

WCA

WORDS



*December 2021*

*Issue 5*

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We are grateful to WCA members **Wendy Israelite**, for designing our wonderful cover and to **Maureen Schaab**, who made WCA WORDS into an online journal. Thank you to WCA President **Patti Boochever**, who was most generous with her time to help make this project a reality.

Karyn Conrath was gracious enough to be our “Why Write” contributor for this WCA Words edition. In her essay she challenges us to write our personal story. I realized I have many stories I tell, conversational stories that should be put in writing. You do too. Think about it. You are in a group of people and someone says something about a fish tank, for example, or a car they loved or whatever. Suddenly your brain snaps a few connections and you are immediately anxious to tell your friends about YOUR fish tank story or about YOUR first car. Right? We all have these stories. I certainly do. So I thought I would start writing them down as they come into focus, as Karyn Conrath suggests in her “Why Write” piece. I call them Snippets.

You may not think you can write but I'll bet you can write down a snippet or two, experiences from your life that you always bring up when a particular subject comes up in conversation.

The other day one of my friends was talking about her grandmother making gefilte fish. I could hardly contain myself until she finished so I could tell MY “grandmother making gefilte fish story.” I seem to have stories about everything and I really should get that notebook so they don't get lost. Anyway, here is my “grandmother making gefilte fish story” which may give you ideas for your Snippets which we would love to publish in WCA WORDS.

My grandmother was an excellent cook. She outdid herself at Passover. Those matzah balls were to die for. Above all other culinary pleasures was her gefilte fish. I can't believe that I loved gefilte fish in the first place, considering what a picky eater I was. Grandma Sue had a special metal grinder for the fish and she worked long hours preparing her masterpiece. For many Passovers I loved watching her at work creating her delicious gefilte fish.

One day I was in the kitchen and I was horrified. There, sitting on the counter, were jars of Mother's gefilte fish. What? I have to tell you that was a defining moment in my life. Grandma Sue, after many years of cooking from scratch, was using prepared gefilte fish and doctoring it with carrots boiled in the gel to make it look as if she cooked it herself.

You might say, "Iris, no big deal," but you would be wrong. My grandmother was an important role model in my life. The fact that she purported to make her gefilte fish from scratch while lying about it was anathema to me. Here it is more than 70 years later and I'm still thinking about it. I never told her how much the faux gefilte fish and her prevarication upset me.

## Why Write?

*Freelance writer Karyn Conrath tells you what's in it for her*

Do you ever find something you love, can't live without and makes you breathless? Besides my dog who nuzzles my neck with his wet black nose, nothing makes me more passionate than writing.

Storytelling provides a rather loose license to observe closely: people, situations, conversations and human nature, hopefully without seeming intrusive. (That, my friends, is an art I have not yet mastered.)

As writers, we are endowed with a special gift. We can observe. We can take notice and intuit. Then we can write in a way that may be even more insightful than even the speaker realizes.

I am currently writing the third chapter of a book of essays relaying the most unusual events I encountered over my three years working at a high school in a rural Turkish village. It is in essay form and I intend to turn it into a book entitled *Turkish Delight*. One piece, "Skinning the Goat," describes a weekend our family spent with a clan of nomads in the Taurus mountains near the Syrian border. The men sacrificed a goat in honor of our visit and as a tribute to Allah. Women fussed over us and rolled lavash out on a wooden wheel, and then baked it in a stone oven. The details are surreal and as succulent as the goat meat we ate with our fingers. We sat in a tight circle on the rugged mountainside. Our laughter needed no translation.

Additionally, I was a Guardian ad Litem for a year. Those experiences uncovered a series of short stories that still chill me. Of course, in writing them, I fictionalized the people and scenarios. Believe me, it was a heart wrenching experience. Observation is a gift, but it comes with a huge responsibility!

Just for fun, I interviewed six women for the WCA “In the Spotlight” series. The women welcomed me with open arms and a child’s trust. They showed me their poker hands without fear. Yet, in each case, it was their eyes, a special smile, and unique body language that unveiled even more than the story she told. One woman said me, “I had seen her soul.” Most importantly, my descriptions seemed honest to them.

I am a loner. But I am not alone. I sometimes sit in a café drinking strong espresso and catch other people’s conversations. Are you ready to label me a horrible snoop and tell me not to be so “Nosy, Posy”? Well, if you write dialogue, you’d better be attuned to your surroundings and catch as catch can what is fascinating or ordinary, that which is unfathomable or sublime.

Crime fiction writer and master of dialogue, Elmore Leonard, was asked how he writes such great dialogue. He replied, “Hey, I listen! I listen to YOU!” In that way, he creates conversations and incorporates everyday phrases into his novels. Just plain talk is the life-breath of writing good dialogue as well as catching bits and pieces of humanity.

I'm intense. (Maybe too intense some might say.) I high-dive into whatever I do. And I admit it: I am pretty darn quirky. But this quirkiness arouses my ability to create my own distinct pieces. I try to hone my style so the reader can hear my unique voice. Perhaps I'm a bit too colorful for your taste and my sense of humor too eccentric. I move every few years for the pure excitement of it. Often a new space allows that sense of adventure I crave. (I have recently moved to Palm Beach County.)

Honesty and insight are what it takes to write effectively. Be forthcoming. Be true to your own style. Have integrity. Stretch yourself. Then write. Write without editing. No excuses. Please don't say, "Wow! I sure have a great story to tell!" If you truly want to tell it, make it your own.

So get moving! Plug in your computer or wipe off that ancient Remington. Having a cup of hot tea while you relax with your legal pad and a comfortable pen also works. Jot down phrases on a napkin while waiting for your order at a diner. Carry a small notebook and be ready for the casual comment or moment in time that will later prove itself invaluable to that paragraph you are working on.

But before you begin this next journey, ask yourself this: Why write? You will find your own answer.

*WCA member Karyn Conrath is a freelance writer and former magazine managing editor. Find out more about Karyn at [www.karynconrath.com](http://www.karynconrath.com)*

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## Loss

Louise Orkin

When I got married, in June of 1956, I had never experienced loss. At least not in any significant way. Except for my grandparents, no one I ever cared about had died. I was 21 years old and remember clearly my wedding ceremony. We stood in front of the Rabbi, Len and me, and heard him say “When troubles and losses come .....

” Like it was yesterday I remember saying to myself “troubles” “loss”? I completely rejected the possibility. I know what you, dear reader, are thinking.

“How naive you were”! And you would be right. I WAS naive and innocent. Well, now I’m 86 and have experienced profound loss. Today I feel a call to talk about it.

Certainly, by the age of 86 the loss of parents, aunts and uncles is to be expected so I will not talk about that. Even the loss of a beloved husband who died suddenly when he was just 80 is something most people think is to be expected, and while painful is surely not unusual. What I feel a call to talk about today is the death of friends. Today I remember three who died and who I still miss all these years later. I will discuss each in separate essays.

My friend, Nadine, known to all as Deenie, was very special to me. We met in college and she was two years ahead of me. It was very unusual for an upperclassman to take an interest in a freshman, so I was extremely flattered that she reached out to me. She also came from a very different world from mine. She came from a place of wealth and

position, lived in Brooklyn Heights, which was very exclusive then, was Protestant and all in all seemed to come from a rarefied atmosphere. When I met her she was engaged to be married and she actually invited me to go with her to choose gifts for her bridesmaids. (That was my introduction to WASP wedding protocols). After the wedding Deenie left school and we lost touch. We didn't meet again for at least ten years.

How DID we meet again? By that time Len and I had moved to the North Shore of Long Island. We lived in Oyster Bay Cove and one day, while shopping in the local supermarket, I saw a familiar face: We both stopped short and recognized each other. Deenie immediately invited us to her home: an invitation I of course quickly accepted. Unsurprisingly to me, it was in exclusive Old Brookville, a mansion on many acres and beautifully furnished with fabulous antiques. It had been the family home. Deenie told me that she and Robert were divorced, and she was now remarried to Carl, who was the headmaster at Greenvale Country Day School.

Deenie and I renewed our friendship and for the next few years we spent time together: I was still in awe of her. She had a calm and sure air about her that I found very appealing, but I can't say we shared very private information. I really valued our relationship: it sounds strange to say this, but I was honored and flattered that she included me in her life.

So, I felt tremendous sadness when she told me she had been diagnosed with cancer. I believed she would survive and fervently hoped she would. Sadly, I was wrong. Before long it was clear that it was terminal. Because I cared so much for her, I wanted to visit and keep her company but she withdrew completely and wanted no contact with anyone outside

her immediate family. As the years have passed, I have seen others react in the way she did, but it was my first brush with the death of a friend, and I felt terribly sad and didn't know what to do. In the end, I wrote her letters, but I never heard back and don't know any details about her final days.

Deenie was a beautiful person, wise, gentle and kind. What a loss for her family, her friends and the world! I also lost touch with her husband Carl and so to this day know nothing more than what I've shared here today. But now, some 50 odd years later, I still think of her and how wonderful it would have been for her to have lived the life she should have had and how wonderful it would have been if we could have been friends for all these lost years.

## The End Game

Estelle H. Rauch

Following her weekly phone call with daughter Jennie, Melissa's mood darkened.

The immaculate white kitchen once delighted her - as did the sophisticated, upscale decor of her lake-front cottage. Widowed five years, she had remained in Newton, Mass for four of those years, until her children urged her to sell in the high market, to relocate closer to one of them. Living in Thousand Oaks' over-55 community was no hardship. She is well-off financially, someone who had quickly taken advantages of the community's many social activities. Until Covid19 hit. Now, though vaccinated, even her annual medical exam is on the computer.

Both adult children and their families had visited to help her get settled after her move. But a year before Covid hit, Jennie accepted a professorship in Ann Arbor, and son Peter's work seemed to have kept him "buried in this damned office" or running trainings in his home state of Colorado. Divorced with no children, Peter admitted to becoming a workaholic - "nearly a recluse, mom." But of late, he spends late nights on Tinder seeking "...the opposite of ex-wifey."

'At least I'm computer-literate.' So many of her new friends struggle with Zoom - she had stayed on the phone with two neighbors for hours each, tutoring them. Telling herself, 'I'm beginning to think like a bitch,' Melissa acknowledged resenting her neighbors, who daily congregate poolside, and considered themselves friendly enough to wave a short greeting on their way to meals with unmasked friends. 'Edith even made fun of me; "You Yankees don't think like we natives!" She thought that crack was amusing. Jennie was shocked when I told her that I hoped one of them would get the virus - even a mild case - to show them... She

wasn't amused. I guess she knew I wasn't kidding. "What's happening to you, mom?" That was just before she cut off: "I have to run. Jim and I are headed for an outdoor concert."

There were calls to old friends back home - yes, home is still Massachusetts - and to her elderly brother, stuck with no visitors in a nursing home.

Melissa walked the lake path, deep in thought. On her return, a computer website called to her.

Following a sixty-three miles' drive on lightly trafficked highways, the 76-year-old woman, as required, remained outside the facility, on the phone, masked; she completed a voluminous form, paying with Visa. Melissa eventually had company. The red, five-year-old Chow had been given up because its owner had died from Covid, and no family member could adopt her.

Melissa and Gabby met so many like-people on their thrice daily walks. Both her children called more often, and for longer, with markedly increased interest in their mother's life, including many demands for pictures. Children and grandchildren arrived - vaccinated, masked, to celebrate the Jewish New Year.

## Robert Frost's Front Porch

Bonnie Michaels

It is dusk with fog creeping through the White Mountains of New Hampshire. It is our last night here. We are sitting on Robert Frost's front porch on green cushions positioned on a well-used, white wicker couch with a small wicker table in front of us. The table is adorned with a red shiny apple in the right corner and two poetry paper books.

The historical house is closed but we just finished our walk through the wilted, fall garden and dark forest while reading his poetry posted along the inspirational trail.

We look into the mountain range in front of us and admire the deep red, burnt orange and quiet yellow leaves of the forest. We reminisce about our bountiful two months in Franconia and the many trails...some with boulders and mud, others with soft pine needles and stubby tree roots.

I will miss our community park where we had many picnic lunches while gazing lovingly at Canon Mountain. Memories of local classical music concerts there go through my head as well.

And I won't forget our daily visits to get the best Macchiato coffee at the petit, rustic coffee hut while reading the *New York Times*.

The only restaurant, Dutch Treat, became our weekly dining routine. I will fondly think about the waitress who dresses up for Halloween two months early and the little twinkling, Christmas lights hanging in the windows. It was through the windows that we were awed by a sunset and simultaneous moon rise over the mountains. Sigh!

Will I be able to handle the traffic congestion and throngs of people after small town living? It will definitely be an adjustment.

As I anticipate entering the hot, humid flatlands of Florida, I will hold the memories of Robert Frost's front porch, the majestic mountains and the little town of Franconia for as long as I can. It's the best I can do.

Our next author, Linda Denning, has written some beautiful haiku poetry. A haiku is an unrhymed three-line poem. The first line contains five syllables, the second line seven syllables and the third line has five syllables. The subject of the haiku can be anything. Historically they were usually about a moment in time in Nature. If you are not familiar with haiku, there is lots of information about this form of poetry on the internet. We would like to encourage our readers to try their hand at writing a haiku. Write about your favorite cat or about the sunset, or whatever topic you choose. Send them to [irisjimshur@aol.com](mailto:irisjimshur@aol.com) and we will publish them in the next edition of WCA WORDS.

## HAIKU SAMPLING

By Linda Denning

Yellow butterfly  
Fluttering through the garden  
I smile and thank you

The woodpecker sits  
Unexpectedly on grass  
Day off from pecking

My eyes feast on you  
You nourish me with your fruit  
Mango tree, pure delight

Splashes of flowers  
Your beauty lifts my spirits  
A joy to behold



Oh look! A rainbow!  
A welcome interruption  
Joy fills the moment

Fall, I've heard of you  
I long for your cool, crisp, nights  
Hurry down south, please

Miracle of life  
We breathe you into our lungs  
Even through our masks

I touch you again  
Knowing that our time is short  
Bittersweet moments

## A Monumental Problem: Where can I find item # 55532?

Judy Isserlis

I need to share. I'm having trouble with my underpants.

It all started at least 25 years ago - maybe more - when it didn't occur to me that I should order more of Warner's #55532 Bright Stripes Hi-Cut Size 6 panties. They were fluffy, AND were not knit, DID NOT ride up, NOR felt like a burlap bag. Most underpants today conform to your body - and my body objects. Warners #55532 panties were not made in China - they were made in Costa Rica where panties were stitched together by hand. It was the good old days of underpants. (Forget that last comment - I made that up). I should have known that nothing so comfortable could possibly be forever.

AND they didn't give me wedgies. If you don't know what that is, I have to whisper it to you. Who knows who might read this?

In 1998, I discovered a poor successor, Warner's #55632. I knew they weren't the same, but I ordered them anyway. They looked like #55532, but something was amiss. These cut into my abdomen. The amended item number should have given me pause.

I saw that Bright Stripes was available in a bikini style 20 years ago. I ordered a few, but I didn't like they way they fit. Warners #55532 has a high front with a large backside. Is this more than you need to know?

I did call Warners Customer Service two years ago and was dismissed as a crank. “Do you really want panties that stopped being manufactured in the 90s? Hahahahahaha.”

I live in three places, so I have carefully divided up the 20 pairs I have among the three. This means at any one time I have 6 and 1/3 underpants in the home where I am abiding. These need to be laundered all the time by hand as I will run out. The washing machine is not reliable if I want these to last another 30 years. They haven't lasted all that well doing them by hand. Also, if I travel (Oh, yes, remember when we used to travel?), I have to remember to bring them back to the home where they were residing.

A very enterprising person has put those underpants on Ebay recently, declaring that they are “vintage” and charging \$39.00 for each one. Give me a break! I know what you are thinking - who would order somebody else's underpants even if they are called “vintage?” I didn't do it myself, but you would be surprised. FYI - the vintage panties were gone in one day.

Is there a lesson here? This is what I think: Don't wait to do anything - including ordering more Warners #55532 while they exist.

## Mother's Closet by Sally Brickman

My parents' bedroom was on the second floor of our house. It was a very large room with twin beds, two dressers in dark mahogany and a beige satin chaise lounge with pillows. The two English crisscross paned windows faced the street.

My parents went out a lot in the evenings to play bridge or go to a nightclub. I had plenty of time alone to peek into my mother's jewelry case as well as her closet.

The long and narrow closet was in the corner of the room. It smelled of leather, and of course my mother's scent. There were lots of black leather pointed toe high heels, some with platforms, slippers, and leather purses. The purses were either alligator, fancy beaded or very large leather. The dresses were very fancy and beautiful next to the everyday nightgowns and robes. Very exciting were my mother's flapper dresses from days gone by. They were beaded and had tassels and were shiny, lacy and chiffony. The waists were low, and she did wear them with long beaded necklaces. The jewelry in the dresser was kept in a gold tin box and all the jewelry was mushed in there.... lots of beads and gold and fancy earrings. One especially unusual necklace had red garnets..seemed to be from another time and place.

I would sneak into her closet and find many treasures. Yes, and sometimes I would try on her clothes, including the fur boa with the fox heads and eyes on them. The rear of the closet had a small, old, kind of smelly chest of drawers where mother kept white gloves and a lot of fancy white lace handkerchiefs embroidered with her initial G.

I never wanted for much as a child though I spent a lot of time with my brother or a babysitter and I felt a bit like Cinderella who had to stay home from the ball....and pretend. Those many many years when I look back and think of the forays in the closet, I think perhaps it was a way to get closer to my mother and keep her with me when she went out.

I still have a few pieces of my mother's jewelry, but I wish I had the flapper dresses. I do have my own old fashioned "Jackie Kennedy" aqua, beaded dress, too small to wear now, but I will keep it in my closet. The memory of my mother's closet is a real history of the "olden days."

## Mask Or Not to Mask

Edyth Cohen

Mask or not to mask that is the question I have been asked??

Dr's know and listen to lies politicians roar!

Sad, people die and covid soars!!

These lies give me hives!!

People laugh and scoff!!

However I don't take my mask off!

This is serious and not a joke!

People be alarmed this is not a joke!!

## **GUIDELINES for WCA WORDS**

### **What is WCA WORDS?**

WCA WORDS is a literary journal open to any WCA member and will be published approximately once a month. Our goal is to provide a publishing platform for members who like to write.

### **How do I submit a piece for publication?**

- Your submission must be your original work. It can be poetry, fiction, or non-fiction of 750 words or less. A submission should not be an announcement of events or book or movie reviews.
- A submission should have a title and be typed in a format (not PDF) that can be edited for spelling, punctuation, and typo corrections. We will contact you if any substantive corrections need to be made.
- Submissions are sent to Iris Shur (irisjimshur@aol.com).

### **What are the Publication Policies?**

- Proofreading and determination of appropriateness for publication will be done by a committee chaired by Iris Shur. Publication is also subject to review by the WCA Board.
- Per Jewish Federation of Greater Naples (JFGN) guidelines, “Items of controversial opinions and points of view about political issues will not be accepted for publication.” Please keep your language and subject matter appropriate for the WCA audience.
- It will be clearly stated that the opinions and viewpoints of the author do not reflect the opinions of WCA or JFGN.
- Work that you have previously published elsewhere will be accepted, so long as you have permission to do so.

- Writers will need to agree to a release form before the work can be published. The form will be emailed to you after receipt of your submission.
- Although writers may submit multiple items, only one submission per member will be selected for publication in any given month.