WRITE ON WRITERS' HISTORY

Part 1: 1995-2018

Compiled by Nonie Moody

Digitized by Bill Perry

WRITE ON WRITERS' HISTORY

January 2024

Nonie Moody

Facts about putting this together

This is not a collection of writings

This is not a craft

Items selected for the Write on Writers' History

- WOW published books
- WOW members and our editors, only
- Photos, especially group pictures
- Announcements such as Author Chats, etc.
- Personal WOW achievements, The Times Record, The Cryer, Member Moments in People Plus News
- Condolences
- People Plus News center folds: Corona Chronicles and Christmas. This gives a good example of all our writings.

Everything should be dated and in consecutive order going forward.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION _____ **2**
1999 _____ **6**
2000 _____ **8**
2007 _____ **12**
2010 _____ **16**
2011 _____ **23**
2012 _____ **31**
2013 _____ **39**
2014 _____ **41**
2015 _____ **49**
2016 _____ **56**
2017 _____ **63**
2018 _____ **70**

INTRODUCTION

First Senior Center

Former St. Charles Church, 6 Noble St., Brunswick

Celebration photo 1-1-2004

HISTORY OF PEOPLE PLUS

AND

WRITE ON WRITERS

The "55 Plus Center" was the first name given for the Brunswick community center. The Brunswick Town Council put out a referendum question to Brunswick voters: Shall the Town of Brunswick purchase the former St. Charles Church at 6 Noble Street in Brunswick, to be used for a senior center? The vote in May 1976 was, "Yes."

The first center located on Noble St was used as a meal site for elderly individuals. The center also became known as a place for social and recreational activities and programs.

A new teen center was added in 2004 through parents, professionals and earnest young people looking to provide a safe place for the youth.

The 55 Plus Center name now didn't reflect who and what we were and the name was changed to People Plus, "The center to get more out of life."

Because the St. Charles Church at 6 Noble St. was deteriorating, lack of space plus our occupancy for 35 years, a new location was found. In June 2010 a move was completed to the current facility, which is the old Union Street School, located at 35 Union Street in Brunswick.

The first meetings of Write on Writers **(WOW)** commenced in 1995 while in the old building. Frank Conners was a great asset to this group after moving to the newer building on Union Street. The first WOW leader was Jean Martz and the group grew to about 12 in attendance. The first book published was *Poets and Storytellers, Writing for Fun.* This has been a nice tradition for WOW to publish a book every two years.

Through the years the leaders have been Bonnie Wheeler (14 y), Nancy Sohl (3), Ralph Laughlin (2), and other leaders for shorter times. Bonnie Wheeler is our senior member joining about 1999, Vince McDermott came in 2005, Gladys Szabo about 2010, Paul Karwowski 2011.

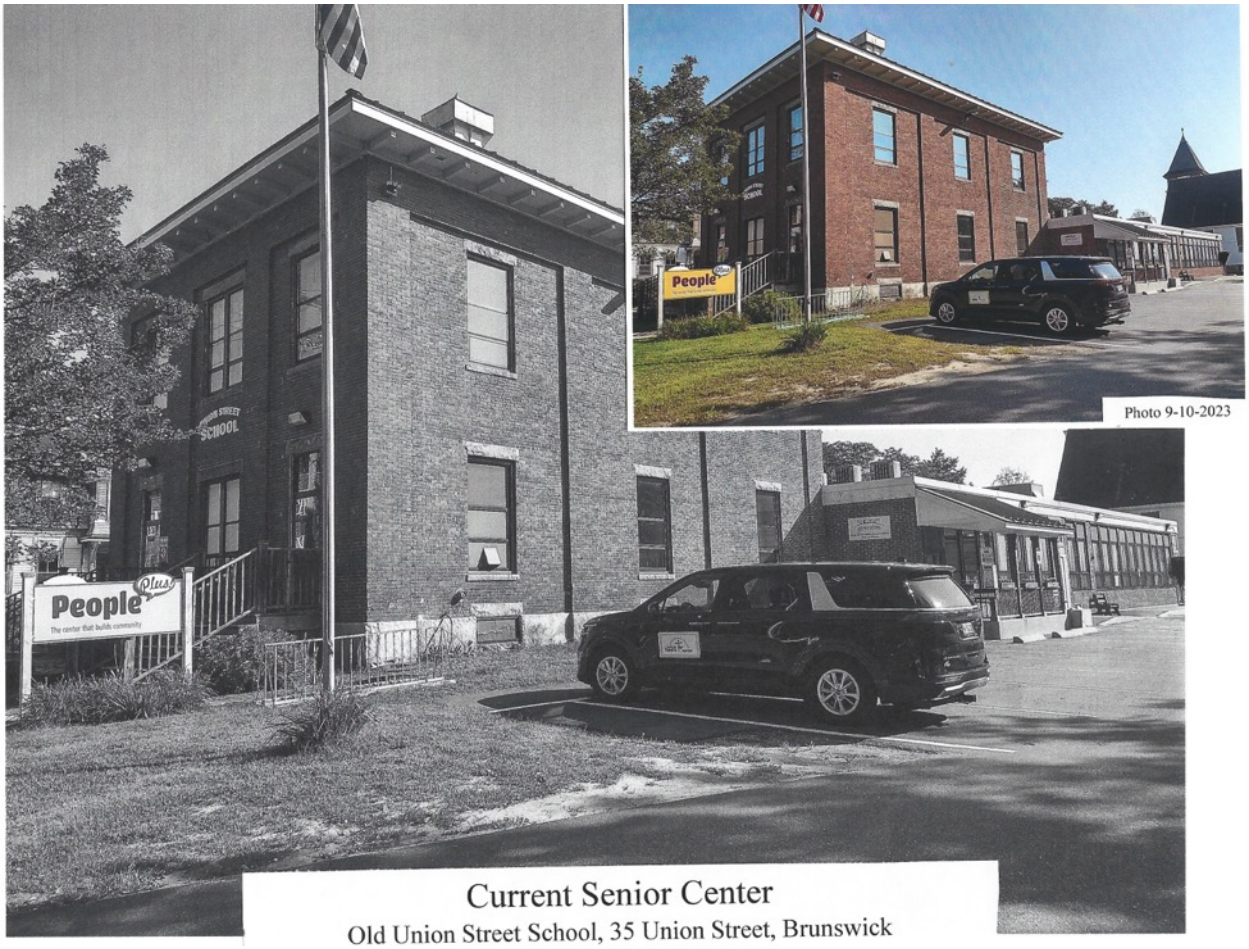

Photo 9-10-2023

Current Senior Center

Old Union Street School, 35 Union Street, Brunswick

The question has been asked many times, "What /Who are Write on Writers?" Here are some quotes from past leaders.

Write On! As I have come to know it, is more a social group bringing together people of diverse interests, backgrounds and talents to share their life experiences and thoughts with others through the written word. That's why we read aloud what we have written. If we wanted to just have our writing judged by others, we would not read our writing but just pass out the printed word and wait for comment. Write On's role and scope is much more valuable to the human spirit.

It is NOT a writers' Workshop where people sharpen their writing skills in order to get published and be an "accomplished author" – whatever that means. It IS a place for souls to mingle.

In my opinion it is a gem of a group that I was most fortunate in finding. Yes, at first, I thought it should emphasize the "Workshop" concept...but I took time to listen, feel its pulse and came to learn so much more than just how to improve this or that sentence.

Thus, I give you my proxy vote on keeping Write On! The way it is.

Ralph Laughlin

When you write from the heart, we needed a safe place. A group that has respect for each writer and appreciation for each one's talents. A group that encourages others to be THEIR best, where there is laughter, tears and a special bond together. That's our goal, a family.

Bonnie Wheeler

Along with Write on Writers publication of a book every two years, People Plus publishes a small monthly newspaper of current happenings. In this newspaper a page is designated for the Write on Writers to express their talents and abilities. Through the years, the editor-in-chiefs who have guided People Plus News have been; Frank Connors, Patrick Gabrion and Charmaine Daniels.

1999

Poets and Storytellers Writing for Fun

The 55 Plus Center Writers Group
Brunswick, ME

Table of Contents

The White Rose by Edith Hazard....1
An Unforgettable Visit by Claude Bonang....2
The Home-Leaving by Jim Haley....7
Love on a Rainy Day by Lynne Kresge....8
MR. by Frances Brown....13
My 95th Birthday by Katharine Van Gelder....14
My Secret by Jean Martz....16
Papa by Phyllis Keough....18
The Breakup by Phyllis Keough....23
Four Haiku by Jim Haley....27
Signature by Jean Martz....28
The Little Feller by Shirley LeMont....29
What If? by Edith Hazard....31
A Memory Walk by Pat Ossenfort....33
A Travel Through Time by Lynne Kresge....34
Stars by Mary Strong....38
Prejudice by Mary Strong....39
Howard by Jim Haley....41
Charlie by Effie Blackstone....44
My Father by Frances Brown....45
ME *by Lynne Kresge*....48
The Big Mistake by Shirley LeMont....50
Baseball and a Gentle Passing by Katharine Van Gelder..54
A Family Gathering by Pat Ossenfort....56
Heart Vision by Jean Martz....57
A Close Call by Claude Bonang....58
Childhood by Mary Strong....62
Meet You at the Poof Foof Stump by Pat Ossenfort....63
Isaiah Fetchall by Katharine Van Gelder....65
Untitled by Lynne Kresge....69
Early Memory of a Sibling by Jean Martz....70
Good-bye Little House by Shirley LeMont....72
Getting Old by Effie Blackstone....73
Welcome to the Octogenarian Club by Frances Brown....74
Friends by Jean Martz....75
Thank You by Effie Blackstone....76
Biographies of Authors....77

Acknowledgments

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Claude Bonang

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Lynne Kresge

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Claude Bonang and Mary Strong

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Logo of 55 Plus Center by Carol Choate

The Writers Group wishes to thank the 55 Plus Center and its Director Sig Knudsen for providing facilities and financial support.

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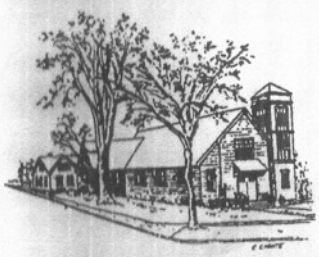
Brunswick, ME 04011

2000

Poets and Storytellers Writing for FUN

(VOLUME II)



The 55 Plus Center Writers Group
Brunswick, ME

Poets and Storytellers Writing for Fun

(Volume II)

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Table of Contents

Katharine by Frances Brown....1
Katharine Van Gelder by Lynne Kresge....2
For Frances Seymour Brown by Edith Hazard....5
To the Telephone Company by Frances Brown....6
The Stars by Frances Brown....7
To My Parents by Frances Brown....8
How Do They Spell Cow in Buffalo? by Catherine McIntire.9
Marriage European Style by Effie Blackstone....12
Chill Factor by Edith Hazard....13
Winter Secrets by Lynne Kresge....14
Meditation by Edith Hazard....14
Who Am I? by Jean Martz....15
Invasions of Privacy by Pat Ossenfort....17
Oklahoma Farewell by Bonnie Wheeler....18
Spring Cleaning by Phyllis Keough....20
Meditation by Mary Strong....23
Ode to Patience by Bonnie Wheeler....24
A Lullaby by Effie Blackstone....25
The Music Inside by Phyllis Keough....26
The Big Maple by Edith Hazard....27
My Name is Splotch by Lynne Kresge....29
Puckerbrush: A Meditation by Jim Haley....33
Mr. Racine—Our Grocery Man by Claude Bonang....35
Gertrude and Angie by Shirley LeMont....37
The Toboggan Ride by Effie Blackstone....40
Benny by Catherine McIntyre....41
Tree Climbing by Claude Bonang....43
Earl by Lynne Kresge....44
Mother's Quiet Time by Bonnie Wheeler....45
My Sister, In Shadow by Edith Hazard....46
God's Answer by Shirley LeMont....47
Traveling Light by Pat Ossenfort....48
Where's My Shirt? by Claude Bonang....49

The Metronome by Phyllis Keough....54
Illusion by Catherine McIntyre....55
Stormy Sunset by Jean Martz....57
Not In Vain by Jean Martz (Bailey)....58
Christmas Shopping by Bonnie Wheeler....59
Night of the Summer Solstice by Edith Hazard....61
Water of Life by Jim Haley....62
A Crossroad in History by Lynne Kresge....63
Yesterday's Memories by Phyllis Keough....66
What If? by Jim Haley....67
Good-bye To Mother by Frances Brown....70
Little Santa by Shirley LeMont....72
Brunswick Spring by Jim Haley....76
"Take Care Now" by Pat Ossenfort....77
Grief by Catherine McIntire.... 78
A Childhood Memory by Jean Martz....80
Cribstone Bridge by Mary Strong....81
Small Curd or Large Curd? by Jim Haley....82
January 1, 2000 by Frances Brown....83
The Final Bow by Effie Blackstone....85
A Closing Thought by Effie Blackstone....85
Biographies of Authors....86

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The Writers Group wishes to thank the 55 Plus Center and its Director Sig Knudsen for providing facilities and financial support. All proceeds go to the 55 Plus Center.

This book would not be possible without the generous gift of Claude Bonang's endless time and talent. His friends in the Writers Group extend their heartfelt thanks.

We will sadly miss Katharine Van Gelder and Frances (Pampy) Brown who have passed on.

WANTED

(ONCE AGAIN)

Effie Blackstone

Claude Bonang

Frances Brown

Jim Haley

Edith Hazard

Phyllis Keough

Lynne Kresge

Shirley LeMont

Catherine McIntyre

Jean Martz

Pat Ossenfort

Mary Strong

Bonnie Wheeler

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2007

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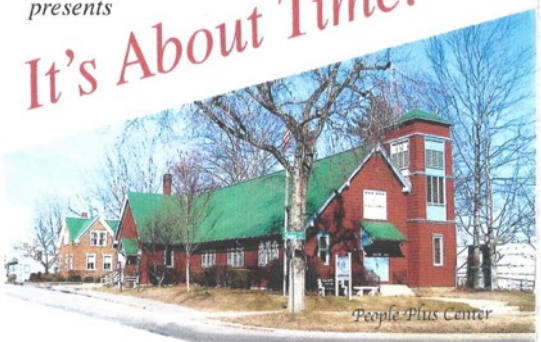
Betty King
Mike Arnold
Esther McCandless
Bill Meroff
Ruth Foehring
Seam Donovan
George Phipps
Judith Zottoll
Bob Dow
David Stuntz
Alex Baxter
Tony Dixon
Wendall Kinney
Eleanor Chaplin
Al Layton
Charlotte Hart
Bonnie Wheeler
Suzanne Rosoff

Write On!

presents

It's About Time!



POEMS & STORIES

Read by the authors

The People Plus Writers Group

Photo by George Phipps

Write On! authors at the recording studio.
They meet every Wednesday
at the People Plus Center,
Brunswick, Maine

2010

Muses and Memories
An Anthology of Prose and Poetry
live well
laugh often
love much
Write it on your heart that every day is the best day of the year.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

A celebration of the heart

'One exceptional group…'

Dear editor,

While my husband and I were visiting in Topsham recently, it was my pleasure and good luck to attend a People Plus Write On! writer's group meeting. WOW! What an amazingly, exceptional group of talented writers they are!

I SO enjoyed meeting them, and listening to them as they presented their writing projects. I was so impressed with all the differing styles of writing, and how much they supported each other. I hope your readers realize how lucky they are to have such talented writers in their midst.

— Rita Greer, Kansas City, Mo.

2010

That's just natural

Speaking Frankly

FRANK CONNORS

The last chore I'd been assigned as we vacated Noble Street was to get our big white front lawn sign off that corner and moved to Union Street. ... Naturally, the afternoon I'd selected to do the job was hot and sticky, but I went at it anyway. I took it as just the latest challenge to my masculinity. I used my best cemetery shovel to dig out the posts and offered a half grunt of a thank you when I discovered the base had never been cemented in place. I rocked that beast back and forth till it came loose, put my back under it and grunted some more, till it almost jumped from the holes and landed flat on the lawn.

Only then did I accept that it was too heavy for me to move to the truck by myself.

Thirty seconds into my analysis of what to do next, this iPod-laden kid came bouncing down the street, jamming with his electronic world, completely unaware that I even existed, till I jumped to the side walk in front of him, shovel in hand, offering in sign language that he should pull the plugs from his ears.

Guess I startled the fellow, but he did what I asked, stepping back several steps, eyeing me very suspiciously. "Hey," I said, "I'll give you $5 if you'll help get that sign on my truck."

The money had his attention. "Really dude?," he asked, "five bucks?"

I nodded and stepped away from him, claiming my side of the sign.

Together we hoisted the sign and moved it to my truck, only to realize that it was several inches too long to fit in the bed. "Guess we need to lift it up to the rack," I decided. "Guess I want to see my five bucks," he decided, dropping his side of the sign to the ground. I reached in my wallet, retrieved my lunch money and snapped it in front of his dull eyes. His faith renewed, he nodded and reached down for the sign.

We quickly settled that sign precariously on my weak wooden truck rack. I turned to thank him and was confronted by his out-stretched hand. I took the five from my pocket, dropped it in his hand and offered a quick, "thank you," but he was already plugging in his iPod, already walking off toward Maine Street. I waved. "Dude," I added.

Today at 6 Noble St., the lights are off and the dust has settled. Classes are relocated, desks are moved, and the buzz that always surrounds People Plus has moved to Union Street. The old digs at Noble are suddenly silent and sad.

So I feel compelled to offer one last tribute to our little brown church, no matter that it was always cramped and crowded, hard to heat, hard to cool, hard to get around in, and usually not a little bit dark and dingy. And when I visited last, it was still hard to find a place to park.

When we were removing a decorative mantle in the old house, saving it for re-use at our new Union Street center, we found an elaborate greeting card pinned to the wall and dated 1887, bearing only best wishes to all who might visit the place in the coming years. Certainly, no common woodworker in 1887 could ever have guessed the modest Victorian cottage he was building would next become a church complex and later still, a center for senior citizens

An impressive parade of myriad activity carried us through the 35 years we "lived" on Noble Street. Beano to boiled dinners, holiday celebrations, exercise classes, wellness programs, stunts, sales, trips, shows, service and social events. Sir Noble was second home to thousands of seniors during the decades leading to this new century. Most of us still accepted the news with some misgiving when we learned we'd have to move, and our little corner on Maine and Noble was destined to house a hotel.

Now, here's the last thing. I took an evening walk around the old place last week and was delighted to find our fine old cherry tree was once more loaded with fruit. I picked several and popped them in my mouth, tasting the tart and bitterness. No matter how nice and wonderful our new home is, there's always a little bitterness about leaving the old. That's just natural.

New or renewing members — July

BRUNSWICK

Ann M. Carter
Shirley Irish
Priscilla P. Booth
Darryl Wood
Frieda Wood
Judith Wilbur
Irene Dow
Dorothy Bufobert
Leah Nelson
Linda Arrin
Helena Zimmerman
Nancy Whitaakle
Cita Levine
Rudi Smith
Germaine Bois
Sue Weissman
George Phipps
Barbara Toal

HARPSWELL

Sandra Pattiaten
Nancy Wilds
Kimberley Johnson
Pamela Craig
Marilyn Ottersteiu
Helen Norton
Hannah N. Dring
Beverly Martin
Joyce Rogers

TOPSHAM

Robert Busch
Susan Busch
Judith Michaud
Priscilla H. Hall
John L. Keiser Jr.
Gillian Watt

OTHER TOWNS

Linda Gardner, Bath
Toinette Weybrant, Bath
Betty King, Woolwich
Jerry Hix, Lisbon Falls
Patricia Hix, Lisbon Falls
Jane McEwan, Woolwich
David Anderson, Bowdoinham
Leslie Anderson, Bowdoinham
Susan Levandoski, Freeport
Rose Cronson, Newcastle
Laura Dever, Durham
Sue Mosserman, Defiance, Ohio
Sally Fitch, Georgetown
Phyllis Smith, Bowdoin

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Lunch Out!

July 13 at 11:30 a.m.

Kennebec Tavern

Commercial Street, Bath

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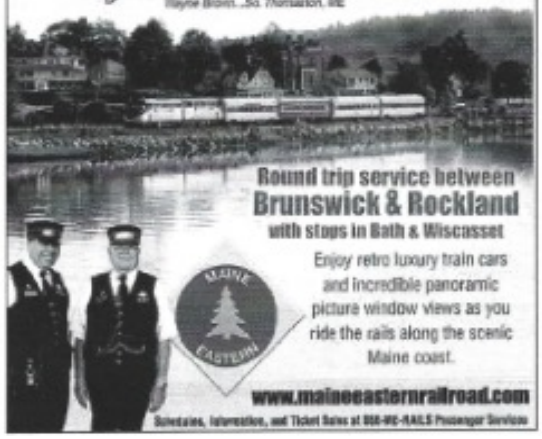

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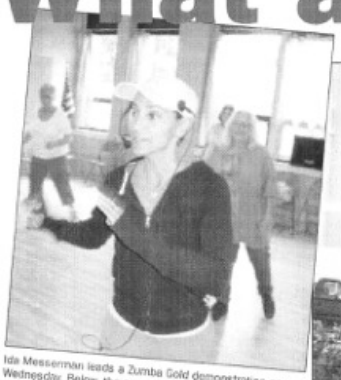
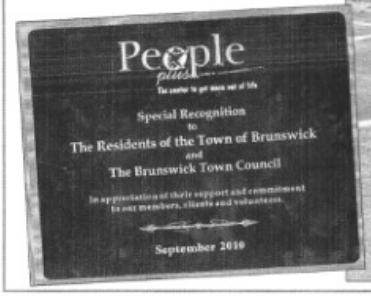
More than 1,000 visitors attend People Plus Center's grand opening celebration, Sept. 20-25

What a week we had!



Ida Messerman leads a Zumba Gold demonstration on Wednesday. Below, the appreciation plaque that hangs in the lobby at People Plus. At right, teen center hoopsters shoot baskets under the watchful eye of Town Councilor Gerald Favreau.



Teen Center groupies cluster for a picture after their main room was named in honor of former executive director Sig Knudsen during a special ceremony on Thursday. At left, visitors gather around tables of goodies supplied everyday by volunteers.

Season's Greetings
from "Write On"
The People Plus Writers

Dad! You missed him!

By Charlotte Hart

"Dad! You missed him!
He came while you were gone.
He stood right there in our back yard.
I was in the window with my new green housecoat on."

Baby Bill was in his crib.
Mom said, "Let him snooze.
Santa's just checking our chimneys
To see which one he will use."

Gram smiled and kept on knitting.
Mittens! Socks! Wooly hats — she has made three!
They will be wrapped in shiny paper
Under the Christmas tree.

"Dad, I'm glad you went to the grange
To the party for friends who are poor.
But, Dad, you did miss Santa Claus!
I was scared! I was happy for sure.

He stood by the well and waved at me.
His beard is long and white.
His pants and his coat are all bright red.
His reindeer were — out of sight.

The Dew of Heaven

By Adelaide Guernelli

The Dew of Heaven was beginning to fall on the trees
That were waiting for the doors of the magic ceiling,
To become the pleasant stage of living in Maine.
But, really the three seasons of the weather:
Autumn, Winter and Spring need equal attention
And respect, because they consacrate us to the
Eternal decisions, and their colors define
Life, Respect and Love ... no matter what!
That triangle can't be rejected because it contributes
To our health, both physical and moral, and with
Happiness it can define our time on the earth.
It is also very beautiful in its intrinsic ways, so
Let us all get ready to salute the days of joy and,
Family togetherness, now that the calendar shows
The dates of Halloween, Veterans Day, Thankgiving Day,
Ha'nukkah, Christmas Eve. Christmas Day and,
New Year's Eve and New Year's Day with our food,
Ready to be shared not only with our relatives
But also with our perpetual friends!

A Christmas blessing

By Gladys Szabo

It was Dec. 23rd. My husband, Bob, was having very bad chest pain. Our doctor said he would meet us at the ER. Driving there my mind was projecting dreadful images. My daughter, Dawn, was 6 and my son, Robbie, was 10. Our Christmas could be disastrous. At the ER, Bob was rushed in, and after what seemed like forever, Dr. Sullivan came out. As he approached me, I was gripped with fear anticipating his news. "It is not a heart attack. He has a collapsed lung and can go home as long as he will rest. I want another X-ray in the morning to make sure it is not still deflating."

I should have been relieved with the good news, but memories flooded my mind, back to the week before our wedding. Scenes of Bob collapsing in a restaurant on our way to my cousin's wedding. He was rushed to the hospital where I was told it was a collapsed lung and he should be fine with a night in the hospital and rest. The following day, I was notified to get to the hospital immediately, but he was in surgery by the time I got there, being 5 minutes from dying. A week in intensive care, indefinitely postponed wedding, left me with terrifying memories.

Christmas Eve morning we returned to the hospital to have a follow up X-ray. When the nurse couldn't reach the doctor for further instructions, she told us we could go home but would most likely be back shortly. My legs turned to jelly, my stomach was in knots as we returned home. I knew I should be doing all the preparations for our Christmas Eve dinner but was not able to think or function. Within a few hours, the phone rang. "Hi this is Dr. Sullivan." My heart was racing, my hands sweating as I answered, "Hi, we have been waiting for your call. Do we have to return to the hospital?"

There was a pause, "No. Why would you think that?"
"Well after the X-ray, the nurse told us we would most likely be returning!"
Angrily, the doctor replied, "Everything is fine and with bed rest for a few days, Bob should be up and around. I will be speaking to that nurse as she should not have told you anything. Have a very Merry Christmas!" I dropped the phone, crying happy tears while hugging my husband.

We had just received the greatest Christmas blessing ever!!

Winter

By Judith Zottoli

The downy woodpecker
beckons to me,
black upon white,
a drop of blood
crowns his head.
I look out my window
at the newly fallen snow,
white, fluffy, virgin.
The black trees,
tall and straight,
a microcosm of emerald
green hidden inside.
I am so weary of winter,
adding layer upon layer
to an already
frozen spirit.
I cry for my father reincarnated
and the hope and comfort he
brings.

Respect

By Bonnie Wheeler

A Season of Joy
Some try to destroy
Take Jesus from Christmas?
Not in my world.
It is your right to worship your way
My family fought for that right.
Would I steal your joy?
Never. So please respect mine.

Christmas Day

By Bonnie Wheeler

The winter wind howled through the night.
Snow piled high in the morning light.
Family arriving — hugs at the door —
Gifts beautifully wrapped placed on the floor
Christmas tree decorated, sparkling with light
Savory aromas from the kitchen, delight
Happy children's faces filled with glee
This is the way Christmas Day should be.
Cold wet clothing, boots dripping muddy clay,
Children running amuck, toys all astray
Infants crying, mothers' weary faces
Leftover food, no refrigerator spaces
Men asleep or watching TV.
Women vacuuming the debris
Discarded wrapping around a forlorn tree
This is my Christmas Day reality.

My most memorable Christmas

By Betty King

..... was, for me, the archetypal Christmas — when my children were very small. In those days we decorated the tree on Christmas Eve, after the children were all in bed — and then wrapped and arranged the presents (some of them always had to be assembled first, puzzling over totally inadequate instructions) and stuffed the stockings. Then I went to church (the Vigil Mass was at midnight then, as it ought to be!)

When I got home I had every intention of going to bed, but the night was so beautiful — the air was mild, the moon was full, blue shadows were striping the snow — and I was already well muffled up and wide awake. I would go for just a little walk. I soon found myself down at the river and sat on a stone to watch the moonlight on the water. Before I knew it there was a pink glow on the eastern sky! I made it back up to the house before the first sleepy child came down the stairs.

We had breakfast all together of stollen, scrambled eggs, bacon and tangerines before attacking the Christmas stockings. Then the youngest child selected a present from under the tree and delivered it to the recipient, who opened it and then chose the next present and delivered it, and so on..... This took all morning. I meanwhile stuffed the goose with fruit and set it to roast.

The afternoon was so warm, as I remember, that we went for a walk on a beach where the fog was so thick that we kept losing sight of one another. It took some doing to gather everybody for the trip home.

I am now about twice as old as I was that snowy Christmas eve. There must have been frustration, anxiety and fatigue, but all that has long since faded from the picture leaving ..... amazement! And gratitude.

Christmas lobster dinner

By Bonnie Wheeler

A very dear friend of mine lives in a nursing facility. She is in her 90s and continues to be cheerful, helpful to others and a delight to be with. Peggy loves lobster so I invited her out for early Christmas dinner so she could enjoy her favorite food. I picked her up, put her walker in the trunk, and off we headed to Captain Mike's. She ordered lobster and black coffee and then asked me when I had been back to Vermont. I thought, "Why would I be going to Vermont?" Oh dear. I realized she had no idea who I was. I said, "Not for a long time. I have not been back to my home state of Oklahoma in a long time." She asked, "How is Russell?" Who was Russell? I said, "I haven't seen him in a while. Now my husband Garry is doing well, still driving a van service to Portland." Now she looked at me, "Who is Garry?"

I said, "I have seen my kids, Brad, Kevin, and Lonna this year. Our friends Carolyn and Don always ask about you." Finally we didn't continue the game of confused conversation. She enjoyed every bite of her lobster, and I enjoyed my haddock.

I drove her back and walked her through the hallway to her room. We hugged and she thanked me, never once saying my name. Did she know who I was? I don't think she ever did. Did it matter? No, not at all. When I got home, my husband said, "How was Peggy?" I said, "Just fine. She loved her lobster dinner, Russell!" He gave me the very same look I had given Peggy when she asked about Russell. The only Russell I knew was a handsome high school boyfriend. I do wonder, "How is Russell?"

The 'Hungry Moon'

By Betty King

Orange-round, then
banana yellow
you rise and float
in the winter sky
the very picture
of abundance.

Who is going hungry
tonight?

Angels

By Gladys Szabo

Did you ever just meet someone
With whom you connected like no other one?
Angels come to us, I believe...
In more ways than we conceive.
Some see angels with flowing gowns
Floating above and all around.
Others enter our lives as a friend or a pet
Whom we will never forget.
A bird in the sky
Or a dainty butterfly.
Some angels come, just for a while
Others remain, for many a mile.
Blessed with angels from earth and above
Receiving their strength and endless love.
Each angel holds a special place
In my heart I will embrace.

A pretty good old fashioned Christmas

By Ruth Foehring

The Christmas of 1990 was almost upon us. I remembered a promise I made to myself a few years back that when we felt settled in our old farm house, I was going to have an old fashioned Christmas party. We had moved there in 1973 so I figured we were as settled as we ever would be. Moving out to the country in Vermont, and purchasing an old farm complete with barn, fields and meadows, and even a pond was a dream come true for me. I loved it. I still do even though I no longer live there. But, oh what memories I have stored up!

Tried and true friends would be invited, people that if the day was a disaster they would still love us. They would be the type of people that would not complain of the cold, love nature, and would eat all that was put before them! My guest list was complete, the phone calls were made. The instructions clearly stated that the Sunday before Christmas the party would occur and to wear warm clothes, especially, warm boots, gloves and hats. Bring snowshoes but if they did not have any plenty would be here to use.

The day before the big event, we set up card tables in various rooms in the house. Each table was set with a red tablecloth, white dishes and napkins and sprigs of holly were placed in the center of each table. Sunday morning the cooking was well on its way, and by noon we were ready. I walked around the house admiring what I saw. Cozy! Christmas! Nice! Right on schedule the cars began showing up. Snow shoes lay on the back deck. Boots lay by the back door. The glass front on the wood stove showed orange and yellow flames. This was an inviting sight in this ten degree day and soon we were all toasty warm.

People relaxed, and then the fun began. We were going off into the woods and decorate a pine tree. This tree would be our special gift to the birds for their Christmas. Bowls of popcorn and cranberries were handed out. Needles and thread and strong string came next and we began making chains with them. They were tied together and began to grow longer. A few of us took pine cones, added string to hang them, smeared peanut butter on them and rolled them in fine bird seed. Grapefruit halves were given hangers and suet balls place in their centers. Then we were ready.

Dressed warmly, snow shoes on, we trudged up the hill in the back and found the prettiest tree. We all decorated it and the smiles on our faces were a delight to behold. The house glowed with lights as we approached it and was a very inviting sight. Rosy cheeked and smiling faces entered the back door once again. Drinks and snacks were served. The meal which had been cooking in the oven for a couple of hours was ready. Now came the next part of the day. Numbers were drawn from a hat, people found their matching numbers on the small tables and sat to eat their salads together.

The house was lighted now in every room. When the salads were finished, numbers were picked again, people changed to their new matching table where the main entrée was begun. Merry conversations and laughs were heard from every room. What fun! What joy! Then of course tables were changed again for dessert. Everyone met everyone that day and friendships were cemented that last to this day. The day ended in front of the wood stove where we all laughed and hugged. Everyone left with a calico ornament and a sprig of holly.

Tired but with a deep feeling of contentment we began the clean up. The people who spent this magic day with us are still our dearest friends. They have told us so may times how special this day was. Yes, the birds found their tree and enjoyed their treats for many weeks. We then cleaned up all the strings and empty holders. Whenever we would cross country ski, or walk by it on greener days, memories stirred up of that very old fashioned Christmas.

Christmas 1945

By Vince McDermott

The tree was up
Straight and green
Presents galore
Santa wasn't mean

The boy was eager
To discover what was there
But no matter how good
There was still a care

Five long years
Had gone past
A rare visit
Not long to last

Some short letters
Slow to arrive
Very little news
But he was alive

The door flew open
Cold air poured through
A snow covered figure
Came into view

The best gift ever
Was standing tall
His dad was home
Safe after all

Company coming

By Bonnie Wheeler

"We are having company come, and we are cleaning house.
You clean your room, Chris, and I want it to sparkle."
"Okay, Mommy"
"You have had time to get your room clean. Are you done?"
"Well, I still have some sparkle left. I put it on my floor,
on my bed, on my dresser, and you are going to be so happy.
My room really sparkles."

"Oh, Christopher!"

Love at first sight

By Charlotte Hart

Pure joy! Anticipation! Sheer delight!
I feel a breathless thrill when you appear.
Will you come now and stay the long dark night?
Lovely, magical first snow of the year!
Tall skis, sleek sleds, strong snowshoes ready wait.
Moon and candles kindle your diamonds' gleam!
Towering blue spruce guard the front yard gate.
O deep-swirled snow, you frost a lovely scene.
In March, we'll end this torrid, iced affair.
Your frozen grip sweet April will undo.
Blue brilliant summer skies will banish care.
October frosts will whisper thoughts of you.
And then — come back, December blanket warm.
Love at first sight again! Wild, swirling, lovely storm!

The last months of 2010

By Adelaide Guernelli)

I never celebrated Halloween when I was a child because my grandma never believed in attracting dead people to earth. But we know that this day is respected by many churches and is also devoted to good souls. So, I hope it will continue protecting the children that disguise and have fun. This way, the day could also be our fun to decorate our kitchens with all the delicious fruits and cookies. I respect the saying "Death, like harvest, are part of Life" as Dr. Jack Santino said in Ohio University.

On November 11 we dedicate our prayers to all our Veterans because they risk their lives to protect other countries as well as the USA. I wish I can do in the future, what I saw a lady doing in an airport: she was kissing and hugging all the men and ladies that had just arrived and she also prayed for them! Thank you, CNN! To come back alive from the war is a miracle!

On December 25th we remember the day Jesus was born and we spend time with our families praying and eating all those delicious pieces we bake with the fruits and vegetables of Maine's rich production. We venerate those pumpkins! Unfortunately, the year 2011 has to wait to say hello and be consecrated by our humble poems and prayers. May I add some of the words that are used and respected both in English and Spanish during all these days, to link all the countries of the new world? Some of them are:

1. Halloween = Vispera de todos los Santos (vispera means the day before).
2. Veterans Day = Dia de todos los Veteranos
3. Thanksgiving Day = Dia de Accion de Gracias
4. December 25 = Dia del Nacimiento de Jesus
5. New Year's Day = Dia del Ano Nuevo
6. Hallow = Hola!
7. Hallowed = Sagrado, o Santo

And one advice to everyone in Maine, from this down to earth, lady: learn how almost everything used or eaten in the olden days was home-made, pure, clean and delicious, and the animals were treated like people. Winter days allowed families to gather, sing, dance and pray, in the evenings. And barns were used very well!

At the food bank

By Betty King

I see courage
In the eyes of the children

How do they know?
Did you tell them?

Winter stays a long time it seems

By W. B. Kinney

The winter stays a long time it seems
As the snow falls and drifts on the wind
And spring waits on the wings of dreams
While we define our lives to find.

Each winter seems longer than the last
For each year comes and goes
While life for some did live the past
These many a years have left us so.

How many more will this life give?
The many more do we so wish
For they have been wondrous to live
Full of all that is this.

Walking the dog on a winter evening

By Betty King

To the west, a stained glass sky
divided by black branches. To the East
a warm glow where the moon will soon rise.
Under our careful feet, dim opalescent reflections
identify puddles which we artfully avoid.
In our faces a fresh night breeze, like
a splash of cold water. In our noses,
scents of lichen and resin. At the path's end,
warm fire, good food, and rest.

My favorite holidays

By Adelaide Guernelli)

My verses will remember three holidays:
Thanksgiving, Christmas and Veterans Day,
Since these are the days we feel closer to God,
And, we can enjoy them with our families and friends.
Christmas is the day my soul prefers 'cause it means
Jesus' Birthday, and He is our Great Brother
And Savior who will never neglect us while
We enjoy our lifes, or suffer and learn!
Thanksgiving is a very special day 'cause it is
The creation of a church in our souls, when we
Gather together with our families and friends
To eat ... but also to pray and we thank God and Jesus, again!
Veterans' Day makes my heart remember one brother and
Two uncles that died, and the list of the names that are in the
Newspapers every week, honoring our Country and
Other lands, and I cry, pray and remember all of them for the USA!

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2011

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35 Union St., Brunswick, ME 04011 729-0757 www.peopleplusmaine.org July 2011 Volume 11, No. 7

"People Plus supports an engaged, healthy and independent life for older adults, while joining others to build community for all ages."

Szabo, Welzel named Volunteers of the Year

Gladys Szabo was named People Plus Volunteer of the Year for 2011, and Hank Welzel was named Brunswick Teen Center Volunteer of the Year at the annual volunteer appreciation program held June 9.

Both are longtime members of People Plus, and both are involved in several very different activities at the Center.

Szabo is "chief volunteer and bottle washer" of the monthly Lunch and Connection dinners. She coordinates the volunteer work crews and tabulates all the monthly reports. She has been a longtime contributor to the WriteOn! writers group. When the Spectrum Generations/People Plus cooperation evolved for the Brunswick Area Respite Center's Carefree Café, it was Szabo who stepped up and made the program work.

Welzel is a retired engineer and a woodworking hobbyist. Several of his creations grace the public spaces at People Plus, including our new suggestion box. He volunteers regularly at the Teen Center. His smiling face and regular bag of food donations is a known and welcome fixture at the Center.

Welzel's volunteer award was the first given by the Teen Center.

Pat Longworth, Ann Frey, Alvina Menard, Vince McDermott and Judy Wilbur were also recognized for continuing service to the Center.

Longworth has been the Monday morning front desk receptionist for a number of years, and is the "secret caller" of the dozens of men who attend the regular monthly men's breakfast.

Hank Welzel

Gladys Szabo

Frey, a member of the Center's Board of Trustees, has been instrumental in upgrading and maintaining the Center's website.

For longer than anyone can remember, Alvina Menard has been coordinating the distribution of the People Plus News.

Wilbur coordinates the volunteers for the front desk and is a "secret dessert maker" for many of the Lunch & Connections meals.

McDermott is a leader of the center's WriteOn! group, coordinates the ping pong events for the Center and, "just pops up, almost everywhere he's needed."

According to Frank Connors, who awarded the prizes to the seven, "Volunteers make this Center work. This group may bubble to the top this month, but there is no doubt in anyone's mind that we wouldn't be here without the efforts of hundreds of volunteers."

Lunch & Connections

July cookout moving to beach

Grilled hot dogs, hamburgers and baked beans are on the menu for the Thursday, July 21, when the Lunch & Connections dinner goes off location — this month only — to Brunswick's Thomas Point Beach.

"We're planning a good, old fashioned beach-front picnic," offered Chef Frank Connors. "It should be the event of the summer."

Gordon Hersom will be providing entertainment at the event, and Connors added that "similarities to the old People Plus summer picnics are certainly on purpose."

There will be a fresh, lightly-dressed green garden salad, and this time only, a side of cole slaw. Madeleine Ashe's secret summer punch will be the featured drink; coffee, iced tea and milk are available. The dessert for July will be fresh melons and a medley of cookies. A pot of "veggie baked beans," will be ready for our vegetarian friends.

Big winners. Christian Potts and his mother, Anna Potts, together won last month's Lunch & Connections' record-setting 50-50 raffle and a door prize.

Focus of this monthly Lunch & Connections program, underwritten by Spectrum Generations, is nutrition, information and variety. Each meal must include regular and vegetarian options, a salad, fruit and whole-grained breads. A CHANS Home-health care professional is always on hand in the café area to offer a free blood pressure check prior to lunch.

Come to the beach early enough to kick some sand around — we start registering folks at 11 a.m. — pick up your 50/50 raffle ticket and register for one of several door prizes. If the weather is questionable, the cookout will be served inside at People Plus, 35 Union St. There will not be a storm-related rescheduling.

All guests must check in at the Thomas Point beach gate house. Reservations for seating are necessary and obtained by calling the People Plus information desk at 729-0757. A limited number of rides to dinner can be provided, on a first call, first served basis. We can NOT accept walk-ins for this event.

Suggested donation is $7 for adults 60 and older and children 12 and under, and $7.50 for all others. Lunch is served at noon.

Strategic planning report to members

By Ed Harris
Retiring Chairperson, Board of Trustees

We have experienced huge changes in the last five years in this organization. We have opened up the mission to include building community for all ages, changed the name to People Plus, welcomed the Teen Center, moved to a wonderful new space, and lost a beloved, longtime leader. The impact of all this cannot be underestimated. The strategic planning process we have begun is intended to help us better define our focus going forward.

This winter we conducted three focus groups (community leaders, staff/volunteer leaders/instructors, and Teen Center Council members), and surveyed our members, (120 responses). Jim Pierce held dozens of individual meetings with other organizations and community leaders. This effort generated much highly useful information about People Plus, its strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for its future.

Some of the themes that emerged (in no particular order) were:

— Focus on seniors but don't eliminate programming for others.

— People Plus is a good name.

— Consider a mission statement that better explains what we do.

— People Plus provides seniors in the Brunswick area with a great place to socialize, learn, serve, be served, and interact with community members of all ages.

— The Union Street facility is really

Please see **REPORT**, *Page 2*

TRIAD: New look, same mission

Merrymeeting Bay TRIAD has a new look, but its mission remains the same.

The "new look" is a new brochure that explains what TRIAD is and does. The mission is two-fold:

— TRIAD is a coalition of senior citizens, law enforcement officials and community service providers working together to enhance and ensure the safety of older adults in the community, and to reduce crimes targeting the senior population.

How does TRIAD accomplish this? One way is to sponsor and coordinate educational programs on crime prevention, that provide information about current scams, and how to avoid becoming a victim of these and other criminal activities that might be in the area.

— TRIAD also provides information about who to contact if you have a concern or question about a transaction that just doesn't seem right. For example: Is that person knocking on your door legitimate or might he be an unscrupulous salesperson or home repair fraud? Does that investment promising financial security right for me? It might not be. Is it too good to be true? It might be — check it out. TRIAD can refer you to the proper service provider resource.

Do you live alone without family living nearby? Have you signed up for the TRIAD Good Morning Program which establishes a daily telephone contact to ensure your well-being? Do you want to be a safer driver? Watch for upcoming TRIAD/AARP safe driver courses in the area.

These are but a few TRIAD initiatives which help to ensure the well-being of older residents in the community and address issues that can adversely affect our physical or financial security. To learn more, pick up a TRIAD brochure at People Plus. They will also be available at other community organizations, town offices, hospitals and other public places in the area soon.

For more information about Merrymeeting Bay TRIAD call 725-4736, or send questions to the address on the brochure. We welcome your input. If you have a question or concern about someone's safety, contact the law enforcement office in your area listed in the brochure.

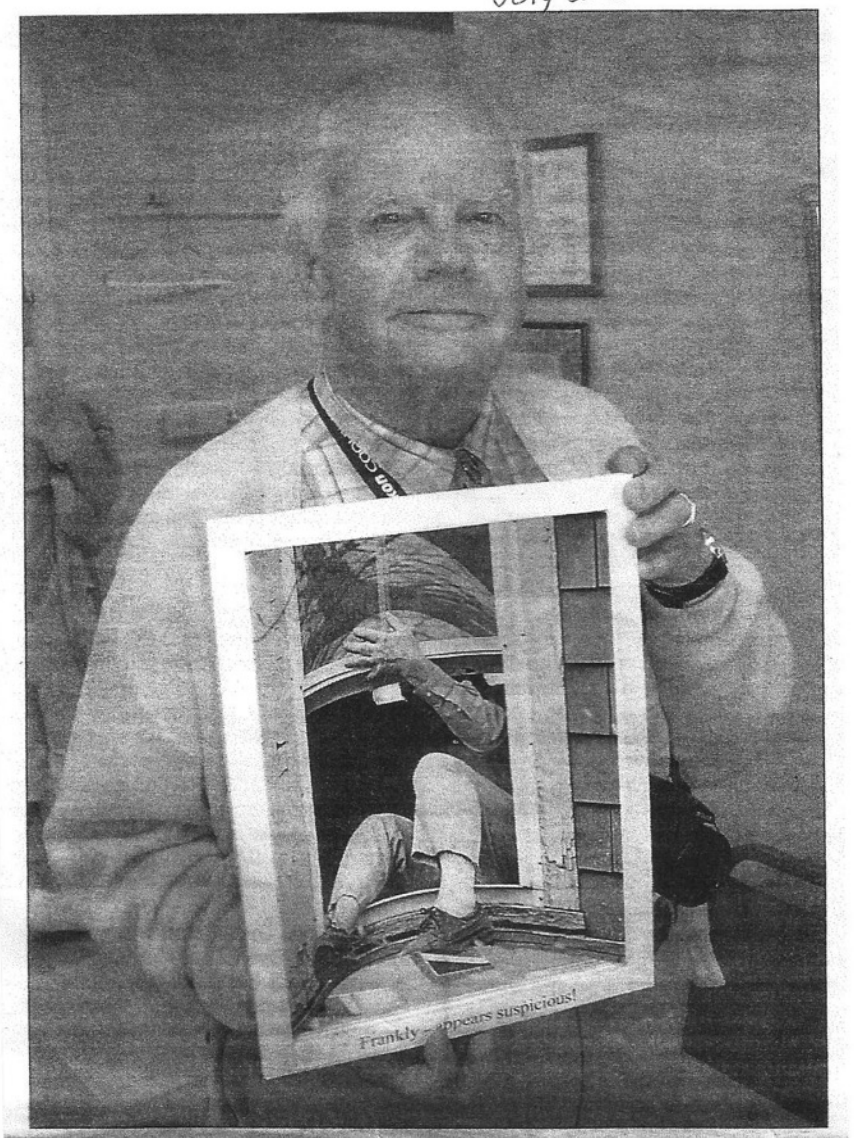
Are you interested in a TRIAD program at People Plus? Call Frank Connors at the Center, 729-0757.

Teen Center Summer Schedule

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday

1:30-4:30 p.m.

July 2011



Bob Dow holds a sample of his unique creations.

Art show features Dow's dioramas

Bob Dow, a multitalented regular at People Plus, will exhibit a collection of his unique "dioramas" in the People Plus Café for the months of July and August.

Dow grew up in Melrose, Mass., during the depression years, and was exposed to photography at a very early age. His grandfather had a wooden box camera from the 1890s that allowed him to make 4x5 inch glass negatives, and his father built a darkroom in the family basement, using an old folding camera as an enlarger.

Retired in Brunswick, Dow still boasts photography as a hobby, and says his computer has become the color darkroom that he never had. His photography work has appeared in several issues of the People Plus News, and most members will recognize his name from writings on the members page.

Dow said this exhibit, his first public solo show, "is not about my photographic ability, but rather a demonstration of an idea," that he has been working on for a while, namely, "a technique that adds depth to a print with out the use of special glasses or other accessories."

This show may be viewed at People

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"People Plus supports an engaged, healthy and independent life for older adults, while joining others to build community for all ages."

Frizzle named to lead People Plus

By Frank Connors

Stacy Frizzle, most recently the marketing and communications coordinator for the Brunswick Downtown Association (BDA), has been hired to be the new executive director of People Plus.

Center trustees unanimously accepted the nomination from its search committee on Sept. 22. She begins her new duties on Oct. 11.

"Stacy's appointment begins a new era for People Plus," Board of Trustee chair Gregory J. Shea predicted. "We look forward to working with Stacy, who has the skills and the drive to lead us forward."

Ms. Frizzle, a Topsham resident, "in her mid-40s," has 20 years of executive experience in public relations, marketing and market development. She has been active in the greater Brunswick area's business community since 2002, and the marketing specialist for the BDA for nearly a year.

Meet the new director

Join staff and trustees for cider, cookies and conversation with new Executive Director Stacy Frizzle on Thursday, Oct. 20, from 2 to 3:30 p.m., in the Center's Union Street Café following the monthly Lunch & Connections. Frizzle will be introduced, will offer brief remarks, and then join in an informal discussion of future plans for the center.

Earlier in her career, she was director of global media systems and advertising for the Coca-Cola Co., in Atlanta, Ga. She holds a degree in communications, with minors in psychology and nutrition, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Frizzle is the mother of three pre-teenaged daughters and has been restoring her River View Farm in Topsham for nearly nine years. She is very quick to tell everyone of her love for and interest in the Brunswick area.

"I'm a big promotor," she said.

Frizzle is a former trustee of the Topsham Public Library and worked on its development campaign. She has worked on

Please see **FRIZZLE**, *Page 2*

Stacy Frizzle and her dog, Gertie.

Eric Thoreson, a nutritionist with the Cooperative Extension Service and leader of our Cooking for One series last month, serves up applesauce to some of his students during a recent class. Thoreson will lead a series on menus and budget shopping on Wednesdays in October.

From yoga to ancestry.com

Plenty to do this fall

People Plus has a number of programs and activities planned for October. Among them:

Gentle Yoga

Gentle Yoga with Dennis Kimmage is ideal for anyone seeking a mild form of exercise and especially beneficial to seniors or people recovering from illness or injury. Classic yoga postures that stretch, tone and improve joint flexibility are modified in a gentle class to make them more accessible. It is an excellent way to start yoga or deepen an existing practice.

When: Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Cost: $60 per 6 week class, Oct. 11 to Nov. 15

Beginning Mat Pilates

Pilates with Ann Kimmage can benefit many people at many levels of fitness. It can improve range of motion, flexibility, circulation, posture and abdominal strength. Strong abdominal muscles increase your control and precision of movement, improve posture, and contribute to a healthy spine and back.

When: Thursdays, 4:15-5 p.m.
Cost: $60 per 6 week class, Oct. 13 to Nov. 17

All-Levels Yoga

Yoga with Ann Kimmage improves flexibility, strength, range of motion, balance and reduces stress. This class consists of classic yoga postures and breathing techniques designed to help you unwind and re-energize after a busy day.

When: Thursdays, 5-6 p.m.
Cost: $60 per 6 week class, Oct. 13 to Nov. 17

Volunteer Opportunity Fair

People Plus, Curtis Memorial Library and the United Way are bringing together more than 25 local, art, environmental, community service, education and support groups needing your help. Learn more about the generous people in our community and become a volunteer.

When: Thursday, Oct. 27 in the Morrell Meeting Room at the Curtis Memorial Library, from 2-7 p.m.

Ancestry.com

Come to the Curtis Memorial Library on Thursday, Oct. 6, from 1-2 p.m. when library director Liz Doucett will guide us through "The Ins and Outs of Ancestry.com Genealogy Software."

Please see **PLENTY**, *Page 8*

Lunch & Connections

September luncheon features local harvest

The Lunch & Connections on Oct. 20 will be our annual Harvest Celebration, featuring heaps of local vegetables, flavorful boiled ham and homemade desserts.

"This is one everyone should be watching for," chef Frank Connors said. "It's going to be a great one."

Potatoes, cabbage, carrots, turnip and beets are all coming from Six River Farms, over in Bowdoinham, and there will be squash from area gardens. Dessert will be fresh baked cookies, produced in our new convection oven, and you'll be encouraged to take an orchard fresh apple home with you.

Of course there will be a fresh, lightly-dressed green garden salad for everyone, and the featured drink will be fresh cider or apple juice. Tea, coffee and milk are always available. A meatless casserole will be waiting for our vegetarian guests.

Focus of this monthly Lunch & Connections program, underwritten by Spectrum Generations, is nutrition, information and variety. A CHANS Home-health care professional is always on hand in the café area to offer a free blood pressure check prior to lunch and this month, a CHANS team will be available to offer flu shots; no appointment necessary.

Come to the Center early, pick up your 50/50 raffle ticket and register for one of several door prizes. Reservations for seating are necessary and obtained by calling the People Plus information desk at 729-0757. A limited number of rides to dinner can be provided, on a first call, first served basis. Suggested donation is only $5 for adults 60 and older and children 12 and under, and $7.50 for all others. Lunch is served at noon.

Magazine features Write On!

The members of Write On!, the creative Wednesday afternoon writer's group at People Plus, gained at least a moment of national notoriety last month when they became one of two such groups profiled in IdeaGems Magazine.

The lead story in the fall quarterly edition is titled, "A Tale of Two Writers' Groups," and the article profiles Brunswick's Write On! and the

Please see **MAGAZINE**, *Page 2*

People Plus News

The official monthly newspaper of People Plus, serving residents of the Brunswick area. Editorial submissions and advertising queries should be e-mailed to:

frank@peopleplusmaine.org

Questions, comments and written contributions should be sent by the 15th of the month to:

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Much more than 'filling in!'

By J. Gregory Shea

Jim Pierce is enjoying the sun and surf of Hawaii as I type this. That's where he was a year ago when People Plus Board President Ed Harris called to ask him to step in as the "interim executive director." Our previous executive director, Susan Cole, had resigned, giving relatively short notice.

He knew he would have to resign his People Plus Board seat to take this role. He thought about Ed's request for a bit and called back with an unequivocal "Yes!"

All of us who "are" People Plus ... members, staff, communities, board ... knew we were blessed by Jim's answer. We knew that his 33+ years as CEO of Independence Association and active support for and knowledge about People Plus were a fortuitous "gift."

What we did not know was how hard Jim would work to not only keep People Plus functioning as it needed to, but to move us forward on several critical fronts to improve our operations and prepare us to better serve our members and communities.

There was no issue, task, challenge or difficulty Jim did not confront and address. He has worked incredibly long hours. He has served for many more months than any of us expected would be necessary.

Jim does not know this column is being written. But, not to celebrate and appreciate his incredible devotion and success over the past year would be a major dereliction.

From the bottom of our collective heart, Jim, we THANK YOU for how hard you worked, how much you care, the courage you displayed, the accomplishments you achieved and, mostly, for being YOU!

Jim Pierce

And, because Jim is Jim, he will be working with the board to assist and support our new executive director, Stacy Frizzle, as she begins her tenure on Oct. 11.

Stove 'n Stuff raffle results offered

The first effort to raise money to pay for the new stove in the People Plus kitchen raised nearly $650, and is being called a success by organizers.

"We sold 128 tickets for $5 in less than a month," program manager Frank Connors explained, "and, thanks to the generosity of four area restaurants, our expenses were zero."

Alison Harris of Brunswick purchased the first ticket drawn at the September Lunch & Connections dinner and selected the gift certificate from Dolphin Marina and Restaurant in Harpswell. Brenton Zachau of Bowdoinham selected the $30 certificate from Richard's German Restaurant in Brunswick, and Joan Tarazewich of Brunswick took the certificate from Capt. Mike's seafood restaurant in Brunswick. The three gift dinners from Brunswick's Fat Boy Drive-In went to Ed Harris of Harpswell, Ruth Foehring of Phippsburg and David Barlag of Brunswick.

"We want to offer a special thank you to the restaurants who participated," Connors added. "Their generosity made the event possible."

FRIZZLE

From Page 1

fundraising for the Bath Area Family YMCA, the Brunswick Area Big Brothers Big Sisters, and has worked as a personal trainer. She encourages everyone to meet her "best friend" Gertie, a 1-year old, jet black, mixed breed retriever.

She called People Plus a wonderful and unique organization. "I can't wait to get in and get my feet wet," she said. "I'm excited to meet everyone and to learn how things work."

She looks forward to a "good transition and a continuing partnership," with the BDA and area merchants.

Shea added, "we remain grateful and indebted to Jim Pierce, our interim director since last November, whose hard and diligent work has put us on the right path."

Pierce, a former board member and director of Brunswick's Independence Association for 33 years, became interim director when Susan Cole left the job in October 2010.

Memorial Donation

made to People Plus

In memory of

Joe Bryant

"Counselor, principal, neighbor and friend"

Lunch Out! will again benefit Center

The Oct. 11 Lunch Out! to Thai Paradise on Pleasant Street will once again be an opportunity to benefit the People Plus Center as you enjoy a noon time luncheon. Harpswell resident Al Moren, who has no affiliation with the restaurant, has agreed to pay the Center a cash donation of $10 for each of the first 50 people who attend this Lunch Out!

Pre-registration at People Plus is essential. You may register over the phone by calling 729-0757.

MAGAZINE

From Page 1

Poway (Calif.) Pen & Ink group.

Managing editor Laurie Notch focused on the importance of writers' groups as "engines" that provide training, inspiration and challenges for aspiring writers, and presented the 20-year-old Brunswick group as, "one of the best around."

Write On! members profiled in the magazine and contributing to the segment include Bob Dow, Bonnie Wheeler, Gladys Szabo, Vince McDermott, Ruth Foehring, Lynne Kresge, Charlotte Hart, Dottie Moody and Paul Karwowski.

A "sample" magazine is available for inspection on Frank Connors' desk. Electronic downloads are available at www.magcloud.com/browse-issue/272134

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Seasonal Flu Shots to be offered at People Plus Center this fall.

Season's Greetings
from "Write On!"
The People Plus Writers

A snowflake

By P.K. Allen

A delicate design
formed by Jack Frost,
which after completion
the pattern is lost.
A one of a kind,
a trillion times dealt,
to touch the warm ground,
only to melt.

Celebration

By Betty King

Resisting the confinement that comes with
Dark, cold, snow and ice, and all the
extra effort that the season demands,
we yet go forth to gatherings that celebrate
family and community. We need to know that we are
there for each other, no matter how hard the going.
In this scarcity of warmth and light and ease
We are all the more moved to festivity, as though
in defiance of material limitations.
When all nature is tucked in, burrowed deep,
waiting out the season, we flower into
unaccustomed extravagance in speech and action –
acts of faith in the new life that, being human,
we know is just around the corner

Christmas presents

By Bonnie Wheeler

Time for gift giving;
Keep your money in the bank.
The perfect gifts are free.
Tis the season to say thanks.
Thanks to my dear friends;
You have my deep respect.
Thanks to my enemies;
Tolerance is your bequest.
Thanks to the poor and hurting;
You give me the chance to give.
Thanks to the unlovable;
You push me to forgive.
Thanks to all my family;
You have my unconditional love.
Thanks to the Christ Child;
You gave me life and a home above.

An unforgettable Christmas Eve

By Ruth Foehring

The Christmas of 1995 was a white one and Christmas Eve was frigid. We were dressed warmly that evening but the cold seemed to go right through the warm sweaters and down coats we were wearing. Hoods and hats were on, gloves were secure and woolen socks and boots completed our outfits. We were visiting our son and his family in a small town in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, and wondering if where we were standing at the moment, was a wise choice for two people who had left the frozen north for the sunny shores of Florida.

We were standing on a shoveled section at the far end of the town square. Many churches stood on one side, lights were on and stained glass windows were reflected on the white snow that lay on the ground all around. Wreaths were on their doors, and their church bells pealed out "Silent Night." Across a wide road and directly adjacent to the churches were many old Victorian houses. They were large and their Christmas lights and decorations were so lovely that we just let our eye eyes roam up and down their inviting appearances. Small paper bags with sand to weigh them down, and candles inside, lit up the sidewalk that ran in front of the houses. The smoke rising from their chimneys let us sense the warmth that existed within them.

Precisely at 6:45 the church bells changed their tune and began ringing with a bong, bong, bong. We were alerted to the feeling that something was about to happen. Then we heard another sound, that went clippety, clop, clippety, clop. Then, through the now gently falling snow, appeared a man dressed like Joseph of old and leading a donkey. Magic filled the air and people around us became silent. We were lined up behind the donkey and candles were distributed and lighted and a long procession began down one side of the square passed all the houses. We began singing, "Silent Night" and upon reaching the end of the square crossed the road to the other side. We approached the churches awaiting us and as the church of your choice came close, people walked up their freshly shoveled paths. The procession would stop, people would call out, "Merry Christmas" and they would turn and wave and enter their church.

We reached our destination and left the line and received the same farewell. Entering the church the organ was playing a choir was singing, and we knelt and bowed our heads. We finally felt warm and a feeling of peace and joy filled us and as we glanced around us we saw everyone present had the same look of contentment.

Those who participated in that evening would find the simplicity, beauty and grandeur instilled in them forever and brought to view again every Christmas Eve. I know, because it is with me once again this year.

Restore! Refresh! Renew!

By Charlotte Hart

Restore! Refresh! Renew! Then light bright lights!
One hundred tiny lights this night of nights.
This house was built sixteen decades ago.
She now rules this great orchard deep in snow.
For generations she graced a city street.
A busy household there found life complete.
A vibrant life in a bustling seaport town
Ended. Would the vacant beauty be torn down?
No! Willing hands worked, and brilliant eyes looked on.
This house was moved long miles in June's pre-dawn.
Repair! And scrape! And paint! Restore with care.
For winter's wind and snow this house prepare.
Put a wreath on her door. With lights each window fill
For her first season of wonder here on Orchard Hill.

What we can learn on Christmas Days

By Adelaide Guernelli

I can be just a teacher that learns to fly with the stars, but ... I don't want to die before baby Jesus gets ready to shine our lives with his delicate eyes! With him on my side, all the sufferings of mankind will become poems to be recited, night after night, in the middle of the page that God wrote before his Son came to the Earth ... that wonderful night! But my hands will be the humble piano that I can use to teach the mystical songs of our human lives...! And I will be able to learn to fly with the children that are no longer restless or mischievous, 'cause the birds with their wings will allow them to slip out of the dream, and Christmas will really begin in our souls and hearts, and it will be not just a day but a long period of human life devoted to the Son of our Creator, and the crystal flowers, with the golden forgiveness will be dancing with the music of our hearts in our country, the USA, because it is the only place where we have peoples from around the world...!

Christmas

By P.K. Allen

Each Christmas brings a special warmth
To a winter that's long and cold,
That's shared together in close harmony
With those you love to hold.
It brings sounds of joy and laughter
That we'll remember through the years,
Along with a visit from carolers,
Bringing sweet music to our ears.

Success at last

By Ruth Foering

Christmas morning, 2010, the phone kept ringing but one call really knocked my socks off, and kept me smiling for the rest of the day. Christen our oldest grandchild, and born twenty-six years ago on Christmas day, was calling to wish us a Merry Christmas. She was entertaining her family and thrilled with the responsibility of being the one finally in charge of the festivities.

She said loudly and with gusto, "Guess what Mimi? I have your Christmas story taped to the refrigerator door and everyone loves it." Well, this had never happened to me before! I had Scotch taped my children's art and stories and my grandchildren's too, to our refrigerator door. Now, it finally had happened to me.

My Mother's refrigerator had lasted for fifty years, and in all those years I never had one thing taped to it. I doubt my children or grandkids ever appeared on its doors either. So, finally I was being recognized. Now that is significant!

My Mother may never have posted my work but when she died I found a big manila envelope and in it was art, Dear Mommy letters and stories, and cards, that she had saved and my name was on all of them. I smiled at that too.

A different Christmas

By Gladys Szabo

It was the first Christmas without my dad.
Mom and I were feeling sad.
Christmas Day, we'd be apart.
Although, together in our hearts.
Mom announced, "No tree this year."
It was a shock to my ears!
Skipping our Christmas was not to be
It's not Christmas without a tree.
One night Mom would be out late
Now Christmas was to be my fate
The very first duty was to decorate
Decorations throughout the house
Even had the Christmas mouse
Off to the woods, ax in hand
Cut a tree on a farmers land
Over the fence, through the snow
No one would ever know
Tree dressed with shimmering lights
Brought that tree to brilliant life
Joyfully singing Christmas carols
Dimmed the lights and lit the candles
As I began to trim the tree
With each ornament I could see
Memories of my years with dad
Though only fourteen we did have.
Each one warmed me deep inside
Hanging some I even cried
Once all done, stood back to look
Was just like a storybook.
Wrapped the gifts, lit the tree
Gifts from "Santa" to mom and me
Hours grew late, I started to doze
Then I hear the back door close
The look of shock as she entered the room
Immediately replaced any feelings of gloom
I shot off the couch,
Hugged mom, till she slouched
With teary eyes, we opened our gifts
Our little Christmas was the greatest gift!

Reflections

By Gladys Szabo

December being the end of the year
A new beginning is very near.
People bustling in every direction
List upon list, too many to mention
Gifts to buy, parties to attend
Trees to trim, seems like no end.
It's time to reflect on the year just past
How can it be that it went so fast?
A time to reach out to family and friends
Possibly a chance to make some amends
Some are in touch only once a year
From those I anxiously wait to hear
Thoughts of those near and apart
All have left footprints on my heart!

Christmas 1940

By Vince McDermott

Very young was I
Memories fade
Some vivid, some not
Strong impressions made

Out for the best tree
My uncle, cousin and dad
Not me, you see
I was just a tad

They went in high spirits
With some in a flask
A great time was had
Not much more to last

Good times soon gone
For many a year
We went into darkness
Not much to cheer

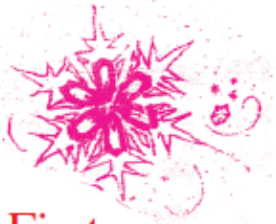
Then came a day
Clouds were lifted
Fine times returned
We were all gifted

The men came home
Happy Christmas again
We celebrated a lot
To forget the pain

The little girl's Christmas

By Beth Compton

There once was a little girl. She liked Christmas very much. She went to the Mall with her mom. They were walking around and the little girl spotted Santa. "Mommy, Mommy, I see Santa. Can I please tell him what I want for Christmas?" Her mom walked her over to where Santa was. The little girl went up to Santa and said "Hi Santa." He said "Hi little girl, what's your name?" She said, "My name is Sue." Santa asked her what she wanted for Christmas. She whispered in Santa's ear, "I would like to have a cat." The little girl got off Santa's lap. He gave her a candy cane and said, "Merry Christmas!"



First snow

By Bonnie Wheeler

Early snowflakes drift softly to the ground.
Winter scenes glisten all around.
A cold pristine beautiful sight.
Only problem — it's Halloween night!

An outhouse bird house

By Charlotte Hart

It was Christmas Day, 1996. Grandson Peter was twelve. "Merry Christmas, Gramp!"

"Thank you, Peter. Now what can this be? You wrapped it well. Peter! Did you make this? A bird house! It's beautiful!"

"I made it in IA at school."

"Great job! This is so neat! We can hang it from that low branch of the oak by the window."

"Turn it over, Gramp."

"Oh. Oh! Oh wow! This is really clever! An outhouse. Look at this, everybody. An outhouse bird house. Look at the half moon in the door! And the door opens. Look inside here! Okay. It's a one seater. Peter, your copy of the Portland Press Herald! Amazing! Great job! Thank you."

"You do know where I got the idea, don't you, Gramp?"

"You did a lot of meticulous work here. Where did you get the tiny tiny roll of bathroom tissue? And the mini mini ... Well no. No I don't. Let me think. Hold on. Oh! Yes I do know. That birthday card I got from Joe Bryant last August! You did like that card, didn't you, Peter!" On August 11, 1996, my husband, Bob, received from Joe Bryant a unique birthday card, a picture of a set of golf clubs beside the entrance to an outhouse. Inside the card was a three page yarn about the early morning routine of the foursome of Al, Joe, Geoff, and Bob. They always let Bob hit first off the fourth tee. He could then visit the outhouse in the woods near the fourth green; then he would rejoin the group on the green to play out the fourth hole.

Joe was widely known for his creative greeting cards and ingenious, carefully planned practical jokes. He also found time to be a long-time highly respected guidance counselor at Brunswick High School, then later Brunswick High School principal. To raise funds for scholarships, Joe wrote blockbuster sell-out faculty shows with large casts of Brunswick teachers. "Fun, Farces, and Foolishness" featured Assistant Principal Jack Caldwell as the whistling lawyer, and math teacher Barbara Leonard as the telephone operator who said, "Is this the party to whom I am speaking?" Math teacher George Millay was the Judge ("Six foot four! Stiff and Sore! Really something of a bore! Has anybody seen the Judge?")

After Joe retired from education, he worked as a customer service representative for L.L. Bean. This gave him more time for community service, golf, creative greeting cards and state-of-the-art practical jokes.

And now it is December 2011. I am sitting in my dining-kitchen area, gazing at the space above my cabinets where I display treasures, a Bowdoin punch bowl (a wedding gift), a University of Maine stein (a graduation-from-Orono gift), a blue phoenix bird teapot that belonged to my grandmother, and a carefully crafted wooden outhouse bird house.

Snowflake art inspired by God; created by Sara King and Grandma Betty

The way I see it

By Betty King

The Incarnation that we celebrate on Christmas Eve is emblematic of the incarnation of air and light and water onto the bodies of algae and lichens and mushrooms, frogs and salamanders and fish, mice and moose and deer, pines and firs and maples, daisies and roses and delphiniums, cows and pigs and chickens — and so into our own flesh. Each of these transformations is propelled by an energy we call Creation, and each of them is holy. The Event in the stable at Bethlehem was a lightning flash that telescoped this whole elaborate progression into one moment. The energy of Creation stepped briefly into the dimension of time in visible form, and this vision has illuminated our lives to this day.

All of this life is holy, and all the things we use and do to support these lives are sacramental — to be enjoyed and celebrated especially when their value is dramatized by scarcity. We are moved by this seasonal joy to distribute our gifts, whatever they may be, as broadly as possible, in decorating and feasting and music, but also more humbly in gifts of peanut butter and mac and cheese to the food banks — these are sacramental, too. We are reminded by this dark cold season how very much we need each others' blessings. A happy and blessed Solstice, Hannukah, Christmas and Kwanza to you!

Winter starlight

By Betty King

This frigid air holds no moisture to mask the Milky Way.
Living at the end of a long dirt road has its drawbacks,
but also its blessings, among them this miraculous clear night sky
so thickly populated with legends — Orion, Casseopoeia, Virgo,
Leo, Aquarius, Scorpio and Taurus, the Gemeni, the Dog Stars,
so bright. That we can take our evening walk in pure starlight
On a clear moonless night in December.

An angel

By P.K. Allen

It's nigh on sixty years that I've known her
And whose company I treasure so dear.
Good feelings are spread by the glow from her head
Though she only comes by once a year.
She'll stay just a week and then leave us,
But the joy that she brings we all see.
For her we will save a place in our hearts,
And also on top of our tree.

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The story of the turkey that didn't die

By Adelaide Guernelli

It was supposed to be easy to catch the beautiful turkey that my son bought last year to celebrate Christmas, but the bird decided to remain in good health, alive, when it smelled the good boiling water that had many ingredients besides salt! ... So he (and not it, because this bird was almost a person) decided to escape, with some pieces of food he found on the big table that was outside! They were supposed to be inside his belly! We saw him escaping into the woods near the house and the kids tried to follow him, but the turkey was very inteligent and fast! In ten minutes we couldn't see him! ... My son decided to use another kind of meat we had for tomorrow, and my mother made five focaccias! And would you believe that the next day when we were having our breakfasts, the turkey was inside the driveway and he was very happy! After this he bagan to eat some of the pieces we had saved the night before for the birds, which were on the table outside! This turkey became a member of the family! But we have not seen him since september 2011!

Early snow

By Bonnie Wheeler

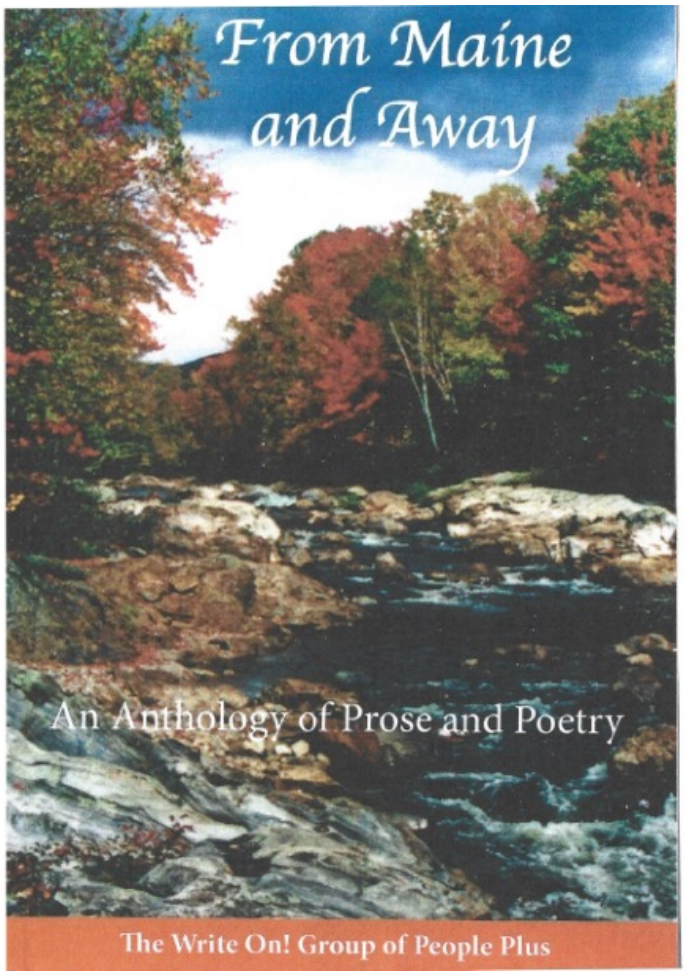
Is early snow bad news? Can mean a day of peace.
No one coming. No one going.
Soup simmering on the stove. Books waiting to be read.
Wait. A car stuck in the road.
Elecirlcity has gone off.
Soup not cooking.
No candles. No flashlights. Getting cold.
No one coming. No one going.
Is early snowfall a bad thing? You tell me.

The spirit of Christmas

By P.K. Allen

The socks were all hung
on the manel with care,
Just so the kids would believe
Santa was there.
Of the cookies and sugar
we left on the sill,
Santa and his reindeer
had eaten their fill.
The presents were placed neatly
under the tree,
And at six in the morning
the kids shouted with glee.
One at a time
they opened each gift,
Which to their spirits
brought a great lift.
It's a time for joy,
may it never cease,
And to the whole world
bring love and peace.

2012



From Maine and Away 2012

Adelaide Guernelli
Andrea Elise Jones
Elizabeth King
Bonnie Wheeler
David Stuntz
Charlotte Hart
Elaine Emily Varney
George Phipps
Gladys Szabo
Jim Friedlander
Sean Donovan
Bill Meroff
Judith Zottoli
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Ruth Foehring
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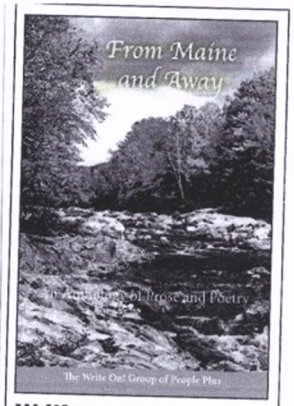
Richard M. North

2012



Writing group releases new book

The latest project by the People Plus Write On! group, just released this month, will be reviewed at our Author's Chat on Wednesday, Oct. 17. See story on page 2.

10-2012

'From Maine and Away' is focus of Author's Chat

"From Maine and Away," the second anthology of prose and poetry written and produced by the Write On! Group of writers at People Plus, goes public this month at a very special Authors Chat on Wednesday, Oct. 17, beginning at 2 p.m.

A wine and cheese reception will follow the discussion.

The 160 page, soft-bound work, printed by High Point Graphics, features the work of Millie Ackley, Rae Bamberger, Eleanor Chaplin, Sean Donovan, Robert Dow, Ruth Foehring, Jim Friedlander, Adelaide Guernelli, Charlotte Hart, Andrea E. Jones, Paul (P.K. Allen) Karwowski, Wendall B. Kinney, Elizabeth King, Lynne Kresge, Esther McCandless, Vince McDermott, Richard M. North, George Phipps, David Stuntz, Gladys Szabo, Elaine Emily Varney, Bonnie Wheeler, Kira Wolpow and Judith Zottoli.

Dedicated to William "Bill" Meroff, the book concludes with Betty North's treasure, "Why I like living in Brunswick, Maine." Copies of the work will be available for sale. Reserve your seat by calling 729-0757.

Other publications of the Write On! team include: "Muses and Memories," published in 2008, and two volumes of "Writing for Fun," the first published in 1999 and the second in November 2000.

Page 2

10-2012

Hot off the presses!

Write On! editorial team members, from left, Vince McDermott, Charlotte Hart, Robert Dow and Paul Karwowski, show off copies of "From Maine and Away," the latest project from the writers group. The four joined several other members of the Write On! team with selected readings at last month's Author's Chat. The monthly Author's Chat sessions are held on the third Wednesday of the month and usually include a talk about the book and selected readings.

Season's Greetings from "Write On!"

The People Plus Writers

Spirit of Christmas

By Anne Robinson

Dog had been chasing Squirrel's family for what seemed like forever. His first memory, once he was old enough to go out on a limb, was looking down on his parent racing across the ground pursued by a large brown barking dog. This was now a familiar daily sight. Dog never gave up and never won either, except once. The Old One had fallen behind one day and was scooped up into the jaws of the beast. Miraculously he survived, spat out onto the ground with a loud dogful "*BLECH.*" Apparently he was not the tasty morsel Dog had hoped for.

Even so, Dog returned day after day. And to what end, Squirrel thought. It was such a waste of time and effort. No other animal would spend so much energy for no gain. Not if they wanted to survive. Not smart, in Squirrel's opinion. But then, he thought, in this case it didn't matter. Dog did not need to forage for food. He lived in the human house Squirrel could see from his tree, pampered, fed and sheltered. No effort required. So Squirrel supposed dog could afford to chase him and his kin. And, if he was honest, it did keep them on their toes and in shape. Others in the forest were not likely to spit out a slow squirrel. More likely it would be squirrel for lunch. So he supposed he should be grateful to Dog.

Squirrel heard a door open in the human house and saw Dog run out on yet another squirrel hunt. Squirrel picked up an acorn in his jaws and started down the tree just as Dog arrived. Squirrel paused as Dog sniffed round and round the tree as he always did, then looked up, spotting Squirrel. Dog stopped, still as a rock, tail erect, eyes locked on Squirrel. Squirrel slowly descended to the ground, dropped the acorn under Dogs nose, and then scampered back up the tree.

Merry Christmas, Dog.

December 25

By Dottie Moody

The celebration of Jesus' birth
Whether God or man, He made a difference
Why not celebrate?
Did He make the world a better place ... YES!

Many live their lives by moral precepts
Jesus spoke of compassion.
Jesus asked more of us.

There is reason for hope
Whatever God/god you worship
We can all do better
At loving and accepting others.

Christmas Presents

By Bonnie Wheeler

Time for gift giving;
Keep your money in the bank
The perfect gifts are free.
Tis the season to say thanks,
Thanks to my dear friends
You have my deep respect.
Thanks to my enemies,
Tolerance is your bequest.
Thanks to the poor and hurting;
You give me a chance to give.
Thanks to the unloveable;
You push me to forgive.
Thanks to all my family;
You have my unconditional love.
Thanks to the Christ Child.
You gave me life and a home above.

A Christmas Memory

By Gladys Szabo

Two huge blue spruce trees
Encased our front screen porch
My dad meticulously dressed them
With garlands of glowing lights
Blue, green, yellow, red and orange,
Each light had a special position
My job was to hold the strings of lights
Preventing any breakage
When dad finished
Mom would join us
To admire their beauty
Each branch glistened with candescent lights
In praise of our Lord's birth.

Silent Journey

By Bob Dow

Like feathers from the sky they fall,
In no great rush to end it all,
They slowly twirl about, up high
Then silently they pass me by
And vanish in the snow below.

What we can learn on Christmas Day

By Adelaide Guernelli

I can be just a teacher that learns to fly with the stars, but ... I don't want to die before Baby Jesus gets ready to shine on our lives with his delicate eyes! With him on my side, all the sufferings of mankind will become poems to be recited, night after night, in the middle of the page that God wrote before his Son came to the earth ... that wonderful night! But my hands will be the humble piano that I can use to teach the mystical songs of our human lives...! And I will be able to learn to fly with the children that are no longer restless or mischievous, 'cause the birds with their wings will allow them to slip out of the dream, and Christmas will really begin in our souls and hearts, and it will be not just a day but a long period of human life devoted to the Son of our Creator, and the crystal flowers, with the golden forgiveness will be dancing with the music of our hearts in our country, the USA, because it is the only place where we have peoples from around the world!

Christmas Day

By Bob Dow

Well, Christmas Day was bright and sunny.
When I awoke my head felt funny,
I had a touch of vertigo
Which meant I did not dare to go
To visit with my kids in Mass.
This holiday I'd have to pass.
They did say they would come up here
But I said "no because I fear
The weather won't hold out for long."
So coming up I felt was wrong.
Without the family gathered round
It's just another day, I've found.
So, while your day has gone away
I'll celebrate another day!

A Christmas Tree

By P.K. Allen

Each year we buy a Christmas tree
To celebrate the season
And always get a real one
For this, there is a reason.

In this world of make-believe
there's too much artificial
So we've determined in our minds
real things are to our favor

When the season is over
to that thought we cling
By putting that tree on the back porch
and leaving it there 'til spring

Christmas Day Sequel

By Bob Dow

As I explained before, my Christmas was delayed.
I got a call, therefore; another date was made.
Halfway we'd meet, you see. That's twenty miles for them
And eighty miles for me — their math's a little dim.
A bar in Portsmouth town, the Red Hook, it's called.
My father'd certainly frown. My mother'd be appalled.
A pleasant gathering spot, but if the music's loud
A quiet place it's not. That day? A peaceful crowd.
The kids came marching in with arms all full of bags.
Their faces all a grin; I thought: I'm in for gags.
It wasn't very long before I realize
That I'd be proven wrong: I really was surprised
A model whirlybird my daughter's engines use,
A laptop too — my word — and that I won't refuse!
A mess when we were done — remarks good for a laff,
It was a lot of fun for us — the bar room staff?
It was a rainy night: I drove a slower clip,
I made it home all right, and it was worth the trip.
I will not soon forget my Christmas in a bar.
I think it's safe to bet, my most bizarre — so far!

A Little Boy's Special Christmas

By Beth Compton

There was a little boy who had always wanted a puppy. Then one Christmas morning he woke up and went downstairs to the Christmas tree and he found a puppy in a box. He yelled "Mommy and Daddy, I found a puppy in a box!" His mom and dad came downstairs to where the boy was. The little boy said, "Is this my puppy?" His mom and dad said "Yes." He was so happy! He gave his mom and dad a great big hug and said "Thank you very much. I have always wanted a puppy!"

He named his puppy "Rusty." He played with his puppy all day. His mom and dad said, "You have more presents to open!" The little boy was too interested in his puppy to want to open anything else. It was time for supper. The little boy ate and then he had his bath. Then it was time for him to go to bed. He went upstairs calling Rusty so Rusty went upstairs with the little boy and they both went to sleep and had sweet dreams.

The End

Night of Nights — a Christmas hymn

By Elaine Varney

This is the night of nights
The night of Jesus' birth
All men now shake with fright
on this dark desert earth
How cold we've grown
what hunger we have known
but we are not alone
Jesus is the answer

He is the Son of God
the torch that's burning bright
He is the flesh of man
He is our guiding light

Day after day
He shows us the way
If we but choose to pray
He is the answer

Now we must welcome him
the babe that's smiling there
He is a friend to us
He hears our every prayer
Praise to the King
To Mighty God we sing
If we but welcome him
He is the answer

Christmas In Our Hearts…

By Adelaide Guernelli

On Christmas Eve this year my grandchildren will dance … and they will do it with Noe Noe, their doggie, that also likes to sing and bark. They decided to celebrate Jesus' birthday with the arrival of the doggie in their hearts and in their homes. She will wear a simple disguise and a tiara, comfortable enough for her to be able to move all her muscles, while allowing the stars in the tiara to shine, shine, to remind all pet lovers that doggies are creatures that can make their owners laugh! And … while the children and Noe Noe are singing and dancing, we are all sure that Jesus is watching from His modest manger, that we also treasure forever, and He will be praying and saying "thanks a lot to you and to all men, women and children around the USA and the rest of the world, for remembering my birthday in all of your hearts!

Snowflake artwork by Sara and Grandma Betty

A Snowflake

By P.K. Allen

A delicate design
formed by Jack Frost,
which after
completion
the pattern is lost.

A one of a kind,
a trillion times dealt,
to touch the warm
ground,
only to melt.

What to Love About Winter

By Betty King

The wind! Replacing tattered shade with clarity
Sweeping away the faded leaves, now tattered
By wormholes and storm winds, bringer of sanity
After the orgy of color, sculptor of branches littered
Across the forest floor, finally relieving
The trees of useless cumber of dead weight.
They stand all freshly pruned, the surplus leaving
To rot back into earth. Soon now, or late
New growth will feed on what's discarded here.
A few short months from now it will be ready
To nourish and protect the turning year
Towards freshness, greenness — cycling ever steady.
Our gardens, too, are cleared and tucked in, for the winter.
We put away the tools that we took up so eagerly in April.
We also rest and change. Our houses, neglected
during the glorious outdoor summer, need to be cleaned
and ordered for indoor hospitality. We come home
by early moonlight and starlight, and set out
Christmas lights into the velvet darkness.

Memory of Christmas

By Margie Kivel

She shared her mother's love of the creative aspect of Christmas, creating a new birth experience for all who entered her house through the ambience of love.

Janice had her mom's recipes for potato doughnuts, and whenever she made them on a Christmas morning it would transport her to the kitchen of her childhood with its delicious smell of doughnuts.

"We would hover, my sisters and I, around the platter where the doughnuts would end up once they were lifted out of the bubbling fat, placed on brown paper bags to drain and then dusted with confectioner's sugar. We were like fledglings hovering around their mother in the chance she would give them a bug or worm. She would let us score a few doughnuts, then shoo us out of the kitchen," Janice fondly recalled.

Her mother, Elaine, made Christmas special in so many ways. Her homemade decorations which she brought out at Christmas, were beyond anything one could buy — felted ornaments, wreaths made of the traditional materials but always with some unexpected items like small birds which she sculpted out of clay, hand crafted candles with imbedded jewels from nature.

Janice still had some of her mother's Christmas decorations which she would hang on the tree or from window locks. But the one custom that only she and her mother shared on Christmas Eve was going to the midnight carillon service at the stone church in the country.

More often than not there would be a light dusting of snow falling and the swish swish sound of the tires rolling over the snow like skis. Once the carillon began Janice and Elaine were enveloped in mystery and awe as the peal of the bells drifted down from the balcony to ring in their hearts.

Their faith has continued to grow and expand, Janice on the earth plane and Elaine in the spirit realm, and it is the main tie that binds them together, because from that sprouts the vine of love.

Christmas Memories

By Dottie Moody

Lying in bed with my four siblings around me
Listening for sleigh bells

We five waiting at the living room door
For the door to be opened and Christmas to be revealed.

Mom always reading the Christmas story from Luke
Wonderful Bowdoin frat parties that brought more gifts.

An adult Christmas with just Dad, Mom left us
Memories good and bad make up all of our lives

As long as hope endures for good memories
Life, good and bad, is affirmed.

Winter

By P.K. Allen

I think about moving to another
climate
When I retire and start growing
old,
For the winter wind goes right
through me,
I shiver, my bones getting cold.

I look forward to spring and
summer
When outside I can dance and
play
They bring me such fond memories
I think, maybe I'll just stay

Christmas Shopping in Maine

By Vince McDermott

Everyone knows that Maine is a wonderful place
in which to live, raise a family, take a vacation, and retire.
But few realize that it is a swell place in which to go
Christmas shopping. Consider the stores which
abound in our area — Big Al's, Big Lots, Dollar Tree,
Family Dollar, Rite Aid — the list is endless.
So many fine gifts are available
it is hard to select the perfect gift for a loved one.
Ah, Maine. Isn't it great?

Christmas Day, 2007

By Betty King

Always, on the day itself,
an expansion of time and space;
the doing is over and we can just be.
After all the long time of preparation,
We can stop thinking and planning and enjoy doing nothing.
We can wrap up expectations of every sort
and just coast for awhile — until the demands
of real life begin to reassert themselves, little by little.
In a week, or two weeks, or three...
there will be taxes to deal with and
budgets to be negotiated and
ends to make meet, but not today, or tomorrow,
or the day after that ... The long climb up the
mountain of the year to Christmas is over,
and we can start the easy downhill run
toward spring.

It's Christmas Again

By Lynne Kresge

Santa, Santa's on his way,
Bringing to all a happy day.
A happy day to all, you say?
I think not, and I will pray
For those who long and pine and grieve,
Especially on Christmas Eve,
For those who suffer family rifts,
Neither wrapping nor receiving gifts,
While Hallmark cards in all their joy,
And store displays of every toy
Seem meaningless and cruel
To those whose salty tears now pool.
Lonely children, crying wives,
Missing those who've lost their lives.
And those away from home and love,
Only sharing the stars above.
I'd like to hold you, kindred souls,
And carry away your Christmas woes...

That Recycled Christmas Card

By Ruth Foehring

The first hint of the Christmas season was always the arrival of the first Christmas card sent by a person who liked to get things done early, and was very organized. That card would sit on the mantel piece, a reminder to all who looked its way that the most wonderful time of the year was truly coming.

I saw how pleased my parents were to hear from people who had crossed paths with them and learned early the value of these cards. We decorated the house with them, stringing up red ribbons and attaching the cards to them. They also overflowed the straw baskets that held them. The baskets had big red velvet bows attached to their handles and looked so pretty on the coffee table or on the top of bookshelves.

The happenings of what was going on in the lives of all the people who signed these cards were discussed at dinner time, and the joys, additions and sorrows of these people were recalled with great interest, and it was a way to keep meaningful memories alive.

Cards from neighbors were noticed but since they lived so close they were not as significant. But ... if a neighbor did not send a card that was noted with interest too. Except ... for the people who lived directly across the street from us. There seemed to be a new baby there by Christmas every year. They had eight of them when finally one year there was no mention of a new addition. The O'Houlihans will always be remembered by me for one special thing they did in the late 1940s. It was quite unusual, and they did it before anyone else ever thought of it in our neck of the woods. They were the very first card recyclers.

It all started when my Mother opened their card, stared at it, turned it over, then stared at it some more. The O'Houlihans had sent us back the card we had sent them the year before. My Mother put it aside and that night we were to discuss this unusual card and I will never forget that discussion.

We ate supper and then my mother passed around the cards that had arrived that day, keeping the O'Houlihans card for last. Now, it was my Father's turn to stare and turn and stare again. He said, "Bessie, this card, says "Merry Christmas to Alice and Leo and family," and we signed it. "What is it doing back here with their names with a line through it and our names in their place? By God, they have their names signed where ours were signed! Well, of all the cheap skates this beats all!"

This continued the next year and then my Father began to realize this was a pretty good idea and he decided to get on the bandwagon. So, the next year they received the same card from my parents that they had sent us the past year and the idea was now an established fact. Now, we began reaching out to neighbors the same way and they responded accordingly. We were receiving lots of recycled cards from the neighbors and what a history book we read each year. The same cards were filled with notes of interest and of gossip and looked forward to each year. When one was filled a new one was started.

I once went through my box of saved Christmas cards and picked out a few special ones and sent them back to some friends with another from us in the same envelope. Now, these were a hit because people called and thanked us for the joy of seeing the names on their cards that had not been there for quite some time. They saw absent members of their families who now were married and with babes of their own, along with cats and dogs so fondly remembered. The joy really hit home when they did the same for us. There were our old cards and signed, Bob and Ruth and Butch, Louise and Mary Beth and Tom, and Elsa (our cat), and Annie (our dog). How lovely to all be together once again, if only on an old forgotten Christmas card.

Christmas, Past, Future & Presents

By P.K. Allen

When I was just a young lad
My Mother said to me
"If you are a good boy
There'll be presents under the tree"

So I took her advice to heart
and was as polite as I could be.
When Christmas came along,
Presents were there for me.

There were trucks, and cars, and
games.
It was such a sight to see,
All wrapped in colorful paper
With a tag that said for me.

Through the years the gifts have
changed
But the Spirit remains like a rock.
Now, instead of giving large presents,
We just fill each other's sock.

Each year the presents get smaller
Since there are fewer things we need
No TVs, computers or stereos,
just a good book or two to read.

What I see in the far future
As my time on this earth ends,
When asked if there's anything
I actually need,
I'll probably say, "That Depends."

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Thoughts on Skating Once Upon a Time

By Ruth Foehring

The man walked across the flat field carrying a huge fire hose. Water poured from the hose and he let it soak into the ground and kept moving. He wore high, thick, rubber boots, and kicked and splashed through the water as it began to resemble a shallow pond.

I was delighted with the image presented to me and waved to the man. He returned the wave and I drove on, but memories were beginning to emerge and I was reminded of a time gone by for me but not forgotten.

I liked seeing them as they appeared on a cold imaginary canvas and I saw myself swishing across the ice. I could feel the warmth of the bonfire that I spied and so I swished over and stood and watched the sparks that flew up in the air and flickered, and lighted up the snow around the edge of the town pond. I opened the door of a forgotten shed and requested a cup of hot cocoa. I warmed up pretty fast from that moment on.

I noticed the rosy faces of people and the misty smoke that encircled their heads with every breath. Smiles were on every face as I hurried and swished across the ice. I could see a conga line forming. I closed my eyes as I really had no intention of grabbing on and skating with them in a terrifying pattern. I instead wanted to remember a peaceful sight, so I speeded up my memories and skated in another direction as fast as I could! I found a friend and skated hand in hand in perfect peace.

The skating field would be ready soon and this winter is still young enough to provide many skating days. I hope they provide some great colorful pictures and sounds. Thanks to the man I spied today who provided me with some nice memories of my own.

The Final Bow *By Effie Blackstone*

We stand alone, one by one,
waiting for our Kingdom to come.
We linger here, we hurry there,
and all the time we are aware
that somehow, sometime down that road we'll go.

When it will be is not ours to see,
so sing that song and dance that dance.

'Effie' Blackstone

Take time to laugh and hug your friends.
And in the end-who knows
when, where, or how we are to take that final bow!

***(Editor's note:** Effie Blackstone was a "pioneer" member of the People Plus Write On! Writers. It saddens us all to record her passing on Dec. 21, 2012.)*

Walking the Dog on a Winter Evening

By Betty King

To the west, a stained glass sky divided by black branches. To the east,
a warm glow where the moon will soon rise,
under our careful feet, dim opalescent reflections
identify puddles which we artfully avoid,
in our faces a fresh night breeze, like
a splash of cold water, in our noses,
scents of lichen and resin, at the path's end,
warm fire, good food, and rest.

Letting the Scarecrow Go *By Robert Dow*

During the holidays, I watched a rerun of, "The Wizard of Oz," for the umpteenth time. It reminded me of something I had at least temporarily forgotten. Ray Bolger was the actor who portrayed the "Scarecrow" in this movie. Many years ago, this same Ray worked for my "very proper, Boston banker grandfather!" Guess who was fired for dancing down the hallowed halls of the First National Bank of Boston!? YES, my grandfather had to "let go" the, "later to be famous," Scarecrow of "The Wizard of Oz!"

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER STUDIO

On a Clear Day *By Margie Kivel*

Look to the tree tops against pale blue,
a band of goldfinch flittering
one by one, from tree to tree,
edging always toward the feeder,
reforming as a group to drop
like a falling scale,
one golden movement towards food.

Lee jeans were a big seller when Lawrence Pennell took this picture in 1938. Pennell's Clothing has been a landmark on Maine Street in Brunswick since 1889 and has sold quality clothing from its present site since 1929. The store has been owned and managed by David Girardin since 1971. **If you have old area photos to share with readers of the People Plus News. Please contact Frank Connors at 729-0757.**

Battling Winter *By Betty King*

Beware! The snow banners are flying!
A declaration of war with all those warm blooded
who haven't been wise enough to run away.
Let them band together with gestures of solidarity,
sharing hoarded sustenance from the gifts of summer,
seeds for the bird feeders and bales left out for hungry deer.

Season of frozen pipes when our common need for moisture
may be met by the blessed snow, eaten directly or melted on the stove.
Snow seals the cold wind out of our leaky cellar walls.
One moment the air is thick with blizzard,
next the white crystals rest from filling the air with sparkles
and settle into a blanket.

The shortness of the day
Makes up in brilliance for what it lacks in length,
And every dawn comes earlier.
We are under siege here, but relief is at hand

Sunny & Noel *By Gladys Szabo*

"Hey I think we need to have a chat."
"Not Me!"
"Why Not?"
"I am not sure about you."
"Why not?"
"You are always sneaking around me, sniffing and you look scary."
"I'm just trying to get to know you."
"Why do you need to get to know me? Can't you just leave me alone and go your own way?"
"Well I was lonely and like having you here. We can be good pals, stick together."
"Well maybe but it is going to take time — so take it slowly."
"OK, well thanks for letting me get a little closer for now."

Master Birder

Bird carver and painter Ed Cardoli, who over his career has produced thousands of unique bird statues, last month donated a dozen to the Center to be used each month as a door prize during the Lunch & Connections meal.

Where were you when J.F.K. was assassinated?

By Ralph Laughlin

No doubt you are part of the last generation that lived on the day when President John F. Kennedy was shot. We all heard the news, we watched in stunned disbelief. We wept, we cursed the travesty, then we pledged again to keep his, and our, vision of America alive.

I am gathering material for a book to mark the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination. Its purpose will be to paint a picture, for future generations, of how the events of Nov. 22, 1963, affected us all. I would like you to write down your thoughts of that day, and the surrounding events, and how you and others reacted. Whether you have only a few words to say, or many pages, the length does not matter, what's important is that your words express your feeling about that time and that place.

When completed, copies of our work will be sent to the Kennedy Library in Massachusetts, the Sixth Story Museum in Dallas, the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Museum for Preservation. The book will also be made available through Amazon and other sites.

Net proceeds from sales will be distributed to one or more of the organizations serving wounded veterans. Publication is planned for this summer. Please send your thoughts electronically to iepapa@aol.com. For more information, contact Ralph Laughlin at 17 Emanuel Drive, Brunswick, ME 04011.

***Editors note:** Ralph Laughlin is a member of the People Plus Write ON! group.*

Changes to Women's Breakfast

After canceling the February Women's breakfast to avoid a snowstorm, we have decided to move that popular early morning event to the first Wednesday of the month, rather than the last Wednesday.

The next Women's Breakfast will be April 3, at 8:30 a.m., and we're sure it will be worth the wait.

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Serving up gelato

People Plus board member Charles Frizzle serves up a dish of gelato and a smile during the fifth annual Gelato Fiasco Scoop-a-thon to benefit the Brunswick Teen Center. Business and entertainment was brisk all day long on April 24. Last year's event raised $3,600, an amount expected to be exceeded this year.

MIA sets new record

Preliminary reports are in and it is apparent that the 11th annual Music In April gala held April 11 was a "huge success."

"I can't imagine how we could have done better," offered People Plus Executive Director Stacy V. Frizzle. "What a great return for a great effort."

With some bills left to be paid, and just a few auction items yet to be picked up and paid for, office manager Betsy White said net income from the one-night event would exceed $34,000, and, "it appears we made nearly $5,000 more than last year."

She added that income from both the live and silent auctions and the five-item raffle were better than they had ever been. Pledged donations to support purchase of gas cards for drivers in the center's Volunteer Transportation Network were also near record levels, she added.

The 2013 event drew 23 table sponsors, and the massive buffet featured 23 area restaurants and food vendors. Musical entertainment again featured jazz guitarists Neil Lamb and David Lawlor, with a guest appearance by the Bowdoin College Community Gospel Choir.

"Once again," observed Frizzle, "volunteers came together in what has become a Brunswick tradition, and the People Plus Center has been richly supported."

Turn to page 6 for pictures of this event.

Volunteer salute planned

See application, page 4

"Volunteers, volunteers, volunteers," cries Program and Outreach Coordinator Rebecca Banks enthusiastically. "Where would we be without them?!"

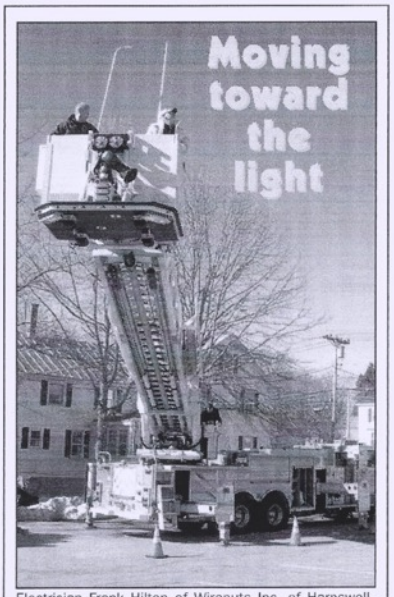
June has traditionally been the month when People Plus salutes its volunteers, and each May, we ask for nominations from membership for Volunteer of the Year, and other member salutations.

"This Center is built on volunteers," Banks said. "... Cooks, cleaners, drivers, receptionists, clerks, mailers, snow shovelers, gardeners, sales people, walkers, leaders, followers, artists ... the worry is we might always forget someone, each time we build a list."

Banks estimated there are at least 300 to 350 members and friends of the Center who provide unduplicated volunteer tasks at People Plus. "That becomes thousands of hours donated, every year, just to make our Center, and our communities, better places where we can all live."

Nomination forms for volunteer of the year are available at the People Plus information desk, or may be clipped from this paper. You may offer more than one name, with a brief reason for your nomination. You do not need to identify yourself. Nominations will cease on Friday, May 31, at 5 p.m., our formal reception will follow in June.

Don't forget to vote.



Electrician Frank Hilton of Wirenuts Inc. of Harpswell, right, gets a boost from Brunswick Fire Department's Tower One truck last month to finally install a light to illuminate the center's flagpole. More details, page 2.

What's Silas doing?

Find out on page 11.

Chat looks at Wheeler's novellas

Two novellas by Topsham author Bonnie Wheeler are the subject for our May Author's Chat. "Without My Toothbrush" and "Mama's Pies" were recently published together in an inspirational little volume that will be featured at the Center on Wednesday, May 22, beginning at 2 p.m.

Wheeler is a staple in the Write On! writers group of People Plus. Born into a large country family in Hollis, Okla., her marriage to a Navy man caused her to travel over the United States and to "land" in Brunswick. She is the mother of three children, who she calls, "near perfect," and is the grandmother of eight children who "are perfect."

"Without My Toothbrush" and "Mama's Pies" will "make you laugh, and cry, make you angry and leave you inspired and happy," offered one recent reviewer.

"This is a book about us all, written by one among us," suggested Frank Connors, People Plus member services coordinator. "This is a Chat you won't want to miss."

Copies of the book will be available for sale, and Wheeler, who "loves a good show," will offer readings, advice and signings.

Come early for a good seat, this one will be hosted in the main hall. Thank you for calling 729-0757 to let us know you are attending.

WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?

See page 7 to find out.

Fondly recalled ...

The Brunswick Hydro Station, left (with arched windows), appears nearly new in this picture taken of the basin below Androscoggin River falls about 1920. At right is the Bowdoin Paper Mill in Topsham. Notice that the Frank J. Wood Bridge had not yet been built. The picture was printed by F.W. Chandler & Son in Brunswick. This copy was offered by Alvina Menard of Topsham. If you have old area pictures to share with People Plus, contact Frank Connors at 729-0757 with comments, contributions or suggestions.

Where Has America Gone?

By Ralph Laughlin

Where has America gone...
Kids playing outside on their own
Doors left unlocked all day
Open time to do whatever
People looking out for each other
Neighbors talking to neighbors.
Public officers held in esteem
Politicians being civil servants
Public events joyful celebrations
Issues placed ahead of personalities
The Common Good, the common thread.

Where has America gone...
Children being massacred in class
Homes made into fortresses
Everything to a schedule, a task
People indiscriminately attacked
Conversations held via machines
Public safety slain on the political alter
Public service now a career
Public events turned to hunting seasons
Personalities placed ahead of issues
Government's interest in special interests

Where has America gone...
and will we ever get it back?
The embers still linger
but must be fanned and flamed
to rekindle and rebuild our core
of Truth, Caring and the Common Good
for every citizen, rich or poor.

A Different View

By Gladys Szabo

A trip to the store
I often thought of as a chore.
Today I took a different view
I needed things, this I knew.
Off to Walmart I did go
Had a little extra dough.
Took my time to walk around
Unexpected things I found,
End to end and back again
I walked but little did I spend.
Chatted with friends and others were new
Interesting conversations did pursue.
On to get the items needed
Left the store, to my car proceeded.
Driving home I realized
I felt more vitalized.
I walked an hour at different paces
Conversed with people, wearing happy faces.
Got my chores done
Had some fun.
Now this did proved to me
Chores don't always have to be
Boring things we have to do
But something vitalizing and good for you.

Goodbye to Old Friends?

By Vince McDermott

There comes a time in every man's life when he must face the inevitable. The clothes closet has to be cleaned out and old friends have to go.

The first choices are easy — two short sleeve shirts, one from Montgomery Ward and the other from Woodward and Lothrop. They were getting a bit snug. I thought they were shrink resistant — shoddy merchandise.

Then it got tougher — T-shirts. What to do about a 1991 Washington Redskins Championship shirt, a 1987 "Say No" to drugs tee. They still fit. OK, put them into the "maybe" pile.

Pants. A pair from Porteus and one from Senter's. Hey, they are not that old. A bit snug, perhaps, but I can live with that.

Then, last but certainly not least, from the deepest, darkest corner of the closet, my oldest friend — a Robert Hall suit! Goodbye, old buddy.

The Load

By Karen Johnson

Wherever I go, there I am ...

When we boarded, they asked what I was carrying and I told them.

I carry the pain of rejection by my emotionally absent father,

I carry the same pain I see reflected in my husband's eyes,

I carry the desperate need of my mother, who threw her anger at me,

I carry the death of my sister's dreams in pointless memories she doesn't remember,

I carry the rigidity of my aunt, who challenged me to intellectual combat,

I carry the longevity of my grandmother's cold unconcern behind eyes that never saw me,

I carry the defeat of my uncle, who drowned in a bottle of wishes that were always denied him,

I carry the heavy cross of Saint Grandfather around my neck,

I told them I carry no more and no less than the other travelers aboard this ship.

Summer in Maine

By Adelaide Guernelli

Why our summer days are so great?
Because they make us feel that we don't
Need to worry about anything!
They give us strength to walk and
Think about the beauty that surrounds us.
We don't have to sleep twelve hours every night
'Cause we want to enjoy every day with the crystal
Face of the sun, and write about the flowers that
Grow at their own wish, and seem to be back to play
With the pieces of nature that man can only help to create.
I wish that summer days will be, who knows when ...
The description of the Earth with a special grace that will
Enroll in the schools beyond the sun, and the stars ...
And we, of today's experience, will not be dust in the sky!

A Perfect Day

By Bob Dow

Define a perfect day.
"In terms of what?" I ask
The weather is one way,
Or else a well-done task.

There are no bills to pay,
Or maybe how we feel?
The joints all work today,
No pain with which to deal.

A sense of having done
All that I'd planned to do.
A day of work or fun
That may be over due.

Some days create some frowns.
We wish that were not so.
With ups we must have downs,
'Cause that's the life we know.

Be positive; don't pout.
And if the day's not great,
Just pick a high point out?
And blame the rest on fate.

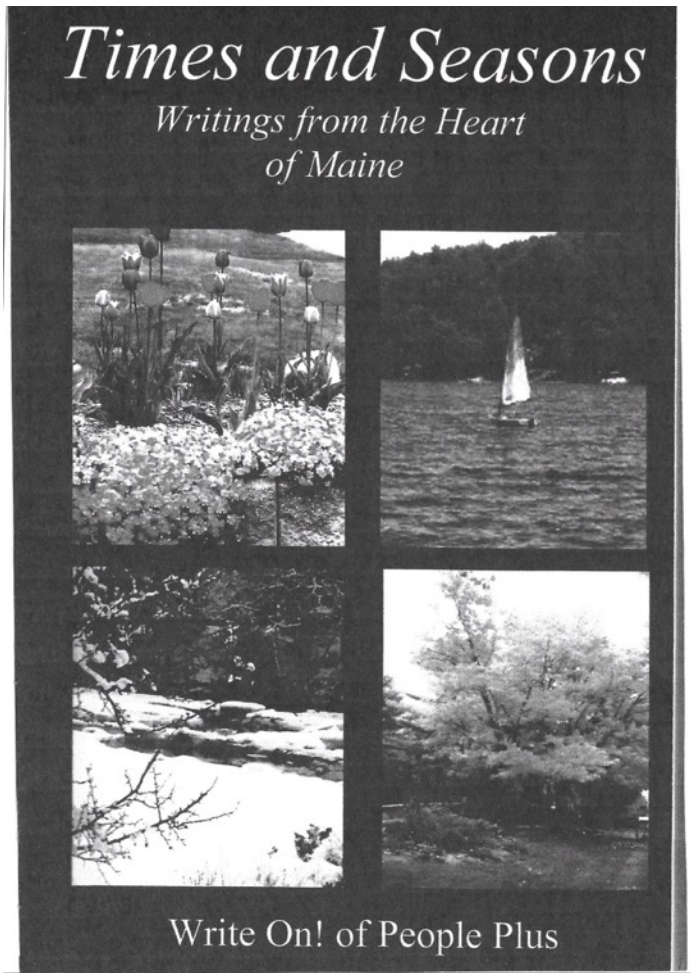
Morning at Camp Grandpa

By Betty King

Three dark heads, intent, admiring
the rainbow flow and smooth roundness
of sunfish in a bucket, just lately flipped
flopping at the end of a line,
destined for the lunchtime fry-pan.
Behind them the forest descends
Graciously, abundantly, to the water's edge.
A warm steady breeze riffles the pond,
Shifts the pools of sunlight on the shady rock.
In the sheltered pool below us
minnow mouths make shiny spreading rings.
and dragonflies gyrate. Grandpa helps
to bait the hooks just one more time!

Sept. Last Issue Posted for 2013

2014



Authors

Charlotte Hart
Ruth Foehring
Bob Dow
Bonnie Wheeler
Elizabeth King
Dottie Moody
Wendell Kinney
Gladys Szabo
Adelaide Guernelli
Ann Robinson
Ralph Laughlin
Nancy Sohl
Winnie Silverman
Karen Schneider
Vince McDermott
Karen Johnson
Margie Kivel
Beth Compton
Paul Karwowski
Julia Garbowski
Patty Sparks

Bonnie Wheeler and Winnie Silverman

9-2014

Times and Seasons

Author's chat features Write On! book

Members of the People Plus Write On! group will strut their stuff during a very special Author's Chat at the Center on Sept. 17, beginning at 2 p.m.

The 174-page book, titled "Times and Seasons," is a unique collection of poetry, prose and photographs featuring the work of 21 local writers and artists. The book has been "in the works" for more than a year and is being billed as "the best effort yet" compiled by the writers group.

The book includes work by P.K. Allen, Beth Compton, Robert Dow, Ruth Fudeting, Charlotte E. Hart, Julia Garbowski, Adelaide Guernelli, Karen Johnson, Paul Karuzowski, Wendall Kenney, Margie Kivel, Elizabeth "Betty" King, Ralph Laughlin, Vivian McDermott, Dottie Moody, Ann Rohlman, Karen Schneider, Winnie Silverman, Nancy Sold, Patty Sparks, Gladys Stabo and Bonnie Wheeler.

The book has been delivered and is available for purchase at the Center.

Cost is only $14.95, and all proceeds, after costs, benefit the People Plus Center.

Author's Chat features P.K. Allen

Join us on Wednesday Oct. 8, at 2 p.m., as author P.K. Allen reflects on his 45 years of married life with Finky in his book, "The Sands of Time: Life With and Life After."

Their love, life, joys and sorrows are shared through heart-warming stories and verse. Allen then shares his feelings as to what it means to have lost the love of his life.

In 2013, he self published three other books: "Reflections: Some Thoughts on Life and Love"; "A Journey"; and "Impressions: From an Ordinary Person of Famous People I've Never Met." All books will be available for sale and 20 percent of profits go to People Plus.

The talk is free and open to the public. Registration is appreciated.

10-2014

Volunteers feted for service

Nearly two dozen People Plus and Spectrum Generations volunteers were singled out for outstanding service to the Center during a spirited, well-attended program on June 12.

O Jeanne d'Arc Mayo, whose service to the People Plus Center is legendary, was feted a second time; and Ralph Laughlin, whose talents carry him from the Center's Write ON! Group to its kitchen, were both singled out as Volunteers of the Year.

Mayo was first named Volunteer of the Year in 2010. Well-known around the Brunswick community for her volunteer efforts, she has served three terms on the People Plus Center board of Trustees, and almost singlehandedly maneuvered most of the Center's past Music In April events from a lack-luster fundraiser into "the hottest ticket in town." This year's event raised nearly $45,000 for the Center.

Laughlin, by comparison, is a newcomer to the Center. Retired to Brunswick and an accomplished writer, he came to the Center first as a member of the writer's group. His publishing skills made the Center's recently published book

Ralph Laughlin

O Jeanne d'Arc Mayo

"Speaking Frankly" possible, and his leadership is helping to deliver the fourth collection of Write On! Essays. In the past several months, his efforts to "streamline" the Center's popular Lunch & Connections meals have proved very fruitful.

Meals on Wheels Coordinator Shannon Hall cited three volunteer drivers for their efforts — Hollis McBride, Su Olds and Steve Garde — and asked for special notice for George Moore of Topsham, who has transported meals from center to center for " longer than we can remember."

She said in the past year, 17,000 meals have been delivered from the People Plus Center and in April, a record num-

Please see **VOLUNTEERS**, *Page 5*

7-2014

VOLUNTEERS

From Page 1

ber of individuals — 90 people — were served.

Other "superstar" volunteers cited include: Bernie Breitbart, for editing The Center's News & Views TV show; Madeleine Ashe, for organizing Café en Francais, and the center's Good Morning program; Margaret Marchand, helping to maintain the Center's gardens; Ed Cardali, donating unique, hand-carved birds as door-prize gifts; Dr. Richard Giustra, who was introduced as "instructor of the year"; Dottie Moody, working with the Center's membership files; Josh Taylor, super Center helper; Gladys Szabo, working to organize volunteers; and Beth Compton, for outstanding work in the kitchen.

Executive Director Stacy Frizzle acknowledged the efforts of "these and a hundred others whose selfless efforts as volunteers make the Center and our community better places ... we would not be here without you," she said.

Topsham Musician Mike McCarthy offered music at the event, and program director Jill Ellis noted that local business like Mechanic Savings Bank, Fairwind Farms, Atlantic Regional Credit Union, Brunswick Downtown Association, Mid Coast Health Services and Bar Harbor Bank & Trust all contributed items to "celebration bags" offered to each volunteer.

Memorial Day Thoughts

5-2014

By Bonnie Wheeler

The sweet scent of roses filled my car as I drive through the cemetery gates. I am grateful that I have only my son-in-law's grave to decorate. He died too young of a brain tumor, leaving my daughter and two young children.

I look at the long rows of gravestones, some standing tall and erect, others old and cracked, neglected. Many wreathed in colorful flowers, lovingly taken care of, others sadly unkept and lonely. I saw flags grandly wavering in the breeze on selected graves of those who fought in wars, unknown to me but to whom I owe so much. My husband gave 23 years of our lives to serve his country and I know personally what they sacrifice to keep America safe and free.

As I stop beside Jeff's grave I see beside the American flag for Army service a fireman flag also flies, and a colorful whirly, his daughter's choice. At age 3, it was a very good choice. I could hardly believe it had survived the harsh winds and snow of winter. There it stood catching the sun as it whirled and I had to smile, knowing she would be so pleased.

I glanced around at so many tombstones, some very old 1800 dates of sea captains, some new graves. Suddenly I look at this cemetery in a completely different way ... I think of the sea captains, who navigated tall ships to this new land and the settlers who braved the harsh elements to began a new life in America. The men and women who built the settlements, fought Indians, cold winters, disease, loneliness, starvation, disappointment and poverty, many came only to face death, their dreams ended right here. Without their sacrifice, I wouldn't be living the good life I live today — the teachers, builders, preachers, farmers, lawmakers, they worked and endured, used their hands to build towns and roads and bridges, we still use today without thought. Their talent, wisdom, perseverance made this day possible for me to be standing here in a strong country, where everyone has a chance to live free and prosper.

I feel such a connection to everyone who lies under this hallowed ground. Tears came to my eyes as the connection deepened and I thought how can I repay this debt I owe? Do I go buy a car full of flowers and dress each grave? I think they would expect more. I listen — I hear their whispers, appreciate all we did for you — cherish the earth, appreciate the bounty, live your dreams — leave the world a better place — work hard, time is fleeting — we did it for you — it's your turn now — remember where we all came from and return too.

I look over the sea of cold stones — and say, — I will remember — thanks you — thank you and thank GOD for you.

Kinney offers author's chat

Wendall B. Kinney, a fifth-generation native Mainer with a knack for telling homespun yarns, has published a book and an audio CD about growing up in Maine, and will be our Author's Chat guest on Wednesday, July 9, beginning at 2 p.m.

Kinney is a long-time member at People Plus and a popular member of the Center's Write ON! Group.

Reading from his book, "Overhome, and other Kitchen Table Tales," and listening to the audio CD, "The Bull and I" will be features of the afternoon event.

"Overhome," is a compilation of short stories based largely on his family history. Kinney says the stories are "largely true with a bit of blarney added."

He grew up in Washington County on a dairy farm and is a veteran of the U.S. Army. He and his wife, Mona, have two grown children and have retired in Brunswick.

The program is free and open to the public. Please register with the front desk, 729-0757, if you plan to attend.

7-2014

Season's Greetings

from "Write On!"
The People Plus Writers

Candlemas

By Rose Marie Mayer

To be in the exact middle of the seasons on this amazing day, is to be in the middle of a quiet stillness filled with the lush and ever intensifying power of the winter sun.

I was held by the miraculous beauty of the moon several nights ago, and this morning by the deep and serene and sleeping might of the river. Pure white peaks of ice surrounded by the reflected golden light from the sun.

The sky, the most powerful and comforting blue, beckoning the soul to soar off into its glory to be held by and to be able to be an observer of all the fullness of the universe and to have the wondrous light fill my spirit to an overflowing and thirst quenching, life-giving fulfillment.

Wishing you peace and love during this holy season, and throughout the New Year.

His Birthday

By Bonnie Wheeler

Goodwill to all
Celebrate the news
Shepherds and Kings led the way
To a Jerusalem Baby's birthday

Cold

By Betty King

Rhododendron leaves
tell me how to dress.
Rolled up tight means
hat, scarf, gloves;
Relaxed and open means
my defenses can come down.
Clouds, too, inform me,
scooting across the sky or
Blown out into long banners,
they mean — a trench coat,
or at least a sweater and
wind breaker.
This is a battle of wits
in which I need to watch for clues
and pick up my cues.
If I can laugh at my mistakes,
All these small victories are,
as always, sweeter.

Christmas Program

By Bonnie Wheeler

Silent Night playing
Candles glowing bright
Children's choir singing
What a glorious night

Free Gift

By Bonnie Wheeler

He came to save us
His gift was free
Forgiveness is more important
Than presents under a tree

Winter Memories of Melrose, Mass.

By Bob Dow

Just now I heard on the news that we are getting snow on November first.
A bit early I thought, but it brought to mind my childhood winters.
When I was a child, a long time ago, it seems the snow banks were
a lot higher than they are today. My best friend, Harold, who lived
across the street, and I would build really big snow forts.
My brother, who was four years younger, was sometimes allowed to help.
We had snowball fights. Harold and I had fun fights with the kids
in the neighborhood. We also liked to slide, but as we lived on a very busy street,
we had to go to side streets that were safe for coasting. A park in Melrose called
Mount Hood had some nice hills for skiing. It was a pretty long walk; we needed transportation to get there. Because of gas rationing, that did not happen often.
We walked a lot! We walked to school. No matter what the weather!
The best time was when the fire whistle blew. That meant, "No School!"
So let it snow! I am retired. No more school. Let it snow!

A Christmas Story

(after Philip Yancey)

By Betty King

In ancient days God lived with us
like any parent, teaching, leading,
admonishing, rewarding, punishing.
Like teenagers we sulked and disobeyed,
grumbled, made faces and complained.
Manna, though free for the taking,
was boring — and what's the glory
in conquering, with God behind us
in heavenly fire and floods and thunderbolts?

This wasn't working, so God tried
the most contrary tack — gifted himself
to us in the most vulnerable creature
on the planet, and the easiest to love.
The king put out a contract on him
when he was just a few days old.
Born a refugee, you might say,
the gold and frankincense and myrrh
just so much excess baggage for the road.

He obeyed mortal parents, so they say,
and when he found his public voice, it wasn't
to scold or threaten, He told us plainly
never to fear: angels are also at our side.
Made himself powerless on behalf of the powerless.
Doing no harm except to astound the powerful,
totally misunderstood by those
who loved him best. They could not save him
from a fate he chose himself, and for their sake.

How fair was that? And yet we say "God is unfair"
What do we know of "fair"? We also choose our fates
by every daily choice. We are lonely; so was he.
We are tempted, insulted, frustrated, cold, in pain —
tortured and killed. He shared all of that, and,
very near the end, even, for a moment, lost
that sense of mission which carried him so far.
How to come closer to us than that?
On Christmas Eve, we put aside our grievances with God,

and for a sparkling moment understand
how gracious and mysterious is that love.

The Stable Boy

By Vince McDermott

What a time. I have never seen this town so crowded. People have been coming from all over. I work for the innkeeper, in his stable. I have been very busy, tending to the animals and helping out around the inn, but I can keep an eye on what is going on.

The innkeeper cannot believe his good fortune. He has filled his rooms and has put visitors into his own home and even into the houses of relatives. I have seen him smile for the first time in ages, thinking of all the coins he is gathering in. This is usually a slow time of the year. So he was probably in a good mood when the couple arrived.

The man and woman looked very tired. The woman is with child. It looks like the birth could happen at any time. They really needed a place to stay. All the owner could do was offer them a place in the stable. They were lucky to get that. I don't mind. It gets lonely out here. They seem like very nice people. But, after being around them for a while, I just have the feeling that something tremendous is going to happen — and soon.

The Christmas Tree

By Beth Compton

It's time to get the tree, mom and dad!
The kids go out and find the perfect tree.
They put it on top of the car and tie it down.
When they get home, they take it inside,
and put it in the tree stand, in the living room,
where they let it warm up.
They decorate it with their special decorations,
their mother mad hot chocolate for the kids,
and they put marshmallows on top.
They sang Christmas songs 'til they were too tired to move.

Winter

By Bonnie Wheeler

Winter has arrived
Close the windows and door
Sit by the warm fire
Then fall asleep and snore

The Spell of Christmas

By P.K. Allen

C is for **Christmas tree**, all lit up at night
H is for **Happiness**, brought on by such a sight
R is for **Reindeer**, harnessed and ready to leave
I is for **Icicles**, hanging from the eave
S is for **Santa**, all dressed for the flight
T is for **Toys**, that he'll deliver tonight
M is for **Manger**, as peaceful as can be
A is for **Angel**, placed atop of the tree, and
S is for **Savior**, who saved both you and me

The Best Gift of All

By Nancy Sohl

Once upon a time, deep in the snowy woods, stood a very sad pine tree. Now this pine tree wasn't always sad. Most of the year it loved this quiet spot in the woods, but it was winter again and the short cold days meant just one thing — Christmas was coming.

Christmas was a sad time for the little tree because it meant that once again he would be left standing in the cold instead of standing proudly in the window of a nice warm house decorated with beautiful ornaments and topped with a star. The birds had told him stories of the Christmas trees they had seen, but the little pine tree was just too far from town. No one would ever find him here. It would be another sad and lonely Christmas.

Now the little pine tree had many friends in the forest. He was loved by the birds that lived in his branches and the forest creatures that he sheltered from the wind and snow. They hated to see him so sad. So that Christmas Eve night, while the rest of the world slept, the forest animals worked hard to make this Chrisimas very special for their friend.

The birds gathered berries and pine cones to scatter on the branches of the little pine tree. The deer dipped vines in the pond so they would freeze and sparkle in the moonlight. They draped these icy garlands over his branches. A shooting star completed the effect.

That Chrisimas morning the little pine tree stood tall and proud, for his friends had transformed him. Thanks to their gifts, he was truly a Chrisimas tree. He was beautiful because he was loved, and love is the best gift of all.

Cory House on Whitney Hill

By Charlotte Hart

Let's walk this cold December night on moonlit glistening snow.
Let's climb up Whitney Road where we once loved to go.
To the Cory farm! The Cory boys used to say,
"You all come to the farm; we'll coast the hills today!
We have sleds to loan and skis for a long fast run,
Then hot chocolate in the game room after outdoor fun."
For long years now, that farm alone on the hill has stood.
Empty. Silent. The fields are gone, overgrown by creeping wood.
Mysterious Cory tragedy* hit the village with terrible shock.
For years, in that great old showplace, nary a soul would walk.
The walk tonight is lovely, but the house is a sight I dread.
But look! Soft light now fills the house. Look up there ahead.
Candles fill the windows. From the barn there's a steady glow.
The front door opens and here is a man with hair as white as snow.
"Welcome you folks from the village! Come see our workshop new."
He led us and opened the wide barn door to show a lovely view.
"My friends find this old farm a place of inspiration."
Four white haired gentlemen sawed and carved and sanded with concentration.
Skis and snowboards with winter design line walls — with every kind of sled.
Wooden trains, wooden boats, wooden ships and planes and wagons painted red.
Rocking horses sizes 2 to 8, baby doll cradles to rock,
Toy tractors and sleighs and wooden dolls and puppets ready to talk.
Time heals. Despair fades. We do find strength from the past.
Old houses, sad homes stage great new life for hope and joy at last.

** Allusion to "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson*

Christmastime Haiku

By PK Allen

A Christmas Wish
Merry Christmas all
May your New Year be happy
And wishes come true

A Christmas Carol
Ebenezer Scrooge
The Spirits of Christmas Past
Present and Future

Christmas Morning
On Christmas morning
Presents placed under the tree
Signed: For You and Me

New Year's Eve
The Times Square ball drops
People give hugs and kisses
Bands play "Auld Lang Syne"

Holidays Approaching, Families Encroaching

By Bob Dow

With holidays now fast approaching
Starts the stream of the family encroaching.
I'm very particular about who shares my bed
So maybe that's why it's empty instead.
I'm restless and I snore
Which is hard to ignore.
Should my brother appear,
Where he'll sleep is not clear.
We'll solve it somehow.
How I don't quite know now.
Just not in my bed.
Enough said.

A Winter's Night

By Rose Marie Mayer

The frost formed ice crystals in my nostrils, and I could feel the prickliness of them
on this intensely cold night.
Penny and I were on our late evening walk.
Not the leisurely stroll of warmer nights, she was quite purposeful, stopping to sniff only when necessary. We were quite an amusing picture, all bundled up, she in her warm, little coat and myself with gloves and scarf,
my hat pulled way down over my ears.
It was very bright, but not from a winter clear and starry night sky.
I had to tilt my head all the way back to discover the reason.
I could find only one shining star and above that at the apex of the heavens
was an almost full moon with only the tiniest sliver shaved off.
It was a glorious sight, for it was surrounded by a most beautiful, huge snow ring.
It was so splendid and completely formed, that I had to stand there, neck craned back and gaze in wonder at its perfect beauty.
Ah, these winter nights have such a way of reaching down and tugging the prayers of thankfulness
out of the very center of my soul.
Thankfulness for the stunning beauty of the night and for the blessed warmth of my room,
so filled with the faithfulness and companionship of that little dog who insists that I
go out into the night where I can discover so much beauty.

Prancer

By Patty L. Sparks

A blythe deer frolics
midst the soft cascading snow
as twilight draws nigh

On Christmas

BY ROSE MARIE MAYER

red
green, gold,
silver hanging lights
decorating trees, star on top,
tinsel, lists, shopping, wrapping packages
writing cards, rushing, baking cookies, singing, laughter,
friends, family gathering, cheer, ice, candles, kitchen perfume,
egg nog, aromas, biting ice, snow, full moon, carols, aromas, candles,
creches, thankfulness,
hopefulness
happiness
peace
love
joy

Becoming Invisible

BY BETTY KING

A crystal of ice,
fragile, ephemeral —
Moisture of the soil,
essential, invisible —
Beside the highway
the rock face gathers
Glassy columns which
manifest the invisible
element
So beautifully, in ice.
As the days
lengthen,
Sun rays
strengthen.
The vision is
gone.

Christmas in Germany

BY RUTH FOEHRING

Christmas in Germany holds special memories of a bitter cold winter, a black coal stove that had to be fed constantly with coal wrapped in newspaper, and my son's first Christmas. We were so far away from loving grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends, and familiar sights.

I arrived in Karlsruhe in October with a 3-month-old baby to find a new life style, a strange language and the realization that I had the biggest responsibility of my life and had to cope, bend and learn quickly.

My first break was finding the right apartment, in a nice building. There were four floors in this narrow brick building with two apartments on each floor. The next miracle was to meet the German couple, and their young son, who were to become our next door neighbors and dearest friends. They saw a young woman, felt her need for a safe harbor, and gave us the love and kindness we so needed. These people remained our dearest friends until they died just a few years ago. We learned the secrets of living well, where language and customs were learned with few difficulties and a young American family felt only kindness and acceptance.

That cold Christmas was probably the coldest on record in Europe. We knew we wanted to celebrate Christmas but planning led to costs and the problem of how to accomplish it all on a tiny budget. A tree, ornaments, some German delicacies, and inexpensive gifts were all on that list.

But then another miracle occurred! Our spare cold bedroom had a gold mine in the form of empty beer bottles. There were hundreds of them and all nicely left by the former tenants. Each bottle was so pretty. They had ceramic tops with metal hinges and rubber gaskets, They could be used over and over again. Each was worth 10 pfennigs and at that time 10 of them equaled one mark. Christmas was looking up!

My husband brought them all back and returned with a small tree, a cast iron tree stand, two boxes of ornaments, which contained glass birds, golden acorns, silver walnuts, and glass spheres. All super pretty and now treasured because of the memories connected to them. He even brought home a Christmas gift wrapped in pretty colored tissue paper with a ribbon tied around it. This had been given to him by a grocery shop keeper where he had bought some delicious German food.

We spent a cozy Christmas Eve with our neighbors, drank German wine and munched on huge pretzels. Later there was delicious strudel and tea and coffee.

It snowed on Christmas Day and we went to Saint Bernhardt's Church. They had a full brass band in the choir loft with 20 to 30 musicians. They played Christmas carols all through the service. We sang the carols in English while the German words floated and blended with ours and the time spent there felt enchanting and magical.

So every Christmas that special Christmas is renewed and we relive the memories of golden acorns and silver walnuts, colored tissue paper, coal wrapped in newspaper and the memories of friends who made that Christmas so special.

Snowfall

BY ELIZABETH B. BATES

Just such a day as this I spent when I was young,
and watched the drifting snowflakes hit the ground
and mold the stones and gullies to their taste.
But then, I watched with glee, and soon flew out
to snatch the rusted sled from his old place
and fling myself upon it down the hill.
Now, I sit and feel no eagerness in me
to bundle up and lose myself in drifts on frosty slopes,
and come up, cheek-red, foggy-breathed, but laughing still.
The pattern is the same, but I have changed.
I only watch the snowflakes fall
and think of
Spring.

New Wonderland

BY PATTY L. SPARKS

Take a winter walk
down a familiar old path
dusted with fresh snow

Writers bearing gifts

Bonnie Wheeler, center, of the Write On! group presents a can opener and electric knife Gladys Szabo, front left, who coordinates volunteers in the kitchen.

1-2015

When **lobster** is involved, make **stew**, not **war**

By Elizabeth B. Bates

Not being a native Mainer, back in the '70s, when we moved to Maine, I knew nothing about how lobsters were caught and processed. I just knew they were delicious.

A lobsterman friend of my husband invited us to go on his boat early in the morning for a day on the water while he pulled his traps.

It was 4 a.m. before we climbed into his boat. The pre-dawn light on the horizon was encouraging, but there was a chill in the air. I was glad I had brought a sweater. I was excited to be able to witness just how those tasty creatures arrived on the dinner plate.

We chugged out into the harbor and then turned, following the nearby shore, through quite a few lobster buoys spread around us. Eventually we stopped where the lobsterman knew he had his traps. These particular buoys had his markings, so no mistake. He caught hold of a buoy with his hook and pulled up his first trap over the edge of the boat, water spilling everywhere. His yellow oilskin apron protected him from getting wet.

The trap had three lobsters in it, together with a couple of crabs and small fish. Those went overboard, making gulls appear out of nowhere, crying and diving for what must have been their breakfast.

One lobster he kept, into the waiting bucket. One was a short, too small, and went overboard, before the gulls could get it. The remaining lobster was a female, with eggs attached, and had to go overboard also, for the sake of future lobsters. One-out-of-three didn't sound like much reward, but later on he had more luck.

With all traps, he had to remove the old bait bag and replace it with a new one, filled with smelly fish parts, that lobsters apparently loved. Then the traps went overboard with a splash and sank to the bottom again, taking the buoys with them, which remained on the surface ... and woe to anyone who cut the ropes to the traps and who tried to put their own traps there instead. That would be the beginning of another Lobster War.

Traps were placed where fathers and grandfathers had placed them, and everyone knew the rules. A lobster war could involve boats mysteriously sunk, with recriminations on all sides, and no real end to it.

In those days, traps were still made of wooden ribs, the metal ones were just beginning to appear, and most lobstermen swore they would never use them ... but for a long time now, that is all you see.

The sun was now getting hotter, and the coffee and sandwiches were all gone, and we were tired. We no longer appreciated the beauty around us, the green trees above the brown rocks, the blue sky and white clouds. Soon, we were back in the harbor, buckets of writhing lobsters at our feet. Some we would take home for our supper — lobster stew — worth it all!

5-2015

Ode to Charlie on his 90th Birthday

By Sally Hartikka

Charlie Payne, you've seen a lot
In your 90 years on earth.
Here's a list of some of them
Just for what it's worth.

The first among them is
nuclear power
Used both in peace and war.
More recently there's development
Of a completely driverless car.

Something we simply can't do
without
Is our big screen TV set,
And don't forget the computer
age
With Facebook and Internet.

Rockets sent our men to space
And allowed them a moon
stroll.
Submarines took them under
the sea
And went to the North Pole.

Cell phones let people talk on
and on;
Microwaves cook your food fast.
Robots vacuum your floor nice
and clean
E'en though the area's vast.

Let's not neglect the antibiotics
And especially childhood vaccines.
Equipment for SRIs, MRIs,
ultrasounds
And research dealing with
genes.

Charlie Payne

So Charlie, here's to you and
longevity;
May you live to see many new
Inventions and gadgets to help
and assist
mankind, and especially you.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

5-2015

An Interesting Occurrence

Passover begins on Good Friday; eat up!

By Winnie Silverman

On April 3 this year two important religious events coincide: Good Friday and the first night of Passover. I could write about how the two religions are linked, but those observations are best left to religious scholars or Google. Rather, what I am going to write about is traditional food.

The celebration of Easter Sunday, which follows two days after Good Friday, features eggs, which are sometimes dyed in bright colors and hidden for children to find. There are Easter baskets loaded with chocolate Easter bunnies and yellow marshmallow "peeps." There are jelly beans. It's a sweet celebration.

Passover celebrates the Jewish people's deliverance from slavery. Hard-boiled eggs, which symbolize life, are also part of the traditional Passover meal. The most significant food on Passover, however, is Matzo.

Since the Jews had to get out of town before Pharaoh changed his mind, there was no time to allow dough to rise to make bread, so instead flour was baked into flat crackers, which were sustenance for a journey in the desert that would last years. During this celebration of freedom, instead of any foods made with yeast, which causes then to rise, there are no breads, no muffins, no cereals — not even noodles. No morning toast or lunchtime sandwiches; just matzo crackers. They are sometimes called the Bread of Affliction.

I agree. They are tasteless and crumbly. However, during the eight days of celebration they are a small daily reminder of the price paid for freedom.

A more delicious part of the traditional foods are chicken soup with matzo balls and yummy macaroons, which do not contain flour. Sweet wine is part of the Seder service preceding the Passover dinner. As a kid I was allowed small sips, though in some families the kids have grape juice instead.

One year I finished the wine left in all the glasses on the table and got tipsy.

5-2015

Two of several Russell Kinne photos that will be on exhibit during July and August at the Union Street Gallery of People Plus Center.

Kinne photographs are featured in gallery

A remarkable group of photographs collected by Russell Kinne will be exhibited in The Union Street Gallery of People Plus during the months of July and August.

Kinne, a Rhode Island native who describes himself as, "self-employed my whole life," says he got into photography because, "you put a camera in your hand, you can get into odd places, do odd things at odd times and not attract lots of attention." To that, we'd have to add, "he's become pretty good at it!"

His collection of photographs, mostly from the natural world, are truly impressive.

"Early on I decided I wanted to travel the world," Kinne said. "I knew I never have enough money so I developed trades and talents what would get me where I wanted to go, with someone else paying the bill."

He described himself as, "about 500 miles shy," of finishing a circumnavigation (at various times) of the world. He said he has had a boat since the age of 9, and admits to being, "eighty something."

He is a Coast Guard master mariner, a pilot and "the principal" of what he calls "Old salt services. I deliver boats for others, now," he said, acknowledging he knows the waters from Nova Scotia to Key West in Florida.

Kinne has self-published several books and says he still wonders what might interest him next.

The collection of photographs can be seen during normal business hours at the People Plus Center café, 35 Union St., Brunswick.

7-2015

Surprise guest. Bob Dow (third from left) made a surprise appearance at the People Plus Write On! group on July 22. Dow, now living in Nahant, Mass., is well know to the group. With him, (from left) is Solveig Smith, also Bonnie Wheeler, current president of the writer's group and Charlotte Hart, group member. Smith brought a basket of Swedish buns to the well attended meeting.

ELIZABETH KING

7-2015

Betty grew up on the North Chicago shore. She graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in architecture and a major interest in solar and environmental design. She worked in Boston in the fifties, then discovered Maine, and moved back to the land to raise eight children on a hardscrabble saltwater farm in Woolwich.

Betty's brilliant poems and insightful essays and stories appear in Write On!'s books, "Muses and Memories," "From Maine and Away" and "Times and Seasons," as well as the writer's group CD, "It's About Time." She also had many editorials printed in local newspapers.

Betty enjoyed writing, painting, gardening, singing, playing with her grandchildren, enjoying her many friends, and doing lots of community volunteer work.

Betty will not only be missed by her family, friends and community, but also those of us at Write On! who enjoyed her readings and her delightful company.

The following are two of her nature poems:

Elizabeth King and her granddaughter, Sara King, collaborated on snowflake decorations featured for many years in the Write On! group's annual Christmas supplement insert.

Hard Freeze

For once the woods are completely silent.
No movement anywhere
except
For the dog's casual lope. He
doesn't stop
To nose burrows or tracks;
Everything is way underground today.
The tiny brooks are frozen in
mid-babble,
Encased in ice – but for one
irrepressible
Little waterfall, like a chattering child
Which will not be silenced, no
matter what.
I, in my muffled great coat,
feel noisy and clumsy
And out of place. The dog,
unselfconscious
In his brindled fur, is totally
at home in
This, or for that matter, any
other scene.

Our Betty King

By Bonnie Wheeler

There's an empty chair at
our table.
One of our family is gone.
Our season with Betty was
sweet,
But much too soon was
complete.
Betty had a joy for life and
also a gift with words.
We miss her, and the community misses her
Passion to make life easier
for others.
She left the world a better
place.

Today Daffodils Bloom

By the stone wall. Red maple
flowers
Dust the hillsides. Pools in the
wet woods
Fill with frog songs in six part
harmony.
Just yesterday the forest floor
Suddenly carpeted itself wall
to wall
With shiny green. We look for
shady places
To park the car. Dogs lie panting in the sun.
The annual resurrection,
annually despaired of,
Has just astonished me again.

Memorial Donation in Memory of

Elizabeth "Betty" King

from her friends in the Write On! group

"Write On" Blessings

BY JONI LARLEE

In August of 2014 I joined People Plus, because I had been coming here as a healing practitioner with the physical therapists from GBPT for their Free Clinics. I had read about a writers group at People Plus, but for some reason I put it in the back of my mind and thought nothing of it until Saturday, June 6th of this year.

It just so happened that I was teaching a class that day and at the end of the class one of the ladies came up to me and handed me her card. I looked at it and saw that she was a writer and that she had published a couple of books, so I told her that I had been thinking about joining a group at People Plus in Brunswick, but that I hadn't followed through yet, and did she know anything about it. So she said, "Oh, we'd love to have you, so you'll have to come and join us and I conduct the group!" This lady just happened to be Bonnie Wheeler. By Wednesday I attended my first Write On meeting. I know in my heart that nothing happens by chance, and I even wrote a song about that by the way. Coincidence? No, serendipity is what this was!

I've had no formal training as a writer, (except for an 8 week memoir class that I loved), but I can't remember when I didn't write. I poured my heart out on paper for as long as I can remember, and most of the time through poetry, or when I felt inspired, I'd write what ever felt right for me at the time. As a child I won many spelling Bees and wondered, how did I know how to spell those words? I didn't know about Intuition then, I just knew how to use it.

I know now that there is One Writer, one Source, one Energy that writes uniquely through all of us. "Words, divinely inspired from Source, paint pictures for the fertile mind where love and imagination co-exist." (Jon O'Donohue) To me, Write On Writers is a gathering of souls, coming together as One, yet uniquely individualized, sharing their experiences, real or fiction, but definitely heart felt.... funny.... sad.... and informative, and telling tales in a way that no one else could.

As the stories are told, dormant feelings of the past are re-awakened as they give memories new life, so that they may be seen in a new light of understanding. The memories did not die, but they were tucked away deep within to be revisited at a more appropriate time. Perhaps a time to release, rearrange, downsize and change, and passing on messages for future seniors, writers, and readers of all ages and from all walks of life.

Writing is a means of communication and connection, and it can bring, solace, understanding and closure to the readers, and sometimes it brings us to a place that is able to touch each others hearts and souls. I once read recently that, "Writers make us feel less lonely in the world." Isn't that the truth!

In closing I'd like to say that, Write On Writers at People Plus, is a place where I have found support and appreciation from unique and gifted writers who understand my words. It's a place where I can be heard without feeling judged or ridiculed, because I know that they can hear the words beyond the words. Write On Writers gives me a sense of belonging where like minded people gather to care and to share, and it gives me a sense of purpose as well, and that my friends is a blessing in my book!

Nancy's Story

BY BONNIE WHEELER

My sister, Nancy, is fighting through the disease, Lupus. The doctors encourage her to go on disability, yet she goes to work every day. She gets out of bed, works very hard, and falls into bed again when she gets home. On most Saturdays, she stays in bed. Come Sunday morning, she pushes herself out of bed to teach Sunday school and sing in the choir. Though sometimes she needs to sit, her voice still rings out to praise God. There is a lesson in this for me as I try to push through uncontrolled Type II Diabetes. If Nancy can do it, I too can stand or sit and sing God's praises, and I do.

ANY DAY BUT WEDNESDAY!

BY CHARLOTTIE HART

On Wednesday, January 10th, 2007, I walked in to a meeting of WRITE ON! Since that day, I have written poems, serious poems, silly poems, occasional poems. I have written memoir pieces, childhood memories, family memories, descriptive pieces of places like Crystal Spring Farm and Mount Chocorua. I have heard poems—poems expressing deep feelings, light and fanciful poems, free verse, blank verse, carefully rhymed and precisely constructed verse. I have heard unique memoirs. I have heard convincing fiction. I have heard clever satire—the writings of Jane Exhaustion! I have heard well researched essays which have become Letters to the Editor.

If a Brunswick Snow Day has cancelled a Wednesday WRITE ON! meeting, I make every effort to attend the make-up day on Thursday. If I need a doctor's appointment, I say, "Any day but Wednesday." If I need a dental check-up, I say, "Any day but Wednesday." A close friend passed on, and his family scheduled memorial services on a Wednesday. I wrote sincere condolence messages. I visited family members to share memories and to tell them I was sorry to miss the memorial service.

You ask why I must be at WRITE ON! on Wednesday. To quote Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, "Well, I'll tell you. I don't know."

An Essay For the 20th Reunion of the Write On! Group

BY BOB DOW

To delve into my 20 years of actively participating in the Write On! group….
What did the group do for me?
It gave me a chance to perform.
It gave me inspiration to do some writing.
It gave me new friends and friendships still going strong today.
There was a social aspect. It gave me a reason to get up and out and socialize.
The suggested assignments gave me something to do, a goal to meet.
To belong to a group of peers who all like to write inspires one to reach for the performer we all have inside of us, wanting to be in the spotlight. …to meet other performers, many more talented than oneself.
The strength of this group is the camaraderie and good spirit and for one person to always step up to assume leadership as another steps down.
May we all meet again to celebrate the next milestone where ever we may be on that day.

Marsha said, "Burn something"

BY BONNIE WHEELER

I could burn bacon, eggs or toast. Nope, not food. I certainly could burn paper. I have over 20 years of stories, poems, plays, and books. Some of them should be burned, but I can't do it.

I have a closet filled with clothes, all sizes. Some I will never wear again, or maybe I will burn them. Nope.

Okay, burn something. I look around, My curtains? Nope. My carpet? Nope. My furniture? Nope. Whatever will I burn? The last time I burned something was on July 4th when I was about 10 years old. Mom told me to be careful with my firecrackers and not to light them in my hand. Did I listen? Nope. I was lighting them in my hand and throwing them up in the air to watch them explode. I was having so much fun until one went off in my hand. Did I run crying to Mother? Nope. She had warned me. So I ran to the bathroom, got a cold washcloth, wrapped it around my blood, blistered hand, and ran to my bedroom to cry in pain. Oh, yes, I burnt something, me. Did I learn my lesson? I think so because I'm having a really hard time burning something today. So sorry, Marsha, I can't seem to do this assignment. Oh, dear, there is an ongoing assignment, the dozen rhyming words of aardvarks. Good grief, there must be something I can burn? Do candles count?

WHY WRITE ON!

BY GLADYS SZABO

I didn't consider myself a writer. I came out of curiosity.
I was told I am a writer. I just need to do it.
I received a very warm, friendly welcome, immediately put me at ease.
I came back. Write On! became a weekly commitment.
This group opened my mind
To observing life more intensely,
To exploring and expressing my feelings,
To learning new techniques of writing,
To recalling life's experiences, and
To writing about them as a legacy for my grandchildren.
My life is enriched as we shared Laughter, Tears, and Caring.
Most important in the group are the people;
Getting to know one another through our writings,
Having a safe place to write, and
Getting gentle feedback plus encouragement.
I feel accepted, listened to and cared about in this group.
It is an extended family to me!

How I Found Write On Group And Why I Like It

BY ELIZABETH B. BATES

I had to leave Scarborough, Me. after 15 years to live in Brunswick because I had to be nearer my two daughters. I found an "independent living" apartment that is great, and then I needed to find something creative to do. I heard that there was a "People Plus" place that had many Senior activities. I found their free newsletter in the grocery store.

I was overjoyed when I looked at it and saw how many activities they offered , many of them free. I had to choose one of them! After much deliberation, I came to the room in which the Writers Group was meeting. I had done some writing in the past.

It was like coming home! Everyone was so welcoming! I read some of my old work to them, and they had helpful comments, followed by appreciation of my work.

I had found just what I needed. The group has much versatility. We not only help each other, but we enjoy each other. What more could we ask for?

20 YEARS AGO

BY BONNIE WHEELER

The only thing constant is change. 20 years ago, I walked into People Plus on Maine Street to join the writers group. Twelve men and women sat around a table in a dark, back room behind the church. I was eager and scared and wondered if I would fit in. They were kind and encouraging. I watched and listened in awe at the wisdom they shared around the table. Jim Haley became my mentor. He taught me that our outer core grows old but our inner core remains young. He said that when an older person dies, it's as if a library burns down. I learned so much around that first table.

Change again-we lost members to death and many life changes. One day, when I was alone at the table, Ruth walked in. She assured me she was not a writer. I assured her she was. Her first story was published.

More changes-we moved to our new and better location. We had a large room, tables, a bulletin board, and thanks to Frank, a full writer's page in the People Plus paper. We were stepping in high cotton. Our group grew, we published books, did reading for the community, and Bill gave us a name, Write on! Bill was 90. He taught us that with a good attitude and humor, we could write on and on.

Many special writers have come through our doors, and today, on Wednesday, we are still using our words to enjoy and entertain and share. In another 20 years, many new writers will walk through the door, sit around the table, fill their library with their stories or poems, and share their gifts with a waiting world. Every writer has a special place in my heart, and I feel blessed to sit at our table. Write On Writers has given me an experience beyond my expectations, and I appreciate all the writers for being who they are. I am a better and happier person for sharing time around the table with such kind, giving, and talented writers. Thank you for the gift of being the facilitator over the past years.

What Write On Means to Me

BY DOTTIE MOODY

A family
Who share a common goal
The written word
Who come weekly together
To offer up
These words
Words that make us laugh
Make us cry
Make us sing
As a family
It is almost always good
Not perfect
Ours would be
A lesser life
Without what we share
We feel safe here
We feel valued here
We feel joy here

Congratulations Write On Writers on your first 20 years!

Season's Greetings from the People (Plus) Write On Writers

Childhood's Wonderful Winter Storms

BY CHARLOTTE HART

Winter storms of childhood brought marvelous things.
Days of snow covered hills for sliding, and then
Sun softened white magic so we could make
Snow forts! Snow women! Snow dragons! Snow Men!

Storms of childhood brought us long snowy days.
Beans baked in the woodstove on slow steady heat.
Then the fire revved hot to bake crusty bread
While windows were tapped by fingers of sleet.

Blizzards of childhood held no fear at all.
We'd watch through windows snow swirling in drifts.
No plough could get through. No school! Days to play!
Snow castles, snow tunnels, winter wonders! What gifts!

Sun-warmed maples filled shiny buckets all day.
Sap vats in the sugarhouse simmered on low.
A late winter storm gave us just what we needed—
A smooth, sweet taste. Maple candy on snow.

HAIKU

BY PATTY L. SPARKS

Fields glisten with frost
a blithe deer frolics in the
soft cascading snow

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

BY PAUL KARWOWSKI

A Christmas of white
A child's delight
O' Holy Night

A caroler sings
A church bell rings
We Three Kings

A heavenly birth
A life of worth
Peace On Earth

MY FIRST SNOW

BY ELIZABETH B. BATES

Having been born in the no-snow zone, I was so excited when I saw it building up on the outside window sill of our Boston apartment. I had to open the window , which was difficult, because of the build-up of snow and ice. Open at last, I stuck my finger into the soft snow, and put a small bit into my mouth. It melted instantly so I tried another. There was no taste, and so I was going to try again, but my mother told me to shut the window at once, because of the cold air coming in.

I went outside as soon as I put on the warm coat a friend of my mother's had given me. It was a couple of sizes too big for me, and it had a fur collar that tickled my nose. It had belonged to the daughter of my mother's friend. It was originally very expensive, so my mother was glad I had it. I was only 9 years old, so I wasn't impressed.

I picked up some snow with my mittened hands and made a snowball. There was no one to throw it to. It was not a neighborhood for children. I saw the milkman coming down the street, moving slowly on the icy road. His horse was covered with powdery snow. I threw the snowball at the horse. He ignored me, but I was happy to have had a target.

I went back to our apartment because I was getting cold. My mother asked me how I liked the snow. I replied I liked it, but there was no one to play with. I wanted to make a snowman, but it couldn't be done on the sidewalk.

My mother told me we would be visiting a friend of hers who lived in the country and who had children I could play with. We would be with them for a couple of days. When we got there, there was much more snow and it was very cold. They had wood stoves downstairs burning brightly. There was no heat upstairs. That's where the children slept at night.

When we went upstairs to go to bed, I was afraid it was too cold for me to sleep. I found heating pads under the blankets and I did sleep after all. In the morning, we did have a good breakfast before we went out to play.

There was a pond, completely iced up nearby. There was a small hill we could slide down on sleds to the pond. I really liked that until I heard some very loud cracking sounds from the ice. I ran back from the ice because I was afraid it would open under me. The other children laughed, but I didn't think it was funny.

When we got back to our apartment in Boston, it was warm and cozy. It felt good. I was glad the snow was outside.

THE CHRISTMAS THAT ALMOST WASN'T

BY GLADYS SZABO

It was December 1955. I dreaded this first Christmas without my dad. He had died in April. It would be mom and I alone for the holiday.

My heart ached remembering all our memories and traditions. Dad climbing the tall ladder to meticulously place multi colored lights on the beautiful full blue Spruce tree in the front of the house and outlining the porch with blue lights. He never let mom or I help with the lights on the Christmas tree as each one had to be placed in a certain spot. So who would do all these things now?

I would miss my dad's infectious laughter. It felt like the bottom dropped out of the Holidays.

Surprise! I was invited to spend Christmas in Florida with my best friend's family. My mom really felt I should go. I was caught between a rock and a hard place. I wanted to go but how could I leave my mother alone on the first Christmas. Aunt Janet, mom's best friend, assured me my mom would spend the holiday with her family. They convinced me it would be best for all of us to do something different

Mom decided we would not put a tree up or decorate the house since neither of us would be home. Again, my stomach churned. I was in an agitated emotional state. I had no one with whom I could share my uneasy feelings. None of this felt right no matter how much sense it made to others.

The weekend previous to my leaving for Florida, mom had plans to go out that Saturday evening after work.

I had plans of my own. As soon as she left for work I got busy cleaning the house, baking cookies, getting out the decorations! I decorated the house and wrapped gifts. Next, I retrieved an ax and headed out to find a Christmas tree. A light snow was falling. There was a cow pasture next to our house so I trekked down to the woods and found a beautiful plump fir tree. It was the perfect size. I managed to hack it down, then tied it up and hauled it up to the house. I found a bucket, filled it with dirt and struggled to stand the tree up straight in the bucket and get it into the house. Once the lights and decorations were done I placed the gifts under the tree. I made some hot chocolate and with a sigh of relief, flopped on the couch. Swarms of emotions came over me, mixing sadness, happiness, excitement and apprehension causing me to doze off.

I was awakened by my mom, with tears in her eyes. We hugged and cried happy and sad tears, thought about my dad, then, opened our gifts.

I believe that was the start of my learning how to turn life situations around and move forward.

Dear Santa,
It was the Cat...

Yours truly,
Patty L. Sparks

December Song

BY CHARLOTTE HART

In every window shines soft candle glow.
Moonlight sparkles on bright glistening snow.
Bonfire roars with cheerful crackling sound.
Flashing skate blades circle 'round and 'round.
Silent sleighs race miles through deep smooth snow
Home to hearth fire's comforting warm glow.
Overhead—gigantic star-filled sky
Celebrates a Newborn's gentle waking cry.

Morning sun gleams on the white church spire.
Joyful voices rise. The village choir!
Ornaments crafted by grandchildren three
Cover a floor-to-ceiling fragrant tree.
Circling the tree are gifts home made with care—
Hand knit mittens, a quilt, home baker's fare.
Door bells chime. Family arrives. Loud cheer.
Sweet joy and hope for peace throughout the year.

The goat who wanted our Christmas tree

BY BETTY BAVOR

A generous farmer in our community invited families to come to his pastures to select and cut a Christmas tree. Before this annual trip we, with our children, deliberated where our tree would be in our home, what kind, how big, slim, round, open or closed branches, and then we were off with our saw to find that perfect tree.

This was a working farm with animals wandering freely around the yard, so a large sign reminded everyone to close the gate after entering. Trees were helter-skelter and natural so we scrutinized each one as we enjoyed hiking through the pastureland on this crisp December day. It was always hard for the four of us to agree, although for me, the first would have been just fine, however, we needed to check that one over there and children needed to have a choice in the final decision.

We were distracted by a goat that took a fancy to our daughter's jacket, biting at the stripe on the sleeve. I shooed at away, and we continued on our quest, finally agreeing on the right tree. The goat stood close by as we put our saws to the trunk, dad made the initial groove and then everyone took their turn to saw away until the tree became free of its roots. Dad carried it back to the farmer as the goat followed close at our heels, jumping and biting the branches of our tree, as if to say, "that is my tree!"

The kids laughed with glee at this frisky goat!

Back at the gate, the farmer gently kicked the goat away from us, and with a "BA-a-a-a," he took off after another family. The farmer seemed pleased we had stayed calm, that we children were not scared, and we had endured, not harming this special goat. After our donation, he wished us a Merry Christmas and we loaded our Christmas tree to the top of our car. By the way, the eaten branches fit well against the wall as we decorated our Christmas tree which we shared with the goat. Happy memories and to all a good night!

Winter Follows

BY GLADYS SZABO

Brisk sunny clear fall day
Eagle soars awesome sight
Winter follows snow falls

Remembering The Essence of Christmas

BY JONI LARLEE

Christmas has always been meaningful for me, in different ways and at different times in my life. As a child I loved spending Christmas at Nanny Larlee's house in New Brunswick Canada, on the borders of Maine and the Province of Quebec. It snowed every Christmas Eve without fail, and large snow flakes fell gently like diamonds from the sky. Everything sparkled, from the blanket of snow on the ground outside, to the colorful lights, ornaments, and tinsel on the beautiful tree inside.

The excitement and anticipation grew as my brother Bob and I waited for Christmas morning, because we knew that Santa Claus would be bringing some of the toys that we had asked for on our Christmas list. After all we had been good and deserving of all that we had asked for. What I looked forward to most of all was to see the beautiful doll that would be waiting for me under the tree, and without fail there she was every year throughout my early childhood!

It was a happy time indeed, when we all sat around the dining room table and enjoyed Nanny's wonderful Christmas meal as a family. We had a great view of the tree in the living room as we looked through the French doors from the dining room, and after dinner we would all sit around the tree, not only to open gifts, but to sing Christmas Carols and make music around the piano. I realize now that we were a family of multi- talented musicians and I am so grateful to have been a part of it.

Those were unforgettable times, and these awesome memories come to life again every Christmas. It helps, especially in moments when I feel alone and feelings of sadness have somehow crept in, because many of the people I loved are no longer here and I miss them. As I reminisce, warm memories sneak into my heart and they bring back feelings of love and belonging as time stands still for just a little while longer. I can still hear the sound of the church bells that rang out every Christmas Eve for midnight mass in honor of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Today I see life through different eyes, as I remember the past with love and appreciation for all that I was blessed to have. These memories warm the heart of my inner child, the feeling part of me and a part of me that will live on forever.

Christmas has a different meaning for many people and for some it can be a sad time and for others, it may not have existed at all. I can only speak of my life's experience, although I respect and honor another's journey, whatever it might be.

The Essence of Christmas for me at this time of my life is about honoring and giving birth to the Christ Consciousness within. Symbolically, it is a time of renewal and of letting go of an old state of being so that we may be reborn into a new state of Being. By doing so we birth into our hearts and souls the qualities of our Devine Nature, which are the qualities of Love, Life, Light, Power, Peace, Beauty and Joy.

Christmas is a time to be with the people we love and who love and respect us unconditionally in return. The energy of unconditional love is empowering, joyful, and beautiful, and it is one of life's most precious gifts. Remembering the Essence of Christmas brings us back to Source, to our True Nature where all things are possible, including Peace on Earth.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays everyone!

A Christmas Eve Haiku

BY P.K. ALLEN

Reindeer on the roof
Santa is coming tonight
A child's delight

Chanukah Menorahs

BY WINNIE SILVERMAN

My kids still have the same menorahs they had as a child. They traveled with them wherever they lived. A few years ago my son had a fire that destroyed the inside of his house and he and his wife had to move into a rented house for over a year. I asked him what happened to the four menorahs. I had given each of my three grandchildren their own menorahs plus there was his. He said they had been in the garage and were OK.

Every year since they were little my grandkids looked forward to the eighth night of Chanukah when all eight candles plus the "Shamos" head candle were lit. Each child lit his and her own candles after reciting a blessing. They stared in wonder at the sight, and especially after we turned off the other lights in the room. Yes, they each get a gift or two for Chanukah, but not one for each night.

When my kids were young and I was a single parent, I gave them small presents each night for seven nights, things like socks and bubble gum, but the eighth night was the big gift. One year my daughter wanted an 8 track player. For the eighth night gift I gave her a bathrobe. Needless to say she was disappointed. She weakly said "Thanks Mom". I told her to put it in her room and when she turned the light on, there was the radio/8 track player.

I now have a great-grandchild. It's time to get her a menorah.

HAIKU/IMAGE

BY PATTY L. SPARKS

Sheets of winter light
spiky shadows of birch trees
snowy owls in flight...

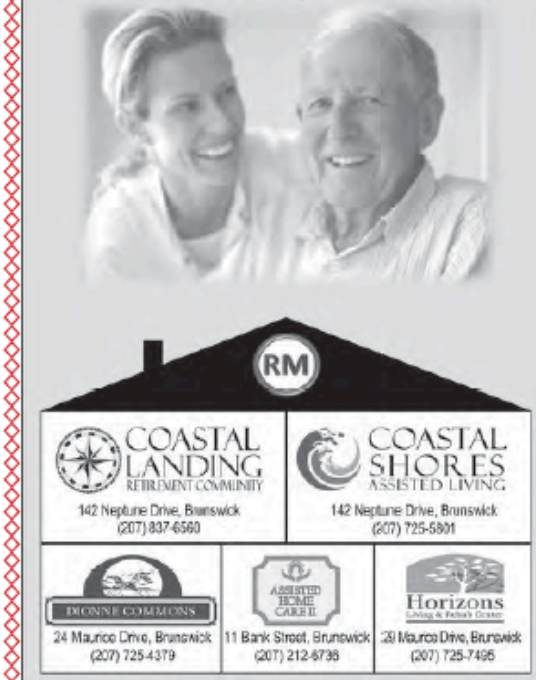
The Visitor

BY VINCE MCDERMOTT

I had come to the village to take care of some business. It was not a good choice. The village was very crowded. People had arrived from all regions for the census. I was very fortunate to get a very small, uncomfortable space at a poor inn.

I encountered a boy when I put my wagon in the stable yard at the inn. He worked there, tending to the animals. He said that the innkeeper was making a fortune. I understood that. I could not believe what I had to pay - but I had no choice.

The boy was very excited. He said that something wonderful was going to happen. A man and a woman with child had asked for room at the inn, but there was none. The innkeeper had offered them space in the stable. Like me, they had no choice. I had no idea what he was talking about. But, as long as I was there, I thought that I may as well wait to see what would happen. I am very glad I did.



Reindeer on the Roof

BY BONNIE WHEELER

"Mama, Brad said Santa likes chocolate chip cookies the best."
"No, Kevin said he likes peanut butter."
"Please, Mama, leave those for Santa."
"Okay, boys, Santa gets 2 of each. Now go to bed.
"Did you remember Rudolf's carrots, Mama?
"Yes, and also the glass of milk. Now go to sleep.
"Mama, where do you think Santa is right now?
"Well, he is about to fly over Texas and Oklahoma on his way to Maine. All the boys and girls there are all asleep. Now go to sleep!
"Mama, my eyes won't stay closed. Do you think he got me a GI Joe and a bicycle?"
"Brad, I said go to sleep, you're keeping Kevin awake."
"No. Mama my eyes won't stay closed either. Mama, how will Santa get in our house? We don't have a chimney. Oh, no, we won't get any presents.
"Kevin, I left the front door open and told Santa to come in that way and he said, "fine." NOW GO TO SLEEP!"
Brad whispers, "I think I hear reindeer hoofs on the roof. Kevin, hurry and close your eyes." "I'm trying to."

At last, the Santa toys are under the tree, the stockings stuffed full of goodies, I ate all 4 cookies, and poured the milk down the drain. I will only do so much for Santa. I even ate 2 of the carrots but left the greens. Now this Santa will not have any trouble closing her eyes because she has had a long day and tomorrow the excited voices of 2 little boys will wake her up with shouts of joy that indeed Santa did find their house and left all the right toys. My last tired thought - Santa had better lock the front door when he leaves. You never know who might drop by on Christmas.

DECEMBER SONG

BY CHARLOTTE HART

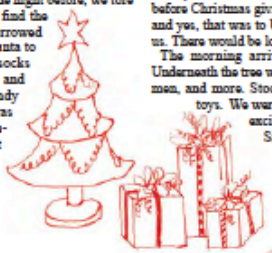
In every window shines soft candle glow.
Moonlight sparkles on bright glistening snow.
Bonfire roars with cheerful crackling sound.
Flashing skate blades circle 'round and 'round.
Silent sleighs race miles through deep smooth snow
Home to hearth fire's comforting warm glow.
Overhead—gigantic star-filled sky
Celebrates a Newborn's gentle waking cry.

Morning sun gleams on the white church spire.
Joyful voices rise. The village choir!
Ornaments crafted by grandchildren three
Cover a floor-to-ceiling fragrant tree.
Circling the tree are gifts home made with care—
Hand knit mittens, a quilt, home baker's fare.
Door bells chime. Family arrives. Loud cheer.
Sweet joy and hope for peace throughout the year.

Grandpa's Christmas

BY BONNIE WHEELER

Christmas Eve was the time the family gathered to celebrate Grandpa's Christmas. We enjoyed a potluck supper, Mama's cornbread dressing and Aunt Jewels yeast rolls - my favorite. After supper, we grandkids sat around Grandpa's chair and handed him his presents. We knew what to hand him first - a box of chocolate covered cherries. He grinned at all of us and then opened the box to pass around. Next might be shirts socks or pajamas. We watched with excitement as he opened his gifts. No one else had gifts, they were just for Grandpa. Our Christmas came on Christmas morning with one toy under the small tree and our stockings. Well, it really wasn't a stocking or even ours. The night before, we tore through Daddy's sock drawer to find the biggest sock without holes and borrowed it to lay out on the old sofa for Santa to fill. Each of the different colored socks held one apple, one orange, nuts, and hopefully a red and white candy cane. It was a time when a little was a lot. Christmas Eve was the highlight of the season. It wasn't what was under the tree, but who was around the tree. It was one very happy Grandpa looking around the room at his family. Indeed, it was a very merry Christmas.



CHRISTMAS PAST

BY BONNIE WHEELER

Growing up in a family of 9 kids I learned early if I wanted things. I did not ask for them. I got a job and earned the money to take care of myself. I picked cotton on my uncle's farms, babysat, and did whatever jobs I was lucky enough to get. When I was younger, I wondered why Santa was so stingy. If he had all those toys in his sled, why didn't he leave me more than one present at Christmas? Later, of course, I understood he was doing his best. Yet, I always dreamed that one Christmas morning I would wake up and find lots of presents under the tree.

Life moved on, and I married. Garry and I had 2 little boys with their own Santa dreams. Military pay did not leave much money for Christmas presents, so I took a job for 3 months before Christmas giving toy parties. I could keep the samples, and yes, that was to be both the dream Christmas for both of us. There would be lots of presents under our tree.

The morning arrived and excitement filled our home. Underneath the tree were trains, trucks, riding toys, balls, army men, and more. Stocking were filled with candy and small toys. We were filled with joy seeing the happiness and excitement on the boy's faces. Oh, yes, our Santa was very generous. My dreams came true. Only it took another generation for it happened. And now, it was much more fun to give it than to have received it. I hope the boys still remember our first year of abundance.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

BY VIRGINIA SABIN

We met when you were brand new
And I was needing a new beginning
You were the first
On my list to view

Built on ledge
In the soil of a rotting forest
Swarming with mosquitoes
Blocking a view
Of The New Meadows River
There could be no cellar here

In its own little place
Cleared away from towering pine
The sky was let in
This little house appeared to be growing
Right out of the ground
I never looked at another

It's been a win win I didn't know about
I didn't know that a felled pine tree
Made room for dormant roots of maple and birch
Waiting so long to have their place in the sun
And what a glorious autumn it is

What I learned
From a dark dense screen of pine
From this house lacking history before now
Is all I need to know

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Santa's Real!

BY BETTY BAVOR

It's Christmas Sunday. The children have been practicing for the pageant, and we are getting into costumes for the big event. The focus is on the birth of Jesus, and the performance was superb. After refreshments, fellowship and Christmas wishes, we all headed home. Not much mention of Santa until we rounded the corner of our street to see Santa entering the house of a neighbor! What a joy to hear the children all say, look, there is a Santa!"

ANOTHER NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

BY R. LAUGHLIN

T'was the night before Christmas and all thro' the house
not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
while visions of sugar plums danced in their heads.
And Mama in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap
when out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow
gave the luster of mid-day to objects below.

There lying on the ground in a huge snow bank
was a total stranger, a personage of no rank.
He had fallen whilst dragging a large heavy log,
all the time being "yapped" at by a mangy old dog.
I looked down on him and he up at me,
he was a lost soul if ever one be.
It was then I knew what I had urgently to do,
I put on my robe and slipped into each shoe.
I ran down the stairs and through the front room
almost tripping over some chairs and a broom.
I opened the front door and motioned to him;
he hesitated but I insisted until he finally came in.

The clothes on his back were tattered and torn,
the shoes on his feet were nearly through worn.
He was lean as a rail if the truth was to speak,
he looked like he had barely eaten in over a week.
I stoked up the fire and set him quite near;
it clearly showed he was frozen from foot to ear.
I brought him some drink and food and set on his lap.
He glared back at me as if I was setting a trap.
He ate all in silence never saying one word.
Satisfaction returned; I swear he nearly purred.
When he had finished he turned and he said,
"Why have you done what others might dread,

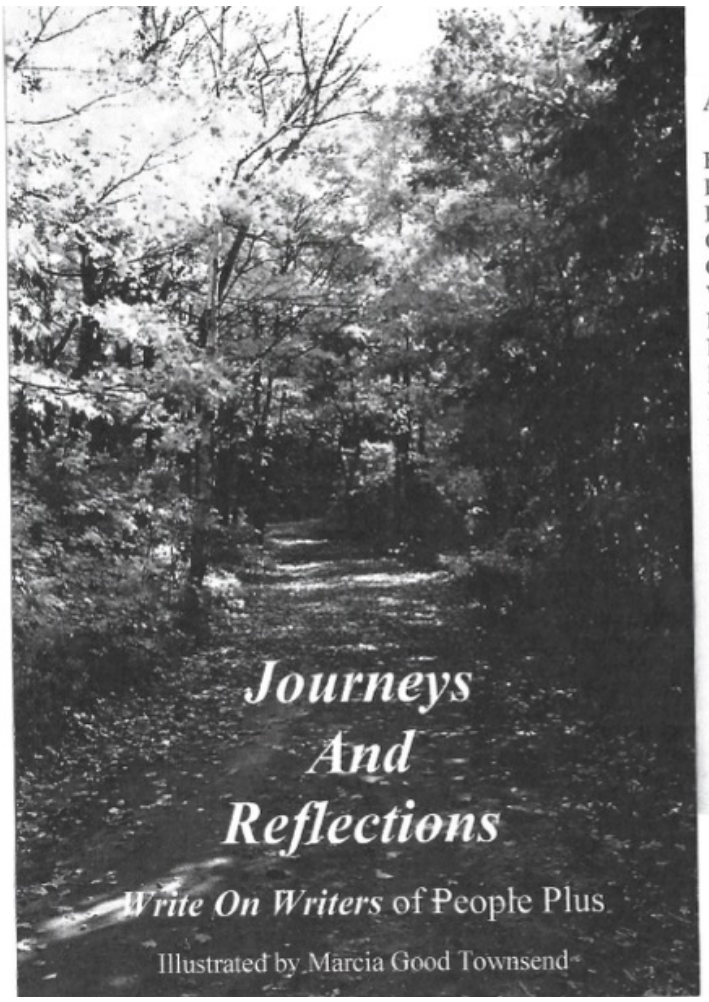
to take in a stranger all tattered and torn?
Most would see danger and look on with scorn."
I replied, "We are not rich nor are we poor.
To a person in need we must always open our door.
Whether at Christmas, Summer, Spring or Fall
is not sharing with others our Father's supreme call?"
He rose from the chair and headed towards the door,
about to go out in the blustery cold once more.
Not fully knowing why, I wished him to stay yet more;
but he said "No," he had found what he came for.
As he departed he looked back at me,
his face now shinning with a look of near glee.

"You're a bearer of the true spirit of living,
helping others in need with unreserved giving.
Your sharing of meat, drink and bread unleavened
has earned you one day a high place in Heaven.
Thank you my friend for the hospitality and drink.
I'll see you again" he said, then disappeared in a blink.
I stood in awe, my mind and body rather shook,
then I dashed to the door to have one last look.
There was no man to be seen, only a heavenly beam,
one bright ascending star trailing a gold stream.
Now when I look to the sky and see a shooting star
I wonder who's been visited by that person from afar.

May the star of your God bring you
Peace, Prosperity, Hope and Fulfillment
this Holiday Season; and for many more to come!

(The first twelve lines are from the poem by Clement Clarke Moore, "A Visit from St. Nicolas" first published in 1823.)

2016



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Gladys Szabo .....
Vince McDermott .....
Patty Sparks .....
Nancy Sohl .....
Paul Karwowski .....
Elizabeth Bates .....
Karen Schneider .....
Ralph Laughlin .....
Marcia Good Townsend .
Betty Bavor .....
Charlie Payne .....
Sally Hartikka .....
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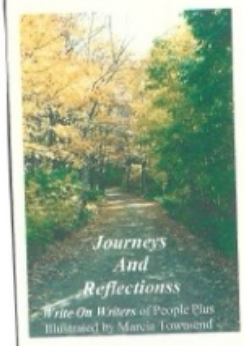

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People Plus!
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Oils by Elizabeth Bates in Center Gallery

Coastal Scene, Oil on board. Elizabeth Bates

Landscapes and seascapes painted in oils by Elizabeth B. Bates are the subject of our show at the Union Street Gallery during the months of March and April. Bates is a member of the center's Write On group, and has enjoyed painting as a hobby for years.

Bates said she has taken painting classes from Audrey Bechler, Elizabeth Knox and Daisy Green, all teachers at the Round Top Center for the Arts in Damariscotta. She said her husband was an excellent painter, and she decided she wanted to be a painter as well. She has painted in watercolors, acrylics and oils, and has decided she prefers working in oils.

"I was born in Puerto Rico in 1926," Bates explains, "my mother was from Boston, my father from the island of Mallorca, in the Mediterranean Sea." She said her parents met in New York City, and her brother and sister were born there. "We moved to Boston when I was 10," she explained, "I've always loved classical music, reading and writing poetry. I fell in love with painting when I was married."

The collected works can be seen during normal business hours at the People Plus Center, 35 Union St., Brunswick, through the end of April.

5-2016

New Write On Writers book is here

Journeys and Reflections, the latest, and seventh endeavor of the Write On Writers, was delivered to the People Plus Center in late April. The 230-page book, the first produced with illustrations by Marcia Good Townsend, was self-published by the writers group, and will be formally introduced to the general public during an Author's Chat at the Center on June 8.

"From cover to Cover," Write On member and author Ralph Laughlin said, "this book is absolutely the most professional book that Write On Writers has ever produced. Whether it's poetry, fiction or non-fiction writing, it is all of the highest standard. If I had to use a single word to describe Journeys and Reflections, it would be the initials of our group....WOW!"

The soft-covered volume contains 76 stories and 120 poems written by 24 member-authors, plus 108 original illustrations and 11 photographs. It went on sale May 1 for a cost of $14.95.

Bates oils continue at Gallery

The oil paintings of Elizabeth Bates remain on exhibit at the Union Street Galley of People Plus through the month of April. This collection of interesting seascapes, landscapes and flowers has created lots of interest at the Center, and Bates, who is a member of the Center's writer's group and luncheon committee, says she has had lots of positive feedback from members.

Bates has been an amateur painter for years, first taking instructions from Elizabeth Knox, Audrey Bechler and Daisy Green, all teachers at the Round Top Center for the Arts, in Damariscotta. She added that her husband was an excellent painter, and she learned much from him. She has painted in watercolors and acrylics as well as oils, and says her heart is in working with oil paints.

Bates said, "I was born in Puerto Rico in 1926." She explained "my mother was from Boston, my father from the island of Mallorca, in the Mediterranean Sea." She said her parents met in New York City and her brother and sister were born there. " I have always loved classical music, reading, and writing poetry," she added.

The collected works may be seen during normal business hours at the People Plus Center, 35 Union Street, Brunswick. Bates said all the pieces are for sale, and any proceeds from sale will be donated to the Center.

Osprey at Pemaquid. Oil on canvas.

Nonie bought this painting

PEOPLE PLUS PIC OF THE WEEK

PEOPLE PLUS PHOTO

THE WRITE ON WRITERS GROUP of People Plus debuted their seventh collaboration, "Journeys and Reflections," at an Author's Chat this week at People Plus at 35 Union St. in Brunswick. The book is a collection of stories and poetry created by 24 authors from the group, reflecting on their journey as writers as well as life experiences. The Write On Writers, who celebrated their 20th anniversary last fall, meet weekly at the People Plus Center to share their own works, host guest authors, critique works in progress, discuss the process of writing and support each other's creativity. The writers have published more than 20 individual works. They welcome members of all writing levels and skills and are always looking for new participants. For more information on this group and other activities at the People Plus Center, visit peopleplusmaine.org. 2016

Season's Greetings

from the People Plus! Write On Writers

SHOPPING FOR CHRISTMAS

by Elizabeth B.Bates

I've got my bag and my coat,
my wool hat and my notes,
as I go out the door
to the big dollar store.
Find the toys for the kids,
big pots with tight lids
and six pie plates for Mom.
Now for Dad, what is new?
One ice skate or two?
An axe to cut wood
to keep us warm!
And for me, a box of chocolate candy
smelling just dandy
will do me no harm!

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

by Gladys Szabo

My Christmas presents
These gifts not to be wrapped
Peace love caring hugs

A TIME FOR FAMILY

by R. Neil Laughlin

Holiday times are of beginnings and endings,
time of outward celebration, and inward reflection.
We marvel at the past, wishing somehow it would last.
The light of the world recedes then begins to ascend again.
So in this festive season, let us apply some additional reason
by reaching out beyond ourselves, to those that are less fortunate:
to those displaced of home and/or country through no fault of their own,
to those whose worldly possessions are but the clothes on their back,
to those who may worship differently, but whose desires are the same;
A world free of wars filled with Peace in which to live, love and know.
An existence that is free of hunger in which lives can grow.
Reach out to all people, in our town, country and beyond,
because giving of ourselves will help others belong.
Freely offering support, how can that be wrong.
For lest we forget, we are need to remember
We are residents of our one and only planet.
Let us deeply hold true,
we are all part of one family,
The Family
of Man.

Christmas Gold

by Nonie Moody

There is a gold mine in our thoughts
To be expressed at Christmas time.
Of clever ways of showing love
Without the clinking of a dime.

Big smiles may seem a small gesture
But smiles can make one's day brighter
Snapping a weary soul alive
Makes his world a little lighter.

Delightful encouraging words
Can demonstrate how much you care
Not making it look obvious
But assuring words that are rare.

A simple note to an old friend.
This year been treating you okay?
The weather here has been pleasant.
How was your special birthday?

The art of giving from the heart
Has been destroyed year after year.
The joy of giving something made
Is offering gold of Christmas cheer.

MY HOUSE

by Bonnie Wheeler

Come to my house on Christmas Eve
The smell of cinnamon cake fills the air
A sparkling tree with gifts galore
Grandchildren sitting around it on the floor
Who could ask for anything more?

CHRISTMAS: IT MUST BE MAGICAL

by Ruth Foehring

It is November. The days are shorter and light fades early. The leaves hang on the trees with a quiet desperation for all too well they know what is in store for them. There will be no time to run around accomplishing the gigantic list of things one must do before Christmas, so we must start preparing NOW!!

My husband and I have been Christmas shopping for weeks and now the stack of presents must be wrapped and some made ready for mailing. Christmas cards must be written, almost two hundred of them, and a nice, newsy little letter must be enclosed, so that those who live far away will know what has been happening this past year in our busy world. Panic has hit me and I must talk to myself and convince myself that all will be fine and somehow it will all get done.

THEN, I remembered a Christmas past where doing everything seemed quite impossible too. I had begun my teaching career much later than most graduates. I had four young children, a big house and now a career and it was my first Christmas working.

Now, Christmas in my house was a magical occasion. It could not be otherwise just because I was working! The day after Thanksgiving the children and I would always start our Christmas baking and so we began according to plan. Everything was going fine and we were right on schedule. Decorations began appearing in the house as well as in my classroom. There was no stress…yet! Excitement hung in the air and grew with each passing December day. Then it happened. Time was short and the list of to do things seemed much longer than usual. The road ahead looked very rocky indeed.

How was I to help make red and green paper chains and hang them all over the house? I couldn't paint the windows with poster paints as I did every year. Santa and his little elves and all those cute reindeer would not be looking at us and cheering us on. The baking list seemed unusually long as there was no time to even light the oven. Cards could be scribbled but what about the newsy little letters!! It was all overwhelming! What about the magic!

It just so happened that I had a student teacher. She was so competent and so organized that a great idea hit me and I found my solution to the whole dilemma. I marched into the principal's office ready to propose my ideal plan.

Nelson, sat behind his desk and listened quietly while I told him my wonderful plan. Susan, my outstanding student teacher, could teach my class while I stayed home and did what I must do. I would pay her right out of my salary. She would have a wonderful teaching experience and I would return after Christmas and really no one would even miss me. I could not possibly work before Christmas because Christmas must be magical at my house.

There was a cough and then the chair he was sitting on revolved around three times. I got dizzy just watching it whirl. Then with a strange expression on his face he said, "You have got to be joking. One look at my face told him the opposite was true. Then very, very softly he said, "Get out of here!" While the chair began revolving again, I made my fast get away.

I somehow got through that first Christmas. My family rallied around me and we carried it off in spite of all the difficulties. When I retired twenty- one years later Nelson told that story and everyone laughed and I did too.

So, now having remembered this time in my past this Christmas seems like a nit. Have a nice, peaceful holiday season! Make it magical too!

LATKES

by Winnie Silverman

The traditional food for Chanukah is Latkes. (laht-kuhs). Why? As Tevya proclaimed in "Fiddler on the Roof", TRADITION! The exact reason for this tradition is that these latkes (potato pancakes) are fried in oil. Potatoes are shredded and mixed with egg and matzo meal to make the batter and dropped by spoonfuls into hot oil. I don't know what they use in other cultures where there aren't any potatoes, but frying in oil is probably observed by frying another ingredient. As we stuff ourselves with these delicious pancakes, we are to be reminded of the reason for the Chanukah celebration. Briefly, over 2,000 years ago when the Jews entered the destroyed holy temple, it was discovered that there was only enough oil to keep the eternal light burning for one day. The miracle is that this oil kept the flame burning for eight days until more oil could be made. Therefore, we indulge in yummy fried potato pancakes to symbolize the miracle of the oil. With us, there's always certain food connected to any holiday celebration. That's our tradition.

Winter Overture

by Charlie Payne

Soon Jack Frost will be nipping at your nose.
You might even feel a tingling in your toes.
The cornstalks shiver with a clatter.
The barred owl says you make my beak chatter.
The red fox gives a cough and covers its nose with its bushy tail.
Hens on their roosts put their heads under their wings.
They dream of summer things.
The cat and the dog are toasty warm stretched out on the hearth.
Bring Winter on us Mainers are tough.
We survived " The Great Icestorm".
The moon slides down so I'll go to rest.

WINTER SOLSTICE

by Patty L. Sparks

Nature
dreams
in shades of grey
...resting...
neath drifts
of unspoken
white

HAIKU

by Patty L. Sparks

first snowflake
falling out of
no-where

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Pearl

by P.K. Allen

It was on a peaceful Sunday morning
just 75 years ago,
when war came to our doorstep
and changed the world we had come to
know.

It started with the bombing
and sinking of our ships
And the loss of many lives
as prayers rose up from our lips.

It ended four years later
with two blasts from the sky
That killed one--hundred thousand
people
and left a mourning nation to cry.

It was a hard fought conflict
for the victory that we earned,
But I wonder if in all the wars since,
Are there any lessons that we learned?

DECEMBER 7, 1941 - A Day of Infamy

by Elizabeth B. Bates

It was a Sunday afternoon in Boston, Massachusetts. My sister had the radio turned on because she liked the popular music all the time. My mother was in the living room writing letters. I had just finished my homework for the next school day at my High School, where I was a sophomore.

When the music suddenly stopped playing, and a voice started talking to us, I was surprised to find that it was the voice of our President Roosevelt. He was telling us, his fellow Americans, that we had just been attacked by Japan in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Japanese planes had sunk ships and killed many of our people there. They had not declared war on us, so it was a total surprise. The President was asking Congress to declare war on Japan. The American people had been following news of the war between Germany and England for a long time. There were many Isolationists in our country who were loudly proclaiming that we should stay away from joining the battle against them, let them solve their own problems, they said. Now they were silenced. We had been attacked from the other side of our country. A Japanese military man said that they had awakened a "sleeping giant". He was correct.

Drafting men into the armed forces took place. They had no choice. We were at war with both Germany and Japan. Everyone had to be careful not to let the wrong person know something that could further imperil us. "Close your lips or sink our ships". It was all very frightening!

CHRISTMAS CARDS

by Betty Bavor

In 1843 Sir Henry Cole, a civil servant in the UK working as an Assistant Keeper at the new 'Public Record' later called the 'Post Office' wanted more ordinary people to use this facility. His idea of a Christmas card became a reality with his artist friend John Collett Horsley as they designed the first Christmas Card. It sold for one shilling – 8 cents and had three panels - the center panel showed three generations raising a toast to the card's recipient and on either side were scenes of charity with food and clothing being given to the poor. 1000 cards were printed and only the wealthy could afford them. When cards became more popular and more efficient printing production developed, postage dropped to a half penny. By the 1900s the custom had spread to Germany. In the late 1900s cards began to appear in America and were very expensive. Louis Prang, a printer from Germany who formerly worked with the UK card makers, began mass producing more affordable cards with pictures of flowers, plants and children. In 1915 Joyce C. Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards. This company is still in business today after 100 plus years with grand children now in charge innovating the latest technology and new ways to celebrate all occasions and holidays with a card! Now

"Firsteristmascard" Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

you know the rest of the story.

Christmas time my mail box has a big red bow as I look forward to reaching for a precious Christmas card from family and friends. I have written a yearly letter for many years. Dear Abby frowns on this as it may seem boring and boastful. Many of us live apart from each other and we welcome news of special happenings with an update of the year's events. I delight to read and re- read every letter I receive. Yes, I know what you are thinking, it's a digital age, the younger generation embraces speed and efficiency. The Christmas card process is time consuming: purchasing, signing, addressing and stamping to say to nothing of the cost. A mouse click and the holiday greeting finds its way to the computer!

I hang four foot X six inch wide felt streamers to attach my cards to so I can enjoy them throughout the season . People have family & personal pictures, meaningful cards and some have designed their own card which need to be seen and cherished. I feel their spirit with me. I guess I am old-fashioned – time goes so fast, people go in and out of your life, never miss the opportunity to tell them how much they mean to you. As long as I am able, a Christmas letter will be enclosed in my Christmas card and I'll happily thank the US postal service for it's safe delivery.

Christmas Dinner 1947 – Lowell

by Paul Roberts

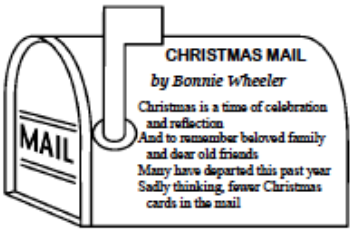
Ma was getting ready to tackle the last project for our Christmas Dinner – baking pies. She knew that the relatives would all want to take a pie home and Uncle John would want two pies because he was a bachelor and this was his only chance to get them. I noticed that he was too cheap to buy my mother and Dad anything for Christmas but neither one complained. My brother Fred and I decided to hide the two pies he 'ordered' and hint to Ma and Dad that 'other relatives must have taken his pies by mistake! We hid the two pies under our bed and put on our most 'innocent' faces. When Uncle John was told by Brother Fred that there were no more pies to give any departing guests Uncle John went crying to Ma that someone too 'his pies' and could she replace them? – (The cheap son- of -a seacook (Dad's saying) actually wanted our exhausted mother to bake two more pies. She had already baked twenty-five pies and the big meal and was quite tired. She asked Fred and me to go look up in our bedroom to see if anyone 'put' the pies there. We knew the jig was up so Fred and me stuck our thumbs into his two pies and brought them downstairs and said "We found them Ma!"

The Shepherd

by Vince McDermott

I do not go into town much. I get very lonely up here in the hills with nobody to talk to but sheep. The sheep know a few words, mostly those I use to tell them what to do. If they get nervous I talk in a low voice to calm them down. I have had to do that a lot lately because there has been a big increase in the number of people going to town for the census. We have to cross the main road to get from the grass to the water. The sheep do not like all the activity. I will be glad when the census is finished.

There isn't enough room for all the travelers in town. But there is something else. A bright star is located right over the town. It must be some kind of omen. People say that royal travelers have come from very far away searching for some people who are staying in a stable owned by the innkeeper. I will go to see what is happening when I sign for the census. I hope the omen of the star is a good one.



CHRISTMAS MAIL

by Bonnie Wheeler

Christmas is a time of celebration
and reflection
And to remember beloved family
and dear old friends
Many have departed this past year
Sadly thinking, fewer Christmas
cards in the mail

The Wonder of Christmas

by Nonie Moody

On the road Mary and Joseph came.
Caesar Augustus called a decree
To register in his first census.
Their journey long with seldom a tree.

Mary gave birth to her first son
With straw in a manger for His bed.
The family had found the safest place
Wrapped Him in cloths and kept Him fed.

Some shepherds keeping watch by night
Saw the angel of the Lord, how frightening?
The Lord's glory shown all around them
They couldn't believe what was happening.

The angel brought good news of great joy
A Savior who is Christ the Lord
Born in the city of David
With angels singing in one accord.

The shepherds went to see the baby
Quickly with haste they found their way
To Bethlehem where the family stayed
And the baby in the manger lay.

Shepherds the secret could not hold
Of all they had seen and been told.
Jesus the child was alive and well
Wonder of wonders the truth was bold.

The shepherds returned to their field
Glorifying and praising God
Not quietly but with full voices
Christ is the Lord singing it abroad.

CHRISTMASTIME

by P.K. Allen

Christmas is a special time
that comes but once a year
And brings us all together
to share in joy and cheer.
It brings friends and families
who travel from far away
To visit and to celebrate
on this very special day.
A day over 2000 years ago
when a baby boy was born
In a stable in a manger
to give the world a better morn.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
welcomes you to join us for

Special Christmas Eve Services, 4 p.m. & 8 p.m.
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A Catholic Cousin Meets His Protestant Cousin Lowell, Massachusetts – 1954

by Paul Roberts

My Protestant cousin came to stay with us for Christmas and being good Irish-Catholics we took him to the Sacred Heart Church to the ten o'clock Mass.

Grandmother McAloon filled us in on our cousin's background. He was born a Catholic but was raised by his Protestant father. Cousin Billy was an athletic – good looking boy and was fun to be with. Being nine years old he was inquisitive and friendly so when Grandma suggested that he go to The Ten o'clock mass with me- Billy said "Yes, Mam!"

When we returned home Grandma was eager to talk with Billy and me to see how Billy reacted to his first Catholic Christmas Mass. When Grandma asked "What was the best thing about the Mass for you Billy?" She was expecting to get into a 'Good old Irish- Catholic discussion on the benefits of Holy Christmas Mass and was therefore shocked when Billy laughed and said "*I liked it best when the man came around and gave us money – I took a big handful!" (The collection!)*

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

by Bonnie Wheeler

It's time for a Christian celebration
The perfect gift from above
We joyously share with everyone
The holy spirit of love

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

by Gladys Szabo

Holiday traditions are carried on through generations.

As a child baking cookies was an important tradition. Mom and I would make several types of cookies but cookie cutter cookies were a must. We used imprinted cutters with many details. We would start early in the morning and spend the entire day baking and decorating. There were several cups of icings in red, green, white, yellow, blue and chocolate. We used paint brushes and toothpicks in order to create every detail. We would stop for dinner and hours later mom would be saying, "You need to get to bed now!"

"Just one more – I need to do this special one" I answered as I never wanted to stop.

When I married we continued my family traditions along with one of my husband's, which was "The visiting Elves." They would lurk around all day watching the children. In the morning they would receive a note with a treat if they were good. If they were not behaving they got a note saying "You better watch out!" The Elves would report to Santa. When children became 12 the Elves would stop coming.

The sugar cookie tradition continued but since my children were not as detail oriented as I, they would spread icing in appropriate colors and then put sprinkles on to create the details. This didn't take a whole day.

Now my grandchildren make these cookies with even less detail. Some are iced with sprinkles and some get sprinkles before being baked. The important thing is the tradition continues with a few variances.

On Christmas Eve in my childhood, we would invite friends and neighbors for an open house on Christmas Eve as I had no siblings and we had no other relatives in the area. Of course our beautiful cookies were displayed along with my mother's delicious cinnamon coffee cake and many more goodies.

My children were fortunate to have grandparents, aunts and uncles in the area giving us the opportunity for a festive and fun Christmas Eve dinner gathering and gift exchange.

My grandchildren have no relatives in the area other than myself. We continue to have our Christmas Eve dinner and added a Christmas story and opening one gift each after dinner.

We sometimes invite friends who don't have family around.

Christmas Day through all the generations has been a family day. We open gifts while enjoying traditional blueberry muffins. (A tradition started with my children). We enjoy sharing our gifts, eating left over's and sometimes never getting out of night clothes.

The true meaning of Christmas and the magic of Santa has continued throughout our generations and I feel it will continue on as our family expands.

Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays have always been my favorite time of year. Many memories bring back all the excitement of my childhood.

LOOKING BACK

by Bonnie Wheeler

If I could go back this Christmas
to a childhood Christmas Eve,
I'd spend more time looking at
my family around the tree.
I'd see loved ones who cooked the dinner,
and Mom and Dad wrapping gifts with glee.
I'd say "Thank You" to them all
for the love they gave to me.

BAKING MEMORIES

by Bonnie Wheeler

Alaina and Raylee, two beautiful
great-grandbabies
joyful memories to create
helping your loving Meme
bake a Jesus birthday cake

Dear Santa,
I've been "wicked" selfish this year.
Please leave only one gift...
a Winery!
Yours truly,
Patty L. Sparks

Christmas Cookies

by Sally Hartikka

What kind of cookie shall we first bake?
There's molded, and crunchy, wafers and cake.
Biscotti, and shortbread, delights and crisps,
Or we could make drops, formed, squares, or strips,
Macaroons, crinkles, kisses or wafer,
Scones, delights or refrigerator.
Blitzkuchen, chews, rolled, or hermits,
Squares, snaps, chews, or biscuits.
What shapes do you want, what is your wish?
Wreaths, trees, bells, perhaps even fish?
Stocking or snowman, nutcracker, doll,
Circles, dreidel, snowflake or ball?
Rudolf or Santa, a star or a garland,
Circle, a bow, a cone, or a diamond,
Pinwheel, heart, snowflake or bells,
A sleigh, an elf, a present, angels.
Now for the flavor, there's lots to choose from
Including almond, blueberry, anise or rum,
Molasses, gumdrops, jimmies or citron,
Coffee, cranberry, peppermint, lemon.
Pineapple, peanut butter, raisins or cherry,
Pumpkin, pistachio, plum or blueberry.
The best parts of baking are wonderful scents
And joy when I give cookies as presents.

THE CHRISTMAS LIST

by Bonnie Wheeler

Alaina's list was long.

I don't know where more toys can go.

I suggested only two toys this year

She thought for a while and said,

"Santa, Bring a bigger house and toy box."

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Marcia Good Townsend

When we put tinsel on the Christmas tree, strand by strand and
Carefully saved year to year?

DO YOU REMEMBER
Bubble lights on the tree branches
Bubbles rising within the tubes when they warmed?

DO YOU REMEMBER
Watching the Lionel engine and cars
Racing 'round the track beneath the tree?

DO YOU REMEMBER
Checking the dish of cookies you left the night before
To confirm it truly was Santa who left the presents gaily scattered 'round the tree and on the floor?

I REMEMBER WHEN
Santa found me even though
We'd moved and had no chimney!

I REMEMBER WHEN
Santa hid the big girl bike in shiny blue and sparkling chrome
Hidden behind the tree!

I REMEMBER WHEN
"Santa" followed us to England and back again,
but this time to Arizona.

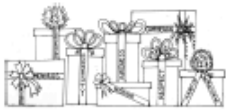
I REMEMBER WHEN
"Santa" left beautiful
Jade and gold earrings in my stocking

I REMEMBER WHEN
"Santa" mailed me a check before Christmas
So I could buy enough gas and a ferry ticket
To "go home" to spend Christmas with my family.

I REMEMBER WHEN
I was unable to drive "home for Christmas,"
So "Santa" wrapped my gifts and stocking and placed them in a box
For USPS to deliver to me.

I ALSO REMEMBER
The year "Santa" stopped bringing presents for beneath the tree
It was the years that Mom & Dad ceased to be.

I NOW CELEBRATE & PLAN
Each year, to "BE" Santa
For our little ones, with eyes so big with wonderment
For them to grow taller and wiser with each year blessed.
And to spread more memories for them to recall
On these special days of love and remembrance.



AMAZING GIFTS

By Charlotte Hart

Dear Santa, I need cramp-ons sharp and fine.
My winter gift? A sheer, steep mountain pass.
A wondrous gift was mine when I was nine.
My birthday wish—to climb! And Dad said, "Yes!"
Chocorua's Mountain Trail. The summit in the sky!
Clear brooks soothed summer's heat, brooks cold and wild.
Six decades plus more years came, then did fly.
"Your birthday wish now?" asked a young grandchild.
"To climb! Up Province Mountain by the lake!"
Leaves lined that trail with autumn gold and red.
Now? Tuckerman Ravine. A winter climb to take.
"Too steep! Too icy! Treacherous," some have said.
Strap on sharp cramp-ons. Do not fear. Just dare.
I've passed the timberline. The summit is right there.

A German Christmas

by Sally Hartikka

In 1960 I was a student at the Free University in Berlin. I had been given a host family in a program similar to the one Brunswick residents share with Bowdoin. My hosts were delightful, as were their four children, aged eleven to eighteen. They invited me to spend the Christmas holidays with them and provided fond memories which I still cherish today.

We went to church in the early evening, after which we returned to their home for a spectacular dinner, featuring Hasenpfeffer and a Weinachtsklotz. After the meal the children were expected to perform…perhaps a song, piece on the piano, or recitation. During the performance, the father slipped out and went into the parlor, closing the door. Then, the great climax of the celebration: The doors were flung open, and there was the tree, radiant with real candles on them. Each person had a table loaded with gifts. I had my own, with the most marvelous presents on it, including a lovely scarf, book, box of candy, and other delightful and unexpected offerings. The family had already been so kind and welcoming, and now this wonderful surprise! I soon realized that despite all the items on the table, the best gift of all was their hospitality and friendship.

A CHRISTMAS WISH

by Bonnie Wheeler

When Santa asked Raylee what she wanted for Christmas, she answered, "A dog." I was shocked. I had already wrapped a baby doll and tea set for her. Later that same day, Raylee was looking out the front window waving goodbye to our neighbors as they followed the moving van in their car. They were moving away. She said, "Mommy, their dog, Lady, is running after their car." Raylee was crying and yelling, "Stop, stop. Let the dog in." I picked her up and promised her that Lady would be fine. I put her to bed with her favorite lullaby playing. That evening I watched the neighbor's dark empty house as a snow storm raged and saw Lady lying on the back porch waiting. "Okay, Santa, I guess you do have a dog for a very good little girl. I opened the door and whistled and Lady to came running to her new home.

2017

Charlie, circa 1955

Ode to a seaman

by Charlie Payne

Today I forged a link in my chain of days
four fathoms deep, or more,
down where Jonah's Leviathan lies
caught in that hateful Sargasso Sea
where only eels can play
I have followed the course
true to my Captain's compass
and the stars like floatsam and jetsam.
I'm tossed about and I want out!

I've finished the course
now I want to reach that fabled Shangri -La.
No more rocks and shoals for this hardy soul
just a quiet cove in some fair land
where no raging sea nor northerly gales
shall reach the gunnels of my fair craft,
nor bend my topsails to the greedy deep.

Give me that slumber that I seek,
Amen and Amen.

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The Verdi L. Tripp Fiction Award: Cecelia Hitte
for *My Palestine*
Fiction Honorable Mention: Margaret Elliott for *Magda's Wren*
Margaret F. Tripp Poetry Award: Stephen Bloom for *Bomb*
Poetry Honorable Mention: Nicole Jakubowski for *I am Vinalhaven*
Richard F. Snow Nonfiction Award: John Leggett for *James E. Strates and Pagan Jones*
Nonfiction Honorable Mention: Monica Kissane for *Redemption (The Funeral)*
TPL Teen Scene Award: Hannah Wilson for *Daddy Issues*
Teen Honorable Mention: Natalia Pinette for *Yellow Bird*
Just Write Maine-related Nonfiction Award: Robin Orm Hansen for *Meddling with the Children of Others*

Verdi L. Tripp Fiction Award

***My Palestine* by Cecelia Hitte**

The room at the Unitarian Center was packed. The American Friends Service Committee speaker, a well-known human rights activist, had just cleared his throat, and was about to begin. The door behind the podium burst open and a short, sturdily built woman with a bulging book satchel clutched under one arm darted in front of the podium.

What nerve! She came down the aisle and settled herself onto the one empty seat. Which happened to be next to me.

Well, I think one should do whatever one can. I know the rest of the world is in a sorry state. But this woman's fervor seemed rather overboard to me. Whenever the speaker made a particularly dramatic point, my neighbor nodded her head in agitation, turned toward me, grabbed my arm and said urgently, But what's to be done! What's to be done!

I studied her out of the corner of my eye. She was dressed in a long black coat that, in spite of the mild spring weather, trailed to her ankles, and her curly red hair bounced vigorously with every emphatic word. I realized I had seen her before, rapidly walking across downtown Bartonville's Court Street, black coattails sailing behind her. She seemed to wear that garment in even the most temperate weather, as though protecting herself from a moral chill.

The speaker wound up his talk and took questions from the audience. My impetuous seatmate leaped to her feet. A stack of pamphlets slid out of the satchel, onto my lap, then the floor. Yes! she said. Yes! Yes! That's

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The Cryer - DECEMBER 2017

The winners, judges and presenters (from the left): Nicole Jakubowski, Stephen Bloom, Helene McGlaughlin, Peter Dexter, Monica Kissane, Shannon Bowring, John Leggett, Linda Baker, Hannah Wilson, Robin Ann Hansen, Cecelia Hitte and Natalie Pinette (not present: Margaret Elliott, Nancy Randolph and Laufey). (Crosby Photo)

Season's Greetings

from the People Plus! Write On Writers

Best Christmas Gifts

by Gladys Szabo

The best Christmas gifts are free
Share them with everyone you see.

A smile or laughter given away
Can warm a heart or make someone's day!

May your holidays be smiles and laughter
Continuing all the years hereafter.

Dear Santa,

Merry Christmas!

Took your advice,
danced like no one was
watching...
Court date pending...
not my best year.

Always,
Patty L. Sparks

Christmas Thoughts

by Nonie Moody

There are warm thoughts of Christmas
Hiding in the small places
The scent of balsam fir trails
Brings memories of faces.

Many lovely Christmas mugs
Find their way to the front row
With memories of years past
Will be used often I know.

Baking the Christmas cookies
The one flavored with nutmeg
With memories of mother
As she cracks a single egg.

Old ornament on the tree
Passed down many years ago
Shines with faded colored glass
While Christmas lights send a glow.

Christmas cards are small and thin
Thinking of those who are dear
Hand written notes tucked inside
Sent to loved ones far and near.

The Christmas Carolers

by Bonnie Wheeler

The time was 6:30 PM on the Sunday before Christmas. I had dressed in my nightie, put an audio book in my cassette player, and was resting in my bed. I heard singing and realize the church choir was on my porch. "We wish you a Merry Christmas," drifted in. They are here! What a surprise Flashes of the last 30 years went by. We would meet at church, choose our songbook, and gather the fruit baskets we had filled earlier. With much merriment, we would then make a parade in our cars going to the elderly, shut-ins, and two nursing homes where some of our oldest church members lived.

We would begin our singing outside, and then continue inside for about eight Christmas carols. After that he would present the basket and give hugs. Climbing joyously back in our cars, we would move on to the next stop. I loved being part of that. This year, after the car accident, problems with knees and diabetic woes, I couldn't be part of it.

I hurriedly grabbed a robe and went to the door to invite everyone in. About 12 church members, a boy of 10 to older families, were standing there. They made a circle in my living room, and I slipped into the circle. They stood in winter coats, hats, and scarves. I stood barefoot and robed.

Sylvia shared her songbook with me, but mostly it was unneeded as the familiar hymns surrounded and warmed my living room. All at once, I stopped singing. Was I supposed to sing with them, or just listen? After all, I wasn't the visitor, the caroler tonight. I was elderly shut-in. I was on the other side of the fence! When did this happen? How did this happen? I felt like someone had punched me in the stomach.

Daniel handed me the fruit basket, we hugged, and out the door they started their parade of cars to the next place. I stood holding the fruit basket wondering if I was on the other side of the fence for good. It didn't feel right! I wanted someone else to hold that fruit basket.

Gardens Aglow

by Sally Hartikka

The colorful lights
Cascading all around me
Dream world of childhood

Tidal housekeeping

by Cecelia Hitte

The house had filled
With leaves. Everywhere
I swept them out

Trying to push back
The rising tide
Of winter.

Christmas Coffee Cup

by Bonnie Wheeler

Thanks for the present of the red coffee cup for Christmas.
He loves it and uses it every day.
There is one problem though,
he forgets it in the microwave oven
and then hunts around for it for half a day.
He also leaves it in his van or on the garage shelf.
He frets and complains when he loses his cup,
So please, next year for his sake and mine,
give him a cup with a very long line.

Christmas Gifts

by Sally Hartikka

As I've grown older, my tastes have changed;
The Christmas gift most pleasing to me
Is not something elegant and pricey
But time with my friends and family.
Under the tree what I hope to see
Is something made by hand for me…
No electronic gizmos or high-priced things
But expenditure of time and the love it brings.

Bad Santa

by Bonnie Wheeler

You took away Capt. Mikes
Our favorite seafood place
Their doors closed for good
So you can forget your Christmas snack
What we want is not in your pack

Christmas Excitement

by Nonie Moody

As little girls, my sister and I were playing nicely in the living room one December morning. The Christmas tree had been purchased at a local farm and was standing tall in the big living room window. We had so much fun the day before putting all the long icicles on the lower part of the tree while mother worked at the top part that we couldn't reach. The tree was beautiful and we were so excited that Christmas morning would soon be here.

While we played close to the Christmas tree, we noticed the mailman drive in our driveway. He never had done this before. Being inquisitive we ran to the kitchen to look out the window. Mother was looking out the kitchen door window. We all watched the mailman walk up to the door carrying two very large boxes. We quickly moved closer to mother and watched as she opened the door for the mailman. The mailman had difficulty carrying two large boxes in his arms and as Mother started to reach for the boxes, the mailman handed them over to her upside down. In the transfer, the boxes had two faint sounds. Waaa! Waaa! Baby dolls! We screamed and jumped up and down. We held hands and jumped some more. We were getting baby dolls for Christmas. Mother was most unhappy and told us to quiet down or she would be giving the boxes to the needy, as she hustled them to her bedroom.

A Winter Song

by Bonnie Wheeler

Standing at my door, looking out at the snow,
dreading the blast of cold air as I step out,
I stop to listen to a wee bird singing.
I smile, thinking of my warm clothes, house, car,
my pantry full of food –
and I'm complaining the bitter cold
while this tiny bird has none of these,
yet, it sings to the world.
How that humbles me as I walk outside
with a sudden feeling of abundance.

Winter

by Virginia Sabin

A time of looking forward to spring
Of remembering
A time of snow blanketing outside
Of down warming inside
A time of later dawn of earlier dusk
Of covering in comfort and dark
A time of pondering
An end of time or a season

First Snow

by Bonnie Wheeler

Bathed in background fog -
I watch as the present appears -
Another scene unfolds, totally clear -
Winters for us snow storm says,
"Hello" –

December

by Rose Marie Mayer

Last night the moon and stars shone clear and bright
Now the first snow is softly falling
and the world is winter white
Midst shopping, baking, wrapping, as the holidays draw near
Let's all find time to pause and listen
to spread love and cheer
And as the year draws to an end
My wish is for peace and joy to you, dear Friend.
Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Images

by Patty L. Sparks

fresh snow underfoot/
twilight and full solstice
moon/snowy owl in flight

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Snow Like Wool

by Nonie Moody

A soft blanket of snow lay on the ground
It came during the evening hours
When homes were lit with darkness around.

The snow fell tenderly to the earth
Looking like the back of woolly sheep
Presents the country side a new birth.

As morning breaks the world is brighter
Clean and pure with beautiful blue skies
Praising God our master designer.

Winter Solstice

by P.L. Sparks

darkness
falls on darkness
refuge
without dreams
sounds
beyond the winter
calmness
Not felt... remembered

The Snowflake

by Sally Hartikka

Consider the lowly snowflake,
Each one a unique creation.
Though all are hexagonal,
Differ slightly in formation.
People are like snowflakes;
Each has no duplication.
Isn't it extraordinary
What exists in our creation!

Snowfall

by Virginia Sabin

Even with a threat of being blown away
Of changing over to rain
Of freezing
I will remember this moment
Of snowfall
Words cannot describe its beauty
Its fluffy white comforting
Its covering all
Even the tiniest twig
Protecting it from an icy change

December Again

by P.K.Allen

December is that festive month
That comes at the end of the year
Bringing Santa Clause with presents
Along with some holiday cheer.

But it starts the winter season
With days of sleet, hail, and snow
And nights that are long and cold
With blistery winds that blow.

Some people leave for the south
To enjoy that warm southern sun
With its mild and gentler climate
Where they can romp and have fun.

Leaving the rest of us to enviously toil
Waiting for spring to come
Shoveling our sidewalks and driveways
While our fingers and feet go numb.

Winter Night

by Rose Marie Mayer

Ten degrees below
Bright moon gleaming, stars shining
Snow all aglitter

O Tannenbaum

by Betty Bavor

A live tree on Christmas Eve waiting
White candle sticks clipped on its branches.
Family and friends gathered around
Sipping brandy with German sweet treats waiting.

The time has come for tradition
Strike a match, light each candle.
Sing Christmas carols to celebrate
The Heavenly Child born in a manger
True meaning of Christmas and a cherished tradition.

We Weep

by Bonnie Wheeler

We ride our bikes
We go to concerts
We worship in church
For happiness and peace
Then horrific evil disrupts
Innocent blood flows
And we weep

At Stevens Corner, Christmas Lights Will Glow

By Charlotte Hart

(Inspired by Holman Day's Pine Tree Ballads)

Snowbanks line every winding campus path.
She walks from chem lab up hill to her dorm.
Two big exams tomorrow—French and math.
Relief from winter's blast—a friendly building warm.
Just in the entry hall, mail boxes line the wall.
Box 304? A letter came today!
She hurries! Reach that treasure now! Stand tall.
From Mom! From home—which seems so far away.
Just now the dinner chime drifts through the air.
Young women's chatter fills the dining hall.
Before the meal—to soothe their every care,
They sing, "Land of the forest…." With thanks for blessings all.
She's thankful for the mail that came today.
From Mom—from home which seems so far away.
Some twenty calls to make! They'll take some time.
Remind the cast—rehearsals of the play.
Maine Masque will do that comedy sublime
Love's Labours Lost. Not long 'til opening day.
Before the evening's work—study and review—
She needs Mom's soothing words and thoughts, what's new….
Plans are taking place for family celebration
Christmas! Home at Stevens Corner! Sweet elation.
Mom's letter says, "Christmas! Three weeks more.
We'll place a candle on each window sill.
We'll fashion seven wreaths—one for each door.
Rum cakes? Sugar cookies? Bake? We will!"
But back to papers on the desk piled high—
A history paper due. She breathes a sigh.
Mom's letter—plans from home she treasures so…
At Stevens Corner, Christmas lights will glow.

Christmas

by P.K. Allen

Each Christmas brings a special warmth
To a winter that's long and cold,
That's shared together in close harmony
With those you love to hold.

It brings sounds of joy and laughter
That we'll remember through the years,
Along with a visit from carolers,
Bringing sweet music to our ears.

Christmas - Past, Future, And Presents

by P.K. Allen

When I was just a young lad
my Mother said to me,
"If you are a good boy,
there'll be presents under the tree."

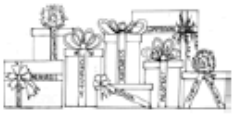
So I took her advice to heart,
and was polite as I could be.
When Christmas morning came along,
presents were there for me.

There were trucks, and cars, and games.
It was such a sight to see,
'all wrapped in colorful paper
with a tag that said for me.

Through the years the gifts have changed,
but the Spirit remains like a rock.
Now, instead of giving large presents,
we just fill each other's sock.

Each year the presents get smaller
since there are fewer things we need.
No T.V.s, computers, or stereos,
just a good book or two to read.

What I see in the far future
as my time on this Earth ends,
when asked if there's anything I actually need,
I'll probably say, "That Depends."



Sharing

by Elizabeth B. Bates

The windows glisten
The children listen
As the sleigh bells sound
From the woods all around.
It is time for Christmas
It is time for sharing
All the good things coming
All the love and caring.

Power Outage

by Elizabeth B. Bates

The wind blew strong, while I had a dream
of sunny skies, the grass so green.
I woke in fear. A tree blew down,
a crash so near, I ran to see.

A pole had snapped, the wires were dangling.
The lights were out and something was banging.
I was getting tearful in the black so scary.
The cat was hiding, the dog not daring
to go out, just whining, his eyes staring.

I ran for the door to the stair-dark cellar
and held onto the rails as I crept there.
There was not so much noise as I sat on a chair.

The dog had come with me as we waited an hour.
Then we climbed to the kitchen, where the noise had abated
but the house was still dark. The dog did go out,
but the cat was still hiding. I found an old flashlight
and lit a candle. A truck soon went by, its lamps
brightly flashing. The dawn would soon be near
so the fear was passing into smiling and laughing.

The next-door neighbors came out and waved,
The storm was gone, and the world was saved.

Christmastime

by P.K. Allen

Twas the day before Christmas
People shopping around
For last minute Christmas presents
All over the town

While children wait impatiently
For morning to come
To open those presents
Marked - to who and who from

As nighttime approaches
Excitement is on the rise
Nearing the time
For Santa Claus to arrive

And when the morning sun rises
Faces light up with glee
To see all those presents
Wrapped under the tree

Christmas Memories

by Rose Marie Mayer

Where do my Christmas memories begin? Many years ago now and so many more have been added in between. But, let's just start back there. In those days, it didn't begin before Thanksgiving. There was always a quiet pause, a sense of anticipation that began to creep in, in early December. There was something wonderful about to happen. There were hushed whisperings. Why? What were they saying? In our house it would all have been in German. Again why?

Tempting aromas from the kitchen, cookies hidden away from little fingers, gifts, carefully and lovingly created in our school classrooms. The excitement was building; Dad was in the garage finishing a dollhouse for Ruth, Mom still knitting the socks that would be part of my eagerly awaited, longed for, pair of white figure skates. The special dollies would be brought out and dressed in their holiday finery; Richie's Lionel trains would be set up with the amazing buildings that Dad had fashioned himself. And sometimes, if I were lucky I would get to play with them, too, maybe, even run them myself.

There would be tree lighting and caroling at the Town Hall, with hot chocolate and candies canes, and if it snowed, even better, no school. Sometimes, Dad would have to go out and run the snow plow crew. We always hoped that wouldn't happen on Christmas Day. I painted the porch windows with Christmas scenes. I loved the painting part but then afterwards, oh bother, the clean up! The church tree would go up and the choir would rehearse. Dad, Rich and I would hang the wreaths we had made in our basement, always making enough for me to put in my wagon and sell to our neighbors, "earning" enough money to buy some "real" presents. Mom would take us on the bus, two of them, shopping and to see all the sparkling, glittering Christmas lights and, of course, Santa Claus. So much fun and so much a part of our celebration.

Finally, always, after so long, Christmas morning would arrive. First, Dad had to go down in the cellar and shake down the furnace and put in some more coal so it would be warm and cozy. Then, he would light the Christmas tree. We wouldn't be able to see it from where we were waiting at the top of the stairs, but we could see the colors reflected in the windows. There had been no trace of it before this magical moment, where had they hidden it? Had Santa really brought it? I was allowed down before the others. I would sit at the piano and open the beautiful song book and play as we all would sing "Oh, come little children" or in our home, Ihr Kinderlein kommet". There would be delighted smiles and hugs and kisses all around. Presents would be opened, ah, but not the stockings, they would have to wait till after church. Dad made breakfast and we all got dressed in our finest outfits and off we would go in the old Ford. How beautiful our church always looked, greenery and garlands, bows, the tree, so bright and shining, children's faces glowing. The background of the sun, the sun always shining, in my memory at least, shining in through the wondrous stained glass windows. The chocolate stars, all the children got them, the beloved carols, the Christmas story, the men's choir, Dad sang in that. Back home, there would be our stockings, filled with all manner of treasure. It would continue for the rest of the day, aunts, uncles, cousins, more presents, given and received. Delicious food, yummy cookies. So much excitement and happiness. What fun, we all had!!!

A Holiday symphony of hearts and home overflowing with love and joy. And these are only some of my memories of Christmas in Maplewood, NJ.

Christmas Wonderland

by Gladys Szabo

Driving up the narrow, winding, wooded back road we wonder if we are at the right place. When we suddenly see red-nosed reindeer in the woods and the sky lite up like day time, we are certain we have arrived at the magical world called Christmas Wonderland.

Approaching the entrance, holiday music surrounds us as Mr. Whipple, known as Mr. Christmas, greets everyone with a hardy hand shake. Little known to anyone, he holds a counter in his left hand, recording the number of visitors. He would later enter the total on his special calendar used to keep track of the thousands and thousands of visitors to his Christmas Wonderland.

We begin our journey down the hilly and winding paths though this magical wonderland. The inner child in each of us takes over. One hundred twelve thousand glistening, twinkling lights create a miraculous fantasy world. As we move along we are dazzled by three hundred-fifty sensational animated scenes; all moving to their own music. Nearing the end, we enter a building displaying an intriguing snow village complete with animated skaters, skiers coming down mountains, trains roaring through mountain tunnels and so much more.

There were shelves of dolls representing other countries displaying their holiday outfits.

At last we are greeted by Jolly Olde Santa, asking what we would like for, each of us a red-striped candy cane.

We, like the many surrounding giggling children, are once again at the magical North Pole. It truly warms the heart, filling us with joyful expectations of a better future. Happy Holidays!

*****

Christmas Wonderland began when Mr. Whipple and his stepson, Edmund, would lavishly decorate their home and business every year, each year adding something new.

On December 16. 1967, after finishing the decorations, Edmund went out to the garage to work on his dump truck. As he lay under the truck, adjusting the transmission, the body of the truck, along with its the ten-ton payload, came crashing down on Edmund. He died instantly.

In the late sixties Mr. Whipple decided to honor Edmund by continuing the Christmas tradition they had done. Within a few years his spectacular displays gained national acclaim. Mr. Whipple said, "This was the most enjoyable part of my life."

He never charged admission. Never a ticket booth. It was never about making money. He believed people would give what they could afford; that is why he only set out an unmanned donation jar at the end of one's Christmas Wonderland visit.

Our family made the journey for many years and always came away amazed and filled with holiday spirit and the goodness of people like Mr. Whipple.

Moments

by Ralph Laughlin

THANKSGIVING…
closes the doors of the Past.
A celebration of the year last.
Of our triumphs and failures;
of friends, foes, and neighbors.

NEW YEAR'S…
opens the doors of the Future:
Fresh starts, new beginnings.
Speculation of what is to come;
of friends, foes, and neighbors.

THE HOLIDAYS…
Time betwixt and between.
The presence of the Present
Where only "now" matters,
of friends, foes and neighbors.

THE PRESENT…
The partition between,
what was and what's to be,
of friends, foes and neighbors.

THUS…
Enjoy Every Moment,
for without it,
nothing would be,
of friends, foes and neighbors.

Soul Flight

by Patty L. Sparks

Red tail hawk... in flight
Super moon... casting shadows
upon white skin of winters'
beauty and decay

Time Passes

by Bonnie Wheeler

Days, days, days
Seasons, seasons, seasons
Years, years, years
And then they disappear
Perchance to dream
Called life -

Power Outage

by Virginia Sabin

Candlelight deepens playful
shadows
On walls and ceiling
With flickering light
Enhances color in wall paintings
Softens scarred tables
And aging faces
Summons closeness
To read by the light
And warm by the hearth

Joseph

by Vince McDermott

The census came at a very bad time. Mary is with child and her time is very near. She had a difficult journey when we traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem. When we arrived I was not able to find any room for us. We have to stay in a stable with animals. The owner and the stable boy are very kind and tried to make us as comfortable as possible. At least we are warm and protected from the elements.

I have been a poor husband - not being able to properly care for my wife and the child which will be with us very soon. I hope that the birth will be without problems and pray that we will be able to return to Nazareth and the quiet life we had there. But I am not depending on it. I have this very uneasy feeling that our lives will be far from normal in the future.

It Only Took Sixty Years

by Marcia Good Townsend

"Hello Cisco!"
"Hello Pancho!"
"Hi Ho Silver, Away!"
"Happy Trails To You!"

This is how every Saturday morning started in the 50's for me and my little brother. It was preceded by the black and white test pattern with an Indian chief in the center. While we waited for that pattern to dissolve on our television screen, as the older sibling, I'd scramble to the basement landing whereon the big tin of large hard pretzels resided. After scooping up a basket full, I'd stop in the kitchen to prepare two glasses of milk. NOW our Saturday morning was ready to commence. We'd watch our favorite westerns (also the only thing available to watch on the limited channels of the era) and munch along while being fully engrossed in all things "cowboy"…..and "cowgirl!" How I wanted a cowboy hat, a bandana, a shirt with fringe….and especially….a pair of those wonderful boots. No amount of begging and pleading would overcome Mom's sound reasoning that these requests were not practical or affordable. Besides, to someone who bought fresh produce at the country auctions and literally canned almost everything we ate….it just wasn't necessary. My little brother didn't care… but then, what little brothers DID care about older sisters or "important" things in her mind?

Over the years I remember special Christmas presents that arrived via Santa's charity and later because of Mom & Dad.

There was "Tiny Tears" when I was five, "Patty Play Pal," a doll nearly as tall as me who had the same straight brunette hair and bangs, a beautiful blue Schwinn when I was six, and many, items that were equally desired and loved along the way. Clothing always appeared and was less appreciated until my teen years, of course. One year, I opened a large box and within was a beautiful pair of mahogany brown leather boots that were oh, so stylish then! In later years a prized antique English copper coal scuttle arrived and each and every season brought treasures worth having and some more memorable than others.

Thus…Christmases and birthdays came and went for sixty years and for many of them, the desires of the five year old were forgotten, even by her. In the summer and fall of 2017 I began to remember... eventually… even speaking it out loud.

In mid November we spent a week without electricity and running water. We had many, many hours to fill without benefit of distractions, so there was quite a bit of chatter between us while sitting in our candlelit living room. In one of those conversations I began to muse and tell some of my childhood memories and that lead to the tale of always having wanted cowboy boots. Now, my husband is a man who understands. His own devoted parents had succumbed to their needs when he and his own little brother were young. We have several pictures in the Townsend Album of the pair, in full western gear, riding the front porch rails of their beloved Townsend Farm in Readfield. This picture always elicits an involuntary *sigh* from me.

When it was his turn to talk, I expected to hear one of his tales of Readfield, the Aunts and all things boyish that he and Rich got up to together. But….he surprised me with a question instead!

"Would you like to have cowboy boots for Christmas?"

Well, that knocked the breath out of me for a bit. But I wasn't so out of it to decline the offer!

He selected both the best and worst day of the week for us. Mind you, ALL days were bad in that we were in the process of surviving a too long power outage that also took out the ability to pump water to our home. Trips to the Androscoggin River were daily chores of which he never complained and the results meant we had "flushing" privileges in our own home….a real treat during outages! No….a "bad" day for us was a rainy one. Rain and clouds meant the house was even darker and needed candles and flashlights during the day, too.

So Thursday it was. No ice left to pack the cooler meant room or porch temperature liquids for the journey….and off to Orono we went! The GPS was about 98% accurate in that it got us to the correct road and in the vicinity, but Linwood's eyes honed in on the correct building and parking lot. The big sculpture of a horse on the roof might have been a dead give-a-way, but mine were taking in the loss of about 10 to 15 or so trees on the opposite side of the road. Like in our community, they had been uprooted and leaning along a now toppled wooden fence.

Inside, it was warm and their power had been restored the evening before. My eyes were wide and my heart was dancing around in my chest when I spied the racks of real western boots in the next room! For TWO HOURS I tried on boots and made decisions about heel types, then colors, then fancy or plain. I came away with a heart and soul that had been quieted. The little girl that I was, the grown lady that I've become….well….we were both very happy. Each of us got a pair of boots! The owners of the store even threw in "boot jewelry" which is comprised of long turquoise suede tassels and conchos that snap onto the tabs on the top of my boots.

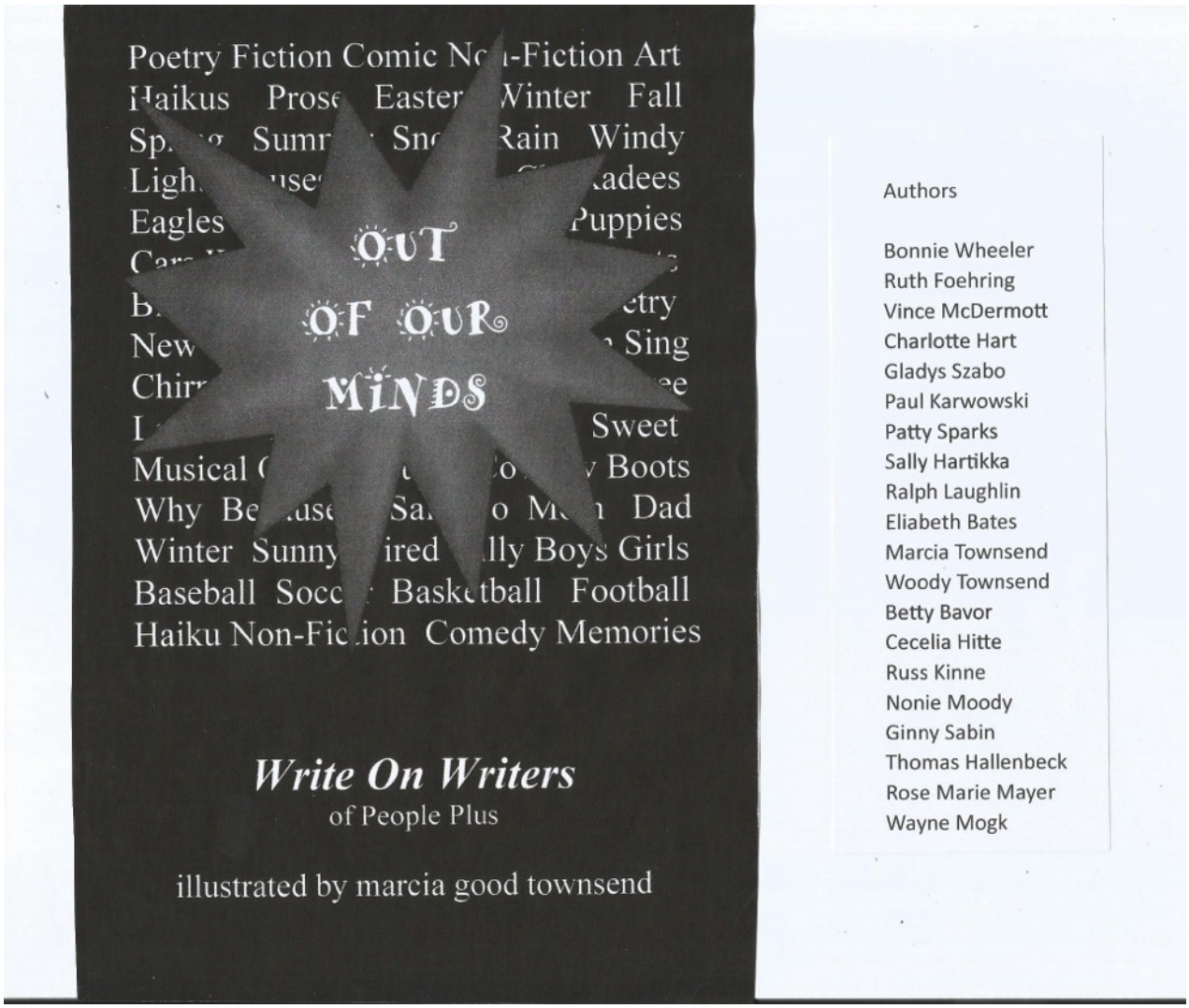
The next day we were back to grazing for food at local grocery stores and acquiring electricity for phones, tablets, and chargers at the library and anywhere we could think of to go (People Plus included.) But….it was a sunny day and when I looked to my side in a parking lot, I saw my shadow and that of those tassels, fluttering in the wind!

"Ahhhh"…..sixty years WAS a long time, but certainly worth it!

Next?

Maybe I should do something more practical….like learn to spit!

2018


Poetry Fiction Comic Non-Fiction Art
Haikus Prose Easter Winter Fall
Rain Windy
Eagles Puppies
Sweet
Boots
Why Dad
Winter Girls
Baseball Basketball Football
Haiku Comedy Memories
OUT
OF OUR
MINDS
Write On Writers
of People Plus
illustrated by marcia good townsend
Authors
Bonnie Wheeler
Ruth Foehring
Vince McDermott
Charlotte Hart
Gladys Szabo
Paul Karwowski
Patty Sparks
Sally Hartikka
Ralph Laughlin
Eliabeth Bates
Marcia Townsend
Woody Townsend
Betty Bavor
Cecelia Hitte
Russ Kinne
Nonie Moody
Ginny Sabin
Thomas Hallenbeck
Rose Marie Mayer
Wayne Mogk

Ralph sighting. MOST members of the Write on Writers were delighted by the mid-winter visit of former member Ralph Laughlin, who claimed to be in the area, seeking ways to move back to Maine from Virginia. Ralph (center, seated) was also spotted at the January Men's Breakfast.

Write On Writers

"Out of Our Minds" debuts this month!

Out of Our Minds, the newest literary creation of the People Plus Center's Write On Writers, will be printed in early September and first released at the Senior Health Expo on Sept. 18.

"Within its covers you will meet twenty authors who have created stories and poems for your pleasure and enjoyment," writes Paul Karwowski, who helped edit the project, which he said is the writer's group's eighth major project. "Diversity, talent, dedication and wisdom are some of the characteristics of these authors," he added, "Their writings deal with a variety of subjects ranging from family, to animals, to life experiences, to holidays, to our times, our seasons and life in Maine."

Writers included in the book are: Elizabeth Bates, Betty Bavor, Ruth Foehring, Thomas Hallenbeck, Charlotte Hart, Sally Hartikka, Cecelia Hitte, Paul Karwowski, Russ Kinne, Ralph Laughlin, Rose Marie Mayer, Vince McDermott, Wayne Mogk, Nonie Moody, Ginny Sabin, Patty Sparks, Gladys Szabo, Marcia & Woody Townsend and Bonnie Wheeler. Marcia Townsend designed the book's cover and added illustrations throughout the 200-page volume. Charlotte Hart wrote the introduction to the book, which is dedicated to former members Charles Payne and Adelaide Guernelli.

Out of Our Minds will be available for purchase at the People Plus Center, and the book will be formally presented to the Center at an Author's Chat in October. 9-2018

Author's Chat features "Out of Our Minds"

Wed, Oct 24, 2 pm. The 20-plus member/writers of *Out of our Minds*, the newest literary creation of the People Plus Center's Write On Writers will be hosted at the Center during an Author's Chat on Wednesday, Oct. 24, beginning at 2 p.m.

Writers included in the book are: Elizabeth Bates, Betty Bavor, Ruth Foehring, Thomas Hallenbeck, Charlotte Hart, Sally Hartikka, Cecelia Hitte, Paul Karwowski, Russ Kinne, Ralph Laughlin, Rose Marie Mayer, Vince McDermott, Wayne Mogk, Nonie Moody, Ginny Sabin, Patty Sparks, Gladys Szabo, Marcia & Woody Townsend and Bonnie Wheeler. Marcia Townsend designed the book's cover and added illustrations throughout the 200-page volume. Charlotte Hart wrote the introduction to the book, which is dedicated to former members Charles Payne and Adelaide Guernelli.

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Copies of *Out of our Minds* will be available for purchase at the event for only $14.95, and at the Center after that date.

10-2018

People Plus Pic of the Week

PEOPLE PLUS PHOTO

THE PEOPLE PLUS WRITE ON WRITERS group hold up copies of their newest literay creation, "Out of Our Minds," which debuted last month. The book is a compilation of works of 20 authors. Their writings deal with a variety of subjects ranging from family, to animals, to life experiences. "Out of Our Minds" is the eighth publication from the writing group that meets every Wednesday at 1 p.m. at the People Plus Center. "Out of Our Minds" will be available for at the center on Union Street. For more information on the writing group and other clubs at People Plus visit peopleplusmaine.org.

Season's Greetings from the Write On! Writers

Twelve Days of A Mainer's Christmas

© Lyrics by R. Neil Laughlin

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me a black bear in a pine tree.

On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me…two Bean Boots, and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me…three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots, and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…six clammers clamming, Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me…seven lobsters boiling, six clammers clamming…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…eight eagles soaring, seven lobsters boiling, six clammers clamming…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…nine guys a huntin', eight eagles soaring, seven lobsters boiling, six clammers clamming…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…ten moose a mating, (MOOOWWWW!) nine guys a huntin', eight eagles soaring, seven lobsters boiling, six clammers clamming…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me…eleven ravens ranting, ten moose a mating, nine guys a huntin', eight eagles soaring, seven lobsters boiling, six clammers clamming…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me…twelve bears a sleeping, eleven ravens ranting, ten moose a mating, nine guys a huntin', eight eagles soaring, seven lobsters boiling, six clammers clammin'…Five Chick-a-Dees…four huffin' puffins, three stinky skunks, two Bean Boots and a black bear in a pine tree.

Foxboro December Night

by Charlotte Hart

In the 1940's, Foxboro, Massachusetts was a very small town. No shopping malls. No motels. No hotels. No inns. Gillette Stadium, home of the New England Patriots, was unheard of. My dad was a teacher in Franklin, Massachusetts, just north of Foxboro. Dad liked to go to Cranston, Rhode Island to visit my Uncle Nelson and his family and also to take advantage of Rhode Island gas wars. He would fill the tank of our 1940 Chevrolet with gas at 17 cents a gallon.

One cold, dark December night, Dad was driving Mom, my brother Bill, and me from Cranston, Rhode Island to Franklin, Mass. In Foxboro, in deep dark woods, we had "car trouble". The Chevy stopped and would not start. Dad popped the hood. "I am afraid the gas line is frozen."

"What will we do?"

"All we can do is hope someone drives out this way and offers to help." For a while we sat there in the freezing cold. I shivered even when Mom wrapped me up in an auto shawl. Finally headlights came through the woods, and a truck stopped. "Need some help, Mister?"

"I am afraid my gas line is frozen," Dad told the man.

"I'll take a look. I think you're right. First, let's get your wife and kiddos to a warm place." We piled into the truck and were driven a couple of miles to the man's home. A wood stove filled the place with warmth. "These people need some cocoa, Mother," the man told his wife. He told her he was going to take my dad and his car to Sonny's Garage.

We sat near the wood stove, drinking hot chocolate and eating homemade frosted ginger cookies. We watched the lady work at her sewing machine, "I'm making these table cloths for the Christmas Fair," she told Mom. Now you pick one out. A little Christmas gift from me."

We were full and warm and getting sleepy. Dad and our new friend arrived with our Chevrolet ready to go. As we drove home, Dad told Mom, "That man even asked if I had cash on hand. He would have given me money to pay for repairs." Mom used the red and green Christmas table cloth for years.

At Christmastime

by P.K. Allen

Winter is calling
The weather is appalling
Sleet and snow are falling
In this season of the year

Children are waking
Christmas pies are baking
Parents are making
Ready for Christmas cheer

Christmas bells are ringing
Carolers are singing
Santa clause is bringing
Bags filled with gifts and toys

Candles are gleaming
Children's faces are beaming
Christmas trees are teeming
With gifts for girls and boys

Angels

by Gladys Szabo

Angels we have heard on high
We often hear at Christmas time
Some people think of Angels with flowing gowns
Wings and halos rather than crowns
I see Angels all around
Take heed of surrounding circumstances
It may be the coincidence
Of an unsurmizing angel.
A smile, a touch or just a hug
Nothing said, you just feel the touch
Angels work in mysterious ways
Through those on earth - night and days.

Christmas Wish

by Bonnie Wheeler

What would your perfect Christmas gift be?
Lots of money? A new car? A 50-inch TV?
I'm thinking my wish would be
Sitting safe and warm by my Christmas tree
Beside family and friends singing Christmas songs with me
With a grateful heart to be living free

Dear Santa,
What a year! The internet went down and I had to spend time with my family...they seem like good people...bring them a small "something" or other. As always, wine and cookies will be next to the recliner, help yourself.
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Yours truly,
Patty L. Sparks

Christmas Tree

by Virginia Sabin

You fell into my lot
Trussed up with stone
Tethered with wire
Defying odds
Of remaining righted
This Christmas tree will stay
Buried deep in January snow
Boughs burdened with winter's sleet
Still you stay
Standing tall
A comfort to me

A Christmas Letter From Cousin Joe

by Charlotte Hart

A letter and family photo from Joe! This one will be a bit different I know.
My favorite kind of holiday cheer, BUT Joe's family does not look happy I fear.
Joe writes, "Fifteen gathered on Thanksgiving Day
At our house; I knew they would stay, stay, stay, stay.
Little Nancy ate lots, kept asking for more.
At family photo time, she threw up on the floor.
Aunt May wonders why does OUR sink over flow.
May does lousy work scraping dishes WE know!
SO from US to YOU this fuzzy photo, sad letter.
We DO have faith—Christmas just has to be better.
While I am at it, dear Family and Friends,
I'll tell you how the year 2018 ends.
As you know, I teach music, have a great high school band.
My band won great honor—the best in the land,
Picked to represent the state. How cool!
But then….my lead trumpet player threatened to blow up the school!
Never mind! We'd play without him in the state band parade….
Trumpet Player Two would give commands. We had it made.
Sad to say, we did have a problem—not small.
Trumpet Player Two, with excitement, made the wrong call.
49 bands marched one way. What a sight!
49 bands marched left. Our band marched right.
I do laugh. I don't cry, Friends and Family so dear,
And hope that we all have a Happy New Year."

Remembering Our Childhood Christmas Tradition

by Betty Bavor

Christmas never entered our minds until after Thanksgiving which was a family celebration as there were no farm hands working in the winter. We lived with our maternal grandparents and my older brother and I learned our p's & q's growing up on a farm. That meant chores had to be routinely done every day. Our second brother was born ten years after me – a big surprise or should I say little surprise! I share this fact as the Christmas tradition I am remembering did not include my baby brother.

Returning to school after Thanksgiving, took on a glimmer of Christmas. We began making decorations for our classroom windows and believe it or not we had Christmas trees in our classrooms for students to decorate. We learned Christmas carols, the 7th, 8th and 9th graders put on a concert or Christmas play and it seemed forever to finally open the last Advent Calendar tab in Sunday school. The church Christmas fair was an annual event. The large blue spruce tree in front of the town's library was ceremoniously lighted for our town Christmas tree. Homes were adorning lights and decorations. We had selected a tree from the pasture and set it up in the parlor waiting for dad to bring the boxes of decorations from the attic. Our grandparents watched and we listened to Christmas music while decorating our tree with precious ornaments. Several days before Christmas Eve my brother and I selected a socking to hang by the wood stove in the dining room hoping Santa would come to our house.

The Christmas story was performed by the Sunday school children on Christmas Eve followed by a candle light service. Santa did arrive at our house filling stockings to bulging and leaving presents under the tree. As mentioned earlier, chores needed to be done and our mom and nana were busy preparing a sumptuous Christmas dinner. Christmas morning my brother & I explored our stockings which always had a game, puzzle, coloring book, note paper and pencil for future thank yous. In the toe there was a tangerine or orange, several nuts, ribbon candy, a candy cane and a penny. The Christmas tree waited! Finally our family gathered for our Christmas celebration. No coal, as legend has it – we were good children all year! A meal fit for a king, a brightly lighted tree, excitement of gifts being opened and our family sharing the meaning of Jesus birth. Cherished memories of family celebration long ago warms my heart.

Goodwill to all people – peace, joy and love this 2018 holiday season

A Memorable Christmas

by Gladys Szabo

One of my most memorable Christmases, which may sound unusual, was at the time my mother was in a nursing home with Alzheimer's.

My four year old granddaughter was visiting us so we were up early, opening gifts. The joy of watching her was heartwarming.

Soon after we finished cleaning up, my significant other, my daughter, granddaughter and myself packed Santa's big green bag with stuffed animals and candy canes. Santa and his three elves headed to the nursing home.

Pack slung on Santa's back, jingle bells ringing, we entered the nursing home with Ho. Ho Ho's. Many residents were in the activity room singing Christmas carols, my mom included. The reaction was like a child's first Christmas. The excitement was overwhelming. Hands reaching out, asking what Santa had brought them. Each one got a stuffed animal which were accepted with open arms. Watching many hugging their gift like a child, brought tears to my eyes. As we finished handing out gifts we spent a few minutes with my mom. Christmas music was playing and my mom wanted to dance with Santa. The delight wiped away the tears of her not knowing who we were.

We then visited all the rooms on the two floors so no one was missed. The joy,hugs and conversations are memories I will have forever..

As we left singing, "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" they followed us to the elevator shouting, "Bye Santa see you next year!"

I know for a fact we got more joy then the residents and to this day my granddaughter still remembers those days.

Walk Down Memory Lane

by Gladys Szabo

Needing props for an upcoming event
To the toy department I went.
Suddenly my mind drifted
To Christmas shopping it shifted.
What fun it used to be
Looking for toys to put under the tree
The years when my children were young
Then waited for grandchildren to come!
I stood in the aisle misplaced in thought
Pondering what should be bought.
Barbie dolls,baby dolls,so many kinds
Enough to put me out of my mind.
Games, books, cars and trucks
The right ones I would pick with luck.
I visualized the intoxicating excitement
Of my children bounding into the living room
Seeing piles of gifts under the tree.
Shredding my hours of wrapping in moments
A heartwarming sight.
I still can hear their laughter and joy.
Suddenly I was back to reality
My children all grown
My grandchildren grown
Life is now so different.
I picked up a doll with thoughts of buying it
For old times sake.
Now it's great grandchildren I await.

Shopping

by Bonnie Wheeler

Christmas Eve was freezing cold and icy - not a shopping day, but I could not disappoint my four-year old grandson, Brandon. It was his day to buy his Christmas presents. He had his list and ten dollars. Since it was so bad outside and I had to go grocery shopping, I decided he could do his shopping at the base commissary while I picked up food, so off we went. I convinced him it would be better than Walmart, and it was. He chose a box of candy for his mother and me. Of course, I did not watch. He chose cans of nuts for his dad and pop. He chose holiday Life Savers and a favorite cereal for his brother and sister, cookies for Santa, and carrots for the reindeer - all good choices. All went well. Now, with five rolls of tape, he was wrapping his gifts.

We made it home safely and happy to be off the icy roads. Everything was wrapped and ready for placing under their tree. When his mom came to pick him up, he was so excited, he ran to tell her he had done all his Christmas shopping with Mama at the cemetery.

Letter To Santa

by Elizabeth B. Bates

Please, Santa, in your dress so red
chase away our memories so blue.
Remind us there is peace somewhere,
and we will get there if we try, like you.

You bring us gifts that fill our hearts with joy.
We forget to thank you, but you do not care.
You are rushing to deliver love to all,
Then back to work on magic for next year.

Christmas 2018

by Bonnie Wheeler

Time to bake a ham with sweet potatoes
Time to shop for coats and sweaters
Time to chop wood and uncover snow gear
SMILE - winter has arrived here
If you can't, you're in the wrong state
Head to the airport and make your escape

The Day After

by Bonnie Wheeler

A mess around the Christmas tree
The aftermath of wrapping glee
Happy tired children
Too much excitement
Adults stuffed and sleepy
A successful Christmas day
Wouldn't you say?

Christmas Tree Lot

by Nonie Moody

Early days of December
Christmas Trees sale signs appear.
Several places are located
On city lots empty and clear.

With poles and hanging white lights
There are rows and rows of trees
Leaning upon a wooden frame
Nicely spaced with a gentle breeze.

There is a chill in the air
With a few snowflakes descending.
As we open the car door
A faint Christmas carol is ending.

I feel the Christmas spirit
As the scent of balsam fir drifts.
Which tree will we select this year
And will it be one I can lift?

We must make a choice and select.
The feet are getting cold and numb.
The long needle pine is not the one.
My hands need warming at the drum.

We linger a little longer at the spruce.
Their needles are short and dark green.
With visions of gifts under its branches
The tall and lean is the best we've seen.

Barnyard Christmas (1950's)

by Patty L. Sparks

Passerby's
stop and stare
Children's eyes are
wide with wonder
while
barnyard puppets
sing and twirl
behind the glass
in Santer's storefront
window

Christmas Fair A Church Tradition

by Betty Bavor

Halloween is history, Thanksgiving is on the horizon and Christmas Church Fairs are taking place to surround us with the spirit of the Christmas Season. Church members have been busy creating handmade one of a kind crafts, knitting, sewing, baking cookies, making candy and jams, preserves, relish, pickles, chutney and canned pie fillings. All ingredients are from Maine's fall harvest. There are treasure tables, vintage tree ornaments and decorations, hand crafted wooden toys and trains, Christmas boutique tables, jewelry tables and more at these festive annual fairs. Some have music performances and entertainment. Each one has its own unique theme and all have the true meaning of Christmas as their focus.

Friendly Santa land is where children are invited to sit on Santa's lap to tell him what they would like to find in their Christmas stocking and under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. There might even be a children's table or room for children only, where they can buy a gift for mom, dad, brother, sister, relatives and friends. After browsing and finding a perfect, one of a kind, gift for special people on your list, enjoy a delicious meal or snack featuring a variety of foods cooked to perfection. Strike up a conversation with other people at the table.

Church Fairs are festive traditions fostering faith, fellowship, mission, and fun in a twinkly goodtime atmosphere. Scented greens, the aroma of food, mulled cider, soft Christmas back ground music and happy people make these fairs a glorious place to celebrate Jesus Birthday. May we keep the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts and let joy, love and peace surround us all, now and throughout the coming year.

The Day After

by P.K. Allen

T'is the day after Christmas
And all through the house
Parents are resting
And so is the mouse

Stockings are empty
All presents unwrapped
Paper and ribbons
And bows are all scrapped

Children are huddled
Playing games on TV
Cheering and shouting
And laughing with glee

Nighttime is nearing
Stories are read
Then all of the children
Go happily to bed

Heirlooms on the Tree

by Charlotte Hart

The sweetest task each winter—
Trimming the Yuletide tree
Unpacking precious heirlooms
Hanging them—carefully!

Near the top Grandmother's elves
Dance in suits of gold.
Grandfather's mini skates and sleds are
Wooden. Nostalgic to behold.

Our tree has grown in nearby woods,
Fresh cut. Christmas is due.
Evergreen scent fills the room
And drifts the whole house through.

This year we add ten snowflakes,
Oval, diamond, round.
Cut in intricate patterns
By children's hands with joy profound.

Another Night Before Christmas

by R. Laughlin

(The first twelve lines are from "A Visit from St. Nicolas" by Clement Clarke Moore, first published in 1823.)

T'was the night before Christmas and all thro' the house
not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
while visions of sugar plums danced in their heads.
And Mama in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap
when out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow
gave the luster of mid-day to objects below.
There, lying on the ground in a huge snow bank
was a total stranger, obviously a personage of no rank.
He had fallen whilst dragging a large heavy log,
all the time being "yapped" at by a mangy old dog.
I looked down on him and he looked up at me,
he was a lost soul if ever one could be.
It was then I knew what I had urgently to do,
I put on my robe and slipped into each shoe.
I ran down the stairs and to the front room
almost tripping over some chairs and a broom.
I opened the front door and motioned to him;
he hesitated, but I insisted until he finally came in.
The clothes on his back were tattered and torn,
the shoes on his feet were nearly through worn.
He was lean as a rail, if the truth was to speak,
he looked like he had barely eaten in over a week.
I stoked up the fire and set him quite near;
it clearly showed he was frozen from foot to ear.
I brought him drink and food and set on his lap.
He glared back at me as if I was setting a trap.
He ate all in silence never saying one word.
Satisfaction returned; I swear he nearly purred.
When he had finished he turned and he said,
"Why have you done what others might dread –
to take in a stranger all tattered and torn?
Most would see danger and look on with scorn."
I replied, "We are not rich nor are we poor.
To a person in need we must always open our door,
whether in Winter, Summer, Spring or Fall –
is not sharing with others our Creator's call?"
He rose from the chair and headed towards the door,
about to go out in the blustery cold once more.
Not fully knowing why, I wished him to stay;
but he said "No." he had other places to go that day.
As he was departing he glanced back at me,
his face now thinning with a look of near glee.
"You're a bearer of the true spirit of living,
helping others in need with unreserved giving.
Your sharing of meat, drink and bread unleavened
has earned you one day a high place in Heaven.
Thankyou my friend for the hospitality and drink.
I'll see you again" he said as he disappeared in a blink.
I stood in awe, my mind and body rather shook,
then I dashed to the door to have one last look.
There was no man to be seen, only a heavenly beam,
one bright ascending star trailing a gold stream.
Now when I look to the sky and see a shooting star
I wonder who's been visited by that stranger from afar.

May the star of your God bring you and yours
Peace, Prosperity, Hope and Fulfillment for
all seasons; and for many more years to come!

Joseph's Story

by Vince McDermott

I look down at the babe - and wonder. How did I come to be here? What am I here for? Yes, I am of royal linage - but I am far from royal. I am a simple carpenter. When Mary said she was with child I did not know what to think - I was not part of it. I was prepared to cancel our marriage. But then I had this dream - a very powerful dream. I was to be part of something wonderful.

After an exhausting journey to Bethlehem in response to the census we are here in a stable. The town is very crowded and my relatives did not want to house us since Mary was about to give birth. We are fortunate to have a warm place in the stable. The birth went well and we are well cared for.

Shepherd came to visit to pay homage to my son. My son? I still am troubled by that. I do not know what to think. Just as I was beginning to come to accept it, these three strangers from the east arrived bearing very valuable gifts for the babe. It is beyond belief - what will happen next? I am very fearful - but hopeful.

The Day After Christmas

by Sally Hartikka

Twas the day after Christmas, and all through our place
The wrapping and boxes were taking up space.
The presents were scattered all over the floor,
And someone's wet boots dripped next to the door.
Dirty pots and pans yet sat in the sink,
Along with some glasses still half-filled with drink.
Wine spilled on the carpet filled me with dread
At the thought of the labor that I had ahead.
If Santa really wanted to give me a gift
He'd have left me a cleaning elf to work the day shift.

Christmas Story A to Z

by Nonie Moody

A is for Angel
Who suddenly stood before the shepherds

B is for Bethlehem
Also called the City of David

C is for Christ the Lord
Born for you a Savior

D is for Decree
That a census be taken of the whole Roman Empire

E is for Engagement/Espoused
Joseph and Mary

F is for First-born
Son of Mary

G is for Glory
To God in the highest [heaven] and on earth

H is for Heavenly Host
A multitude praising God

I is for Inn
Where there was no room for Joseph and Mary

J is for Jesus
On the 8th day they called Him Jesus

K is for Keeping Watch
The shepherds maintained a watch over their flocks by night

L is for Love
Mary treasured up all these things pondering them in her heart

M is for Manger
Where Mary laid Jesus after she gave birth

N is for Nazareth
The home of Joseph and Mary

O is for Own City
Joseph traveled 65 miles to Bethlehem because he was a descendant of King David

P is for Praising God
A multitude of heavenly hosts

Q is for Quirinius [Kwy-rin-ee-us also called Cyrenious]
Governor of Syria

R is for Returned
The shepherds went back to the fields praising God for all they had heard and seen

S is for the Sign
The shepherds will recognize Him covered in swaddling clothes

T is for Terribly Frightened
Of the sudden appearance to the shepherds by the angel of the Lord

U is for Us The Shepherds
Receiving the good news of Jesus birth

V is for Visiting Angel of the Lord
Made announcement of good tidings of a great joy to the shepherds

W is for Wrapped Clothes
Mary used to cover the baby Jesus

X is for eXalting
Praising God saying Glory to God in the highest peace among men with whom He is pleased

Y is for Years
Jesus was born during the time of Caesar Augustus (27 B.C. to A.D 14 who served as first emperor of the Roman Empire)

Z is for Zealous Shepherds
Traveled to Bethlehem to see this thing that was announced by the angel

Snow, Snow, Go Away!

by Doris Weinberg

I just looked out my window
And it's doing it again!
The flakes are floating down
And will it stop? Who knows when?

It looked so very pretty
When I saw it just at first.
But after so very many days,
I think that we've been cursed!

The large tree branches have
much too much snow!
I fear that they will break
If the wind should really blow!

The parking lot has caused me fear
That I might fall is very clear.
My car is buried under all that white.
To be stuck in the house just doesn't seem right!

I've missed my swim class for so many weeks.
Will I get back soon? It looks pretty bleak.
On the other hand staying home might be good.
I would have been shopping-spent money-that's understood.

Sometimes it's best to just slow down.
Curl up in pajamas and a warm dressing gown
I've got a good book land some knitting too.
And probably a few bills that I know must be due.

I guess it's not so bad to see the snow through the glass.
I can stay where it's warm and dream of green grass.
So snow, snow, please go away!
I think we've had enough for many a day!!

I Picked up a Box of Christmas Cards

by Sally Hartikka

I picked up a box of Christmas cards
That contained scenes of our great state.
"Just the thing," is what I thought,
And thus those were the ones I bought,
Not knowing how they would frustrate.
As I was writing out the cards
I discovered something appalling.
Though the scenes were of Maine,
I decided to complain because
I'd discovered something galling.
The publisher, from a town nearby,
Had opted to have Chinese print it.
"Printed in China," it said on the back.
To me, that was a real drawback,
Since "buy local" has been my habit.
Surely this must be a mistake, I surmised,
So I emailed and asked him why
When he was featuring the State of Maine
Did he show to his home state disdain
By deciding out of the country to buy.
He said he had used a printer in Auburn
But thought a better deal might lay abroad.
I checked on that Auburn printing firm,
And what I discovered made me squirm.
Out of business. Was it due to that tightwad?

Everygreen

by Virginia Sabin

I'm in a rush, late as usual, to get a Christmas tree after work. From the very few left in the lot, I chose one, it was not as tall as I wanted nor as green. One side could pass, looking better than the others having lost a limb or two. It was a close fit in the trunk of the car. I hoped there would be no more damage.

My 16 year old son carried the tree into the house, placing it in front of the sliding glass door that was in the front of the house. Oh Ma, it's always a crippled tree. Not always. Anyway, a Christmas tree deserves to be decorated regardless.

Remember the tree last year? So tall it touched the ceiling, it's generous arms thick with greenery, filling the house, smelling like Christmas. The tree was hung with dozens of gingerbread men your sister made from a 10 inch cookie cutter. She dressed each one with bright red and green shirts and trousers from a frosting sprinkled with glitter. A perfect tree!

The day after Christmas, the tree was leaning to one side. You came out of the shower, whistling , ready to go someplace else. You fixed it in a hurry and left. You could be seen whistling up the walk as the tree toppled over. Now, all the ginger bread men were amputees! Another crippled tree.

Winter's Solstice-Moon

by Patty L. Sparks

Quivering diadem
dressed in white
silver mirror
priestess of...
night

BRR-R-R

by Doris Weinberg

The thermometer says it is ten below-
Too cold for dog or man.
Much easier to stay inside
And be toasty if you can.

Outside the snow is swirling
And icicles are beginning to form.
You'd be foolish to leave the house.
Stay in where it is warm.

Add another log to the roaring fire
And hear it crackle and snap.
And as the flames get bigger,
You can toss away your wrap.

A cup of hot chocolate would add to the mood.
Maybe with a marshmallow on top.
Put comfy pillows on the floor
For all of you to flop.

This is how I'd picture
A bitter night very long ago.
Maybe a book but no TV-
Life was much simpler you know.

So enjoy the snowflakes and icicles
From through the window pane.
Cuddle up with your dog and family.
The scene would be lovely to frame!

The Wishing Boy

by Elizabeth B. Bates

It was beautiful...it was shining from the store window. The store was all lit up for Christmas. It was so bright that the necklace looked like it was made with diamonds. It was placed around the neck of a mannequin that was staring out the window at the people rushing by during a snow squall.

Christmas was coming so soon, and there was so much still to do.

The boy wanted his mother to have that necklace, but he had very little money to spend. He turned away and ran for the bus to take him home. He had no job. He was only 12 years old. He was not ready to buy expensive gifts. He was sure his mother would love that necklace. Maybe he could buy it somehow.

When he got home, he took out his shovel to clean the snow off the front steps, which were many because the apartment was higher up than the sidewalk. It was his job but no pay. His mother told him he had to do it so that the old people in the other apartments would be be safe using the steps.

The sidewalks were shoveled by the city's uniformed workers. He worked on the steps and when he had finished, he took his shovel and cleaned it off with his gloved hands. When he took it into his apartment, he could smell something cooking in their small kitchen. It smelled like chicken soup. He was really hungry.

He didn't have any brothers or sisters. No father either. His father had gone to California to get a job. His mother told him he wasn't ever coming back. She didn't seem sad about it. Still, he missed him. He wished he could go to California, too. Was his Dad looking for gold there? He would love to do that! His mother told him he had to finish going to school first. That would be in four years...it sounded like forever.

The boy did have friends at school, but only two lived near him. He didn't like them much. His mother told him that they were always getting into trouble, so stay away from them. The next day was Saturday and he went back to the store to see if he could find his gift for his mother. He went all around the first floor and then up to the second floor, He saw a big sign that said "Santa's Village".

He went over there to see all the little children waiting in line to visit Santa. They were so cute!

He was too old to visit Santa, so he was surprised when Santa got up and went over to him. Santa tapped him on the shoulder and smiled.

"Hello" he said. "I really need you...Please...the boy that was supposed to help me didn't come...could you help me? I will pay for it!"

"What do I have to do?" the boy asked.

"Just keep order with the children, they are so excited to see me!"

He gave the boy an elf's costume and it fit! He went to work for Santa and the hours flew by.

When the time for seeing Santa was over, Santa came over to the boy and thanked him and gave him an envelope with dollar bills showing. The boy was so happy! He went over to the first floor where the necklace was still hanging on the mannequin's neck with the For Sale sign. It was priced at $15. The boy counted his dollar bills and had more than that! He bought it ! He was so happy he laughed all the way home in the bus!

Join us for the new year!