

Village Voices

In Our Own Words

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JUAREZ, MEXICO by Elaine Ferrara

One fine spring day, I had the great pleasure of visiting Juarez, Mexico, just across the border from El Paso, Texas. The streets were lined with shops that had kitchen wares, hand-knit sweaters, and cheap necklaces made of stones or shells on ropes. The pungent smell of deep-fried tacos and chile peppers and onions pervaded.

My companions suggested a restaurant, “Las Comercialas,” for a delightful dinner experience. You could eat in a dentist’s chair, in a bathtub, on a throne, in a garden, or in a hunting cabin. We timidly selected a table that was in a tree trunk. A gorgeous Jungle Jim and his stuffed orangutan waited on us.

After imbibing two very potent Margaritas, I announced a visit to the facilities. Once the doorway was shut, I noticed a glorious, life-sized, Michelangelo-esque statue of David in the corner—with one difference: this one had a movable fig-leaf! I used

the facilities, and when the room was empty, I decided to peek at what was beneath that leaf.

The fig leaf moved downward easily enough, revealing a disappointing rusty hinge. It set off screaming gongs throughout the restaurant. Several minutes later, sheepishly, I exited the women’s room, accompanied by the only standing ovation I have ever received in my life—and a howling one at that!!!



APROPOS OF NOTHING by Phyllis Purscell

I want to write a big, baggy poem
as large as an elephant’s underpants.
It will be loose fitting, with room
enough
even for clichés.
This will be an easy-going poem;
it will not require that every word
“work.”

Some of them should just stand
around, smoking
other people's cigarettes.
This epic will have quotations
in languages
I don't speak and esoteric theories
by philosophers of my own invention.
I will include the real names of boys
I lusted after in high school.
Into this poem I will empty
the contents
of my junk drawer and include greasy
old family recipes.
I will slip my father's foolish
wordplay
into this enormous work:
"Eat, drink and get married." And
"I see the handwriting
on the wallpaper."
Everything that doesn't fit
in any other
poem will be found there.
I will include all the left over bits and
pieces.
I will thank everyone I ever met
for their invaluable contributions
to my life.
Then I will send this poem to *The
New Yorker*
and include their polite rejection slip
in the revised version.



COMPUTER LANGUAGE A Play in One Act by John Means

THE SCENE: *An office somewhere in North America, though I think you can rule out Vegas. A man on a tight deadline sits before a computer. He responds to computer messages as they pop up on the screen. The man seems agitated.*

MAN: Yes, I want you to save the file! That's what I asked you to do, didn't I?

MAN: No, no. I don't want to update the Operating System now. I'm busy; I don't have time to restart. Why do you always ask me this when I'm busy? Are you insane?

MAN: So Save already. Save! Glaciers move faster than you. Compared to you, snails move like cheetahs!

MAN: OK, you asked for it. You don't want to Save? Fine! It's reboot time, and we're not talking Log-off or Restart. That's way too good for you. It's the *Kill* button for you! You asked for it, and now you're going to get it. Think you're having fun, do you? Well, no more Mr. Nice Guy . . .

Computer goes blue-screen blank.

MAN: Oh, my God—what have I done? Don't go blue on me. I'm

sorry . . . I'm sorry! I lost my head.
Please don't go blue on me.

MAN: I don't need the debugger.
What's a debugger? Do you have a
debugger?

MAN: OK, OK. It may be possible to
continue normally. Your words, not
mine. Press any key to continue?
OK . . . but before I press a key, I
want you to know that I'm sorry about
shutting you down like that. I was
wrong. The IT guy from the Geek
Squad told me I should always Log-
off, but I was angry. I'm only hu-
man—sometimes, just barely. Haven't
you ever made a mistake? Oh, never
mind. Here goes. I'm pressing a key.

MAN: Thank you, thank you! I knew
we could work this out. You're the
best!

MAN: Open already—open! [*Actor
ad-libs a string of unprintable exple-
tives.*] Why can't you open faster?
Sundials move quicker than you; the
pyramids were built faster



THE MOUSE by Howard Arons

I'm a Pennswood mouse called
Nibbles.

I don't want your doggie's kibbles.
But a snack high in fat,
or something like that,
why, I'll eat it without any quibbles.

I'm Nibbles, a Pennswood mouse.

I live in the walls of your house.
My coat is gray,
My nose is black.
If you chase me away,
I'm sure to come back.
I'm a stubborn sort of a mouse.

I'm Nibbles, a Pennswood mouse.

I'd like you to meet my spouse.
She's cute and she's sleek,
and she won't need a week
to explore every room in your house.

I'm Nibbles, the mouse you abhor,
as I skitter along on your floor.
The crumbs that you leave,
I've come to believe,
are a promise there'll be something
more.



INK-DIPPING

by **Alice Warshaw**

You know when you get to that moment in third grade when everyone is sufficiently versed in Palmer Penmanship by pencil that you get to use real dip pens—with REAL ink?

It had finally happened.

The ink-filled pots sat in holes in the tops of our desks, upper right. The ink jar had a flange on it to fit deep into the desk hole, so the top was flush with the top of the desk. Built into the black Bakelite jar cap was a little rotating knob that slid the cover over the dipping hole to close it when not in use.

Strict instructions were issued about the ink being PERMANENT and what that meant. Special ink paper with nice blue lines was passed out. “And keep the ink off your fingers!”

We cautiously began, but I got distracted by the memory of a cartoon I had seen.

I wore long pigtails carefully plaited each day by my mother. They had nice fluffy paint-brushy ends below each rubber band. And yes, my braids were often pulled by the boys, but not too hard.

We had all seen the comics—probably *Henry*—where the girl’s pigtail got dipped into the ink pot by the naughty boy seated behind her.

This attention had been a secret wish of mine. I could identify. So after conferring with the boy behind me, I tipped way back in my chair to help the deed begin.

“What are you doing?” Miss Royer inquired.

It was quite obvious what we were doing. “She made me do it,” he said with a grin.

With that twinkle she got when fun was afoot, Miss Royer said, “Wait a minute,” while she grabbed a handful of paper towels, and nodding, stood by as he threaded a bundle of hairs into that tiny hole in the ink pot and wrote on the lovely paper. Wild, confident smears. By then the whole class was enjoying the drama.

With art class over, we went back to ink pen practice a little more relaxed and confident in ourselves.

Hair clean-up in the girls’ room was no problem at all. The ink washed right out.



PENNSWOOD'S ANTHEMS

by Anne Baber

On Pennswood's Tenth Anniversary, residents published a commemorative booklet. It included six rousing and uplifting songs with borrowed tunes and heartwarming—or hilarious—lyrics by Pennswoodians.

Alma Mater

(Tune: "Far Above Cayuga's Waters")

by Elizabeth Dominy

In the fields where
George School students
Learned to play the game,
Thoughtful Quakers built a village:
Pennswood is its name.
Thank you, thank you, is our chorus,
Hear our voices sing;
Hail to thee, our Pennswood Village,
Loud our praises ring.

To the glory of her Founders
Through these stalwart halls,
May each one of us pay tribute,
Where our duty calls.
As the moments, swiftly fleeting,
Ages roll along,
Many yet unborn will hail her
With a thankful song.

Just to be sure things didn't get too syrupy, Edgar Stromberg added:

Far above the Nesh-a-min-y [sic]
Stands our gracious home;
Here we live in budget splendor,
Where the rabbits roam.

Acting cheery, feeling weary,
Taking our repose;
Some of us are hyperactive,
Some are prone to doze.

Another sentimental piece uses "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" from My Fair Lady.

We've grown accustomed to the style
That makes our
Pennswood life worthwhile.

More anthems were written to encourage esprit de corps. This one, set to "Oh! Susannah," is called "Oh, You Pennswood."

Oh, I came to Pennswood Village
Having paid my entrance fee—
It's the inter-gen-er a-tion-al
Life care community.

Chorus: Oh, you Pennswood!
You're home sweet home to me;
It's a place so downright friendly
That they call you thou and thee.

Did the inhabitants of our fair community actually use the Quaker forms of address in 1990? We can't ask the lyricist. That person's name has been lost to history, as has the name of the person who wrote these lively words sung to the tune of "Camptown Races."

Pennswood Village is my home!
Doo dah, doo dah;
From it I will never roam,
Oh, doo dah, day.

Chorus: Goin' to sleep all night,
Goin' to run all day;
Hustlin' til I terminate,
Just like the one-hoss shay!

*The emotions I'm sure were heartfelt,
and we can relate to many of the sen-
timents. I can imagine a group
singing all of these treasures at one of
our talent shows. What fun!*



ANATOMY MATTERS by David Cuff

The bosom and the bottom
Oft by men are rated
But there's a curve
Underestimated

It's where a slim waist
Sweeps down to the hip
Inviting the touch
Of a lover's lip



PAINTING FACES by Glenna Follmer

It's a job unlike another
I paint the bride and then her mother.
Dad has declined; the best man's in
(A decade ago, 'twas thought a sin).

I schedule time for our first meet.
Your vision, Bride, sexy or sweet?
Colors aligned, the price agreed,
Two cases of make-up she will need.

On wedding days, most brides just
glow.
Set for prime time, it's their big show.
Some triumphant! Some are ner-
vous—
The "Rent-a-Rev" might blow the
service.

So off you go—be with your lover,
Whose hidden flaws you'll soon un-
cover,
A Lyft, a jet, then lit chalet
Your radiant look will last all day.

In years to come, it's up to you,
When radiance is not so new
and trials of life come on apace,
Smile at your day of a perfect face.



I ALWAYS WANTED A PET PIG

by Elaine Daniels

During the late 1960s, Zsa Zsa Gabor was interviewed on the radio about her pet pig. She extolled its virtues: intelligent, trainable, and fun! I was captivated with the whole picture.

Since I already had two children, four dogs and one cat, the thought of adding a pig seemed logical. Thinking it best to check with my veterinarian before going further, I called his office and spoke with his receptionist. She suggested that I call a farm vet to be on the safe side.

The farm vet asked me, "Lady, do you know how much that pig will weigh when it's six months old? Answer: 600 pounds . . . Do you know how much it will weigh when it is one year old? Answer: 1000 pounds. How much land do you have?" I replied, "one-quarter acre."

"Not a good idea."

I was very close to my brother, who was in college at the time. I told him my sad story, and he sympathized with my plight. On his next trip home, he surprised me with a deskunked skunk. We named him CHANEL.

I traveled to my vet's office to check out the new addition to the family. Carrying him in a box, I seated myself in the waiting room. The receptionist asked me, "What do you have in the box?" I replied, "A skunk." She said, "That reminds me of this crazy lady who called the other day wanting to buy a pet pig".

Needless to say, I never got a pig. But now I can picture one frolicking in Pennswood's Bark Park.

Eventually, our Doberman escaped the screened porch. Chanel went with him and was never seen again.



SCRIBBLERS' CLUB

by Kathy Hoff

Weird! As I look back, *really* weird! Of the various activities I was involved in in high school, Scribblers' Club stands out as the weird one. In the others, we actually did what the names indicated. In Photography Club, we took photos and worked in the darkroom. In Chess Club, we played chess. What do you think we did in Scribblers' Club? From the three years I belonged, I have zero recollection of doing any activities re-

lated to the description above the club photo in our yearbook, namely, “to promote interest in creative writing and conversation about literary matters.” I don’t recall that we wrote creatively or discussed any literary matters. I don’t remember anything we did in regular club meetings at the school. What I *do* remember are three field trips.

Why field trips rather than writing for a scribblers’ club? Only Miss Hofmann, our faculty adviser and trip planner, could answer that. Poor Miss Hofmann. There she sits, smiling hopefully in the second row of the yearbook photo in the heavy wool suit she always wore—trying to be just one of the girls—right alongside the club officers clad in Fifties schoolgirl standard skirts and blouses. I never had Miss Hofmann for English, nor had the other college prep girls in the club, but rumor had it that she had fallen onto the floor in class a couple of times. Pathetic! We were too young and self-absorbed then to feel sympathy, to wonder what awful chronic disease might knock a teacher to the floor. At least, we were decent (and malleable) enough to go along uncomplainingly with her trip schemes. Likely she thought the field trips would broaden our narrow experiential range in preparation for scribbling our Great American Novels.

The only writing I recall ever doing for Scribblers’ Club was an assignment from Miss Hofmann as follow-up to the first of those field trips—to the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, Connecticut, a big old white house with a fancy art collection. Evidently the trustees had hinted that the museum might be permanently closed. As club secretary that year, my assignment was to write a letter to *The Hartford Times* protesting the possible closure. I wrote quite a long adolescent-presumptuous letter to the editors in defense of culture. It was published in its entirety. Miss Hofmann was pleased. The Hill-Stead didn’t close.

As I think back, Miss Hofmann missed a huge opportunity presented by Hill-Stead. The 1953 Scribblers yearbook photo includes 34 girls, grades 10-12, most of us also in the Honor Society photo of that same year. There we were, conformist look-alikes, all bobby sox, saddle shoes, and short curls, contemplating our options for the future—marriage, of course; college—only to get an M-r-s. and a *good* husband plus enough training for teaching, nursing, or secretarial work as backup “in case he dies.” We would have benefited from knowing more about Theodate Pope, the rich woman who had left her art-rich home, Hill-Stead (with money to support it in perpetuity), as a museum where one could view Monet, Degas, Manet, Cassatt, Whistler, and other

luminaries. As a teenager, Theodate changed her own first name (from *Effie*) to please herself. After graduating from prep school, she hired teachers to teach her architecture privately so that she could become one of the first female architects in the country. For an early commission, she designed a home for her parents, Hill-Stead, now recognized for its architectural importance as well as for the family art collection. Other commissions and recognition followed. She survived the sinking of the *Lusitania*. We Fifties Scribbler girls could have done with a good dose of Theodate.

The next field trip I recall was to Hartford Hospital. The highlight?—an operating room. Screamingly bright lights. Super hot. Humid. Recently used and not yet scrubbed down. Bright blood puddles on the blazingly white tile floor. Near fainting. I was cured of one option for my future. Nurse? Absolutely not. Nothing medical. Nothing at all.

Senior year, Miss Hofmann topped the operating room. Trip number three? The Wethersfield State Prison (now demolished). We young women got plenty of gratifying whistles and cheers from the prisoners viewing us from behind bars as we paraded by following our tour guard, permitting ourselves only side glances toward the cells. The culmination was the execution chamber. We got to take turns sitting in the electric chair. Definitely

weird. Nobody would believe me if I ever wrote that I had sat in the electric chair.



HUSBAND MAKES A GARDEN

by Deidre Crumbley

Dawn came to witness
Dew came to see for himself
The deer came to eat



ACORNS

by Doug Meaker

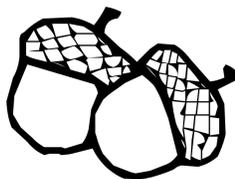
This is the year of the acorns. Even my clumsy two-footed neighbor has noticed. I don't know his name, but no matter, probably couldn't say it anyway, so I'll just call him CTF. Sometimes, when I'm provoked, I sit and call him every name in the book and shake my tail at him. It's a wasted effort; he doesn't understand.

But, back to the acorns that this tree is producing in abundance this year. I go about harvesting, but there are several

in a clump, so I select the best and let the rest drop. I'll check them out later—and if there are any worth saving, grown but not eaten out on inside by those pesky worms—I'll bury them. Meanwhile, the tree is full of acorns to harvest.

Did I mention that the best acorns are at the ends of the branches? They are, which makes getting them very difficult and daring work—kind of like a high-wire act without a net. No wonder I pick out only the best to eat and let the rest drop. The ground is littered with acorns, most not worth the trouble, but I'll go over them, and some will be worth saving.

There is one branch, which has some luscious-looking fat acorns. But that branch sticks out toward CTF's favorite spot. I don't understand; he doesn't eat the things, but he seems to regard those acorns on that branch as his personal property and chases me off whenever I get near them. Talk about the dog in the manger! Well, there are plenty of other acorns, so I'll wait until they drop. Or maybe I'll sneak in when he's not around and steal them. That'll show CTF who's King of the Nuts!



HENRY BAIRD WINS DFD

The Editors have awarded Layout Guru Henry Baird the very special and well-deserved recognition of Distinguished Finder of Dingbats. A dingbat, as we're sure you already know, is a special ornamental symbol or picture used to separate items or articles typographically. Congrats, Henry!

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