

# *Just Write*

**Gloucester County Library System**

**Logan Township Branch**

**Writers Group**

**Selections**

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Freeholder Director, **Robert M. Damming** | Freeholder Library Liaison, **Lyman Barnes**



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COME IN

Gert takes the highway and exits onto Carter Road, turns and turns twice more, pulls into the driveway, facing the big green garage door. Dru takes the highway, too, exiting one exit south, taking Thomas Road to Broad Street, turning right, and following to Academy Ave. He passes the driveway, turns the corner and parks on Miller Avenue. Coming up onto the porch, he opens the front door and walks in. He is home.

Meanwhile, Gert arrives at the side door, which leads from the drive into the mudroom. Reluctantly, but because we insisted she not ring the bell, she comes in the first set of doors and timidly knocks at the kitchen door, then calling out and entering, as we have instructed.

Granddad comes from work at the church on Broad, turns onto Academy, then into the drive, pulling past any other cars into the side spot, which he alone uses. He steps out of the car, comes up the brick steps, opens the door, walks in, hangs his coat, puts his hat on the shelf and opens the door into the kitchen and steps up into this room, part of his home.

Dolly leaves her job at the daycare facility in the Town Shopping Center. She pulls out onto Harvest Road, turning left. Following Harvest through one traffic light and several residential blocks, she turns left onto Miller Avenue, driving a mile. At Academy Avenue, she turns right and then immediately left into the drive, pulling up almost to the green door and immediately next to my own van, to leave room for her father to come and go from his single space. She comes in that same mudroom door used by Gert and Granddad. She doesn't knock or hesitate. She might set some items down on the toy chest on her way past, and then she opens the kitchen door and steps up and into the warm room.

Since moving to 130 Miller Avenue a little over five years ago, we have found it a very pleasant street on which to live. Townspeople often use it for exercise, pushing strollers, walking dogs, or taking their own daily walk, alone or with a companion. Our expansive windows often show us a friend or an acquaintance passing by. Because our street parallels Broad Street, it can be an alternate route for driving through town. Diagonally across from our house is the Catholic church. This occasions particular traffic at certain times, also turning our curbside into the overflow parking for services, weddings, and funerals; it sometimes interferes with Boyd's accustomed arrival and parking pattern of pulling in ahead of Dru's spot and then entering by the front door, following the front hall to the connecting hallway. However, Dru's habit, once inside, is to take a right turn into the living room crossing into the dining room and turning into the kitchen just where it joins the hallway chosen by his father.

The current residency of our home is five, with a sixth still “at home”, but only present on breaks from college in New York State. Daily we come and go, using any of the routes described, not counting the other times when we return from our own walking ventures or simply from yard chores. Except for possible comments on repairs needed, we never complain about the doors. The house has a third, rarely-used outer door all the way in the back, which leads down a set of stairs to the lower floor. Family or friends ring a doorbell, signaling their arrival and giving us the information of which door to open to let them in. So far, I can’t think of anyone who has complained about the doors. Even strangers have rung our bell and expected a resident to at least open the door and speak, whether or not they were seeking entrance.

So, what does all of this description signify?

A common complaint or question raised by those who look at the Christian faith concerns the exclusiveness expressed therein of One Way to come to God. Why would a good God be so constricting as to make His Son, Jesus, the only Way into His Kingdom? I have been told, “There are many roads which lead to God.” The counter question might be, “If one wants to get in, ‘come home’, or be welcomed, isn’t it more to the point to be thankful that there is an accessible door or one where someone comes in answer to a knock or ring?”

Yes, our home can be approached by a variety of routes. One can come on foot, by car, or even, as occasionally happens, on bicycle. However, once arriving at the corner of Academy and Miller Avenues, no one fusses about the ready entrances. Rather, we enter through them and are welcomed, either because we are at home or because someone inside says we may. Anyone entering by some other way would not be welcomed, but rather, expelled or escorted out by a town policeman.

If we desire spiritual shelter--if our lives cry out for “home”--there is a welcoming door awaiting our coming. Jesus said it this way: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6 NIV) He presented it another way, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” (John 10:9 NIV)

Paul the apostle wrote to the Roman Christians of having, “...peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” (Romans 5:2 NIV) Further, one newer Bible version, meant to be read for easier understanding, translates a section of the letter to the Hebrew Christians this way: “So, friends, we can now—without hesitation—walk right up to God, into ‘the Holy Place’. Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of his sacrifice, acting as our priest before God. The ‘curtain’ into God’s presence is his body.” (Hebrews 10:19, 20 The Message)

No one is forced to accept these teachings as true. Nevertheless, this is a basic doctrine of the orthodox Christian faith.

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## “LIFE IS A DREAM”

A. Muhammad Ma`ruf<sup>1</sup>

Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold’s groundbreaking *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (1991) has a chapter entitled “Life is a Dream: Intimations of a Wider World”, which discusses questions about the reality or illusory nature of lucid and other dreaming experiences. The chapter discusses how the post-1970s meeting of Eastern and Western dream knowledge traditions has yielded new psychological questions about the nature of sleep and dreaming, intuition, and the illusory nature of personal reality. A philosophy supportive of cultivating lucid dreaming practices is made explicit and a justification provided for the benefits of an emerging new dreaming practice.

This brief essay is about the expression “Life is a dream” which is part of the chapter heading. Most people who feel compelled to get up in the morning, wash, go to work, get paid, come back home, pay the bills, clean, and cook may not accept the proposition that life is a dream. However, many similar sayings are found in languages of the East and West. In English the saying seems to have gained currency after it appeared as the title of a 19<sup>th</sup> century translation of a play written in Spanish in the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Edward Fitzgerald was the author of the English version. The play explores the metaphysics of the idea. Later, “Life is but a dream” became etched in popular memory as the last line in the well know nursery rhyme: “Row, row, row your boat”. I was told that many American adults also sing this song all the time. The song was also part of a scene in the popular film *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* (1989). The captain and his mates sang it.

Some Sufis have also made similar assertions, but with a difference of a word. The difference may be significant. The Sufis say “The world is a dream”.

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<sup>1</sup> Comments and suggestions from Writers Group colleagues are gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup> Another version of this idea is in Shakespeare (1564-1616):

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, *The Tempest*, Act IV Scene I.

Mevlaana Rumi (1207-1273), a well known Sufi, is translated as having composed the following, in Persian:

“The world is a dream – don’t be deluded;  
If in a dream a hand is lost, it’s no harm.  
In dreams, no real damage is done  
if the body is maimed or torn in two hundred pieces.  
The Prophet said of this apparently substantial world  
That it is but the sleeper’s dream.  
You’ve accepted this as an idea,  
but the spiritual traveler has beheld this truth with open eye.  
You are asleep in the daytime; don’t say this is not sleep.”<sup>3</sup>

To say that the world is a dream is not the same as saying that life itself is a dream. As such the Sufi belief is different. It does not deny that life is a reality.

What is meant by saying that the world, in which so many lives thrive, is a dream? The world which scientists assert has existed for millions of years is in anthropology, cartography, history, geography, and many other fields of study. It is in our biographies. It is in the animals we know; in the land on which we tread; in the rivers that fairly flow; in the trees and the birds that live in them. It is in the United Nations Organization. Is it a dream? This is a question that invites and has received the consideration of many philosophers.

Even the Prophet and the Mevlaana who are reported to have said words to this effect have lived in the world and gone through its pains and pleasures. They, who know the world well, assert that ultimately, our experience of this world is something like a dream.

Some passages in the teachings of the Chisti Sufi, Inayat Khan (1882-1927) available online at <http://wahiduddin.net/> have helped me in relating some of my dreams to this traditional Sufi belief.

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<sup>3</sup> Rumi, Mevlana Jalaaluddin. *Jewels of Remembrance*. Selected and translated by Camille and Kabir Helminsky.

## **BABY MISTAKES**

By Caroline Kalfas

One thing I like about writing is my ability to erase words that don't fit.

I can type, "Lucy detected a faint smell when she entered the room."

If a rotten potato is in the kitchen, I can erase the word "smell" and type, "Lucy detected a faint odor when she entered the room."

Or if roses are on the counter, I can erase the word "odor" and type, "Lucy detected a faint fragrance when she entered the room."

Eventually, I find the right word without having to correct myself in public.

If that were only possible in daily conversations!

This week, I sat in the middle school guidance counselor's office with my son to register him for high school. When the counselor joined us, she didn't recognize me.

"We have met before," I told her during the introduction. "Our babies played baseball on the same team last year."

As soon as the word "babies" flew out of my mouth, I wanted to backspace and change the noun to "children," "boys," "sons" – any term but "babies."

The word does not come close to describing the young men we watched defend bases and score runs on the baseball diamond last spring.

But the conversation couldn't be rewritten.

The word hung in the air like an unpleasant scent as my "baby" signed up for classes in economics, physics, literature and foreign language.

When we left the guidance office, my son said, "Babies? Really, Mom?"

As I watched him head down the school hallway back to class, the word choice still stung.

My son's voice has changed. He's taller than me. He wears a size 13 shoe. He's "a teen," "a young man," "a strong athlete."

All this is true. But he's still my baby.

## Ocean View

by Marian M. Fay

Brilliant prisms of icy white light  
Pulse to the rock beat of the ocean floor.  
Glossy turquoise mountains glide and froth,  
While their foam bubbles stick and cling  
To the meandering lines of seemingly endless shore.

The sherbet clad brown, red, and white bodies of children  
Run and jump after thin wisps of foam and spray.  
Others dig diligently down into the warm and inviting  
Draw of the mounds of shimmering sand all day.  
Their play is the stuff future reality is made of.  
They are swimmers, architects, and explorers in training.  
Their dreams are limitless, wanting to do what they love.

For me it is enough to prowl like a seagull watching the waves glide.  
My thoughts wiped clean by the gritty winds and roaring tides,  
Soaring like stunt kites on the dizzying heat swells.  
My feathers sun bleached and misted with salty, foamy spray.  
Here all choices are possible, and life can begin again I pray.

Here all things are rolled, smoothed, ground and polished,  
And when finished are released by the tide as treasures on the beach.  
Some things like memories are buried so deeply  
They seem to be just out of reach,  
But with the give and take of the endless tides  
They are revealed in all their sometimes garish splendor  
To tantalize the mind of the vigilant discerning eyes.

Ah, to be a child at the sea  
And live in life eternally!



# *Just Write*

**Meetings Held 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays @**

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