, when in reality I couldn't. Learning to cope became my only fix. How could I keep my commitment to my husband, live a balanced life, and remain sane? I discovered caregiving had become the biggest challenge of my life, and it was happening at a time when I had thought retirement years would be enjoyable.

I want to help other caregivers recognize that our pain is real and unavoidable. Like writing, caregiving is a solitary act even though the person we care for is present. I discovered self-pity doesn't bring closure to the situation. I acquired new coping skills, but my desire to fix it never went away. It became dormant for a short while, but giving up was just something I couldn't do.

In trying to accept what I didn't know lay ahead, the memories of our good experiences carried me through the day. I seemed to always be thinking with two heads. One head recalled the good days and the other tried to fix the problems at hand.

It was 2014 when my husband Bill had his first stroke and many small strokes throughout the rest of his life. After he was diagnosed with cognitive dementia, I

was on a roller coaster ride. It was heartbreaking. My intelligent well-educated man, who loved learning, reading, walking and exploring all of Europe and New Orleans, slowly deteriorated into a state that ended his quality of life. As I witnessed this process, it was particularly hard for me since I have been a problem solver my entire life.

I had to accept there was no future for us. Memories were all we had. I was thankful that during our thirty-one years of marriage we had traveled extensively and always created memorable experiences. Thinking back on the days of travel helped me appreciate my life and tamp down my self-pity. There were so many things I could recall that put a smile on my face.

with such skill, threw the shawl over her back with the bread wrapped securely. I had to see more, and even though I was hesitant to get close to a gypsy, finally I managed to walk down the hill past her. Unless you had seen her bread-wrapping skills, you wouldn't know she was wearing a shawl filled with loaves of bread. So, when I was thinking of a memory, like that particular memory, it was in color--the green hills, the wildflowers in bloom, the color of her clothes, and the stone building with its old window panes and frames in need of paint. And then I would take a deep breath and allow myself to smile before the silence broke.



I would sit for hours beside Bill as he watched TV, and my mind traveled to faraway places we had visited, the wonderful people we met, and the different lodgings we stayed in. Bill always tried to meet people in those places or studied a road map while I was busy snapping photos of unusual things, like the Turkish people at their roadside stand selling honey or the gypsy in Greece standing at the bottom of a hill outside a monastery waiting for a monk to throw her bread from a second-story window. The loaves flew through the air landing on a shawl the gypsy had placed on the ground. She bent over and,

“Change the TV station. I don't want to see this show any more. Have you got my lunch ready? What did you fix? I told you I don't want a lot to eat, but you never listen to me. I am ready to take my shower.”

Back to reality, but I was able to cope with the rest of the day, because I had taken a brief break by escaping to my memories.

Gwen Keane, a local author from the Northern Neck, Virginia, is writing a book on her thoughts and experiences with caregiving. Her book is called *Fix It*. This is an excerpt.

STUDY IN CONTRASTS

SHARON CANFIELD DORSEY

In a tiny village in Uganda, twelve-year-old Sena leans closer to the static-ridden radio, listening to her biology class on the government channel. Her school is in total shut-down due to the coronavirus.

In a small town in Kentucky, twelve-year-old Adaline sits at the dining room table, iPad in front of her, participating in a Zoom biology class led by her teacher. Her school is providing online learning during the pandemic.

Sena's family can afford to send only one child to the local school since her father's fishing boat was destroyed in a storm. She finds it hard to focus on studies as her four boisterous siblings run in and out of the tiny room, squealing and crying.

Adaline's younger brother and sister tune in to classes in their rooms, on individual devices, supervised by their dad, who is home, training remotely for a new position. He was laid off seven months ago from his job of twenty years.

Sena is expected to help with household chores and babysit her siblings while her mother mixes dirt and water to repair the walls of their small hut, also damaged by the recent storm. She worries there will be no money for Sena to return to school when it reopens.

Adaline's mom has become the primary bread-winner since her husband's lay-off. She is concerned her salary won't stretch to pay the mortgage and keep food on the table, but is determined to shield her children from concerns about family finances.

Both mothers wonder about their children's futures. Both fathers hope they will be able to support their families.

We are all different--facing individual challenges in this new world, but beneath the surface,
we are all the same.

The Sound of Boots

E. Compton Lee



The girl had never been to “The Big Apple,” but she figured it was the best place to start, so she lied to her parents and hopped a train. She was fifteen, already a woman with a past and about to begin on her future. She sank into the seat nearest the door and looked around the car. There were a few tired-looking women, two men in suits and a dark boy with a ponytail. He was not beautiful, but when he glanced at her, his eyes got her attention.

“Is that a guitar?” she said nodding at the large bag at his feet.

“What?”

“Do you play in a band?”

“No,” he said with dignity. “I am a tennis player.” He spoke with an accent.

“Awesome.” She crossed the aisle and sat next to him. “I’m Savannah George.” She held out her hand and after a brief hesitation, he took it.

“And I am Gabriel Raul.”

“You staying here long?”

“A week. Ten days. It depends on how I play.”

“Cool. Now listen. I’m just going to come to the point. I have this plan, kind of a life plan. I live

in this little town in Pennsylvania where nothing happens and I’ve got to move on. So, I’ve come here to experience life while I’m young enough. Are you staying in a hotel, because if you are, I’d like to stay with you for a few hours, maybe the night.”

“Are you crazy?” Gabriel drew away. “You are a child.”

“I’m much older than I look. It’s the freckles. Actually, I’m twenty-one.”

Raul was an Argentine, and Savannah, having certain ideas about Latin men, stretched her arm along the seat in back of him. “So, Gabe from Argentina,” she said. “Are you going to help me out or not?”

The boy thought quickly. His coach would not be here for six hours. He wasn’t supposed to make love before or during a tournament. He wasn’t supposed to make love during training either, which made life difficult because he loved women, but he was a boy who believed in obeying the rules.

Still. He too was twenty-one.

Raul closed the door to his hotel room, and when he turned around Savannah was pulling off her T-shirt. She pushed her skirt over her hips, past her knees, stepped out of it and over to him wearing only her cowboy boots, having never liked underwear. She began pulling off his shirt and pushed him toward

the bed, trying awkwardly not to step on his feet. She felt him tremble as she helped him take off his clothes.

“Are you going to keep the boots on?”

They rolled together, her boots knocking against the footboard. It was over quickly, both of them soaked in sweat, and, no, Savannah had to admit it wasn't great, nothing like Mr. James T. Elliot, the man she had willingly given her virginity to. She wiggled out from under the boy and walked into the bathroom, fetched a glass of water and offered it to him. He gulped it down, looking at her over the glass.

The second time was over soon too, but not the third. Not at all. Not compared to Mr. James T. Elliot or anything she had read in books or seen in movies or any standard she had ever heard. Finally, they lay wrapped and wet together, Savannah's arm flung across his chest. “My coach will be here soon,” he said.

“I know.” The girl was half asleep.

“I am not allowed to do this before a tournament. You will have to go. I am very sorry.”

Savannah rolled onto her back... “Hey, leaving now is nothing to be sorry about.”

“I want to see you again, though. My coach does not need to know. Say you will come tomorrow night.”

The girl skipped down the stairs into the tunnel, hummed an Emmylou Harris tune while she waited for her change at the stadium, clambered up the bleachers to the top, settled herself and spotted Gabriel Raul immediately by his dark skin and ponytail. Most of the seats were empty and Savannah slipped into the first row. He was not the same boy she had been with last night. The dimples were gone, and just before he tossed the ball, he stared into his own world with such intensity that his eyes crossed. Gabriel Raul won his match with ease.

Savannah's hand trembled when she knocked on his door that night. The Plan did not include reruns.

“Are you dangerous Gabriel Raul?”

“Only on the tennis court.”

“Yeah, I could tell.”

Later, Savannah took a strand of the boy's hair that had come loose from his ponytail, rubbed it between her fingers, scrutinizing it. “Promise you won't be shocked,” she said, and before Gabe could respond, went on, “One morning early, this older man and I made out in the back of his pick-up truck and he said we had to quit because I was too young and it really pissed me off and I jumped off the truck and paced around the empty field yelling at him. He said only someone my age could walk naked in the morning light and not be ruined by it, so we hung out for a few more weeks.”

Shocked, Gabriel paused. “What finally happened?”

“Oh, he got himself engaged to an aerobics instructor, and I made up my mind to see the world while I was still young.”

“And all the men in it?”

“Well...yes.”

“And when you are not ‘seeing the world’ what will you be doing?”

“I'm going to be an actress.”

“All beautiful American girls want to be actresses. And when is it that you will stop being young?”

“When I'm twenty-five.”

“I see.”

“And what will you be doing when you are twenty-five, Gabriel Raul?”

“I want to be the best tennis player ever.”

Savannah crossed her knees. “Will you ever marry?”

“Of course, but not till I'm thirty. Perhaps later.”

“To a nice Argentine girl, I suppose.”

“That is likely. Perhaps, a friend of the family.”

Well, thought Savannah, that's pretty much my idea of hell.

Raul made it to the quarter finals, a rising star coming out of nowhere. He had stayed with Savannah every night for many hours and it did not seem to hurt his game. He and his family and coach spent a long night celebrating before they left New York the next

day, and there was no reason for Savannah to stick around. On the train, she wore her big dark glasses all the way home to hide her tears.

Jeanette George shoved a frozen pizza in the oven. She slammed the oven door and straightened. "I know you, Savannah George," she said. "You don't want to get up at five and feed those horses any more than you want to be beaten with a stick."

"That's not exactly true. I'd do it for money."

Jeanette's boarding and lesson business didn't make any money. Savannah's dad financed the operation, and, as a teacher at the local community college, he didn't finance it well.

"Why would a girl your age need more money? More money, more trouble you can get into." Jeanette tossed the pizza box into the trash.

"It could keep her busy," Savannah's father said. He was setting the table. "It may tame her wild ways." He smiled at his daughter.

"I'll do it for forty bucks a week." Savannah knew her father couldn't say no to her, and she also knew forty dollars per week would be a stretch, but she needed the money to get out of Dodge. It was definitely not so she could become a tennis groupie and follow Gabriel Raul from tournament to tournament. No sir!

Savannah was up at 5:00 am, horses fed, stalls done by 7:00, showered and dressed by 7:45 when she caught the bus for school where there was a boy who had turned from a croaky-voiced fool into an angelic Adonis and he was a treat, but then he wanted to give her his class ring. Definitely time to hit the road. She bought a copy of *Tennis Magazine*, flipped through it and wrote a check for a subscription. This was not a good idea, but the magazine said Gabriel Raul's star was indeed rising. He would be out of reach soon and she would be safe. There was a picture of him sliding across the court, his legs spread, returning a shot, which should have been impossible and she remembered that he had the most perfect ass she had ever seen, bar none. She put the check in an envelope, stuck a stamp on the envelope and dropped it in the mailbox, flag up.

After checking the Association of Tennis Professionals schedule, the girl selected Valencia, Spain. She could just afford a decent seat and sat on the edge of it, but something went wrong. Gabriel Raul made unforced errors. For the first time since the U.S. Open, he played badly. Savannah watched him walk off the court with his head down. She waited thirty minutes and called him on his cell.

"Hey you," she said.

"Can you come see me?" Gabe did not sound surprised to hear from her. They arranged to meet at his hotel room.

"I saw you in the stands. Your bright hair. I could not miss it."

Savannah stopped, waited cautiously.

Eventually Gabe smiled a half smile. "You distracted me."

Savannah stood still for so long Gabriel got off the bed. "Come here," he said.

It was the softness with which he spoke that made up her mind. "Hey, Gabe, you're just one in a long line of many. The Plan. Remember?"

Hearing these words, the look on his face changed to something that lifted the girl off her feet. She ran and leapt on him with such force that they fell backward. His eyes, when he flicked a look at her, were slightly crossed. When it was over, he rolled away, turning his back. Savannah touched his shoulder. He did not move.

"You have to go. My coach will be coming."

Savannah lay immobilized. She was fifteen. She was a woman with a past but she had no idea what to do. "I wanted to surprise you. I thought it would be fun."

"Get out," he said. She got out.

Savannah's father threatened to turn her in as a run-away when she called to tell him she would not be back for two weeks. "Don't," she said. "I'm safe and I'll be back before you find me anyway." She followed Gabriel Raul to the next tournament. She managed to be everywhere: at the food booths, walking past the tunnel to the locker room, at the practice courts,

talking to the ball boys and girls, in Gabriel's hotel lobby, walking along his street.

After a week, she stepped in front of him as he headed to the lockers.

"You have been here every day," he said.

Savannah watched him.

"Why?"

"Because I want to be. To be near you."

Gabe reached up to wipe the sweat dripping from his hair. The girl took his wrist, stood on tiptoe and caught the sweat with her tongue. Holding her hand, Gabe led her to a dark corner behind the bleachers and leaned her against a hard wall, his mouth on her neck tasting the sweat. It should have been ugly. It should have been sordid. Instead they fell into that place where there is nothing but love of the other, illicit, uncontrollable, feral and exquisite, that state beyond all boundaries and all of society. The Hindu divinity Vishnu's highest form of love, thank God.

Savannah's parents thought they knew why she suddenly took school seriously, opened her books, studied them and even added a few advanced classes to her schedule. They thought of it as an act of contrition for her runaway. The girl's real motivation was to earn enough credits to get her high school diploma a year early and move to New York City to become an actress. She went online and found herself a three-hundred-fifty square-foot apartment. The day before her departure in early June, she sat her parents down at the kitchen table. Her father held himself very still, as though he knew what she was going to say. Her mother was a slender column of rage. They did not take it well as their daughter knew they wouldn't, and for years after, their faces, defeated and furious, would pop into her head when her guard was down.

Savannah joined an acting class and obtained a job as a waitress. She was surprised to discover she preferred the men in the restaurant to those in her acting class who were mostly gay. The waiters, however, were young, edgy and irreverent and though the turnover was relatively slow, there were enough new faces to keep The Life Plan alive and well. Also, Savannah did not draw the line at including the customers.

Gabriel Raul had called her weekly since their last time together. Now he sent her a plane ticket and an excellent seat to his tournament. She dressed in the same clothes she had worn the first time she had met him. It was twilight when she reached the street behind his hotel where he told her to come. She saw him leaning against the wall. His face was in shadow, but it was Gabriel Raul all right with the black hair pulled into a ponytail. She began to run. He heard her boots hitting the pavement and turned. Savannah saw the moment he recognized her and ran even faster toward that wide smile and the dimples that framed it.

They met in Paris, Barcelona, Madrid, Indian Wells, Cincinnati. In the beginning, Savannah stayed for most of the tournament. They came together in his hotel room or hers, in corners at the stadium, alleys, bathrooms, and one time in the locker room after everyone had gone. No one knew. They were bad kids up to no good and it made them laugh. They talked about his tough coach whom he loved and his parents whom he loved even more, about how, as much as he loved them, sometimes he felt he was missing so much. She talked about the look on her parents' faces when she left, how her mother wouldn't even say goodbye, how she tried to call them but couldn't so sent postcards instead, never with a return address. They talked about his future, which looked brighter and brighter, about what it was like being in a match, the awful tension before and then once it started how the body eventually took over, relaxing into muscle memory. She told him stories about the restaurant, mostly funny. She told him over and over he had the most beautiful ass in the world, steel orbs covered with satin. He counted the freckles that ran across the bridge of her nose and onto her cheeks.

She worked to exhaustion but was fired anyway, her absences having gone past the breaking point. She found another job, lost it, found another, lost that one. Gabriel now sent her plane fare and tickets to every tournament. She stayed from the beginning until he was eliminated or won, which he did more and more.

"How old was the man who started this 'Life Plan' of

yours?" They were in Rome. This was the first time they had managed to be together though Savannah had been there three days.

She looked at the wall. "I don't know. Thirty-five, forty. Why are you asking me this now?"

"I wonder if he had not seduced you if you would be so...restless."

"It's not like I was a baby. Anyway, I always knew I couldn't stay in that hick town. I had to see the world."

"How does your boss let you be away so much?"

"I'm doing fine."

"What about your acting classes? Does it affect them?"

Savannah didn't answer.

"My coach is starting to suspect something. He has begun looking for me when he doesn't find me."

The next time Gabriel Raul sent her tickets, Savannah called to say she could only stay one night. She had to work. She had found a job at a popular restaurant where she worked double shifts. He was disappointed, but he understood.

Of course, he understood.

She arrived at the hotel around six. She tried to eat shrimp cocktail in the dining room then went to her room and tried to watch T.V. She opened the mini bar, selected rum, put it in her Coke and then put in another. She drank it as slowly as possible, which meant five swallows. She took a shower and put her clothes back on. Not feeling the rum at all, she drank another straight from the little bottle plus vodka and then a scotch. As soon as she finished it she ran to the bathroom and spewed brown liquid into the toilet. Savannah took another shower and brushed her teeth until they hurt. Gabriel arrived at eight o'clock. When she opened the door, he pulled her against him and hugged her hard. He was shaking. "Leave your boots on, at least at first," he said.

Boots on, boots off, it was a fine long night.

Toward morning, Gabe took her hand, turned it over and gazed at the palm. "Will you come to my games even if I can't see you, except a little?"

Savannah hesitated.

"You must work. I know. I can give you money. I have much."

"That," she said, "would not be a good idea."

"No."

Savannah looked at his shoulders, his loose hair covering the pillow, the paint-brush eyelashes, the square hands. "I will come to your games whenever you want me to," she said.

Though her seats were excellent, Gabe never put Savannah near the box with his family and coach. It did not matter. It did not matter if he won or lost. All that mattered was watching every expression on his face. When a hair came loose and he tucked it behind an ear, she felt dizzy.

When Gabe was not playing, Savannah walked. She covered all the streets around the stadium, her hotel, his hotel. She went into restaurants and picked at bread and butter and drank sparkling water. She went into shops, tried to look at the jewelry, the clothes, left in five minutes and kept walking, her cell phone in her pocket. When it rang and she met him, the sounds and smells of the city, the crowds, and the terrible agitation dropped away, and the world began and ended with the sight and the smell and the feel of Gabriel Raul.

She was fired again. This time she never left her subterranean room except to go to the bookstore to look for sports magazines that might have an article about Gabe. She went online and watched his games over and over late into the night until one night she saw him on the screen of her laptop with a dark-haired, beautiful girl. "Gabriel's New Girlfriend?" the caption read. Yet, a ticket arrived the next week. When they talked on the phone, neither of them mentioned the possibility of another woman.

During the three days she was in France, he was often surrounded by women. This was more like it she told herself. This was the way it should be. This was in keeping with the spirit of things; therefore, to help matters along Savannah surveyed the field. She chose a tennis player from Germany who had a mop of dark blond curls, aquiline nose, square jaw, and symmetrical features. Even squinting into the sun, he was beautiful. She caught up to him waiting for a

cab. It was amazingly easy to invite herself along.

He was worldly in his view of these matters and therefore kind, but when he had fallen asleep, Savannah slid out of bed, scurried out of the hotel back to hers, stripped and showered and crawled into bed with the sheets pulled over her head. She took the next plane back to New York City where she begged to get her job back and because she was so good when she was there, the owner hired her again. She no longer watched Gabriel on T.V. or the computer or read her subscription to *Tennis Magazine* or listened to sports radio.

When Gabe called, she told him she couldn't leave work, that this job meant a lot to her. She threw herself into waitressing with such gusto that she was offered the maitre'd position. She preferred the hardscrabble, contentious energy of the kitchen, however, and asked if she could be a cook. Her boss told her this would be impossible with her dashing off every time he turned around.

"I won't be doing that so much anymore."

"You will start at the bottom, prep cook," he said. She worked hard, pestered the sous chef into letting her watch.

"Just don't get in the way," he said.

When the restaurant closed for the night she invited him to her place for sex. Tennis had become a part of her past until plane tickets arrived to the most prestigious tournament of all.

Gabriel Raul had made it to the semi-finals. There was a note with the tickets. "Please, come. I have missed you. You are my good luck charm, and I will need it." Savannah was on the plane in four hours.

She was unprepared for the pomp, the age-old procedures, tradition, rules and staid crowds. Gabriel called her several times a day. "Don't leave," he said. He was cloistered among his entourage, but she stayed. She watched. She waited. He won, but at what cost? She felt despair at what he put his body through.

"Don't go away," he said. "Don't leave. It will be a few more hours. Don't leave."

Finally, a strange male voice told her over the phone where and when she could meet Gabriel Raul.

Savannah walked into a brass and chandeliered palace of a hotel, through the lobby where uniformed guards stood stiffly, down a corridor thick with carpet, into the mirrored elevator, out at the top floor, through the doors into a glitz of a living room filled with unknown men. One of them indicated the bedroom door.

Savannah stood in the middle of the room and dropped her purse with a thud on the floor. Gabe lay on the round bed with his legs spread.

"I feel like a whore."

"Please do not say that."

Savannah looked around the room. "This is not the way I expected it to go."

"This is who I am now."

"I liked it better before."

Gabriel held out his arms and Savannah sat on the bed next to him. "I have missed you," he said. Savannah managed not to cry.

"Remember your Life Plan," he said.

She stretched beside him.

"My girl with the so-white skin." He took her hand. After a long, long while during which Gabriel was tender and Savannah at times brutal using teeth and nails, and when they had touched each other everywhere possible as though to keep the memories in the fingertips, Savannah rested on him, her cheek beside his, feeling his breath on her neck, seeing the tangle of her red-gold and his black hair on the pillow.

"Did I hurt you?" she said. Gabe laughed and then they both did, belly to belly gasping and snorting, and then Savannah went limp and they both sighed and were silent.

Gabe ran his fingers along her spine. "You are right," he said. "I am now at the top. I am young and it feels good. Very good. But, this will not always be so. Soon, I will be twenty-five and in the tennis world that is no longer young." He tipped her face. He smiled. "We are on the same schedule, you and I."

"You think you can keep playing like this for eight more years?"

"Eight?"

"I mean three."

Gabe looked at her carefully. "Oh, Savannah," he said. She kissed him long and deep then was on her feet, into her skirt, shirt and cowboy boots, swinging her purse from the floor onto her shoulder.

"Come to my next Major. It is in your own city," he said.

"Sure."

Savannah blew him a kiss on the way out the door, smiled at the goons in the living room, rode the mirrored elevator down to the lobby and was on the next flight back to New York City where she dropped her acting classes and enrolled in Columbia University.

The school was crawling with material, many of whom had black hair and dark skin, but Savannah avoided them and concentrated with self-destructive intensity on light-skinned WASPY types. At the age of twenty-four and nine months she married John Townsend, her history professor, and they moved to the College of William and Mary in Virginia where she had a baby girl named Allison. When the child went to school she worked in a small, inconsequential restaurant during lunch so she could be home for her when she returned.

"You look lovely," John Townsend said watching Savannah put on a little black dress she had worn way too many times. They were going to a cocktail party at the department head's house two streets away. John came up behind her as she combed her hair in front of the mirror, turned her toward him and touched the freckles on her nose, something he had never done before. "Don't cover those," he said.

Savannah turned away, and blinking furiously, applied make up. When her face was an even mask, she said, "Let's go," and walked out of the room. They drove in silence and separated as soon as they arrived, which was proper cocktail-party protocol. Once or twice her husband smiled at her from across the room. Eventually, people left her alone and Savannah looked down at her perfect black pumps, then at her knobby knees, the hem of her dress, and finally at her hand holding a glass of dry white wine. She stared at the gold band with the tiny diamonds that John had given her on their tenth wedding anniversary.

Looking up and around the room, she counted the number of simple black dresses and tennis bracelets, surveyed the perfect haircuts, the proper tans, the modest earrings. She put her glass down on a fine antique mahogany table and walked out the door.

Within two weeks she was living in Montana. It took her two years to obtain joint custody of Allison. Eventually, she became executive chef at one of the upscale restaurants in Bozeman and made enough money to buy her own restaurant, not big but considered by many to be the best around. She lived on a small farm outside of town where she kept two horses for her daughter, the irony of which did not escape her.

It wasn't a bad life. The restaurant business was hard, sweaty, fast and Savannah slept well at night. At first, Allison spent every summer with her, all of Christmas, and every spring break. Then John Townsend found himself a new wife, a better wife, one who didn't look down at her shoes at a cocktail party and walk out the door and keep right on going across the continent. But the new wife wasn't crazy about another woman's child, and so Allison moved to Montana to live with her mother until she turned eighteen and enrolled in Cornell University to study hotel management.

On the day she was to leave, mother and daughter stood in the small barn. Allison stroked the bay mare, which was her favorite. Savannah watched her, heavy with the knowledge her girl would be leaving the next day to go all the way back East.

"Are you sure you'll be able to stand it? Those mountains seem so close together, like a cage."

"Cornell has the best hotel school in the country."

"Why the hotel business? Inside all the time?"

"It's your fault. All those hours helping in the restaurant."

"What about all this?" Savannah patted the horse's neck.

"Mom."

"I know. It's just that..."

"It's so far away?"

Savannah said nothing. She would not hold her daughter back. She picked up a lock of the girl's hair, played with it, patted it back into place on Allison's

shoulder. A cold wind blew through the barn. It smelled of snow.

“Mom I worry about you being alone out here.”

“What? Why?”

“Well, you know. The winters. The snow and...it’s just...”

“I’m not getting any younger?”

Allison leaned against the stall. “Mom, how come you never date? Don’t you want to ever get married again?”

“No.”

“Why not? You’re still pretty. You’re successful. Lots of men find you attractive.”

“I’m not interested in all that.”

“What happened? Did some man break your heart?”

Savannah laughed. She thought about how much she liked this young woman. “No, he didn’t break my heart, Sweetie,” she said.

“So, there was someone besides Dad.”

Savannah looked out the barn door at the vast Montana sky. “Let’s just leave it that my heart has not been broken.”

“You could sell the restaurant for heaps. Travel. Come back East for a while. Have fun.”

“I thought you might take over for me one day.”

“I might, but I might not too. You know.”

Savannah nodded. She knew.

Go back East. What a strange suggestion. Savannah was cleaning out Allison’s room. She sorted through clothes, knick-knacks, throwing some things away, storing most of it in the upstairs bedroom under the eaves. She made space in the bureau drawer, untouched for years. It was filled with clothes left behind, photos, scrapbooks, items no one wanted. She couldn’t imagine why her daughter would suggest she go back East. She was stuffing musty sweaters in a black garbage bag when a pair of boxer shorts fell onto the floor. She picked them up and held them out. The elastic waist band was sprung, ruined by sweat, which also had left a yellow stain forming a V in the back. Gabriel Raul’s. After watching a

particularly grueling match, Savannah had asked if she could keep those sweat-soaked shorts.

“But why would you want such a thing?” he had said.

“Because it’s you,” she had answered.

And this was what she had of him over twenty years later. Savannah stood, slipped out of her jeans, pulled on the boxers. They fell around her hips below her belly with the marks of child bearing. “What are you doing now, Gabe?” she said. For an instant, she thought about trying to find him. She sat on the bed. It was warmer here under the eaves. The wind had grown stronger and moaned around the window. The wide Montana landscape could be as closed in as a small town in Pennsylvania, after all.

Savannah looked down at her bare legs. The muscles were still toned, but the skin was clearly no longer young. And you Gabe, she wondered. Is your skin still like satin? She looked in the full length mirror against the wall. Gray had dulled the red-gold hair. She rubbed the shorts between her fingers. The cotton had turned silken over the years. Oddly, it was not the sex she remembered the clearest, but the way she had felt when she ran to him from out of cabs, under street lamps, along a corridor, outside the stadium, along the many streets behind all those hotels, in daylight or in dark. She had run on long, young legs, flat out and unequivocal, flinging herself at him, wrapping herself around his body, burying her face where his shoulder met his neck, breathing in his very being.

No, she would not try to find Gabriel Raul. She had experienced the best the universe had to offer. She hoped he had as well.

Lazy, Hazy Days

Cindy L. Freeman





Summers on the farm gave birth to my most memorable childhood experiences. My three siblings and I played outside all day, traipsing indoors only to use the bathroom or refuel. Luxuriating in the sunshine and cool breezes, we managed to investigate every copse, brook, and meadow of our 200-acre property in Palermo, New York. As an adult, I have often been slightly bewildered by the degree of liberty we enjoyed to explore the many potentially dangerous areas. But we never questioned our freedom for fear our parents might curtail it.

Lacking modern conveniences, Mom was perpetually engaged with never-ending tasks inside the house. Dad worked from before dawn to suppertime in the dairy barn feeding and milking the herd of holsteins or in the fields, plowing and planting crops, or in the woods, felling trees and splitting logs for winter fuel. Perhaps they trusted our sister, as the oldest, to keep us safe, or maybe they thought their fear-laden warnings were enough to deter us from perilous

behavior.

Sunshine, a rare commodity in Central New York, was my remedy for every ailment. I savored its curative properties like drops of precious water from a desert traveler's canteen. The sun's rays healed my itchy, eczemic skin and relieved my natural melancholy. Not a carefree child, I felt anxious and morose much of the time, especially during the long, overcast, snowy winters. The hours I spent inside my head generated a lively imagination but also fueled all sorts of worst-case scenarios. It wasn't until middle age that I was diagnosed with clinical depression and began life-changing treatment. I've heard it said that depression is "anger turned inward." Until my fifties, I spent an inordinate amount of time being angry at myself and taking it out on the people I loved. But that's another story.

Sunny summer days reduced my despondency, at least temporarily. As each gray winter gave way to spring renewal, I anticipated the welcome reprieve

that summer promised, allowing me to enjoy activities like mock parades in the front yard under the shade of mature maple trees. After watching the annual Fourth of July parade in town, my siblings and I would march around and around, shoulders back, knees lifted high, with our homespun flags fashioned with sticks and fabric scraps left from Mom's copious sewing projects. Various sized pots, pans or pie tins served as drums that we tapped with wooden-spoon drumsticks. Fallen twigs became flutes or clarinets.

Summer's additional hours of daylight meant we could stay up later than usual. My sister, two brothers and I filled every precious moment with games of tree-tag, mother-may-I, red rover or cowboys-and-Indians. Given the popular TV Westerns of the 1950s, it never occurred to us to portray the Indians as heroes.

As we grew older, baseball occupied the bulk of our waking hours until harvest time required our help. Since rolling hills, open fields and abundant woodlands surrounded our farmhouse, there was never a shortage of space for any game. If we ventured beyond the yard, slipping under electric wire fences, our challenge was to avoid stepping in cow-pies that littered the pastures. But even odiferous piles of manure couldn't dissuade us from our favorite pastime.

The New York Yankees of my childhood included the legends Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, and Yogi Berra, and the team had won the World Series Championship nearly every year since my birth. Our parents--and all the adults in our lives--were die-hard Yankees fans, which meant we never missed watching a game on our black-and-white television. My sister and I held fewer aspirations than our younger brothers of becoming baseball players, but only because females were unheard of in the profession. That fact did not diminish our enjoyment of throwing, fielding and batting balls for hours on end. We had few commercial toys to keep us occupied, but each of

us owned a baseball glove.

Behind the house, beyond the chicken coop, a large pond surrounded by marshland, nestled in a ring of dense woods. Dad called the pond a lake and convinced us it was so deep as to be bottomless. He was sure it had been created by a meteorite. We could play in the woods, he told us, but we must not go near the lake. "Many a cow wandered into the marsh, got sucked into the bog and washed into the lake, never to be seen again," he cautioned more than once. I don't know about my siblings, but his dramatic warnings were sufficient to deter me. Besides, we lived close enough to Lake Ontario to spend an occasional Saturday there picnicking, swimming and enjoying the sandy beaches.

Each spring, as soon as the last snow melted, a still-damp canvas surrounding the pond burst with trilliums, some deep red, some white. One year, my siblings and I bent down and picked as many of the woodland beauties as our arms could hold. We ran to the house to present our floral gifts to our mother, but sadly, before we reached the back porch, each blossom had withered atop its rubbery stem. Mom explained to her disappointed children that trilliums weren't fond of leaving their natural habitat, and it was best to enjoy their beauty where they grew. She

placed the stems in water, but our bouquets failed to revive. We never picked the trilliums again.

The pine plantation across the road and up the hill from our house, beyond the cornfield, was an inviting place to play. Devoid of underbrush, this woodland with its tall swaying pines afforded ample space for running, playing, and imagining. Years earlier, Dad had cleared all but the largest rocks then planted hundreds of seedlings in neat rows. With his careful trimming, they grew into shapely evergreens suitable for more than one Christmas tree for our family and others in our farming community. But, once the



Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle, 1953
(photo: Wikipedia)

remaining spindles soared beyond our father's reach, their trunks gained height as quickly as a throng of pubescent boys.

We loved to explore these woods, climbing atop the few remaining boulders to act out scenes from "The Davy Crockett Show," or "The Lone Ranger" and build secret shelters beneath fallen branches that we covered with pine straw. Sometimes, we'd lie on the needle-padded earth and gaze through swaying tree tops to study cloud formations and enjoy nature's symphony. Even now, if I close my eyes, I can hear wind whispering in the high branches and crows cawing in the cornfield nearby.



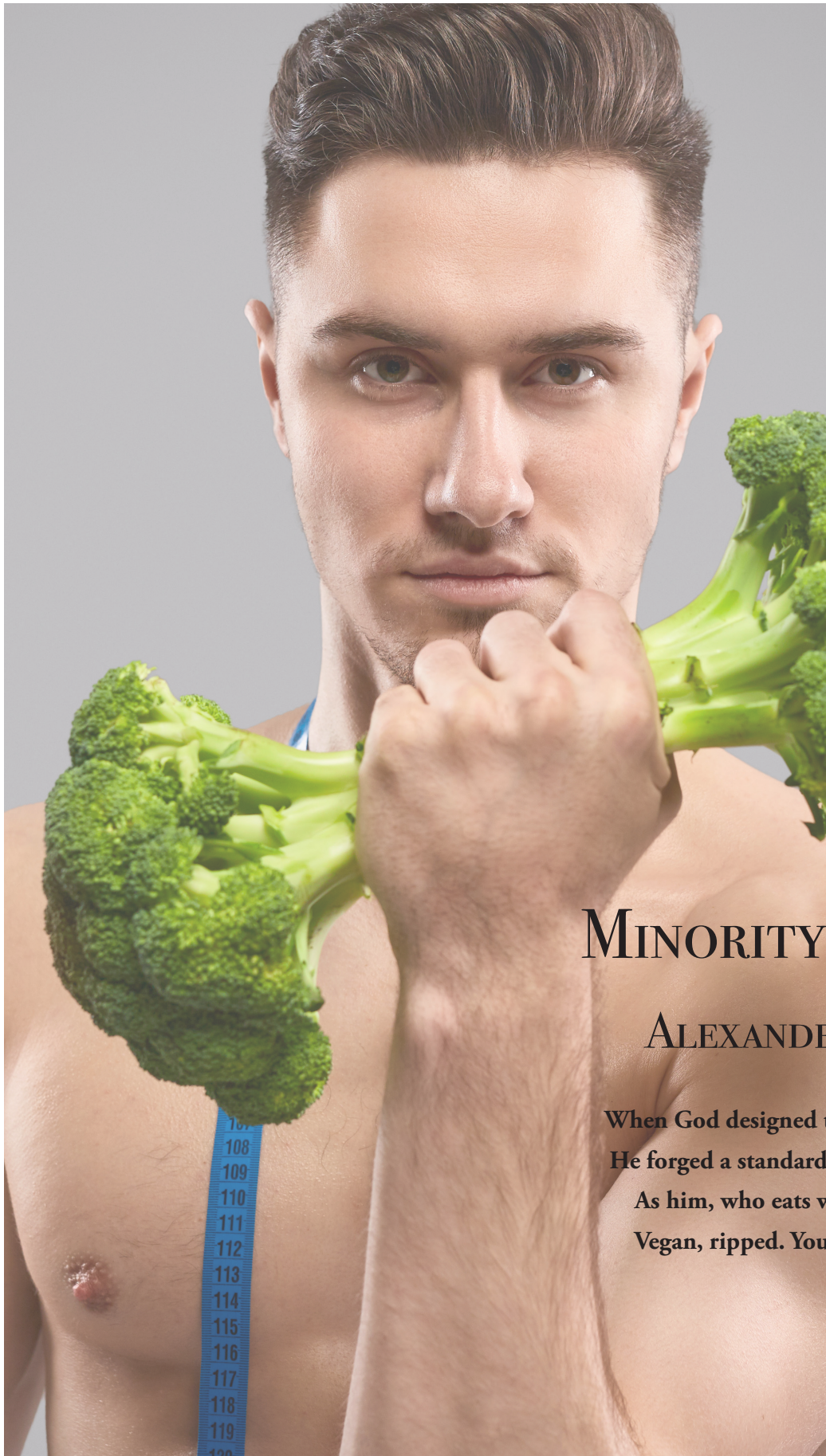
Occasionally, Mom prepared a picnic lunch for us. She would spread an old, worn blanket under one of the nut trees in the side yard near the raspberry bushes. Sometimes we morphed into pioneers heading west on a wagon train. Setting up camp required circling the wagons, feeding the horses, gathering firewood, and cooking rabbit stew over an open fire. Nothing on the farm was discarded no matter how seemingly useless. Broken broom sticks or rake handles became

galloping horses with feed-sack saddles, and fallen twigs served as make-believe cigarettes.

Mom said smoking was sinful, but the cowboys we watched on TV smoked Marlboros or Lucky Strikes; all except our hero, Roy Rogers, the singing cowboy. Sometimes people told our father he resembled Roy Rogers, an impression he relished since Roy was considered handsome. Dad took pride in his thick, wavy brown hair and slim, muscled physique. Occasionally, in public settings, Roy Rogers fans even asked him for his autograph. Whenever we went to town for groceries or farm supplies, Dad encouraged this mistaken identity by wearing a tasseled shirt, string tie, and western belt buckle.

On warm, rainy evenings, Mom sometimes carried bath towels and a bottle of emerald-green Prell shampoo outside to let us wash our hair and rinse it in soft rainwater. We'd strip down to our underwear and run wildly through the rain shower until we were soaked and our hair felt squeaky clean. We enjoyed the tickle of wet grass on our bare feet and the freedom that came with staying up late to indulge in activities apart from the school-day routine. Once we were sufficiently washed, Mom wrapped each play-weary child in a towel and read us a bedtime story on the steps of the small, covered front porch. It didn't matter that the next day and the day after that we would manage to get just as grimey and sweaty. For her, bathing four children before bed each evening was easier than hauling water from the well and heating it on the woodstove to wash four sets of sheets and pajamas in a wringer washer, rinse them in the kitchen sink and then hang them outside on the clothesline to dry. But we didn't bother our innocent minds with such details. Summer was not the season to carry worries or dwell on issues associated with adulthood.

Childhood summers on the farm were for sunshine, exploration, and fantasy.



MINORITY REPORT

ALEXANDER REAM

When God designed the human frame,
He forged a standard - much the same
As him, who eats what Eden had;
Vegan, ripped. You know the lad?

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

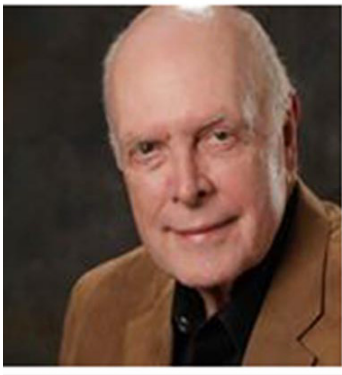


JANICE HOFFMAN holds degrees from Indiana University, teaches writing at the post-secondary level, and is published in the US and Canada. Her work appears in various literary journals and state poetry society anthologies, and she edits *A Common Wealth of Poetry* for the Poetry Society of Virginia. In 2020, the Indiana Arts Commission selected three of her poems to include in its inaugural poetry archive. Her collection *Soul Cookies* was released by High Tide Publications (2019), followed by her children's books *Four Fairy Friends* and *Cuatro Amigas Hadas* (2019, 2020). Jan resides in Williamsburg with her husband and two labs. She can be reached at janhoffpoetry@gmail.com and on Facebook at [janhoffpoetry](https://www.facebook.com/janhoffpoetry).



CINDY L. FREEMAN is the author of three novels published by High Tide Publications: *Unrevealed*, *The Dark Room* and *I Want to Go Home*. She enjoys writing about strong women who overcome adversity. She has also published a novella, *Diary in the Attic* and written three award-winning short stories. Freeman began writing fiction after retiring from a forty-five-year career in music education and music ministry. In response to the pandemic, she is putting the finishing touches on a Christian devotion book, *After Rain*. She and High Tide Publications will donate all proceeds from the sale of this book to Hospice House and Support Care of Williamsburg. Freeman also edits for High Tide and writes blog posts: www.cindylfreeman.blogspot.com.

Website: www.cindylfreeman.com

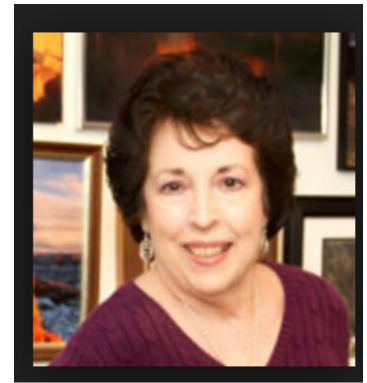


DAVID CARIENS is a retired CIA officer--31-year career. In this capacity he wrote for all levels of the U.S. government--from the President to the working level analysts and policymakers. Cariens served in Eastern Europe and as an editor at the BBC-FBIS facility outside London. He has taught intelligence analysis and writing throughout the federal government and for a number of U.S. allies abroad. He is the author of nine books including *A Question of Accountability: The Murder of Angela Dales* -- an examination of the shooting at the Appalachian School of Law in Grundy, Virginia in January 2002. Angela Dales, the mother of Cariens' oldest grandchild, was killed in that shooting. His memoir, *Escaping Madness*, is slated for publication in late 2020. <http://www.DaveCariens.com>



ALEC REAM is an author and poet living in the Northern Neck of Virginia. His work has been printed in *Decanto Poetry Magazine*, *Western Viewpoints* 2014, *Poetic Images: the Great American West* 2015, *The Society of Classical Poets Annual Journals*, and in several issues of *The Lyric*. A member of the Demosthenian Literary Society at the University of Georgia, he deployed to Hawija. He continues to write, lecture and work for Delta Kappa Epsilon International.

SHARON CANFIELD DORSEY has published fiction, nonfiction, juvenile fiction, and poetry in magazines, newspapers, journals, and anthologies. She is a member of National League of American Pen Women, Inc., and the James City Poets, Poetry Society of Virginia. Sharon has received awards from Christopher Newport University Writer's Conference, Poetry Society of Virginia, National League of American Pen Women, Gulf Coast Writer's Association, and Chesapeake Bay Writers. Sharon is author of four children's books, two books of poetry, a memoir, and a travel memoir, *Road Trip*. Her poems are also included in two anthologies, *Captured Moments* and *The Poet's Domain*. Sharon is a Senior Sales Director of forty years with Mary Kay Cosmetics, Mom to son, Steven, and daughter, Shannon, and grandmother to Adaline, Emma and Zachary. <http://www.SharonCanfieldDorsey.com>



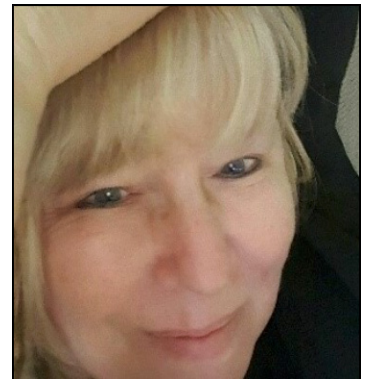
GWEN KEANE is a local author, born and raised in the Northern Neck, Virginia. She writes nonfiction. Her previous books are *Swan Wait*, *Local Color*, and *How Cowboy Found His Forever Home*.

For many years she was the sole caregiver for her husband, a stroke victim survivor. Her writing here is the beginning of her forthcoming book, *Fix-It*. It is a very personal and emotional journey written to help other caregivers survive the every day challenges and realize their emotional battles are normal.

Visit her website at <http://www.GwenKeane.com>.



E. COMPTON LEE: Ms. Lee's work as a therapist has been extremely helpful since her tales are mainly about people in all their exquisite forms of good and evil, courage and cowardice and heart-rending humanness. Her latest book, *My Name Is Sloan* is set in rural and backwoods Pennsylvania. It gives the reader a clear picture of the ethical struggles against bureaucracy by compassionate people. This story is a companion to her first novel *Native*. She has written nonfiction articles for magazines about horses, nature and people as they go about their way in the world. Her interests include the vagaries of the human condition and the natural world around it. She left the Allegheny Mountains after living there twenty years and now lives in Tidewater Virginia where life takes a more level hue than that found in the mountains. Her family lives close by, which is more than she can ask for. <http://ecomptonlee.com>



H. SCOTT BUTLER grew up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and graduated from LSU. He went on to earn a doctorate in English at Duke University, after which he taught literature and film at a community college in Eastern Virginia. Since his retirement he has devoted his time to writing and to participating in a grassroots effort to preserve Fort Monroe, a former Army post of deep historic significance. Scott is the author of three novels--*Night Journey*, *Voice from the Shadows*, and *Falcon*, all featuring Cynthia Westbrook, a Virginia sheriff's investigator. He and his wife Susan live in Blacksburg, Virginia. Visit his website at <http://www.HScottButler.com>

