

Just Write

**Gloucester County Library System
Logan Township Branch
Writers Group
Selections
Volume 5, Issue 1**

January 2016

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



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Fly Me

The first apartment we shared as newlyweds was located on the 2nd floor of a building on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The apartment was at the back of the building and the entrance to the neighbor's apartment was set at a slight angle just across the narrow hallway from our door.

I don't think we ever knew her name, but it didn't really matter since she wasn't home all that often. That, unfortunately, doesn't mean the apartment sat empty when she was out of town. She was a stewardess; they were still called that back in the seventies; now you know them as flight attendants. She worked an international route; taking her out of the country on a regular basis. When she was gone, the other stewardess's and some of the pilots would stay in the apartment, while on their layovers in New York City. I think she had given a key to every employee of the airline; or maybe it just seemed like it.

What do you do if you're young and in New York for a few days? You party, of course, and that's just what they did. It seemed like there was a party going on next door at least several times a week. The music was loud, the revelers were louder, the door would slam open and shut all night and we wouldn't get much sleep. Complaining did no good; they didn't live in the building and could care less if they irritated the other tenants.

Our neighbor also had a boyfriend, Fontaine. We were pretty sure he was a drug dealer and wouldn't have been surprised if she transported drugs for him in the course of her job. Airport security was almost nonexistent, compared to today's standards, so it would have been relatively easy for her to smuggle drugs into the country. Of course this is just speculation; I have no proof. Guessing Fontaine's occupation wasn't hard, however. The man had at least three expensive sports cars that he would park in front of the building. He would go into the apartment with one or more men and play annoying music, full blast, for twenty to thirty minutes. Then they would all leave; it didn't take a brain surgeon to figure out a drug deal had just taken place.

The Super, Joe and his wife, Helen, were a young couple from Ireland, with two school age children. They were a lovely couple and almost everyone in the building thought of them as friends. They were also devout Catholics; attending church every week and sending the kids to parochial school.

One night a week, my husband worked late and I would be on my own for most of the evening. These nights were usually quiet, but one spring night was anything but uneventful. As usual, there was a party going on next door. At approximately eight o'clock I heard Joe banging on the door across the hall, shouting to the occupants to turn down the music. I could tell when the door opened because the music got louder and the sound of voices filled the hallway. I needed something fixed in the apartment and thought I would take advantage of the Joe being right outside, so I opened my door; holy smoke! You don't see what Joe & I were looking at everyday day.

This time, my neighbor was hosting the party and she was standing in the entrance of her apartment, stark naked! I could see into her apartment and couldn't help but

notice that the walls were lined with mirrors. The mirrors reflected the interior of the crowded living room and like the woman in the doorway, everyone was naked. Fontaine was there and I could see drugs on the coffee table which I assume he had supplied.

I'm not sure whose jaw was closer to the floor, mine or Joe's. My open door was the escape he needed. "Keep the noise down, you're disturbing the others tenants." He quickly shouted as he turned and shoved me into my apartment, following close behind. He slammed my door shut and leaned against it. His face was red and his eyes were as wide as they could be. In his thick brogue he sputtered "what am I going to tell my wife? How do I explain what we just saw?"

"Easy' I told him "just tell your wife the same thing I'm going to tell my husband. She had an orgy and didn't invite us!"

Things like this could only happen in New York.

Brenda Sabol
January 2016

The Early Morning Scribbler

By Marian M. Fay from her book "Poetic Scribbles"

Ink stained fingers,
A sure sign of a scribbler.
I was seeking the energy and rhythm of early morning,
Munching on granola bars and sipping gator aide.
The birdsong is loud and boisterous and
The cool breezes play the hummingbird chimes.

Dusty millers standing bright, attentive and happy
Hanging begonias adding a joyful pop of pink against green foliage
Jack rabbits eye me cautiously and give a wide berth
Squirrels climbing trees and flicking bushy tails for all they're worth

I tried in vain to go back to sleep
But the sun and the birds bid me come outside.
It's been so long since I scribbled and wrote
Thoughts and observations from my early morning front porch

I wake most times with such worries
I say my rosary or parts of it in a hurry
Then light and positive energy comes forth in my mind
My thoughts aren't sleepy but gentle and kind

Still I try to fall back asleep
But melancholy starts in to creep
That's when I grab my writing gear
And head outside for my spirit to hear
God's creation of the new day
And my gripes and troubles get soothed away
Now rest can come to my thoughts and stay

Be At Peace

By Marian M. Fay from her book, "Poetic Scribbles"

Guilt, what is it good for?
Absolutely nothing
If you sign on to do X amount of work
If asked for more
Keep walking out the door
Your free time is yours
Own it and enjoy it.
Enjoying your work?
Stay by all means
Own it, enjoy it
Or be frivolous and free
Your free time is precious,
Guard it carefully
Self condemnation,
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing
Bad choices, different choices, better choices
No kicking yourself for past missteps
The past is behind, the future is ahead
Know better, be better
Be at peace with your time
Be at peace with your choices

The Politics of Speaking English

A. Muhammad Ma`ruf

January 2016

In our Writers Group we are concerned with the poetics rather than the politics of speaking and writing English. Although we are not named an English Writers Group, our goal is to improve our skills in expressing ourselves in written English. These skills may be broadly described as the poetics of speaking and writing English. Non-writers, however, may not have a serious interest in such poetics. They are more interested in the politics of what language is spoken more commonly in the public marketplace.

I was prompted to think on such things in September of 2015 because of the controversy generated by the reported attempt of a prominent politician to gain publicity and admiration by telling one of his rivals to “speak English”. The rival who was being addressed in the lecture had spoken in Spanish at a political rally composed largely of Spanish speaking voters. During September of 2015 I got quite interested in reading up more on the issues and substance of this debate. This was in part because I have a long personal history of dealing with conflicts about speaking English, and about what kind of English to cultivate and about whether my English had too much technical terminology derived from the specializations I had pursued in my academic studies. At that important turning point in my career, during the late 1980s, I had realized that anthropological English was not something that most of my intended readers were comfortable with.

Personal history aside, I was not at all thrilled about how this issue entered the current presidential race and became added on to the much more “white-hot” debate about immigration issues.

I was happy to note that a few days after the din of the attacks and counter-attacks in the Speak English debate subsided, Pope Francis arrived in the United States and announced that

he would make all except four of his speeches, while in the US, in Spanish. The Pope's approach seemed to me to be a better approach to the challenges of communicating with people in the multilingual political, religious, and social environments of the U.S.

During September when the controversy was widely reported and commented on I also participated in an online discussion about it. One of my colleagues in that discussion took the position that the Speak English politics of the day had to be seen as kind of humorous side of the grandstanding. His observation seemed to make sense as much of the theatrics of the presidential contest this time seems to be comical. Another colleague, however, wrote in a serious vein.

"...The knowledge that permits one to "speak American" is practical knowledge... It is acquired by experience and is personal, difficult to define or circumscribe. So saying "speak American" means something different to just about everyone.

...

People who say this are looking for ...some way to exclude others from their increasingly narrow world. ..."

Since September there have been news reports indicating a trend toward a preference for narrower worlds. A customer at a popular restaurant in Minnesota was attacked with a beer mug by another customer because she was not speaking English. She was with her family speaking Swahili.

In November two male passengers attempting to board an airplane at Chicago's Midway airport were told that they wouldn't be allowed to board because a passenger was afraid to fly with them after overhearing them speaking Arabic. After some effort on the part of the naturalized citizen passengers, they were allowed to fly back to Philadelphia as they had intended to.

Will speakers of French or German in a restaurant or other public space now, in what may be a changing USA, have to contend with similar situations?

© A. Muhammad Ma`ruf

SUMMER MONTHS PAST

It's not another Spring
Full of bright fauna and flora
Misadvising what it will bring.
Do you need your fedora?

Couldn't it naturally be
Electronics off of a string
Or wayward thoughts blown free.
Passed through an ocean of Ping.

This age of science seems to go by us
Sometimes quickly, sometimes slow
As a crow on a cloud soaring high in focus.
Floating as the cloud not spying on crocus.

The above written in the North 2012 August.
Now winter is near here in Florida
To be born anew as the flora and dew.
The grey passes and leaves are a plethora of clover.
©JohnWitkowski082321012r12062115

Ping. Is a computer software to aide in connecting or knowing if connected to a network.
The word ping is also a loud sounding report as in rolling loud thunder.
Clover a sea of
And in Florida it is a cool season forage plant and looks like a sea of green.
And CLOVER IS ALSO A sold software designed for businesses to manage their
administration
Crocus - Traditionally a flower plant as a sign of spring.

WONDERINGS

How often does one think
Have you had eyes blink
A question foretold based on a dream.
Come now, what do you mean?

Fantasy/ dream/ nightmare/
Separate these words
Children's game laid bare
Again who would create something "bored"?

Where would you look?
How often mistook?
Words as to meaning
Were you preening?

Then when a child is exposed/
to games and an electronic nose
And only "wins" a black bird which crowed.
What would you propose?

In an instant a ladder up - Utilized to prater
With attendant rhyming matter
Or lakes filled with hungry snakes
To bring you down. Who lived to take?

Would you hire an opium magnate from the East?
So that we would blather
And not care or rather
Lounge in ecstasy to escape the feast.

Here once again an attendant dream
So what how and when and where?
Claims to land softly
Or as a meteor banging into earth to cream.

Round we wound and wander
Stepping stones defined
Clearly on mind - lost then found
We ponder.

Based on Dr M'aruf's prompt @ Logan Library writers "Life is a game, he said, smiling; like a life game of snakes and ladders – or ladders and snakes –. Ladders for building one up vs snakes which bring you down." 10 October 2012)

Life is a series of Ups and Downs.

Bored as in the game site- Bored.com

Children's Two Little Blackbirds. Rhyme and game.

Special Correspondent, Henry J. Winser, of the New York Times
by Ben Carlton

Henry Jacob Winser (1833 - 1896) began his journalistic career as a proofreader for Henry Raymond's *New York Times* shortly after the newspaper was established in 1851. Winser then became a reporter covering a local beat before resigning at the commencement of the Rebellion to assist Colonel Elmer Ellsworth recruit a regiment of zouaves from the fire companies of New York City. As Ellsworth's private secretary, Winser accompanied the Colonel and his men, the 11th New York Infantry Regiment, to Washington City and thence across the Potomac to Alexandria, Virginia. There on May 24, 1861, Ellsworth was gunned down by the enraged proprietor of the Marshall House for tearing down a large secessionist flag from the rooftop of his establishment. Colonel Ellsworth was struck full in the chest by a blast from both barrels of James Jackson's shotgun as he was descending a narrow stairway. Mortally wounded, Ellsworth collapsed into the arms of Henry Winser.

Returning to the newspaper after Ellsworth's shocking and sudden demise, Winser was dispatched by the *Times* to cover the joint Army-Navy expedition to capture Port Royal, South Carolina, during the autumn of 1861. Perhaps because his father had served as an officer in England's Royal Navy, Winser seemed to gravitate toward news coverage of naval affairs. Consequently, Winser sailed with the Federal fleet to chronicle Flag Officer Samuel F. Du Pont's warships demolishing the rebel-held Fort Walker at Hilton Head Island. This uplifting triumph for the Union secured an important coaling station critical for the maintenance of the Federal blockade along the South Atlantic coast.

Following the Navy's victory at Port Royal, Winser scored one of the great journalistic coups of the war with his incisive and timely reporting on the Battle of New Orleans in April 1862. Observing from a skiff borrowed from the USS *Owasco*, Winser witnessed Commodore David Dixon Porter's mortar schooners rain fire upon Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip, the nearly impregnable masonry works on opposite sides of the lower Mississippi River. These forts guarded the approaches to the South's most populace and, arguably, most important city. Winser watched as Admiral David G. Farragut's gunboats sailed upstream past the forts, dodged the menacing fire rafts, and dispersed the Confederate "Mosquito Fleet" on its way to demand and receive the surrender of the Crescent City.

Although other correspondents from rival newspapers were with the fleet at New Orleans, Winser scooped them all by paddling 50 miles downstream in a leaky dugout canoe to the Southwest Pass at the mouth of the mighty Mississippi. There he delivered his dispatches to a steamship bound for Havana, Cuba. From Havana, Winser's report of the battle was taken to New York and printed in the *Times* a full 24 hours before any other account of Farragut's great victory hit the streets.

Winser's next report was not as joyfully received at the North as the Navy failed in its attempt to reduce Fort Sumter and sail past the obstructions into Charleston Harbor. Despite having nine powerful ironclads at his command, Admiral Du Pont's attack went awry from the beginning. After an ineffective three-hour bombardment, the flotilla steamed slowly back out of range after absorbing a severe pounding from the rebel batteries. All the ships reported extensive damage while the experimental, double-turreted *Keokuk* sank in shallow waters the next day. Before she foundered, Winser had climbed aboard the damaged vessel and wrote that "she was leaking badly through several shot holes just at the water line." Charleston would defy all attempts at capture until the final months of the Civil War.

Winser reported from dry land as well as from the sea. Winser followed as the Army of the Potomac grappled with Lee's veterans of the Army of Northern Virginia during General Grant's Overland Campaign in the spring and summer of 1864. At Cold Harbor, Winser was near enough to the fighting to have his horse shot out from under him. The well-travelled Winser also covered the opening stages of the Petersburg campaign, reporting from the field with the Army of the James, as General Martindale's Division attacked the city's extensive earthworks from the northeast on June 15, 1864.

Perhaps Winser's most compelling report covered the entire front page of the *New York Times* on November 26, 1864. In that edition Winser described the intense suffering of Union prisoners released from Andersonville prison and exchanged on the Savannah River in November 1864. Winser described the heart-wrenching plight of hundreds of sick, emaciated, tattered Union prisoners recently liberated from the infamous prison pen. Winser wrote one of the first reliable accounts of the horrific conditions endured by Union POWs at Andersonville, which shocked and outraged readers at the North.

Civil War correspondent Henry J. Winser had a colorful and eventful career covering the war for the *Times*. Winser risked his life to report the truth for his

readers on the home front and was even briefly incarcerated by the Federal government for allegedly violating rules of censorship.

(For further reading, see: Andrews JC. *The North Reports the Civil War*; Lande N. *Dispatches From the Front*; Perry JM. *A Bohemian Brigade*.)

Just Write

Meetings held 2nd & 4th Wednesdays at

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

498 Beckett Road

Logan Township, NJ 08085

Phone: (856) 241-0202 Fax: (856) 241-0491

Website: www.gcls.org

Anne Wodnick, Library Director (856) 223-6000

Carolyn Oldt, Branch Manager coldt@gcls.org

Ben Carlton, Liaison bcarlton@gcls.org