

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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“How Do I Start Writing?”

By BILL BOYS / MICROSOFT COPILOT AI

I ASKED MICROSOFT'S AI COPILOT, “How do I start writing?” It shot back this decent list of steps. (#4 applies to pieces that might be great for *One-Page Stories* and #10 is important, too.)

Starting your writing journey can feel both exhilarating and daunting. Here are some steps to help you begin:

1. **Set Your Intention:** Reflect on why you want to write. Is it to share your experiences, entertain, or explore creativity? Understanding your purpose will guide your writing.
2. **Choose a Medium:** Decide whether you want to write a memoir, a short story, a poem, or something else. Each medium has its unique style and requirements.
3. **Create a Writing Space:** Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can focus. Whether it's a cozy corner, a coffee shop, or a park bench, having a dedicated space helps.
4. **Start Small:** Don't overwhelm yourself with a full-blown novel. Begin with short pieces. Try writing a paragraph about a vivid memory
5. **Use Writing Prompts:** Since you're interested in memoirs, consider prompts like:
Write about a life-changing event.
Describe a person who influenced you.
Recount a childhood memory.
Reflect on a lesson you've learned.
6. **Set a Schedule:** Consistency matters. Set aside specific times for writing. Even if it's just 15 minutes a day, regular practice builds momentum.
7. **Silence Your Inner Critic:** Don't worry about perfection initially. First drafts are meant to be messy. Allow yourself to write freely without judgment.
8. **Read Widely:** Read memoirs, essays, and other genres. Observe how authors structure their work, evoke emotions, and use language.
9. **Join a Writing Group:** Connecting with other writers provides support, feedback, and motivation. Attend workshops or join online communities.
10. **Embrace Revision:** Writing is rewriting. After your initial draft, revise, edit, and refine. Seek feedback from trusted friends or writing partners.

Remember, the most important step is to start. Put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard, and let your stories unfold. **Happy writing!**

Best Day Ever

ELISE BOWMAN — DERWOOD, MARYLAND

MY OLDER DAUGHTER AND I HOPPED ON A PLANE at BWI Airport to fly cross country to visit my younger daughter, who was living in Long Beach, California. This was a rare and long-awaited girls-get-away weekend before my younger daughter moved back east.

To treat ourselves, we booked the high-speed ferry trip to Catalina Island. My daughters were busy whispering together on the hour-long boat trip. My understanding was that we were just going to have a spontaneous day of exploring the island, but once we docked, the girls were walking determinedly into Avalon, clearly looking for a specific address. It became clearer and clearer that some secret plans had been made. I was getting anxious about what to expect and a little angry to be kept in the dark. I don't like surprises!

Eventually, we found ourselves at a glass door in a side alley that held a large map of the island. Trying not to spoil the surprise they had clearly planned for us, I just glanced at the map out of the corner of my eye and saw the word ZIPLINE!! My stomach lurched! Didn't these girls know me any better than that?? I dread ziplines – but of course I will do anything for them, especially since they clearly felt they were treating me. The two of them continued to whisper as we headed off to our newly discerned location – letting the word 'canyon' slip out, only to confirm my understanding of the ziplining 'fun' ahead of us. I walked slowly and with dread in each step.

Another half mile of walking finally led us to a steep slope of beautiful green grass rolling down to the Pacific Ocean. We headed inland and up the slope but much to my surprise there sat a man with a falcon gripping the leather glove on his arm. Surprise! We weren't scheduled to fly through the air but to have a few wonderful hours learning about raptors which in turn flew to *us*! Between the relief of being wrong about our destination (no zipline!) and the joy of checking-off a bucket list item (falconry!) with two of my favorite people, this turned out to be the Best Day Ever.



Saved by the Bell

By JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

DURING MY MANY YEARS OF EDUCATION, I can only remember one young female teacher and that was when I was in high school. All the others were middle aged or old. I'm sure there were young teachers entering the New York City school system but none showed up in my section of the Bronx. Some of the teachers I was exposed to had short fuses.

It was 1948 and I was in the seventh grade at Mosholu, (a local Indian tribe name), Parkway Junior High School, (JHS 80), but everyone just called it Eighty. One day our class had a period in the school library. We didn't have study periods so in lieu of that, I guess they just sent us to the library.

The teacher in charge of that room was a Miss Gannon, who we all knew was not to be trifled with.

Some of the details are a little vague, but I recall that the period was drawing to a close and we were standing, probably waiting for the bell to ring so we could leave Miss Gannon to herself. Something must have upset her, surprise, and she started acting like a drill sergeant, directing her venom at Norman, one of the nicest kids in the class. He never gave anyone any trouble and I wish I had been closer friends with him so that I might still be in contact with him.

Norman had his left hand in his pocket, as he always did. It was deformed, being the size of an infant's. We kids all knew it, even though he tried to keep it hidden all the time but occasionally we'd catch a glimpse. Obviously, Miss Gannon was not aware of him problem as she demanded, "Take your hand out of your pocket." He didn't, and I'm sure he never would, no matter what was said. He just looked at her, not saying a word.

She asked him several times – it was more of a demand. I was embarrassed for him and thought about raising my hand, saying I had to go to the bathroom, which required a pass from the teacher. My plan was to tell her to desist and to tell her later what the problem was. Being rather shy, I was afraid to do it but thankfully, the bell rang ending the standoff.

I'm sorry to this day that I didn't do something.

Cream Puffs

LINDA L. SHIVVERS — DES MOINES, IOWA

THE CHEESE CAKE/CREAM PUFF STORY by Mary Dempsey in the December issue reminded me of the cream puffs I used to make. Big ones and little ones. I filled them with homemade chocolate pudding.

Some years ago, long ago, Mel and I lived in a two-story house. It was a rental. The place was old and a bit leaky, and drafty. A nice gal had the top floor, entered by a backdoor stairway. We kept the inside staircase locked. We had the ground floor. It jutted out from under the top floor, hence the leaks. On a rainy day, we had buckets in the living room. We didn't have the most proactive landlord for fixing things, and he used the basement as storage for his carpet store next door.

There was a solarium at the back of the house; windows all around, great view of the woods and creek. There was a steep hill, which was great for sledding in the winter. Our Dachshund, Sandy, got to go down on a sled with us, ears flapping. Sometimes we sent her down by herself on a piece of cardboard. Mel would be at the bottom of the hill to catch her. She loved it.

The house was okay for a starter home; except for the mice. They “owned” the house because they were everywhere. Lots of places for them to squeeze in.

Oh, yeah! . . . The cream puffs. One time when I was going to make them, I was about to put the baking pan in the oven. I was bent down enough so I could be sure to get the pan in level. I saw this black thing stuck to the back of the oven. I yelled, “Mel, I need some help!” I’d used the oven the evening before to make meatloaf. I thought I’d baked a mouse, too.

Turned out it was a cream puff that had gotten stuck to the back of the oven the last time I’d made them. Didn’t see it when I put the meatloaf in. So, no mouse, and fresh, yummy chocolate filled cream puffs.



My First Car Was a Lemon

BY TOM DUFFEY — REYNOLDSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

IT WAS A 1938 PLYMOUTH BUSINESS COUPE. It was the original six-cylinder, just a two-seater. I paid \$100 from my paper route money, the middle of the summer of 1959. The seller lived across the street from our house and I would see it parked in their driveway every day. He used it as a drive-to-work car.

I repainted it. Having no access to a sprayer, I used a brush very carefully so as not to leave any brush strokes. My choice of color was lemon yellow. Also, I used a fine brush to cut in around the windows. The red tire rims really set off the yellow. It had a working ash tray which afforded me a private spot to indulge in that bad habit. I was 16 at the time.

Some cars are looked upon as all hood, such as the Studebaker Avanti. This baby was all trunk. We could load five guys into it and drive into the drive-in theater, wait for dark and unload. There was another time I was at



An image from the web, not quite the right shade of yellow that I painted mine, but it will do.

this drive-in with a friend. It started to rain so I had some string and we tied a length on each wiper. Larry would pull his side and the wiper would work on both sides. I would then pull my side for the return swipe, to clear the windshield so we could see the movie. I even had a way of driving with the window down and arm pressed against the side of the car to accentuate the arm muscle in a tee shirt.

I didn't get to drive this buggy to school in the fall because the motor blew up. I saved money like mad to buy grandpa's car which was a very cherry 1954 Chevy four-door. I got fender skirts to dress up the sides, smoothed and leaded the hood ornament, scrounged in the junk yard for extra teeth for the grille and a genuine Earl Scheib \$29.95 paint job.

This became my cool car until I joined the Army a month out of high school and sold it to a neighbor still in high school.

Hello, Korea

By JULIAN HUTCHINSON — SPARTA, WISCONSIN

AT 10,000 FEET, THE TEMPERATURE WAS COLD inside the C-47 cargo plane. About 25 of us GIs were strapped to metal ribs, sitting on our duffle bags. My mind whirled, realizing I had left Japan and would soon be in Korea – the land of siff and gonorrhea. Also, in 1952 it had been the fun place where North Korean and Red Chinese were on the loose, killing and raping.

Two weeks earlier, I had climbed up the gangplank of the USS *Gordon*, a hastily built troopship lying in the 'Frisco harbor. The crossing had been uneventful, if that is what you call the tail end of a typhoon that struck the 4,000 GI passengers with chronic seasickness. Sixty-foot waves washed over the top decks. Many were afraid they were going to die! Then three days later, hoped they *would* die!

The C-47 landed okay, and for the next sixteen months, I joined the detachment of 75 combat engineers providing water, sewer, and electricity for Koji-Do Island – the home of 100,000 North Korean and Red Chinese POWs. We also pulled guard duty for the powerhouse, which produced energy needed by all the flood lights around the compounds. I served in the water section and supervised a crew of 10 South Korean laborers. We provided water for all compounds, plus a small detachment of MPs (military police) and 5,000 South Korean troops who guarded the horde of POWs. What! Only 5,000 guards for 100,000 POWs? Oh, woe is me!

For better control, the 100,000 were broken up into smaller compounds. On the average, individual compounds contained 500 POWs. Occasionally, water lines or faucets would fail, and I'd take two laborers into that compound and make repairs. Of course, I had to surrender my weapons to the MPs before entering. The Army felt I was expendable, but not my Colt .45 and Thompson sub-machine gun! The POWs could get me, but not my weapons!

So, it can honestly be said many times I've been surrounded by 500 fanatical Red Chinese while carrying only a pipe wrench!



Dinner with Don Rickles

BY AUDREY HARKONEN — COLUMBUS, OHIO

YEARS AGO, A LOCAL THEATER OWNER AND FRIEND invited me and my boyfriend to a concert. The invitation also included dinner with the “headliner” afterwards. The Front Row Theater was a popular Cleveland venue for musicians and stand-up comics. The star of the show that evening was Don Rickles. And although I have long forgotten his performance, I’ll never forget dinner with Don Rickles.

A group of a dozen friends gathered at a restaurant after the show. I was seated at the end of a long table with my boyfriend who was quite a bit older than me. Rickles and his wife Barbara were seated to my left. Rickles just finished over an hour on stage, and he must be exhausted, I thought. But I watched as he quickly scanned the table looking for his “stooge.” I was in my mid 20’s and the youngest person there so clearly, I was it!

“So Sweetheart, what do you do”? he said just loud enough to catch everyone’s attention. He was starting his “shtick.” I leaned towards him and quietly said, “Well, I’m a cardiovascular nurse at the Cleveland Clinic and finishing my bachelor’s degree at Case Western Reserve University.” Instantly, Rickles turned toward me, his eyes widened, shoulders softened, voice lowered and said, “Really? What’s your major? Was it hard to get into? Case, it’s kind of like Ivy League, isn’t it?” It was as though the curtain dropped on the “performer” and this lovely, sweet man and I were deep in conversation. Rickles was asking about colleges on behalf of his son who was just entering high school. He wanted his son to consider careers other than the entertainment business. He also heard that it was best to start the college search early.

With our foreheads practically touching, we spoke softly while the rest of the table stared with puzzled looks. Then I noticed Rickles looking behind me. A young busboy had recognized Rickles and was staring at him. Instantly, the “shtick” began. I don’t remember all the comments/insults thrown the young man’s way, but I do remember the trademark “Hockey puck” remark. Then, to my amazement, Rickles knew when to stop. He extended his hand and said with a wink, “Good job, kid.” The table erupted in applause.

Despite being known as the Original Insult Comic on stage, Don Rickles was a very dear, sweet man.

Why Does Time Go So Slowly . . . Or Does It?

BY CHUCK STRAUSS — NELSON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE KID, IT SEEMED LIKE forever for things to happen, like Santa coming with gifts, or the Easter Bunny with candy, or the summer trip to the West Virginia State Parks. But then, when we got to the state park, right after we got there, the next thing was packing up to return home. Too fast!

Then, in the eight years of grade school, it took forever for a week to pass so we could do Saturday things. High school was a little different — but sometimes it still took too long to wait for a delightful scheduled event to happen. By the time I got to college, I began to realize I didn't have the time to do stuff I wanted, because other things that had priority (yes, I learned that word) had to be taken care of before I went to that picnic or the movie or party.

Around then I started figuring out that the eight years in grade school, four in high school and now, four years in college passed relatively quickly. Sigh. Then, in “adulthood,” with marriage and raising three boys, most of the time there was not enough “time” to do the things I wanted to do.

Now I am a Certified Geezer on Social Security and Medicare, with sixty-two years of marriage. And I wish Time had not passed so quickly — but, I finally figured out that at my present age, each hour is one of about 45 million hours I have lived. So, each and every passing hour is a smaller and smaller portion of the time I have spent on Mother Earth. Thus, each hour is an increasingly smaller portion of my life.

If you line up 45 million dominos, and look at them from one end, before you start pushing them over, they seem to take a lot of space. Then, touch the first one and Lo! There they go.

And I have figured that each domino has 60 minutes which make each minute VERY small. Just like the dominos, small things go by very fast.

Or do they?



Carpe Diem – Or at Least the Minute!

By KATHLEEN J. ZWANZIGER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

“TAKE EXTRA FOOD.” “TAKE LOTS OF WATER.” “Fill up with gas *this morning!*” For days we had been hearing “doomsday predictions” of what the traffic would be like if we were planning to drive to see the eclipse on April 8, 2024. Why would anyone want to be caught in traffic for hours? Turns out, I did!

After a quick lunch, I started my adventure. After arriving at my destination, I checked my phone for messages. “Are you going to drive some place to see the eclipse?” – from my older son, whose family had seen the total eclipse in 2017. “Just arrived.” I took out my eclipse glasses and took my first look. Already perhaps a quarter of the sun was covered. Holding one pair of glasses over my eyes and another over my phone lens, I took a picture – and got an excellent shot of the underside of my hat’s brim!

I sat at the base of a light pole, waiting. I was not disappointed. I thought of all the possibilities: seeing stars, drop in temperature, birds quieting. I did notice the temperature drop and the sky get a little darker. But I was surprised by how light it was with just a sliver of the sun showing. I heard cheers in the distance just at the time of totality. Removing the eclipse glasses, I could see the corona, a “star” (probably Jupiter) off to the right, and an orange and yellow “sunset” near the horizon, silhouetting three people. Thoughts of Jesus’ crucifixion occurred to me. Was that, too, an eclipse? No, that lasted three hours,



not three minutes. Inexplicably, there was a lump in my throat and tears on my cheeks. I briefly thought of the millions of other people waiting and watching the same event as the sun and moon continued their paths – and then it was over. The special glasses went back on, the sky became brighter. I wiped the tears away and got into the car. Why did I want to see totality? Perhaps to be at one with so many people across the United States. Perhaps it was just too close to pass up the opportunity. Maybe to witness an awe-inspiring phenomenon. My adventure lasted a mere 3 hours; the memories will remain much longer.

Inexpensive Stays When Traveling

BY BILL BOYS – COLUMBUS, OHIO

WHAT IF YOU COULD BE A GUEST in a private home for a night or two on your travels, with a private bedroom and (usually) with a private bath; enjoy a breakfast with your host(s) in the morning; and then go on your way? Cost: \$15 a night for one, \$20 for a couple. That's what the Evergreen B&B Club network offers, if you are eligible. *Eligible?* Yes, you have to be 50 or older, you have to be able and willing to *host* guests in your *own* home, and you have to pay an annual membership fee. (\$75 at this time).

One of the questions on their website is: "Do I have to host in order to join?" The answer is: "Yes. This is the beauty of the club - giving and receiving of hospitality. All members must be able to offer warm hospitality and accommodations. You're only expected to host when it's convenient with your schedule."

My wife Ruth and I joined in 2003. We used it as guests about 20 times over the past 22 years. (I wish I had kept better count of that.) And we have hosted 219 times. (We keep guest books, so I know that number's exact.) We enjoyed meeting the variety of folks we hosted over the years. Never in all that time did we have any guests we regretted. On the contrary, there were many of them that we would have liked to hang out with longer, but off they went when their stay was over. There are a few we visited repeatedly, for example, Chuck and Jane Strauss in Virginia, who lived conveniently halfway between our home in Tennessee and a family reunion in Pennsylvania. Jane has since passed away, but we stay in touch with Chuck, who has even contributed one-page stories to my amateur journal of the same name. Here in Columbus, since our home is in the German Village historic neighborhood, I got into the custom of making German pfannkuchen, with bratwursts from Schmidt's, for breakfast. It makes such a presentation! What fun to share it with our guests! (Even if it falls quickly.)



Pfannkuchen, just out of the oven.

But, we're aging and preparing to move to a retirement home. So, we regretfully resigned. But we certainly thank them for making all these wonderful social experiences possible over all these years.



Contributors Welcome

You needn't be a NAPA member, but members are definitely invited.

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT? Your own original prose, unpublished elsewhere – fiction or non-fiction. Personal narratives, anecdotes and memoirs especially welcome. Other genres considered except poetry.

HOW MANY WORDS? About 350 to 400 words. (Less if you have an image to fit in with your story, and I encourage them.)

CAN I GET SOME EXTRA COPIES FOR MYSELF? Certainly. Just let me know how many you would like. (Free.)

WILL I GET FEEDBACK? I'll share with you any feedback I might get from others about your story.

WHERE DO I SEND MY SUBMISSION? To Bill Boys, email at williamboys@att.net.



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