WRITE ON WRITERS' HISTORY

Part 2: 2019-2024

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.

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2019

FRANK, an Ultimate Winner

The accumulation of wealth does not make a person a winner in life. The true winners in life are those people who commit themselves to fully participating in the family of man; the people who say "yes" to whatever circumstances they encounter on their journey through life.

They reap the ultimate rewards from living, loving, laughing, crying and embracing life's offerings. Frank Connors is such a person.

It's a privilege and pleasure to know him and to have worked with him. *-Ralph Laughlin*

We'll Miss You, Frank!

Speaking Fondly,

Write On! Writers

Speaking Frankly

Editor-in-Chief *Frank Connors*

7-2019

7-2019

Gabrion becomes Editor-in-Chief

7-2019

Patrick Gabrion, recently retired as an editor with the Brunswick Times Record, has been named editor of People Plus News.

Gabrion, 66, who is a native of Michigan, compiled a 44-year career in journalism working at daily newspapers in Michigan, Florida, and Maine. He is a graduate of Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, with a degree in History.

While at the Times Record for 16 years, Gabrion was responsible for designing and editing the front page, and had similar duties producing the Home, Business, and Science sections of the newspaper.

"I look forward getting to know the people who utilize the wonderful facilities at People Plus," said Gabrion. "The publication is for them, to keep them and others informed as to what's going on, and hopefully tell their stories."

Gabrion and his wife, Vicky, live in Hallowell.

Season's Greetings from the Write On! Writers

Merry Christ Mass

by Elizabeth B. Bates

The name used to mean something old.
Santa was not YET born in the USA!
Now it means shopping for everyone
on a list that gets bigger every day!
Trees are sought in the green woods
and dragged screaming indoors
and ruined by the time "decorated"
by those who love no green to show.
I miss the olden days somehow
when the child named Christ was here.
Others have moved here, I know ... so
HAVE A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Advent Can Begin in October

by Helen L. Walker

Ancient rhythms, ancient tempos can awaken you to wonders from beyond yourself: you begin the watching. Then the hope comes. Then the glory more than worth the wait. Then finally the grieving, before the greatest gift, rebirth.

Like here in Maine, the drive to Popham Beach brings autumn ecstasy, unparalleled splendor, candy for your hungry eyes.
Yet now you see that maple reds have shed, prepare their bare repose, their contribution to winter's cycle coming, dark branches exposed.
You, leaving off with harvesting your daily bread, remember what is next.

You start to hear the text inside yourself, the message of a babe, a birth.
A quickening occurs. You're not sure where or if you should take note, yet you set aside time to listen. As sure as heaven is our heritage, the song starts, the drums beat slowly, stirring you, inviting you.

You do what you can, what you know, what you are, to be awake to this Christmas mystery. This year, you begin to realize that Advent, the season of the Coming of the Christ Child, is as old and as new and as ever-present as your own expanding heart permits.

God Rest Ye Merry

by Sally Hartikka
with help from Vince McDermott

God rest ye merry, gentlewoman
Let nothing ye dismay,
For all your work is now completed
On this Christmas day.

You've decked the halls with holly
And trimmed the tree with lights.
Santa and Rudolf adorn the roof
Along with other sights.

You've bought the gifts with utmost care
And covered them with wrapping.
You did the Christmas cards and letter
And all the envelope lapping.

You've made the Christmas cookies,
Now resting in the freezer,
And the fruitcake has been baked,
Its aroma quite a teaser.

Today you roasted turkey
With stuffing on the side.
The gravy was delicious ...
Not lumpy, made with pride.

Creamed onions and mashed potatoes
Along with candied yam
And green beans in a casserole
Accompanied the spiral ham.

You did it all, my precious girl
And all without complaint.
No wonder you're so tired now
And feeling rather faint.

You've been hard at work for several weeks,
So God rest ye merry, now dear lass.
You've earned some relaxation.
Put up your feet and have a glass.

A Very Special Night

by Gladys Szabo

Great anticipation on this very
special night
Lights and decorations, all
shining so bright!
My favorite of holidays, it's Christmas Eve
Santa is coming and I do believe!
The spirit of Christmas with many joyous sounds
Holiday songs being sung, heard all around.
Santa is coming with presents — such fun.
But the birth of Jesus is the one
Whose praises are being sung.
All faiths gather to honor in their ways
Making it the most wonderful of holidays
Everyone's celebrating as we all gather
One day of the year our differences don't matter!

Blessed at Christmas

by Nonie Moody

One year as an early teen there was a major shortfall in our family's finances and Christmas looked bleak. The Christmas tree was decorated and only small packages with reused paper were under the tree. It would only be a few days before Christmas eve.

My older brother's best friend and his twin sister were working young adults. One evening there was noise coming from the back door of the farmhouse. Letting themselves in, they came through the kitchen straight to the living room tree, carrying wrapped colorful Christmas packages.

The whole family was in shock as we all watched. This was the year my sister and I received the latest fashion pop beads. These two young adults were giving, selfless and wonderful while lifting our family's Christmas spirit.

A Christmas House at Stevens Corner

by Charlotte Hart

This farmhouse! Here two hundred years and more.
My family's home. Four generations born ...
Red bows on wreaths of green grace every door.
White window candles light snow-covered lawn.
Charles Stevens built eight rooms large and well.
Eight fireplaces the first century blessed.
My own grandparents then came here to dwell,
Built on an ell, a porch, made home a heavenly rest.
A generation traveled miles to school,
Established five new homes not far away
The family gathers yearly — blessed Yule.
Great Grandma Margaret ten
decades did stay
Bright lights, a feast and
Christmas songs we'll bring!
My wedding will be here —
with lilacs — in the spring.

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.

Maine Nor'easter

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Seas rage, winds pummel
shorelines of granite and pine,
as snow falls ... on snow.

You Wonder

by Bonnie Wheeler

Why do folks live in Maine
Where snow flies all winter long
Why don't folks move away?
Maybe spring and fall is the answer
Living life the way it should be

Tiny Wishes

by W A Mogk

I found a tiny bottle in the sand and picked it up to examine it. In so doing, I rubbed the surface and was greeted with a puff of smoke. There in front of me, now stood a genie — a tiny genie. He said, "I am the tiny genie of the tiny bottle. You are entitled to three tiny wishes." "What do you mean by tiny?" I asked. "I leave that up to you," he replied. "But be warned. If you are greedy and wish for too much, we will exchange places and you will become the genie of the bottle."

"How did you become the tiny genie?" I inquired.

"I wished for a pony," he responded.

With that, I knew asking for a small sports car was out of the question. This was going to be tricky. How can I gain something of value while still asking for something small?

"Maybe you could wish for a small wallet stuffed with one-hundred dollar bills," offered the genie. "Would that qualify as tiny?" I asked. "Maybe yes — maybe no; I don't make the rules."

Great, I thought to myself. This teeny-weeny-sneaky-genie will be no help. So I pondered for awhile then said, "I wish to have only tiny amounts of doubt." "Granted," said the genie. "And I want my fears to be small." "Also granted." "Lastly, I wish for any feelings of malice I might have, to be brief." "Agreed," the genie replied.

Then, looking up at me, the tiny genie said, "I had hoped you would fall for that wallet gimmick, but you didn't take the bait. Instead of asking for riches, you asked for things that make you a richer person. I tip my tiny genie hat to you, and hope that the next stranger to rub the bottle is not as wise."

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!

Snowflakes

by Betty Bauor

Snowflakes begin high in Earth's atmosphere when a dust or pollen particle comes in contact with water vapor. The water-coated particle freezes to become a tiny crystal of ice, the "seed" from which a snowflake will grow. Being heavier than the surrounding air, it begins to fall towards Earth collecting more water molecules of vapor. Somehow they arrange themselves in a hexagonal crystal structure and the snowflake grows. The hexagonal structure of each snowflake has an unlimited variety of shapes caused by temperature, humidity and water vapor as they descend. Snowflakes will reach ground only if air temperatures are below freezing all the way to the ground.

It is amazing how these tiny, fragile and beautiful snowflakes can fall to create tons of piles of snow causing catastrophic environmental challenge and damage. They also provide opportunity to enjoy winter sports and recreational activities for people of all ages.

People need to prepare for winter — button down the hatches, have the shovels handy, snow blowers ready to start, sand/salt within reach to spread on slippery surfaces, warm clothes, emergency plans and supplies. Lastly, have fun playing in the snow. Stretch out on your back in new fallen snow, raise and lower your arms to form the wings and shape of an angel. What would Santa Claus do without snow for his reindeer to bring the sleigh full of toys to girls and boys and wish

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL
AND TO ALL GOOD NIGHT.

If I Were Planning Christmas

by Helen L. Walker

If I were the one in charge, I'd have the Christ child born on Halloween
in a dress with satin bows, to set a precedent for clothes, so
cross dressing now would be just fine, and gender problems would decline.
That would lead to less divorce, less arguments, less pain,
Less broken hearts, more love in general on the earthly plane,
which is the point, in the longer view, of Jesus coming here for me and you.

If I were planning, like I said, I wouldn't wait til Christmas Day;
instead I'd make All Souls Day the baby Jesus holiday.
That way ghosts could be our friends and teach us how to walk on air
and zombies how to never die. And witches, they could start to fly
their brooms by day, so we'd see them wave and be less scary, and gradually
we'd lose our fears. We'd start to know that anywhere we'd go, we'd find
a friend to help us out, invite us in; there'd no lose, only ... win.

If I planned how to celebrate this big event, it'd go like this:
Churches painting altars orange, setting up pumpkins in a fine long line
with candles inside and faces carved with mouths that smile and eyes that shine,
and here is the big change not to miss: we could start to love more, and fear less.

Instead of closing our minds and hearts out of fear of this and that,
we'd embrace the new, try more things, talk to strangers on a train,
or a bus, and a neighbor too who could decide to disagree
with what we know is true. Refugees from Africa or Mexico
or anyone who needs some hope, we'd invite into our homes
expectantly as friends, as family, and soon we'd have no enemies.

War would stop of course, and then the lion really would lie down with lambs.
Then maybe Jesus wouldn't have to die and change to spirit. Instead,
we'd run into him at a farmers market, church, or Popham Beach,
see him with our natural eyes, inspired by every single speech.

I say this sort of kidding, but sort of not. God's way is always best,
but since I cannot ever understand, I like to imagine other plans
that seem to save us more efficiently, with more joy, more ease.
So just perhaps a Halloween Christmas could bring a quicker kind of peace.

Seasonal Goddess

by S. Patty L. Sparks

... wisdom
... stillness
beauty and decay
etched upon her
white skin of
winter

Winter Solstice

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Walk her crackling, frosted fields under skies of washed out winter blue
Stand in her stillness where air holds its breath
Caught between the birth and death of time ... there, sleeps, a promise of spring

Let it snow, Let it snow, Let it snow

by Sally Hartikka

Let's not get carried away;
A little snow is pretty and nice,
But one snowstorm will surely suffice ...
A few inches of fluffy white stuff,
And none of that horrid ice.

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas;
It helps show off the colored lights
And brightens up the darkening nights
As winter solstice comes along
And the bitter cold nips and bites.
But no blizzards, please,
And no back to back storms
When it's hard to get the house warm
And chilly drafts permeate all
So wrapping in blankets becomes the norm.

Everything in moderation, 'tis said,
And I couldn't agree with it more.
Let it snow once, but I abhor
The continuing storms this song's about
And the piles of snow it longs for.

Haiku

by Betty Baxor

SNOWFLAKES
Snowflakes in winter
A hexagonal ice crystal
Each snowflake distinct

January Snow

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Come, let winter weave
her wondrous spell,
for all of nature
is at peace,
in this the month ...
of dreams

Eight Little Lights

by Doris Weinberg

Eight little candles lit up nice and bright.
I wonder what my present will be that
my Dad gives me tonight?

Way back when I was little,
what did Chanukah mean to me?
I knew a great big battle had been won,
and my People were finally free.

We celebrated with a gift each night
because a miracle had lasted eight days.
And now after thousands of years
it is a traditional Jewish holiday.

I did grow up and hear the story of
how our People were constantly oppressed.
On this occasion the Temple was ruined
but our small army turned out the best!

The family of the Maccabees led us off to war.
And I'm sure that God did help our tiny Army Corp.
And I'm sure that God joined in to
help our tiny Army corp.

The battle was won by the Jews of course,
And they hurried to get the temple repaired.
But during their effort only a tiny bit of oil was found
and gave them a terrible scare.

The Holy Lamp needed to burn eternally
and now it would go out.
Someone would have to travel far for more.
Of this there was no doubt.

The Miracle occurred when oil was found
and brought back eight days later.
But that one little original drop lasted that long!
Another Miracle by our Creator.

Chanukah is one of our Joyous events
And besides the gifts of course there is food.
So, join us at our Jewish home
Potato pancakes cooked in oil we include!!!

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.

A Different Christmas

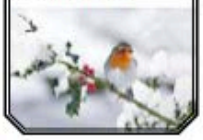
by Gladys Szabo

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 farmer's 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 dose
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!

Haiku

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Tiny birds scurry
Neath boughs laden with snow
Grateful for berries.



Twenty Christmas Fruitcakes

by Charlotte Hart

"Nick, would you mind making twenty fruitcakes? I like to give them as Christmas gifts."

"No problem, Mrs. Parsons. I'll make them this afternoon."

It was early September 1953. Our boss, May Parsons, was owner of the Forest Hill House in Kennebunkport, Maine. Nick was the chef. I was a waitress. Most of the help had left on Labor Day to go back to high school. Because I was a sophomore at the University of Maine in Orono, which in those days opened in mid-September, I was still in Kennebunkport. Most of the hotel guests had gone home. It was quiet, and Nick was glad to have something to do.

May had soaked a huge bowl of fruit in dark rum for a couple of days. She gave Nick her recipe for fruitcake. Some of the ingredients were raisins, light raisins, dark raisins, glaceed cherries, currents, pineapple, orange peel and apricots, Golden syrup, dark brown sugar, eggs, flour, butter, and "more" rum to drizzle over the cakes.

Now I have to tell you that on a busy day in August 1953, Nick had had a nasty little chef's accident. He had nearly cut off a finger on his left hand. He had several stitches. A thick, skillfully applied bandage was to be worn for several weeks. That bandage stayed firmly in place but changed from white to dark, stained with various kitchen juices.

On the afternoon Nick made twenty fruitcakes, the hotel kitchen smelled heavenly. (I love good fruitcake!) After the cakes were baked, Nick drizzled dark rum over the tops. Then he flipped the cakes and drizzled dark rum over the bottoms. When the twenty cakes were cool, Nick wrapped them carefully in several layers of cheesecloth and then aluminum foil ready to season and then freeze until Christmastime.

I had been admiring Nick's work on those twenty beautiful fruitcakes, but then I noticed something was missing. "Nick," I said, "Where is your bandage? Your finger looks fine, but where is your bandage?"

"Oh –oh! Oh no! No! No! NO! NO! It has to be in one of those fruitcakes. Should I tell May?"

"Oh dear! I don't know. I really do not think so. What good would that do?"

"Some friend of May's is going to get a surprise for Christmas."

Red Truck

by Nonie Moody

It was the cutest red truck I had ever seen,
Not the big one with the four-door double cab.
This one was small with only two doors
Not a ton pickup with engine sounding so mad.

This red truck was an absolute dream vehicle,
Not that monster pickup you would see at a show.
The bed was just a normal size and looked perfect,
Not that large truck bed you could haul a cow.

My red truck was shiny and perfect in snow,
Not a large truck to hog the middle of the road.
This red truck carried a beautiful evergreen tree
Parked inside a very large Christmas snow globe.

The Spirit of Christmas

by P.K. Allen

The socks were all hung
on the mantle 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.

The Wise Men

by Nonie Moody

Making a journey to an
unknown place,
They slowly bumped along on
camel backs
Over mountains and through
deserts,
Following "His star" creating
tracks.

Astrologers and scholars were three
Studying the vast heavens above.
The Magi's caravan slowly moves on
From Persia (Iran) to Nazareth.

Gifts were packed securely in the saddle
Gold for deity, royalty and King
Frankincense for fragrance and priesthood
Myrrh for embalming, dying His mission to bring.

The Magi followed the supernatural light
To the Child's house and when they saw Mary
They fell down and worshiped Him
Giving Him treasures, they did not tarry.

Saga of the Three Caroleers

by Russ Kinne

As 13-year-old boys, we were always short of cash. And we knew a 15-year-old guy who went caroling with his very pretty girlfriend — and got good tips! Even a dollar, when Pepsi was cents a bottle and hamburgers (albeit small and maybe half sawdust) we had to try it. But we couldn't sing at all well. So we decided to simply chant —

(first guy) Merrrrrrry Christmaaaaaaas!
(next guy) Haaaaaappy Nooo Yearrrrrr!
(last guy) Perrioddd!

Well, that didn't work; they wouldn't even open their doors
So we decided to sing a little. Bill knew what he called "close harmony" just singing three notes above the primary notes. But we were tired of the same old carols, so we sang:

Happy Birthday to youuuu, happy birthday to youuuuuuu,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR JEE-ZUSSS!
Happy birthday to youuuu — oo —uuu
We didn't get any tips than either.
Sigh

Gifts

by Bonnie Wheeler

There are different kinds of gifts
Two of the best, true friendship and kindness
You don't need to unwrap

Christmas Waiting

by Bonnie Wheeler

The smell of cinnamon cookies
Christmas is coming
Bags filled with presents
Family coming for turkey dinner
Christmas tree lights burning
Excited sleepy children waiting
Christmas is almost here

Santa Gear

by Bonnie Wheeler

You could spend Christmas in Florida
Where warm winds blow and flowers bloom
You could eat Christmas dinner of barbecue
Or stay in Maine this year
Until Santa appears in L.L. Bean gear

Dear Santa,

They say people my age should not STILL believe in you. ... Well, guess what, you'll find my homemade ginger molasses cookies and a nice Merlot next to the recliner — you know the drill.

Merry Christmas, Santa!

Yours truly,
S. Patty L. Sparks

Writers put into words why they enjoy writing

Photo by Patrick Gabrion

The Write on Writers, a very engaging group at People Plus, obviously enjoy what they do. So they were asked to put pen to paper on why they like to write and gather together at the Center. Here are their thoughts:

"I have to say I have a love-hate with writing. It is very hard to do, so much work. And there is the question in my mind, do I really have anything to say? Who will this benefit? And so on. But then something gets me to start writing and, hours later, it is still my 'life work' to say what I really mean. It is very nice to be in this (Write on Writers) group. It is a reason to need to write something every week. Everyone is so accepting and kind. There is no competition, and there is a great love of language and especially of storytelling."
— *Helen Walker*

"All my life I have enjoyed writing. Papers for school, letters home, you name it. In February 2007, I joined the writing group at People Plus. There I found encouragement, a diverse and interesting group of welcoming people and weekly inspiration to write. For me occasionally writing is therapy. Driving in South Freeport one morning I hit a deer, a fawn, (and) broke its leg. I wrote about the experience. Then I felt less devastated, less sad. Attempting to write helps me appreciate the great writers, the talent and effort necessary to produce significant work, that of William Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, J.K. Rowling, J.D. Vance, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and hosts of new giants."
— *Charlotte Hart*

"I learned of the writers' group as soon as I moved to Maine three years ago. However, I was a little intimidated when I realized the ability of the writers. Nevertheless, I made myself attend a session just over a year ago and I am so happy that I did. The group, a variety of different writing styles, welcomed me warmly and seemed to enjoy what I wrote. Now, after a whole year, I have many new friends and the challenges from the group have much improved my writing skills."
— *Doris Weinberg*

"During my senior year at Brunswick High School, I was able to take an advanced English course, one which required a great deal of composition. John Smith taught the course, and he was enthusiastic, full of ideas, and able to instill in us a love for writing. Since childhood, I had read and wondered about an event mentioned in my family's genealogy, leading to years of research on the subject and eventually a book, which I self-published. I joined Write on Writers for help with the book's production, but I stayed because I enjoyed the group's challenges and interaction with its people. Writing for me is a way of expressing myself, and thanks to my classes at Brunswick High School, it also comes quite easily."
— *Sally Hartikka*

"Several years ago I moved to Maine. A college classmate introduced me to People Plus and gifted me with my first year's membership. I mentioned my goal of finding an activity I had never done and the suggested Write on Writers. Our Wednesday meetings are friendly, inspiring and social as we share our creative writing talent together. It is an opportunity and honor to be a member of this group exercising our minds, risking new writing styles, enjoying stories, poetry, essays, memoirs and more at our weekly storytelling meetings. Members have published books and I am delighted to open People Plus News and have my writing included with others on the Write on Writers monthly page."
— *Betty Bawor*

"Ten years ago I attended my first meeting with the writers. I enjoyed writing poems for family and journaling. I wanted to write memoirs and learn other types of writing. Write on Writers is a unique group. Many of us share memoirs, personal experiences, different types of writing. Through all our sharing we get to know one another much more than in most other groups. We have become a family. We care and help one another as needed. We celebrate birthdays once a month along with holidays throughout the year. I look forward to our meetings every week. I know being there will make my day much brighter. Lots of laughs, great readings and I always seem to learn something new either about writing or from someone's reading."
— Gladys Szabo

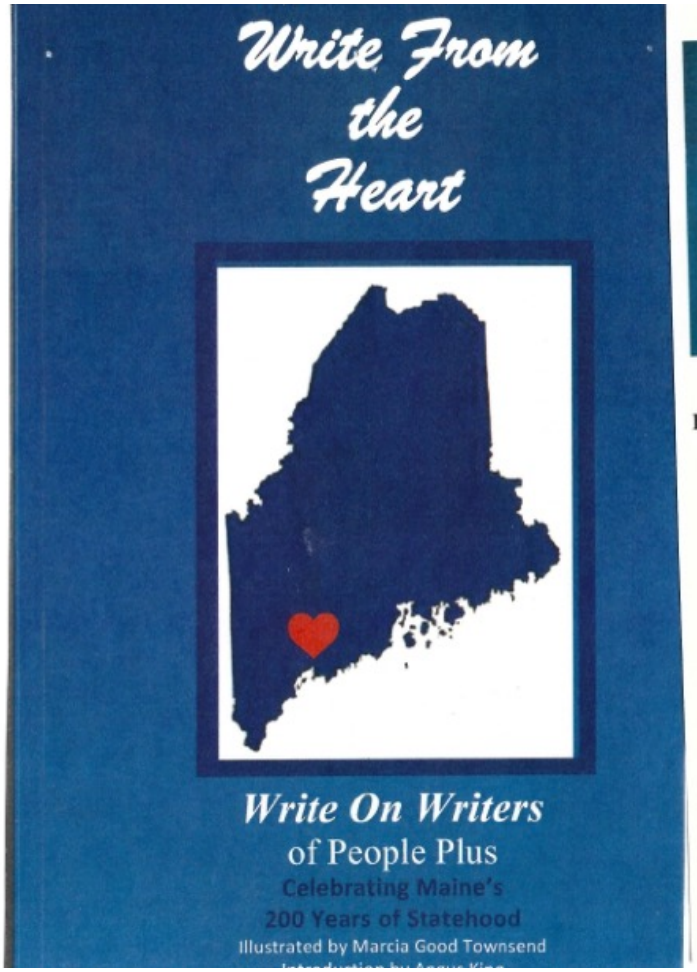
"My grandmother and mother both wrote poetry and prose. But it wasn't until joining People Plus and Write on Writers did I catch the excitement of sharing my thoughts in writing. Write on Writers has given me the venue to exercise my voice in a fun and friendly way."
— *Nonie Moody*

"I enjoy writing because it gives me the freedom to think about anything and everything. Inspiration may come from the news, a report or just looking out of the window. Science fiction is my main interest so the possibilities are endless, but I always try to add a dose of plausible to pull the reader into the story. I try to make people imagine things they may never have thought of before. If my story makes people wonder, then I have been successful."
— *W A Mogk*

The Write on Writers group meets on Wednesdays at 1 pm at the Center. Their published works are available in two books, *Out of Our Minds* and *Journeys and Reflections*, which are available at People Plus. The cost per book is $14.95, with proceeds going to the Center.

Join us for the new year!

2020



Do you like to write?
Fiction
Non-fiction
Poetry

Be Our Guest
Every Wednesday
at 2:00 PM
or on Zoom

Come to
Write On Writers
of
People Plus!
The center that builds community

11-30-20

Authors

Paul Karwowski
Charlotte Hart
Vince McDermott
Gladys Szabo
Sally Hartikka
Elizabeth Bates
Ralph Laughlin
Marcia Townsend
Betty Bavor
Nonie Moody
Woody Townsend
Ginny Sabin
Doris Weinberg
Russ Kinne
Helen Walker
Lucy Derbyshire
Wayne Mogk

Member Moment

We are offering a new feature in the People Plus newspaper. It's called "Member Moment" and it gives people who participate in programs and activities at the Center a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Today, we are featuring Gladys Szabo, a longtime member involved in countless activities, including Lunch & Connections, and volunteer driver at People Plus. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Gladys Szabo

My name is Gladys Szabo and I am 79 years young. I have lived in Brunswick since I moved here in November 2000, coming from Connecticut, where I lived since I was nine months old. I moved here to be near my daughter, Dawn Grimes, and her family.

Growing up, I was an only child and learned responsibility at an early age. My dad died when I was 14 and he took care of everything. My mom had to go to work, so I took on a lot of the household chores.

My dad was a very passionate man and I followed in his footprints. From the age of 10, I visited older neighbors, having tea, which I hated, or bringing them goodies my mom had baked. I would spend a lot of time just talking with them. At age five, I spent time with a boy next door when he broke his leg.

I had a happy childhood with the help of wonderful friends during tough times. My mom remarried when I was 16. This man was such an extraordinary addition to my life. He never replaced my dad, but became a great dad in his own way. I never referred to him as a stepdad. For several reasons, he adopted me at age 32 and you would think he won the lottery, when I and my children were the real winners.

My beginnings at People Plus started when I attended the Writers group, encouraged by Bonnie Wheeler. I enjoyed it and became a member in February 2010. I filled out the membership card which at that time listed all volunteer opportunities. I checked every one, figuring they would have something I could do. I chose Lunch & Connections, which was just making calls to be sure there were enough volunteers to get everything done. Of course, I jumped in with both feet and have been coordinating it ever since.

STACY FRIZZLE, LEFT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE PLUS, is shown with Gladys Szabo after presenting her with Lifetime Membership and Volunteer of the Year certificates. Szabo, a longtime member and involved in many of the Center's activities, said, "People Plus means more to me than I can explain. I have opportunities to help others and have many friendships I will keep no matter where any of us go. People Plus is a second family to me."

I am not able to pick a favorite activity at People Plus since everything I do is my favorite. I guess I would have to say the people are my favorite thing. With everything I do I make more friends, so therefore no matter what I do or where I go someone I know is there. Each activity brings something different to my life. A favorite part of People Plus would be giving me the opportunity to give to others and make a difference in their lives one way or another. People Plus is a fantastic organization.

People Plus means more to me than I can explain. It has changed my life, giving me self-confidence to be who I really am. I have opportunities to help others and have many friendships I will keep no matter where any of us go. The staff have always been welcoming and encouraging. People Plus is a second family to me.

Things I would like people to know about me is I've learned to be accepting of changes, look for the upside early in life. I appreciate all I have been given in my life by wonderful people. I am honest and when I say something it comes from my heart.

CORONA CHRONICLES

Member submissions during self quarantine

Poor America

I wonder if the rest of the world laughs at the United States for our toilet paper panic, while their main concerns are about shelters, hospitals, cars, meals, food and water. Admit it ... we are spoiled! So, appreciate what we have. Pray for those who have not.
— Bonnie Wheeler

Twenty Twenty Crisis

Coronavirus
We are inside
Homebound for months
When will the end come?
Stores without supplies
Distancing is the rule
Even if it feels cruel
Reaching out to one another
Until we all recover
Helping those in need
Is the answer indeed
Our strength will thrive
Together we will survive!
— Gladys Sacbo

The return of civility

During a disaster such as the world is now undergoing, the worst and the best of people come forth.

People are crawling as in hoarding and seeking needed items; they are kinder, as in reaching out to one another. And they become more creative in ways to be compassionate.

There have been ideas put forth to electronically celebrate birthdays, weddings and other special events. They have come up with ways to provide assistance to the elderly and shut-ins without face-to-face contact, and many people have used the phone to connect with one another in ways seldom seen before.

Instead of eating out, friends are emailing recipes to one another and having virtual dinners together. We are more interested in one another, and less worried about previous activities that have kept us too busy to listen and interact.

I think civility has found its way back into our lives.
— Sally Hartlde

Confinement

I open one eye and look at the clock,
It's already a few minutes past nine.
This is usually when I am getting up,
but things have changed
since we've been confined.
I don't hear any sound out in the hall
and it's not my day for the housekeeper.
Do I really have to get up right now?
I could stay put and have a late sleeper.
A terrible virus is going around
and normalcy has come to an end.
It's happened before, history says,
but it's hard for us to comprehend.
Each generation has faced such terror
and almost been wiped out.
But enough have survived to study and learn
how to end this horror no doubt.
So, it's happened again and we're all doing our best
to keep this virus contained.
It means we must stay put and follow some rules,
All this has been explained.
My yoga has been canceled and the Y is closed.
This has been going on for several weeks.
At first it was fun not to be on the go,
but now boredom has set in as I speak.
Sleeping down from my usual routine at first
felt good and I enjoyed the change.
But the past few days, I haven't felt right
A jittery feeling that something is strange.
I seem very unsettled, can't sit still
and my concentration is totally gone.
And I know I didn't feel this way
when it started early on.
As the weeks have passed, I have no more ideas
of just how to keep myself busy.
I lie on the couch much too long
and know when I get up, I'll be dizzy.
April has just started and it will go on be May.
Will this isolation go on that long?
The news keeps saying, "there's no end in sight.
We all have to keep being strong."
At least I live in a lovely place
where others are quarantined too.
All activities are canceled, but we do meet for meals.
Thank goodness that we can still do!
So twice a day the dining room is full
of seniors chattering away.
We linger over our coffee and cakes,
before heading back to our rooms to stay.
At some point this isolation will end
and life will return as before.
And maybe we'll be thankful we survived
And appreciate life all the more.
— Doris Weinberg

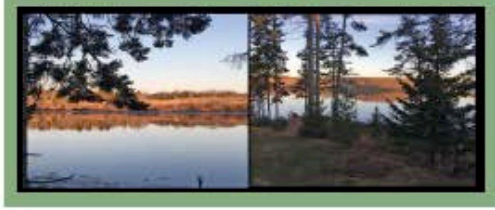
May Flowers

This is the month I always look forward to, when forsythia and lilacs and daffodils finally arrive here in Maine. But a horrible plague instead this year has destroyed my dreams. I am scared of what is coming to us all.

Now things are growing worse. We are sliding down a slippery slope. Our governor has made new rules: no more gathering together at all. Our president has finally promised to help us more.

What will keep us indoors? Reading books is what I love to do, but I am finishing my last library book. I must buy some, but how much will that cost me? I have to look for something cheap, and something I would really like.

I have an indoor cat that loves to get into my lap and purr. He is my company. I will be alright. We will conquer this.
— Elizabeth B. Bates



May's Weekly Celebrations

The weekly celebrations for the month of May are well worth taking the time to ponder.

The first full week of May is called National Nurses Week. This month there is in my heart a special appreciation and big thank you for all the nurses that have been stretched and giving of themselves far beyond their means to patients who have contracted the coronavirus.

My new celebration for the second week of May is National Doctors Week. Doctors treat and care for patients with the mysteries of the coronavirus.

The third week of May celebrates National Police Week. Gov. Janet Mills has issued a statewide "stay-at-home" order for the protection of our citizens. The police are out there enforcing the order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, putting themselves in the direct path of the virus.

The fourth week of May celebrates Emergency Medical Services Week. These men and women are the backbone of our society and laying ground-work, putting their own lives on the line to save even one person. Our doctors, EMS, police, and nurses are appreciated and commended for their duties as trained individuals for service in curbing the spreading of the coronavirus.
— Norie Moody

Stop It

You have shelter, you have food, you have water, you are not sick, you have people who care. Help is a phone call away. Stop with the panic of no toilet paper. There are other ways to wipe your butt. Make do and grow up ...
— Bonnie Wheeler

Strange times

It is a strange time to be living in today when the COVID-19 is stealing lives and shutting down the world. Our freedom is at a standstill. The world leaders are desperate to find a cure. Americans are blessed that our president loves this country and is working hard to make everything better. Today, I see better behavior and I hear people asking to help each other with kindness. There are more important issues than politics and race. It's sad to see what it takes for us to come together. I would love to give you hugs, but we will all need to stay apart. I can blow you a kiss from afar and pray for us to have a better tomorrow.
— Bonnie Wheeler

How I Spent my Quarantine

How many days has it already been? I can't even remember that. Life has changed so drastically. I wonder what "normal" will be like if it ever returns. Where I live, all activities have been canceled while this worldwide menace is dealt with. And we are thankful that no one here has become ill.

Although I have never been suited to "sitting still," that is how I find myself spending these lonely days. I doze on the couch and then on the chair and may even end up in bed. If the phone should ring, it startles me, but it's so good to hear a voice. I often use it to talk to myself, but now would you believe that I am answering back?

I am sure we all remember when we thought staying home would be a great opportunity for accomplishing something. But now that we have the chance, I can't even list anything that I've done! I do realize that sometimes you have to put yourself aside and follow the rules as given and listen to those elsewhere who are setting all this in place.

So, I will stay put as long as necessary without grumbling or complaining and hope that when "normal" returns I will still be able to get off the couch.
— Doris Weinberg

Sitting on the couch & my husband sweetly whispered.. "The best part about all of this is that I get to spend more time with you" as I looked over at him lovingly I realized he was talking to the dog not me

I've eaten 14 meals and taken 6 naps and it's still today. are you kidding me

Time

We always say there's no time to do the things we should. Today, we have the time: time to wash the car, take the yard, clean the garage, clean out the closets, make a vegetable soup, and now we even have time to cut my be nails. So, what's our excuse now?
— Bonnie Wheeler

New Normal

The coronavirus issue across the globe touches all of us with uncertainty and rapidly changing situations for every age.

School closings mean disappointing cancellations of end of year activities for thousands of students, shattering their dreams and futures. Families having to make difficult choices due to closures in business and industry plus adjusting to working from home while caring for children.

Everyone in health care, medical research, hospitals, clinics and nursing homes are having historic disruptions with the shortage of needed medical supplies and unknown cures. None of this is news to you, as we hear the tragic daily statistics of illness, quarantine and death.

Social distancing, home disinfecting, wearing gloves, face masks, washing hands, produce and packages have become second nature. People are following instructions to stay at home, determined to be there for each other, and uniting as a community with creativity.

I began feeling lazy, staying up later and too long in bed each morning. Not good. I need a schedule, so this is what I am doing. Back to "early to bed, early to rise," breakfast with news and morning devotions. Disinfect home using Dr. Oz recipe (Clorox only), then 10 o'clock exercise on channel 14 with People Plus instructors. Oh yes, quick call to Bonnie reminding her to join me.

Energized and raring to go, I check my email, time flies when you are on the computer. It is time for lunch, after which I delve into one of those "some day I will" tasks like reading a book or tackling a box of family history documents, before a daily walk.

Returning home, I make a cup of tea, check my vintage address book to select a person who I have not talked with for months, maybe years. What a joy to catch up and an hour or more later, the tea is cold, and we are saying "So long." Then dinner, a bit of TV and at eight o'clock I am joyously ringing my grandmother's school bell at my front door for two minutes, as a symbol of togetherness as a community.

I invite Stacy into my home via technology to share her daily People Plus update video news from her home. Her up-to-the-minute local happenings with suggestions of how we can keep connected are comforting. Sometimes a bedside story with Frank is a treat.

You all may be doing similar activities or maybe I've inspired you during this time of social distancing and staying at home. I am content, finding ways to stay connected, happy, healthy and productive. I look forward to when we can once again be together, but until then prayers of gratitude to all those working around the clock to help those in need. Be safe, healthy and innovated. God Bless America.
— Betty Bavor

Thank you

Thanks to the Post Office workers who are on the job every day. Thanks to the police, firemen and first responders who are always on call. Thanks to the doctors and nurses who care for us, and to all those who support their work. Thanks to the grocery stores and restaurants for sanitizing and stocking shelves to get the orders out. Thanks to the stores that allow early shopping for the elderly. Thanks to People Plus for reaching out through channel 14 to keep us in touch, neighbors who call to see if we need anything, children who call to remind us to stay inside, our pastor who cares to remind us that God is still in control, and to thank God for warmth, food and water, and living in the United States of America.
— Bonnie Wheeler

Member Moment

"Member Moment" is a new feature in the People Plus newspaper and gives people who participate in programs & activities at the Center a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Today, we are featuring Betty Bavor, a longtime member involved in several activities. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Betty Bavor

My name is Elizabeth "Betty" Bavor and I live in Topsham. I grew up in Sterling, Massachusetts, a small New England farming community where one day a lamb followed Mary to "The Little Red Schoolhouse." You know the poem; John Roulstone wrote "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

I learned my P's and Q's on the farm doing chores and enjoying life with freedom, adventure and exploration. Cows, chickens, gardens and orchards to care for kept us busy. We were a happy family of three generations being involved with town organizations and events. Everyone was always ready to lend a hand in an emergency at a moment's notice.

I entered first grade with 18 classmates. Second grade was with Miss Smith, who incidentally was also my mom's second-grade teacher. School was fun, as most of us were promoted yearly through ninth grade, then going out of town to high school.

Pearl Harbor and World War II happened during my elementary school years. Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, began as usual, with church Sunday school, dinner and radio news before chore time. My mother always played the piano on Sunday afternoons. My brother and I would "secretly" hide under the piano to listen as she played our favorite tunes.

On this particular afternoon, my dad burst into the parlor coming from the barn to tell us of the attack. We all gathered to listen on the radio, even though we kids did not totally understand the graveness of this event. My dad was a Merchant Seaman in World War I and he knew what might be in our future. Things changed as we adjusted to wartime. At school, we practiced safety drills, evacuation procedures, had free food snacks and we purchased war bond savings stamps. Life changed, hanging blackout curtains, gas and food rationing, and young men off to war — many never to return.

PEOPLE PLUS MEMBER BETTY BAVOR is shown participating in strawberry picking on a Frank's Field Trip. She said, "At People Plus, I found comfort with friends, educational, cultural, fun, games and the privilege to volunteer with others who share my values. ... I enjoy and appreciate participation in every program and event I attend."

High school and college became my future with success and cherished memories. I enjoyed teaching physical education in Connecticut where I met my husband and after our wedding in 1956, we drove to the Dutch Village Motel in Freeport, Maine, for our first night as Mr. and Mrs. Our honeymoon to Prince Edward Island is another joyous story.

We had 55 years of marriage, with a stepdaughter, our son and daughter, three step-grand and three step-great-grandchildren. Years of happiness traveling life's journey of parenting, family celebrations, community involvement, vacations, camping and boating with treasured friends and memories.

All of us experience some valleys in our lives with faith as our helpline. In 2015, I had one of those years. My "Mainer" daughter saw a perfect house for me to come and live closer to her and here I am, not only close to her but also nearby to a couple of college classmates.

My welcome to the community gift was my first year's People Plus membership which opened the gates to opportunity. I made a goal that I would seek new activities, make new friends and do things I had never done before. People Plus provided the perfect place and more for fulfillment of this goal.

At People Plus, I found comfort with friends, educational, cultural, fun, games and the privilege to volunteer with others who share my values. I do not have a favorite activity — I enjoy and appreciate participation in every program and event I attend.

I am an optimistic, positive being, having a spur of the moment mindset and never saying "no" to an opportunity or adventure. Life has been good. I count my blessings in this latest chapter of my life, living in Maine.

Ruth and Barbara

In Memory

Ruth Foehring

The Pros

Two young girls went out to play
They looked so perfect in every way!
Tennis was their goal that day
What are the rules one did say?
The other looked at her in dismay!

They truly did look like pros.
Everyone they met that day said so!
Dressed in white they looked so neat.
Notice loafers on their feet,
This would only cause early defeat

Days earlier two boys they had spied,
Let's go meet them they had cried!
Those boys playing on that court
Influenced their need to learn that sport!

Racquets slung on their shoulders,
Sure helped to make them a lot bolder.
Clothes and racquets were only fixtures,
But, who do you think took those pictures?

5-2020

More Corona Chronicles

The Corona Legacy

Coronavirus is indiscriminate.
It doesn't care what you have.
It doesn't care who you are.
Nothing matters to it.

Houses don't matter.
Bank accounts don't matter.
Titles don't matter.
They are all immaterial.

Reaching out to help others.
Looking out for each other,
whether family, friends
neighbors, or strangers,
That's what matters!

Let the legacy of corona be
a re-awaking in everyone
that the way to a truly rewarding life
is through helping each other.

— Ralph Laughlin

Enough Already!

After six weeks of staying put,
my mood is not so happy.
In fact, to be very honest with you,
I am feeling pretty crappy!

My hair's too long and my face is pale,
and my energy seems gone for good.
I've nothing to show for all this time,
Weeks lost — that's understood.

If this forced time at home had been by choice,
I would have relished every hour.
But having to spend all this time in my room,
By now I have no willpower!

I am very bored. I keep looking for snacks,
and my waistband feels very tight.
By the time this quarantine is over,
I will be larger and not a pretty sight!

I know everyone else is in the same boat,
but that doesn't change my mood.
How many more weeks of this,
before we all come unglued!

I know there's little I can do about it,
without creating some flack.
So, I guess I will head to my pantry,
And see what's there for a snack.

— Doris Weinberg

6-2020

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Today, we are featuring Bonnie Wheeler. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Bonnie Wheeler

My name is Bonnie Wheeler and this is my story.

It was a dark and stormy night and a tornado was dancing around when a doctor was called. It was on June 7, 1941. Everyone rushed to the cellar for shelter except the doctor, my mother, and me, Bonnie Sue, her newborn baby girl.

I was the fourth child of an Oklahoma farmer and his wife, Ruby Lee. As the years passed, I was joined by five more siblings. We were brought up to believe in hard work and to share with others.

After graduating from high school, I worked as a telephone operator in Texas. I married Gary and began the adventure of Navy life. We raised two sons and a daughter while living in San Diego and then in Brunswick, Maine, in 1967. I served as a VP-23

Navy Wives president, school superintendent at First Baptist Church, and scout leader. I also worked as a hair stylist.

At age 55, I joined the People Plus writers' group. I fell in love with the writers, and for the next 20 years I wrote hundreds of articles, plays, and poems. I also worked with Center Stage Players director Frank Wicks to write, direct, and act in many skits and programs for People Plus and the community.

I was the facilitator for the Write On Writers group for many years, and our goal was not just to create a group for writers but rather a writers' family. The door is always open. We welcome new writers to share their experiences with us through their writings.

Over the years, we have always had a great relationship with the staff of People Plus and especially with Frank Connors, who was always there to help writers. We made one CD and have published seven books. We promoted these books at Author's Chats at People Plus. Many of us have published our own books.

I am blessed to be part of the writers' family. It was a good day when I walked through the door and today, at age 79, it is still a good day when I walk through the doors at People Plus.

We have created a family, and People Plus created a community family. We are all blessed.

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Today, we are featuring Russ Kinne. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

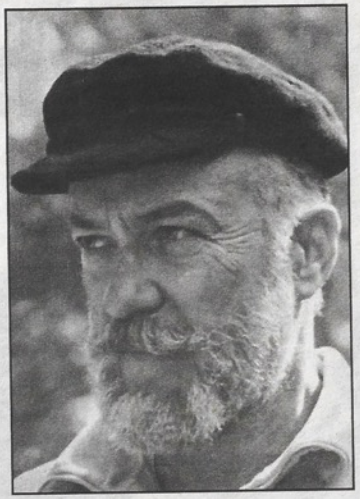
Getting to know Russ Kinne

My name is Russ Kinne and this is my story.

I live in Topsham and I am 92 years old. I grew up in a small city in Rhode Island; a nice state, but with horrible politics. Kindergarten was declared a "luxury item" and was discontinued. I went into first grade instead; no problem, but all my school life my buds were in the class behind me. We went everywhere by bike — fishing, hunting, camping. Dad had a boat 15 miles away and we went down there regularly.

Public schools were OK, but nothing special. I joined the Drama Club, and started the Photography Club. My dad and older brothers would print photos on the kitchen table with blankets over the windows, and I wasn't about to be left out. So I developed and printed (enlarged) photos from age 8 onward, with quite a bit of help. Later, I was a professional photographer for 50-plus years.

When I was 9, dad and I built a 12-foot kayak, and the family had a small sailboat. I fell in love with sailboats right then. Later, I was master of a 70-foot Bermuda-racing sailboat for two years, mostly in the Caribbean. I hold a USCG Master's license for 500-ton vessels — sail, steam, and power.



We'd go duck hunting on our bikes, with our shotguns across the handlebars (try that today!), riding 8-10 miles at 4 or 5 a.m., but never even got stopped. We would ride the bus to some areas, shotguns in hand.

I inherited dad and my brothers' cameras when they got new ones. I also got their sailboats when they got bigger ones; worked at the local boatyard and learned a lot. I got a .22 rifle for my 13th birthday and started to target shoot. Those were great years, but of course things changed a lot when World War II came along.

I moved to Maine in 2012 and dropped into People Plus out of curiosity and liked what I saw. Frank Connors and Stacy were running the outfit smoothly and efficiently. I was impressed and decided this was a great place to volunteer. I drove members around: to the doctor, dentist, Bingo, beauty parlor, shopping, whatever. I'd done that for six years in Connecticut, but this was more fun.

What's important to me about People Plus is the people! It's a great bunch, doing good things with good leadership. And what a slew of activities! I was an assistant "cook" when Frank cooked the Men's Breakfasts every month; good fun. Haven't joined many groups yet, but may when I grow up. People Plus does so much good for so many people, and I'm proud to be associated with it, even in a small way.

My favorite activity at the Center is the Write on Writers group, where we write a page every week, read and critique them. This is a fab thing for a writer, as it keeps the creative juices flowing. The annual WOW-collection books are good Christmas presents, too.

I've done a lot of writing, largely in conjunction with my photography. I was a contributing editor for Popular Photography magazine, had two small paperbacks published by Doubleday, wrote two hardcover "how-to" books on nature photography. I also did a lot of re-writing of "translation" Japanese, Spanish and German for Doubleday; 154,000 words one year — and my name was not under any of them.

As far as one thing from my life that I'd like to share, I guess it would be this. Since I've been self-employed all my adult life, if I don't work I don't eat; so I've done a lot of different things because I like to eat! And I'm willing to try just about anything. It's satisfying to me to help people, so that's a plus.

I have delivered (on the water) a lot of cruising boats, mostly 40-to-50-foot long, and a few small aircraft; I hold a commercial pilot's license. These licenses keep the owners and the insurance brokers happy!

I've now worked in 65 countries (never could've afforded that as a tourist). I have a BA degree in psychology, which is a huge help in foreign countries, especially the body-language courses. In recent years I was a consultant; it's easier and more profitable.

What I'd like people to know about me is that I'm available — and always need work. I'll try most anything, if it's mostly legal, interesting, and (hopefully) can show a small profit. If you have five minutes to spare/waste, look at Boatrelocate.us; some nice

The Magic of Words

WOW members offer favorite words and phrases

Text & photos by Patrick Gabrion

While there are plenty of opportunities for involvement at People Plus, one of the more active groups is the Write On Writers. Meeting once a week, participants eagerly share their stories and poems, as well as provide praise and helpful feedback to those in attendance.

And every so often they present their wonderful creations to the Center's members and the general public, having published several books. In fact, WOW has just released a new title, *Write From the Heart*. Its 193 pages feature the works of 18 authors. Worth checking out, indeed.

Writers, whether here in Brunswick and anywhere else, love the magic of putting pen to paper — or the modern equivalent of tapping keys on a computer — to describe the world around them, such as events in their lives, a particular season that brings joy, the importance of certain holidays, the relationships with family and friends, and so much more.

Recently, members of the group were asked if they had a favorite word or phrase — or related thoughts — they would like to share. The following is what several of them had to say, or should we correctly say … what they wrote:

"I don't think I really have one, but maybe 'nice or beautiful.' I usually try to make someone feel good. Years ago in college down south, my roommate always said 'Hell's bells' and for a while I picked it up from her. But I haven't said that in years."
— Doris Weinberg

"How can a writer choose just one word that tends to be a favorite? One that you use so consistently that you learn to love and savor it? I love our native language that has such a rich vocabulary; I can use so many words and really be discretionary!"
— Sally Hartikka

"'Hope means to wait with confidence.' — taken from Warren W. Wiersbe (1929-2019), author. This is what I am doing during the current coronavirus pandemic. My own special phrase is 'Many things I did today didn't make my list.'"
— Nonie Moody

"'Love you!' is probably my most used phrase. I use this every time I talk, text, email, or am leaving family or very close friends, and also my pets every time I leave the house. The reason I say this is because I do love them and, in case of anything unknown happens, it would be the last thing they heard from me."
— Gladys Szabo

"Everyone has valleys in life's journey. Dwelling on the facts that cannot be changed will not help with recovery, resolve and the future. How frequently do we say, 'It could be worse!' When we look for the 'bright side,' it helps us realize better conditions and is optimistic. We need to remind ourselves of the power of science and the healing of nature. The 'bright side' makes us feel happier and gives us faith. Let us help each other feel better, stay healthier and be focused on the 'bright side.'"
— Betty Bavor

"One of my favorite phrases comes from Robert F. Kennedy, who said, 'Some see things as they are and say why? I dream things that never were and say why not?' These inspiring words looked toward a future where all things are possible and can be made better. RFK was a visionary who knew people had to grab the present if they wanted to change the future. Let his words guide and influence us every day in everything we do."
— W A Mogk

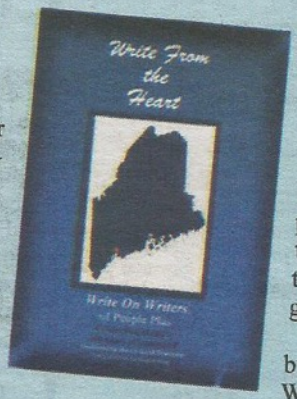
"My favorite phrase is 'Let's climb Mount Chocorua?' Why do I say that? Mount Chocorua was my ninth birthday present. I asked my dad for it. He took me and three friends up the Piper Trail and down the Weetamoo. I climbed Chocorua for my next 23 birthdays. Chocorua is in New Hampshire."
— Charlotte Josephine Bourret Hart

"Ever onward!"
— Cecelia Hitte

We thank those from WOW for their contributions to this story and the monthly offerings that appear in the People Plus newspaper. The photos accompanying today's presentation were taken in warmer weather, when the group met outside in the Center's parking lot. Again, thank you!

New book is here!

Come and get 'em!



Just in time for holiday giving — but actually good for any occasion — the new Write On Writers' book, *Write From the Heart*, is on sale now. Featuring the works of 18 dedicated authors, its 193 pages include countless stories and poems for hours and hours of reading.

Inside, you will find an introduction by U.S. Senator Angus King, a brief history of Maine, along with state symbols and facts. There are also historical notes on People Plus and Write On Writers.

In fact, the People Plus group is dedicating the book to the state of Maine on its 200th anniversary of statehood and to all those Mainers throughout history who made our state such a great place to live, work, and raise their families.

They also are dedicating *Write From the Heart* to People Plus, which in 2021 will be celebrating 45 years of service to the Brunswick area community and to all the board members, staff, volunteers, and members, past and present, who gave their time and effort to make it such a great success.

Other publications by the Write On Writers of People Plus include:

— *Poets and Storytellers*
— *Poets and Storytellers; vol II*
— *It's about Time*
— *Muses and Memories*
— *From Maine and Away*
— *Times and Seasons*
— *Journeys and Reflections*
— *Out of Our Minds*

Their new book is available at the People Plus Center or on Amazon. The cost is $14.95. Most of their previous books are also available for purchase at the Center.

The original group of writers, which eventually became the Write On Writers, was formed at the 55 Plus Center in Brunswick in 1995. Its first leader was Jean Martz.

Season's Greetings from the Write On! Writers

Lighting the Porch

By Nonie Moody

There is something about the entry porch
When December one comes around,
It must be decorated with lights
Making the west home brightly crowned.

The weather has turned a bitter cold
But with gloves the fingers are kept warm.
Attaching the pile of tangled lights
Making sure they function and perform.

With step stool in tow the task begins
As previous mishaps are all in place.
Then stringing continues in line
Bringing sparkle to the front porch space.

The glow of the lights are for celebrating
The One who brings us this time of year
With extra love and care for everyone
Displaying the season with message clear.

Good Riddance, 2020

By Sally Hartikka

Good riddance, go away
You had your chance with us,
You had a chance to have your say,
But now there has more to discuss.

You gave us naught but discord,
Anger, fear and hardship too.
You dispersed an epidemic
And created in us helplessness
As we dealt with this pandemic.

You made us fear each other
And caused much racial tension.
Riots and police brutality
Were brought to our attention ...
Once our sense of normality.

All of this strain and stress
Caused businesses to close.
Many lost their positions
And look of confidence arose
With fear of bad financial conditions.

You're a bust, 2020
Gives new year your piece.
People are ready for you to leave.
Go away, name you've lost face.
Go away, we will not grieve.

We want the world to turn to peace,
To let love defeat the hate.
To let the virus be defeated
And we simply cannot wait
For a brand-new year to soon be greeted.

Happy, peaceful, healthy and less worrisome New Year to all!

Christmas Twenty Twenty

By Gladys Szabo

Christmas is approaching
It will be like no other.
Families having to make decisions
There will be very different visitors.
How do we get together yet stay apart?
It is enough to tear at our hearts.
Who can come or do we Zoom?
How many can be in a room?
Each of us will make different plans
How we can, gather all our clans.
My prayer is COVID-19 decreases
That each of us can find joy and peace.
Bringing merriment to our holidays
In hopes the New Year brings better days!

2020 Christmas

By Bonnie Wheeler

Ever since facing the same problems
The world equally hurting
The same God rules over all
So keep standing tall
Our God is faithful
The best is yet to come
In the end, we win

At Last Hal-le-lu-jah!

By Elizabeth Bates

It's time for the birth
Of you know who
He must know it was time ...
But she had to "make do"
Like so many women
Since time was born

The man she was with
Was not much help,
But he tried ...
He made sure there was plenty of straw
By her side
The rest was up to her!

The stars were so bright
They lit up the night
While everyone slept.
Only one heard the angels sing in the
Welcoming down ...
A little King who waited
For all to begin.

Labor Relations

By W.A. Magli

All through the summer there had been unrest in Santa's workshop. By reading newspapers, such as the Wall Street Journal, the elves knew that there was a wider world out there with opportunities and better incomes. They had always suspected they were underpaid because Santa paid them "under-the-table." Their meager pay was bad enough, but being required to parade under a table and reach up for their checks was humiliating. Things had been different in the past.

The elves were descended from children that Santa rescued from the sweat shops of Britain in the 1800s. He gave them clothes, good food, and accommodations. In return, the children were more than happy to make toys for Christmas. What they didn't know was that magnets had been sewn into their garments, and after a few generations, the downward pull of the magnetic North Pole caused their off spring to remain tiny. Once the effects was permanent, the magnets were removed and used to make refrigerator stick-ons. "Workout, want not" was Santa's motto.

Santa was aware of the discontent among his height-challenged employees and he tried to meet their demands halfway. He started a retirement plan, increased medical benefits, and no longer required them to walk under the table. Even so, grumblings persisted, causing Santa much concern.

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Santa was grateful beyond belief. If the bell had been ruined, or missed its delivery date, he would have to give back his commission, which had already been spent to pay gambling debts. (If only that little bell had stopped on 23 red!)

"You boys saved my butt," Santa told them. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, Santa," pronounced until coughing quality control manager. "We need some changes around here, like better pay and more time off. A new break room with an eggnog dispenser, free candy canes, and shoe dates anytime. Also, how about hiring a ground keeper to clean up all that reindeer poop? Rudolph may be able to find his way in a fog, but he sure ouch find the toilet!"

"I agree to your terms," responded Santa. He knew they weren't asking for too much. Besides, with all the extra sugar they'd be eating, he'd probably get more work out of them anyway.

Santa's Job

By Bonnie Wheeler

Santa's job is easier this year
Everyone will be at home
The cookies will be homemade
The children will all be snug in their beds
Parents rested, no frantic shopping
No rushing to grandparents' house
Or church or friends' houses
A different Christmas following a different year
Good news...Santa might bring you a new face mask...
Oh joy

A Different Christmas

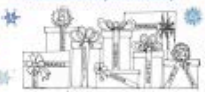
By Sally Hartikka

Christmas will be different this year;
We've got to work 'round the pandemic.
We want to make sure we have a good time
But don't want to end up getting sick.

Santa will still be coming for sure;
And we'll still have our decorations.
Christmas trees will be brightly lit;
But there may not be big celebrations.

Bells will still ring gaily from steeples,
But carol singing might be in decline...
Except of course for what takes place
By having some virtual singing online.

It will be hard to follow guidelines
When we're all ready to party.
But we'll have to still think of each other
To make sure we stay safe and hearty.



Santa's Dilemma

By Betty Bauer

The Christmas tree at our house was setup and decorated in the parlor. This room was for company, piano practice, listening to music from 78 rpm records on the Victrola and special occasions.

Christmas morning we piled surprises from our stockings. The gifts Santa left under the tree were opened in the afternoon, when chores were done and everyone could enjoy our Christmas family celebration. We wrote letters to Santa hoping he would leave the treasures we wanted. Peeking at the tree, we could sometimes guess what awaited us.

Baton twirling was part of my life and I performed with the Sterling Kitchen Band. They were women who made instruments from kitchen utensils and sang using kazoos. My baton twirler thought lighted batons would be a classy addition to my performance. Somehow Santa heard about this and his elf had pen found them. Now, if they went under the Christmas tree, the recipient would recognize them, so Santa decided to put them under the couch. This couch, mind you, was firm with carved wooden legs and no skirt to the floor.

Christmas gift-giving time finally arrived and here we were unclamping presents. A couple people sat on the couch, others on piano bench, chairs or floor as we shared gifts, thanking each other plus Santa. Then a couch sitter moved their legs, hitting a package underneath them. "What is this?" Then it says Betty from Santa."

I opened it to find two lighted batons, batteries and a box with two ends, red, green, blue, yellow and white tops. Such an unexpected gift, I could hardly wait to see how it felt to perform in the dark.

Santa's dilemma provided me with many memorable performances at summer concerts, in shows for celebrations and on parades. This was Christmas gift I will always remember. These batons now reside in my home town Sterling Historical Society Museum, along with memorabilia from days of yore.

Gifts are very special, with some occasions more memorable than others. Have you received one that was unique for you? Merry Christmas.

Eight Little Lights

By Doris Weinberg

The holiday season is coming around
and it will be different this year.
You can make dinner and decorate,
but there will be no family coming, I fear.

Chanukah comes early, I noticed,
the second week in December.
You will see menorahs in the windows,
the same every year if you remember.

It is a holiday that celebrates
the winning of a small war.
The Jews were outnumbered and
winning made spirits soar.

But then army ruined the Temple
and dousped the oil for the Eternal Light.
When the Jews discovered this,
it gave them quites fright.

The lamp must always be lit
and the remaining oil was only for one day.
It took eight days to retrieve some more,
even though the rider left without delay.

But a miracle occurred.
The Lamp burned for eight days.
It was still burning when the rider returned,
after racing all the way!

So, Chanukah celebrates this joyous event,
eight days the candles are lit.

The Innkeeper's Story

By Rose McDermott

To call me an innkeeper is an exaggeration. I merely have some extra space in my house. Occasionally, a traveler stays there. When the man and woman came to my door seeking shelter, I had to tell them I had no room. My relatives were staying with me during the census.

I was very sorry for them. They were exhausted after a long trip. I could see that the woman, actually a young girl, was very close to her time. I thought at first she was older, since the man was much older than she.

All I could do was invite them to stay in the shelter in which I kept my animals. At least they would be warm. It was the best I could do. I am so glad I did it. Something wonderful has been happening after the birth of the babe.

Christmas in the 1940s

By Charlotte Hart

My absolutely favorite holiday memory is the Christmas Eve Candle Light Service at the West Newfield Congregational Church in the early 1940s. Every pew had a lighted candle and sang "Silent Night."

In those days, preparation for Christmas began A FEW Thinksgiving. Christmas gifts were socks and mittens. My grandmother knit mittens for me and my brother and the neighborhood children. Other gifts were pencil and crayons, paper-doll books and storybooks. The year I was five, mom made me kits out of barrel staves. They had leather straps that fit over regular boots.

On Christmas Eve, we hung new e-high stockings from the mantle over the fireplace. On Christmas morning, they held cookies, candy, and an orange. That was the only orange we had all winter. (Usually we drank canned orange juice for breakfast.)

Sometimes dad brought Aunt Adrienne from Cranston, R Island, to West Newfield, Maine, at Christmastime. Family and neighbors came to the house at Stevens Corner for wassail, cookies, and caroling. Everyone knew many carols by heart.

The tree was from our own land. It was decorated with shiny objects and tinsel. No candles or lights. There was no electricity at Stevens Corner until 1957. Candles glow in the front windows only when someone was in the room. (Fire hazard.) On the two front doors, mom and dad hung evergreen wreaths with red bows.

Many memories are pleasant, but without question my favorite — vivid — and most joyous was the Christmas Eve Candle Light Service at the church.

Christmas Catalogs

By Nonie Moody

There was excitement with its arrival
And waiting my turn to browse with glee
Three new beautiful catalogs
The Sears, Montgomery Ward and JC Penney.

Hours were spent looking at each page
Thoughtfully, picturing and dreaming
But knowing this would never be
As the supply of funds was shrinking.

Matching family outfits was the age
From ladies and girls old to dresses
To the whole crew in lookalike pajamas
As well as the stripes and plaid blouses.

Many games were pictured for review
And we collected a new one each year
From Sorry, Monopoly and Carrom,
With many hours spent with cheer.

Christ Child

By Bonnie Wheeler

Jesus was born and much something beautiful of my life
I was born into a Christian home
Who taught me right from wrong
Set me on God's path
Without the baby in the manger
My life would be empty
So I sing happy birthday and praise your name
Thank you for being so good Christmas child

A Christmas Prayer

By Nonie Moody

Dear Heavenly Father,
I come to you this day
With heavy heavy heart
For many a reason okay.

It's the Christmas season
A time for celebration
And pandemic of 2020
Has left us beaten and broken.

But daily looking upward
There's healing for the brokenhearted
Comfort for those who mourn
And peace for the wounded.

May we as Christmas time
Sing the songs slightly louder
And appreciate those dear to us
Making our sphere a little lighter.

This celebration is about others
Helps us see through Your view
To lighten someone's heavy load,
Making this Christmas especially true.

An Outhouse Birdhouse for Christmas

By Charlotte Hart

The year was 2011. Good Shepard Lutheran Church on Maine Street was packed. Standing room only. My son, Larry and I arrived, and we greeted by Evelyn Bryant. This was a Memorial Service for Evelyn's husband, Joseph S. Bryant.

"Our granddaughter is going to read your letter," Evelyn smiled at me. "About the outhouse birdhouse Peter made."

"That is awesome," I told Evelyn. Let me try to explain.

Joe Bryant had died at age 80. Born in Biddeford, he graduated from South Paris High School, a three-sports letterman. He graduated from Colby College. He taught English in Caribou. Then he was drafted into the Navy and did a tour of duty in the Pacific.

Back home he became a guidance counselor, head of the Guidance Department for 16 years at Brunswick High School. Next, principal at Brunswick, then many years at L.L. Bean.

Joe loved golf and music. Joe wrote and directed Brunswick H.S. talent shows, student aid fundraisers. Assistant Principal Jack Caldwell became the Whistling Lawyer. Math teacher Barbara Leonard delivered the Lily Tomlin line, "Is this the party to whom I am speaking?" Forgive me the details, but you need to know patient reader, I remember Joe BEST OF ALL as MASTER OF CREATIVE CARDS AND THE PRACTICAL JOKE.

On Aug. 11, 1996, my husband, Bob, received a unique birthday card — a photo of an outhouse with a set of girl's bikes standing by the entrance. In the card A Joe Bryant yarn about my husband's Brunswick foursome. Al, Geoff, and Joe him self always let Bob hit first on the 4th tee so he could race to the outhouse by the 4th green where the foursome played out the 4th hole.

Our grandson, Bobby and my grandson Peter, loved the Joe Bryant birthday card. Peter was in seventh grade in Industrial Arts class at Bonny Eagle Junior High. Peter carefully created a wonderful birdhouse, a tiny outhouse. A half moon is carved in the door which opens to show a nice seater, a tiny roll of bathroom tissue, and a mini Portland Press Herald. The outhouse birdhouse was a gift for my husband. "Merry Christmas, Grampa!" Joe Bryant would have loved Peter's outhouse birdhouse.

A Perfect Tree

By Virginia Sabin

Evergreen
in winter
Starkly
in snowdrift
Branches
snow covered and icy
Winterberry and holly adorn
boughs heavy with fir
An empty nest, orchid scent
a diamond studded snow covering all
waits under spring

Lighting the Porch

By Nonie Moody

There is something about the entry porch
When December one comes around,
It must be decorated with lights
Making the sweet home brightly crowned.

The weather has turned a bitter cold
But with gloves the fingers are kept warm.
Attacking the pile of tangled lights
Making sure the strands all perform.

With step stool in tow the task begins
As previous nails are all in place.
Then stringing continues its line
Bringing sparkle to the front porch space.

The glow of the lights are for celebrating
The One who brings us this time of year
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Christmas is approaching
It will be like no other.
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There will be very different visions.
How do we get together yet stay apart?
It is enough to tear at our hearts.
Who can come or do we Zoom?
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Each of us will make different plans
How we can gather all our clans.
My prayer is COVID-19 decreases
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The same God rules over all
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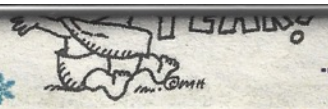

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All of this strain and stress
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Many lost their positions
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You're a bust, 2020
Give a new year your place.
People are ready for you to leave.
Go away, 'cause you've lost face.
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At Last Hal-le-lu-jah!

By Elizabeth Bates

It's time for the birth
Of you know who
His mom knew it was time …
But she had to "make do"
Like so many women
Since time was new.

The man she was with
Was not much help,
But he tried ...
He made sure there was plenty of straw
By her side.
The rest was up to her!

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Welcoming dawn ...
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For many are not okay.

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Back home he became a guidance counselor, head of the Guidance Department for 16 years at Brunswick High School. Next, principal at Brunswick, then many years at L.L. Bean.

Joe loved golf and music. Joe wrote and directed Brunswick H.S. talent shows, student aid fundraisers. Assistant Principal Jack Caldwell became the Whistling Lawyer. Math teacher Barbara Leonard delivered the Lily Tomlin line, "Is this the party to whom I am speaking?" Forgive these details, but you need to know, patient reader, I remember Joe BEST OF ALL as MASTER OF CREATIVE CARDS AND THE PRACTICAL JOKE.

On Aug. 11, 1996, my husband, Bob, received a unique birthday card — a photo of an outhouse with a set of golf clubs standing by the entrance. In the card? A Joe Bryant yarn about my husband's Brunswick foursome. Al, Geoff, and Joe himself always let Bob hit first on the 4th tee so he could race to the outhouse by the 4th green where the foursome played out the 4th hole.

Our grandson, Bob's and my grandson Peter, loved the Joe Bryant birthday card! Peter was in seventh grade. In Industrial Arts class at Bonny Eagle Junior High, Peter carefully created a wonderful birdhouse, a tiny outhouse. A half moon is carved in the door which opens to show a one seater, a tiny roll of bathroom tissue, and a mini Portland Press Herald. The outhouse birdhouse was a gift for my husband. "Merry Christmas, Gramp!" Joe Bryant would have loved Peter's outhouse birdhouse.

Christ Child

By Bonnie Wheeler

Jesus was born and made something beautiful of my life
I was born into a Christian home
Who taught me right from wrong
Set me on God's path
Without the baby in the manger
My life would be empty
So I sing happy birthday and praise your name
Thank you for being so good Christmas child

A Perfect Tree

By Virginia Sabin

Evergreen
in winter
Starlit
in snowdrift
Branches
snow covered and icy
Winterberry and holly adorn
boughs heavy with fir
An empty nest, a robin's nest
a diamond studded snow covering all
wait another spring

2021

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Today, we are featuring Doris Weinberg. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Doris Weinberg

My name is Doris Weinberg and I was born in Toronto, Canada, where my parents had moved during the Depression. They returned to the states when I was two and I grew up in Plainfield, New Jersey. It was a perfect hometown where you rooted for the high school teams and you didn't have to lock your doors.

In 1950, I left to attend college in Richmond, Virginia, to study to become an occupational therapist. Richmond is still my favorite city, but in those days it was still segregated and that was quite a learning experience.

My first job brought me to Hartford, Connecticut, and that became my home for the next 60 years, with marriage, children, and a good job.

When my husband passed in 2014, I moved up here to Maine to be with my sister. We live at Coastal Landing on the old naval base and I now feel like a "native Mainer."

I started writing rhymes in college for the student newspaper and then continued them for all kinds of family occasions. I didn't take my poems seriously until I joined the Write On Writers group at People Plus and now I have actually published a book!

This group has been a challenge for me as the members are all so talented. I also joined the Mah-Jongg group and I do hope it will resume someday soon.

People Plus has exposed me to a wonderful new circle of friends. It has added so much to my life, especially during this pandemic, and I strongly suggest that others come and try all that the Center has to offer.

My Hometown *By Doris Weinberg*

I moved several times before I was seven,
and then we settled down.
A small town in New Jersey
finally became my "hometown."

I remember starting school and being very scared
Of not knowing anyone.
The teacher had a funny name
but before I knew it, the day was done.

This would be my town for the next ten years
and I soon loved all the space.
Our house had a yard. I cut the grass,
and I loved the stone fireplace.

I have wonderful memories of this little town,
great neighbors and a best friend next door.
There was high school, first dates and even a first job,
and there is really so much more.

Those days in the '40s were different than now.
Life has changed so much.
It was much less stressful way back then,
no locked doors or cars as such.

We had a wonderful downtown with no malls in sight.
Movies only cost a dime.
You did not have to spend much money
in order to have a good time.

I graduated high school and went off to college
and never returned there to live.
My parents were disappointed, of course.
I moved north and they did forgive.

50 years later, I did go back
And sat in my car and stared.
I would have liked to knock on the door,
but I really didn't dare.

Lots of things remained the same,
but times have changed, you know.
You don't let strangers in your house,
but I would have loved to go.

The trees were taller and the stucco was gone,
but one big thing was the same.
I looked at the brick front steps,
and the big crack remained.

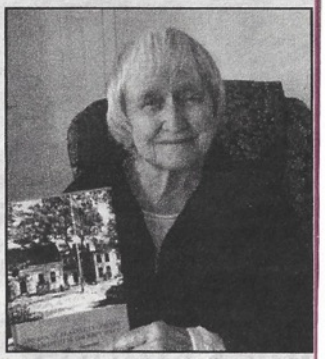
I have had other homes since then,
but these memories are still with me.
They bring back my youthful times,
when life was so carefree.

My recollections make me smile,
because that is what life's about.
They made me who I am today,
Of that there is no doubt.

1-2021

In Memory of Charlotte Bourret Hart

By the Write On Writers



Charlotte grew up at Stevens Corner in West Newfield, Maine. She graduated from Dean Academy in Franklin, Massachusetts, and the University of Maine in Orono. From 1957 through 2008, she lived and worked in Brunswick, Maine (Brunswick High School, Brunswick Junior High School, and part-time at Bowdoin College). She recently resided on Orchard Hill in Cumberland, Maine.

Charlotte wrote personal narrative, character studies, light and personal rhymed verse, and poetry inspired by life experiences, her late husband, her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and various and sundry friends.

Charlotte was a member of Write On Writers for more than 13 years. She was a valued contributor to the group and its last six publications, as well as writing the book introductions and the forward for the most recent, *Write From the Heart*. She will not only be missed by her friends and family, but also by those of us who enjoyed listening to her readings.

Stevens Corner in June

By Charlotte Hart

I'll take time to go home, to savor the past,
To remember early years that went by so fast.
To the Stevens Corner House! I will see it soon!
It was always loveliest there in June.

Half-way up Province Mountain. Eighty acres of wood.
Stone-walled yards. Gardens. A joyful childhood.
Eleven rooms and a barn. I will go back soon.
It was always loveliest there in June.

I'll drive by. I'll remember Family Giving Thanks there,
Our farm produce and turkey wood stove-roasted with care.
Homemade wreaths at each door. Christmas spirits were high.
Christmas lights? Oil lamps glowing and a great star-filled sky.

A price for that house? Not a worry at all!
Priceless winters, springs, summers, harvest moon in the fall.
I will go there this month. I will see it soon.
But Stevens Corner is always most lovely in June. 2-2021

In Memory Ralph Neil Laughlin

By Paul Karwowski

Ralph was a University of Iowa graduate. Upon graduation, he joined General Electric's Marketing Communications Department (advertising group). After 12 years with GE, he went on to work for other industry leaders.

He authored seven books, the latest being *Scribblings — The Brunswick Years,* a compendium of prose and poetry done while living in Brunswick.

He and Dianne, his wife of 55-plus years, resided in New Orleans, Louisiana, for the past year, yet retained strong ties to Maine. Their three grown children live and work around the globe.

Other books include: *Beyond The Pool, The Day The World Cried As One, Random Thoughts Of A Wandering Mind, 1,001 Bites Of Chinese Fortune Cookie Wisdom, Food For Thought ... In The Bed,* and *Tarzan: The Greystoke Legacy Under Siege.* All available on Amazon books.

Ralph was a member of People Plus for eight years. He volunteered in the kitchen for the men's and ladies' breakfasts, monthly lunches, Thanksgiving dinner, and parties. He was known as Frank's "Wingman."

Ralph was a valued member and contributor to Write On Writers. In addition to his own books and writings, he mentored and aided other writers in the group with the publication of their books.

He and his wife, Dianne, also started Books A La Carte, a group of readers who meet to discuss books at People Plus.

Even though they moved to Louisiana to be close to their family, Ralph still sent his writings to be read at the group's meetings. He will be sincerely missed at our table.

Time

By Ralph Laughlin

The Past is Memory.
Don't let it haunt you.
The Future is speculation.
Don't let it scare you.
The Present is now.
Live it. Embrace it.
Life is too short
To do anything else. 3-2021

Condolence

By Nonie Moody

The loss of three members of our Write On Writers club/family at People Plus has left me remembering them sitting around the table laughing, talking, and giving encouraging words. Charlotte Hart, Ralph Laughlin, and Nancy Sohl, three outstanding writers, will truly be missed. 2-2021

In Memory Nancy Sohl

By Paul Karwowski

Nancy was born in St. Louis, but spent her early childhood in a small town in Massachusetts. When she was 10, her family moved back to the Midwest where she grew up in the suburbs of Chicago.

She graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, with a degree in elementary education in 1972 and her master's in teaching degree from National Lewis University, Evanston, Illinois. She came back to the Chicago area to teach, mostly 4th and 5th grade, for 33 years. She and her husband, Ray, moved to Maine in 2012.

They loved the quiet, peaceful beauty of their home in Harpswell and happily shared it with their golden retriever named Sally. Due to her failing health, they moved to Indiana to be near her family. Nancy and Ray were married for 47 years.

Nancy was an active member of Write On Writers for five years and acted as facilitator for one year. While writing was always a hobby of hers, the beauty of Maine gave her added inspiration. She will be remembered for her positive spirit and leadership by all of us at Write On Writers.

The Little Things in Life

By Nancy Sohl

I've learned from my dog, a sweet golden retriever named Sally, to celebrate the little joys of life. Sally gets excited about belly rubs and the forgotten tennis ball rediscovered in the corner. She barks in eager anticipation of dinner, even though it's the same food she gets every night. She wiggles and wags in delight when someone says, "Want to go for a ride in the car?" Sally's days are filled with little celebrations.

We moved from the Chicago suburbs to Harpswell two years ago. Since moving here, I've come to understand Sally's celebrations. The hummingbirds at my feeder and the bull frogs in the pond make me smile. I am awed by the beauty of the star-filled night skies, the picturesque bays and coves around every corner, and the snow that blankets the trees. Here the seasons are marked by the new lambs born at the farm, the lady slippers that bloom in the woods, the reopening of the lobster pounds, and the amazing colors of fall.

Life here is good. Sally and I both know now it's the little things in life that are worth celebrating.

3-2021

Remembering Elizabeth Bates

Elizabeth and her husband moved to Maine from Massachusetts in the early 1970s after their three children had left for lives of their own. Before that, she was able to go back for her BA degree in the tempestuous 1960s through the Harvard University Extension Program, where she fell in love with words.

Elizabeth had some writings published, but life got busy. She was a travel agent, but left that to open a small B&B in her home, which she loved doing.

Elizabeth only went back to writing when she joined the Writers On Writers group at People Plus. She also liked to paint on canvas. She was a valued member of Write On Writers since 2014. Elizabeth also loved doing our Lunch Out gatherings at People Plus, especially when we took side trips to parks or rides to see fall leaves. Elizabeth was a delightful friend and loved her cat who snuggled with her.

We will not only miss her poetry readings, but also her cheerful smile.

Song of the Damariscotta

Ice breaks like an unwanted gift over the rocks
on the shore, while stacks of lobster traps spell out
their long winter lessons: a slow geometry of lines
and half-curves indifferent to weather. The river lies
sleeping.

Breathless, we watch as the gray immense, immobile skin
is cut by the surgical hand of a passing shrimp boat
trailing a net of gulls in the air. Now the wake leaps to
break her sleep, like a rough dream welling over.

She turns on her bed of rockweed and kelp and sings crows,
where green at the edge spruce and fir root down...cries
golden-eyes into her mirror, combing with barnacle shells
her green curls of waves, and pins sunlight into her hair.

7-2021

Remembering James M. Friedlander

Jim Friedlander was an only child who, barely post-adolescence, spent two WWII years in the U.S. Navy earning four ribbons. He had two wives, one divorce, one daughter, three stepdaughters, one grandson, and one great-granddaughter. He also inhabited nine states, voyaged on 14 ships, and visited 41 countries on four continents.

His interests included politics, railroading, sustainable resource technology, and veteran affairs. He was founder of the Veterans Housing Coalition, served as commander of Chapter 15 of the Disabled American Veterans for several years, and also commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA until his death.

Jim earned three college degrees and endured five career changes, some pleasant, some not so. He asked, "Will writing be his sixth?" Jim was a longtime member of Write On Writers until 2013. He was a man of ideas until the very end. 8-2021

PEOPLE PLUS PIC OF THE WEEK: WRITE ON WRITERS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO VIA PEOPLE PLUS

After having to meet online during the COVID-19 pandemic, the People Plus Write On Writers club met in person for the first time in over a year this week. The group was formed in 1995 and has published nine books including their newest released October 2020, "Write from the Heart," which features the works of 18 authors and includes an introduction by Sen. Angus King. Books by the Writers' group and other members are available for sale at the People Plus Center on Union Street in Brunswick. Visit peopleplusmaine.org for more information. 6-25-2021

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Alene Staley

My name is Alene Staley. I live in Lisbon Falls and I'm 76 years of age.

I grew up on the South Side of Chicago, initially in the city itself and then later in the suburbs. I first lived near Midway Airport, when it was busy. There were the sounds of airplanes and it was noisy, but as a child that did not bother me. At that time, my dad worked at the airport.

Although Chicago is a huge city, it is organized by neighborhoods and neighborhoods are like small towns. We did have a yard to play in, and we played on the sidewalks up and down the street. There were lots of kids and we had much fun.

At age 7, my family moved to the suburbs when subdivisions were first being developed. There was open space everywhere with room to explore and be outside. I have always loved being outdoors. I spent my childhood riding a bike, ice skating, and playing tennis.

I joined People Plus in the summer of 2020. I was looking for a social place that was open where I could find people and companionship. I found People Plus by searching online.

The exercise classes and other activities were held outdoors, which worked fine for me. I started with the Gentle Barre class, where I met Betty Bavoc. I also went to social events where I made new friends.

When the Gentle Barre class moved indoors, I became curious about the bulletin board in the room which has all the pictures of people in Write On Writers. Betty told me that she belonged, it was great group of people, and I should join. I took her advice. Write On Writers is a perfect activity for me. I find the stories fascinating, the people so interesting, and, best of all, the whole group is positive and encouraging. I really love it.

In addition to what I said previously about People Plus, what I also love is the chance to try new things. For example, I am planning to eventually try Mah-jongg, since I understand they do give lessons. And the table tennis seems to be calling me. There are so many possibilities; I'm sure I won't be bored.

I have lead an interesting life with friends and experiences I cherish. I have lived in Chicago, Arlington, Virginia, and Maine. My career involved professional accounting, government service, and teaching.

I have met a few celebrities and the stories of how I met them may show up someday in stories I write with Write On Writers. I was in a room on Rush Street in Chicago where the center of attention of everyone in the room was Cassius Clay, later known as Muhammad Ali. I once rode in an elevator in the Plaza Hotel in New York City with Eartha Kitt. I sat in a café in Philadelphia late one night in a booth next to another booth, where Betty Friedan was dining with friends. I shook Nelson Rockefeller's hand during the 1968 presidential election. I'm thinking there are a few stories there worth writing about.

Season's Greetings from the Write On! Writers

A Tale of Freedom — Chanukah

By Doris Weinberg

Chanukah comes early this year.
It begins at the end of November.
And because it lasts for eight happy days,
it doesn't end until December.

This holiday follows the phases of the moon
and is usually later in the year.
But it doesn't matter when it arrives,
children are joyous when it is here.

Chanukah tells the story of great Jewish men,
who won a hard battle and felt great!
And then they had a miracle
when one day's lamp oil lasted for eight!

So, over the centuries
this memory has been kept alive.
By eight days of lighting candles,
and all the family would arrive!

Special foods are served,
cooked in oil is a condition.
And gifts are exchanged
as part of the tradition.

Though the years Chanukah has become
an important holiday full of joy.
Especially for the children,
who look forward to a new toy!

But like any kind of tradition,
the one thing for which we strive.
Is to keep this Tale of Freedom
very much alive!

The Bells of Bethlehem

By Nonie Moody

The Bells of Bethlehem are ringing
Echoing loudly for the King of kings.
The mood on Christmas Day is joyous
As the parade moves on they sing.

Dressed in brilliant colors this day
To celebrate the Blessed One's birth
Trumpets sound following worshipers
For the Christ child has come to Earth.

Church bells are heard all over the city
And Bethlehem is overwhelmed midday
Praising the Messiah with joyous carols
And the festivity continues straightaway.

Thoughts for All Seasons

By P.K. Allen

May your Christmas be Merry
and full of delight.
May your New Year be Happy
with an outlook that's bright.

May your dreams of achievement
always come true.
May your sorrows and disappointments
be but a few.

May the days of hostility
and violence cease.
May the world see the wisdom
of an everlasting peace.

What Jesus Means to Me

By Lucy Derbyshire

C Constant Companion
H Hopeful Helper
R Resting Place
I Inspiration Giver
S Sincere Pal
T True Friend
M Mountain Mover
A Attitude Lifter
S Soul Healer

My Maine Winter

By W A Mogk

Every year people complain about winter weather in Maine. You people don't know how lucky you have it today.

When I was a kid growing up, we used to get 10-foot snowfalls that went up to the roof. If we kids wanted to go out and play, we had to climb out the second-floor window on ropes!

Our mothers would bundle us up, and made sure we had our snorkels and pickle jars. We used the snorkels to breath under the snow, and used empty five-gallon pickle jars like diving masks. Usually we played hide and seek with the neighbor kids. Some of them were so good at it that we didn't see them again until the spring thaw.

One winter my older brother went to visit his girlfriend with his snorkel, jar, and 30 feet of rope. She climbed down, but later couldn't get back up, so they decided to elope.

That's where the expression comes from: "If you can't climb the rope, you might as well elope."

Jobs were scarce in the winter, except for cutting ice out of the lakes. This was hard work for everyone, including us kids. After the adults hauled out huge ice blocks, we had to chip them into tiny cubes so they would fit in the trays. That's where you get the expression: "A chip off the old block."

Kids today also have all kinds of toys and video games to play with. In my day, we got excitement by sitting around watching maple sap drip into buckets. That was just a little more fun than watching the tide come in and go out.

So if you find yourself complaining about the weather this winter, just remember the old days with pickle jars, ropes, and sap staring. You've got it easy!

Where Snow?

By Fred Cheney

I can clearly remember the first words Nikos spoke to me. "Where snow?" My teacher, Mr. Miles, had told us that our new classmate was from Greece, and we should help him get used to his new home. It seemed that the first thing he had to understand was that we didn't get snow in mid-September.

As far as getting used to things, Nikos did most of that himself. He became a star on our soccer team. He picked up English quickly. He watched the World Series with us and cheered right along for the Sox.

Nikos showed us on the map where he had lived in the southern tip of Greece. He told about the hot weather there and the beautiful blue of the sea. But every so often through the fall, he'd ask again, "Where snow?" It became a joke with us. Sometimes one of us would greet him with, "Hey Nikos, 'Where snow?'"

And wouldn't you know it? Winter was late that year. It got us all wondering, "Where snow?"

Then it came. It started on the Friday morning before Christmas break. Nikos couldn't stop looking out the window, while Mr. Miles was trying to explain something about the exports from Peru. Nikos was first out the door for recess.

"Snow here! Snow here!" Nikos shouted running across the playground. He caught flakes on his tongue and let them melt on his face. He blew a thin layer of snow back into the air off the teeter. He stopped and looked closely at a bunch of flakes on his sleeve as they melted.

The rest of us who had grown up with snow were nowhere near as excited. Actually, as snow goes, this storm was a disappointment. It was dry and fluffy and only two inches.

We went in at the end of recess hoping the storm would keep going so we would get enough snow to do something with. But it didn't. The weather turned to rain, and by the time school let out, it was gone. Then it was winter break.

The morning of the 25th I got up to steady snow in the air. We did our family tree. The presents were good, both mine and the ones I'd given. Then the phone rang. It was Nikos, "Come over. We sled."

I didn't know if I had anything to do, so I asked my mom if it was alright. She said it was, so I went over. But I left my sled at home, looking at the puny amount of snow on the ground.

Along the side of Nikos' house was a very slight hill. It just went from the front of the house to the back where the basement was level with the ground. "Slide here," Nikos said, pointing excitedly at the little slope. I couldn't believe my eyes. He had actually gathered up snow from all over his lawn and made it into a track down the slope. He showed me how he'd gotten down on his hands and knees, and patted it down with his hands. I could see that it was solid and iced over just a bit. I had to admit that it might work.

We went in the cellar door, and I couldn't believe my eyes. He must have gotten a sled or saucer or tube every week since he'd arrived. He had everything you could move across snow with. He had round ones, rectangular ones, flexible ones, ones with runners, ones with skis, and ones with smooth, flat bottoms. We took them all to the top of the little slope.

I sat on the front of one of the long sleds. Nikos pushed me and then jumped on the back. We went down the 30 feet of hill at about walking speed. Nikos was hollering in my ear and laughing. When we stopped, he tipped us over, laughing still.

We spent the afternoon, hauling and packing more snow. We tried every combination of sled. It turned out to be the best sledding I ever had, but that was because of Nikos, not the puny little snowfall.

It was a holiday I'll always remember.

Childhood Memories

By Bonnie Wheeler

As a child, Christmas Eve was special. My mom and her sister, two brothers, and their families gathered together for a big supper. After everyone ate, all the children would sit around grandpa and watch him unwrap his Christmas presents, most of which were clothes — warm PJs, socks, handkerchiefs, and always a box of chocolate-covered cherries. He would grin and look at us circled around his chair and pretend to put down his box of candy. Then he would open it up and pass it around. Each of us carefully took only one piece. That was our gift. We were very happy.

Do you think I should suggest that celebration to my grandchildren today? Would they be happy with only one piece of candy? I don't think so. Those were the good old days on the old farm in Oklahoma, when being together was the gift.

Old Christmas Decorations

By P.K. Allen

Old Christmas decorations
Bring back memories from the past
Of those decades long gone by
Oh, how they went so fast

That little bell-shaped ornament
And the angel atop the tree
That I looked upon as a little boy
As excited as could be

Those long-dated Christmas tree balls
Received from mom each year
I spread them evenly around the tree
With a smile and tear

Then there are of the homemade ones
Adding to the Christmas cheer
Beautiful and elegant
Made by friends no longer here

And finally those of paper and yarn
Made by hands nimble and small
Now those very same grandchildren
Have grown to be straight and tall

These are just some of the memories
Old Christmas decorations bring to light
To help in our celebration
and to make our Christmas bright

Time is Flying!

By Doris Weinberg

If it's less than 20 days to the holidays,
then I guess we should get busy.
That means we've had 340 to plan already,
that thought makes me quite dizzy!

Time flies much too fast
and we waste so many days.
Suddenly the holiday is upon us,
and we rush like we're in a daze.

The trick is to prepare early,
as soon as the previous holiday is done!
Make your lists and buy some gifts,
and then relax with 330 days of fun.

This past year has been full of stress
and we all need some relief.
Preparing for a very good time,
will help, it's my belief.

Whether you buy some gifts or prepare special food,
it's good to get an early start.
The first step would be to make a list
or even a calendar chart.

If the chores are done early,
you will have more time and much less stress.
The holiday will be enjoyed,
and any mess will be so much less.

So, take my advice and get
an early start on your list.
And the fatigue and rush,
certainly won't be missed.

The Honeymooners

By Howie Moody

Growing up in the late 1950s and with our first television set, my father would watch "The Honeymooners." [illegible]

Oh Christmas Tree

By Ellen Brown

[illegible]

Goofy Gifts of Christmas

By Alene Staley

[illegible]

Christmas at 80

By Bonnie Wheeler

Years of Christmas excitement and fun
Buying and giving gifts for family and friends.
Years pass by and it's time to say, "enough!"
What once was fun now gives me a headache.

So today at 80, I watch the parade
While in my rocking chair I dare to say,

"Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,
Gather together for a yuletide of cheer."

They'll find buying those presents can be rather hard,
But as for me, I'll be giving out joy in a Christmas card.

What Santa Wants for Christmas

By Sally Harrika

Poor Santa, he works so hard
On every Christmas Eve.
I wonder what's on his wish list…
What he'd like the elves to leave?

I'll bet the chance to put his feet up
In a comfy new pair of slippers
Would be right at the top of his list
With a warm sweater with zippers.

Then some hot cocoa to warm up the insides
And some of the cookies he's gathered at homes.
Then, because of the heavy sack he carried,
A nice long back rub by some of his gnomes.

Once rested, he must then think of the children
That he's gifted along the way
And wish for them all to have
A very happy Christmas Day.

Happy Holidays

By Gladys Szabo

The year two thousand and twenty-one
Finally, you are almost done
Would like to say "COVID we have won"
Regrettably we are not quite there
But closer than we were last year!
Now for the holidays, we excitedly prepare.
Since vaccinated, we can share
Still being cautious not to deviate
Taking precautions to keep us safe
So together for the holidays, let us celebrate
And to the new year, two thousand twenty-two
Bring us peace on Earth and life renewed!

Christmas in Africa

By Vince McDermott

[illegible]

Frost

By W A Mogk

[illegible]

A Christmas Memory

By Christin Kay

[illegible]

Christmas Frugality

By Betty Bower

[illegible]

Winter's Prelude

By R. Mulligan

The Earth prepares it bed for the turning of the season
And long winter's sleep

Windborne leaves accumulate at the base of trees and shrubs
Insulation for the roots below

Pine trees deposit a thick soft thatch
on the floor beneath

Forest denizens have stocked their
shelters with seeds and nuts

Some will winter in trees and stumps
Others deep below Earth's frost

This is both a season of celebration and rest
Until the arrival of spring's dawn of awakening.

Some Words for Thought in the New Year

By P.K. Allen

Resolutions and wishes are easy to make,
But it's hard to make them come true.
Here are some words to think about,
Some hint that they mean to you.

PEACE
LOVE
JOY

Yesterday is history, it can't be changed,
But we can celebrate today and
tomorrow in such a way
That when they do become
yesterday,
We will know we made a
difference.

Many celebrations of Christmas

By Russ Klewe

[illegible]

Merry Christmas, everyone!

New Year's Cheer

By P.K. Allen

Glass of wine
Auld Lang Syne

In good health
Sufficient wealth

May wars cease
Hope for peace

Midnight cheer
Happy New Year

Holiday Food

By Bonnie Wheeler

The ham is in the oven baking
Sweet potatoes and casserole all ready
While apple pie is waiting
The table is set with napkins folded
Time for a nap
Serve yourself!

Yesterday Christmas

By Bonnie Wheeler

[illegible]

Journey or Destination?

By Russ Klewe

[illegible]

Preparing for a very good time,
will help, it's my belief.

Whether you buy some gifts or prepare special food,
it's good to get an early start.
The first step would be to make a list
or even a calendar chart.

If these chores are done early,
you will have more time and much less stress.
The holiday will be enjoyed,
and any mess will be so much less.

So, take my advice and get
an early start on your list.
And the fatigue and rush,
certainly, won't be missed!

dragged the tree to the car and tied it on the roof. The top of the tree just hung over the windshield, and we winced every time mom went around a corner and we saw the tree sway ever so slightly.

Home safely, dad took the tree off the car and brought it inside to place in the stand. It was his only contribution as he was somewhat of a Scrooge. The ornaments and lights were carried down from the attic where they had been stored in the same boxes year after year. My older brother tested the lights

And to the new year, two thousand twenty-two
Bring us peace on Earth and life renewed!

Christmas in Africa

By Vince McDermott

In the mid-1960s, I was an Air Force officer serving in Germany. I lived in quarters with other officers, teachers, and nurses. One December, three teachers planned to go on a photo safari to Africa during the Christmas holidays. A short time prior to departure, one could not go. I volunteered to take her place.

We flew from Frankfurt to Nairobi via Zurich and Cairo. We met up with others in our party and set off in a zebra-striped Volkswagen van with an African guide. Some nights we slept in tents on bare ground. We zipped up our tents from the inside.

Overall, I felt safe, except for one day when our guide apparently lost his way. For most of the day, we raced toward an unknown destination. We finally reached a river with a ferry crossing just before dark. We caught the last trip. Later, while relaxing on our hotel's terrace, we saw the lights of a car frantically blinking. The occupants wanted to cross the river, but there was no ferry. We never learned what happened to the people in the car.

We saw many wild animals on the trip. Some were just a few feet away from the thin skin of the van. We were never seriously threatened, but there were a few nervous moments.

We ate our Christmas dinner in a tent in the wild. It was a Christmas to remember.

Goofy Gifts of Christmas

By Alene Staley

All of us have given and received hundreds of gifts over the years. Think about what gifts of the past holidays are most memorable. If you are like me, the goofy, puzzling, completely baffling ones are the most memorable of all. I have given and received goofy gifts. Based on my personal experience, I suggest that no one intentionally gives a goofy gift.

My first goofy gift was a present from a favorite but distant aunt and uncle who had a son but no daughters. I was about 11 and my sister 10. We did not normally receive gifts from these relatives, so interest that Christmas was focused on that one gift. It was the first box to be opened. Inside were two dolls made of straw. This happened in the mid 1950s, when girls did not generally play with dolls at age 10 and 11. We couldn't really figure out what to do with them, but I still remember them to this day and the mystery they presented.

Later in the 1950s, one Christmas our parents asked us what we would like for Christmas, which did not usually happen because times were tough. I knew what I wanted, a chemistry set and told them. Thinking ahead I made plans for all the experiments I could do. Come Christmas, I eagerly opened the box and was puzzled and surprised to receive a child's microscope instead. I was as excited as I could pretend to be and puzzled. Why didn't they want me to have the chemistry set? Was it because of the baby, my new little sister? In time I found the microscope to be almost as intriguing as a chemistry set.

I have given many goofy gifts. The most embarrassing one was given to a close friend. For many years a group of friends and I celebrated holidays together. The group was large and rules for gift giving were complex. Gifts were to be inexpensive and were to be appropriate for each individual's interests and personality. We exchanged gifts with each attendee and opened our gifts in turn with laughter and glee.

The host and hostess lived in Portland and the gathering was at their home. The edge of their property was wooded and they loved to watch wildlife, including deer and birds. So I gave the host what I thought was a perfect gift, a deer lick, causing much hilarity and fun.

Don't worry about your gifts. The thinking and caring about the person is what matters most.

Frost

By W A Mogk

Since I am the local country bumpkin, it's up to me to check the frost on the pumpkins. That may seem easy, but actually, it's very complicated.

To begin with, I have to get out of bed way before sunrise, in order to beat the sun to the pumpkin patch. Otherwise, its rays evaporate the frost in a matter of minutes. I have to get there first so I can take my measurements.

I have a thin piece of wire — thinner than dental floss — that I use to scrape off a section of frost. I place it on a glass slide, like the ones they use in laboratories with microscopes. Then I take my micrometer and measure the thickness of the frost (minus the thickness of the slide, of course). I repeat this on as many pumpkins as I can to get an overall average. After that, I refer to my pumpkin frost chart to see if my readings are normal for this time of year. A thick frost means it was very cold and humid overnight; a thin frost means the opposite.

With all this information at hand, I am ready to reply to anyone who asks, "Hey country bumpkin, how's the frost out on the pumpkin?"

It's great feeling needed!

Old Christmas Decorations

By P.K Allen

Old Christmas decorations
Bring back memories from the past
Of those decades long gone by
Oh, how they went so fast

That little bell-shaped ornament
And the angel atop the tree
That I looked upon as a little boy
As excited as could be

Those huge dated Christmas tree balls
Received from mom each year
I spread them evenly around the tree
With a smile and tear

Then there are of the homemade ones
Adding to the Christmas cheer
Beautiful and elegant
Made by friends no longer here

And finally those of paper and yarn
Made by hands nimble and small
Now those very same grandchildren
Have grown to be straight and tall

These are just some of the memories
Old Christmas decorations bring to light
To help in our celebration
and to make our Christmas bright

Time is Flying!

By Doris Weinberg

If it's less then 20 days to the holidays,
then I guess we should get busy.
That means we've had 340 to plan already,
that thought makes me quite dizzy!

Time flies much too fast
and we waste so many days.
Suddenly the holiday is upon us,
and we rush like we're in a daze.

The trick is to prepare early,
as soon as the previous holiday is done!
Make your lists and buy some gifts,
and then relax with 350 days of fun.

This past year has been full of stress
and we all need some relief.
Preparing for a very good time,
will help, it's my belief.

Whether you buy some gifts or prepare special food,
it's good to get an early start.
The first step would be to make a list
or even a calendar chart.

If these chores are done early,
you will have more time and much less stress.
The holiday will be enjoyed,
and any mess will be so much less.

So, take my advice and get
an early start on your list.
And the fatigue and rush,
certainly, won't be missed!

The Honeymooners

By Nonie Moody

Growing up in the late 1950s and with our first television set, my father would watch "The Honeymooners." This half-hour show was simple in props but hilarious in delivery. Sweet smiling Alice (Audrey Meadows) was a perfect wife to Ralph (Jackie Gleason), who was gruff and made poor choices. Ed Norton (Art Carney) was the talented absent-minded neighbor with wife Trixie Norton (Joyce Randolph).

Together on a Christmas show hiding gifts became a problem when Ralph and Alice hid their gifts in the same place. Distrust appears and a mousetrap causes Ralph pain. Round after round, the absurd dilemmas occur and my dad would howl like a coyote with laughter.

Oh Christmas Tree

By Ellen Brown

Holidays and celebrations can conjure up vivid memories. Decorating the Christmas tree as a child was one I still carry. Christmas wasn't as chaotic in our house in the 1950s, but there was always great excitement and ritual around decorating the tree. It was the first sign that Christmas was coming.

It was mom who orchestrated the holiday preparations, including getting the tree. The four of us kids piled into the Buick and we headed across town, where every year she bought the tree at the same garden center, and every year she complained about the price. I still remember walking through the stands of trees and feeling as if I were walking in a forest and the smell of pine which always reminds me of the warmth of family. We didn't always agree on the perfect tree, but eventually consensus was reached, and with mom's approval, the attendant dragged the tree to the car and tied it on the roof. The top of the tree just hung over the windshield, and we winced every time mom went around a corner and we saw the tree sway ever so slightly.

Home safely, dad took the tree off the car and brought it inside to place in the stand. It was his only contribution as he was somewhat of a Scrooge. The ornaments and lights were carried down from the attic where they had been stored in the same boxes year after year. My older brother tested the lights — the big, multi-colored ones and mom and my sister wrapped them around the tree, and when they were plugged in there was an elevation of excitement.

The ornaments were carefully released from their holding cells and placed on a table to examine for damage. The special ones were made of mercury glass, and we all knew how delicate they were. It was a rite of passage when we were deemed old enough to place one of those ornaments on the tree by ourselves.

The lights strung; the ornaments hung; it was time for tinsel! Lots and lots of tinsel. Every year we were reminded not to throw it on the tree but to neatly place the strands across the branches. It took forever, but the result was shimmer and shine and glow and magic and every year my sister and brothers and I stood back and declared it the most beautiful tree ever.

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Christmas at 80 *By Bonnie Wheeler*

Years of Christmas excitement and fun
Buying and giving gifts for family and friends,
Years pass by and it's time to say, "enough!"
What once was fun now gives me a headache,

So today at 80, I watch the parade
While in my rocking chair I dare to say,

"Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,
Gather together for a yuletide of cheer,"

They'll find buying those presents can be rather hard,
But as for me, I'll be giving out joy in a Christmas card.

What Santa Wants for Christmas *By Sally Hartikka*

Poor Santa, he works so hard
On every Christmas Eve.
I wonder what's on his wish list ...
What he'd like the elves to leave?

I'll bet the chance to put his feet up
In a comfy new pair of slippers
Would be right at the top of his list
With a warm sweater with zippers.

Then some hot cocoa to warm up the insides
And some of the cookies he's gathered at homes.
Then, because of the heavy sack he carried,
A nice long back rub by some of his gnomes.

Once rested, he must then think of the children
That he's gifted along the way
And wish for them all to have
A very happy Christmas Day.

Happy Holidays *By Gladys Szabo*

The year two thousand twenty-one
Finally, you are almost done
Would like to say "COVID we have won!"

A Christmas Memory *By Christa Kay*

There was snow that year at Christmas. Lots and lots of snow! Best of all, we were spending the day at my aunt and uncle's house which sat at the top of a steeply slopped hill, perfect for sledding. I think we were more excited about the snow than we were about Christmas presents!

After the gifts were exchanged and the dinner consumed, my brothers and I rushed outside bundled in one-piece snowsuits that zipped up the front and pinched our chins. We each had received a new set of hats, mufflers and mittens, hand-knit by my aunt, for Christmas. Since I was still pretty young, my mittens came with a knitted cord attached that was long enough to go across the back of my neck and down both sleeves of my snowsuit so if my mittens came off while I was playing in the snow I wouldn't lose them. They'd just dangle from my sleeve! My older brother's mittens didn't have that accessory, which was kind of a right-of-passage in those days suggesting they possessed the necessary amount of responsibility to keep track of their mittens.

The air was cold but we didn't feel it as we ran straight to the barn where we knew the sleds and toboggan waited. We soon discovered that the snow was too deep for sleds with runners, but conditions were perfect for the long, wooden, flat-bottomed toboggan. My two older brothers were the first ones to ride it down the hill while my younger brother and I watched from the top of the hill in excited anticipation.

The toboggan, in its downward trajectory, plowed through the deep powdery snow sending a wave of the cold stuff up and over the curved front of the toboggan. I could hear my two brothers laughing as they rolled off the sled. Turning they looked back up the hill. Snow stuck to their eye lashes and brows and was even packed up their noses! It frosted their knit caps and scarves white and painted their cheeks pink!

Some of the adults had joined us at the top of the hill while others watched from a window. I could hear them laughing which made the sight even more comical. Grinning and wiping snow from their rosy faces, my brothers grabbed the toboggan rope and began the trek back up the hill, careful not to walk in the freshly blazed trail they had just made. When they reached the summit they repositioned the toboggan and we all pilled on. Down we went again and again, always trying to get the toboggan to slide just a bit further than the last time. It was great fun and we kept at it until our toes went numb and our fingers ached from the cold.

Other than the mittens, hat, and scarf I have no memory of the other gifts Santa brought that year. All I recall is the fun we had sledding on that Christmas Day of the big snow!

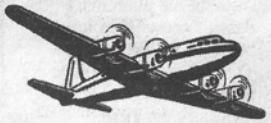
Christmas Frugality

By Betty Bavor

Christmas family traditions in my youth were special and it never entered my mind they would change. Holiday decorations appeared in stores around Thanksgiving Day. A Christmas tree was found in our pasture in Massachusetts, cut and brought home to be decorated on a Sunday afternoon. We exchanged gifts that were appropriate, appreciated, practical, and fun — sleds, dolls, skates and there was little or no commercialism in stores for the perfect toy. Sunday school classes produced the Story of Jesus Birth and we attended Christmas Eve Candle Light Church Service. We were a reverent happy grateful family.

The first year away from my hometown family at Christmas took place when my boyfriend invited me to meet his family in Ohio. We flew on a fancy airplane, the new mode of transportation and my first flight. It was exciting. His parents met us at the airport and we drove to my boyfriend's childhood home in Cleveland.

His dad was born in Vienna and his mom's family came from Germany, so they had German Christmas traditions. The Christmas tree was decorated by his parents with vintage ornaments, garland, colored lights, a bird's nest for good luck and an angel on top. His mother created a story scene under the tree. She made all the characters and landscape which was a work of art. Following a sumptuous Christmas Eve dinner, we gathered in the living room to sing a few carols and then open presents. I don't remember what gifts we all exchanged. However, it was a joyful evening. I discovered Christmas morning that Santa stopped in and filled stockings hung from the fireplace mantle. Other relatives arrived for Christmas day celebration and we listened to his mother's story of the scene under the tree. It was a nice experience and I married this boyfriend.



Our Christmas tradition became Ohio one year and Massachusetts the next year. New Year's became a second Christmas each year alternating with celebrations with both our families. One year I thought I would be frugal and wait to shop for gifts after Christmas as we had several days between these family destinations. Yes, there were sales; however, things were shopworn and limited. As I said above, "One year," never again — it was a disappointing year with compromised gift choices.

The birth of Jesus is a symbol of joy, hope, love and peace. In this holy season, let us not be frugal with faith, prayer and the time we share with family and friends. Season's Greetings to you and yours.

Winter's Prelude

By R. Mulligan

The Earth prepares it bed for the turning of the season
And long winter's sleep

Wind-borne leaves accumulate at the base of trees and shrubs
Insulation for the roots below

Pine trees deposit a thick soft blanket
on the floor beneath

Forest denizens have stocked their
shelters with seeds and nuts

Some will winter in trees and stumps
Others deep below Earth's frost

This is both a season of celebration and rest
Until the arrival of spring's dawn of awakening.

Jou

Well, they're both important — and usually differ quite a bit in their pleasure-level. But for importance; yield way to ambulances, fire engines, police cars with flashing lights — of course, all emergency vehicles — and yield even a few people carrying a stretcher with an injured person, perhaps a hiker or skier, onboard. Or even a distraught mother driving her injured child to the doctor.

All but the last one are readily identified by sirens and flashing lights. If the mother is on the ball, she'll turn on her four-way flashers to let everyone know she's asking for the right-of-way. That's better than nothing; it's always a good idea to let people know there's an emergency if only by flashing lights and leaning on your horn. Try three beeps, repeated over and over.

Some Words for Thought in the New Year

By P.K. Allen

Resolutions and wishes are easy to make,
But it's hard to make them come true.
Here are some words to think about,
See what that they mean to you.

PEACE

LOVE

JOY

Yesterday is history, it can't be changed,
But we can celebrate today and tomorrow in such a way
That when they do become yesterday,
We will know we made a difference.

Many celebrations of Christmas

By Russ Kinne

Xmas has been around awhile! — and is celebrated all around the world, in one way or another. We're all familiar with the many rituals used in our country, and perhaps a few others, but there are more! Lots more. Many you may not even have heard of.

The four million Jews in the U.S., of course, do not celebrate Xmas, but do celebrate the major holiday named Hanukkah at about the same time. There will be a 30-foot-tall Menorah on the White House lawn!

In the Philippines — hardly the place you think of at Xmas — there is a friendly competition among 11 villages to build the biggest LANTERN! With, of course, singing and dancing. The winner now is about 20 feet in diameter; some wild kinda light, no? In Austria, children fear Krampus, a kind of demon who steals naughty kids away.

As you might expect, the Scandinavian countries are Xmas-files too. Sweden builds the GALVE GOAT — a huge 40-foot-tall wood-and-paper goat that some people traditionally try to burn down. They've been successful I think 29 times since 1966, the last time in 2016.

Toronto has an impressive display of some 300,000 LED lights, with fireworks thrown in for good measure. Lots of people ice skate too.

Norway has an odd season where people try to steal each other's BROOMS to ride around on. In Iceland, you may find the "Yule Lads" who commit mild mischief for three days at Christmastime. Germany, as you might expect, has some of the oldest traditions of all. Nikolaus (not Saint Nicholas) roams around the night of Dec. 6, leaving treats for the good children. But he's accompanied by Knecht (farmhand in English), who taps the bad kids with a stick or whip. In Venezuela, people go to church services — on roller skates.

And there are big Xmas markets in many major cities like Strasbourg, Dresden, Copenhagen, Moscow — that's a surprise! — Austria, Prague, Brussels, Madrid, Naples, Manchester, England, and — Chicago!

Merry Christmas, everyone!

New Year's Cheer

By P.K. Allen

Glass of wine
Auld Lang Syne

In good health
Sufficient wealth

May wars cease
Hope for peace

Midnight cheer
Happy New Year

Holiday Food

By Bonnie Wheeler

The ham is in the oven baking
Sweet potatoes and casserole all ready
While a pecan pie is waiting
The table is set with napkins folded
Time for a nap
Serve yourself!

days between these family destinations.

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Yes, there were sales; however, things were shopworn and limited. As I said above, "One year," never again — it was a disappointing year with compromised gift choices.

The birth of Jesus is a symbol of joy, hope, love and peace. In this holy season, let us not be frugal with faith, prayer and the time we share with family and friends. Season's Greetings to you and yours.

Serve yourself!

Yesterday Christmas

By Bonnie Wheeler

In yesteryears, our life was filled with the Christmas joy of our children and grandchildren and today, six great-grandchildren. Their excitement with opening gifts and a happy birthday Jesus cake was our gift. So, many years later, we relive our times together and watch as they make the birthday cake, sing "Silent Night" in church, raise their children, and make their own family traditions. As long as there is a birthday cake for Jesus on the table, I will feel blessed knowing they remember the true meaning of our special holiday.

Journey or Destination?

By Russ Kinne

Well, they're both important — and usually differ quite a bit in their pleasure-level. But for importance; yield way to ambulances, fire engines, police cars with flashing lights — of course, all emergency vehicles — and yield even a few people carrying a stretcher with an injured person, perhaps a hiker or skier, onboard. Or even a distraught mother driving her injured child to the doctor.

All but the last one are readily identified by sirens and flashing lights. If the mother is on the ball, she'll turn on her four-way flashers to let everyone know she's asking for the right-of-way. That's better than nothing; it's always a good idea to let people know there's an emergency, if only by flashing lights and leaning on your horn. Try three beeps, repeated over and over.

As for pleasure — there's a HUGE list of what's "pleasurable" for different folk. And for folk of different ages. A young child may love to ride in the car (pets, too) and don't much care where they go. Later on, when they start driving, it's the trip that counts the most; and with adults, what they drive may be paramount. Most men, and many women too, are "car nuts" and really groove on driving a Jag, or a Benz or a BMW or a Porsche. Or even some Detroit Iron; there's no accounting for tastes, especially here.

Bicyclists and motorcyclists have a very different driving experience, being out in the open where you really can "smell the roses." But, of course, your old bod is much less protected too. So though it's more fun, it's much more dangerous too — bone up on safety gear and procedures!

Boating is — usually! — great fun, whether you're zipping (or plodding) around in a power boat, or silently and smoothly gliding along in a sailboat. Either way, the trip is much more pleasant than the destination — where you're faced with tying up to a pier (or trying to find an empty spot), washing the boat down, cleaning up things in general and just being ashore again. The trip is way better.

And there's nothing to beat flying, preferably in a small plane at low altitudes, where you can see things. And pretty much go where you want and when you want, with no speed zones, radar guns, crazy drivers or complicated intersections. A vast improvement! — safer too, but be careful — it's addictive.

Ask me how I know that.

Write on Writers
Wednesdays at 1 pm

What, No Christmas Gifts This Year?
By Sally Hamikka

It may be hard to get the gifts
You wished to give this year.
Toys, electronics, and everything else
Are held in ships still in port, I fear.

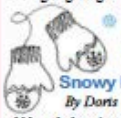
What to put under the Christmas tree?
I've got some suggestions to try.
Give gifts that the whole family can share
And provide excitement for even small fry.

Doglodding is one idea for the family.
There are several places in Maine to see.
Winter carnivals to watch ice carving
Is another idea that comes to me.

Gardens Aglow's by car yet this year;
Fill up the SUV with friends
To look at beautiful light displays ...
Hurry, get tickets before it ends!

Take the kids to see the Nutcracker
Or stage version of "A Christmas Carol."
Then out to dinner at a nearby restaurant,
One that's possibly near the Merrill.

Not all gifts have to fit under the tree,
And anticipation can be part of the fun.
With gifts of adventure and entertainment,
The gift giving may have just begun.



Snowy Mittens
By Doris Weinberg

Although the winter is
not my favorite season.
I can think of all the many things
good for many reasons.

A freezing cold day
with lots of snow coming down.
Snowsuits and mittens are needed
outside to play around.

A fort or a snowman
on the lawn must be made.
Its head with a scarf, coal and carrot,
and a hat for some shade!

When feeling too cold,
you come in with red cheeks.
Hot chocolate is waiting
and the fireplace speaks.

It draws you near with cup in hand,
and you warm your fingers and feet.
Yes, winter has many good points,
in fact, it is pretty neat!

December
By P.K. Allen

Batten down the hatches
Winter is on the way
Gone is summer sunshine
Cold weather is here to stay

Sleet and snow are coming
Along with freezing rain
Shovels on the ready
With some aspirin for the pain

I yearn for that summer sunshine
Of which my heart holds dear
But like so many others
I'll just have to wait till next year

Come to Grandma's
By Bonnie Wheeler

Come to grandma's house
For lots of Christmas fun
Bring your presents and your food
We will enjoy watching you celebrate
But remember, we go to bed by 8

Magical Snowflakes
By Betty Bavor

Are you ready to make a snowman, build a snow fort, make snow angels, slide down a hill on something, walk in snowshoes, explore the wilderness on a snowmobile, play fox and goose or maybe check out shapes of snowflakes on black velvet or glass? We will have a snowstorm or two creating a Maine winter wonderland. Trillions and trillions of snowflakes will make people happy, providing active winter sports experiences. Perhaps your family will share the joy of a favorite winter activity or try a new winter adventure.

Snowflakes start out as tiny crystal specks of ice that form when water in the air freezes and float on the wind. Specks bump and stick together predominately forming delicate hexagonal, six-sided shapes that change as they fall through colder air to Earth. You might measure the depth of snow by locating a sheltered place with less wind, no drifts or sparse spots. Push a ruler or yardstick straight down to the ground and write the inch level to be kept in a notebook or on your calendar after each storm. Add them up in the spring of 2022 to see who had, and where the most snow fell. Challenge a relative or friend in another state to compare snowfall depth with you. Snow surveyors study and record snowfall around the world.

The mountains of Washington, Oregon, and California get more snow than anywhere else in the United States. Mt. Rainier in Washington holds the seasonal record for the most snowfall with an average of 671 inches, nearly 65 feet per year. The highest ever recorded there was 1,224.5 inches in the winter of 1971–72. That is over 100 feet of snow, enough to cover a nine-story building.

As children, we collected snowflakes on chilled black velvet cloth and looked at them with a magnifying glass. We also folded paper carefully cutting snowflakes to hang in windows. Snow surveyors and scientists reproduce their shapes using a flat piece of glass and a plastic fixative artists use on chalk drawings, which can be purchased in an art supply store. Give it a try — store glass and can of fixative in the refrigerator keeping them cold and ready. Have an extra piece of cardboard ready to cover snowflakes. These items need to be carried carefully and quickly in a cardboard box outside to be kept cold when it snows. Once outside, spray the glass with a thin film of fixative and catch several snowflakes, covering them quickly with the extra piece of cardboard so they do not fall on top of each other. Take your snowflakes on the glass inside. Don't touch the glass or snowflakes until the fixative is REALLY DRY, at least 20 minutes or more. The snowflakes will melt but their shapes will be there fixed in plastic for as long as you want to keep them.

Maybe you are inspired to save a snowflake or two for holiday fun and pleasure. Every season brings new blessings. Silent snowflakes are magical and create a winter wonderland.

The Christmas Blanket
By Gladys Szabo

Working at Independence Association, my first job was caring for Chuck, who lived with his parents. Chuck was not verbal and confined to a wheelchair, but we learned to communicate very well. I would get him up, dressed, fed, and then take him to the IA day program. Years later as his parents aged, I became co-guardian with his dad.

One Christmas I gave Chuck a warm furry throw with two large golden retrievers covering the whole blanket. Chuck loved dogs. When he would visit us he would sit with his hand on one of our golden retriever's heads and the dog never moved. The blanket became his favorite thing to always have with him. It went everywhere with him. When Chuck took his last breath, he had a hold of his blanket.

I kept the blanket on my bedroom chair, reminding me of the 17 years we had together.

This past year, I had to have my 16-year-old dog put down. I then adopted Hunter who was a rescue from Alabama.

Preparing for his arrival I was cleaning the crate and looking for bedding when I noticed the blanket and thought, Chuck would love my dog having his blanket. I put it in the crate and fluffed it up.

Once Hunter was settled in, he would lay in the crate on his nice blanket while I made the bed and got dressed. When warmer weather came, I removed the blanket and put lighter bedding in the crate. I realized that Hunter would lay on the floor in front of the crate while I did my morning chores, not in the crate. Now that the weather has become cool again, I have returned the blanket and found Hunter laying in the crate this morning while I made the bed.

I like to think that maybe Hunter feels the love and connection Chuck and I had and hope Chuck is smiling down on us.

Christmastime
By P.K. Allen

T'was 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 Clause to arrive

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

He is Born
By Bonnie Wheeler

The holiday spirit sings in the air
Snow falling, trees glistening, children sledding
We surround the nativity scene, our eyes glowing
And welcome baby Jesus to comfort a world in need.

Unusual places for Christmas
By Russ Kinne

I've been so lucky it scares me. In all my life, I haven't missed Christmas at home more than a handful of times. But some were memorable.

I found myself at McMurdo Sound in Antarctica one Christmas, and thoroughly enjoyed it. You may know that all the U.S. bases there are Navy bases, and in my experience Navy chow is first-rate, and it was. A few dozen roast turkeys, with "all the fixings" and ending with delicious mince pies. Truly delicious, a fine meal for most anywhere, let alone on an ice-covered island on the "South Ice." There were about 75 people at McMurdo (called McMudhole in warm weather when everything melted) and a handful of Navy cooks turned out a gourmet holiday meal for everyone. Most impressive and hugely welcomed! And a big Christmas tree, too.

Predictably, a week later it was time for New Year's Eve parties, and I was in Christchurch, New Zealand, on the way back to the USA. The New Zealanders — "Kiwis" — are marvelous people, most friendly and most hospitable. A nice friendly party, no one overdid anything and all went beautifully.

The next morning I walked by the Officers' Club, to hear yelling and cheering: HAPPY NEW YEAR! — at 10 am on Jan. 1? Curious, I went in to find a happy group around a couple of pilot-navigators and a big map of the world. On every hour it was New Year's in a different part of the world, and they were into having 24 NYE celebrations! — as the sun passed each line of longitude.

But another nice surprise awaited us — the O-Club had shown a nice profit, and all the drinks were free! So we had a leisurely, friendly time, enjoying each other's company and singing when we felt like it.

So we all cheered HAPPY NEW YEAR, VISAKHAPATAM! — most of us wondering where it was. I guess it was karaoke, but that hadn't yet been invented.

2022

Poems & Prose

Write On Writers publish 10th book!

Save the Date – Wed, Nov. 9 at 2 pm!

The Write On Writers of People Plus are proud to announce the upcoming release of their tenth publication titled *We Write*.

Contained within its 185 pages are poetry, humor, prose (fiction and non-fiction), memoirs, and other delightful wonders. The Write On Writers are especially pleased to have the People Plus Art Class join in this endeavor with their creative illustrations throughout the book.

We Write features 17 authors and works by 12 artists. It showcases 77 poems, 76 stories, 11 pictures, and 69 illustrations, as well as the authors' photos and biographies. There also is an introduction by longtime member and former staffer Frank Connors.

An Author's Chat on the new publication has been scheduled at People Plus for Wednesday, Nov. 9 at 2 pm. Since no Author's Chat took place for the group's last book, *Write From the Heart*, because of the COVID pandemic, it also will be included in the presentation.

Inside *We Write* readers will find many wonderful writing examples, such as:

— Mysteries that will make you search for an answer in "The Harp" and "The Question."

— One will get an understanding of why the writers write in "Why I Write," "I Write," and "On Writing."

— Heart-felt memoirs like "Porch Swing" and "My Favorite Teacher."

— Or "Lunch With A Seagull" may make you recall similar experiences in your own life, or maybe the thrill of a "Wednesday Afternoon Sled Ride" will do the same.

— Find a little state history in "The Year Maine Burned," or learn about volunteering in "Volunteers," or scouting in "Yes, I Am Still A Girl Scout."

— For animal lovers, there is a treasure trove of reading in "Life With Woody," "Calleigh," "My Grady," and "A Dog's Love," or for those into wild animals, there is "Avian and Human Nesting Habits," "Chipmunks," and "Here Come the Crows."

And so much more.

Other publications by the Write On Writers at People Plus include:

— *Poets and Storytellers: Writing for fun*

— *Poets and Storytellers: Writing for fun, volume II*

— *It's about Time; Poems & Stories read by the authors*

— *Muses and Memories: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry*

— *From Maine and Away: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry*

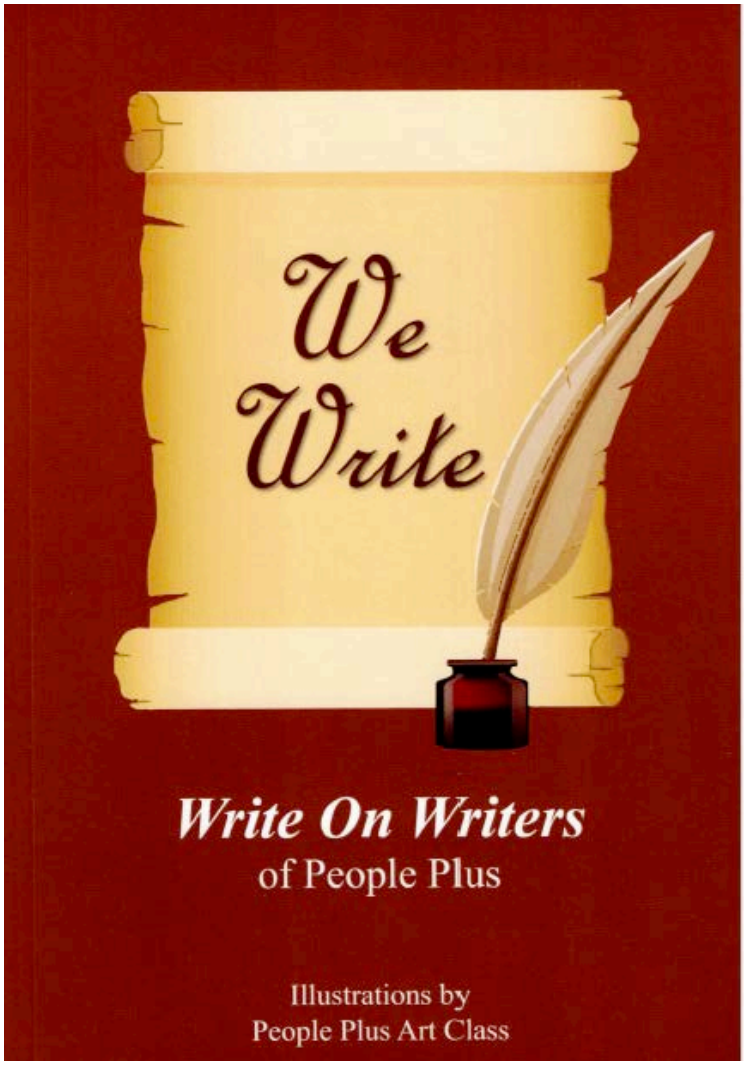
— *Times and Seasons: Writings from the Heart of Maine*
An Anthology of Prose and Poetry

— *Journeys and Reflections*

— *Out of Our Minds*

— *Write From the Heart*

We Write, along with many other Write On Writers books, can be purchased from amazon.com or at the Center.


We Write
Write On Writers
of People Plus
Illustrations by
People Plus Art Class

We Write

An anthology of prose and poetry by the ***Write On Writers***
of People Plus in Brunswick, Maine © 2022

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Journeys and Reflections
Out of Our Minds
Write From the Heart

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Illustrations by the People Plus Art Class
Publication by People Plus

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PEOPLE PLUS PIC OF THE WEEK

COURTESY OF PEOPLE PLUS

Members of the People Plus Write on Writers Group debuted their new book, "We Write," at the Center this week. The collaboration of poetry, humor, memoirs, prose and more is the 10th book from the group. It includes the works of 17 authors from the club, plus illustrations by a dozen members of the People Plus art class. At the event, members were treated to readings by several of the authors, along with book signings. Copies of the book are available at the People Plus Center. For more information on the group and other activities at the Center on Union Street, visit peopleplusmaine.org.

2022

MOVING TO CONNECTICUT didn't keep Gladys Szabo from the writers' group! They love her and also new members, so come join the group if you're interested! And you just might get to meet Gladys too!

Stacy Frizzle-Edgerton
Executive Director

Jill Ellis
Programming & Events

Patrick Gabrion
People Plus News Editor

Poems and Prose

Farewell, Gladys! We'll miss you!

SAD

By Bonnie Wheeler

We had no idea
Gladys would light a fire at People Plus
She became the go-to person
Who got things done
The one who gave hugs with lunch
The one who solved your problems
A friend you were proud to have
Everyone's life she touched will agree
Gladys is Heaven's gift
We wish her a healthy, happy new home.

Dear Gladys,

You have been such a delight to know at Write on Writers. You have a great sense of humor. During the brief time I was doing the prompts and leading the meeting, when I really did not have a clue as to what I was doing, you were so kind and understanding.

I enjoy hearing your heartwarming stories each week. How will we ever get along without your keeping track of all the comings and goings of the people, past and present, in our group? We will have to find a way to keep things going, but I am certain it will take more than just one person.

I wish you the very best in your move. I'm not sure what you will do once you are there, but I am certain you will find a community with interesting people who will be delighted to have you join them.

Sincerely,
Alene Staley

A STAR

By Bonnie Wheeler

You moved here
Became a star

Frank & Gladys ... the Hannaford 'couple'

By Frank Connors

It would take a better mind than mine to boil down the many hours and the many jobs that Gladys Szabo has contributed to People Plus since she walked through our doors, sometime in the last century, and announced she was "new in town," and was "wondering what we were all about." She became an exceptional writer, driver, director, coordinator, organizer, schemer ... a legend in the hallowed halls of People Plus.

The story I always enjoy telling recalls one day we were in Hannaford, shopping for what might become the next Lunch & Connections meal. This was a job we guarded almost selfishly, piling into her little black roadster, "got the shopping bags, Frank?" and away we would go.

We filled a shopping cart (or two) full of food, discussing quantities, arguing about qualities, deciding often on the fly what to buy, changing the menu as we bounced from produce, to meat, to canned Harvard beets! It became a monthly ritual, always a good time, and there came the day when we rolled up to the checkout, (Donna was our favorite) and we were asked, "did you and your wife find everything you needed?"

Gladys' face got red, I smiled, and we both told Donna that Gladys and I were friends, shopping for People Plus. She rolled her eyes in disbelief, laughed, and said, "I watch you shop, you look and act like an old married couple!"

The story could end there but it didn't. Several months later, shopping again at Hannaford with Gladys, my dear Jane met us in the milk and cheeses and asked how we were doing. She was after a salad, I'm remembering, we three rolled up to check-out, to Donna. Jane waited as Gladys and I unloaded 78 pounds of food. "Donna," says I, recalling, nodding toward Jane, "I want you to meet my wife, Jane!" Gladys smiled and nodded as well. Donna looked squarely at Jane and said, "I understand why you prefer to shop on your own!"

Gladys, you are one in a million, People Plus is better because we met you, and remember, you'll always have a home in Brunswick (maybe just not a husband!).

Gladys

By P.K. Allen

A very special person
Who helps people with different needs
By doing special favors
And other helpful deeds.

Whether helping in the kitchen
Or taking someone for a ride

To Gladys:

Welcome to your new home in Connecticut. May it be filled with the love of your family, joy and peace. Friendship is a privilege and a rare jewel of life — difficult

An angel to so many
You may move on
Will never be forgotten here
Your star will burn bright

Dear Gladys:

When I arrived in Maine, six years ago, you became my first friend. And since then, I have discovered that you are "everyone's friend!" You have never refused a request for anything asked of you and I think everyone will agree that you have touched many lives.

I am not the only one that is going to miss you when you leave. But please remember we will always be as close as the phone or the computer. You can even stay in the writing group!

I wish you the very best in your new home and please stay in touch.

Love, Doris Weinberg

To a doctor, dentist, just shopping
She does it with enjoyment and pride.

She helped so much at People Plus
That she was voted Volunteer of the Year
It's so sad that she is leaving
We'll see her off with a great big tear.

to find and impossible to replace. The way you come to the aid of others is amazing and I thank you for all our shared activities here in Maine — cherished memories I will forever hold in my heart.

We will miss you and hope you will return for a visit now and then. Warm wishes, health, happiness and God's blessings to you and yours.

Love, Betty Bavor

CALL GLADYS IF YOU NEED HELP

By Bonnie Wheeler

If you need a ride
If you need a meal served
If you need a cane to walk
If you need People Plus advice
If you need uplifting
If you need a friend — call Gladys

Write on Writers

Wednesdays at 1 pm

GOODBYE

By Bonnie Wheeler

You need to go
We all know
You served your time
The loss is mine
Without you here
Will be hard to bear
We love you so — Gladys

Dear Gladys:

I've known you for 20-some years. We worked together, attended the same church for a time, and, because of your efforts, are now connected through People Plus.

I was always drawn to your sincerity and warmth. You have an open heart, and you are welcoming, gracious, and supportive. It's little wonder you are so loved and will be so missed. I count it one of my greatest fortunes to have you as a friend.

Ellen Brown

GLADYS

By Bonnie Wheeler

She's the pretty blonde
With a touch of gray
Who blew into People Plus
One lucky day.
She welcomes you,
She serves you lunch,
She drives you to the store,
She has become everything
To everyone and more.
She hugs your neck,
Takes care of us all,
She sits with the Write On Writers
And puts pictures on the wall.
When you need to get a job done,
Gladys is the "go to one."
She is a gift to People Plus,
And she is my angel friend.

Leaving with mixed emotions

By Gladys Szabo

I am delighted, after ten years, to have our family reunited to living together. My son-in-law has traveled home every other weekend since the base closed and couldn't find a job. We stayed here so all their daughters could graduate with their friends with whom they started school.

I am extremely sad to leave my extraordinary life I have built here in Brunswick.

My emotions jump back and forth constantly. Life brings tough choices and this is one of the hardest, but, in my heart, I know I am making the right one. Family is always the first choice.

My life has been touched by so many in an abundant amount of ways. I am so blessed to have so many caring and loving friends. I wish I could hug and thank each of you personally, but it would take more time than I have left before moving.

I won't say goodbye as that is too final. I expect to come back to reunite with many as one of my granddaughters will be living here for another year.

I am actually returning to Connecticut where I came from 21 years ago and have many friends around the state that are excited at the chance to get together again. Still not in my everyday life.

My phone number will be the same and would love to hear from you. I bid farewell until we meet again.

As Bob Hope sang,
"THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES"
HUGS - Gladys Szabo

BITTER SWEET WAS THE WORD OF THE DAY at the May lunch. No one wants to say goodbye to

Poems & Prose

People Plus News – Building Community for 45 Years!

October 2022

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO BE CREATIVE! The Write On Writers group loves to celebrate during their meetings. Last month they celebrated all the writers who are in their 90s! (L-R: Russ Kinne, Betty Bevor, Doris Weinberg and Virginia Sabin) Want to join in the fun? Write On Writers meets at the Center on Wednesdays at 1 pm.

Don't miss this Author's Chat!

11-2022

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continued on page 6

Poems & Prose

11-2022

Author's Chat continued from page 1

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We Write, along with many other Write On Writers books, can be purchased from amazon.com or at the Center for $14.95.

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Aug 2022

DEB AND BETTY FROM THE WRITE ON WRITERS GROUP chat with participants at the 2022 Senior Health Expo last month.

11-2022

TOPSHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESENTS

JOY OF THE PEN

Annual Writing Competition for Maine Residents

Congratulations to the 2022 winners!

NOVEMBER 16, 2022 ~ EMMA ~ 0 COMMENTS

We're please to announce this year's winners! W
reception on November 29 at 6pm. Their winni
and we will also reveal who our judges were th

2022 Joy of the Pen winners and judges

The Verdi L. Tripp Fiction Award: **Jim Mentink**
Fiction Honorable Mention: **Lorelei Greenwood**
Margaret F. Tripp Poetry Award: **David Sloan fo**
Poetry Honorable Mention: **Cynthia Larson for**
Richard F. Snow Nonfiction Award: **Nancy Brou**
Nonfiction Honorable Mention: **John Reinhart**
The Crowbait Short Play Award: **Greg Simpson**
Short Play Honorable Mention: **Fred Cheney for "Danced to the Fiddle"**
TPL Teen Fiction Award: **Charlotte Schatz for "To Lend a Hand"**
TPL Kids Poetry Award: **Luisa Feliciano for "Crow"**

This is Fred Cheney's short play "Dance to the Fiddle"
https://joyofthepen.topshamlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/12/Danced-to-the-Fiddle.pdf

Holiday Luncheon in December 2022

THE MEMBERS OF THE WRITE ON WRITERS group love to get together every Wednesday afternoon at the Center! This month Stacy got them all lined up for their annual holiday party photo! They are a fun group who love new members! Come join the fun! Dec 22

Season's Greetings from the Write On! Writers

Christmas Tidings

By Nonie Moody

Here comes our faithful mailman
Driving his bright white new van
He has a new arrival time
Of eleven fifteen his plan.

Rain or snow I will be watching
Anxiously waiting this December
For the first Christmas cards
And quickly checking for sender.

The cards come a few at a time
Some large, some small with yearly letters.
How you doing? The year been good?
I must answer with a tale that stirs.

The cards are displayed on a wall:
Cards with masterful painting,
Cards with writings, cards of bells,
Cards with portraits, cards of a King.

It's Christmas time at the post office
Where stamps bought and packages sent.
They deliver cards to hill and dale
For Jesus' birth brings an exciting event.

New Year's Cheer

By P.K. Allen

Glass of wine
Auld Lang Syne

In good health
Sufficient wealth

May wars cease
Hope for peace

Midnight cheer
Happy New Year

Why

By Bonnie Wheeler

Santa is puzzled this year
As he looks down from his sled
Fewer Christmas lights — electricity hard to pay
Fewer cars on the road — gas
is sky high today
Kids excited but
confused
Fewer gifts under
the tree
Yet the baby Jesus
is here to stay
— hurray
His birthday cake is
on the way

Snowflake

By Sally Hartikka

She watched the swirling snowflakes
Dancing as they fell.
When a large one landed on her glove
She studied it quite well.

"Look," she cried, "at the pretty shape.
Do they all look like this?" she asked.
Her mother explained all are different
Which left little Becky aghast.

Then, as she watched, the flake melted,
And the child began to cry.
"Why can't it stay with me," she said,
"Why does it have to die?"

"It doesn't die," her Mom replied,
"It just alters its current form.
It has now changed into water
And has other jobs to perform.

When it trickles to the ground
It'll make its way to the river
And then all the way to the sea,
Where it will become a life giver.

The sun will draw it up
Into great big clouds in the sky.
Then it will come down as rain
Or even snow; it won't die.

When it soaks into the ground
It will give water to plants and trees
So they will drink it up and grow,
And we eat our food from these."

Little Becky thought for a moment,
And finally said she was pleased
That her snowflake would do some good
And her worries were now eased.

Sparkles For All Seasons

By Deb Noone

Sparkle can come in many forms. And at all times of year.
Just gaze above you on a cold, moonless night. The stars sparkle like nuggets of gold nestled on a black velvet cloth.
After a heavy rain and the sun pours down, or on an early morning walk, droplets of silvery dew sparkle on flower petals or on autumnal, bright red maple leaves.
Eyes sparkle when a lover gazes adoringly.
Sequins sparkle as a woman in a blood red, evening dress passes under a muted chandelier.
Fairy dust sparkles when Tinker Bell flies around Wendy and Peter Pan.
Fireworks sparkle and crack, filling the sky with bursts of color.
Engagement rings sparkle in candlelight.
Fireflies sparkle on a still spring night.
Veins of quartz sparkle in a found rock on a hike.
Frothy foam of a crashing wave sparkles as the sun dips below the horizon.
My heart sparkles and dances in a way no cardiogram would register, when I hug my grandsons.
Christmas lights sparkle on a tree and firelight sparkles from Hannukah candles.
Glitter sparkles on tissued holiday wrapping paper.
Champagne bubbles sparkle as they rise in a fluted glass.
What makes your heart sparkle?

A Remembered Miracle

By Doris Weinberg

Another Chanukah will soon roll around.
The time is drawing near.
It always arrives in December,
close to the end of the year.

It is indeed a joyous holiday.
Often called "The Festival of Lights."
And the happy time is celebrated,
by lighting candles for eight nights.

It goes back to a long time ago
when the Jews were again at war.
Their very small army was losing.
But with great effort, they won once more.

However, their holy temple was ruined,
and the Eternal lamp had very little oil.
It would be a terrible thing if it ran out.
They would feel themselves disloyal.

A messenger was sent.
But it would take many days.
However, once again, the Lord showed his ways.
That tiny bit of oil, miraculously lasted eight days.

For all the years since, that miracle is remembered.
Children are retold the story.
The courageous victory and the amazing drop of oil,
is retold in all its glory!

I will be setting my menorah
in the window for all to see.
And each night light another bulb
to show that we are all free.

The family will gather for a joyous meal,
saying prayers and sharing gifts.
We are reminded of our strong ancestors,
who provided this beautiful uplift!

Christmas Trees

By Sue Linkel

Early on that wondrous morn-
When that little babe was born.

The mighty oak was there to guard-
All night long in the manger yard.

Birch tree leaned in for a sight.
Aspen shivered with delight.

Balsam sniffed, Palm just sighed,
Maple blushed all o'er with pride.

Elm hovered near the baby boy-
While Willow wept her tears of joy.

Happy Fig was all-aglow
As Apple humbly bowed down low.

White Pine, with all in accord-
Raised his arms to praise the Lord!

A Christmas Greeting

By Vince McDermott

December in Maine
A look out the window
Is there snow?
Do we really need snow
To celebrate Christmas?

Just stop
Turn inward and enjoy
All the blessings
Of the holiday season
Trees, lights,
Friendship, and warmth

January Snow

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Come, let winter weave
her wondrous spell,
for all of nature
is at peace,
in this the month ...
of dreams

Beauty of Spirit

By Bob Mulligan

What then is impossible to see
That which we hear in our inner ear
Feel in the heart, know in our deepest soul
Beauty of spirit
Indescribable, glowing
Vaguely familiar yet ancient
Welcome where accepted
Accepted where welcomed
Warmly

MERRY

I Wanted My Students to Feel Joy

By Betty Bavor

Being a physical education teacher in an elementary school, my teaching space was a gymnasium which converted to a cafeteria for lunch, and an upper and lower playground. Classrooms were decorated for the Christmas season, and I taught a unit of game-related musical activities, rhythms, movement and dance.

I also wanted to decorate my teaching space in the gym. I consulted with the art and music teachers to avoid any conflicts with their curriculum plans. Not a problem and we even initiated future ideas.

The gym decorations over the years included stars, reindeer, Santa Claus, Christmas trees, sleighs, etc. I made enough identical pieces 18 to 24 inches in height, putting one letter of a Christmas message on each piece. For example, MERRY CHRISTMAS — 14 LETTERS, 14 stars each with their own letter. They were hung prominently above the cafeteria doors, visible upon entering the gym.

My gymnasium was not left out for holiday decorations, bringing joy to students, teachers, and school visitors during the holiday season.

Season's greetings and peace be with you one and all.

CHRISTMAS

Christmas Caroling

By Arlene Staley

Although I am not a talented singer, I enjoy singing and love Christmas carols. When I was young while living in the Southwest suburbs of Chicago, people caroled every year. Groups got together and walked around neighborhoods going door to door. I loved to hear the knock on the door. We all stood inside with the door open and sang along with the carolers. It was magical. When I was in high school, a group of us teenagers formed our own caroling group and wandered our neighborhood singing all the way.

In my adult world, the opportunity to carol was lost for a long time. I listened to carols on the radio and went to Christmas concerts, but it was not the same as walking through snow and singing, "Noel." Then I moved to Maine.

I joined a church in Portland. They had a tradition of caroling every year. We met at church and then drove to different neighborhoods to visit and sing. It was cold and often snowy, but it was just "like the good old days." After caroling we would return to the church for a spaghetti dinner cooked by the minister and some of his buddies. After dinner, we gathered around the piano and sang more carols. It doesn't get any better than that.

Even today caroling is on the calendar. My town has a holiday festival with a bonfire in the park across the street from where I live. People of all ages gather to sing carols and yes there is hot chocolate too. I wish all of you a "Holly Jolly Christmas This Year."

The Christmas Tree

By Sally Hartikka

Daddy and I were holding hands as we entered Grandpa's wood.
Our quest was to find a Christmas tree, and we were sure we could.
It had to be taller than Dad with full branches all around
I was certain there would be plenty, and perfect ones would abound.

I saw one that looked amazing and ran over to check it out.
However, looking at it closely, I suddenly had some doubt;
The opposite side was really thin and wouldn't do at all.
"Let's keep looking," I said to Dad. "It's also not too tall."

We kept searching for that perfect tree, Dad with saw in hand.
Finally we found what we had sought, and oh my but it was grand!
"This is it!" I shrieked. "It's just the right one for us!
I love the shape of it. It's simply fantabulous!"

Dad cut it down, we dragged it out and tied it on the car.
When we got home, Dad made a stand, and put on top the star.
He checked to make sure that it was standing straight,
Then, as it became dark, we began to decorate.

First came the lights, at least two strings,
Each checked for damage that storage brings.
Then came the fun part ... putting on balls.
As we worked, we played carols which echoed through the halls.

And then we made a discovery, a lovely little bird's nest.
It was within the branches, in an area recessed.
What a sweet surprise it was, truly a real Blessing.
But I saddened, thinking the bird might return looking for her nestlings.

Dad said, "Don't concern yourself, her chicks have long since flown;
By now they're probably gone and all are quite full grown."
I later learned that finding a nest in the tree
Was a sign that luck would come to the family.

I miss the days when we cut our own tree.
The artificial ones aren't the same, you'll agree.
How many of them come with a bird's nest?
None, I can unequivocally attest!

BONNIE WHEELER ADDRESSES THE VERY WELL ATTENDED AUTHORS CHAT last month celebrating the 10th book released and published by the Write On Writers group! A collaborative effort, We Write was written by our writers, and illustrated by the People Plus art class! Inset: longtime member of the writers group, Betty Bavor, autographs a copy of *We Write*.

Holiday Family Traditions and Memories They Evoke

By Deb Hoone

As we move into the holiday season, Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve, and remember family traditions, many revolve around food. If you had known my dad, he enjoyed cooking especially when my mom was out of town and loved to experiment when cooking for himself. Of course, when we arrived home from visiting my grandmother or other family members, the kitchen looked like a category-five hurricane, named Robert, had hit and destroyed everything in its path. But I digress.

Every Christmas Eve, my dad, wearing his red tie and green- and red-plaid vest, wielded a carving knife; his sole purpose was carving the rib roast (or the Thanksgiving turkey in November). Fifty years since I lived at home and many years to follow that I went home with my own family to participate in holiday fun, I can still see dad's huge grin, the candlelight in the middle of the table, and the sconces over the dining room fireplace lowlit to give a wonderful holiday glow on the family silver and the old lace tablecloth handed down from my mom's mom. My dad's twin, Uncle Dick, also wearing a red vest, always brought his movie camera and recorded the entire production.

As kids, our bellies growling as the rich scents of holiday offerings swirled, suffered through this ritual. Never mind, dad served each person individually, cutting off slices of meat and then asking if you wanted the potato and the variety of vegetables, etc. To a kid, this took FOREVER. Especially since we were last to be served right before dad served himself.

But now looking back, my cousin and I both remember those days with oh-my-gosh-will-we-ever-get-to-eat fondness. These are memories we will always share together.

Christmas Candles

By Ellen Brown

When I was old enough to stay awake past 11 p.m., I started attending the Christmas Eve service at our church. It was one of my favorite holiday traditions. There was comfort in the smells of fresh evergreens and in the scarlet colors that surrounded the sanctuary. We celebrated communion, sang familiar carols, and listened to the telling of the Christmas story, but what I remember with the greatest warmth is the lighting of the candles.

We each received an unlit candle when we entered the church and at the end of the service, just before midnight, with the advent of Christmas day, we walked in silence to the front of the church where fellow parishioners lit our candles. Each candle lit from the flame of another.

Still in silence, we walked outside and, if we were lucky, there would be snow covering the ground and we'd place our candles in the snow like tiny torches. They would flicker and reflect off the whiteness, creating a glow that imbued the night.

When I placed my candle in the snow among all the others, I felt a common purpose. We were gathered to celebrate the birth of our faith, to reaffirm a belief in humanity and to share a hope of peace. Each candle spoke to a person's silent Christmas wish. Each candle contributed to giving light to the darkness which is the essence of Christmas.

Haiku

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Tiny birds scurry
Neath boughs laden with snow
Grateful for berries

A Christmas Wish

By P.K. Allen

May your Christmas be Merry
and full of delight.
May your New Year be Happy
with an outlook that's bright.

May your dreams of achievement
always come true.
May your sorrows and disappointments
be but a few.

May the lessons of humility
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To Hope, Love, and Peace
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HOPE
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A Different Christmas

By Gladys Szabo

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Memories of the past
As we begin a new journey
New traditions and many more memories.

Gift Giving

By Sally Hartikka

As a child, I loved to get presents
And woke Christmas morning with glee
In hopes there'd be many packages
Under the tree for me.

As a young mother with kids of my own
I spent so many days
Searching for just the right gifts
Treating each child fairly always.

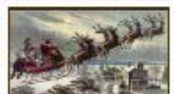
Now I'm old, my ideas have changed,
And the gift of time is what I crave
And companionship with those I love,
And memories that I can save.

I worry about the plight of others
And donate to those in need.
Watching others enjoy the holiday
Is for me satisfying indeed.

I've learned as I've grown and aged
That the old saying is very true.
It really is better to give than receive;
It leaves a good feeling with you.

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 their 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 these presents
Wrapped under the tree

We Love You

By Bonnie Wheeler

Thanks to our
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and volunteers.
You do so much for
others that's nice
We appreciate you
365 days a year.
May Santa fill you
with cheer and a
happy new year!

Maine Nor'easter

by S. Patty L. Sparks

Sea surge, winds pummel
shorelines of granite and pine,
as snow falls ... on snow.

If Only He Could Talk!

By Doris Weinberg

He has just jumped into my lap,
and is pawing at my face.
This happens many times a day,
I wonder what he's trying to say?

I have given him fresh water and a treat
So, I scratch him under his chin.
His claws are sharp. They need to be clipped.
I don't know where to begin!

I stare deep into his beautiful gold eyes
and he continues to paw at my cheek.
I know he really wants something
If only he could speak.

I head to the kitchen and fill his bowl.
He gives me only a glancing look.
So, I reach for two little dental treats
and that is all it took!

His bowl is emptied at a fast pace
I can hear him crunching away.
This time I did figure it out.
Just what he was trying to say.

At other times, it has not been so easy.
I am trying to limit his food.
He has put on too many pounds, you see.
But his behavior can be very shrewd!

He has me right around his paw
It is very hard to say "no!"
I am sure that he understands the word.
But I'm the boss and I'd like him to know!

If only he could really talk.
I often wonder what he would say.
I hope it would be, "Mom, I love you,
I am glad that you chose me that day."

Season of Blessings

By Gladys Szabo

Moving to another state
A new life I'd have to create
After much intense
research Blessings
My first blessing led me to
a wonderful church
Looking back over my
eighty-one years
I realized Blessings
continually appeared
Now as I move on through
my remaining life
I look forward to blessings
rather than strife.

The Wise Men — Astrologers

By Howie Moody

Following the star
Wise men arrive from the east
Where's the newborn King?

King Herod's troubles
Meeting with top officials
Prophets write answers

Herod Oh Herod!
Wise men follow star to Christ
Herod's evil scheme

The star showed the way
With joy they worship the Child
God diverts trip home

Stockings Hung with Care

By Betty Bavor

Growing up on a farm meant chores were priority 24/7. Christmas was no exception. The fireplace had been sealed in our farmhouse, though the mantel remained attached to the wall. The tradition was to hang our empty stocking from the mantel on Christmas Eve for Santa to fill. We put a cookie and hot chocolate with some hay for eight tiny reindeer close by as a treat.

Santa was generous and Christmas morning those stockings were bulging, misshapen and full. Mom and Nana peeked as my brother and I appeared in our PJs early Christmas morning. No coal — only happy practical items — a game, crayons, coloring book, socks, mittens, and in the toe always a penny, tangerine, walnut, candy cane, and very important, on the mantel above our stocking, note paper with postage stamps, pencil or pen.

This last item was for writing our thank you for gifts found under the Christmas tree to be opened at our family Christmas celebration in the afternoon. We had written Santa to tell him what a good girl and would like to have a gift. We exchanged our family presents and yes, Santa found our Christmas tree in the parlor and there was a present with our name and signed "From Santa."

We were permitted to open our stocking gifts in the morning which helped us endure the long wait for our Christmas tree family gathering later in the day.

The barn radio had Christmas music for the cows and we prepared 78 vinyl Christmas records to be play on the Victrola during our celebration. Every so often someone had to crank the Victrola. We all felt the Christmas spirit in our hearts and I remember wishing the day would never end.

We were a happy loving family with faith and nurturing parents and grandparents giving us roots and wings. May they, in their eternal home, remember our tradition celebrating the birth of baby Jesus in the manger. It is a precious memory deep in my heart. They would want me to wish everyone Merry Christmas and goodwill to all.

Christmas Animals

By Sue Linkel

Early that first Christmas morn
When that little babe was born.
The rooster crowed a mighty crow-
The first to let the whole world know.
The ox and the ass lingered there.
Their body heat to warm the air.
A shepherd brought a newborn lamb,
Followed by a ewe and ram.
A rabbit lured from his lair-
His paws together in a prayer.

An eagle perched way up high
Kept watch with an eagle eye.
A cooing lullaby of love-
Came forth from a nearby dove.
An ant crawled up the wall to see.
And by him buzzed a honey bee.
A cow and calf with a dog to guide,
All paid homage just outside.
Three camels did the Magi bring,
All knelt before the newborn king.

Icy Cold Winter

By Bonnie Wheeler

When you are older
You get colder
Icy winds cut you in two.
What are old folks to do?
Dress warmer?
Sit by the fire?
Hibernate like Maine bears?
Begrudgeful you can pay your bills
And wish for a happy new year.

Christmas Joy

By Sue Linkel

Why do we feel so much joy
When we see that little boy?
So tiny and so innocent-
Yet to mankind - Magnificent!
In extremely humble circumstance,
Into our world was his entrance!
Kings and powers deemed a bold
Enabling fulfillment of things foretold!
Bethlehem would be the site
For his birth that very night.
So you see that little king
Is the reason why we sing
JOY TO THE WORLD!

My Worst Christmas

By Vince McDermott

It happened in my eighth year
A Christmas which became so drear
I had great hopes so dear
I had nothing to fear

My hopes abounded as time grew near
My dad was to be home this year
We adorned the tree with lights so bright
We hoped they would guide him in the night

My hopes were high, so full of cheer
But it was not to be that year
The worst was to come you see
Because there was more to be

My best friend came to wish so well
But he had a sad tale to tell
He told me like plain as day
There was NO Santa Claus per se

I did not believe him at first of course
But, in truth, feared the worse
If there was no Santa Claus, you see
There was also no Easter bunny! Woe is me!

M E R R Y

I Wanted My Students to Feel Joy

By Betty Bavor

Being a physical education teacher in an elementary school, my teaching space was a gymnasium which converted to a cafeteria for lunch, and an upper and lower playground. Classrooms were decorated for the Christmas season, and I taught a unit of game-related musical activities, rhythms, movement and dance.

I also wanted to decorate my teaching space in the gym. I consulted with the art and music teachers to avoid any conflicts with their curriculum plans. Not a problem and we even initiated future ideas.

The gym decorations over the years included stars, reindeer, Santa Claus, Christmas trees, sleighs, etc. I made enough identical pieces 18 to 24 inches in height, putting one letter of a Christmas message on each piece. For example, MERRY CHRISTMAS — 14 LETTERS, 14 stars each with their own letter. They were hung prominently above the cafeteria doors, visible upon entering the gym.

My gymnasium was not left out for holiday decorations, bringing joy to students, teachers, and school visitors during the holiday season.

Season's greetings and peace be with you one and all.

C H R I S T M A S

Christmas Caroling

By Alene Staley

Although I am not a talented singer, I enjoy singing and love Christmas carols. When I was young while living in the Southwest suburbs of Chicago, people caroled every year. Groups got together and walked around neighborhoods going door to door. I loved to hear the knock on the door. We all stood inside with the door open and sang along with the carolers. It was magical. When I was in high school, a group of us teenagers formed our own caroling group and wandered our neighborhood singing all the way.

In my adult world, the opportunity to carol was lost for a long time. I listened to carols on the radio and went to Christmas concerts, but it was not the same as walking through snow and singing "Noel." Then I moved to Maine.

I joined a church in Portland. They had a tradition of caroling every year. We met at church and then drove to different neighborhoods to visit and sing. It was cold and often snowy, but it was just "like the good old days." After caroling, we would return to the church for a spaghetti dinner cooked by the minister and some of his buddies. After dinner, we gathered around the piano and sang more carols. It doesn't get any better than that.

Even today caroling is on the calendar. My town has a holiday festival with a bonfire in the park across the street from where I live. People of all ages gather to sing carols and yes there is hot chocolate too. I wish all of you a "Holly Jolly Christmas This Year."

snow and singing

This Year."

The Christmas Tree

By Sally Hartikka

Daddy and I were holding hands as we entered Grandpa's wood.
Our quest was to find a Christmas tree, and we were sure we could.
It had to be taller than Dad with full branches all around.
I was certain there would be plenty, and perfect ones would abound.

I saw one that looked amazing and ran over to check it out.
However, looking at it closely, I suddenly had some doubt;
The opposite side was really thin and wouldn't do at all.
"Let's keep looking," I said to Dad. "It's also not too tall."

We kept searching for that perfect tree, Dad with saw in hand.
Finally we found what we had sought, and oh my but it was grand!
"This is it!" I shrieked. "It's just the right one for us!
I love the shape of it. It's simply fantabulous!"

Dad cut it down, we dragged it out and tied it on the car.
When we got home, Dad made a stand, and put on top the star.
He checked to make sure that it was standing straight,
Then, as it became dark, we began to decorate.

First came the lights, at least two strings,
Each checked for damage that storage brings.
Then came the fun part ... putting on balls.
As we worked, we played carols which echoed through the halls.

And then we made a discovery, a lovely little bird's nest.
It was within the branches, in an area recessed.
What a sweet surprise it was, truly a real blessing.
But I saddened, thinking the bird might return looking for her nestlings.

Dad said, "Don't concern yourself, her chicks have long since flown;
By now they're probably gone and all are quite full grown."
I later learned that finding a nest in the tree
Was a sign that luck would come to the family.

I miss the days when we cut our own tree.
The artificial ones aren't the same, you'll agree.
How many of them come with a bird's nest?
None, I can unequivocally attest!

middle of the table, and the sconces

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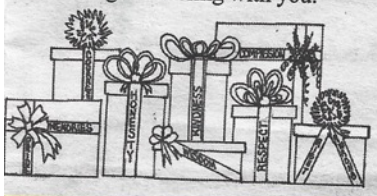

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So, I scratch him under his chin.
His claws are sharp. They need to be clipped.
I don't know where to begin!

I stare deep into his beautiful gold eyes
and he continues to paw at my cheek.
I know he really wants something.
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He gives me only a glancing look.
So, I reach for two little dental treats
and that is all it took!

His bowl is emptied at a fast pace.
I can hear him crunching away.
This time I did figure it out.
Just what he was trying to say!

At other times, it has not been so easy.
I am trying to limit his food.
He has put on too many pounds, you see.
But his behavior can be very shrewd!

He has me right around his paw.
It is very hard to say "no!"
I am sure that he understands that word.
But I'm the boss and I'd like him to know!

If only he could really talk.
I often wonder what he would say.

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By Sue Linkel

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The first to let the whole world know.
The ox and the ass lingered there.
Their body heat to warm the air.
A shepherd brought a newborn lamb,
Followed by a ewe and ram.
A rabbit lured from his lair-
His paws together in a prayer.

An eagle perched way up high,
Kept watch with an eagle eye.
A cooing lullaby of love-
Came forth from a nearby dove.
An ant crawled up the wall to see.
And by him buzzed a honey bee.
A cow and calf with a dog to guide,
All paid homage just outside.
Three camels did the Magi bring_
All knelt before the newborn king.

Season of Blessings

By Gladys Szabo

Moving to another state
A new life I'd have to create
After much intense
research Blessings
My first blessing led me to
a wonderful church
Looking back over my
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Be grateful you can pay your bills
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Yet to mankind - Magnificent!
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Into our world was his entrance!
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So you see that little king-

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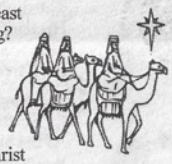

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The Gift *By Ellen Brown*

When you're grown and perhaps have children of your own,
And they ask you what you recall of the time when you were small,
I wonder as I sit here today what you'll tell them, what you'll say.

Will you talk about the time you traveled here from palm to pine?
So excited to see snow, "Give it time," we teased you though.
It was March, the fickle month.
There were challenges to confront,
A different life to begin,
But gradually you settled in.
What will you remember as you age
Of those early childhood days?

Will you remember read-a-louds each night before you slept
And stories that from our shared imagination leapt?
Dancing in the kitchen waving scarves above our heads.
A kaleidoscope of colors: blues and greens and reds
Being able to explore
The natural world outside our door.

Helping light the fire under papa's watchful eye.
Playing UNO, hide and seek, I spy.
Will you remember parties, each with its own theme,
And hot chocolate in tall mugs piled high with whipping cream?
Building forts of all sorts.
Pulling cushions, pillows, towels, sheets,
Where the line with chaos meets.
We potted flowers every spring
To place upon the deck.
A time of togetherness
I hope you'll recollect.

You're all still young for goodness sake,
We have more memories to make.
But when you are old enough
To view life in hindsight
Remember memories fade
Like sunset into night.
If you remember nothing else
I want you to know this
I can't imagine how I'd feel
If all of this I'd missed.
We're so happy you are here.
We can see you, touch you, hold you near.

You gift us every day anew,
The gift of memories we give to you.
Remember love, remember care
Remember we are always there.

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Ellen Brown

Hello, my name is Ellen Brown and I just wanted to let you know I recently turned 70 years old. Quite honestly, my brain still has a hard time accepting that fact.

I have lived in this great town of Brunswick for 23 years, 20 of which I spent working for Independence Association — assisting with adults with developmental disabilities. As I was debating my departure date, the COVID pandemic made that decision easy for me.

It was Gladys, an already longtime People Plus member and someone I had worked with, who introduced me to the wonderful goings-on at the Center and the Write On Writers group. I started on Zoom and I was hooked. It was a perfect fit to minimize the isolation brought on during COVID and to my adjust to retirement.

Write On Writers at People Plus introduced me to talented and creative writers, who are as diverse as their stories. It challenges me to think creatively. I look forward to each meeting. It's also an activity that continues beyond the time we're together. When I'm alone, I'm spending time thinking about and preparing my writing to bring to the group.

Being creative has always been important in my life. From planning themed parties to handmade holiday decorations, and to sewing and writing, it is the part of me that is the greatest joy to share with others.

A Memorable Christmas *By Sue Linkel*

I came home from the hospital with a present - a new baby brother. The nurse put him in a large red stocking for the trip home. He was number eleven. You might think baby eleven would be a ho-hum, but his siblings were excited. They all wanted to hold him.

In those days we weren't told ahead if it was a boy or girl- the boys won - Six to five!

Dear Santa,

They say people my age should not STILL believe in you. ... Well, guess what, you'll find my home-made ginger molasses cookies and a nice Merlot next to the recliner — you know the drill.

Merry Christmas, Santa!

Yours truly,
S. Patty L. Sparks

Christmas Time
By P.K. Allen

Christmas bells are ringing
Carolers are singing
It's a time of peace
A time of love
A time to celebrate
The One above

A Lit Window *By Deb Noone*

Big, soft flakes swirled and drifted lazily
Some landed on her face, a touch of chill
Others hit the pavement and disappeared
Temps hovering at the juncture between frozen and wet

Through the window
A bright light, a beacon in the inky night
The figure bent over a chunk of wood
His dark hair flopping over his forehead
The steady rhythm of slide and flip, slide and flip, slide and flip
Each freed wooden sliver floating toward the floor, out of sight

She imagined a tiny pile of soft chips
Scattered about his feet
As the block of wood took shape
Would it be Santa, a bag of toys slung across his shoulder
Maybe a reindeer to pull his sleigh
Or a tiny antique truck, soon painted red

Which lucky child would find such a treasure in a stocking
hung from a mantle

His head lifted from the intricate task
and turned
Gazes met through the frost-rimmed window
and held

The magic of the moment caught in her heart
before she turned and slipped into the dark
Her heart pounding
Her step hurried
Her head filled with fantasies

Winter
By Bonnie Wheeler

A cold blast of air
It's winter's dare
Ducks and geese fly south
Or buy long underwear

Thank You for sponsoring the holiday edition of "Poems & Prose!"

Betty Bavor
John & Sue Linkel
Delsora Lowe, Author
Audrey McLaughlin
Naoma Moody
Helen Small
Write On Writers

A Christmas Surprise *By Bill Perry*

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house it was much too cold for any mouse to survive. My two sisters, one older and one younger, had arrived in southern Germany to spend the holidays with my wife and me. Snow lay on the ground throughout the city, Jack Frost was doing exactly what he should, and all was perfect for a wonderful German Christmas.

We had a freshly cut Christmas tree in the living room of our 200-year-old apartment in the center of town. We also had an Advent wreath, a requisite item for a perfect German Christmas. There was a goose in the oven, and we had prepared all of the appropriate dishes for the Christmas Eve meal.

We lit all four of the Advent candles on the wreath, which was perched behind my younger sister on the back of the sofa. The candles representing hope, love, joy, and peace were a perfect combination for this special Christmas season. We were all enjoying the candles and the aroma from the cooking goose wafting through the apartment as the wreath suddenly caught fire behind my younger sister's head.

The flames began to rise, and we knew that in a short time everything in the room would be on fire unless we acted quickly. My older sister, the scientist in the family, had decided that it would be best to smother the flames, while I, a practical technical type, had decided that dousing the flames in the kitchen sink would be best.

We were at a stalemate. My older sister reached a pillow from the sofa, while I grabbed the flaming wreath and ran toward the kitchen sink. My younger sister and wife sat in disbelief at our actions wondering what the fate of the burning wreath would be. As I hurried toward the kitchen sink, my older sister was making every effort to smother the flaming wreath in my arms.

As we reached the kitchen sink, she dropped the pillow on the flames at the same time that I turned on the water. My sister and I looked at each other in an understanding way, knowing that our learned life strategies had just been played out, and simply said "Merry Christmas." The goose was a very tasty reward for all of us.

2023

Gabrion says he is retiring as PP editor!

(We'll believe it when we see it)

Patrick Gabrion has announced that he will be leaving his position as editor of the People Plus newspaper at the end of June, 2023. Thus, the July 2023 issue will be his last one after nearly four years on the job.

In his exit letter to Executive Director Stacy Frizzle-Edgerton, Patrick said, in part, "The end of my full-time journalism career at The (Brunswick) Times Record in 2018 and subsequent part-time hiring at People Plus a few months later have provided a smooth transition period, as I've attempted to adjust to the unknowns of retirement. And for that, I thank you."

"I'm not sure any of us thought we would survive the retirement of Frank Connors from the newspaper, but Patrick helped us through that transition and showed us the way forward. We have loved working with him for the last four years and we will miss him here at the Center, and as part of our People Plus family!" said Frizzle-Edgerton.

"Also, I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to work for and represent such an outstanding organization as People Plus. It's too bad every community doesn't possess such a thriving gathering place for all ages," Patrick concluded.

So, for Patrick, it will be more free time for being retired ... and for riding bicycles. "We hope we haven't seen the last of Patrick as his monthly columns are so fun to read. I'm still working on him to provide a column here and there... Fingers crossed, folks!" said Frizzle-Edgerton.

Jan 2023

Page 16 March 2023

HELP WANTED!

Join our fun team!

Since Patrick has decided to retire, the People Plus organization needs a staff copywriter to fill his shoes. The job entails an hourly pay rate for writing articles, doing an interview or two every month, editing when needed and reprising previous articles. The position averages about five hours a week, and the bulk of the work can be done from home. Computer skills are a necessity along with an interest in interacting with members at the Center, attending fun meals, social gatherings, and events; and generally becoming a part of the People Plus newspaper production team!

PEOPLE PLUS MEMBER, DEB NOONE, meets with Bowdoin student, Ayhorng, as part of the Midcoast Literacy "Elder Memoirs Project." These two will meet once a week for 8 weeks and Deb will share stories and memories from her life. Ayhorng will document Deb's personal history and create an original, short book that captures her special moments and memories.

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Bunny Carlisle

By Charmaine Daniels

"I love change," said Ruth Ann "Bunny" Carlisle, busting the myth that older people embrace routine. At 83, the former drama major continues to celebrate the spirit of adventure even as she has started to reflect on some of her memories during the weekly Write on Writers group at People Plus.

Those memories include working for American Airlines for 35 years, first as a stewardess and then as a training supervisor. Growing up near Philadelphia, Carlisle attended Catholic schools and after graduating from Marywood College, landed a summer job where she learned about openings for stewardesses. Feeling like she couldn't see herself going to New York City alone to seek an acting job, or more likely, waitressing for a long time before she did, she decided to apply.

"I was the spy in the sky," she said of her supervisor career, referring to making sure the airline crew members were serving the customers properly, looking professional, and mastering emergency landing procedures. Though she never experienced a crash landing or other crisis, she said she had traded out of a flight that ended up crashing into a mountain in the Caribbean. Although she didn't know that then, that flight she almost boarded was just the first of several incidents where she narrowly escaped death.

"I loved airplanes," she said, remembering how she even relished the smell of the jet fuel and the feel of the tarmac underfoot in the days before jetways made it easy to walk right on board. Because she had enough seniority, she managed to sign on for the inaugural flight of the Boeing 747, as well as the inaugural flight of the DC-10.

When she was flying, she felt like she was in step with what was going on in the world. And she met celebrities, even dating Gene Autry and Hoagy Carmichael.

She said she initially chose a career over marriage, but at the age of 38, married entrepreneur Bob Carlisle, a native Californian. She had moved to Los Angeles and was flying out of there as her base when a friend told her about a man he thought she should meet. She and Bob were married 41 years before he passed away several years ago. Because they both put a positive spin on life even in times of trouble, they were well-matched and weathered his company's bankruptcy as well as her subsequent serious illness together.

"I had an unusual and exciting life, and I married an unusual, exciting man," she said. "He was not afraid of taking risks, and neither was I," she added. Once she married, she gave up her supervisory role and returned to being a flight attendant so her schedule could be more flexible.

How did she get to Maine? Her younger brother had gone to Colby College and settled in Brunswick, so she had visited often. Besides family, another thing that drew her to Maine was art, specifically the art of the Wyeths. "I love art, and I like creative people," she said. In Carmel, California, she and Bob ran an art gallery at one point and she sometimes flew to Europe to buy pieces there for the gallery. Several pieces still hang in her apartment.

Although she has acted in community theater and dinner theater ("I've always been comfortable talking in front of people"), she enjoys art now by attending plays, concerts and galleries. She also enjoys watching old movies for the production values in costumes, lighting, and make-up.

Still a practicing Catholic, she has kept her faith alive over the years and said that no matter where she has traveled in the world, the magnificence of creation is always present. She muses that her faith and being so trained in survival in the airlines helped her survive a serious car crash and an illness 10 years ago that put her on a ventilator for two weeks.

Of living at Thornton Oaks in Brunswick, she said, "This is home now and I've got my foothold here. But I'm always ready to go." One of the places she's going is back up in the air, in this case in a biplane ride she won at the People Plus auction in April. She will soar in an open-air cockpit over Penobscot Bay. "I like the magic of flying," she said, smiling.

What's to come in the future? "We don't know what's to come in the next years. It's the last adventure … and there's still so much to learn."

In the meantime, she said she believes in being grateful. With her clear, bright blue eyes, she added a final nugget of wisdom: "Always go forward." Or in her case, forward and up!

We've Seen It All: lessons from six long lives

By Maya Lunn, The Bowdoin Orient
April 27, 2023

Bill, 75 June 2023

Frank, 77

Frank has lived in Maine his whole life. He has been the town manager of Bowdoinham, a paratrooper in the airborne infantry during the Vietnam War and a photographer.

Q: Would you have done anything differently in your twenties?

A: In my twenties? I had my 21st birthday in Vietnam. Yeah, we were young. I've always said that the last thing of value to my service is that none of my kids or grandchildren have had to serve in a war. I hope that stays. I wish I [had] finished school. I went back to school right after I came home from Vietnam, but it was a very unpleasant experience, so I never finished. My mother, God bless her, got her degree in English and history when she was 80. I have six brothers and sisters. She went nights and Saturdays and did all kinds of stuff to get that degree. She showed it to me and said, "Now you got to get yours."

Bill lived abroad for 35 years and developed a knack for languages while intercepting Russian transmissions during the Cold War. He then became an English as a Second Language professor. Bill was a spy, a teacher and a world traveler. But equally as important, Bill was a devoted father.

Q: What are you proudest of?

A: I just became a grandfather. I was home with my oldest daughter for the first two months of [the baby's] life. It was so wonderful to see the cycle of what I used to do with her. She's now doing it all to this little baby, and it's all new to her. I'm just there, smiling. When I changed the diaper, she was like, "How do you know how to do that?" And I said, "I used to change yours!"

Welcome Charmaine!

We'd like to welcome Charmaine Daniels of Brunswick, the new writer for the People Plus newspaper. Taking over for the retiring Patrick Gabrion, Charmaine is a longtime writer and editor, having previously worked at the Portland Press Herald as a copy editor, as well as at Idexx. For many years, she was the editor of the Saint Joseph's College Magazine and the media relations point person there.

Charmaine has lived in Maine since 1974, except for several years in Madison, Wisconsin, where she attended graduate school. Originally from Williamsport, Pennsylvania, she is a graduate of Penn State and the University of Wisconsin. Her son, Jacob, lives in Portland and is a historian.

She looks forward to meeting our members and writing about their experiences. "Everyone has a story to tell, and people always want to know what other people have done in their life so far and what motivates them now," Charmaine says. "I believe we're hardwired for stories and I will enjoy highlighting our members, as well as all the great activities that go on here at People Plus."

An avid pickleball player, Charmaine also folk dances at People Plus every Friday and said she looks forward to it all week. "I like coming together in community, having fun, and learning new things. It makes all the difference," she notes.

If community, fun, and learning sounds familiar, it's because that's what happens here. "The energy in this building amazes me," Charmaine adds. "I look forward to sharing the stories of People Plus with all of you."

Note: If anyone has a story idea, you can email Charmaine at: news@peopleplusmaine.org

July 2023

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US! The People Plus writers group has a fun annual summer birthday celebration every year. And this year was no different with a group of around 20 folks gathering for a potluck luncheon complete with birthday cake! The Write On Writers have been sharing poetry and prose for 28 years. This welcoming group meets every Wednesday at 1 pm at the Center and encourages newcomers to come try it out!

undated

People Plus News – Building Community for 45 Years!

Member Moment

"Member Moment" gives people who participate in programs and activities at People Plus a chance to tell us a little bit about themselves. Don't be surprised if you might be asked a few questions some day, after all, everyone has a story to tell. Thank you.

Getting to know Claude Bonang

My name is Claude Bernard Bonang. I am a resident of Brunswick, and I am 91 years old.

I was born in a house at 9 Bowker Street in Brunswick, Maine, one of nine children — six girls and three boys, and I was the seventh born. The house is located adjacent to the entrance of Bowdoin's Whittier Field, where a great deal of my childhood took place doing a variety of things — playing baseball and football, climbing about in the grandstand, skating in the winter time. And after football games, looking for money and things under the bleachers dropped by spectators.

The main entrance to Whittier Field, with its brick structure and iron gates, and the surrounding wooded area of pine and maple trees provided the neighborhood boys with plenty of opportunities for climbing and playing "Cowboys and Indians." And in the summer, when college was out, I spent time riding my bicycle about the various pathways on campus.

I graduated from St. John's Elementary School in 1944, Brunswick High School in 1948, and Bowdoin College in 1952.

How and when did I become a member of People Plus? In the 1990s, the organization was known as the 55 Plus Center and was located in the St. Charles rectory and church. I was a member of the writers' group and we published two books of our writings titled "Poets and Storytellers Writing for Fun" Volume I in July of 1999 and Volume II in November of 2000.

I continued to be a member when the name was changed to People Plus and the new location on Union Street. I think that People Plus is great, in that it provides the opportunity for people to participate in a variety of activities and interact with each other in a number of different ways.

The things I enjoy the most is attending the variety of guest appearances, as well as interacting with various People Plus members.

One thing about my life people might be interested to know about, is that in December of 1996 I self-published a book about my family and growing up in Brunswick. I did it in verse and illustrated with pen and ink sketches and photos; it was titled "Memories in Verse." I had two printings, the first of 300 copies and the second of 225, both of which sold out.

In November of 2006, I self-published a second edition, which included 28 new anecdotal stories in verse having to do with events and changes that the town of Brunswick has undergone over the years, as well as things that pertain to my siblings and me, and six stories in prose dealing primarily with some of my life experiences.

Because of the added prose, I titled the second edition "Memories in Verse and Prose." Of the printing of 1,000 copies, so far I've sold more than 900. The more than 100 letters that I have received from customers with complimentary comments about my books has been very heartwarming.

35 Union St. / PO Box 766, Brunswick, ME (207)729-0757 www.peopleplusmaine.org October 2023 Volume 23, No. 10

People Plus member Claude Bonang receives award

THE ROTARY CLUB OF BRUNSWICK SURPRISED AND HONORED longtime People Plus member, Claude Bonang, with a well-deserved service and community volunteerism award.

A well-deserved accolade for a marvel of a man

Longtime People Plus member Claude Bonang (inset photo) got a big surprise last month when he showed up to perform at a Brunswick Rotary lunchtime meeting. When he tried to take the stage to play music with his beloved spoons, rhythm bones and musical saw, he was asked to hold on for a minute. What followed was a standing ovation for Claude as he was given the club's Paul Harris Award for community service and generosity. The 93-year-old teacher, historian, author, musician, artist, gelato scooper extraordinaire, and YouTube star admits he was stunned.

For 32 years, Claude taught biology at Brunswick High School, where his enthusiasm, creativity and class field trips to Harpswell to collect sea life in the tide pools

continued on page 6

Claude Bonang award *continued from page 1*

motivated students. He also cooked – over Bunsen burners – a meal of locally harvested clams, mussels, and periwinkles for his AP Advanced Biology students after their unit on mollusks.

He was known as a kind and dedicated teacher. People Plus member Ruth Thibodeau had him for biology class and says he was always willing to give her extra help.

Outside of class, Claude took clam, mussel and scallop shells along with sea urchins and starfish to make whimsical sculptures sold at craft fairs or donated to good causes – including donating them for decades to the Music in April fundraiser for People Plus.

Born in Brunswick to a French-Canadian family of nine children, Claude graduated from Brunswick High in 1948 and from Bowdoin College in 1952. After teaching for two years at Lisbon High School, he went to teach in France, living on the Left Bank of Paris and later traveling all over Europe. After he returned, he spent three years back at Brunswick High before leaving to earn a master's degree from Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif.

Claude's journey as a musician started when he was given a ukulele as a child. He learned that along with the guitar. Later he mastered the harmonica, pan flute and melodica. Now he concentrates on the rhythm bones (he made them from cow ribs gotten from Bisson & Sons butcher shop in Topsham), spoons, harmonica and musical saw. He has played in nursing homes from Boothbay to Lewiston and he has been a consistent participant in Rotary's Maine's Got Talent variety show, along with MSMT's Footlight Follies. He has also performed on the bones with the Fiddle-icious orchestra.

And, of course, he has performed at People Plus; in fact, he was the first entertainer at the People Plus Center when it moved to Union Street. And he performs every year at the Gelato Fiasco Scoop-a-thon to benefit the Teen Center.

Obviously, retirement from teaching in 1987 didn't slow Claude down. He has authored several works of local history. First, he self-published a book of verse about his family and growing up in Brunswick. He illustrated it as well, titling it "Memories in Verse." In 2006, he self-published a second edition, "Memories in Verse and Prose," about events and changes in the town of Brunswick over the years, as well as some of his own life experiences.

Claude lives in Brunswick with his wife, Ann, a former math teacher whom he married 60 years ago. They have two sons and two granddaughters. He still corresponds with 300 people via e-mail, many of whom are former students. His legacy continues.

One more thing to know about Claude that you don't want to miss: He is on YouTube dressed as the Lone Ranger and playing the spoons to the tune of the William Tell Overture. That performance filmed in 2016 (when he was 86) has had 12,850 views! If you want to see it, type this in your web search engine: Claude Bonang plays the spoons.

THANKS TO CLAUDE BONANG for playing music at the Teen Center fundraiser at Gelato Fiasco on Maine Street in Brunswick every year for over a decade! It wouldn't be the same without you, Claude!

WOW History of Claude Bonang

1999 Poets and Story Tellers
Publication Coordinator, Text Arrangement and Illustrator, Photography

An Unforgettable Visit
A Close Call

2000 Poets and Story Tellers, Writing for Fun Vol II
Publication Coordinator, Text Arrangement and Illustrator
Note – 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.

Mr. Racine – Our Grocery Man
Tree Climbing
Where's My Shirt

CONGRATULATIONS WINNERS!

Journal

Joy of the Pen 2023

The Verdi L. Tripp Fiction Award: Juliana Delany for *Trespass Point*
Fiction Honorable Mention: Betty Culley for *Widow Maker*
Margaret F. Tripp Poetry Award: Ann Vanvolkenburgh Chang for *After*
Poetry Honorable Mention: Poetry Honorable Mention: Cora Kircher for *Ark*
Richard F. Snow Nonfiction Award: Jean Konzal for *Searching for Jenny*
Nonfiction Honorable Mention: Fred Cheney for *Brit*
Nonfiction Honorable Mention: Bonnie Wheeler for *Grandpa's Porch*
The Crowbait Short Play Award: Josh Gauthier for *Last Call*
The Crowbait Short Play Honorable Mention: Brian Daly for *I'm Leaving My Body to Science*

To read the complete winning nonfiction works go to:
https://joyofthepen.topshamlibrary.org/#nonfichm

Season's Greetings from the Write on Writers

The Signs of Christmas

By P.K. Allen

Fir trees all lit up
Carolers at the door
Last minute shopping
In a department store

Scenes of the Nativity
Decorate the town
Cold winter wind
Snow falling down

Children sitting on Santa's lap
Excited and full of glee
Asking for toys and presents
Under their Christmas tree

But it has a deeper significance
More important than material things
You can feel it in your heart
By the warmth that it brings

So we gather at Christmas services
To celebrate the life
Of a man born 2,000 years ago
To relieve mankind of its strife

Christmas Story Memories

By Betty Bauer

Christmas decorations, planning, and holiday spirit began after Thanksgiving when I was growing up. Our Sunday school teachers directed the story of Jesus' birth for us to present at the family Christmas Eve afternoon service. We all looked forward to who the star would be in the pageant. Our teachers must have made the selections; there were no auditions. Mary and Joseph, angels, wise men and animals, there was a part for everyone. Each year we experienced a new part in the performance. I remember how proud I was when my brother was Joseph. Years later, I was Mary. We girls enjoyed being angels with sparkling halos. The boys liked being animals with no verbal lines to learn.

Sunday school classes were on hold as we practiced for this annual pageant. Costumes, carefully stored from former years, were retrieved from the closet and spread up to fit the characters. We practiced singing related Christmas carols and memorized our speaking parts. "Away in the Manger" and "Silent Night," the finale with all the cast gathered before the congregation, were my favorites. The sanctuary was transformed with a manger, the Star of Bethlehem, and colored scenery. Every pew in the church was filled on this glorious afternoon.

After rehearsals and fellowship, Christmas wishes with family and friends, we departed. The Midnight Candlelight Service was for adults. We children were tucked snug in our beds waiting for Santa Claus to come down the chimney! Cherished memories.

May the magic and wonder of Christmas bless your home and bring you peace in the New Year.
Merry Christmas, everyone.

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 have
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

Late December

By Vince McDermott

Black, cold, snowy
Gray skies
Little sun
Depressing

Counting days
Until spring
Too, too many
Right now

Sunshine needed
Florida or Arizona?
Should I pack?
Grab a plane?

Then at the worst
Sleigh bells jingle
Santa Claus arrives
All is well

Christmas Eve

By Sue Linkel

When I was a child, on Christmas Eve there was no tree or decoration. We hung up our stockings and went to bed. The next morning it seemed that magically everything in all its glory appeared. The tree was all lit up, decorated, and surrounded by wrapped presents. That was the custom then. Of course that was 50 some years ago. But times have changed and trees, etc., begin to appear even before Halloween.

We tried to keep the old tradition alive by waiting till Christmas Eve to put up our tree. One year with a new baby due any day and John away in Maine where he accepted a new job, he came home in time to spend the holiday with us. We were to move to Maine in a couple of weeks.

So we went shopping for a tree on Christmas Eve, but not one single tree lot was still open! One store had some trees piled up ready for disposal behind it. They said we could have anything we could find. The best we could find was not very pretty, so we took an extra tree for branches to fill in where needed. The kids were disappointed and complained. One of them declared in a disapproving voice, "Charlie Brown would sure be proud of us!" We began laughing and making jokes and had a lot of fun decorating that sad tree. It didn't look too bad all decorated, but it didn't look too good either.

Over the years memories of Christmases sort of blend together but that tree and year is remembered more vividly than any other. It is referred as the "Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Year."

Shopping

By Bonnie Wheeler

Christmas Eve was freezing cold and icy – not a shopping day, but I could not disappoint my 4-year-old grandson, Brendan. It was his day to buy his Christmas presents. He had his list and 10 dollars. Since it was so bad outside and I had to go grocery shopping, I decided he could do his shopping at the local community whilst 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 LifeSavers 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.

Christmas Shopping

By Sue Linkel

It is always such a chore
When you shop at every store
To find a perfect gift for
The one you still adore.
For which you will be kissed
So taking pencil in your fist
You arrange to make a list
And hope no name is missed
At last your chore is done
And now begin the fun
Of wrapping every one
Now your under the gun
Of where to hide away
Everything till Christmas Day
And then to your dismay
Comes all the bills to pay!

ChristmasTime

By P.K. Allen

T'was 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 their presents
Marked – to who and who from

As nightime approaches
Excitement is on the rise
Nesting the time
For Santa Claus to arrive

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

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

Family gift exchanges

By Sue Linkel

By now you all must be aware that I come from an unusual family. We draw names for gift exchanges with our extended family members. One Christmas we decided that we would all be required to get next year's gifts from yard sales or rummage sales with the usual price limit. That gave us a whole year to shop.

We had more fun opening those gifts and hearing from our extended families what they got. One newcomer to Maine received an old wood chainsaw with a 6-pack of Moxie. Laura was delighted with his high school ring with his name on it that he got at graduation. It disappeared years ago. It had been found at a rummage sale in Massachusetts. Grandma Daniel was given a decorated Christmas tree costume which he put to use the next Halloween.

Every year someone received an old ugly urn and passed it on, sometimes out of state to those who lived elsewhere, but still participated. (I usually picked the names to send to them.)

After a while the urn disappeared. Johanna, who started the urn tradition, passed away nine years ago and her children were pleased to locate it and honored her by storing her ashes in it. Recalling her great sense of humor, I'm sure she was laughing about it.

So – beware of gag gifts! You never know what will happen!

The Spirit of Christmas

By P.K. Allen

The socks were all hung
on the mantle with care,
Not 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.

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 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 heats around for it for half a day.
He also leaves it in his van or on the garage shelf.
He fears and complains when he loses his cup.
So please, next year for his sake and mine,
give him a cup with a bungee.

Celebrate Yourself 2023

By Lucy Derbyshire

Prevention magazine suggested to fill my life with positive thoughts. I am 78, so decided I would do that by celebrating what I have accomplished this past year. First, I am proud that I just completed a class from Randy at Marymeeting Adult Ed about learning to play my new guitar, a Fender, from the music store in Topsham.

Second, I enjoy Pilates almost every day of the week about 7 or 7:30 a.m. Music plays. People talk. Dishes and pots and pans make noise as I plan my day. And best of all, I can do whatever I want. I have no bosses telling me to do this or that. Wonders are on these walls so I enjoy either sun, rain, or snow. It is like a touch of heaven at the beginning of my day.

Finally, I celebrate my church. We all know we have a wonderful, loving, kind heavenly Father. I guess I am celebrating God!

A winter song

By Bonnie Wheeler

Standing at my door, looking out at the snow,
drawing 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 of the bitter cold
while this tiny bird has none of these,
yet it sings to the world.
How that humbles me so I walk outside
with a sudden feeling of abundance.

Christmas Travel Problems

By Vince McDermott

I just watched the updated Christmas weather forecast. There will be snowstorms over much of the eastern United States.

I hate snow and ice. I can't tell you how many times my sleigh has almost slid off rooftops. And it is almost impossible to climb down snow-clogged chimneys.

But I'm just supposed to say: "Ho, ho, ho," and carry on.

I'm getting much too old for this. I've been doing it for many, many years. I'd like to retire, but there is nobody to take my place. So I'll just have to keep on going.

"Ho, ho, ho."
Right.

Christmas bricks

By Sue Linkel

When we moved to Maine, it took a while to get accustomed to winter. The first Christmas we spent was really cold. Our big house was over 200 years old, very drafty and difficult to keep as warm as we enjoyed in California. Wood stoves were practical financially with the woods we owned.

The upstairs bedrooms were cold. Crawling into a cold bed wasn't very pleasant. Running upstairs to rinse out soiled diapers was just too difficult for me, and so disposable diapers were fairly a new product, I thought it prudent to change. So I had a lot of obsolete cloth diapers that I didn't throw out.

Stacie decided what she would give each of her seven older siblings for Christmas. There was a pile of used bricks in a shed, so she secretly picked out seven bricks, cleaned them up, wrapped them in a no-longer-needed diaper, and tied a red ribbon around them with a bow. Then hid them under her bed til Christmas Eve.

After all the laughter when they were opened on Christmas morning, she explained that they were to be warmed up on the wood stove and wrapped in the diapers to put in the feet of their bed to keep their feet warm. It worked! The bricks were joined in appreciation in much as the new socks and underwear everyone usually received among their gifts.

Season's Greetings fro

The Signs of Christmas

By P.K. Allen

Fir trees all lit up
Carolers at the door
Last minute shopping
In a department store

Scenes of the Nativity
Decorate the town
Cold winter wind
Snow falling down

Children sitting on Santa's lap
Excited and full of glee
Asking for toys and presents
Under their Christmas tree

But it has a deeper significance
More important than material things
You can feel it in your heart
By the warmth that it brings

So we gather at Christmas services
To celebrate the life
Of a man born 2,000 years ago
To relieve mankind of its strife

Christmas Story Memories

By Betty Bauer

Christmas decorations, planning, and holiday spirit began after Thanksgiving when I was growing up. Our Sunday school teachers directed the story of Jesus' birth for us to present at the family Christmas Eve afternoon service. We all looked forward to who the cast would be in the pageant. Our teachers must have made the selections; there were no auditions. Mary and Joseph, angels, wise men and animals, there was a part for everyone. Each year we experienced a new part in the performance. I remember how proud I was when my brother was Joseph. Years later, I was Mary. We girls enjoyed being angels with sparkling halos. The boys liked being animals with no verbal lines to learn.

Sunday school classes were on hold as we practiced for this annual pageant. Costumes, carefully stored from former years, were retrieved from the chest and spruced up to fit the characters. We practiced singing related Christmas carols and memorized our speaking parts. "Away in the Manger" and "Silent Night," the finale with all the cast gathered before the congregation, were my favorites. The sanctuary was transformed with a manger, the Star of Bethlehem, and related scenery. Every pew in the church was filled on this glorious afternoon.

After refreshments and fellowship, Christmas wishes with family and friends, we departed. The Midnight Candlelight Service was for adults. We children were tucked snug in our beds waiting for Santa Claus to come down the chimney! Cherished memories.

May the magic and wonder of Christmas bless your home and bring you peace in the New Year. Merry Christmas, everyone.

Shopping

By Bonnie Wheeler

Christmas Eve was freezing cold and icy – not a shopping day, but I could not disappoint my 4-year-old grandson, Brenden. It was his day to buy his Christmas presents. He had his list and 10 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 LifeSavers 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 Meme at the cemetery.

Christmas Shopping

By Sue Liebel

It is always such a chore
When you shop at every store
To find a perfect gift for
The one you still adore
For which you will be kissed
So taking pencil in your fist
You attempt to make a list
And hope no name is missed
At last your chore is done
And now begins the fun
Of wrapping every one
Now your under the gun
Of where to hide away
Everything till Christmas Day
And then to your dismay
Comes all the bills to pay!

ChristmasTime

By P.K. Allen

T'was 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 Clause to arrive

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

The Day After

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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 beeper.

A winter song

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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 –
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I'm getting much too old for this. I've been doing it for many, many years. I'd like to retire, but there is nobody to take my place. So I'll just have to keep on going.

"Ho, ho, ho"

Right.

n the Write on Writers

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

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

Late December

By Vince McDermott

Bleak, cold, snowy
Gray skies
Little sun
Depressing

Counting days
Until spring
Too, too many
Right now

Sunshine needed
Florida or Arizona?
Should I pack?
Grab a plane?

Then at the worst
Sleigh bells jingle
Santa Claus arrives
All is well

Christmas Eve

By Sue Linkel

When I was a child, on Christmas Eve there was no tree or decorations. We hung up our stockings and went to bed. The next morning it seemed that magically everything in all its glory appeared. The tree was all lit up, decorated, and surrounded by wrapped presents. That was the custom then. Of course that was 80 some years ago. But times have changed and trees, etc., begin to appear even before Halloween!

We tried to keep the old tradition alive by waiting till Christmas Eve to put up our tree. One year with a new baby due any day and John away in Maine where he accepted a new job, he came home in time to spend the holiday with us. We were to move to Maine in a couple of weeks.

So we went shopping for a tree on Christmas Eve, but not one single tree lot was still open! One store had some trees piled up ready for disposal behind it. They said we could have anything we could find. The best we could find was not very pretty, so we took an extra tree for branches to fill in where needed. The kids were disappointed and complained. One of them declared in a disapproving voice, "Charlie Brown would sure be proud of us!" We began laughing and making jokes and had a lot of fun decorating that sad tree. It didn't look too bad all decorated, but it didn't look too good either.

Over the years memories of Christmases sort of blend together but that tree and year is remembered more vividly than any other. It is referred as the "Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Year!"

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Over the years memories of Christmases sort of blend together but that tree and year is remembered more vividly than any other. It is referred as the "Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Year!"

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound the carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn the households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God I not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men."
(in the public domain)

A Happy Jazzy Christmas

By Alene Staley

In my home in the 1950s in Chicago, family entertainment was found often on the radio and with a phonograph that played 78-, 45-, and 33 ⅓-speed vinyl records. My family enjoyed music. The music popular in our house was opera and jazz. I did not like opera, but loved jazz. Our collection of records included those purchased by my parents and gifts from my uncle who owned an FM radio station. When I was about 10 years old, my parents would occasionally let me listen to the phonograph by myself, and pick out what record I wanted to enjoy. That was my favorite treat.

One evening close to Christmas my dad came home from work and announced that we were going Christmas shopping. Going out to shop at night in the dark was quite the treat for my sister and myself. Malls did not exist as yet. We enjoyed visits to the Loop upon occasion, but that evening we went to a small shopping area not very far from where we lived. We entered and discovered that it was a record store. I didn't even know there were record stores. It was spectacular. Records in bins everywhere. Our parents told us we could look at the album covers while they shopped. I resolved that when I grew up I would spend all my money at record stores.

My parents chose some records to purchase. They did let us see what they had chosen. We were not allowed to listen to the records until Christmas. I knew Christmas would be fantastic that year. I wish I could remember what specific records they purchased. Performers I remember listening to as a child include Benny Goodman, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughn, and Louis Armstrong. I wish everyone a happy and merry musical Christmas.

Christmas Music

By Sally Hartikkan

At the birth of Jesus, the Bible records, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'" We have come to interpret this as the angels singing at his birth, and songs have continued to play a large role in the celebration of this occasion. I, too, associate music with Christmas. I have loved singing carols since I was a small child, waiting impatiently for them to start playing on the radio shortly after the end of the Thanksgiving weekend.

As I grew older, I joined choruses and choirs that spent much of the fall learning some of the beautiful music of Christmas. One of my first experiences singing with a large chorus and orchestra was that of singing the "Messiah" by Handel. I was in high school, and my choir was one of several that joined the Bowdoin Glee Club and orchestra under the direction of Frederic Tillotson. What a thrill! The orchestra and soloists were in the front of First Parish Church, while the chorus members filled both balconies. Music filled the sanctuary.

Over the years, I have sung plainsong, early medieval carols, and songs in many languages. Even the more popular, secular music has been part of my repertoire. Bring it on! I loved it then, and I love it now. It would not be Christmas without music and a chance to sing it!

A New Year, Already?
By Doris Weinberg

Where did this year go?
It went by much too fast!
When you get to be as old as me,
you want the time to last.
If I think back to my early years,
I was always looking ahead.
At six, I couldn't wait to start school,
and those years through eighth grade just sped.
Then I couldn't wait until high school.
I would carry a pocketbook and wear lipstick.
And then those four years flew by.
I didn't think it would be so quick!
College for me was a very big change.
I was away from home on my own.
It didn't take long to realize,
just how much that I had grown.
First job, marriage, and raising a family,
filled the following years.
My children grew up and left the nest.
Looking back, I did shed some tears.
And now I have just turned ninety,
and the new year is only weeks away.
What do I look forward to?
That may be hard to say.
My life has really been good so far.
I haven't wanted for much.
I hope that I have given something,
to all the lives I've touched.
Maybe next year I will continue in good health,
and the world will find some peace.
And life will improve for everyone,
if those big problems would finally cease.

Stuck in a Snowstorm
By Nonie Moody

The weekend was free
Road trip to Pennsylvania
Snowbound in the car

The Old Man and the Kid
By Vince McDermott

The old man groaned as he got up from his easy chair. What a year! He was glad it was almost over. He had done what he could — with mixed results.

Just than the doorbell rang. He opened it and found a young kid there. The kid pushed by the man and looked around. "Just wanted to make sure things were ready for me."

"Who the heck are you?"

"Come on 2022. I'm 2023."

"You're early. Come back when it's time."

"OK. I'll go. As the rabbit says — Happy New Year — yuk yuk."

The old man just stared at the kid with his mouth open. Good grief. What kind of year will it be, he wondered.

The kid paused in the doorway.
"See you at midnight on the 31st"
He slammed the door on his way out.

10 Wishes By DK Allen

If I could have 10 wishes
for this year that's bright and new,
I'd wish for Peace, Love, and Happiness
to name but just a few.

I'd continue on with Compassion,
and bringing Poverty to its knees,
followed by a miracle
that would end Hunger and Disease.

Then, I'd end with Freedom and Justice
For all people right from birth,
along with care for the Environment
to help our Mother Earth.

If I could have 10 wishes
that would all come true,
the world would be a better place
to live in for me and you.

Wishes for the New Year
By Vince McDermott

May you get what you wish for
but be careful what you wish for
May you be where you want to be
when you want to be there
May your talents be recognized
and your efforts be rewarded
May your computer and your spirits
stay up in the coming year
May you not be boring
May your muse not desert you
May you have a nice year

The Resolution
By DK Allen

I should make a resolution
To start this brand-new year.
Should I promise to eat less food,
Or perhaps to drink less beer?

Sometimes I get so confused
I don't know which way to steer,
So I'll just make a resolution
To think it over till next year.

Waiting By Alane Staley

I am waiting for the first snow of the season. By that I mean the first snowstorm when winter finally shows up to stay. When the snow piles up and takes at least a day or two to melt. I know that snow disrupts my life, but it also gives all of us a chance to press the pause button. To relax and just stay home off the roads, watch the snow fall, and maybe read a book or take a nap.

When I was teaching it was magical when the first snow started to fall. Classes inevitably went quiet and everyone looked out the window. Even in offices, if there are windows, people often go quiet when the first snow starts.

I love the peace that comes with early winter. I love seeing the beauty that emerges in the snow. There is work to do when it snows, shoveling, roof raking, and all the necessary tasks. It comes amid a quiet cozy contentment and provides an excuse to stay home. And soon enough the roads will be plowed and traveling will be easy again. Enjoy the first snowstorm and the start of winter.

Timeless Wishes
By DK Allen

I wish for the promise
of peace instead of war,
and for those who have less,
I wish for much more.

I wish for the promise
to end hunger and disease,
and for those who are afflicted,
I wish their suffering to ease.

I wish for a country
not divided, but one,
where differences can be settled
without the use of a gun.

I wish for a world
where all people are free
to live, to worship, to prosper
in peace and harmony.

I've Been Thinking
By Nonie Moody

There will be new adventures
In the year of twenty twenty-three
Where to travel, be it far or near
Or maybe a B&B in the country.
How are we traveling this year?
The car will be on vacation,
Other options are bus, train or plane
To selected places in the sun.
At home working in the garden
What seeds to sow for future delights
Or shall the garden be small this year
Planting it all in annual favorites.
What project to plan with extra time
A dream of a new sewing design
Or will there be a quiet time
For many unread books of mine.

Write On Christmas Party
By Bonnie Wheeler

The Christmas party was fine
Around the table we talked and dined
Santa brought us all gifts
Our Christmas cards read and displayed
Pictures taken; a memory made
My favorite part was Carol's caramel corn homemade
Come join us next year
Paper and pen in hand

Write on Writers
Wednesdays at 1 pm

New Year Wishes By Bonnie Wheeler

An America that's still free
No more flu to isolate us in
Return to respecting for all who keep us safe
Leaders who choose our nation's needs first
A time our kids are safe and educated
And God will bless America again

2022 History — 2023 Mystery
By Betty Bevor

Father Time 2022, rest in peace! You managed to survive a year of inescapable truths, difficult challenging times and events. People around the world have experienced unimaginable sadness, property losses, political unrest, financial issues and loss of a precious sense of faith and more! 2022's history will be written for future generations. What will they remember and write in their memoirs?

Baby 2023, we are a nation bruised, hurt, frightened and need your help! Come to us with new energy, innovational ways, technology, science, medical cures and educators with vision. Students need resilience, intelligence, mission, purpose, patriotism, kindness, and ideas as they prepare for the future with a goal to make the world a better place.

There are limitless opportunities on land, sea, and air for research in every field or discipline one can name. The future is a mystery with the gift of each day. Wishing you 365 chances to be productive, positive, live life in the fullest and may the new year shine with happiness, adventure, love, peace and God's Blessing.

Missed My Chance By Doris Weinberg

I look over my life filling 90 years.
I was able to do so many things.
But there are still some "wants" on my bucket list,
that I will never be able to swing.

I did get to Israel and the UK,
but my own country is another story.
Out of 50 states, I've been to 20 percent,
and missed out of many categories.

My traveling days are over now,
but there are places I still dream about.
Washington and Oregon — such beautiful scenery —
of that I have no doubt.

The canyons and the national parks,
I never got to see.
I had brochures and looked up tours,
but, alas, it was never to be.

I almost got aboard a Mississippi River cruise,
just a few years ago.
It was all planned out, but that fell through,
too many problems, you know.

But I am not complaining. My life has been good.
Many great memories I have to share.
I look at my albums with pictures galore,
and remembering them, takes me back there.

Now is the time to relax on my couch.
Out the window, the scenery changes.
I'm perfectly content to look through the glass,
and see what Mother Nature arranges.

So, no regrets to the places I have missed.
What I did see always helped me grow.
And if I am really sad about that,
I can always watch a travel video!

THE MEMBERS OF THE WRITE ON WRITERS group love to get together every Wednesday afternoon at the Center! This month Stacy got them all lined up for their annual holiday party photo! They are a fun group who love new members! Come join the fun!

Poems & Prose

Be Mine! By Doris Weinberg

A little more lace and it was done.
I had made a valentine for my mum!
I must have been maybe eight or nine.
Some red paper and glue and it turned out fine!

Many years later, the holiday came again.
I got all my supplies at the five and ten.
I had a secret crush and so special it had to be.
The words would say it, but he wouldn't know it was me.

I looked over so many cards
at the nearby stationary store.
But some were just too mushy.
Even though I liked them more.

I had to be so careful,
in how I expressed my love.
I didn't want to scare him off.
Even though, he was what I dreamed of!

And then I saw it! The perfect card!
It said my feelings so very well.
Would he read it and also find
the words made his heart swell?

I read it through several times,
and decided it was the one.
I would take it home and add my name.
The search was finally done!

The card got mailed and I patiently waited.
I hoped for one in return.
But the days went by and nothing arrived.
I had to hide my disappointed concern.

I never did get a response,
but a surprise did come my way.
A boy who lived next door to me,
sent me candy that Valentine's Day.

I really had never looked his way.
He was just "the boy next door!"
But I was so surprised with his gift.
He was just what I was looking for!

I had never thought to look so closely.
He was right under my nose.
While I was looking the other way,
he was waiting for me, I suppose!

An Ode to Chocolate By Deb Noone

Versatile chocolate in every shape and flavor imaginable
What's not to like?
I pick through the heart-shaped, red box
Do I eat my favorites first?
Or save them for the very last, anticipating each sweet nibble?
Do I polish off the entire box in one sitting?
Or limit myself to one every other day to make the box last?
I toss my hands in the air ... and dive in
Then I add to my grocery list — buy more boxes of Valentine's Day chocolates
I'll have enough to get me through the dreary month of February

A Valentine Puzzle
By PK Allen

Though we both have different shapes
that are of different size,
and faces with different tints
along with different eyes.

Though we both have different hair
that's cut to different lengths,
and spirits with different weaknesses
along with different strengths.

There's a corner in my heart
where I keep for you a space,
for like two different parts of a puzzle,
we both fit right into place.

Happy Valentine's Day

A Winter Haiku
By PK Allen

Short days, long cold nights
Snow-covered ground, wind that bites
That's February

Winter Lament and Valentine's Day By Vince McDermott

I don't mind snow. I don't mind wind.
I don't mind rain. I don't mind sleet.
BUT NOT ALL AT ONCE!

How many more storms with mixed precip will we have to bear this winter? Is that all we have to look forward to? Actually, no. There is Valentine's Day. We can all enjoy the warmth, the color, and anticipation. Who will send a card?

Do you recall grade school where cards were exchanged? Sometimes no signature was included. On rare occasions, the sender was never identified. Are you still wondering today about a card or two? Might your life have changed if you had discovered the sender? Some romances begin in grade school and last a lifetime. What a mystery!

Childhood Valentine Memories
By Betty Bavor

Mary Ellen Butterick School in Sterling, Massachusetts, is where I began school. There was one classroom for each grade, with 18 to 25 students. The two-story building was fronted with windows decorated appropriately for holidays throughout the school term. For Valentine's Day, the windows were decorated with red hearts students in all grades had cut out.

We all made Valentines for our parents. My mom had construction paper, doilies, maybe a magazine for pictures, paste, crayons and scissors for us to make our school cards. We had learned to make perfect hearts by folding paper in half and drawing a crook-shaped line from top to bottom on the fold side in all sizes. My brother and I were encouraged to be creative designing cards fitting girls or boys.

Our teacher brought a box for the class to decorate, seal and cut a mail-slot on top for classmates to "mail" our cards. Prior to our home-making card project, we had a brief discussion about who would get our Valentines. Somehow our mother made us realize if we gave to one classmate, we should give to all classmates. If we planned to write a verse, she had to check it out. As we advanced in grade, we wished to be more selective, though mom's advice prevailed and I remember my verse being just one word, "Valentine or hello." All classmates always received a card from us.

On February 14th after lunch, the entire school partied singing, playing games, a story read by the teacher, opening the Valentine mailbox and having treats the room mothers had prepared. One time a teacher gave each of us a Hershey Kiss. The principal visited the classrooms with a Valentine greeting. I wonder if he was giving the teacher a Valentine or checking classroom behavior!

I kept my cards for weeks. It was a memorable, happy, experience — oh, to be young again in days of yore. Have you received a handmade Valentine? How about you making one with grandchildren for someone special! HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY ONE AND ALL

Cold, Wet and Snowy
By Nonie Moody

The temperature cold
The roads are wet and slippery
Hard to see when dark
The snow clouds are coming in
Morning brings a soft new look

Tobogganing
By Laura Lee Perkins

Today we've gone tobogganing
Flying over the snow –
Bumping down the steep long hills
To the slowing valley below.

First a sense of exhilaration
Then almost a tremor of fright –
And a wondrous feeling of helplessness –
Too fast! O'er the blanket of white.

The spills are a bit scary,
The pulls uphill are long –
Again and again we make the run
And experience, with nature, a song.

The song tells the beauty
Of having the freedom to roam –

Midwinter Thaw
By PK Allen

The midwinter thaw
is a break that won't last
From the bitter cold weather
and an icy northeast blast

Thoughts turn to spring
and warm skies of blue

Yet, remembering sadly
winter's not through

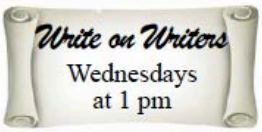
Blizzard By Laura Lee Perkins

The furious winds swirled their way
Into our aging domain –
Singing through cracks and crevices
As an impending, stinging refrain.

The threat in the storm's approach
Was fearful to behold –
The winds could sweep you off your feet
And make you shudder from the cold.

And then the snow began to fall
As it drifted, piles grew by the doors.
Nature had taken over our world
Closing schools, banks, and stores.

The blizzard howled all through the night
And most of the following day.
Then humans began the task of reversing
Nature's wild and perilous ways.



2024

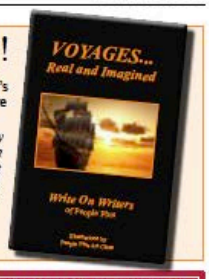
Join us for the launch of a new book from our resident writers!

Wed, Nov. 13, 2 pm. Join us for the authors' chat to launch *Voyages ... Real and Imagined*, the latest book by the Write on Writers group at People Plus. Covering everything from a grandmother's pin cushion to stories of life and love and telling the truth about accidentally breaking your sister's beloved flower vase, this book brings it home. Featuring 22 writers and nearly 200 pieces of poetry and prose, *Voyages* will take you on a real trip, open your imagination, and make you want to sit down and tune in for more.

In almost 30 years, the WOW writers have published 11 books, and along the way have become a respected and endearing group at the Center. The group members love their weekly Wednesday gatherings in a "this is a lifeline" kind of way. The unique talents of the writers stand out as you encounter different experiences and sensitivities. This latest book journey is marked by a full range of writing styles and originality. The poetry takes you deep into each poet's world, while the prose stirs your interest as you experience the insights of each writer.

The very first entry in the book is about a poem in a pocket that wants to get out. How's that for a starter? Dare we say WOW?

Note: This latest book by our writers' group will be available for purchase at the Center; just see Sarah at the front desk to get your own copy.



Poems & Prose

For more submissions from our writers' group, go to www.peoplephusmaine.org/write-writers-0

Our Bill Says Goodbye

There is an empty chair at our table.
One of our best writers is gone.
Our season with Bill was so sweet.
But too soon it was complete.

Bill was a joy and gifted with wisdom.
He gladly shared with all of his friends.
He is walking a new path today.
We wish him peace and love all the way.
– *Bonnie Wheeler*

I Saw it Standing There

I opened the shade that morning,
And I saw it standing there:
A beautiful doe stock still in the road,
Of the motion my blinds made aware.
We looked at each other with awe.
She was beautiful, healthy and sleek
And ready to bolt on quick notice,
Athletic and right at her peak.
A car slowly approached from her rear,
Came to a stop with great care.
As the woman rolled down her window
She took a photo of the deer there.
The click of her camera finally scared her,
And the doe quickly turned and ran,
Tried to get into my backyard,
But a fence put an end to that plan.
She next turned again to the street,
Where she sprinted down toward the base.
I lost sight of that gorgeous creature;
Of her there was no longer a trace.
– *Sally Hartikka*

The Baskets

They are cream-colored, made of hard sturdy plastic, my swinging two-handled baskets. I do not remember when or where they were purchased, only that they came at different times.

The baskets were great in the garden, especially when collecting the pumpkins, carrots, and green beans. When finished, the baskets would be so streaked with mud and dirt they needed to be cleaned. Cleaning was easy, just turn the hose on them for a quick cleanup and let them sit in the sun to dry.

When canning, the baskets were great for stacking the glass containers and using the handles to carry the empty jars from the basement up to the kitchen to be washed and ready for canning. After the canning was finished, the clean filled jars were ready to be taken back to the basement for winter storage. I would arrange six quarts for each trip to the basement, walking slowly down the stairs with the heavy load.

When our family lived in Virginia, we would travel to our respective family homes during the summers. One of these baskets was always used for packing lunches and snacks. I made a sturdy flat lid, covering it with a blue cloth and putting a solid 1x2 wood piece down the middle – making a nice handle on the lid to keep items in and able to stack things on top.

On Mondays the washing is usually done. All the dirty clothes were carried from the bedrooms to the washer in my favorite basket stuffed full. After the wash is dried and folded, clothes are repacked in the basket and returned to the bedrooms.

Like a favorite pen or knife are my trusty two-handled, cream-colored baskets. I would never misplace them or give them away.
– *Nonie Moody*

Vacation to Paris

It is time for another trip to Paris, France. I went right after I got my degree in nursing about 50 years ago. The only thing I remember is how disappointed I was. The people were not dressed up as fashion models on the runways and the buildings all looked older than my home in Peoria, Illinois. It was built in 1837. Maybe this time I will like Paris better?

The first place I plan to visit is McDonald's. I heard the Big Mac there costs only $4.93 and here in USA they average $5.29. I found out there are 1,564 McDonalds in France and 41,800 worldwide. California, Texas, then Florida, have the highest number of McDonald's in the USA.

I am going to see the Eiffel Tower again, and this time I plan to eat in the restaurant up in it. Last time I saw it at a distance. My special tour in the tower will cost me $62. Then I will go on the Versailles tour for $163, followed by the trip to the French Rivera and Nice, France, for $112.17. Whoops! I forgot to mention before Nice, I will be seeing Normandy for $158. My cheap hotel is only $63.65 a night.

I haven't decided yet. Should I stay for six days or for ten? I have a lot to see in this city of 2.161 million people with a mayor named Anne Hidalgo. I will be paying $584 for round-trip tickets on United Airlines.

The last two days I am there, I want to visit these three places: I have to see my favorite painting by my favorite artist, Mona Lisa by Leonardo Da Vinci, in the Louvre Museum; I have to dine at Fouquet's, a restaurant open since 1899; and I need to visit the Seine River.

The museum will cost $150 for the exclusive guided tour and reserved entry included. Fouquet's is so famous that several movie stars like Bradley Cooper and Catherine Deneuve are often seen there. I was unable to find the expense of eating there, so will have to allow plenty if I am hungry or have a couple of drinks if I am out of money. The Seine River Tour will cost me $141.

What do you think? Should I stay for six days or ten days??
– *Lucy Derbyshire*

Imagination Magic

Where do our ideas come from?
Out of the blue
an idea pops –
whether in words, or…
visual, in our minds,
encouraged by our surroundings
A brilliant red maple leaf
conjures memories of
driving Route 2
through New Hampshire to Vermont
end goal – University of Vermont
parent's weekend … my son's freshman year
Now he turns fifty this month … and yes, I aged, too
Or memories…the once majestic maple tree in my yard
before succumbing to rot from within
memories of leaves collected
and dried – sent to my daughter
in Colorado – homesick for Maine
Out of one tree, so beautiful despite its last stages of life
The brilliant red leaf
now mottled with black…
the beloved tree, diseased, on its deathbed
Sadness filled my heart
The years pass by, one by one
I, too, age
but dreaming of my beautiful,
majestic tree, I still see those bright red leaves
atop that tall tree, so alive…in my mind
Life passes along, each experience a gift,
a memory, treasured
– *Debora (Deb) Noone*

The Last Goodbye – The First Hello

The last goodbye to summer with cooler shorter days.
Vacation adventures, visitor memories, and
Maine State Music Theater plays.
The first hello to fall with county fairs, festivals, and
farmers markets on the green.
Forests ablaze with fall-colored leaves, yards and
gardens harvested, weeded, trimmed, and clean.
Pack away the summer toys.
Get ready for the winter joys.
– *Betty Bavor*

Moose on the Loose

Older brother Troy and I were home alone
Upstairs, getting ready for bed
When I peered out the window at the setting sun
And I saw moose antlers instead!

"There's a moose on the loose," I said out loud,
"Oh dear, WHAT should I do?"
Should I run and tell Troy or call the police?
Would they lock it up in a zoo?

It's standing right beside our house
Right THERE on our front lawn.
Oh dear, it's getting very late –
It might stay there til dawn!

I'll run and tell my brother
Who's doing homework on his bed,
"Troy, come quick," I yelled down the hall,
"There's a moose with antlers on its head!"

Troy came scampering quickly,
But he thinks this must be a joke –
"If this is a fib," he yelled as he ran,
"You're going to be one sorry folk."

But as he entered my bedroom door
His eyes popped and mouth opened with glee –
"Wow a real moose! on our front lawn.
Get the camera, and hurry – quickly!"

I run downstairs to the kitchen
Grab the camera, and off I fly
Back up the stairs, and into my room
Troy snaps a photo proving it's no lie!

The moose very slowly raises its head
And spreads its back legs to run
Oops not to run, but to "water" our lawn,
Boy – this evening sure is FUN!

And then the moose starts to wander
Down the driveway he goes,
We were sad to see him leave
And wondered what it all meant?

To have a moose appear on the lawn
When our parents were both away
We weren't sure what we should do
Just watch or chase it away?

"You did the right thing," Mom later said,
"You watched and didn't scare the moose."
The animal was curious and wandering –
Lucky you SAW "The Moose on the Loose!"
– *Laura Lee Perkins*

VOYAGES...
Real and Imagined

Write On Writers
of People Plus

Illustrations by
People Plus Art Class

VOYAGES...

Real and Imagined

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Season's Greetings from the Write On Writers

Somewhere at Christmas

[illegible]

– Fred Cheney

A Present from the Heart (a work of fiction)

[illegible]

– Debora (Deb) Hoose

Giving and Receiving

[illegible]

– Laura Lee Perkins

What Baby Jesus Means to Me

There's hope after the grave
There's a celebrating so great
There's a love beyond compare
There's a joy for each person on earth
There's a song whispered of gladness
There's no more sorrow or sadness
There's no more isolation or madness
There's freedom for all to share
There's no murders, stealing, or divorces
There's no pride, greed, or lies
Best of all, the maker of all bidses to come home.

– Lucy Derbeshire

The Snows of Winter

The first snow of winter
is a child's delight.
The second snow of winter
is so fluffy and light.

The third snow of winter
is freezing and cold.
The fourth snow of winter
is getting pretty old.

The fifth snow of winter
hail and sleet sting
And by the sixth snow of winter
I'm ready for spring.

– P.K. Allen

Christmas Cards

[illegible]

– Betty Bower

The Holiday I Liked Best

[illegible]

– Jim Cherry

Christmas

It's Christmas time
A time of joy and happiness
Gifts under the tree
Beautiful lights and ornaments
Adorning the tree

It's Christmas time
Time to be with family
Visit with friends
Spread your good cheer
Make peace with the world

It's Christmas time
But don't forget the reason
For he came here
So our sins could be forgiven
Yes, it's Christmas time

– Kathy Gaunt

Solstice Time

Snow likely, silence and darkness certain.
Ovens, family meals seasoned with contentment.
Lights sparkle from windows, trees, doors.
Starry skies bring wonder and hope.
Time slows with long nights and short days.
Inside is where we dwell in cozy warmth.
Cuddling becomes a cherished necessity.
Each day forward brings one more minute of light.
Treasure family and friends.
Invest in time for rest and renewal.
Make merry with music and dance.
Enjoy precious gifts of love, light and joy.

– Alene Staley

Christmas 1940

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
Twas not 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 gifted

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

– Vince McDermott

Santa's Elf

Dear children of all ages:
Let me introduce myself.
I'm one of Santa's helpers,
Better known as an elf.
I make toys all year long
With help from all my friends.
We saw and hammer and paint;
The hard work never ends.
Then, as Christmas approaches,
We begin to check Santa's list
To see who's been bad or good:
No one is ever missed.
Once we know who gets toys,
And who only lumps of coal,
We double-check all to make sure
One hundred percent is our goal.
Finally, a day or so before Christmas,
We begin to load the sleigh.
It's hard work to lift toys onto it.
Then we see him on his way.
Once he returns up here,
The work begins anew.
We start making toys for next year.
There's always so much to do!

– Sally Martilla

The Christmas Gingerbread House

[illegible]

– Nonie Moody

Child's Christmas

[illegible]

– Carol Smith Markell

Season's Greetings from

Somewhere at Christmas

The kids ran in and found their places. They snuggled and nestled, and finally came to rest. "Are you all comfortable, cozy?" I asked. They all nodded. Kids, lying through their teeth. Maybe to them, the body heat of another was enough to make them comfortable, cozy, for as long as it lasted – the body heat, that is.

You really had to concentrate to even hear the air raid sirens outside. Hearing the warplanes and bombs and strafing machine guns required no concentration whatsoever. This shelter was rickety and outmoded, but, hopefully, the enemy didn't know where it was, or even care. To kill a dozen or so Quaker children and their teacher was left to the fates.

I tried to judge the closeness of the bombs, some shook the foundations of our shelter. Listening intently was the worst thing I could have done. I was powerless, and I knew it. I admired the children. They entered a catatonic state where they put their senses on hold. Bomb blasts and tremors and shaking of the structure were things they had no reaction to. I was alone, with my anxiety.

In time, the bombing abated. This was when you heard the "all clear" sirens. But they weren't there. Perhaps, their lack was due to enemy troops in the streets. My anxiety went up a quantum step.

Then out of the stillness, a thin, reedy voice sang—

"O holy night, the stars are gently shining
It is the night …"

The voice was joined by three or so voices.

"… of our dear Savior's birth."

The rest chimed in, and somewhere, I have no idea where, I joined them.

"Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn."

I knew I should commend the instigator, and all the others. The trouble was I had a paralysis in my throat – I was choked up.

I thought, "This is the best Christmas anybody ever spent." But it got even better.

Another single voice, more nasal than reedy, began to sing, and everybody joined in.

"Grandma got run over by a reindeer
Walking home from our house Christmas-eve
You can say there's no-such-thing-as-Santa,
But as for me-and-grandpa, we believe."

And they knew all those words too, the chorus and three long, irreverent verses. I was a bit hazy on some of them, but I sang what I knew.

The song ended.

Time for me to say something … anything. Something appropriate to Christmas in a war-torn country and the dominance of the human spirit, and its best embodiment – youth.

The words wouldn't come before "Silent Night" began from a third voice.

– Fred Cheney

A Present from the Heart (a work of fiction)

Sheila tied off the back of one more large red bow and tossed it into the growing pile in the middle of the table.

She glanced around the room at the eight round tables, with members of the senior center seated at each one; all making bows. Then she eyed the three long tables stretching along the conference room walls. They were piled three or four deep with dark green wreaths.

She stood up. "Can I have your attention, please?" She asked each table to count the wreaths. When the final count showed a shortage of bows, she had her table construct the last three, and had the other members begin the task of tying a red bow to each wreath. She was proud of the assembly line she'd put together.

Tomorrow morning at the farmers market, they would sell wreaths. All the money would go toward funding the adjacent teen center.

When MaryAnn held up the last bow needed, they all cheered.

Ben sauntered up to stand beside Sheila. "Great job getting us organized. I love doing this every year."

She grinned. "The best part is taking the check over to present to the teens, so they can plan fun activities for the new year."

Ben asked her, "How about we gather this group together and present the teens with a giant check? We can get the newspaper or local cable TV involved and that should drum up contributions from the general public."

Sheila gripped Ben's sleeve and grinned. "Oh, my gosh, that is a wonderful idea."

The following week all the wreath-making volunteers lined up in the recreation room at the teen center. Shiela and Ben, each holding one side of the large mock-up, handed over the check. Everyone cheered. The local TV station taped the ceremony. Soon, all the town's citizens would know where they, too, could contribute.

Sheila stood at the podium. "I want to wish a special Happy Holiday to our teens. What could be better than letting our little town know the importance of giving this gift to the center, so our teens have a safe place to socialize, learn, and get a decent after-school snack."

The applause was deafening. Soon, the electronic board lit up with contributions from those who had seen the ceremony on TV.

Ben looked at Sheila and grinned. "I say, if we start planning now for next year, we can do even better."

She grinned. "Count me in!"

– Debora (Deb) Noone

Giving and Receiving

During the busy holiday season, we have many opportunities to say "Thank You" as we experience the cyclical joys of giving and receiving. But commercial messages about holiday expectations are mostly empty – devoid of deep meaning. When we compare these empty promises to the reality of the experience, we are often nudged in a different direction.

These holidays can leave us feeling fragmented and exhausted, unless we plan our gift-giving carefully. Taking time to embrace the mysteries of the December holidays invites internal peace. We know that silent, cold, star-filled nights can inspire awe, Christmas carols can bring tear-filled memories, and a simple, handwritten verse might offer a deep connection to someone needing comfort. There are many gifts of love that don't cost anything and don't need to be wrapped. Offer yourself to others this holiday season. You'll be filled with the joy of giving and your loved ones will be filled with the joy of receiving a gift from your heart.

– Laura Lee Perkins

Christmas 1940

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
Twas not to last

Good times soon gone
For many a year
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Not much to cheer

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

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

– Vince McDermott

Santa's Elf

Dear children of all ages:
Let me introduce myself.
I'm one of Santa's helpers,
Better known as an elf.
I make toys all year long
With help from all my friends.
We saw and hammer and paint;
The hard work never ends.
Then, as Christmas approaches,
We begin to check Santa's list
To see who's been bad or good:
No one is ever missed.
Once we know who gets toys,
And who only lumps of coal,
We double-check all to make sure:
One hundred percent is our goal.
Finally, a day or so before Christmas,
We begin to load the sleigh.
It's hard work to lift toys onto it.
Then we see him on his way.
Once he returns up here,
The work begins anew.
We start making toys for next year.
There's always so much to do!

– Sally Hartikka

The Christmas Gingerbread House

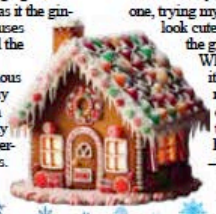
During the 1970s and 1980s there were pictures of beautiful candy- and frosting-decorated Christmas gingerbread houses on the front covers of the December issues of "Family Circle" and "Woman's Day" magazines. The dreamy sweet little gingerbread house caught my creative ambition.

The first gingerbread houses came from Germany about the 16th century and were shared in homes in the 1800s. Some said that the 1812 Brothers Grimm fairytale Hansel and Gretel was the story that inspired the gingerbread houses or was it the gingerbread houses that inspired the fairytale?

Many famous hotels display their version of beautifully crafted gingerbread houses. The White House executive pastry chef to five presidents, Roland Mesnier, created a masterpiece every year to be displayed in the White House State Dining Room. Gingerbread houses were displayed around the world, and in Norway they were called "the gingerbread village." Several years ago, L.L. Bean had a gingerbread scene in its display window.

About 20 years ago, I started making my own gingerbread house from scratch. It was a big job then, but now those cute little houses are sold in boxes for you to decorate at home. Each year I purchase one, trying my best to make it look cute and festive for the grandchildren. What fun to have it displayed on my kitchen counter for the Christmas holidays.

– Nonie Moody



he Write On Writers

What Baby Jesus Means to Me

There's hope after the grave
There's celebrating so great
There's love beyond compare
There's joy for each person on earth
There's a song whispered of gladness
There's no more sorrow or sadness
There's no more isolation or madness
There's freedom for all to share
There's no murders, stealing, or divorces
There's no pride, greed, or lies
Best of all, the maker of all bids us to come home.

– Lucy Derbeshire

The Snows of Winter

The first snow of winter
is a child's delight.
The second snow of winter
is so fluffy and light.

The third snow of winter
is freezing and cold.
The fourth snow of winter
is getting pretty old.

The fifth snow of winter
hail and sleet sting.
And by the sixth snow of winter
I'm ready for spring.

– P.K. Allen

Christmas Cards

Christmas card history, thanks to Wikipedia: In 1843, Sir Henry Cole, a civil servant in the UK, worked as an assistant keeper at the new 'public record,' later called the post office. He wanted more ordinary people to use this facility. His idea of a Christmas card became a reality with his artist friend John Colette Horsley, as they designed the first Christmas card. It sold for 1 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.

One thousand cards were printed and only the wealthy could afford them. When cards became more popular, more efficient printing production developed and postage dropped to a half-penny. By the 1900s, the custom had spread to Germany. Later in that century, cards began to appear in America, but were very costly. Louis Prang, an American 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 1950, Joyce C. Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark cards. This company is still in business today after 100+ years – with grandchildren now in charge of innovating the latest technology and new ways to celebrate all occasions and holidays with a card! Now you know the rest of the story.

I decorate my mailbox at Christmas and look forward to reaching for precious Christmas cards from family and friends. I have written a yearly letter for many years, even though 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 read and reread my cards. Yes, I know what you're thinking: It's a digital age, the younger generation embraces speed and efficiency. A mouse click and the holiday greeting finds its way to a computer! Yes, the Christmas card process is time-consuming – purchasing, signing, addressing and stamping to say nothing of the cost. But I hang 5-foot felt streamers to attach my cards to, so I can enjoy them all season. People have family and personal photos, meaningful cards they design and make, and I like to share their cards and feel their spirit. I guess I am old-fashioned – time passes 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 U.S. Postal Service for it safe delivery.

– Betty Bavor

The Holiday I Liked Best

The holiday I liked best was Christmas. We would go to see our grandparents. On Christmas Eve, we would be at my dad's folks. We got to sleep in the attic. Yes, it was cold, dark and one lightbulb to keep away the scary things we thought were there. You could hear the wind blowing, but grandpa said we would hear the reindeer when they landed.

The drive to grandma's house was on the afternoon of the 24th. A big dinner would be waiting for us. We ate our fill, then out to the barn to give the livestock their special Christmas treats. Back to the house, we sang Christmas songs and say what we wanted from Santa. We always had a big list. Me and my brother waited with excitement for bedtime. Climbing the narrow stairs, getting into the same bed. We lay there listening for the reindeer to land. But the only thing we heard was grandpa yelling, "Santa's been here." Which was around 3 am. Flying down steps … there it was, the Christmas tree with presents under it.

Grandpa would pass out the gifts, first came the ones with new clothes. Did everyone get new clothes for Christmas in the 1940s? Then came the toys. We only got two or three small ones. After everyone had opened their gift, dad would bring in our big toy. Maybe a snow sled, or a red wagon, which we both shared. Grandma and mother would bring out the coffee, and hot cocoa for brother and me.

Donning our winter farming clothes, we went to take care of the animals. Returning to the house for Christmas breakfast, grandma's pecan sticky buns were always on the menu. After breakfast, we climbed into the car and headed for mother's family for dinner. There were always about 30 people there, the women in the kitchen, fixing all the goodies, taking pies out to cool, the cousins running in and out, the men chatting about the size of the crops and animals. If you were a lucky kid, you got to sit at one of the adult tables. After dinner, grandma gave each of the grandkids a box of her homemade candies. There was always some burnt brown candy in it. Around 3 o'clock, we headed back to the farm to take care of the animals, and back to the scary attic for the night. Then the drive back to the city and home.

– Jim Cherry

Christmas

It's Christmas time
A time of joy and happiness
Gifts under the tree
Beautiful lights and ornaments
Adorning the tree

It's Christmas time
Time to be with family
Visit with friends
Spread your good cheer
Make peace with the world

It's Christmas time
But don't forget the reason
For he came here
So our sins could be forgiven
Yes, it's Christmas time

– Kathy Gaunt

Solstice Time

Snow likely, silence and darkness certain.
Ovens, family meals seasoned with contentment.
Lights sparkle from windows, trees, doors.
Starry skies bring wonder and hope.
Time slows with long nights and short days.
Inside is where we dwell in cozy warmth.
Cuddling becomes a cherished necessity.
Each day forward brings one more minute of light.

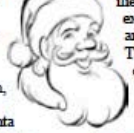
Treasure family and friends.
Invest in time for rest and renewal.
Make merry with music and dance.
Enjoy precious gifts of love, light and joy.

– Alene Staley

Child's Christmas

Santa Claus is a lively and exciting memory from my childhood. Though I was schooled by nuns throughout my young life, Jesus sleeping in a manger, in a place where animals were kept, with his family looking on, and visited by three Magi from the East somehow didn't make it into my imagination. True, it was a beautiful Christmas story, but with troubling features to it. Think about it! Jesus grows up to be crucified, nails hammered into his hands, and dies on a cross. No child of five wants to hear a tale like that, no matter how it is told to you by the lady of God dressed in black. Death is personal and scary to a child.

The Santa Claus story, however, was a glossy tale with many books and songs being written and sung. Santa was this kind, generous, happy and rotund man. The books and magazines I read, the town's holiday activities, what I heard on radio, and conversations I overheard from friends, family, and store employees all told of a pleasant Santa who cares. It fed my imagination. And Santa lived in a place with bright red clothing, with a wife who welcomed all with joyous smiles, and with elves dressed in green who were very busy creating presents for you and me. So, yes, through my early years, Santa Claus earned more attention from me than Jesus did. And yes, the Santa I knew and believed in was a kind, charitable man, surprising me on Christmas morning. Other elements of his kindness and strength were the presents he gave to all as he traveled the whole world on Christmas Eve delivering these gifts, assuring everyone of happiness when they awoke. And Santa was sort of a real man, who they say is celebrating his 1,750th birthday, come December 25 of this year! It's very obvious that the media was very kind to Santa also. There was no negative press!!



Oh, the sweetness of that youthful ignorance! Then, when I was seven, all my friends told me there was no Santa Claus. Bam! Bam! Finding out that the Santa Claus story was fiction was the beginning of a maturation process for me. So, at seven, I dealt with loss. Santa Claus became only a well-loved myth.

Even though Christmas became different for me after my friends' big revelation, I continued to keep Santa in my Christmases, bringing out the Santa relics I have gathered through the years. And even without my belief in Santa, the Christmases past have held so many other exciting memories that can never be forgotten, like the religious aspect of the birth of Jesus, the gathering of families together, the singing and feasting, and the exchange of gifts that were part of the holiday, and continue to be part of our family legacy. These legacies have the bonding and binding elements that make my Christmases a joyous celebration, year after year after year.

– Carol Smith Markell