Este bombus aliquid significat

Loosely translated:
ALL THIS BUMBLING
MUST MEAN SOMETHING--
(With apologies to Pooh)

...or more loosely translated:
In Search of the Missing
Coffee Break—or TRUTH,
Whichever Comes First

Connecticut
Writing Project
Summer Fellows
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an anthology
by

The Connecticut Writing Project
1990 Summer Fellows
Fairfield County

Connecticut Writing Project
Stamford, Connecticut
1990
PREFACE TO 1990 ANTHOLOGY

Last week, I was copy editor for the pieces printed in this anthology. I would not have believed that these pieces could, for the second time, have so strong an impact on me. I cried at Marcia's baseball game kicking up its perennial dust, I laughed at Paul's tour de force of an outline, and I identified with Ann's portrait of mother/daughter symbiosis. Certainly, my present reading contains the echo of voices and images stored in July's part of my memory, but, whatever the background, I was once again impressed with the variety, fluency, seriousness and humanity of the writing.

What I once more learned is that writing is a way to make sense of our lives. By giving order to experience, we explore relationships, find causes and results, assign blame and credit, express joy, pity, anger, sorrow and all range of emotions in between. In publishing writing, we share a piece of our souls. Some who trust greatly allow us long stares; other provide only glimpses. But all writers give us, the readers, a chance to watch a mind and heart at work.

For that sharing of yourselves, thank you. Please keep writing, sharing and making what sense you can, and let us teach our students to do likewise. That is the goal and hope of the CWP Summer Institute.

Faye
This wasn't exactly your average flight. People weren't boarding according to class, disability, or age of traveling companion. Passengers carrying babies, bundles of flowers and huge baskets of fruits rushed the plane, seeking seats on a first-come basis.

An hour and a half later I viewed it from the plane. My quest, a huge brown snake, swollen in parts as if digesting prey, weaving its way through a canopy of green. The events of the week to come loomed with excitement and fear.

The temperature was ninety degrees, the humidity close to rain. The thatch roof of our eight foot wooden boat, of dubious structural strength, gave little relief from the sun. I questioned Alfredo, our guide, as to the purpose of the buckets in the center of the boat. "No problem lady, sometimes the boat leaks."

A native of the Peruvian Amazon, Alfredo is slight of build, with a medium brown complexion and moderately long hair. He's wearing a T-shirt, jeans and no shoes. His English is about as good my Spanish, bad! His warm smile and friendly manner, and confident handling of bags, stacking of baskets of fruit, vegetables, and gallons of water, gives me confidence in him. He is going to be our only means to the outside world for the next seven days. I know him no better than a stranger on the streets of New Haven, yet I'm entrusting this man with my life.

The navigator of the boat, who will drop us off at our camp and return to pick us up a week later, communicates only with Alfredo in Indian tongue. Occasionally he will gesture that we should bail. an activity in which I gladly participate.

Seated next to me on the hard wooden bench seat is a heavy set man, possibly five feet, six inches in height, fair complexion, dark beard, maybe in his fifties. He's a bit mysterious wearing dark glasses and a large Panama hat. Our only communication is a nod. His appearance gives no clue as to his ethnicity or purpose here.

Across from me sits an attractive woman in her thirties, with light brown hair, short on top and pulled back in a pony tail. She doesn't appear to be a local or linked to anyone on the boat. Her gear and composure lead me to believe that this expedition is not her first.

Seated on my other side is my best friend for the past four years, Earl. This is his birthday present to me, a trip of my choice. This is also our first major expedition together. I sense that he's a bit anxious about my being able to handle the rigors ahead.

The boat pushes off with a sputter, then a puff of blue grey smoke, then a roar. Not exactly the comforting purr one would like to hear as you are about to descend the Amazon River en route to a jungle camp.

Not ten minutes out the motor cuts off, the boat spins around out of control, the water surrounding us becomes a mass of fins and splashes. My heart beat quickens and stomach tightens. Suddenly the other woman screams, "Look - pink dolphins!" The sound of the motor had attracted them. My gosh, pink dolphins... hey, what did you say? To this day I don't know what shocked me more, the dolphins or Peggy, the woman, speaking English. It had been over a week and a half since I'd a conversation in English with anyone other than Earl.

Peggy was a fourth grade teacher from Reading, Pennsylvania. That much I did find out. Her air of confidence was due, in part, to extensive solo traveling. We eyed each other with suspicion. She was a perfect blend in the milieu: worn knapsack, appropriately stained shorts, and shoes that had seen many miles. The "Reebok" on my sneakers was still readable, shorts and LaCoste shirt clean, and knapsack still with packaging creases, lacking that comfortable worn-in appearance of the well traveled.

Hours later, having passed no more than a couple of dozen thatch-roofed huts perched high on the river's bank and a like number of fishermen poised in incredibly small boats carved from logs, we drifted into our camp, Albergue. Conversation on the river had been limited, partly due to the roar of the motor, partly the language barriers - Leo, the man, speaks only in Italian - but mostly due to mutual suspicions. Why would anyone come to the Amazon Jungle?

It is unbelievable, that's why. Truly as good as National Geographic portraits: they can not do enough justice to its beauty nor to the mystery of its people. Macaws, monkeys, giant ferns, insects of all sorts , smells of sweetness and musk and sounds from indiscernible sources.

The exploration throughout the ensuing seven days caused the snake to coil, embracing the five of us in a relationship that can be best described as an intimate family.

HEIDI'S COOKIES

by Jim D'Acosta

There are only chocolate chip cookies. All other types are just sweet calories to chew and swallow, nothing special. Homemade cookies transcend reality, are infinitely greater than the sum of their parts. Sure, they've got flour, semi-sweet chips, brown sugar, vegetable shortening, baking soda, eggs, butter, golden California raisins, peanut and regular M & M's. The miracle is in the baking. Something happens during the ninth minute at 350 degrees, something magical. That's when they come out of the oven; that's the time to eat, milk in hand.

I've spent years learning how to eat cookies at 350 degrees, how to break off a section and toss it into my mouth before my fingers are singed, how to prevent the liquefied chips from dripping on my clothes and skin where they stain and burn, how to move the bite around in my mouth, never letting it rest too long in one place, not letting it inflame the roof or parch the sides, how to introduce a sip of milk at the last moment. Then I swallow and reach for more, knowing I haven't much time.

I usually get sick on cookie day, but I don't mind. I eat 'til I'm full. Then I sit or lie down for awhile remembering the taste, feeling the warmth in my stomach, assured that life is good.

Yes, I eat what's left over on other days, at other times. But it's never the same, not even when I heat them up in the microwave.

The first time Heidi made cookies for me the amount of milk I needed to eat my cookies, something which NEVER happens. I noticed. It was a sign. I knew then that I loved her, that I had to have her. The time had come to leave my father's house. I would marry this woman and our descendants would be as the dust of earth. It was ordained.

Heidi, my wife, is the cookie maker in my life now, following in the footsteps of my mother and Aunt Billie. I love Heidi's cookies, not Mrs. Fields or David's. During college I sometimes made cookies for myself, goodies when I needed to think of home or wanted to mark an occasion, make it special, give it formality. But it was different. I remember when I first tried to make cookies. I bought Betty Crocker's mix. I read the directions, made them step by step. I mixed everything together with such enthusiasm that the chips were pulverized. They were diffused throughout, no longer separate treats like they were supposed to be. The cookies baked as brown blobs. Tragic. I learned that I couldn't make the cookies; they had to be gifts, made by someone who cared.
INSIDE OUT

by Louann Daragan

There are many weekends when I’m away from the “world” because I’m involved in Emmaus, a Catholic retreat group originally for teens but now extended to adults in the Danbury area. There is always a special feeling during these weekends when the job of the whole team is to help candidates feel that they have a closeness to God. In many ways the weekend runs the gamut from frustration and exhaustion to exhilaration and peacefulness. Somehow no matter what happens on the weekend I always have the feeling that God is in control.

Of all the many weekends I have worked, last December stands out in my mind so clearly. It could have been yesterday. It was a very unlikely place to spend the waking hours of a weekend for the Danbury Federal Correctional Institution does not have all the attractions of a weekend get-away.

It started several weeks before with a call from Wally saying that he was co-rectoring a weekend and would I help. I had been in the FCI on several occasions but for short periods of time like an hour or so and although I had many fears about the place (mostly of the sense of tension that seems present when you walk through the various areas) I said yes.

On that Friday evening we arrived late because Markus had forgotten his wallet and with no ID he could not go inside. By the time we had returned across town we were late. Being late upsets me and seems to throw me off balance. Somehow I was to remain that way most of the weekend. One thing I learned was that no matter how well you plan something, either God or the US Government has other ideas. Looking back at the end result I am amazed at how smoothly it seemed to flow even if minute by minute frustrations mounted and you had to constantly put them behind you.

"Remove all jewelry, coins, keys, etc. and the go through the metal detector." Somehow you have the feeling that the guards just don’t want you there. They are always late to check us inside. "Don’t forget to have your hand stamped for you can’t get out without it." Inside I sometimes wondered who the prisoners really were. The inmates seemed to walk at will around the compound while we always had to have a guard with us even for a trip to the rest room.

When we got inside our worst fears were confirmed. The first evening our session would be in a small room adjacent to the gym. It was almost impossible to hear for the bouncing balls, cheers etc. from next door. Through it all the candidates making the weekend came and we started, complete with two guards in the room. Behind schedule we skipped some, adjusted the rest and started the program of talks and discussions. Sometime later we noticed the noise level from the gym had dropped but our weekend continued. The candidates gradually relaxed and if they were not over enthusiastic they at least seemed willing to go along with us. Time seemed to fly and before we knew it our departure came. All at once the guards were back in control. The candidates would remain in the room and we would leave. As we went through the empty gym and down the hall they announced "Be careful where you walk." Looking down we could see blood all over the floor. It seemed that there had been a fight, and the quiet was the result of a lock down. We now understood why we had been counted so many times but we wonder to this day how we were allowed to continue, for lock down always means everybody must be in his cell.

Leaving we spent the night with host families while the candidates returned to their cells.

Early the next morning we were back. It was the same drill through security but we were cheered by the welcome of the men inside. The retreat consists in talks by the team followed by discussion by the candidates at tables. Sometimes the discussion was difficult because the primary language for many of the men was Spanish and none of us could claim the slightest proficiency.

Talks, religious services, etc. continued throughout Saturday. Some of the team were in and out much to the delight of the candidates for it brought a taste of the outside world to them. On Saturday morning everyone wished Ed good luck as he left to travel with his girl’s soccer team for a state final game. When Ed agreed to work on the weekend he never dreamed he would need to be twins. On his return several hours later we all cheered to see him sporting a championship shirt.

Father Linus was also on the go for as chaplin at WCONN he was trying to be two places at once.

The candidates became very protective of us, especially when we went to meals. They made sure someone accompanied each of us, showed us how to survive in their world and how to eat. It seemed a little funny when they warned others not on the retreat that this area was reserved. Ever so careful even to returning our trays. It seemed that they were more protective than the guards.

Whenever they saw we needed something, it suddenly appeared. Eddie saw I was having trouble getting the start of music on the tape player. The next thing I knew he handed me his ear phones so I could listen and find the right spot. When we had trouble hanging banners since we couldn’t cut the cord, Jose said no problem and within minutes a small razor blade appeared. You can bet the guards weren’t there that instant and the biggest problem was how to get rid of it. Through it all there was tension and I couldn’t completely forget that this was the inside.

Perhaps the most moving experience was Saturday evening. A crowd gathered outside security. This group of 80-100 teens and adults associated with Emmaus had come to serenade the candidates. Security
takes a long time for the team of 20 so multiply that by five and you realize how patient our friends were as they were processed. It took at least an hour but they waited cheerfully.

Once inside they get their voices ready — in tune would be a misnomer since enthusiasm counts ever so much more than talent. The sonesters interrupt the retreat and surround the candidates with song. Three songs are quickly over and they leave as quietly as they arrived. The candidates are overwhelmed that someone would care enough to show up on a cold Saturday evening, sing for awhile and then leave. This community presence means a lot to those inside for many are too far from relatives and friends to even have the allowed visits. The fact that people care about them is a new experience in many of their lives.

As for our friends the guards, they find it extremely difficult to believe that all these people would spend so long going through security and actually be with the candidates for 10-15 minutes. They think it is not worth the community effort — believe me it is.

At the end of every Emmaus the candidates are given a wooden cross to remind them of their time together. As usual a friend of Wally's had made the crosses but our problem was how to get them inside. Everything brought in must be taken back out. Both on Friday evening and Saturday morning we were told no. However Sunday morning Brother Tom met us at security and checked things in. "Is this what I don't see," he asked — yes, we nodded as he looked the other way.

Sunday proceeded much like Saturday and late in the afternoon it was time to say goodbye to our new friends. Goodbye with a hug, a smile and I won't forget you.

We dreaded the hassle of checking out but Brother Tom hurried us through security and told us to keep right on going. We did. However the crosses the men cherished so much were still inside — some in pockets, some around necks either over or under shirts but they were not on the inventory as we left.

No longer can I categorize these men as prisoners or convicts. I can't dismiss what they did to get sent to the FCI nor can I guarantee that they won't commit another crime. But I can relate to their loneliness, frustrations and fears. No longer do I tend to lump them into a category. They are men named Fred, Jose, Eddie etc. The faces have names and the names have personalities and maybe, just maybe, we were able that weekend to bring a bit of God into their lives. Will they change? Did it make a difference? I don't know but I can tell you I'm different. Emmaus taught me that behind every student is a person with a story that affects the way he learns. FCI Emmaus taught me that behind the bars, no matter what they've done, are men. I'm thankful, so thankful, for the chance to share with them for I have grown.
sort, wide, yellow beaks. At the slightest noise or vibration, these helpless "took" things would open their conical, clown-like smiles and instantly become all mouth.

I never tried to get a close look at the parent birds feeding their young, but from early morning to late evening the two adults were constantly at work bringing food to the nest. I was amazed to see how rapidly the babies grew, increasing in size noticeably from day to day and producing feathers, musician like, out of nowhere.

Sometimes I would stand quietly for several minutes inside the porch just watching the small birds in their green-lit home. They hardly moved their bodies, which were held close together by the embrace of the nest, but their eyes looked around wonderingly, and their beaks were as active as ever.

Soon, seemingly all at once, the nest was really crowded, almost overflowing. I became alarmed; somebody was doing to have to leave on his own or simply be pushed over the edge.

Then it happened. I had walked over to the corner of the porch one morning and was peering into the nest. One fledgling, slightly larger than the other two, was almost sitting on top of his siblings. For a brief moment he looked up at me and then lifted his wings, stretched them out to the sides, and flew out of the nest. After dipping momentarily rather steeply toward the ground, he gained more control and flew straight to a branch near the top of a tall azalea bush at the edge of the trees in back of the house. He sat there for a while, all fluffed up, with what I took to be a somewhat surprised and maybe even pleased look on his face. A minute or two later, he flew up from the bush and disappeared into the leaves of a large oak. He had not fallen. He was on his way in life.

The next morning, when I looked into the nest, it was empty. The two mourning doves, mated for life, had done their parenting job, and done it well. Their offspring would know instinctively what to do to get along in life. Although they would face dangers, the world for them was essentially the same world that their ancestors had faced millions of years ago. And during those evolutionary eons, they had developed techniques and strategies to deal effectively with the difficulties presented to them by life.

Feeling good about their prospects for a successful life but a bit lonely after the departure of their babies, the two doves looked around wonderingly, and their beaks were as active as ever.

During those evolutionary eons, they had developed techniques and strategies to deal effectively with the difficulties presented to them by life.

In comparing our children to the fledgling doves, I found myself up against one of the biggest questions of life. Why do some specimens of the species Homo sapien falter and fall? They somehow do not seem to be as well equipped to deal with the ups and downs of the world as are the doves.

The first pink baby dove that appeared in the nest had made me think of my daughter's pink baby in North Carolina. Both the newborn and the newhatched were helpless, both were vulnerable and needy. Both had loving parents who were committed to caring for them until they were ready to leave the nest. The future of the baby doves was assured -- Nature seems to have taken care of that. But what about the after-nest future of human babies? Why aren't they as well equipped to deal with life as the doves? Or are they? Can the fallen state of humans, if such it is, be blamed on poor parenting? And if not on poor parenting, can we push the blame back to Adam and Eve? They lived in a leafy bower, and they fell, or so the story goes. Or maybe we should go back and try to understand the blame to Nature or to God.

In A.D. 397, when St. Augustine began writing his Confessions and was becoming very influential in the west, he seemed to feel that he was born with a sinful nature, one that could not really be overcome. A person could be saved from Hell, but not because he had purified his sinful nature. Only the Grace of God could accomplish that trick.

Then, about a thousand years later, in 1509, Desiderius Erasmus, who had read the Greeks and who became the archetype for all succeeding humanists, expressed contrary opinions:

"Nothing can be unhappy if it expresses its true nature."

"As if it were possible that nature should be so careful in making a midge... and then should have dozed in making man!"

"Isn't it true that the happiest creatures are those which are least artificial and most natural?"

And still later, we have Ralph Waldo Emerson in the nineteenth century speaking of the "sacred germ of (human) instinct screened from influence" as a key to living the good, unfallen life.

What we see here in these short passages is a small part of the conversation that has been going on for a long, long time, passing down the centuries from generation to generation, a serious conversation about some of the most important and fundamental questions of life. However, these questions do not belong just to the great philosophers and theologians of the ages; they are questions pondered by the young and old, by the learned and unlearned, by people in all positions of life. And what I find amazing is that they are continually leaping out at me at the most unexpected times, such as when I am staring into an empty bird nest.

I am now a grandfather; one of my children has just begun a family of her own. She and her husband--the two people with the beautiful Biblical names of Sarah and David--I know they have resolved deep in their hearts to raise their new-born son so he will not fail.

But I fear for him, for little Neal, the baby who, at birth, scored a 9 1/2 on the ten-point Apgar Scale. His perfection and his
As I look at Neal in the framed picture near the clock on the mantle, I can only hope.

LIKE MOTHER LIKE DAUGHTER

by Anne Gesualdi

As time passes, I am aware of the fact that I am becoming more and more like my mother. It's something that seems to happen between mothers and daughters. While we all tend to inherit certain physical traits, some of us seem to inherit more personality traits than our female siblings do. I hear myself saying things that my mother once said to me. The very first time I told a child: "I don't care what everyone else is doing, I only care about you." I nearly choked on the words. I swore that I would never utter those words, and yet here I was saying them. There are other ways that my mother has influenced me, ways that become more apparent as I age.

When I first noticed this phenomenon, I began to look at some of my friends to see if they too had been metamorphosing without their knowledge. I was surprised to find, upon closer inspection, that yes, they too had begun to resemble their mothers in ways that I would never have guessed.

One day while visiting my friend Karen and her new baby, I noticed a few things that she did that reminded me of her mother and lifetime nemesis, Sissy. Sissy is just about the best housekeeper in the world. She lives to clean and dust. Everything sparkles, everything shines, you could eat off the floor in the garage (the only way family members are allowed to enter the house). The copper-bottomed pots and pans are polished weekly and are tarnish-free and glittering as they hang on display above the Hotpoint Range. Every morning, at about ten o'clock, the house is "aired out." All of the windows are opened for a full fifteen minutes, no matter what season it is. As a child, Karen was never allowed to be in her room with the door closed. Her mother believed that the bedroom was for sleeping only.

In response to Sissy's obsession with her house, the Karen that I lived with for two years couldn't have cared less whether the bed was made or the countertops were clean. She had at times been quite slovenly. However, the Karen of today sits in a kitchen that is as clean and bright as the one from her childhood. She is up and down with a sponge to wipe up any stray crumb or drop of milk. Every time her husband opens the refrigerator door, she questions him: "What are you looking for, Steve? I'll get it." She doesn't want the items on her shelves to be rearranged. Her house is as neat and orderly as any I've seen. It's the type that doesn't really look lived in.

After a delicious dinner and a pleasant visit, Karen and Steve escorted me out to my car...through the garage. It wasn't the way I came in, but was the way I was going out.

"What happened to Karen?" I wondered, as I drove home that evening.

"When did she turn into Sissy?"
Two years ago in October, I sat in a Catholic church in Newton, Massachusetts waiting for my friend Patty to arrive. It was her big day. She was marrying a wonderful young man who could be seen from time to time peering his head out of the room at the front of the church where grooms wait their cue. Patty was over fifteen minutes late and she only lived two blocks away. The guests were fidgeting in their seats. Every so often a noise would be heard from the back of the church and a sea of heads would turn simultaneously in that direction, hoping to see some sign of the bride’s arrival. After one of these futile neck-cranning exercises, my companion and I struck up a conversation with the middle-aged couple seated directly behind us. It turned out that the woman was a childhood friend of Patty’s mother, Ruth. I explained my connection to Patty and we began to discuss the similarities we saw between Patty and Ruth, laughing each time one of us cited another example. We discussed points ranging from their shared sense of humor and dry wit, to their love of bargain hunting in Filene’s Basement.

“You know,” said the woman, “the funny part of all of this is that Ruth kept everyone waiting at her wedding, too. I was her maid of honor and I can remember standing at the back of the church with the other members of the bridal party, not knowing what was taking her so long. And after about fifteen minutes she came waltzing in, cool as a cucumber. This is just the sort of thing Ruth would do.” We laughed once again and at that moment I caught a glimpse of Patty and her father entering the church. A hush eventually went through the crowd and as the music began, Patty appeared on Dr. Frawley’s arm. She was beautiful, obviously happy and seemed relaxed. I doubted whether she was even aware of the fact that she was over twenty minutes late to her wedding. Ruth’s friend and I winked at each other as the pair passed by our pews. I had always known that Patty had her mother’s charm and sense of mischief. This day she walked down the isle toward her husband-to-be, also a doctor, wearing both her mother’s wedding gown and her mother’s smile.

Remembering this, I think about how life often comes full circle. There seems to be a process at work. I’ve given some thought as to how this transformation between mother and daughter takes place, and why one daughter may be affected more than another. Karen is Sissy’s only daughter, Patty is Ruth’s second daughter and I am the oldest of three daughters in my family. I’ve reached no definite conclusions on the “why” of it, I am only convinced that it happens. What I do know about the process is that it is a gradual one. I believe that it begins in our early years when we first look upon our mother as role models, but it is arrested somewhat during adolescence, when mothers tend to be the voice of reason and as such, the enemy. I think the transformation cells go back into action at a more rapid rate once we reach our late teens and early twenties. The process is a tricky one so as not to be detected too early or too easily, but it does exist and is in constant motion through the twenties and at least a part of the thirties. Beyond that, I’m not yet able to say.

I do know that I have inherited more that my mother’s blue eyes. My dad has remarked from time to time that we both have an annoying habit of striking up conversations with strangers, and that we tend to be a bit too trusting. That’s true, we admit it. Nor can he understand why we don’t try to have a broken hair-dryer fixed before we rush out to buy a new one. What’s the point, we say, it only costs about twenty dollars. And the general consensus among family members is that Mom and I are too honest! Well, how in the world can you be too honest? We really don’t know.

There are other traits of mine that I can trace to my mother, and some of these I am genuinely grateful for. She has taught me about being independent and standing up for myself when I need to; I have been blessed with her sense of humor which has helped me to laugh at myself during times when that’s clearly the best thing to do; and I’m fairly certain that my compassion for others and sense of fairness comes from her, as well.

I have been wondering lately if the transformation process isn’t in another dormant stage. I seem to be lacking the “know how” that my mother has in the kitchen. Not only am I lacking the “know how,” but I’m lacking the desire to “know how.” I’m not worried though, I’m sure they’ll both turn up in another few years.
There was an eighteen year gap in my education. I returned to college when the youngest of my five children was in first grade. One of the most distressing laws acquired during my studies was the fact that at age forty-five, brain cells begin to deteriorate. Last year, our school was fortunate enough to host Jane Healy, a well known psychologist. She told of a woman who worked with rats, seeking answers to questions about how children learn. When the baby rats were given a variety of toys with which they could interact, their brain cells grew at a good rate. Grandparent rats were put in with the babies to encourage and assist them. Instead, the grandparents pushed the babies aside and played with the toys themselves! I was delighted to learn that the brain cells in older rats also grew.

Years ago, our young family tried camping. The experience produced many good stories but no campers. Two of the other multi-age teachers at our school take their classes camping. Visions of struggling to put up tents, being caught in storms, sleeping on the bumpy, hard ground with no shower, animals snooping around, bugs buzzing in ears and twenty-one frightened little children to cope with provided my idea of sensible, persuasive reasons to avoid camping.

Three years ago, I weakened enough to go along with my friend and neighboring teacher, Kiki. She was in charge. My class and I just tagged along. But, for the last two years, I've gone on my own with the help of parents.

I don't sleep. Last year it was weeks before; this year only one week. I wake up at three AM and list all the things I need to do. Then I worry about all the things that could go wrong. This year, my fears were intensified because I had to drive a school van all the way to White Memorial Conservation in Litchfield, Connecticut.

Thursday, June first was a beautiful day--crystal clear, no humidity. Six of the fathers arrived. They had shed their roles as diligent, competitive, vigorous, successful businessmen to become a cooperative group of dads working together to provide a happy experience for the children.

Going up the Merritt Parkway listening to the children's chatter, watching the lovely countryside, I began to think things might be okay.

Setting up the tents had been an ordeal the year before, so I was prepared for trouble, but everyone cooperated and even I felt of some use. It was done in no time.

The park was purchased in the early part of the century by Mr. White who started with a small vacation home and bought up four thousand acres around Bantam Lake. There is a museum where we learned about the plants and wildlife, a small office and several campsites. Many local schools come for a few hours but seldom do classes have the opportunity to enjoy the wonders of the area for an extended period as we did.

It's about a mile through a little forest and some meadows down to the beach. The lake is very lovely but so shallow that even the children would have to go a long way to be in any depth. The water was really cold so only a few hardy souls went in. The children built a sand construction which kept them happily occupied. There were the few who insisted on checking time. We are so used to being on a half-hour schedule.

Henri, Marannie's dad, made a beautiful fire but it was too good. To his chagrin, we had to reduce it so we could cook the spaghetti. Cooperative groups set out plates, etc. while dads cooked and served. Everything tastes better outdoors especially when you are really hungry!

We played a fierce game of Capture the Flag against Kiki's class who were at another campsite. After an intense battle, we had to call a draw.

Refreshed with watermelon, we went for a night walk with the naturalist. The pond at night is a little ominous. Walking along a rather lumpy path, surrounded by dark trees and bushes can be frightening. There was a lot of quiet hand holding. One of the benefits of being an adult on such a walk is the feel of a trusting, small hand thrust into yours. It was a beautiful evening and the little dipper was directly overhead as we came back to the meadow.

Roasting marshmallows over a campfire, children wanting to fix one for you, dads with kids in arms. As we told ghost stories, Willie looked around fearfully. "I have a lap, Willie." He made a beeline for my comfort. Children sang "Play a Simple Melody" finishing even the two part section together.

Teeth brushed, faces washed, everyone wandered to tents. Quiet descended very quickly. This year, I went to sleep. That's an accomplishment! Campsite in the morning is rather misty. Everyone is subdued. Slowly the group gathered for breakfast. Parker's dad brought pancake batter. Children made juice and served cereal until the pancakes were ready. Genevieve, Marannie and her dad slept until 8:30am! The talk of the camp!

Covered with insect repellent and sunscreen, we set off to hike some of the many beautiful trails. Tramping through the forest, the children stopped often to point out signs of a beaver or a particularly delicate wildflower. They watched two frogs sunning themselves on a log in the middle of a pond. Michael's dad stopped unknowingly on a beaver's den. To the delight of the children, two beavers swam hastily away! Along the Trail of the Senses, we touched rough bark, smelled pine and wildflowers, felt the warmth of the sun, heard the call of birds and the chatter of squirrels and tasted mint leaves.
Breaking camp was again an example of good cooperative skills. We packed up and drove to the lake to have lunch and a swim before starting home.

Today, because we were hot from hiking and working, most of us went swimming. Nathanael, a rather large, round and soft first grader, shocked the second grade girls by bouncing into the open as he struggled to put on his sock. The girls were horrified at his innocent nakedness. We had an interesting discussion about age and nudity. I don’t think I convinced them of anything except to keep quiet in my presence.

It’s over. It was wonderful. Our class had an experience together that is special. We spend most of our walking hours together but there is so little time or opportunity for holding hands, laughing, telling stories, singing, looking at a beaver or a heron or a lovely wildflower. It will be an annual happening even though I’ll still have to suffer the worry and the sleepless nights. It’s well worth it! Like the grandparent rats, I played and hopefully, my brain cells are still growing.

Stiffly I shift my body while at the same time wondering how in heaven’s name I find myself sitting in a weather-beaten, old fishing boat, in the middle of the Indian Ocean, without a life preserver or the ability to swim. Oddly enough for the first time in a few weeks I feel at peace and open to the new sights and sounds around me. As my study group proceeds towards its destination of Prison Island and the shores of Zanzibar become more distant, a childhood remembrance floods to the forefront of my thoughts. I am back in Mrs. Scott’s fourth grade class. She is stoically poised in the front of the classroom, pointer in hand. Behind her a chalkboard on which is written the oceans of the world in perfectly formed handwriting. How many times did I recite that list so it would be imprinted in my memory for instant recall upon request. Only now does that list have real meaning to me.

Looking out into the crystal clear blue water and the azure sky I am awestruck by the subtle blending of the two into picture perfect beauty. I become the medium through which the past, present and future connect. I am swept back in time to a period when Arab and Portuguese mariners traversed these waters. It is the 1500’s and Zanzibar is a major trade center of the world. Three hundred years later it is the East African mecca for slave traders. I can hear the voices of the sailors as they speak of what lies beyond this isolated place, and the echoes of my ancestors as they are sold and transported to other places as human commodities. This calm, alluring water masks the ugliness of the sounds of pregnant slaves waiting to give birth, who with their own hands will slit the throats of future generations and throw their bodies into the Indian Ocean. Death is better than bondage. Sadness, anguish, and pain become mine.

As we ride the crest of a major wave and the water sprays my face I return to the present. Still photos of the past few weeks of travel through Kenya run through my mind. Feelings of ambivalence, frustration and bitterness ooze from an open sore. Flashes of deja vu stir within me as I look into the faces of these strangers. They eerily resemble relatives and friends back home. But always, sometimes cruelly, I am reminded that I am not one of them. I am stared at and maliciously called “m’zuner”, black European, as I walk the cobble-stoned streets of rural towns, the urban streets of Nairobi or the fragrant and pungent marketplaces. The color of skin may be one barrier broken here, but others still exist, such as separation of common histories and erroneous notions of each other’s lifestyles. The anticipated joy of homecoming escapes me. But that’s okay now. My sense of self has taken on new depth and broadened perspective. The discovery of self lies within me.
Tonight, in a small town in Connecticut, the ballpark will swirl in a sandstorm of dust, and bats will crack loud across the early evening air. The first time I really heard the crack of a bat my son was seven. He is twenty now, and I am forty-six. Still, at 6:00 p.m., when he takes the field, my heart will rush; my eyes will follow the trail of dust, and the world, at last, will move an inning at a time. I will watch his knees bend and his glove open forward, the position of a shortstop ready for the ball.

It was a long time ago that I first learned about my son and baseball. On the morning of the first game of the season when he was ten, I quietly opened his bedroom door as he slept. Laid out perfectly flat on the floor was his blue and white uniform, with the legs and arms spread out. Positioned at the bottom of the pants were his cleats and batting glove, and at the end of the left sleeve was his glove, poised and ready as if, perhaps, they guarded against some imagined, midnight player swinging a ghostly bat and catching him unaware. It was a habit now long abandoned, though sometimes I suspect that the three swings he gives his butt each time he approaches the plate have replaced the more elaborate ritual.

I like to sit on the bleachers, but his father always stands by the dugout, leaning against the chain link fence. You can't see his limp until he begins his pace when his son readies his stance at the plate. Still, my husband won't have his arthritic hip replaced until the sun sets on browner grass and colder afternoons. He'd miss too much of the summer he says, but I know he means these nights.

Sometimes during an inning, I jump down the bleachers and run to my husband's side to ask for a recount of a play. I can't always take in the subtle actions of the game, but I know he's noticed every detail, from the pitcher's release to the dip of a curve ball across the plate. He says I pester him and after all these years I should have better eyes for the game. Then he chuckles and curls his left arm around my neck, and we stand together awhile. Maybe he forgets for this time the long, red scar down the middle of his chest where four leg veins now connect his heart together and the metal clips that the doctors assure him his bones will grow around. I never ask him, but I hope he does. I know that the truth steals in sometimes in the middle of the night, when I catch him lying awake and watching the darkened ceilings of our room.

Our daughter, who is seventeen, always comes late to the games. About the bottom of the third inning, she spins the gravel in the parking lot. More than likely she's dressed in shorts and a tank top. She's wearing my nose and smile, but her skin is tanned dark, like her father's, and over her shoulders cascades her own deep, brown hair.

"Sultry," her father sighs and shakes his head. "Gets her good looks from me." He smiles, and I know he is seriously considering the matter. She won't stay long, just an inning or two. After all, there's a party somewhere and, if not, she has places to go. Still, she never used to come at all, but she checks in more often now to lend a few minutes of her support. She always kisses her dad goodbye and waves to me from the fence, kicking up dust with her feet as she leaves.

When the game is over, my son ties his purple bandanna around his head, grabs his hot pink duffel bag and goes over to stand close with his father. It is a serious time, a few minutes spent recounting the crucial plays of the game. I hang nearby, waiting for a break in their huddle to ask where my young one is going now, I know his answer will be "Lifting and out for awhile," but I ask him anyway. Slowly we walk to the parking lot and get into our separate cars, my son into his blue Toyota Tercel, whose odometer now reads 132,000 miles, and my husband into his white Corolla. We all arrive at the games these days from different places, and the night will take us separate ways again. Usually I wait for them to pull out of the parking lot, kicking up dust with their tires. That's when I always yell, "Drive carefully" and open the door to my new, white Mazda, wondering if they too have noticed the darkening sky and the subtle change in the wind.
REFLECTIONS

by Alyce Loesch

Declarative sentences, commas and
semi-colons
that was what they said;
they stopped the words from coming

Essays, three paragraphs of structure
three examples for each point
re-work the words of authorities
dare not to originally think

Structure, form, a sea of red ink
fear, anxiety and trepidation
this was what, as a student,
made my heart skip a beat

I wrote but I conformed
focused on what was wanted;
ever dared to wander or roam
into the forests of my own mind

Expository essays, critiques and
research papers I could do
but poetry, fantasy, and personal expression
this I could never pursue

I discovered writing, just for me
quite by chance, a wonderful bit of luck
I experienced the freedom of release through words
a gift I now treasure most of all

But what if there had been
a guide to take my hand
when I was younger and so in need
a teacher, maybe, could have been the one

A voice of my own, the
ownership of ideas
a way of thinking and learning
that would have opened the doors, to my mind, sooner

The writing process so simple
but so unique
a child today can be led
to find the wonder of the word

I teach today, I now am the one
who can light the way;
with technique in hand and
heart committed, I hope I can!
WHOSE DECISION IS IT ANYWAY?

by Julie Machen

She's still able to get around on her own and to guard against any attempt by the cat to get fed first. She would, if we let her, chase and return a yellow tennis ball time after time until she dropped from exhaustion or someone grew tired of throwing it, and she can still — on a good day — flip in the air and catch in her mouth the dog biscuit Pete puts on the end of her nose.

The kids say she's not getting deaf, she just has selective hearing. She only ignores us if she would rather be doing something else, but she's well aware of the cat if he's about to invade her territory. Pete says he thinks her ears are improving. They don't look as cloudy as they did. But I'm not so sure.

We all admit she sleeps much more than she used to, and always with her tongue sticking out. "Put your tongue back in your mouth, Pippa. You look ridiculous." Her cough to clear her throat is more frequent and she's definitely slower than she was. "But after all, she'll be fourteen this month," someone interjects. And then the conversation stops or moves on to Cinny — the Davenport's dog. Recently, they've had to carry her up and down to the back yard. Will they decide to have her put to sleep while they're in Maine this week?

I realize that's a decision we've never had to make. Our old cat, Trouble, died the night we said, "If he's not better in the morning, we'll have to have him put out of his misery." The next two cats were not "Street wise" enough for Riverside Avenue. And although hearts broke and tears fell at the deaths that came too early, no decisions on our part were necessary.

I don't think that will be the case with Pippa. Sometime in the next year or two, we will probably have to decide that the time has come. If she can no longer function, if she is in pain, if living means only lying on her bed uninterested in food, in her tennis ball, in us, or even in tormenting the cat, we will sadly make the decision and know that it is the right one.

The vet will comfort and reassure us that it is far better that she not suffer. There will be sympathy from friends, but no condemnation. The minister will not make it the topic of his weekly sermon. No editorial will set forth opinions on the matter, and — most certainly — the Supreme Court will not rule on our decision.

We will cry but soon we will smile and, eventually, even laugh again remembering the crazy things she did, how mad she made us and the joy she brought us. She is part of our family and out of love — in spite of our own sorrow and pain — we will do what is best for her. We will want her to end her life peacefully and with some dignity. We would want the same for any family member.

Wouldn't we?

TO LANDS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON

by Cathv McArthur

Sundays were special days when I was little kid. My mom, dad, sister, two brothers and I would all pile into the car and take our Sunday ride. Dad would head old Chief Pontiac's nose up the Hudson River toward Bear Mountain, or up Route #7 to Candlewood Lake, or anywhere else where he was sure to find lots of trees, water, mountains or meadows. I can still remember his saying, "Look, over there! Aren't those hills beautiful?" "Did you see that waterfall?" "Look at the cows in that field." I loved those rides.

Years later, I stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona and thought of Dad and our Sunday rides, and the appreciation he gave me for the beauty of Nature. I can remember wishing he could be there and thinking, "Oh, Dad, you thought that waterfall was great? You should see this."

I can also remember my own kids complaining when, on Sundays, I'd suggest that their dad and I take them for a ride. Somewhere along the way, the Sunday rides stopped.

Three summers ago, however, my husband, George, provided me with the ultimate Sunday ride. Dad would have loved it.

It was still dark in Kenya, East Africa when we were awakened at 5:45 a.m. by the Masai warrior outside of our tent in Governor's Camp. This was the end of our first week in Kenya and every day proved better than the preceding. The lantern and spear in one hand and a tray of tea and biscuits in the other, the Masai called softly, "Sir." "Madam." George rose off of his cot, unzipped the tent and took the tray. The Masai waited for him to light the lantern in the tent, said "Forty-five minutes," and left as silently as he had come.

I don't think that will be the case with Pippa. Sometime in the next year or two, we will probably have to decide that the time has come. If she can no longer function, if she is in pain, if living means only lying on her bed uninterested in food, in her tennis ball, in us, or even in tormenting the cat, we will sadly make the decision and know that it is the right one.

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Wouldn't we?
After a five minute ride through the dark campground, we made our way outside the compound and proceeded across the bumpy terrain, down to a river. Awaiting us there was another Masai, with his lantern and spear, sitting in a rickety dugout boat. There was a thick rope strung from a tree on the bank on our side of the river to one on the other side, and a set of wooden stairs climbing up the steep bank. We got into the boat and, slowly, hand over hand on the rope, he pulled us across the river.

Once on the other side, we ascended the steps and were led by the Masai through a thick clump of trees. As we walked, we could a whooshing sound growing louder and louder, and there appeared to be a strange light toward which we were walking. Although daylight was just beginning to dawn as we reached the clearing, it was fully lit by four gas fires blowing hot air into four partially inflated balloons. The balloons lay on their sides in the clearing looking much like lazy dogs reluctant to arise. We could feel the excitement in the air as several men worked on each balloon breathing life into it. The colors were spectacular. I had found that African sunrises bring new meaning to the word, "breathtaking," but add to that the vibrant blues, yellows, reds and greens of these giant balloons and the colors of the flames shooting the hot air into them, and you have something beyond Disney's wildest imagination.

At 7:30 a.m., the six of us were taken to a huge blue, yellow and red striped balloon and given a course in Ballooning 101. We were instructed in the proper procedure for entering and exiting a balloon, (climb over the side), proper position for landing (crouch down in the basket, hang on for dear life and pray silently), and what to expect on landing. We then climbed into our basket piloted by a Frenchman named Claude, held down with ropes by four other men, and with a loud whoosh, followed by another, we began our ascent.

For the next two hours we drifted and floated over the Serengeti in what was the Sunday ride of my life. Dad would have gone hoarse pointing out all the sights. As we floated barely above the treetops, we watched herds of elephants roaming through the brush, giraffes craning their long necks to get the highest leaf for breakfast, baboons chasing each other from tree to tree, and a cheetah still fast asleep on his limb. The silence up there was deafening. It was punctuated only by one of us whispering, "Look over there!" or "Did you see that?" or the loud whoosh of hot air whenever we drifted down too far.

Once beyond the treetops, we drifted out over the plains and saw the thousands of Wildebeests migrating up from Tanzania. There were Wildebeests as far as we could see. Interspersed were herds of zebra, impala, and gazelles, and every once in a while we would want to warn them of the pride of lions or the cheetah trailing them in the distance.

We floated along accompanied by the other three balloons as the sun became high. We drifted over a river and watched a thirsty gazelle, frightened by our reflection in the water, run for the cover of the trees. Off in the distance a cloud of dust appeared on the plains and we assumed the Minolta Brigade, as the tourists were called, were beginning their safaris. Three land rovers made their way beneath us and Claude pointed and shouted directions. They were not tourists at all, but a welcoming crew for our descent. Claude told them our approximate destination and time of arrival, and we watched as they disappeared over the plains.

We continued to float in the general direction of their dust cloud and kept up a constant chatter. Shortly thereafter, we came over a rise and saw what appeared to be a camp without tents. There were the three land rovers and men busily attending to tasks. There were long tables set out with white tablecloths, flowers in crystal vases, and china cups, saucers, and plates. We could see smoke rising from a cook stove and the men scurrying from land rover to stove, to table, and back.

We were told to assume the landing position. Claude guided us to within 50 yards of the land rovers and with a bump, followed by another, set us safely down upon terra firma. The basket of the balloon tipped on its side and we were dragged about 100 feet before we came to rest. The ground crew assisted us in exiting the baskets and pointed us toward the tables.

Several men were preparing scrambled eggs and bacon and two more men were circulating among the balloonists offering champagne and orange juice. We sat on benches that looked suspiciously like the empty gas tanks taken from the balloons and began our Sunday morning breakfast.

Before taking my first bite, I looked out over the African plains and remembered a quote from Beryl Markham's biography:

"... when you have flown over the Rift Valley and the volcanos of Buswa and Longonot, you have travelled far and have been to the lands on the other side of the moon."

The Rift Valley and the volcanos would come in the following week, but this was a preview of the other side. I wished Dad could have seen it. Sunday rides would never quite be the same. But if he hadn't shown me what to look for and how to appreciate what I was seeing, maybe this one wouldn't have meant so much.

Dad would have loved it.
Like a full-blown balloon
She came soaring in on high
Her head just skimming
through the skies

Bounding
Bouncing
Like so many iridescent bubbles
Reshaping
Taking on new form
Clustering
Touching others ever so gently
Well-knowing the fragility of herself
as well as of those she touched
Caring about, and
Loving her freedom
Knowing how brief the time to touch
To teach and shape can be
And there he was...
Snugly sitting
and waiting
Waiting to capture her light
her colors
her beauty.

In his attempt to capture her
and keep her in his grasp
He reached out a bit too roughly
And pulled her down to where he was
He grasped that fine filament
that was her soul
And scattered the bubbling
iridescence
shattered
into so many
rainbows
Until there was little left to glow
But wait....
walked past that corner a half-hour before it happened. "Was the bullet meant for Terrence?" Rodney wondered.

Third period needed to remember. We looked at Terrence's picture in last year's yearbook. Antoine's cousin used to go with him. We looked at her picture. Then we flipped through the freshmen section, laughed about ninth grade, talked about kids who weren't in school this year.

By fifth period, we were talking about buying guns for protection, a way to avoid violence.

I couldn't agree. Guns belong in the wilderness, at a shooting range, on the rack of my uncle's pick-up truck. Not in a city.

There was no team of psychologists called in to help our students deal with the death of a classmate. There was no assembly to recognize him. There was no moment of silence. Maybe too many die for moments of silence. What is the tally now? Nineteen in the last two years, or does this make twenty?

Several months later, I deal with Terrance's death by adding him to my irreverent list of students with unfortunate names. Rosa Concepcion, who got pregnant as a freshman. Phelan James, who took sophomore English three times. Terrence Gamble, who graduated from Hillhouse High School one year and got shot in the back the next.

I like, but I am afraid. I don't live in a neighborhood where gun shots are fired many nights, but I am afraid. I am not a poor teenager, a common target, but I am afraid.

I've confessed, to friends, my daydream, and found that it isn't only mine. Driving down the street, I picture myself, or someone in the car, shot. I picture myself, or someone in the car, shot. What does that look like?

Last week, around the corner from the house we're buying, a man was shot in the head as he was driving. Our friend David went to help the screaming passenger. Before the ambulance arrived. What does that look like?

Once I heard shots from the second floor teachers' lounge at school—machine gun fire. I rushed, stupidly, with the others to the window. We couldn't see the person with the gun, only cars speeding backwards to avoid the shooting. An hour later, cops had the gunman cornered in an apartment, so more bursts sounded, now obviously firecrackers. We giggled nervously. But then seriously, we contemplated the gamble. Could a shot fired from the street hit us in our bedroom on the third floor? We didn't think so.

For many years, when we traveled to Spain with a group of students, we stayed in a very European kind of hotel in Madrid call the Florida Norte. The first year we stayed there, we discovered a little bar next door to the hotel where, at 5:30 every day, the bartender carefully lays out on the long bar, an astonishing assortment of little dishes of delectable temptations called tapas. Tapas are actually hor d'oeuvres, but the enjoyment of them is intrinsically Spanish. They are part of the ambiente, the mystical atmosphere of Spain that cannot be explained. Without ambiente, a thing cannot be Spanish; with ambiente, explanations are not necessary.

Now, in those days, my husband, who is 6'7" and weighs 265 pounds, had taken to wearing Stetson hats—the ten gallon type that inevitably made him at least five inches taller than his actual height, which, in Spain, already bordered on the kind of windmill giants with whom Don Quijote had fought in vain.

We approach the bar. Behind its slippery black marble, laden with meatballs, shellfish, mushroom, potatoes and other delights, stands a little man in a white apron, the bartender. In his wildest dreams he is perhaps 5'2" tall. His wizened face betrays the years of working the Spanish sun, perhaps in the tobacco fields of the south or maybe in the vineyards of La Rioja. Now he serves a select, steady stream of regular customers who, night after night, stop into his bar on their way home from work. Here he serves up beer and conversation, wine and wisdom.

He looks up and up and up. His dark flashing eyes are circles of disbelief and amazement—Mediterranean Rumplestilskin, who has himself discovered a secret. "John Wayne!" he cries, and turns to signal to anyone who can hear him. "Tajas!"...now he is standing on a stool reaching out the bar to shake hands with Emory, who does not understand a word of Spanish which several men, now gathered around, are babbling at incredible speed.

Quickly he grabs a plate from under the counter. He looks at Em. Questioning silently, spoon in hand poised over the tapas. No words. Em points to the meatballs—whooosh! a few are on the plate. Em signals the shrimp in garlic sauce, a wonderful choice—he spoons out a portion. Some black olives and onions, potatoes in spicy red sauce, batter-fried squid rings, and more. Soon the plate is stacked so high, we cannot remember what was the first choice at the bottom. A mug of beer. Our little friend points to a table just beside the bar. No words. We sit down. He leaves his stand behind the bar, and carrying his stool, dances over to our table and sits. His eyes are still wide with wonder. He pats Emory on the back as if assuring himself that he is real. He wants to shake hands again. Em holds up his hand against that of our Iberian leprechaun and folds his size fifteen fingers over the doll-like
fingers of his new friend. They laugh. They exchange a meaningful glance. The Spaniard calls over some of the customers to show them this marvelous feat. Lots of laughter and long excited Spanish phrases. I have understood, but I do not need to translate.

In the corner of the bar is a slot machine—not the one-armed bandit of Las Vegas—but a single, unpretentious yellow soldier serving out his time on duty in this bar just as thousands of his brothers-in-arms are serving their time in hundreds of bars all over Spain. We set up to play the machine. It takes a twenty-five peseta piece, but we don’t have any. Emory goes to the bar with a bill. The bartender turns his hand away, and, taking four twenty-five peseta pieces from the cash register, he carefully places the money in Em’s hand. No words. Emory plays the machine—three cherries—Yankee Doodle Went to Town—the coins cascade from the machine like a small silver waterfall. He buys beers for the house.

A second coin enters the slot—Yankee Doodle Went to Town—more coins. Another round for our friends. By this time, the men are gathered around. Everyone laughs. This gentle giant is a magician! The third coin—Jackpot again. They are cheering. More beer for everyone. Far into the evening, the camaraderie grows—no words—just laughter, gestures, and touches.

I stop to reflect on the nature of communication. If language is our tool for transmitting our thoughts, our feelings, our needs, then must that language be spoken in order to convey our meaning? I used to think so, but here in this little corner of the planet, a relationship is begun, friendship is made, understanding is cemented with no words, no verbal exchange. I decide that, no, we can communicate in the silent language of humanity. We can form bonds of brotherhood with a touch, a look, or a smile.

We went to a different hotel the following year. It was on the other side of Madrid, and since our itinerary was very tight, we did not have a chance to visit “our bar.” The next year we took our students to Greece.

The fourth year, we returned to the Florida Norte. As we left the elevator and walked out to the street, we felt a tingle of excitement and anticipation as we wordlessly turned left and headed down the familiar street to the bar next door. Would our little man still be there? And if he were there, would he remember us? Would he still receive us with that same joy for life that makes even the poorest man rich in Spain? How many hundreds of people pass through that heavy time-worn oak door each year?

We step inside. We quickly survey the room. The young man behind the bar looks up briefly and turns busily to attend his customers. We are heartbroken. Suddenly, the door from the kitchen swings open at the other end of the long narrow room. He is there. He looks up and sees us. “John Wayne!” he shouts, and in a trice he runs down the length of the bar and jumps up into Emory’s arms. “Bienvenidos, Tejas!”, he cries. Welcome, my friend, as he warmly presses his cheek against Em’s, first the right, then the left. Joe the bear and Sam the mouse. No words, just love.

That was several years ago. We never did find out the bartender’s name, nor do we know the name of the bar, but that doesn’t matter. They’re all there waiting for us, as is all of Spain—her history, her present, her future—and the slot machine will be filled with money, ready for our imminent return. No words...
CHILD NIGHTS

by Delbert Shortliffe

In the dreamy dimness of nightlights
I stand in my boys’ room --

Their books in tumbling plies, their toys
flung
in rich heaps
a moustache and top hat
readied for costuming Mark’s morning, and
Tom’s blanket fort still
blocking the closet door, and
all their animals tossed,
stuffed, and lounging.
The boys also
seen tossed, randomly
fallen
part on top and part below
their covers, thumbs and fingers
resting near their lips.

I linger over the best
moment, out of body, watching
each boy’s breathing and my own
kneeling by bedsides,
my open, offered palm brushing
their hair, their sleeping brows.

This gentle brushing seems
the source of memories which sweep now
past my eyes.

sweet shadows somehow
cast by my own father’s nighttime hand.

There were evenings he would walk
up the stairs in Hartford
leaving bills on the kitchen table,
to let my crew cut tickle his palm
and to kneel beside my rumpled bed,
its faded, checkered, brown-green spread
part over, part beneath my legs.

Memories are maybe myth.
But father, and mother, were real

and really tender, and truly
they stood, before kneeling at nighttime,
where streetlamps and neighbors’ windows
cast soft light through my shade
and spread these standing shadows on my ceiling.

And over sixty years ago,
alert in long Alberta nights,
a little man in worn cuffs and suspenders
(those parentheses around his broad chest,
around his faltering heart)
rose from his students’ algebra exams,
rose to the room where his four sons
slept and could not see
his stepping over hockey sticks,
his shadow on their slumbering walls,
his hand upon their dreaming heads --

nor could they know his archaic name
would someday pass along to me
who then was even less than dreams.

And now, all up and down the streets of this
and all the other darkened towns
are parents rising in the night --
from bills or poems
newspaper or late dinners --
and easing into children’s rooms
to tuck the sheet beneath this chin,
or brush the hair back from these eyes.

I imagine them as I remember
others, pausing in the dim light,
shedding the split skin of day’s tensions,
kneeling to this tender ritual
of wonder, love, and memory.
It's a comfort to know it's there, my haven at Cape Cod. As I turn off the highway onto my exit and travel toward my destination, I'm aware of the tension of the four-hour drive releasing its grip on me. My eyes take in the familiar landmarks and I am pleasantly surprised to see no change at all in the landscape of my summer retreat.

The handcarved Nauset Indian sign outside the inn welcomes me one more. Al and Diane are the innkeepers of my sanctuary. Their home feels like it's mine as well. I walk up the tree-shaded gravel path to the brick patio outside the back entryway and pass by the shaggy dog keeping a relaxed watch over the comings and goings of the guests. The screen door squeaks in its wonderfully familiar way, and I enter the inviting, treasures-from-the-past, living room with its overstuffed chairs and couches, and bookshelves brimming with well-worn books on every subject imaginable. The eclectic surroundings are suitable to the varied collection of travelers attracted to sharing bath and board with other guests.

Breakfast will bring all of us together from our respective rooms for homemade cranberry muffins, delectable omelettes and interesting conversation. We will swap stories of our hometowns, yesterday's whale watch and last night's lobster dinner over a bouquet of just-picked daisies, zinnias, Black-eyed Susans and just-brewed cups of coffee. The morning room, with its wide-planked, uneven floors and oval, polished pine table, is bathed in filtered light from the open glass doors from which a fragrant, summer morning breeze blows.

The rooms from which we emerge are, like us, distinct in style and personality. Some are cozy and stenciled in Diane's own folk art designs. Others are large and cheerfully wallpapered in colorful prints. Each room bears on its doors the name of a flower indigenous to Cape Cod and its likeness is painted there. This visit I am a guest in "Johnny-Jump-Up," a name I will offer when asked by the waitress at breakfast as she records my order. No room has a lock, nor its occupant a key, evidence of the fact that, once we enter this inn, we are all family to one another.

My hosts are, as always, warm and welcoming as they greet my arrival. I'm here at long last. There is no better comfort than this for me. It is here that I am renewed. Responsibilities and roles of wife, mother, colleague, daughter and friend fade quickly in these surroundings. Here I am beach-goer, music-lover, bookworm and connoisseur of the fine art of relaxation.

Eager to enjoy every moment, I rise early, dress in tee shirt, shorts and sneakers and make my way on foot the quarter mile to the beach. I am anxious for my first glimpse of the wide expanse of blue ocean, framed by billowing clouds and white sand, the sight and sound of whitecapped waves pounding the beach, and the sun sparkling on the ocean as far as the eye can see. It takes my breath away as I crest the sand dune and view it all for the first time this year.

The sun is warm on my skin. The mussels tighten in my calves as I walk barefoot into the soft sand making my way to the hardpacked sand at the edge. The water is cold; I brace myself as I immerse my feet. It's numbing, but the pain subsides as I wade in and out of the surf. I search the sand for the perfect shell, a gift from the sea to take back with me. My thoughts wander aimlessly as I give myself totally to this glorious day. I think about what I'll do during my stay and where I'll eat each night, savoring the choices and the knowledge that I don't "have to" do anything. Life the next few days is blissfully open-ended.

After breakfast, I return to the beach laden with everything I require to stay the day. I spread my colorful, patchwork, cotton quilt on the sand overlooking waves and sea, and firmly plant my umbrella so that it provides a circle of shade against the hot sun. The warm breeze rustles the pages of my book as I wander in and out of the story, alternating my reality between the beauty of my surroundings and the images proved by the printed word.

I am prepared to stay forever. I have all I need to sustain me. My cooler is filled with chocolate-covered m&m's and other forbidden fruit. I have books to nourish my soul and a tape from "Out of Africa," whose music soars above the sounds of the waves, to lift my spirit. Perhaps the wonder and attraction of this place for me is that I cannot stay forever. Knowing that my brief interlude will come to an end, I savor these days at Cape Cod and take comfort in the fact that I can conjure them up on less perfect days in the year to come.
1. Greeks used their alphabet for counting
2. Arabic numerals
   a. which actually are a product of non-Western World
   b. Arabs invented zero as well
   c. why don't we use zero on outlines
   d. outlines are Western
   e. we use only what we must from Arabs, like oil
   f. they're all terrorists anyway
   g. or religious zealots
3. the Arabs didn't think to make uppercase numerals
4. so there
5. I rest my case
6. it's a good thing most outlines stayed on a single page
7. not anymore
8. not anymore
9. conveniently just right, like Goldilocks' porridge
10. if they weren't just right, we'd be in trouble
11. run out of ordinal sequences of symbols
12. have to learn Egyptian hieroglyphics for outlining
13. isn't that why we learned Roman numerals
14. The Egyptians Western
15. they were a civilization so they couldn't be
16. African
17. they are Arabs now
18. what happen to the good ol' days
19. when Egyptians could build pyramids
20. when Coke only cost a nickel
21. in your outline, never have a single subtopic under a larger topic
22. anything can be analyzed into several components
   a. Western science taught us that
   b. not Arab science
23. if you have a single subtopic, make up one that sounds related
24. like the one above <IB4bii>
25. one advantage of an outline is that each thought has a name
26. it would be a better world if all thoughts had names
27. the above entry <IB4bii..> was made up to finish the pair
28. so was the one <IB4bii...> immediately preceding this one
29. another advantage of the outline is it keeps you on track
30. if you di Gregg too far
31. you run out of ordinal symbols
32. the left margin expands, limiting the writing space for your digressive ideas
33. when you are done digressing
34. return to the last major idea
35. it'll be the one sticking out alone on the left
36. so maybe there is a reason for all that unused space
I always thought it was for teacher comments. Teachers usually wrote much red ink on my outlines, especially when I wrote them after the rough drafts. If only they would see how well learned.

Here comes a 5. way over in the left margin. 66 lines on a page. 85 spaces on a line. Start at space 42, line 28. Backspace half the letters in title. Who says math doesn't have applications?

You need to know calculus, though, for 2-line titles. Name, class, date, teacher in lower right. That's why we didn't type the title on line 33.

Justify it all to the right margin.

C. I learned a lot from writing it:
   1. As you can see from above.
      a. I wouldn't have been able to do this without writing that paper
         i) This has been kind of fun.
      b. My original intent was just to be boring.
   2. I learned about the history and uses of magic, too.
      a. It was on magic, by the way.
      b. Funny I didn't think to mention that until now.
   3. It's lost somewhere in the mail now.

II. Did you ever notice that many outlines rarely go past Roman numeral one?
   A. Maybe that's because my first entry should be the overall topic.
      1. Which means I should go back and change each symbol to the next ordinal system.
         a. Oh, God.
         b. But it would decrease the left margin: more room to digress.
      2. Who cares if there is a Roman numeral II anyway.
         a. That's how it is supposed to be done.
         b. Evidently I don't.
         i) Why else would I have thought of it?
         ii) What's the use of knowing it if I can't use it for something?
         b) I finally found a use for it.
         ... What a relief.
         ... The world has become a slightly tidier place.

Yesterday, I participated in a workshop by Julie Machen. She presented dynamic teaching methods she had used to encourage her students to think about their research as they gathered information. Her students used dialectical journals to summarize, analyze, synthesize, comment on, evaluate, and apply what they learned from discussions, interviews, textbooks and the news media. These are skills they would use every day for the rest of their lives even if they had quit school the minute they walked out of her classroom. They didn't, of course. They have a control over knowledge and an appreciation of how exciting it can be to acquire it.

Julie recognized this growth and wisely decided that demanding a research paper from them at the end of the semester was more trouble than it was worth. She let each student figure out what sort of presentation would appropriately tie up his or her semester of learning. (As with my magic paper, their significant learning was more about skills than content.) What her decision said to the students was, "You and I both know that you have..."
learned a great deal throughout the semester; you don't need to prove it to me now at the end by jumping through the hoops of writing a formal research paper." She showed respect and trust.

Of course students should learn the formalities and conventions of academic discourse. Julie does teach how to lay out research papers in her classes. But conventions and formalities should not be the central object of education; they should be learned for what they are: the frosting on the cake of knowledge. If we help students bake the cake, if we encourage them to think and analyze, they will learn the art of frosting much more readily than if we insist on force-feeding them frosting year after year.