

Creatively Speaking

THE ELLINGTON WRITERS



This is our summer issue of Creatively Speaking. It is hot off the griddle, so to speak, much like the weather we have been having. On these pages you will find, as usual, a variety of short pieces from our pencils and pens that we hope will entertain you. As always, we appreciate the time you take to read and pass on some of our word kernels to one another. So without further adieu, let's get some of those kernels popping right now. Enjoy!

By: The Ellington Writers

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

The pictures in the living room of my apartment are very interesting to me. I suppose this is so because they are personal in nature comprising recollections and associations with my children and family. Because of this connection, I enjoy looking at them every day.

A first example would be of a gift given to my husband and I from our family on our 50th wedding anniversary. It is an autumn harvest picture by Peter Etril Snyder. The scenery takes the viewer away and into a colourful, simpler take on a rural farming activity.

For our 60th anniversary our family gave us three lovely pictures, one of our son and daughter, another including our son and his wife with their son and daughter and the final one of our son, his wife, their son and daughter and my daughter and her son and daughter. You are right to think that's a lot of sons and daughters, but these pictures all remind me of how our family has grown over the years.

Two remaining pictures are connected to my late husband. The first is a painting of a barn done by a neighbour's daughter who lives in Ottawa. It was given to my husband in appreciation of things he had done for her mother who lived alone in the country on a small farm.

(continued on page 2)





(continued from previous page)

The second is of my husband holding his great grand daughter who was just a few months old at the time. Both are looking at each other intently. I am fortunate to be surrounded by such memories each time I look around my room.

By: Elda Portt

THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA

My husband and I took a wonderful trip to Europe in the 1970's and one of our stops on the tour was at The Leaning Tower of Pisa. We had had a wonderful trip to that point and were looking forward to seeing the tower, but when we arrived at the site we were taken aback as it seemed much smaller than we had imagined. We wondered, at that point, if the stop was even worthwhile.

However, when we got off the bus we were greeted by a funny little man who began dancing and playing a guitar. It wasn't until we were inside that we realized his purpose. Entering the main floor we were treated to some of the most beautiful paintings I had ever seen lining the walls. It was then that the little man began serenading us with a musical history of the paintings and the structure itself.

As he sang, what had begun as a rather dull day in our minds suddenly became quite interesting and unique. While I can't remember much concerning the tower itself, I will always remember our little musical guide who brought my view of The Leaning Tower higher in my estimation than it had been before.

By: Cam Becker



IT DOES NOT COMPUTE!

If it were possible to have a magical power, I would like to have the ability to use my computer. You may laugh at this notion, but I am sure magic is necessary in order for me to get it to work properly.

I have taken a course on how to use a computer only to discover that the course made no sense when I tried to apply it to my MacIntosh. Mac courses seemingly do not exist. People I have talked to who have Macs say it is so easy to learn that you don't need a course. I hate to say it, but this is definitely not true.

On days when my exasperation reaches a peak, I find using a pencil with an eraser works perfectly thank you very much...and so does a ball point pen. In fact, sometimes I imagine my pencil or pen as a magic wand and with a wave my computer simply disappears.

By: Jane Crawford

MY REASONING CAN SOMETIMES GET THE BETTER OF ME

Many years ago, my husband and I embarked on a wonderful trip to China. While in Beijing we stayed at a beautiful Inn called Fragrant Hills, accommodation so modern that I did not feel that I was halfway around the world. I was, however, so tired from our flight and the entertainment we had enjoyed at the Hiatus Restaurant that I did feel, as I sunk into sleep, that I was visiting a world of dreams.

In the morning I dressed quickly as we were meeting several of our travelling companions for breakfast. As part of the finishing touches on my wardrobe, I reached for my small heart-shaped pendant necklace. It was then that I remembered that I had left it unceremoniously on the dresser by the door when we returned and it wasn't there. I was in a quandary as I knew I needed to report the loss, but also knew that it would involve members of the staff, most of whom were polite young men.

(continued on page 4)





(continued from previous page)

Here is where why reasoning eventually took me on this occasion. In China then, it was a time of change. Many women were not wearing clothing without some form of jewelry. I decided in my mind that possibly a young girl had received my heart-shaped pendant as a gift from her young man who might be employed at the Inn and could not otherwise afford such a purchase. My husband did not agree with my reasoning, but it made as much sense to me as anything and so we moved on.

The next day while visiting the Temple of Heaven One, I reasoned that I should take a picture of this beautiful landmark. During this time my tour group had left the platform we were on and moved on with the tour leaving me alone and lost. I began to panic as I could not speak a word of Chinese and didn't know where anyone had gone. Some time went by in this predicament, but luckily our young guide came back to find me. He scolded me and reminded me that he had warned us not to stop and take photos until given permission. We eventually were able to catch up to my husband and our group.

After this fretful experience, my small necklace didn't seem to matter as much and I came to a new reasoning. It is important to pay attention to your guide when travelling in a foreign country and you don't know the language.

By: Dorothy Hart

FAME OR CELEBRITY - A THORNY DEBATE

Are "fame" and "celebrity" status really the same thing? The Oxford Dictionary reveals very little distinction in its definitions. It defines "fame" as being known by many people for your accomplishments while "celebrity" is characterized as being, and here's the word again, "famous", especially in the fields of entertainment and sports. In my mind, these definitions tend to lend a less serious tone to the air of "celebrity." Acquiring fame could be perceived to be a more serious or noble pursuit.

(continued on page 5)





(continued from previous page)

Malcolm Muggeridge, the British journalist, was said to be the first person to use the term “famous” as a definition of “celebrity.” Daniel Boorstin, an American historian, declared it as “someone known for his wellknownness” and Neil Gabler, American journalist and film critic, touted a celebrity as “someone who has gained recognition by having done nothing of significance” (think the Kardashians and Paris Hilton).

Is it unfair though to apply this type of celebrity definition solely to entertainers, athletes and other pop culture stars? Anyone who reaches a pinnacle in any field can be said to be worthy of admiration. They can rightly be called “celebrity” by virtue of their dedication, discipline and talent. But can they be called “famous?” Do they belong on a list with the classical composers, the ground-breaking scientists, the nation-builders, the astronauts? These are people of great accomplishment whose legacy will endure for what they have done which is to increase knowledge and improve humanity as well in the process. They are the true owners of “fame.”

Consider the following: Winston Churchill was famous; the Beatles were celebrities, Barack Obama is famous; Oprah Winfrey is a celebrity, General Dwight Eisenhower was famous; Michael Jackson was a celebrity, Eleanor Roosevelt was famous; Marilyn Munroe was a celebrity. And on it goes.

The difficulty with all of these arguments and their definitions is that they tend to be based on subjective interpretation and are therefore judgmental. Who is to say who is more important than someone else? The distinctions are still very fuzzy. Is Glen Gould, by virtue of his recordings and performances, a celebrity or someone who remains famous because he was a musical genius? It doesn't really matter does it? The Word Police aren't going to cart you off for using these terms interchangeably. It is not a decision for the Supreme Court or the United Nations to ponder. But, it might be a fun exercise to discuss while we are all waiting around the dinner table for our desserts to arrive...and wondering whether we would rather be famous or a celebrity.

By: Agnes Revington





A TRAIN RIDE NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

My mind goes back to a special train ride I had in 1945. I had been in Portage La Prairie, Alberta for a week visiting relatives and was on my way back to Toronto via Thunder Bay. No problem, I thought. But it turns out there was a problem. I had been booked on a troop train of all things and I, as it turned out, was to be the only civilian on board!

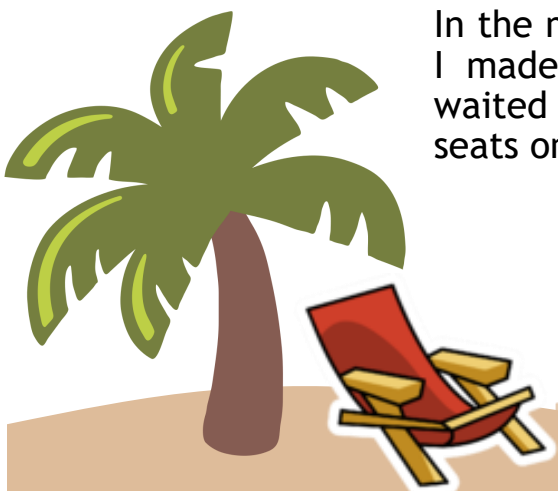
At first everything seemed to be okay. We were all sitting in our seats which allowed me my own space in relative comfort, but then came meal time. Every body headed out for a meal in the dining car which left me alone and wondering what to do. Luckily I had a nicely packed shoe box filled to the brim with food. I ate in silence as around me the porters began to convert the sitting car into sleeping berths for the night.

When I went to get ready to retire, I found that the women's washroom had been crammed full of knapsacks. I registered a complaint and was simply told to go around them. I did as required and prepared for the night. I was then ushered to what passed for upper berth #6. I made it up a sturdy enough ladder and settled in for the night, my box of food close at hand. I decided to get out some reading material before turning in.

Not long after, a face appeared over the adjoining berth. A vocal soldier began broadcasting my every move to his mates. "She is now having a sandwich guys." "Now she's reading a large volume of something." I admonished him and threatened to call the porter. After much laughter and more interference in my privacy, I finally succeeded in getting the porter. He straightened out everything and I tried to put it behind me, but I felt an apology was owed me for the individual's behavior.

In the morning everyone got breakfast again except me. I made do with what remained in my shoe box and waited around until the car had been converted back to seats once again.

(continued on page 7)



(continued from previous page)

When the boys came back there were comments back and forth as to what had happened to me the night before. Finally, a young man stood up and told the culprit responsible for my embarrassment to apologize or he would report him. Report him he did which caused the commander of the detachment to come forward from his private quarters and wring an apology from the man in question.

For the remainder of the journey, I was worried that I would be ostracized even more, but as it turned out I was able to get into a game of bridge and everything managed to smooth itself over. Thunder Bay materialized safely and I ended with an experience I would always remember.

By: Thelma Hornberger

OF TREES AND THEIR WOODEN OFFSPRING

In the summer of 1963 my job in Toronto, the city where I was born and raised, took us to a smaller city of North Bay. We had four young children at the time. My wife wept at the prospect of leaving her friends. However, as time passed, it opened up opportunities of all kinds for us.

The city of North Bay is placed between two large lakes. In summer we were able to rent cottages that allowed me to commute to my job. In time, we were able to acquire lakefront property of our own.

It was a great site with a view to the northwest. We could see the lights of the city some five miles away in the evening. At almost an acre in size though, it was covered with a mixture of cedar and hardwoods. It was a lot that others had rejected due the need to clear space for a roadway, a parking area and a play area. And, yes, there was also a large boulder blocking our access.

(continued on page 8)





(continued from previous page)

Undeterred, we accomplished the task of clearing in the first year of ownership. It helped that we had a small Massey Ferguson tractor and a gas powered rock drill won at an auction. At that time in 1970, dynamite could also be purchased at a building supply store and was used with great care. I am living proof that this was accomplished.

Today, 45 years later, the trees that surround the cottage have grown to overshadow and menace it with their size. We do have a forestry service available now though should clearing be necessary.

But what of these giant trees' offspring, in my case the furniture fashioned from trees similar to the ones surrounding our cottage. Now, my home is a unit of 450 square feet in a not for profit retirement home, but I have brought a few cherished mementos that I have fashioned from wood and which remind me of earlier times at both cottage and home.

If you look into my apartment, you would see a small wooden desk that I made in our earlier married life. And a hallway bench made in my early retirement years. Both are of simple design. The wood from the bench came from a walnut tree and log that a cousin and I cut from his yard where it had begun to poison his garden. Finally there is a third item that I have kept, a tiny foot stool that I made from clear white pine, 6 inches high and 12 inches wide, now shabby from drips of paint. Why was it kept? Because it ushered in the essential toilet training needed for each of our three sons. How could I part with that?

Cedar, walnut, white pine, and more, all combine to remind me of spaces lived in, of memories fashioned, of happy times I often return to.

By: Ken Reeves





We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the
CREATIVELY SPEAKING newsletter!

*A special THANKS to David McConnell,
for his ongoing support and volunteer
contributions to the
Ellington Writers Club program.*

For information on how you can actively become
involved with this writing program, please contact
the Recreation Department.

Stay tuned for our next edition to be released in
the Fall!

