

Just Write

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

Writers' Group Selections

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A Miracle

By Kathleen Pierson

My father had spinal meningitis when Walter and I (and our children) lived in Maine. He was at the “old” Underwood Hospital in Woodbury and had a wonderful doctor. His name was Dr. Rudolph Depersia, Sr. He was very good at taking care of Dad, but he gave us no hope at all that he would survive, but he did. Once Dad was restored to good health, he went right back to pistol shooting and even worked with the NJ State Troopers in showing them how to shoot well. He was that good! He was even a Special Deputy Sheriff in Gloucester County.

Dad never went beyond grade school because he had to help out with family finances – so he got a job. That was quite common in the era he grew up in. There was lots of poverty. Yet, he went on to become a valued employee at Du Pont in Gibbstown, NJ, and was a magnificent tennis player and a chess player. He grew up in a Catholic home, but once he met and married my Mother, he became a very active Methodist at Kemble Church in Woodbury. He was on the Official Board and even taught teenage boys in the Church School.

I think can tell I am so proud of both my parents. They were outstanding people and just wonderful to me – and everyone they knew.

Golden Summers

by Mary Ellen DeAngelo

Simple

Schedules abandoned
Time slowing down
Sitting on the farmhouse porch
When doing nothing was something.

Colors

Choreographed butterflies
Curtains softly swaying
The magical dance of fireflies
Hues melding in the fading sunset sky.

Stillness

Droning cicadas
The hum of the old mower
Soft clucking of Pop-Pop's chickens
Booming rolling thunderstorms that make
your insides jump.

Inhale

Bursting honeysuckle
The first tomato cut
Mowed grass hanging in the air
The baking pie – a gift from the old apple tree.

Savor

Sweet watermelon
Brewed iced tea
A tomato sandwich with Hellmann's
Mom's potato salad from the family recipe.

Reaching

Peach fuzz
Hot stones on your feet
Warm crisp sheets on the line
Air so thick you feel it part as you walk.

Cousins

A July birthday
Biking with no destination
Unlimited time with my dog
A huge bouquet of snowballs randomly, perfectly arranged.

Reality

Chilly air
The first leaf changes
The postman delivers school instructions
Oh sweet, savory, succulent summer – you
brought my senses alive.
A bittersweet farewell.

Lone Angel 1

By Joshua Carter

I am so undesired and victimized from an ungrateful mental abuse called love that has flowed through others' mouths like it's meant to be heard. It was a worded reminder of how my childhood was vastly poisoned by the most deadly vipers: people honored as heroic legends that hide their past actions.

Soo...I am guessing by the dark, metaphorical thoughts you associate with your parents that love doesn't come easy to you?

Well Doc, that's one way to look at it. I guess I'll see you around.

Hey, Dan. I want you to go and make your life happy for yourself, okay?

Alright, Doc.

THREE YEARS LATER:

He met a girl and she sensed something in him.

Hey, my name is...

Before you go offering something you think is genuinely love or kindness, I'm not interested in it.

I – I can't believe that you wouldn't want any type of affection or anything.

I'm OK. But thanks anyway, Liz. I'll see you around.

"How do you know my name?" she thought. (He walks off, leaving her in confusion.)

Hey, Doc.

Hey, Dan. What can I do for you?

There's this girl –

Romance?

No, Doc. She's more like, trying to give me some happiness of some sort.

Then let her – let her experience little by little. Let her figure you out and give that happiness.

I heard what you said and I know what you mean, but you should know me by now. See ya, Doc.

Indeed, I do. (Doc, chuckles softly.) Bye.

THE NEXT DAY:

He finds her.

Hey, Liz.

Hey - ?

My name is Dan.

OK, Dan.

He gives her a number. Here you can reach me with any questions. He walks off.

THREE WEEKS PASS:

Doc calls Dan.

Hey, Doc.

What did you do?

What do you mean?

What did you give her?

I gave her what she wanted.

No, you gave her what wasn't supposed to have.

Hey relax. She'll be fine and you can analyze everything for yourself.

She's gonna come back with more questions than ever. And knowing you, you'll probably answer them, and the whole –

We agreed never to mention that again. See how I handle things? I don't answer – I leave her in a state of confusion.

Alright then. But one way or another, she's gonna find out. And when she does....

She won't know unless I tell her.

Dan and Doc hang up and (on another line) Liz hangs up with a smirk.

THE NEXT DAY:

He walks to her house to retrieve the drive.

Before he can knock she opens the door.

I know you, now.

Liz, I would like the drive back.

No, no Daniel; or should I say, "Dagger"? I know you want to hide this part of yours and want to keep that trained killer inside. But I want his help.

Dan looked at her. Come on Liz, you don't know what you're asking. You're asking a killer to kill again, even without knowing what he's done before!

I know what you've done. It's in the drive.

The drive is just the peak of what I've done in that program.

Wait! What program?

Dan vanishes.

[To be continued in the October 2019 issue of *Just Write*.]

Shadows

By Joshua Carter

There are two sides to everything, but we choose to base things on the side we see first...

I remember waking up one day and feeling something odd. I did everything I normally did, but I went to the bathroom last. As I was washing my face, I glanced up at the mirror and my reflection smirked. I washed my face again and glanced up to see my reflection just laughing at me. My reflection spoke: "You don't remember me, do you?" As I looked at it with confusion, he said, "I'm your sense of thought; your mental volt, if you will. Your thoughts are like my thoughts, mostly, except there's a person that wanted to see you for a long time. And he ain't happy with you. Who is this person? Well, you got lucky. I got him locked up. He's deadly. You feed him or anything? No, let's just say he feeds off your negative side. So, yeah, he's something. Hey, wake up!"

I looked to see a guy in a guerrilla-like stance on the floor of a cell with bright red, devil eyes and a saber tooth-like face, looking me in the eye without blinking. The moment he blinked he spoke in a soft voice, "Do you know who I am?" He ran up towards me and hit hard on the cell bars. He grasped them tightly with his hands like a caged, insane person, yelling, "DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!!!" Barley audible I said, "No." He walked to the back of the cell with a hollow laugh. "Of course, you don't! I'm... just call me the Rage in your mind; the Honesty in your head that you secretly desire to let out. I'm your deadly demon that lives inside you. I was freed once. It felt really good. You were so young to the world and I was your guide. Josh, do you even know my name?"

I said, "No, but you were a monster."

"No, I was the truth that people feared. And because of that fear, I became this unspeakable, evil monster inside of you. It felt amazing being in control, but then you started to listen to others and obey pointless rules in order to fit into an unacceptable society that tells you what you should do, but doesn't explain why. You have done that so much you have learned to control me and managed to lock me down here. But I feed off every frustrating moment of anger that builds up inside, and one day you're gonna go off the edge. And when you do, I'll be there to take back control!"

Tired Eyes

By Shelby Carlton

Tired eyes,
Tired eyes,
Silently watching the world pass me by,
Waiting for something to happen.
Tired eyes,
Tired eyes,
Staring unfocused into the distance,
Their gaze lingering on flickering shadows dancing beneath the streetlights.
Tired eyes,
Tired eyes,
Watching the dark, empty roads slip by,
Waiting to get home so they can finally close.
Tired eyes,
Tired eyes,
Too exhausted to shed a tear,
Too alert to flutter closed, distracted by every movement in the darkness.
Tired eyes,
Tired eyes,
Looking for something they cannot find,
Searching the endless lonely roads for someone left behind.
Tired eyes,
Tired eyes,
Watching the world pass me by,
Waiting for you to emerge from the darkness and guide me back to
dreamland.

NEW JERSEY BUREAU. Naval Rendezvous at Swedesboro - Van Amburg's Menagerie Draws a Crowd

By Ben Carlton

A temporary naval recruiting station was established in the historic village of Swedesboro amidst great pageantry and fanfare on September 27, 1864. While the local businessmen and town folk held their annual street festival last Saturday with many food vendors and hucksters of all sorts selling their wares, naval officer, Bruce Tucker, Boatswain's Mate, Dan Cashin, and sailors, George McDowell and William Myers, all of the USS *Lehigh*, attempted to enlist men and boys for duty with the Navy. The Seamen pitched their tent in the dusty street in front of the stately home of Doctor Charles Garrison, a prominent and well-respected physician of this town. It was something of a homecoming for the shipmates of the *Lehigh*, their vessel having been constructed in 1863 in the shipyard at Chester, Pennsylvania, just across the Delaware from this place.

Despite the lure of potential prize money from captured blockade runners and the guarantee of immunity from conscription into the Army, few stepped forward to sign on, although many young boys, apparently eager for an adventurous life at sea, tried to enlist as cabin boys without their parents' consent. Gone for good, apparently, are the days of the press gangs scouring the waterfront for unwary recruits. Boatswain's Mate Cashin attributed the lack of recruiting success to the area's pacifism, thought to be engendered from a strong Quaker influence within the County of Gloucester. The community is not, however, bereft of noble military heroes: Lieutenant Commander William N. Jeffers, formerly the skipper of the famed *Monitor* and now assigned to duty with the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance, was born here, as was Brigadier General Charles G. Harker, recently killed heroically leading a charge at Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, July 27, 1864. These men are just two among the many who have volunteered from Swedesboro and Gloucester County to serve in their country's hour of need. In fact, Mr James Plummer, the proprietor of the well-appointed Plummer's Hotel (the best accommodations in Swedesboro), where this journalist had recently taken a room, has not seen his son since the Battle of Chancellorsville, where the young man was reported missing from the ranks of the 12th New Jersey Volunteers, a regiment made up largely of men from this region. It must also be said that a draft was just held in Camden on September 23, and that the Township's complement of soldiers is made up. Uncertain rumors of distant peace are being bandied about, as well, making

service in any branch of the service less attractive at this late date in the war. Still the US Navy is always in need of able-bodied men.

Van Amburg's Traveling Menagerie was also on hand to draw in the crowds from the surrounding communities. Upwards of twenty large circus wagons were parked up and down Main Street as white circus tents had sprouted up over the previous night like giant mushrooms. Several lions and two large elephants were on display. The largest pachyderm, "Hannibal," weighs 15,000 pounds and was at times during the day very ferocious. (Perhaps, some of the local men, having already seen the elephant, no longer desired to "see the elephant," as the expression goes.) In addition to the wild beasts there were acrobats, jugglers, sword-swallowers, and a human giant, purportedly eight feet, two inches tall in his stocking feet, plus a dwarf and his normal-sized wife among other singular curiosities, all for the paying customers' viewing pleasure. One of those curious exhibits was a seemingly normal, down-to-earth Negro from Mississippi, who had once been a slave, laboring in the trenches during the famous siege of Vicksburg. The fortunate fellow, whose name is Abraham, was literally blown over to freedom with the explosion of one ton of black powder placed underneath a salient in the rebel line by General Grant's soldiers, who had been endeavoring for weeks to blast their way into the Confederate stronghold. The resulting battle in the huge crater that was caused by the detonation of the mine was a flat failure, but Abraham was blown sky high over to General John A. Logan's part of the federal line, about 250 yards distant, where he landed among the astonished Yankees. The former slave certainly took an unusual route to emancipation, but was otherwise unhurt, and only a little shaken. When a certain *Times'* reporter asked Abraham if he remembered about how high he had flown, the sable young man replied with all candor, "I's a blown up about t'ree mile, I was, suh!"

This particular story was enlivened and perhaps given added credibility by the purchase of hard apple cider, known locally as "Red Stingo," a town staple, and according to Dr. Garrison, of great medicinal value. Despite the apple harvest being some weeks away, there was plenty of the home-brewed concoction available for purchase, much to the delight of townsmen and visiting sailors, alike. A near brawl that followed a baseball game played on the fairgrounds just outside of Swedesboro was probably fueled by the imbibing of too much Red Stingo.

Just Write

Meetings held one Saturday a month

10:00 am at the

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