

Lake Logan Fearless Writers Retreat Anthology

October 2010

“I think it's important for us to carry the magic and inspiration of Lake Logan beyond those fleeting moments in the circle.” - Dawn Lawson

“Remember to suspend judgment” – Peggy Tabor Millin



“Dedicated to my sister writers who modeled courage through shaped words and flaming marshmallows.” – Kimberly Smith

Contents:

The Thing to Remember prompts – Deborah, Kathy, Dawn, Kimberly

The Todzilla Collection – Joanne

Photo Prompts – Tina, Kathy

Heart Strings – Betsy, Nancy (Bunny), Dawn, Kimberly

Characters Set the Stage –Dawn, Kimberly, Deborah

Miscellaneous Musings –Tina, Dawn, Nancy N

Odes to Lake Logan Fearless Writers – Betsy, Nancy (Bunny)

Thanks to all the contributors, Betsy Fletcher, Dawn Lawson, Deborah Cantrell, Joanne Costantino, Kathy Boswell, Kimberly Smith, Nancy Dunlop (Bunny), Nancy Newlin, Tina Seeling

And much love to the other participants at Lake Logan 2010, Beth Dewan, Jenn Wheeling and huge gratitude to Peggy Tabor Millin for bringing us together within a sacred circle.

Assembled by Kimberly Smith, December, 2010.

Writes from the prompt, "The Thing to Remember"

The Thing to Remember
Deborah Cantrell
Lake Logan Writing Retreat
October 2010

"Dixie! Come here, Dixie! Come here right now! Leave that man alone!" Lynn Garner yelled gruffly at his big red Doberman as she bounded down the street to meet the postal truck. Dixie stopped and spun around. Her elegant, pointed ears drooped as she trotted back to the front porch. "Sit! Stay, Dixie! Don't chase the Post Man!" Lynn said as he grabbed her long muzzle and looked her in the eyes. "You sit here till he leaves. Don't you know better than to tangle with a postal worker? Dobermans are supposed to be smart."

Lynn stretched and took his crystal old-fashioned glass back inside their lavish antebellum mansion in Houston's Historic District. "Sharon!" he yelled up the winding stairs with the plush yellow runner. "You ready yet?"

"In a minute. I just have to put Newton back in his cage. He wanted to help me dress. He walked up my back and zipped me up! Didn't you, sweet-birdie-who-loves-him-mommy?"

"Yeah, I bet he did," muttered Lynn. "You've got that damn bird spoiled rotten, Sharon. Come on, we're late."

"Sharon! Get the phone!" Newton squawked in Lynn's exact raspy, deep voice. "I'm not here! Sharon, get the phone! It's for you. Sharon, get the phone! I'm in the tub! Sharon, get the phone! I'm not home! Sharon, Phone!"

"Lynn, you set him off. He's flying around squawking about the phone again." Sharon hollered down the stairwell. "Newtie, come here, sweet boy. Come to Mommy."

“I love you, bab-eeey!” Newton chimed in Sharon’s sweetest voice as he lighted on her outstretched arm. Mimicking her West-Texas drawl, Newton trilled out, “Sharon’s a babe! Nice Butt, Sharon!! Hair looks good. Sharon’s a babe! Did you take the trash out, Lynn?”

“Sharon, put the damn bird in the cage and let’s go. We are missing Happy Hour at the Club. Tell the bird I already took the trash out.”

“Lynn, if and when Newtie ever grows his feathers back, we can leave him loose in the parlor again. He is going through his embarrassed stage.” Sharon said as she came sweeping down the stairs in her black sequin body suit and pink ostrich cowboy boots. “I had to stuff him in his cage in the bedroom, and I think it made him mad.”

“He’ll live,” growled Lynn. “I need a drink.”

They slid into the Mercedes and drove the three miles downtown to the Houston Petroleum Club on the penthouse floor of the Exxon Building. They had a few drinks, a lovely dinner, danced a slow dance, and had a few more drinks. “Let’s cab it home, Sharon. We can get the car in the morning.” Lynn said.

The taxi drove up to their big white house surrounded by the tall wrought-iron fence. The lights were blazing on both floors. They had left them on in their hurry. “Lynn, why isn’t Dixie outside?” Sharon asked. “Where is she? My god, I hope no one stole our guard dog. You would think a Doberman could take care of the place for a few hours.”

As they unlocked the front door and stepped inside, they heard Lynn’s gruff voice upstairs as Newton screeched, “Sharon, put the damn bird in the cage! Let’s go! Don’t chase the postman! I’m not here! Sharon, get the phone! I’m in the tub! Dixie, come here! Sit! Stay! We’re late. Damn-it, Dixie. Sit! Stay!”

They went upstairs. There was Newton, hairless and squawking, swinging on his perch. And there was Dixie, sitting tall on her haunches, ears forward, starring alertly at Newton, as his head dove

under his wing to chase a mite. Dixie saw Sharon and Lynn and moved ever so slightly, beginning to rise. Newton's head popped out from under his wing, he stretched his scrawny neck and squawked in Lynn's gruff voice, "Damn-it Dixie, Sit! Stay!" Dixie's rear hit the floor again. She tilted her head, whimpered, and stared up at Newton, ears drooping.

Sharon looked up at Lynn. "The thing to remember, big Man, is to take this damn smart dog out before we leave!"



The Thing to Remember
Kathy Boswell
October 2010

The thing to remember...just one thing to remember? I guess I have spent much of my life trying to forget. To forget hurts or failures or jealousy. So now I'm told to remember? To not shrug my shoulders and say "well it's in the past." Is there one person to remember? I guess Mom or Dad or Sister Dorothy who hugged me when I said I was going to marry a rich man and give all his money away. Childhood friends, some just vague memories not even remembering a face or even worse seeing them on "Facebook" and thinking he or she is in that face somewhere. But one thing to remember? I don't know – I could write about the thing to remember is to try and be kind and don't turn out like Grandma. Try to help and learn to help yourself. Don't build that lump under the carpet to be tripped over every few years. The lump is gone and the carpet is smooth – well kind of smooth – there is one little thing that gets remembered everyday at least once but then the inside voice, tiny but now strong, says it does not matter, you are strong, you are fine. So you go on and don't remember. I sometimes ... oh I don't know, keep the pen moving but this is one of those prompts that could take you right down into where you never ever really want to go and I ask why should you if you are fine. So I guess, so I guess, so I guess the thing to remember is the Golden Rule, right. The thing to remember is to please re-use the towels and recycle the cans and turn off the water and do everything for the world – it just gets very, very tiresome when sometimes you just want to be that person who lives her life the way she wants to, cares for the people she wants to and the hell with all the rest.

The Sea
Dawn Lawson
Lake Logan,
(Prompt – The Thing to Remember)
October 2010

The thing to remember was that each of the three sisters had her own special beach towel for their annual summer vacation in Ocean City. Kath's showed fish, swimming away in the sea. And so she did, perhaps drowning of liver failure from the lithium along the way—we don't know. Somehow, despite all the sudden moves of our childhood and my travels since, I retain her now-ragged towel, which occupies a special place in my linen closet.

Sue's featured a seahorse, bobbing up and down in the same place, just as she stayed on with Mom, drinking with her, then recovering with her, for 25 years. She bobs next to her to this day, supplying Mom with the beer she began drinking again at the ripe old age of 80.

My towel pictured the license plates of all 50 states, perfect for me to memorize as a hedge against the voices saying I should never have been born—external first, then so successfully internalized, but perhaps now being sent back outside where they belong, on this sheet of paper, or many sheets. Will it take whole forests of paper to absorb them? Are there enough forests?

Perhaps that's why I went East, to the land where bamboo grows a couple of feet an hour. The United States were not far-flung enough for me; the beach towel too narrow to depict the distance I needed to get away from the voices. Speaking and thinking in another language, a difficult language, kept them at bay, until I returned to the States, and Harvard admitted me to a PhD program. The game was up, then, I knew. The impostor had been revealed and needed to be obliterated. A stomach pump, charcoal, and a fellow patient, Tricia, with whom I somehow could be myself, helped me survive. Until, that is, I had to be readmitted a year later—after being awarded a prestigious fellowship—only to learn from a nurse that Tricia had hanged herself, right there, in the shower, even while on suicide watch.

The Thing to Remember
Kimberly Smith
October 30, 2010

The thing to remember, when darkness grips
you,
When you don't care anymore,
When life has left your heart
When it all closes in around you
And television your only escape

Is that the sun still circles,
Lower, lower, higher, easterly and north.
The moon waxes and wanes.
The dandelions bloom and wither.

The squirrels' nests rebuild
The hawks come back in June
The snow melts, the Earth softens
The comfrey reappears

The life soon over releases
And new ones are born –
The dilution ratio of new souls
Always wins.

The thing to remember,
This too shall pass.
Find your center
And take a rest.

When you hate yourself and
Hate your job and hate your life
And even your wife,
Find your way outside to

The overgrown lemon balm – Melissa
The crinkled lavender – Lavandula
The tenacious comfrey – Symphytum
And the leggy St. John's – Hypericum

Touch their dry and dark leaves
And feel your own soul there
And remember the chi waiting deep
In their roots.



Find your prana, blended with theirs.
Still, small, a truth-toned voice
Of Life and Love and Laughter, forgotten
Just for now.

Until time comes, with longer days
And warmer nights
To rise again from the
Deep moist womb of Earth
Holding you until you can again hold yourself.

The thing to remember is that spark,
That never dies, but often hides
So many ways to shine and easily cover,
It's always there.
Three-fold – will, wisdom and love,
Connected to All

Remember the Sun – outside, deep in the core,
And far away.
Beyond Orion, beyond Sirius,
Holding the spin of the galaxy, the Central Sun,
Connected through crystals and visions and
sound,
The depth of Being, of I Am, of Now.

The Big Sun
That spins the world and the stars
And the tiniest seed
Is there too inside of me.

The Todzilla Collection

Leaving the Leaves
Joanne Costantino



Every year I have the same argument with my family. Every year, as soon as the leaves begin to change color, one would think we are expecting a blizzard. The anticipation of how much of a mess the leaves will make is unbearable to them. They linger by the windows, gaze out and watch for days into weeks, seeing and monitoring how the

leaves are falling and wonder out loud how and when the leaves will be cleaned up.

Every year I say the same thing, “Leave the leaves.” Their reaction is the same every year too, “WHY?” more of whine than an inquiry.

I never understood the purpose of raking up dying leaves only to expose the drying grass. It seems to be a dumb and wasted effort.

Autumn is my favorite season and personally, I have always liked the look of a pile of leaves. I like the crunch under my feet as I shuffle through a nice pile of tawny crisp leaves just waiting and ready to be pulverized for their end purpose of food for the earth. Then there’s the smell of moldering leaves, musky and woody, to remind you that it’s almost finished its life cycle and ready for the last stage of their seasonal performance. Why not wait until the show is totally over?

The best collection of falling leaves is under our maple in the back yard. Every year it is a spectacular transition of dark green to blazing red to a brilliant yellow that almost glows in the sunlight. When the leaves begin to lazily waft to the ground they go from the yellow to a rich tawny gold where

they collect in an almost perfect ring around the base of the tree, like a skirt that's just dropped from a waist.

This perfect pile calls for some action. I got out the little used leaf blower and made a pile of all of these leaves on one side of the tree. The family is all in a giggly dither thinking that finally we clean up the leaves.

Once the pile is created I gathered up my camera and my Todzilla granddaughter. Once we're at the pile of leaves I say to her, "Go ahead, jump in", and she did.

"NO", hollers her mother, "She'll get dirty."

Well, THAT was my intention and I was going to make sure that it happened. She needed to get dirty. She needed to let loose. I don't call her Todzilla because she's a peach of a child. Her happy moments are few and far between.

As she jumped in, she giggled, and mentioned how it smelled good. Yep, I was on to something, I thought to my not so humble self. "Go ahead, dig down, throw up handfuls of leaves", I tell her.



First she looks to her Mommy and then spots my camera. Ooo, a chance for a Kodak moment. Todzilla loves to have her picture taken.

As I take up the camera she has found rapture in throwing something up and down and around and not getting yelled at for it. She threw those leaves like it was confetti over and over, digging down to the ground and throwing as much as her little hands could shovel up into the air, up and over her head. When we were all done I insisted we leave the pile where it was where they molted over the winter.

Spring cleanup revealed a giant bare spot on the lawn where the leaves were left. I was reminded that this was my fault for building the pile and leaving it.



I whipped out the pictures of the captured rapture and reminded everyone what a great time we all had. The grass will grow back.



Mornings are Usually Bad
Joanne Costantino

Mornings are usually bad, especially weekday mornings. My bones hurt and my brain is muddy with thoughts of waning dreams. I lumber into the shower whining to myself that it sucks to get old, it sucks to have to get up early, everything sucks. Sometimes I say to myself, “Self”, I say, “suck it up”. And then I trudge through my morning routine of getting ready to take on another day.

Some days the household is quiet. Those are the days when a few of us non-morning people are moping around in our own self-pity that yet another day is once again beginning. Some days the household is a cacophony of individual needs for attention all at once, mostly from Todzilla Meghan. She can really foul up an already fouled morning. It’s her gift.

This particular morning as she’s getting ready to leave for daycare she urgently knocked on my bedroom door. I keep it closed to mute some of the cacophony. KNOCK, KNOCK, knock, KNOCK!

“Yes?” I respond, trying to sound more pleasant than tolerant.

In bounds little Todzilla, with pep in her step, chipper and just so stinking happy.

“Grammy, can you fix this?” she is dressed for the day ahead of her and sporting a green foil party hat and holding out to me a matching party horn that is unfortunately bent.

“What do you have on your head?” I ask.

“A pawrty hat.” She answers with an edge of “master of the obvious” attitude. Sooo much attitude for a toddler.

“Who’s having a party?” I ask.

“Matthew.”

“Matthew?”

“YES!” she exclaims.

“Why is Matthew having a party? It’s not his birthday.”

“Because he uses the potty!”

“Ah, a Potty Party.”

“YES!” She squeaks. As if to say, “Who hasn’t heard of a Potty Party?” There’s that attitude again.

I tape up the party horn, adding to the cacophony that only this little person can generate. She is grateful.

Okay, some mornings aren’t so bad.



Sanctuary
Joanne Costantino



We are hiding in the office, the only sanctuary we have to hide from the little 4 year old tyrant we call Todzilla. Her name is Meghan, my granddaughter. This office is by no means sound proof, but we have the means to distract ourselves from the ridiculous temper tantrum that has grown into a full blown war of wills. My

husband and I each sit at our individual computers and alternately tsk or giggle at the battle going on upstairs between a four year old and her mother. This temper outburst at bedtime isn't new, but it has escalated over the last 2 weeks. And it has begun take on the character of a dreaded nightly event.

We have one those multi-generational households that have become pretty common. Along with Mommy, included in Todzilla's domain is her 14 year old sister and her dad, whom she leads around by a firmly planted virtual ring in his nose. Dad will do almost anything to keep Toddy quiet. Truth be told, Daddy and sister have a lot of ownership in Toddy's willfulness. But we won't point any fingers here. PopPop and I try to stand on the sidelines with things of this nature.

Tonight is Day 3 of a concentrated effort on Mommy's part to follow through on hints and tips she's read from other parents who have suffered through the wrath of willful toddlers and some sage advice from the veteran Mommies (me, Aunts, the babysitter), to "simply" constantly re-enforce that 'no means no', just keep putting her back in her bed, don't negotiate with her, try not to lose your cool, try putting her back in a crib, advice and suggestions ad-nauseum. Tonight, Daddy slipped out to stay out of the fray. He is no good at consistently non-negotiating and/or trying not to lose his cool. He

would rather his pretty little girl have some type of diagnosable behavior disorder than accept the fact that she is a brat.

Yes, she is a brat. Meghan can wow you with her intelligence, she can spell her name, write most of the alphabet, count correctly to 15 and she comprehends the value of numbers to 10. She is a very bright child. But she is also disruptive and willful, mostly when Mom and Dad are around. Dinner is always an emotional treat, unless she's having her demanded cereal, dry, no milk and then 'requests' her ice cream.

As the Grammy, I find all this crap tedious, the child is in control of the household. She knows where my threshold lies, and so, deals solely with her parents, as it should be, they are her parents, but she is dealing with them, not the other way around. I felt bad, for about 10 minutes. Then I hear the constant repetitive mantra that goes on nightly: Mommy, I want to ask you a question, Mommy, I want to ask you a question, Mommy, I want to ask you a question, Mommy, I want to ask you a question; Mommy answer me, Mommy answer me, Mommy *A N S W E R* me; I want Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy; I want Tayler, I want Tayler, Tayler, Tayler, Tayler, Tayler, Tayler, Tayler; Mommy, I want to sleep in your room, *P L E A S E*, PLEASE, Mommy, PLEASE, Mommy, PLEASE, Mommy. I'll spare you the rest of her repertoire. But all this is accompanied with a tantrum of banging on the wall and door of her bedroom. She's 4.

The first few times she began this, I felt bad for the hysterical mess she could work herself up to, then one night in a weak moment of exhaustion, Mom said, 'Just come lay down on my floor'. Todzilla's response, "YYYEssss." The crying and tears stopped like a light switch was thrown. From there it just got worse. She had won the battle and waged war on compliance and bedtime. Did I mention she is just 4?

Now it is 2 hours later since Mom has begun the Bedtime Battle, and Todzilla is asleep. This is a little progress. Last night's battle lasted 2 ½ hours, and the night before that it was 3+ hours. Through

the last three nights we've hidden in the sanctuary of the office. Tonight I wrote this recap. If tomorrow follows suit, I will probably be taking sanctuary again in my own little corner in my own little room.

We're all tired.

Let's hope she sleeps through the night. Tomorrow is another day.



Photo Prompts

Prompt: photo of couple with nametags at park bench
Tina Seeling
Lake Logan
October 2010

It was the 18th Annual McHale Family Reunion. It was always a nice event, though Sadie, and this year was no different though it would never be quite the same after Aunt Eleanor's passing. We placed her chair in the same spot we always had, under the big shade oak. We used to joke and call her Queen Ellie and say that she was holding court. She liked that. When I went to pay my respects her "throne" (as we called it) was already filled with flowers, notes, some balloons and a child's jacks and ball. I left her a slice of my famous caramel apple pie.

The sack races were just about finishing up. I was glad that I'd changed into my flats after church as it'd rained on Friday and the ground was still a little soft. Cousin Monica and I had taught the young girls a new jump rope rhyme, as we did every year, and Sissy and the other girls and we had laughed and joked until our sides nearly split.

I noticed a man in a natty white straw hat sitting off by himself on a bench. "Who's he?" I asked Sissy. Not sure, I went over.

"I'm Sadie McHale. I don't think we've ever met."

"Bobby McHale," he said, "it's a real pleasure. No, I'm sure we never have. I haven't come to these reunions before. Heard about them, but never came. Always felt kind of funny."

"Well, that's just silly," I said. "Who's your mama and daddy?"

"My mother's name is Veronica Ransom. My father is Richard McHale. Richard Sheldon McHale."

"Are you sure you've got the right reunion? Because that's my daddy's name but I don't have no brother named Bobby. I'm an only child."

“Well then, I guess...maybe I do have the wrong reunion. But it’s been a pleasure to meet you anyway” he said, as he gently shook my hand. He rose from the bench and began to pad down the gravel path.

“Hey, wait a minute” I said. “Where’d you say you were from?”

“Akron, Akron Ohio.”

Huh. My daddy used to go on business trips to Ohio when I was little. I felt sick and excited at the same time. I studied the shape of his nose, his eyes, the curve of his chin.

Shame on daddy, I thought. But it felt like Christmas morning!



Kathy Boswell
Lake Logan
October 2010

Ok so there's two naked mannequins walking down the street – sounds like the beginning of a joke.



Three guys walking along in suits and ties – on their lunch hour or after work?

They are compelled to look – then they, or at least one is compelled to make a comment – maybe he says look at the stick up her ass and how he dated someone like that...

Maybe he says he wishes his wife had tits like that...

Or he sure would like long legs like that wrapped around him...

What causes this with men?

Three women walking down the street might look, measure themselves against the mannequin's figures and worry inwardly that they didn't start that diet this week or maybe that they should start working out but that's it.

The three men will joke and laugh, even the guy on the left who looks uncomfortable. But they will all stare and their eyes will do the up and down slide of which some men do better than others. Some are shifty and barely noticeable and some are slow and lecherous.

Then the conversation will stop and one guy will say “how bout them Yankees” and that will be discussed until the next set of women come along – real or otherwise – for them to make a whole new set of comments about.

Men...can't live with them...can't live with them...

Love them but beware how the male mind thinks or doesn't think most of the time.

Just mostly making sure the penis is adjusted and comfortable.

I remember my husband once saying to me right before he fell asleep...”my nose is cold, my balls are warm and I love you”

I guess that about sums it up.



Heart Strings

The Fire Starter
Betsy Fletcher
October 28, 2010

The Fire Starter

You said: "I am a fire starter."
In deed.

I was, keeper of the same,
Sparked quite innocently
By a twinkle snap in those clear blue eyes
Fanned by your worldliness & charm
Ignited by your zest for life
Smoldering with raw attraction
Held, for a time
Fire ring intact

Wind shift from the west
Sparks flew
Who knew?
Had eyes been open,
The charred swath from the blaze's former path
might have been obvious
I did not want to see
First bride suicide,
Offspring off put
And heart shards of others, glittering embers
gone cold
Blown away as ash

I could only see the ring of fire contained,
Only the ring
Me, the tender.

You said: "I am a fire starter."
In deed.

That westerly blew, blew - spewed
And flared the blaze
Far beyond the ring
Sparks on the wind,
Now, a wild fire out of control
Path of destruction inevitable

Where will it end,
Now that there is no one there to tend?

You said: "I am a fire starter."
In deed.

Wildfires burn out
And when this does
The arsonist will be left-
A young boy in his BVDs
Shivering, cold, alone, ashamed and afraid
Insecure as ever
With no match

Remember Me
Nancy Dunlop
Lake Logan
October 2010

“Remember me.”

“Yes, I will. Lord will I remember you. I see you in the mirror each morning as I brush my teeth and each evening before I go to bed. It has been twenty some years - let’s see 1986 to 2010 - 24 years and it seems like last week.

When Dad and I travelled to put a wreath on your grave just before last Christmas, I remembered the strong, healthy boy who was under that cold, cold ground in those beautiful Kentucky hills.

The wreath was specially made. I phoned a tree farm. The woman who answered asked what size wreath was needed. I didn’t know. Of course I wanted the best for you, not too fancy but with pretty greenery and with a simple red bow at the bottom. She asked what the wreath was for and I told her it was for your grave. She said she would make it herself and would have it ready for me to pick up by 1 pm the next day.

Full of anticipation, I drove alone down narrow country roads, past farmhouses and barns like pictures on Christmas cards. I turned in at the Tree Farm sign and drove along a windy dirt road to the red barn where the wreaths were made.

I opened the big wooden door. The warmth hit me in the face. There was a pot belly stove, a dog and a cat, an old man and Mrs. Green, the daughter who came every year from North Carolina to help her father make wreaths.

I didn’t have to tell her who I was. “Here it is. Do you like it?” She said.

“Oh, yes. Thank you so much.” How fresh it smelled, how simple and beautiful it was with a red velvet bow at the bottom and three clusters of red berries in the greenery. It was perfect.

I hurried home to show Dad. He agreed it was perfect and we carefully put it in the trunk of his car to drive it to Kentucky the following day.

We left early in the morning as the weather was deteriorating and high winds and snow were predicted. I laid the wreath on your grave. I remembered you. I missed you. I felt close to you.



The drive back to Tennessee was gorgeous. The sun was setting behind the mountains. I took a picture from the car window to remember the beautiful day. The predicted bad weather held off until we were safely home.

Where I Was When (prompted by Billy Collins, “The Day Lassie Died”)
Dawn Lawson
Lake Logan,
October 2010

Death has a way of etching the everyday into our brain. When the call came from the neonatal intensive care unit to tell us to come to the hospital right away, Magic Johnson was on TV announcing to a packed press conference that he was HIV-positive. It was November 7, 1991. Alan and I weren't ordinarily ones to watch much television, still less so while eating dinner, as we were at that moment, but during the five short days of Alistair's life, any distraction was welcome. Alan didn't even know who MJ was; I knew but didn't care much by then. Even nineteen years later, that he lives on rankles.

Silly, isn't it? To retain a seemingly useless fact that actually does come in handy on occasion—when doing the *New York Times* crossword puzzle or watching *Jeopardy!* But the coup of knowing the public significance of that date is outweighed by the pang of remembering why I know it. On November 8, I experienced the renewed shock of grief that occurs when the blissful forgetfulness of sleep is replaced by conscious recollection. Consulting the Yellow Pages for Crematoriums, I dialed a number that produced a voice of exquisitely sensitive kindness, even at 5 AM. “We don't charge for infants,” it explained.



Leaves, a List
Kimberly Smith
October 27, 2010

Lessons planned
Leaves of pages
Piled erratically
Notes on green and red tabs
Yellow college-lined pad

Leaves, partly torn
As ideas and thoughts and images
Dance rapidly through the cortex

Leaves outside float
Colored yellow, soon brown
Catching light
Catching eyes
Catching attention
Leaving the lessons
Partly planned

Leaf of the dining room table
Mid-pended
For homework not dinners
Too many dinners left
Uninvited, uncooked, unfinished
As curriculum calls
And tests are graded
And no one is left behind

Piles ply my persnickety
Apprehension
Must complete, must apply
Leaves of paper rustle
As I regain
My focus

Outline leaving me dry
How to make it rich and
Real and responsible?
Sigh

Students come
Students leave
What life have I enriched?
What one have I enraged?

Thoughts wander to
Wanda Wilson
Ten years, suicide
Why I still ...?
I don't know
Her leaving,
Indelibly marked
A legacy she may have wished
Yet escape, leaving,
Her only option
Could I have ...?
No, of course not.

Thoughts float on to
Those letters of thanks
As those graduating left
And returned
Nostalgic

For my leaves of syllabi
And piles of homework.



Characters Set the Stage

Mortimer Was Miserable
Dawn Lawson
Lake Logan, October 2010

This piece was prompted by a photograph. Ashley Walker, Mortimer's first incarnation, was the result of a photo prompt at Lake Logan in 2008; the resulting piece appeared in the December 2008 ClarityWorks newsletter.

Mortimer was miserable. Why, oh why, had he given in to Grace's insistence that he attend this "Lose Your Inhibitions and Anxieties" camp? He knew why, of course, but now that he found himself there doing—well, attempting to do—the first mandatory exercise, he realized that nothing, NO THING, and NO PERSON—personne, as they say in French—was worth this misery.

The assignment was to take a bicycle ride through unknown terrain, carrying no provisions and without a map or a watch. How long would the ride take? Not to worry—it would be clear when to stop, the instructions had said. How could it possibly be clear? Naturally, Mortimer hadn't ever considered following the camp's instructions to the letter. Or, to put it more precisely, he'd considered it only long enough to divide them into those he would and would not follow. Predictably, Grace had said that he would get the most out of the program if he surrendered to it entirely, but his many interrogations of her about its content over the past 18 months—ever since the day she'd said he had to enroll in it or lose her—had convinced him that he'd be able to get around some of its strictures without anyone being the wiser. Grace had been ecstatic when he'd allowed her to draw the conclusion that he would accede to the requirement to surrender his watch entirely for the duration of the camp. But she of course didn't know about the teeny-tiny timepiece he'd acquired at an electronics shop in Akihabara on his last trip to Japan. It came with a pair of boxer shorts whose elastic waist featured a tiny slot into

which you could slide the watch and a transparent flap through which you could glimpse the time on it surreptitiously while appearing to be merely pulling up your pants. Previously Mortimer had worried that he had let Grace know too much about his tortured relationship to time, but if she thought that he could surrender his watch completely, he had obviously maintained more of his reserve than he had feared.

And so he found himself on a bicycle in the country, hemmed in by a stone wall on either side, with no water, no flat tire repair kit, no emergency food source, no wallet, and no ability even to see beyond the first bend in the road. You'll know when to stop, my eye! He would never have known without the aid of his ninja watch. Not that he'd even consulted it as yet—he was still at the starting line, where the "Lose Your Inhibitions" bus had dropped him and the bike. Holding the bicycle across his body, one hand on the handlebars and the other on the seat, he contemplated whether he was ever going to proceed at all. The sun beating down on his back intensified his fear of being without water.



Prompt: Kill and Lamp
Kimberly Smith
October 29, 2010

"Kill the lamp," Johnny whispered.

Clyde reached over and turned the knob on the kerosene lamp.

They held their breaths, listening hard.

"What?" Clyde whispered.

"Hush!" Johnny said, finger to his lips. He pointed upward and slowly circled the cabin toward the corner where his rifle leaned. He grimaced as he cocked open the chamber, willing the device he be silent. He reached for two shells out of a nearby box, slid them into the gun. He slowly shut the chamber by placing the barrel under his arm, trying to muffle the sound. He looked up at the ceiling again and tiptoed to the fireplace, not yet lit for the night.

The December chill was beginning to creep into Clyde's hide and he shuddered. *Johnny's had some bad whiskey again*, he thought. There was absolutely nothing out there, and certainly nothing on the roof. Just to be sure, he leaned toward a window and slowly pulled aside the curtain for a peek. Nothing to be seen -- no moon, no stars, just dark gloom. He looked upward as far as he could. Nothing.

Johnny knelt by the fireplace, pushing aside last night's half-burned stump. He leaned into the ashes and peered up the flue.

"Johnny," Clyde whispered, "there's nothing out there you crazy coot."

Johnny glared back and waved his rifle, fingers at the ready. "Of course there is!" He hissed. "It's Christmas Eve!"

Prompt: Speech Therapist
Deborah Cantrell
Lake Logan 2009

“Hullo.”

“Hello. This is Amy Wilson. I am the Speech Therapist at Edgar Allen Poe Elementary School. I would like to speak with Mrs. Eunice Jefferson, please.

“This be’s her. Dis de school callin? Lawd, lawd, what that chile gone and done now? Do he need a whoopin? He ain’t got no daddy, so he don’t get enough whoopins. ‘Spare the rod and spile the chile.’ You send him on home, and I’ll whoop him.”

“No, no, no, Mrs. Jefferson. Shi-thead is fine in school. You see, we are taking the children on their first out of town adventure study next week to the art museum in Little Rock. His teachers thought I should call you and perhaps discuss the way he spells his name.”

“Say Whut?”

“Well, we are making name tags for all of the children, you know, so we won’t lose them, and the problem is that he insists on spelling his name “S-H-I-T-H-E-A-D”!

“Sho nuff? Well, he be’s right bout how he spelling his name, fer as I can tell.”

“Of course, ‘Shi-thead’ is a fine name, and we all know how to pronounce it around here, but strangers really don’t, and you can see the problem it might cause.”

“Well, hisn’ Momma say she named him after his daddy! Folks do’s that all the time.”

“Yes, of course, ma’am, but I just wondered if, maybe for this excursion to Little Rock, we might use one of his other names?”

“What be wrong with ‘Shi-thead’ fer a name?”

“Nothing, nothing exactly—except the spelling-- which sounds derogatory and demeaning if pronounced, ‘Shithead’. You don’t want people calling him ‘Shithead’, do you? The children will all learn it, and we won’t be able to stop the teasing and...”

“Listen here, Teacher Lady, it makes me no never-mind. Ya’ll do whats ya’lls needs to do. I give that boy three mo’ good Bible names: ‘Shadrack,’ ‘Meshack,’ and ‘Abednego’. Ya’ll can pick one and put it on hisn’ nametag. Please yo’selves.”

“Mrs. Jefferson, it is only because we don’t want to lose him, and that the children might tease him, and that strangers can’t pronounce it that I am calling...”

“But, I tells you this fo’ sure, Miss Teacher Lady, if’n you lose Shi-thead in that fancy art museum in Little Rock, and you starts callin him, he may not answer to Shadrack, Meshack, or Abednego. He may not answer lessen you shout out hisn’ real name. And when you be’s shoutin out ‘Shi-thead’ , you needs to be thanking me, cause I be’s the one who stopped hisn’ momma from namin’ him ‘As-sho-le’!



Miscellaneous Musings

Day Two
Tina Seeling
October, 2010

Today at close of morning session, Peggy read us a piece written by Candy Meyers. She must have been a rare soul to have made such an impact in so short a time.

Anyway, Candy's work described one afternoon's struggle with folding chairs, the weather and writer's block. She was trying to find the right spot and the perfect inspiration so that the words would flow like autumn rain. Peggy's reading the story was her way of saying it's okay if the words don't come, if a change in setting only makes the page look more blank. If your muse is taking a nap, take one too. It's okay.

One of eleven students, I am the only rookie. Some of these gals are writing books—whole books— attend fiction-writing classes and workshops throughout the year. Others have a cast of characters fully formed, a whole troupe of actors waiting in the wings ready to perform for the group. Or so it seems. Right now, all I've got is me. I feel outnumbered.

But hold on. I reread my stated intentions for this course. *"Overcome my lifelong tendency not to try something I wasn't sure I'd be good at. Be process-oriented instead of product-oriented."* I decide to get my creative juices flowing by snapping a few photos. Just be creative. If not with the pen then with the lens. Just keep moving. This will be a nice one to frame for the guest room, I think. Ugh. Product-oriented. I put the camera back in my pocket.

Just look. Just listen. Soak it in. I struggle. No, no. Now, get your notebook and make a list of ten words to describe the sound of the wind through the trees. Let's see...

1. Rustling
2. Chattering
3. Rattling
4. ...

Yipes—stop with the list and just LISTEN!

I realize that before I can describe it I must see it. Hear it. Touch it. Attach an emotion to it. I am so unbelievably caught up in the workaday details of daily existence, I can scarcely believe it. I'm not a robot. At home I notice the wind bending the trees, I acknowledge the rain on the rooftop. But instead of enjoying the music of the rushing air, the rhythm of the raindrops, I worry about clogged gutters or a backed up drain. But here at Lake Logan, I can just look, just listen. The leaves are not an obstruction, a nuisance, they are works of art, tiny brushstrokes in a pointillist painting. Here the drops can be musical notes and the ridges of the roof the strings of a Carolina dulcimer.

I will allow myself to retreat, relax, rejuvenate. I am not here to impress or produce. I am not here to develop characters or get tips on how to someday publish.

I am here to force myself to take the time to see and hear and feel. To rediscover subtlety and nuance and natural rhythms.

Before I can craft stories with meaning, I must take the time to step back and take it all in. Before I can scoop out the rich golden honey of experience and serve it to the other girls at morning tea, I need to make time to explore this world of Lake Logan from a bee's eye view, to get close to it, to breathe it in, fill my lungs with it, restore my senses.

Retreat? I accept!



Spiral Notebook
Dawn Lawson
Lake Logan, October 2010

As if I didn't have enough challenges growing up, I was born left-handed. I couldn't use the required three-subject spiral notebook comfortably, because my hand bumped up against the wire. It wasn't until I had lived in Japan that it occurred to me to use notebooks from back to front, thereby repositioning the pesky wire to the right side. A great, if late, discovery; now I can use any notebook I want, even a spiral.

The problem of my knuckles' getting smeared black with lead when my hand rubbed against the writing on the lines above is another one I didn't solve until much later in life, when I learned to place a piece of paper on top of what was written above, as a kind of blotter. I forget to do that sometimes, though, and it's embarrassing when I sign a card we're passing around for someone at work with a smeary pen and my name gets blurred when I add it to the falsely sentimental "I enjoyed working with you."

In third grade, when we were introduced to cursive writing, I shocked my parents by coming home with a report card that had a grade that was not a VG (Very Good): the evil Mrs. Utterback had given me an NI (Needs Improvement) in penmanship. I hated her *and* the temporary classroom we had to occupy that year, some kind of prefab structure in the back of the real school building—because of overcrowding, I guess. When the report card came, I explained that Mrs. Utterback had tried to switch me from being a lefty to writing right-handed. My mother promptly requested a parent-teacher conference for the purpose of convincing her to stop that nonsense.

Sealing Wax (what on earth was the prompt?)
Dawn Lawson
Lake Logan, October 2010

In junior high, my best friend Karen and I had penpals, whom we culled from the endless columns of names, addresses, and hobbies listed in small print in the back of magazines like *Sixteen* and *Tiger Beat*, which perennially featured Bobby Sherman on the cover. Just looking at his eyes brought to mind the theme song of his hit TV show: "The bluest skies you've ever seen, in Seattle. . ." Think of all the poor Baby Boomers whose subconscious memory of this led them to move to the Northwest as adults, only to find that it was the rainfall and Seasonal Affective Disorder capital of the US of A? But I digress.

Our eloquent letters resembled the following:

Mary Thornbird
16 Down Under Lane
Canberra, Australia

Dear Mary,

My name is Dawn and I am an eighth grader at Robert Goddard Junior High School in Seabrook, Maryland. I found your address in *Tiger Beat*. I just love Bobby Sherman and his show, *Here Come the Brides*. Don't you? It comes on here every Friday night at 8. Then at 8:30 is the *Partridge Family*, with David Cassidy and Susan Dey. But I like Bobby Sherman best. How about you?

Your friend,

Dawn

Dotting the "i"'s with hearts, we recorded these profound musings on sheets of paper carefully selected from among the many boxes of stationery we bought on our precious Saturday afternoon trips

to the mall. Along with the stationery, we purchased packages containing four sticks of sealing wax, two in each color, flanking a metal stamper that bore a design or letter of the alphabet. I can still see us in my mind's eye sitting side-by-side on Karen's canopy bed, carefully lighting a candle and painstakingly letting the wax pool into a circle on the flap of the envelope before we stamped it. Below the impression we wrote:

Mr. Postman:

D-liver, D-letter

D-sooner, D-better



The Stars Are Out Tonight, Ladies

Bluegrass song lyrics for the women writers at Lake Logan, 2010

Lyrics © 2010, Nancy L. Newlin

Stars are out tonight, Ladies,
The clouds have blown away
The moon will light our way, Ladies,
As we talk along the way.

Up here in the hills, Ladies
Where Nature plays her tricks
It snows and rains and shines, Ladies
And then we go for picnics.

Plenty to do here, Ladies
Kayak and quilt and write
Sit on the porch and read, Ladies
Tell stories by the firelight.

Odes to Lake Logan Fearless Writers

Ode To My Lake Logan Sisters
Betsy Fletcher
October 30, 2010.

Ode To My Lake Logan Sisters
Gratitude washed over me
And an Ode came right through!
It's a sweet little ditty
From me to all of you.

In the six short days
We have come to know
Our stories, each other . . .
A new chance to grow

On the shores of Lake Logan
So peaceful and calm
For each of our souls
It's been quite a balm

Our circle of women
With journals and pens
Took on every prompt
To do less was a sin!

We did not sit and whittle
No how and no way!
But we did our fair share
Of eating and word play

The Muse hovered close for nearly a week
Whispered lyrics for Nancy
That became, "Avery's Creek."

Shetad came to visit,
Finally out of that trunk
Debra kept us all laughing
She don't write no junk

Tina delighted
With her sense of wonder
Nature is glorious
Cast a spell she's been under

JoAnne brought new meaning
To the term "VCR"
We're sure to remember
That term when we're far!

Beth with her kind heart
And big laugh from Philly
Writes words that bring healing
And is never, ever silly!

Kathy/Kathleen has a notebook
Filled with wisdom and wit
No more ripped pages, now
We do give a shit.

Jenn came back east from the ranch
Way out yonder
With words flowing fast
And plotlines to ponder
When Joe is re-programmed
You will be set free
To write at your leisure
Hey, it's just meant to be!

Dawn: librarian, tech weenie
And Japanese scholar
You're so fun to tease
We like to hear you holler!

Funny Bunny our sister
From Canada and Tennessee
You throw us such zingers
And we all laugh with glee



Kimberly it seems that poetry
Has found you
Here's to meter and rhyme
And your Voice that rings true.

Peggy, Grand Poobah,
Our leader and friend
Thanks for your guidance
Down to the very end

Soft belly, pens moving
And notebooks near full
Our thoughts are of next time
We all feel the pull

This poet, now hurried
And wishing for time
Calms down with a sip
Of Conviviality wine!

I smile to myself
Feeling exceedingly blessed
To have shared a near week
With some of the best

Women who write
Both fearlessly and well
Se fine and adieu
This Ode has been Hell
I mean, had much to tell!

Ode to Lake Logan
Nancy Dunlop
2010

Like welcoming arms your shores embrace me.
Oh, Lake Logan the place that holds the key,
To my inner thoughts and deep memory
Spills out of my mouth when I am with thee
Onto the page for all the world to see.
Without hesitation words flow easy
So many thoughts that I am made queasy.

Like welcoming arms your shores embrace me.
Oh, Lake Logan you make it so easy
To write from the heart like Robert told me
To write as I speak and then let it be
Do not embellish or say golly gee
Write down all the words to tell my story
Express myself, my truth in its glory.



Like welcoming arms your shores embrace me.
Your dirt roads wind through pines so shadowy
That one could fear they would be cowardly
About walking toward the end to see
What is waiting might be eternity.
But have no fear and go forward with glee
Lake Logan is a place of true safety.

Like welcoming arms your shores embrace me.
The lodge, the cabins, the lake's clarity
Provide a venue peace, serenity
Allows writing in solidarity.
To share or to file away for me
To edit and polish to guarantee
A product to publish of quality.



Like welcoming arms your shores embrace me.
Your cabins welcome writers from Jersey,
From Pennsylvania and Tennessee,
From New York and even old Virginey.
North Carolina claims some maybe three
One from Colorado the farthest be.
And the friendships formed are a specialty
Remembered for ever as part of me.

Like welcoming arms your shores embrace me.
You are the place of a great memory
That adds up to a special gift from ye
To all those who travel and rest with thee
Partake of your food your drink and beauty
Come away knowing who they want to be
And return home to productivity.

Thank you Lake Logan for being there for me

