

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

Writers Group

Selections

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WORRIES FEARS & ET CETERA

Another Sunny Florida Day
Ho-hum the disheartened say.
Worries, fears and etcetera
Lead to certain dismay.

Angst, anxieties then come to play
Prolonging that not positive array
That negative list too long makes one fey.
Leading to another ho-hum display.

The dawning now here, bright brings
Birds and blooms that sings.
An open drafty mind no more pings.
And all I had to do, was pray.

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DISTRACTIONS

Distractions occur every day
Most often to my dismay.
Too large a percentage get in the way.
There is a difference today.

An experience has occurred
Which dictates I adjust my word
Back on daily rigor,
To stop rest and play.

Keeping it simple starts this theme;
Budget time to provide life needs
Administrative, provisional, make sure to pay.
Most important pray, with vigor.

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ELEGIAC TO JOY PRAYER

A thousand miles from nowhere;
Where wolves and coyotes howl and croon;
A lonely melancholy wail of a steam engine
Stirs the heart to swell.

Recent happenings bring this music strains to mind.
A country singer bewails his lonesomeness;*
Waiting out nowhere around a refill water tank
For his train to come in.

The parallel for me:
Requests went out for thoughts and prayer.
At this juncture for sure people care.
Here I pray for those thoughtful souls.

Our Supreme Being of the Universe
Healing those did bring
Joyful knowing did come, growing seeds of kindness**
To them, to all, to God I bow. Thank you. How Great Thou
Art***.

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* Jimmie Rodgers "Waiting for a Train" 1950's

**Bringing in the Sheaves / Knowles Shaw 1874

***How Great Thou Art / Gustav Boberg 1885

FENCE POST-JOY

As a lone eagle soars above
My heart reacts to the mourning dove.
Many times (3now4), I do declare
Doves presence have announced answered prayer.

Last Angelus eve relaxing in the courtyard,
Came the cry of a lonesome dove.
Looking up high in the sky, an eagle soared.
My fears escaped to fore.

Then as if an angel whispered in his ear
That eagle turned fleeing into the setting sun.
My pulse did quiet as awareness did glove
The respect of that dove.

Today, I know more powerful than ever
My healing and recovery did leap to mend
I am but a server, thank you family and friends.
For prayers and thoughts to this end.

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Swedesboro Native Commands USS *Monitor*:

Commodore William N. Jeffers of the United States Navy

By Ben Carlton

(Continued from the January 2017 issue of *Just Write*)

Following her combat with the *Virginia*, the *Monitor's* mission was to safeguard the Federal fleet at Hampton Roads from the devastating Confederate ironclad. For two months, a standoff ensued. Twice during that time the *Virginia* steamed out from her berth at Norfolk to the mouth of the Elizabeth River and out into the Roads, attempting to lure the *Monitor* into another fight at the scene of their first encounter. The "tin can on a shingle," as a Confederate observer described her, would not take the bait as Jeffers was under direct orders from the Navy Department not to expose the *Monitor* and risk losing her and thus the entire fleet. Jeffers and crew were frustrated by this directive but obeyed orders nonetheless to remain safely under the guns of Union shore batteries. A crewman wrote that Jeffers begged permission from Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, to sail to Norfolk to engage the *Virginia* but was denied. This same crewmember, however, felt that Jeffers was merely seeking to distinguish himself while he had a chance for glory before the much-longed-for return of Captain Worden, still recovering from his wounds at Washington City. The crew expressed their feelings in a plaintive get-well-soon letter to Worden: "These few lines is from your own Crew of the Monitor...Hoping to God that they will have the pleasure of Welcoming you back to us again soon." The missive continued, "Since you left us we have no pleasure on Board of the Monitor." Apparently, the crew had already taken a strong dislike to Lieutenant Jeffers.

Jeffers preferred to remain aloof from both officers and crew, keeping to his own quarters while not tolerating any breach of discipline. According to Paymaster William Keeler, Jeffers was a “rigid disciplinarian” with a quick temper and “domineering disposition.” While the departed Worden was described by Keeler as possessing a “noble kindness of heart,” Jeffers was constantly finding fault and was very much a martinet when it came to meting out harsh punishment to the malefactors among the crew. Jeffers routinely enforced order by clapping unruly sailors in irons. One crewman wrote that a sailor had been shackled on deck for three days for drunkenness. When two crewmen were arrested for brawling, Jeffers ordered the pair chained together on deck with their hands manacled behind each other’s back in an embrace that lasted for three or four days. Jeffers mustered all hands at 10 o’clock every Sunday morning for inspection. He insisted on cleanliness of uniform and body and “woe to the one who is found dirty, as he will be given over to the Master at Arms, whose business it is to take him on deck, strip him naked, and take a scrubbing brush and give him a cleaning,” wrote one of the *Monitor*’s firemen, George Geer. Geer disliked Jeffers so much that he wrote in a letter to his wife that he wished Jeffers would fall overboard, and swore, in the event that he did, Jeffers could “go to the bottom for all the help I would give him.”

While officers and crew were adjusting to their unpopular new captain, on 11 April the *Virginia* and her consorts again sailed out to the entrance of Hampton Roads to challenge the *Monitor*. The Confederates had devised a plan to board and capture their ironclad rival. But restrained by orders, Jeffers did not sortie from under the guns of Fort Monroe. Captain and crew were forced to watch as their cumbersome nemesis captured three Union schooners. Unable to draw the *Monitor* out, *Virginia* contemptuously fired a few rounds in the direction of Fortress Monroe before slowly withdrawing to Craney Island. “We have been very much provoked for the last two days by the *Merimack* [i.e., *Virginia*],” wrote Geer in a letter dated 13 April 1852. “She comes down in the Roads in plain sight but under cover of Sewels Point Battery and lays there as much to dare us to attack her, but our own orders are such that we cannot go after her, but must lay here like an old coward and look at her.” The crew cursed Flag Officer Goldsborough for not allowing the *Monitor* to respond to the *Virginia*’s challenges, but the northern press

blamed Welles. A reporter for the *New York Herald* excoriated the Secretary for the “wretched imbecility of the management of the Navy Department [that] has paralyzed the hands of our sailors and restrained them from victory.” But with General George McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign in full swing as the Army of the Potomac besieged Yorktown, it was now even more imperative that the *Monitor* not hazard an engagement with the Confederate monster but continue to keep the waters of Hampton Roads open for federal ships landing troops and supplies for the army at Fort Monroe.

On 9 May and again on 10 May, the *Monitor* received visits from the chief executive himself. President Lincoln arrived at Hampton Roads with a couple of cabinet members in tow to have a look-see at McClellan’s operations and, perhaps, to goad Goldsborough and the navy to greater activity. As a small revenue cutter carrying the distinguished visitors steamed alongside the *Monitor*, the President received Lieutenant Jeffers’ permission to climb aboard. Lincoln shook hands with Jeffers and some of the crew before briefly inspecting the ship. During Lincoln’s second visit, he bypassed the normal chain of command to ask Jeffers to conduct a reconnaissance of Sewell’s Point at the mouth of the Elizabeth River. Jeffers demurred only to ask that Goldsborough be informed of the President’s request beforehand. Then the *Monitor* cautiously cruised over to Sewell’s Point to find the Confederate batteries abandoned. Two days later, with McClellan’s massive army advancing ponderously up the Peninsula toward Richmond, the Confederates abandoned the entire Norfolk area. The rebel navy had fled upriver to man the fortifications along the James. Trapped, the *Virginia* had to be blown up by her own crew as the unwieldy behemoth could neither escape out to sea past the Union blockade nor retreat up James River because of her deep draft.

[To be continued in the next edition of *Just Write*]

Just Write

Meetings Held 2nd & 4th Wednesdays @

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