

# *Just Write*

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

Writers Group

Selections

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**PRIME VIEW FROM A LANAI**

Toward the southwest in the sky-  
Catty-corner props met the eye.  
Soft rose from the setting sun-  
Tinted side raked rolled cotton for fun.

The choices are yours to make  
And all of ours to break.  
A portent for me, with head on high,  
Lord you placed my feet on the ground.

The sky reflected in the lake's waters  
Eerily doubles will's resound  
The choice proceed  
Hold the course-no falters.

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## Autumn Move

And so Autumn had come  
Not with a crisp, gusty, and hardy clarity  
But with a quiet coolness behind the rains

Surely by now they would be snug and nestled  
Enjoying their new digs, a new beginning  
Not yet, not yet the blue jays cried

Late blooming summer flowers smiled  
Mums and geraniums continued to grin  
The greened up grass waited to be trimmed

While inside air conditioning was replaced by heat  
Constant were their thoughts of what to give away  
What parts of their past can they part with this time

Things that were important to keep weren't so much anymore  
Friends and family and relationships are what mattered  
Keep the pictures but live with and enjoy people not stuff

The house stands ready for a new family, a new beginning  
A family who will experience much peace, happiness and joy  
That is the legacy they wish to leave and entrust

These are the things this Autumn would be made of  
Warmth, faith, and hope for what lies ahead  
Gratitude, friendships, and love for those they left behind.

By Marian Fay

## **RECLINER IN CONDO**

A Sunday – a day of rest.  
Often a fest.  
As days have come and gone  
Somedays ran this test.

A Special set of children  
A lightness in chest - brethren  
Gifts of the eternal Spirit  
Preceived this merit.

Learning to trust  
Came first  
Precognition of being human  
Enhanced this acumen.

Thus we bow before  
Openly pray  
Enjoy this foray  
Full of Thanksgiving, we adore.

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## **THE CLOUDS CRIED**

Step not taken today  
We're not lost along the way  
Early clouds smiled  
Late that day – the clouds cried.

Nature's way of supplying  
Needed moisture for growth  
Heeded beginnings for new birth  
Now for complying – here on earth.

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## **CLOAKED WORDS**

Laughter born of rapture  
How doth thou believe?  
The Dodger asked- What  
Would a man from Cleveland be?

Why simply a famer is he.  
For his plow splits the soil  
As to the land  
Cleaves he.

Does this mean, I be an idol man  
Or the sandwich not free?  
Food for the chase-me.  
Out of the mist.

No ghost - only language, a cloak.  
Not worn as a coat.  
As simmering heat and sun bends rays  
On desert sands

The scene seen  
A hallucination  
A mirage  
Or a dry drunk.

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*Rebel Prisoners at Fort Delaware*  
By "Henry Winsor"/Ben Carlton

In my recent correspondence I described how I witnessed the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners on the Savannah River ["Our Prisoners" *New-York Times*, November 26, 1864]. In this report, which was the first of its kind to document the terrible plight of the Andersonville prisoners, I described the wretched condition of the brave "soldiers of the Republic" who had at last been delivered from the "unutterable misery" of the notorious prison pen known as Camp Sumter located near Andersonville, Georgia. Evidence in the form of the pale and forlorn specters shuffling off or being carried from the gangplanks of the steamers gave living (barely) proof of the vindictiveness of southern authorities. A hard accusation, indeed. But the exchanged prisoners gave the lie to the myth of the chivalrous Southrons in the "wasted hungry aspect of the sufferers, whose filth and squalor and skeletal frames appeal to Justice to the God of justice." Further proof of deliberate mistreatment of the Union prisoners was evident in the testimonies of those thus far brought back - an estimated 10,000 men returned to "our welcome keeping."



**Fort Delaware (photo by William Myers)**

By glaring contrast, Rebel prisoners confined at the North have been generally treated well as this correspondent set out to prove on his recent visit to Fort



Delaware on Pea Patch Island located midway between Delaware and New Jersey on the Delaware River. The prison compound resembles a medieval fortress complete with moat, drawbridge and portcullis. The Confederate officers are kept within this fortress while the enlisted men are comfortably housed outside in sturdy barracks. Long lines of these structures, which house 400 men apiece, are situated far enough from the fort to isolate the men from their officers. Leaderless, the prisoners acquiesce to their surroundings more readily as there have been few escapes from the island. Although, remarkably, it must be noted that a few daredevils have sought to swim to freedom by the unpleasant expedient of slipping through the privy holes of the latrines that stretch out over the river. The distance is about 2,000 yards from the prison to the Delaware shore (it is even farther to New Jersey side), and even the strongest swimmer risks being swept out to sea by the strong and swift cross-currents of the Delaware.

But why would the prisoners attempt so bold and desperate a plan? They are given better rations in the prison than the poor devils ever received in the Rebel army: two regular meals a day consisting of eight ounces of meat, thirteen ounces of bread, and generous amounts of soup and coffee. Their Yankee counterparts at Andersonville receive far less and have to scrounge for extra foodstuffs just to subsist on their pitifully meager rations. And they are without shelter, constantly rained upon, and crammed into an open area of just five acres within a stockaded compound manned by trigger-happy guards with orders to shoot to kill if a prisoner ventures too near the so-called "dead line." There is no dead line at Fort Delaware, though large calibre artillery pieces mounted on the walls of the fort are loaded and trained on the prisoners' barracks to discourage insurrection. After all, as many as 12,000 or so restless prisoners outnumber the 200 guards by a considerable margin.

Whereas medical care at Fort Delaware is judged adequate for the needs of the Rebel prisoners, the charnel house mislabeled as a hospital at Andersonville is a place where the cure is indeed worse than the disease. By and large, sick Union prisoners suffer from cruel neglect, unsanitary conditions, and a severe lack of sufficient food needed to nurse a sick prisoner back to health. Yet despite the heat and the presence of numerous pests, situated as it is on a marshy, alluvial island, the prisoners at Fort Delaware are considerably healthy. Many of the Rebels hail from deep South states and are generally immune to the heat of summer on the island. They suffer more from the cold Northern winter as icy winds blow off the Delaware and across the island. It is true they

are not allowed to receive heavy or sturdy clothing as this, in the event of another prisoner exchange, would be tantamount to supplying the Rebel army.

Of course, neither are prisoners permitted to wear any coats of blue material or suits of blue color as this might aid in escapes from the prison. However, the barracks are supplied with two stoves each per structure to provide heat during the cold winter months. A prisoner admitted to me that he suffered so much from the cold because of the men who position themselves in front of the red-hot stoves. Dubbed "stove rats" by their fellow prisoners, only a concerted rush from the inmates of the barracks will dislodge the stove rats who refuse to share the warmth with their barracks' mates.

Despite some unavoidable privations, Fort Delaware is considered a safe haven for Confederate prisoners of war, while the prison pen at Andersonville is said to rival the infamous prison ships of the British for unbridled cruelty, where American Patriots died by the thousands under similar horrific conditions during the Revolutionary War.

- HJW



**Barracks of enlisted men (photo by William Myers)**



**Inside of enlisted men's barracks (photo by William Myers)**

[Editor's notes: Despite the author's assertions that the southern prisoners were well fed and comfortably housed at Fort Delaware, it should be pointed out that General Schoepf, commandant of the prison, complained to Union Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs that the barracks were sinking into the mud! Also, despite common knowledge that a proper diet prevents scurvy, William Hoffman, the Commissary General of Prisoners, ordered prison officials to withhold vegetables from the prisoners' diet as this was considered an expensive luxury. Yet, medical officers continued to report scurvy as the number one killer of prisoners housed at Fort Delaware.

For more information, see *Confederate Prisoners of War at Fort Delaware* by Nancy Travis Keen; also, see *Dispatches from the Front: A History of the American War Correspondent* by Nathaniel Lande.]

# *Just Write*

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