



Lewiston Writers' Group

Newsletter

October, 2009

The Lewiston Writers' Group meets every other Monday at the Lewiston Library from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The group consists of local area residents who meet regularly to discuss and critique their writing efforts, and to exchange ideas and information about the craft. Please join us!

2009 Meeting Dates

October 5, 19
November 2, 16, 30
December 14, 28

On Writing

“One of the ways we know we are writers is when writers tell us so, pointing out a way through the dark wood.”

Writing Contests

If you would like to be added to our list to receive emails regarding upcoming writing contests, please send a request to DLSHERMAN1@yahoo.com.

Newsletter Emails

If you would like to be added to our list to receive this newsletter regularly via email, please send a request to DLSHERMAN1@yahoo.com

New Writing Workshop!

FREELANCE WRITING

Presented by Joshua Maloni

**Thursday, October 15 and
Thursday, October 29**

**6:00 to 9:00 p.m.
at the Lewiston Library**

Workshop Description:

How do I get my article published?

In this workshop, participants will:

- Discover the difference between a hard news story, a second-day story and a feature article.
- Understand what it takes to write for magazine, newspaper and online publications.
- Craft a winning query letter.

Instruction 6-8 p.m.

Questions/Answers 8-9 p.m.

Register by **Friday, October 9** by emailing

DLSHERMAN1@yahoo.com

Fee: \$25 includes both nights

Mail payment to:

Debra Sherman

967 Pletcher Road, Youngstown, NY 14174

You might be interested in some comments made by those who attended Josh's recent Journalism Workshop!

"Mr. Maloni has a lot to offer those who are just starting out as writers, and those who have been writing for some time but still need to know more about getting published. He was so courteous and very patient and thorough when he answered our questions at the end of the session."

"I'm very happy so far with Josh. He's got a great teaching background and credentials to back it up, and it shows. He's been very good about presenting the material in a very thorough and methodical way. He's using a syllabus/outline to keep on track and to give us the salient points that show why journalism is different than other forms of writing. I've taken copious amounts of notes where he has touched upon important topics/concepts that are crucial to being a good journalist. This is material I've never encountered before, and it's nice to get a knowledgeable overview

of a writing genre I am less familiar with. He's also not just an academic, but works in the field, and has numerous examples of news stories and experiences to help us understand fundamental ideas. Great teacher!"

"I'm really impressed with Josh and the workshop. He came prepared to teach content and did a great job at covering a lot of material in a short period of time. He had an outline in front of him and stuck to the program. He gave a lot of "inside" information about how newspapers work, what it's like covering an event, getting and doing interviews and more. The time went by really fast. I took a lot of notes. These workshops have been so good and the price is so reasonable."

About Joshua Maloni

Joshua Maloni began his affiliation with Niagara Frontier Publications in 2000, working as a freelance writer. Then a senior at Niagara University and the editor-in-chief of both the Niagara Index and Random Magazine, he covered the Village of Lewiston and entertainment beats for NFP. He also wrote freelance articles for Night & Day, What's Up! Magazine, Artefakt, The Word, Niagara University publications and the Associated Press.

In 2002, after receiving a Master of Arts degree in magazine, newspaper and online journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, Maloni went on to work for Greater Niagara Newspapers. At GNN, he worked the copy desk and covered sports and entertainment.

Niagara Frontier Publications welcomed Maloni back in the fall of 2003. He was hired to be the editorial coordinator – responsible for generating copy to fill four newspapers – and to cover his previous beats. He also picked up the Niagara University and local government and business beats.

In November 2005, Maloni was promoted to the positions of editorial and production coordinator and entertainment editor. In addition to his former responsibilities, he was also tasked with heading up pagination (via Adobe InDesign) for the newspaper chain, and editing the company Web site, www.wnypapers.com.

Since then, Maloni has also worked hand-in-hand with NFP interns and freelancers. He currently writes television, food and business columns. His favorite pastime is scooping the daily newspapers.

This fall, Maloni begins his second semester teaching journalism at Niagara University.

Should You Write a Memoir? (The Memoirist's Dilemma) By Matt Rothschild (Writers Digest 8/5/09)

I'm often asked why people who profess to dislike reading buy memoirs, and the answer always seems so obvious to me. As children we devour the stories our parents tell us, and even fashion our own fantasies around the stories' protagonists. As adults, however, we become more skeptical and it's more difficult to sit through a tome about wizards and alternate realities. Yet we still crave stories for inspiration—after all, who doesn't have his strength and resolve tested on a fairly regular basis?

I think that's why we turn to the memoir. In those books we can read about everyday people who are confronted with life's obstacles and come out all the better for the test. In these narrators we find our strengths, and we can put our lives into perspective.

If you feel you have a true story to tell that illuminates life and relationships and all that rigmarole, write it. But just as you wouldn't sit down to write a novel without some kind of plan (unless you didn't want to finish what you started), you shouldn't sit down to write a memoir without a plan either. To write a memoir, you must go into your project with your eyes open, because, to butcher a Bette Davis quote, memoir isn't for sissies. You will have to relive your personal tragedies and struggles, and then put that strife into words.

This leads us to the Memoirist's Dilemma. Everyone who considers writing a memoir suffers from it. Finding the story in your life that needs to be told isn't the real predicament (the stories find you), and neither is getting the words on paper—that's a dilemma all writers, not just memoir writers, face. The real dilemma all memoirists must address is whether to tell their stories in the first place. And the answer isn't necessarily as easy as you may think.

Let me give you an anecdote to frame my story: When I was a child and my grandmother said or did something publicly that embarrassed my grandfather he'd say, "You always have to advertise." It became his refrain, and since my grandmother took pleasure in embarrassing my grandfather, he used it often. I don't remember the first time I heard him say it, but I do remember it was long before my grandmother adapted and twisted the phrase to suit her own purposes. For when I was a highly troubled teenager (think Holden Caulfield with a pronounced Jewfro), she would say, "Stop advertising our shame to the neighbors."

I share this piece of Rothschild family trivia with you for two reasons. The first is that I had forgotten these catchphrases that so encompass my grandparents' relationship with each other—and my relationship with them for that matter—until after I had completed the memoir describing my life with them. This alone might suggest one aspect of a memoir's challenges: You can't say everything that happened because you might not remember everything. And the second reason is that every time anyone asks what my grandparents would have said about my memoir *Dumbfounded*, I remember their voices delivering these refrains and I wonder if I did the right thing by advertising our family's dysfunction to the world. This is what I think of as the true memoirist's dilemma: Does the memoirist have the right to tell his or her story when it involves other people?

As a memoirist, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about truth and how it plays into my work. That might surprise some given the recent batch of memoir scandals, but I think we can all agree that few of us don't know the difference between lying and telling the truth. I know there are readers and writers who take a very conservative view and proclaim that the memoirist's "tricks" (composite characters, asynchronous chronology, imaginatively recreated dialog) hurt nonfiction and are better utilized in fiction. I don't subscribe to that opinion.

Even before I spent time thinking about legality and liable, I knew I would have to change names and alter characteristics. I did not live my life in a vacuum, and while I do not damn anyone in my book, I do explore some rather unfortunate events. Changing names and using composite characters has allowed me the opportunity to write what I remember but to protect the identity of those who may have made some mistakes in their past, but who don't deserve to be beaten over the head by those mistakes some 20 years later.

Admittedly, I felt pretty good about protecting identities. What I didn't count on, though, was that I would come to wonder if that was enough. Now we come back to my grandfather's refrain about advertising. I guess it was just about a month after the manuscript had been accepted and approved by my editor and then vetted by the Random House legal team when I awoke to the sound of my grandfather's voice. It was soft and gentle, just as it had been in real life, but it was his nonetheless saying, "You always have to advertise." I sat up in bed and looked at the clock; it was four in the morning. Until that point I hadn't really thought of what my grandparents would have said about my writing a book about my family. The book was about me growing up with them (they were the only real parents I had ever had), and I hadn't thought what their reactions might be. Had I made a mistake?

When I shared these fears with some friends they told me that I was being foolish. "It's obvious that you loved your grandparents in the book. They come off better than anyone else," said one friend. Another said, "Your grandmother carries the whole book!"

And while that was reassuring—that and all of the reviews which suggested that I painted a very even portrayal of my grandparents and was harshest on myself in the book—would I have written something different if I'd had these fears before I began writing it.

After the book was published, I spoke with a writer who called me brave. She said, "I would never have had the guts to write what you did," but I didn't create *Dumbfounded* to be a tool for recrimination or blame. I just wanted to tell my story. And if you are compelled to tell yours, a memoir may be just the way to put your life in perspective.

Excerpt from Stephen King's *On Writing*

"You can read anywhere, almost, but when it comes to writing, library carrels, park benches, and rented flats should be courts of last resort - Truman Capote said he did his best work in motel rooms, but he is an exception; most of us do our best in a place of our own. Until you get one, you'll find your resolution to write a lot hard to take seriously.

Your writing room doesn't have to sport a Playboy Philosophy décor, and you don't need an Early American roll top desk in which to house your writing implements. I wrote my first two published novels, *Carrie* and *'Salem's Lot*, in the laundry room of a doublewide trailer, pounding away on my wife's portable Olivetti typewriter and balancing a child's desk on my thighs; John Cheever reputedly wrote in the basement of his Park Avenue apartment building, near the furnace. The space can be humble (probably *should* be), and it really needs only one thing: a door which you are willing to shut. The closed door is your way of telling the world and yourself that you mean business; you have made a serious commitment to write and intend to walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

By the time you step into your new writing space and close the door, you should have settled on a daily writing goal. As with physical exercise, it would be best to set this goal low at first, to avoid discouragement. I suggest a thousand words a day, and because I'm feeling magnanimous, I'll also suggest that you can take one day off a week, at least to begin with. No more; you'll lose the urgency and immediacy of your story if you do. With that goal set, resolve to yourself that the door stays closed until that goal is met. Get busy putting those thousand words on paper or on a floppy disk. In an early interview (this was to promote *Carrie* I think), a radio talk-show host asked me how I wrote. My reply - "One word at a time" - seemingly left him without a reply. I think he was trying to decide whether or not I was joking. I wasn't. In the end, it's always that simple. Whether it's a vignette of a single page or an epic trilogy like *The Lord of the Rings*, the work is always accomplished one word at a time. The door closes the rest of the world out; it also serves to close you in and keep you focused on the job at hand.

If possible, there should be no telephone in your writing room, certainly no TV or videogames for you to fool around with. If there's a window, draw the curtains or pull down the shades unless it looks out at a blank wall. For any writer, but for the beginning writer in particular, it's wise to eliminate every possible distraction. If you continue to write, you will begin to filter out these distractions naturally, but at the start it's best to try to take care of them before you write. I work to loud music - hard-rock stuff like AC/DC, Guns 'n Roses, and Metallica have always been particular favorites - but for me the music is just another way of shutting the door. It surrounds me, keeps the mundane world out. When you write, you want to get rid of the world, do you not? Of course you do. When you're writing, you're creating your own worlds.

I think we're actually talking about creative sleep. Like your bedroom, your writing room should be private, a place where you go to dream. Your schedule - in at about the same time every day, out when your thousand words are on paper or disk - exists in order to habituate yourself, to make yourself ready to dream just as you make yourself ready to sleep by going to bed at roughly the same time each night and following the

same ritual as you go. In both writing and sleeping, we learn to be physically still at the same time we are encouraging our minds to unlock from the humdrum rational thinking of our daytimes lives. And as your mind and body grow accustomed to a certain amount of sleep each night - six hours, seven, maybe the recommended eight - so can you train your waking mind to sleep creatively and work out the vividly imagined waking dreams which are successful works of fiction.

But you need the room, you need the door, and you need the determination to shut the door. You need a concrete goal, as well. The longer you keep to these basics, the easier the act of writing will become. Don't wait for the muse. As I've said, he's a hardheaded guy who's not susceptible to a lot of creative fluttering. This isn't the Ouija board or the spirit-world we're talking about here, but just another job like laying pipe or driving long-haul trucks. Your job is to make sure the muse knows where you're going to be every day from nine 'til noon or seven 'till three. If he does know, I assure you that sooner or later he'll start showing up, chomping his cigar and making his magic."

This Month's Writing Exercise:

By Judy Budnitz, September, 2009 Writers Digest

Write ten "first" sentences. Don't write (or think) beyond that - simply write ten openers as quickly as you can. Be as playful or nonsensical or abstract as you wish. It can be surprisingly liberating to write a "first" sentence when you know you don't have to commit to the idea for another 20 pages.

Put the sentences aside and look at them again later. You'll see how even the simplest sentences, seen in isolation, become freighted with implication and portent. A single sentence can set off a cascade of questions you can spend an entire story answering. (Here's an example: "He thought about cutting off the other leg." What leg? Why? How's he going to do it? What happened to the first leg he cut off? Why's he still thinking about it and not doing it - what's stopping him? Who is this guy?)

You might find it helpful to look at the opening sentences of some of your favorite stories to see some examples. One of my favorite examples is from "Big Bad Love" by Larry Brown: "My dog died."

This Month's Writing Prompt

Write a short profile of someone you admire and remember vividly.

Guardian Angel Story, continued

In the July, 2009 Newsletter, the Lewiston Writers' Group presented the first chapter of "Guardian Angel" – an ongoing work of fiction created by members of our group who were daring enough to try their hand at contributing to a story whose chapters are each written by a different author. Yep, you read that right – each chapter of the story is written by a different member! A special thank-you goes to Heidi Walcutt, whose creativity and enthusiasm for writing came gleaming through when she came up with the original 'guardian angel' idea. We'd also like to thank our editor, Heather McEntarfer, for volunteering to fine-tune our work. The fourth chapter, written by Wayne Hilton, follows. Look for a new chapter each month!

Episode 4 By Wayne Hilton

It was Harold's boss. Harold collapsed his head against the back of his seat, unbuckled, and exited the Angelic Training Simulator. Fiona, Alice Rivlin's very appealing, sweet-scented angel, glided past him and winked with a smile. She shook her head in amusement as she continued on.

"Harold, snap out of it!" His boss floated beside him, his wings folded crossly. "It's a good thing we had angels on the ground to intervene. You could have thrown the whole cosmos into chaos. By chance it was only a minor injury. No fatalities."

Harold hung his head. "Sorry boss. I got...distracted."

"Of course you did. But we talked about that. These human feelings you're experiencing aren't real. Pride, vanity, and avarice, attraction for another angel, are all remnants of old human memories. It's like losing a limb and trying to scratch an itch that's not really there."

"I know, I know." Harold balled up his fists at his side. "I really fell into that one, didn't I?"

"Well don't beat yourself up over it. Just try a little harder next time. And stay focused! You're new at this, Harold, and bound to make mistakes. That's why we don't let angels solo until they're equipped for it." Harold's boss clapped him on the wings. "Besides, Fiona *is* cute and *does* smell nice. Now get back in there and give it another try."

~

They carried George's stretcher across a cow pasture, and lifted him with care over two wire fences, reaching the airport road where the ambulance was waiting. Alice walked alongside holding George's hand, a pleasant distraction from the dull ache growing in his left leg. He knew he'd broken something, and was aware that his endorphins had kicked in to mask the pain. George didn't care at the moment, Alice was holding his hand. As they loaded George into the ambulance she leaned in close and whispered,

"I'm going to run and get my car. I'm so sorry this happened, George. I'll be right behind you."

She had slipped out of her harness and jump suit at the landing site and hastily thanked her tandem instructor before hurrying to George's side. Now, keys in hand, she bolted for her blue convertible in the parking lot. A minute later Alice pulled up behind the waiting ambulance.

What was I thinking? Why can't I meet a nice levelheaded, intelligent guy who isn't on a collision course with the grim reaper? George is an all-right guy, I guess. Kinda' cute, charming, a little bold. I mean he followed me to a hospital just to ask me for a date!

“He stalked me to an ICU unit and talked me into jumping out of a perfectly good airplane.” Alice smiled. “Oh God, now I’m talking to myself!”

~

Inside the ambulance the paramedic noted George’s blood pressure on his clipboard with his left hand and felt for his pulse with his right. “How are you feeling, Mr. Hardy?” George was oblivious.

Alice was wearing jeans and white sneakers. A delicate silver chain and locket hung from her neck in the vee of an aqua-colored tee shirt. And George was fixed on the image of soft rose petals clinging to her face on the day they met.

I can’t believe I made such a rookie mistake. I only glanced up for a second or two. At least it seemed like only a few seconds. I should have been more focused on landing and less worried about waving to Alice.

“Next thing I knew I saw the tree line and it was too late to turn into the wind.”

“Did you say something, Mr. Hardy?” The paramedic rapped on the open door to the cab of the ambulance, signaling the driver to roll out. “Relax, Mr. Hardy. We’ll get you to the hospital in a flash.” The paramedics’ radio crackled to their dispatcher.

“Tri-county 4-2”

“Go ahead, 4-2”

“En route to County General. ETA twelve minutes.”

George, peacefully enraptured by the calming blue light above his stretcher, bolted upright instigating a wave of pain down his left leg. He winced as one of the paramedics tried to settle him down.

“St. Luke’s. I’ve got to go to St. Luke’s!”

“Sir, County General is closest and we need to get that leg treated as soon as possible.”

“Please, I’ll do anything. I’ll pay you. Just take me to St. Luke’s instead.” George leaned back and closed his eyes in frustration.

Lord I know we don’t talk much, and I certainly don’t deserve it, but please, get me to St. Luke’s. I’ll do anything you want. I’ll change my ways. I swear to... you.

~

Harold sat cross-legged atop the ambulance as it sped along the asphalt road. With great amusement he smiled as wide as any angel could.

Gotcha’.

...to be continued

Work of Our Members

Leap of Faith

By Paul B. Dominick

Dylan bounded into the living room wearing a patch over his right eye with a mask and cape like Batman. He had three eye surgeries at Children's Hospital before his fourth birthday. His hero was not the dark and melancholy Batman from Hollywood but the campy and comic Batman from television. He ran through the house with a cape flying in his wake and sang his own theme song. With arms outstretched, in full stride and an even fuller smile he sang, "na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na, BATMAN!"

Because Dylan had only one useful eye, his balance and field of vision were compromised. His enthusiasm and fearlessness led to many falls, cuts, bruises, and emergency room visits. During one visit to Mercy Hospital, only a few blocks away, a conscientious nurse asked his father to leave the treatment room so that Dylan could be questioned about the possibility of child abuse. His repeated visits for stitches and sprains from running into door jams, table corners, dresser edges, misjudged stairs, open cabinets, discarded toys and up-turned rugs fit the profile of a child in peril. His father sat in an adjoining waiting room. He stared out at the parking lot and thrummed his fingers.

"Has your father ever yelled at you?"

"Yes."

"Does your dad ever swear?"

"Yes."

"What words does he use when he's angry with you?"

"God damn it."

"Were you ever spanked?"

"Yes."

"Where did he hit you?"

"On the bum."

Common sense prevailed that day. Father and son left the hospital with only a receipt and some dressings.

Dylan's father often jury-rigged contraptions to help his son with coordination. On one trip to the lumberyard he found a severely warped two by four over twelve feet long. He made a balance beam that was so uneven and unsteady that his wife would not speak to him for days.

She said, "What are you thinking? You'll just frustrate him."

Within two months Dylan could jump onto the wobbly balance beam held about six inches off the ground by four wedged-shaped two by fours, run down its entire length and jump off the other end. His father's eyes watered each time he watched a performance.

The two of them loved to go to the movies. Dylan's adhesive-patched eye and glasses with one opaque lens were invisible in a darkened theatre. Sometimes they sat so close to the screen that their heads were forced to move side to side like spectators at a tennis match. Sometimes they sat near the rear of the theatre and allowed the scenes to parade in front of them. Regardless of their vantage point, Dylan's father encouraged discussion. His dad always asked about details in the film and Dylan knew the ride home would be filled with

pointed questions.

"In which scenes was it raining?"

"Did Cato attack from the right or the left?"

"What color was the door to the house?"

"Did the inspector have a moustache?"

"Were the curtains in the bedroom open or closed?"

"Which eye had a twitch?"

As Dylan grew he merged his two media heroes into one character. His fascination with Peter Seller's manservant, Cato, from the "Pink Panther" was combined with television's Gotham City caped-crusader. Dylan loved to ambush his father by leaping out unexpectedly and yelling, "BATMAN!" He hid in closets, behind chairs, in kitchen cabinets, under cellar stairs, behind bushes and behind the bathroom door. He always surprised his father. He knew his dad's routine and hid himself accordingly.

The upstairs stairway was the most disconcerting site for an ambush. Dylan waited on the landing twelve steps up from the dining room. As his father walked past the archway at the base of the stairs Dylan launched himself with outstretched arms and yelled, "BATMAN!" His battle cry was not sounded until after he propelled himself towards the target. If his father failed to respond or if his father flinched, even for a second, Dylan would fall about six feet to the hardwood floor.

"What if I miss him?" he thought.

"One of these days Dylan might place too much trust in me."

The Cato-like Kamikaze attacks continued until Dylan discovered BMX bicycles and began jumping off mounds and picnic benches in Krull Park. Shortly after he moved onto skateboards and even more challenging venues which, once again, required numerous visits to emergency rooms for x-rays and the occasional cast. Dylan needed the excitement and challenge offered by New York City and he moved there immediately after college. He eventually bought a high-tech Italian motorcycle and traveled all over the world as the computer geek and video engineer for the Blue Man Group. Dylan was projecting visual images and special effects onto arena sized screens from Los Angeles to the Lincoln Center, from London to Lisbon and from Singapore to Tel Aviv. At a party in Greenwich Village Dylan met a beautiful young eye surgeon wearing designer glasses. One of Dylan's childhood friends decided to get married at a resort in Thailand. The wedding gave him and the woman who could see into his soul their first opportunity to travel and vacation together. A few years later they decided to celebrate the place where their love first blossomed by choosing Thailand for their wedding as well. Cato no longer wore a mask and he and his ladylove lived happily ever after.

Reflecting on One's Own Name

By John S. Bis

You have to wonder what some parents were thinking when they named their children. I'm sure we've all come across people with unfortunate names, or nicknames that came from the combination of their initials. I'm reading a novel right now in which the lead character, a male, is called Lucy. This resulted when his first grade teacher called his name out in class but, unfortunately, shortened Louis to Lou and also used his middle initial, "C". So, Louis Charles Lynch was announced in class as Lou C. Lynch. Of course all his classmates looked on in wonder at this young boy who was called, Lucy!

In my case the name I was given was not a problem. I was named after my father, who had the common name of John. My difficulties began, I suppose, when my parents decided to call me Jack. Why was I called Jack? I never really asked. Perhaps it was just a way to distinguish between my father and me. So, among family members I was called Jack. I really grew up as Jack. From the earliest shards of my memory, I was Jack. My parents, my grandparents, all the aunts and uncles, the many cousins, and even family friends, they all called me Jack. And to all of my neighborhood playmates I was Jack.

Then, at the fateful age of 6, I started grammar school. Into this new arena of existence I was thrust, not as Jack, but as John. I was duly registered at SS Peter and Paul Grammar School as John. My mother gave no hint to the nuns that I was ever called anything but John. So, to those twenty-five first grade classmates, and all those that followed, I would forever be known as John.

At the time I don't think it ever occurred to me (and here I'm not sure of the "me" to which I refer) that each morning when I arrived at the school building Jack stayed outside while John went in to class. The simple truth is that John went to school and Jack didn't.

Jack's neighborhood playmates went to different schools so there was never a meeting between Jack and John. Jack played on the sidewalks and porches, ran in the gangways and through the alleys, he rode his bike, and he shared play with Bob, Tom, Carl, and Bernie. John's classmates weren't part of this group. The closest member of his grammar school class lived more than two blocks away. And, in a Chicago youngster's neighborhood of friends, two blocks away was a different world.

But neighborhood worlds change as youngsters get older and Jack's play area had moved outward into the local park. It was here, during a 3rd grade winter, that Jack and John had a first time encounter.

The park provided a large ice-skating rink and it was a popular play area. On this particular Saturday afternoon, Jack and friends are playing a game of hockey. Jack is skating across the ice when, from the sidelines someone putting on skates yells, "Hey, John, I didn't know you could skate." Jack looked across the ice and saw one of his 3rd grade classmates. He waved back.

Tom yells across the ice to Jack, "Who's that?"

Jack yells back, "That's a guy in my class at school."

Tom skates over to Jack and says, "He called you John. Who's John?"

Jack begins to skate toward the puck saying, "That's what they call me at school."

There is no response from Tom as he skates back into the game. It seems children have a way of ignoring the strange ways of the adult world, and what could be more adult than school.

Until then, I was who I was in those two different places, no identities questioned. But the places had begun to overlap. I'm not certain how the 8 year old "me" thought about this two name issue, or even if it was a concern.

As I got older my parents continued to call me Jack, except sometimes in her later years, my mother would refer to me as John. My younger brother still calls me Jack, but my even younger sister calls me John. I suppose the more important question is what do I call my self? And the answer to that seems to be, it depends. But, doesn't much of life function that way?

Fall's Illusion

By Gail Carson Rosenberg

Flashy as a gypsy,
or some harlequin queen,
Bawdy and full bosomed,
smell her pungent perfume,
and yearn to rendezvous
In some secluded place;
But she is just a tease,
dancing wildly away.

Dressed to kill in gaudy colors
crimson, chartreuse, burnt orange,
She is jangling her tambourine,
clapping copper castanets,
Spiraling and whirling,
faster and faster swirling,
Throwing gold leaves like coins.
Tossing caution to the wind,
Sorceress that she is,
wrapping round herself a cape
Grey as bonfire ashes,
Autumn goes up in smoke.

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www.firstwriter.com
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www.writersjournal.com

The Front Porch

By Charlie Woolcutt

The first day of school, my mother walked with me to show the way.

Across 11th Street, up Lockport Road, cross South Avenue, a long block, turn the corner. There was Cleveland Avenue School.

Mom introduced me to the Kindergarten teacher, then left.

My schoolmate Anna lived in a corner house with a porch. On nice days, I would walk home with her and play on her porch for a while. Both my parents had jobs, so no one expected me to hurry home.

Anna hadn't been to school for a week, so when I saw her on the porch, I stopped. She was playing with a doll. I asked her why she didn't have to go to school. She said her mother kept her home.

While we talked, I climbed the railing and started to walk around, I only held on around the posts. Anna watched me balance for a bit, then said, "I have to stay off the railing for a while, 'till I heal up."

She lifted her dress; she didn't have any underwear on! "I fell on it last week and cut myself," she said.

She had a terrible scar where her private parts had been torn off! I was sorry for her, but I didn't want it to happen to me.

I ran home, and when my parents came up the stairs, I told them. My mother can usually fix anything.

My father just laughed, but my mother was angry. "Stay off that porch! And don't talk to that girl! I'll see her mother."

Seventy-some years later, I see Anna in Tops Market. She is a small, dark-haired, older woman now. She sees me, but doesn't recognize me.

[Lewiston Public Library](#)

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If you would like more information regarding the Lewiston Writers' Group, please contact Debra Sherman at 754-8408 or email DLSHERMAN1@yahoo.com.

Men's Work

By Debra Sherman

Yesterday I installed my new kitchen floor.

More than a year has passed since I purchased a box of those 12x12 square stick-ons at Valu; I was delighted that I found a pattern of pink roses and green leaves to match the set of dishes I inherited from my mother. Soon after the purchase, however, life got in the way and I never got around to inviting my step dad over to help me install the new floor.

A month ago, the tenant in my duplex gave notice and moved out, so I've spent the last four weeks refurbishing that apartment. I painted the entire interior, took louver doors off, painted each set out in the yard, then re-installed them. I took the back door off and trimmed it with an electric saw to eliminate its sticking, and even managed to install a new vanity and sink in the bathroom, plumbing and all.

"She's been working her ass off," my boyfriend told his mother. "No, I mean it," he continued, "She's been doing real hard-ass work – men's work."

So yesterday, while I was cleaning out my coat closet and came across the box of kitchen floor tiles, I decided to use my newfound, "I can do hard-ass men's work" confidence to go ahead and install the floor. No boyfriend and no step dad to help... just me and all the tricks I've learned during the seven years I've spent renovating my duplex. I carefully laid each piece, making sure all the flowers faced the same direction, and carefully measured and cut each square to make them flush with the perimeter. I tore off the old trim and replaced it with new, and, even though I considered cheating, I did in fact pull out the fridge, covered that square, and pushed the fridge back in.

My floor is beautiful, and I'm proud to say its professional-looking work. All straight lines, no uneven pieces, and flawless trim.

My friends and family continue to be shocked at the enormity of the projects I regularly take on.

"Debra Lynn, you've been this way since you were two years old," my mother once said after she realized my moving my concert piano clear across the room had been necessary in rearranging my living room furniture. "You never take no for an answer," she said, "You always find a way. How did you move that piano?" she asked.

I replied with an exhausted but proud, "One inch at a time."

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