

2021
ISSUE 2

WCA

WORDS



We are thrilled to present the second issue of WCA WORDS, showcasing a wide variety of subjects and styles by our members. All thought provoking.

Yes, writing is important, but why? I asked my friend Dr. Susan Smith for her take on the “why” of writing. She teaches writing at Merrimack College and Cambridge College in Massachusetts. This is what she had to say:

Writing is thinking.....

Writing takes time.....

Writing is hard work!

This is the mantra that introduces all of the writing classes, seminars, and workshops I conduct. Although writing poses these challenges, it provides many benefits to those who embrace it.....

First, if one learns to write clearly, she will soon discover that her thinking becomes more focused. Also, writing allows one to learn more. Research indicates that more learning occurs if writing is part of the learning equation. And, writing can enhance communication because it forces one to think before offering ideas and speaking. Stress, too, can be reduced if one writes. Taking pen in hand forces the writer to slow down, take a deep breath, and possibly identify the cause of the stress.

Can't seem to focus? Writing can help because it requires the writer to sort through thoughts, discover which ones are

extraneous and zero in on the important ones. Picking up a pen when a decision needs to be made additionally offers benefits. Why? Once again, writing provides the author the opportunity to ponder and weigh and measure a decision that needs to be made. As the writer slows down, she is often able to see the big picture and thereby make the best decision possible.

Writing often enhances memories, too. It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but those words can also enrich any picture taken.

The benefits of writing are many; these thoughts represent just a few of mine. So, turn on your computer, or grab a pen and some paper and begin your writing journey.....

We are hoping to get more answers to the question, “why write?” from professional writers in future issues of WCA WORDS.

Meanwhile, any member of WCA can be published in WCA WORDS, so check out the guidelines on the last page of this issue and send us your submission.

WCA WORDS Committee

Iris Shur (Chair)

Sally Brickman	Hollis Chalem	Elaine Chase
Edythe Cohen	Sara Drogin	Jean Erlbaum
Louise Orkin	Susan Pittelman	Elaine Waxman

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.

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*The opinions expressed in WCA WORDS reflect only the views of the author and not those of WCA.

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WHEN YOUR LAST NAME BEGINS WITH Y

by Janet Cooperman

It's a special society, the x's, y's and z's. They exist in their own world. Often, we are lumped together as a threesome, denied having our own special letter.

Try to imagine going to parents' night at school and being sent to a little dark room at the end of a long corridor, far away from all the other parents in regular classrooms. Yup, that's where the x, y's and z's were.

We felt a bond as we began to relate our stories in that room. Being last in line when getting your uniform and equipment in the military, nothing ever fit, and nothing worked. Being relegated to the last row in class. We nodded, we understood.

Once, on a flight from Acapulco to Mexico City, the flight crew announced that some people would have to get off the plane and take the next flight. Those passengers were selected alphabetically. It was one of our finest moments as Y's. Our last name was Youmans, we could stay, but the Youngs had to leave. We smugly sat with the rest of the alphabet, secretly high-fiving, as we watched the Youngs' luggage being offloaded.

Graduations are always really boring for Y's. By the time they get to us, most people are dozing or looking at their watches and checking to see how many more graduates are left. We are squirming in our seats waiting and waiting. When my son graduated college, it was a cold rainy day in Boston and we were outside on the lawn trying to keep warm and dry. His roommate,

last name, Ackerman, graduated over an hour before our son. We were huddled under a tree with the Wus and the Zalinskis, half smiling at each other. Pretty much everyone else had left to get out of the rain. The only people remaining to clap and cheer were the other x, y's & z's. Immediately following the reading of our son's name, we left, glancing back at the Z's standing alone shivering under the tree as we hi-tailed to the car to get warm.

It was easy to find my place card at a wedding or gala. Just a few cards would be nestled among the x, y's or z's in the last row. Sometimes I was the only Y. I felt special.

Now I'm a C. I don't like waiting with all the other C's when checking in at an event. But at this age, it's not all bad to be a C. I sure do appreciate that I don't have to bend down to the bottom shelf to get my books on reserve at the library.

Three Things I Carry by Jean Erlbaum

The thing I carry with me everyday is my old black backpack. Friends, family and my chiropractor ask me all the time “Why are you schlepping that heavy thing around wherever you go?” I usually answer with something flip like “It’s permanently attached to me.” But really, if I were honest, I’d admit it’s my security blanket. I actually have panicky dreams about losing it. It is so nice to know that all the things I need (like my glasses, hearing aid batteries, pens, tissues and credit cards) are with me wherever I go. Not to mention all the things I like having nearby just in case (scissor, bandaids, extra tea bags, lifesavers, coupons and a nail file). And in that handy backpack there is always room for a novel, a snack or a change of clothes. When I carry my backpack, I carry the joyful assurance of someone who knows that at any moment all (or at least most of) her needs will always be met.

The next thing I carry is not so joyful – it’s worrying about my kids.

I have two daughters and my older daughter has her own two daughters. I take it on as my right and duty to worry about all of them. The baby is just five months old and is mostly giggles and bottles, napping, pee and poop. I spend most of my time with her and worry about her the least. Our four-year-old Sadie is mostly a delight and the only thing I worry about is her refusal to eat fruits and vegetables. Sometimes she just refuses to eat. This is where her stubbornness shows up. But I can’t worry too much about her diet (or resulting constipation) or her stubbornness because I firmly believe that she will figure it all out on her in her own time.

My big girls present bigger problems. I worry about their jobs (about which they complain a lot) and their relationships (which

they complain about even more). I worry that they refuse to take calcium and they'll get osteoporosis like me. I worry that they are right that my generation has ruined the economy and the climate for them. Actually the list of worries about them is endless and I really do carry them around with me like fragile eggs about to break. I try to tell myself that all this worry is useless, that I can't manage or fix their lives, that in fact they seem to be resourceful and resilient adults who ride the waves of their own lives quite well. I think I carry all my girls with me all the time because it's a habit. That's what mothers do.

The last and probably most valuable thing I carry is my Zen practice. It is the best antidote I know for all the attachment I have to my stuff and to all the worrying I do. On some deep level, after having sat in meditation for hours and years and decades, I know that all grasping is useless. I know that everything is interrelated and that everything changes. I know that I can't hold on to anything or anyone. I have learned that I am actually in control of nothing, that all I can do is to join in the dance, love as much as I can and have a good time. When I remember this, nothing I carry is a burden. I can hold my backpack of stuff and my kids and my Zen practice lightly and let them carry me.

Snow
By Louise Orkin

There was a snowstorm in New York this week, the first of the season. It made me think about snow for the first time in years.

Snow, delightful or dangerous? Beautiful or destructive? Freezing or fun? Just like everything in life, snow means different things to different people.

Children love snow—it brings school closings, outings to the park with sleds, snowball fights outside and snowmen. To others it means missed work, exhausting shoveling, slippery, dangerous sidewalks and then gray, dirty sludge at every street crossing.

How you feel about snow depends on where you are in life: a school child or a working adult, a physically compromised person, or a skier, and isn't that what determines our opinions? It all depends on where we are in our lives, doesn't it?

Take, for example, a simple thing like a vaccination for protection against the deadly Covid virus. Getting the vaccine has become a flash point of contention in our very divided nation. There are conspiracy theories galore: the vaccine includes a microchip to enable the government to trace you, it's unnecessary because the virus is a hoax and so many more theories. Your opinion depends on your politics, where you live, your religious beliefs and more. So, like whether we love snow, or hate it depends, not on rational, scientific study but on emotions, our experience of snow and where we are in our lives. And, how we feel about snow is a metaphor for our divided nation: It doesn't matter how we feel about snow but it does matter how we feel about getting the vaccine.

We Americans face an existential problem, we must come together, trust each other and work for the good of the country. Will that ever happen? Is there hope for us? If we can't, I believe the American dream is over and our democracy will die.

My Sanctuary*

by Katrin Lubars

Looking out my bedroom window

A grey and white world

Wishing it weren't so

Dark willow branches reaching a gun-metal sky

Blue ice at the small waterfall

Rocks in the creek wearing snowy hats

Me – waiting for color and spring

A storm — thrashing the naked willows

The pale sun of early spring

Warming the first red willow buds

When will they open?

When can I touch the velvety catkins

And hold them to my cheek?

Then finally—

Green shoots peeping through dead leaves.

And later, my beloved yellow cowslips, so delicate

I have been waiting for you.

Mamy says be careful of the bees

Hundreds are humming, visiting the willow blooms
Collecting pollen around hairy feet

Summer –

And I go barefoot
Swinging from the springy willows
Sloshing in the cool creek
With snails, salamanders and tiny frogs
Yellow butter flowers—
A carpet across the creek

Tart raspberries from bush to greedy mouth
Climbing the tallest pine tree
No, I'm not afraid!

Queen of High-Up Land with sticky sap on knees and hands
Deer in the meadow and mountains beyond

Friends building a clubhouse by MY pine
Measuring, sawing, hammering, arguing
Who is the boss?

Cooking salty bullion over a puppet-size stove
Eating onion sandwiches
Club rules written down mean more

Then — willow leaves turn yellow
Blackberries at the forest's edge
Hazelnuts ready for picking
Leave some for the squirrels, Mamy says
Purple asters

Last color spot of the season
A fall storm and
Leaves are letting go

The first snow
Bees inside a warm hive
Snails, salamanders and toads buried deep
Willows and perennials dormant
Creating miracles under a white blanket
Me — looking out my bedroom window
How much longer till spring?

*I would like to dedicate this piece of writing to the teacher and participants of our WCA Memoir writing class. It has been a great joy to meet up with you on Tuesdays and getting to know each of you through your writing. Lisa Wroble, inspirational teacher, Gail, Maureen, Lynn, Rosie, Susan, and Janis. Miss you already!

Rosie

by Sally Brickman

Rosie lived with us in the attic. She weighed about 350 pounds or more, and she was very short and wide. She was Caucasian, very old and wrinkled. I do not know how she managed to make it up the long, steep old stairs that led up from the second floor to the attic space which was her domain.

She was our maid though I never saw her doing any cleaning. Mainly I think she was hired by my parents to baby sit my brother and me. In those days, the forties and fifties my parents did a lot of socializing primarily at supper clubs and bridge groups and I always felt that my brother and I were secondary to their busy lives. Thus Rosie appeared in our lives to take care of us 24/7.

How she made it up those attic stairs I do not know because she wore flippy, floppy moccasin slippers all the time and her body undulated from side to side as she walked. The little fat, cushy sides of her feet and bunions would spill over to the floor as she waddled along. Rosie always wore a housedress of faded white cotton with a very large apron tied around her plump middle. Her matted hair was grayish and she always wore a hair net held by a knot in the middle of her forehead. Wisps of strands of the grey came through the hair net on top of her head. A rather large hairy growth was on her cheek. She smelled a little musty. I figure my parents must have gotten her a very low weekly rate. It was a little embarrassing for me to allow my friends to see her.

The funniest part about Rosie was that one day my mother exclaimed, “Who left the stove on with a spark that could have set our house on fire?”. A few days later we watched as Rosie went to put something on the stove. Her huge stomach had turned on the oven as she passed by. Problem solved. Her stomach was turning on the stove as she moved in front of it.

One day when she and I were alone in the house, Rosie let me come up to her attic bedroom. Actually it was two rooms if you count the bathroom. The bedroom was very large with an iron headboard and matching iron at the foot of the bed. The mattress, as you can imagine, was sloping down in the middle as so much weight slept on it. The floors were bare except for a little beige braided rug.

Chocolate candy wrappers were strewn all over the bedroom which gave the room a sort of sweetish smell. (Where was she hiding the new candy bars?) A very old, small wooden trunk belonging to my mother sat under the dormer window. (One time I found my parents’ old love letters in that trunk.) There was a very old fashioned brown wooden chipped dresser in the room and I recall a small lamp by the bed.

Oh the bathroom! The wall paint was a bit cracked and there was an old fashioned clawfoot bathtub there. Those kinds of bathtubs are very fashionable today. The sink had a false teeth cup on display. I do not think she wore those false teeth very much.

The last time I was in Cleveland I went to peek at my childhood home which was renovated over the years by past owners. I did not get a chance to go inside the house but the memories of the attic were with me.

I do not know what happened to Rosie but I suspect she stayed with us until my older brother could do the sitting. However, the vision of Rosie’s stomach sweeping by the stove and lighting up the burners remains with me forever.

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?

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.

