

York Area Writers Guild

Poems, Stories and Essays

Twentieth Year Commemorative Edition
1984 - 2004

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INTRODUCTION

In August, 1984 a group of aspiring writers from a small region in central Nebraska gathered with a mission: “To help writers become more proficient.” The York Area Writers Guild was born, eventually drawing people from a wide area that includes the towns of Bradshaw, Henderson, Gresham, McCool Junction, Osceola, Seward, Silver Creek and Stromsburg.

Even writers willing to clock up to a hundred miles on their cars just to attend a meeting have their own “comfort zones,” genres and styles that are their specialties. All zones are respected at Guild meetings. Members read their work out loud, then those who want critical suggestions can get them, while everyone gets plenty of encouragement. Original writings shared include selections from poetry, fiction and non-fiction in almost all genres. Assignments are used occasionally to prompt directed writing, and sometimes a Guild member or guest will put on an entertaining program intended to expand everyone’s zones at least for a night, encouraging all to explore areas they ordinarily would not.

Today, the York Area Writers Guild has a dues-paying membership of eighteen, which includes two of the original charter members. Over the course of the last twenty years, the Guild has stayed true to its mission, with an increasing number of its writers publishing their books, articles, stories and poems. In recent years, members have showcased their works to the public in special programs at the local Yorkshire Playhouse. In 2004, Guild members’ works were featured in a special, one-hour live radio broadcast from the Playhouse on York radio station KAWL.

The York Area Writers Guild meets from 7 to 9 p.m. on the last Thursday of each month at the Kilgore Memorial Library, Sixth Street and Nebraska Avenue, in York, Nebraska. Visitors are always welcome, and there are no prerequisites for membership. Please join us!

Works of Kent Bedient

Biographical Note

Kent Bedient

Kent Bedient returned to his roots in York County, Nebraska, in 1988, after thirty-four years as a freelance designer in New York City. He joined the York Area Writers Guild in 1989, concentrating on historical essays and the fact-based stories of people and events important to his life. He credits the Guild for every word he has committed to paper since joining. For this invaluable affiliation, kindly sounding-board-forum, and enthusiastic fountain of encouragement, he says THANK YOU, York Area Writers Guild.

Busy Wheels

*For Sue Curran on a chill and fierce
October afternoon.*

If you're in Busy Wheels' good hands,
You really haven't got a thing
To fret about, to sigh or cry,
Or even give your hands a wring!
They'll get you there, with time to burn
And promise prompt and safe return...
You're in good hands, there is no doubt,
So ease yourself, relax...point out
And visualize your destination...
Then with ne'er a hesitation,
They'll not only come 'n fetch ya,
They'll return to kindly getcha!
So when your fond desire feels
You gotta go...call Busy Wheels!

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Words of My Mother

I am reaching an age where the words of my mother begin to have meaning. Today, I'm sorting and trying to clean out files. They bulge with letters, cards, notes, clippings, and sweet mementos of life gone by. Some are faded yellow. Some are frayed around the edges—brittle and worn thin by handling and surviving numerous moves I've made...missives sent by so many loved ones and dear old friends over so many years. Now, suddenly, I feel amazed—and eerily empty—realizing how many of them are gone, gone from this earth, and my life. I am, all over again, sad, lonesome and longing for their kindness and the solace their presence in this world gave me...no more to be...each one never to be replaced. Irreplaceable. Unique. And soul-scathingly gone. Should I pitch the files? Try to edit them down? They are now, after all, mere ghosts of times past...shadowy reminders of good times come and gone. Yet I can't do it. Not yet. So I shuffle and rearrange the sea of papers, putting off to another day the sad finality of disposing of the last tangible remains of those cherished days and times and souls well loved.

Yes, I am growing old, approaching the age my mother was that long ago evening when she remarked, in her advancing years, how she had no one to talk to. I now know what she meant. At the time, though, I was hopelessly uncomprehending. I recall thinking, "Why not make new friends?" Sounded easy then! But with the passage of years—the passage of my own life—I now appreciate her forlorn sadness that evening. One does not, cannot replace long-lasting loves and friendships easily, if ever...the kind of rapport, trust and easy comfort which quietly grows and matures over long stretches of time, like the fine old patina of a long-familiar, beautifully polished heirloom table or bookcase...with which one has lived and shared hours and

days and talk and laughter and tears. Yes, one makes new friends, new acquaintances, but my mother longed for, I now understand, long-standing friends...chums...confidantes from younger, better days...to chat with, to comfortably visit with...share, unreservedly, secrets, longings, heart-songs. Those, as the saying goes, with whom one can be oneself. What a rare, fortunate blessing...what a profound, priceless and all-too-fleeting luxury! Now I begin to understand my mother's words. Now it is my turn to long for those with whom I could talk easily, fully talk, just as she in her turn did, a far, sad time ago.

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Well-Worn Coat

Lips say Bon Voyage, Best Wishes
and Godspeed
While pleads my selfish,
leaden heart,
“Don’t go, dear friend,”
Already keenly, badly aching
at mere thought of no more you...
No more joyful sightings
of your happy, generous self...
your quick and ready
glowing smile
that lights the sky
and fills the day...
your spritely, impish, elfin grin
which warms my heart,
my life...my soul...
But go, good friend
–out of brute necessity–
And bravely will I try to wear
the sadness of our parting
like an old, familiar,
well-worn coat...
easy, snug and
comforting...warm-lined
with all the golden hours
with you as pal,
with you as friend,
when I knew well
your gladness, goodness,
sweet, kind self.

Then armed with this
to insulate
against the emptiness
you leave behind,
I'll manage "Go in Love"...
"Bon Voyage"
and "Fond Adieu"...
still call you friend
across the miles,
and when November winds blow wild,
remember you like summer-glow...
against the gale...
mid Winter snow.

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Vincent's Chair

Summer. The south of France. Clear, glorious dappled light, bathing everything in sight for miles and miles in every direction. Hot. Sultry. Driven, the mad artist cries out ...splashing masses of unlikely paints...piled one upon the other in the most unreasonable combinations which spell perfection.

The days begin to end. The sanitarium. Angry, screaming crows! Mawkish! Marauding against the sullen, leaden sky. A pitiful, tortured soul...earless...failed in life... alone, save for a golden brother who fed and clothed him...bought him paints.

The chair remains. I gasp. I cry! Legacy from a sad, short, nightmare life, still pulsing in this throat-catching work of soaring genius. Vibrant. Haunting. Timeless. Beautiful! The empty chair...patiently, faithfully standing there...staunch, stoic, waiting...expecting Vincent to come back home. Oh, Vincent...Vincent...Vincent! Poor, tormented, aching soul! I weep some more. The chair remains.

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Works of Sue Curran

Biographical Note

Sue Curran

Sue Curran was born and raised in Nebraska, and discovered a love for writing when she was in school. English class was always a favorite, especially when the assignments involved penning stories, essays or poems. She graduated from York High School in 1971, and from Mount Marty College in Yankton, South Dakota, in 1975, with a B.A. degree in Media. Once out of an academic environment, she continued to put pen to paper. “I just *have* to write. For me, not writing is like not breathing,” she says.

Sue was one of the founding members of the York Area Writers Guild in 1984. Today, she and Norma Chase are the only two original members left in the group. “We started it because we discovered there were a lot of local people who enjoy writing. The group gave us a chance to network and brainstorm together. We just started gelling from there.”

Sue currently writes a variety of pieces, but emphasizes her poetry and her humorous essays. “All kinds of cool things happen to me, and around me,” she laughs. “I just write ’em down!” Future projects include a children’s book about assistance dogs.

Sue lives in York with her Service Dog, Woody.

Grandma Dagnillo

If a loved one should die,
and you just wanna cry—
well, before any tears drops should spill-o;
if you need help to mourn,
just get on the horn.
Put a call in to Grandma Dagnillo.

For the funeral's sake,
invite her to your wake
for quite a spectacular thrill-o.
No one's more distressed
when a soul's laid to rest
than that little old Grandma Dagnillo.

Though you might blow a gasket
when, inside the casket,
the corpse should move. Ooo! What a chill-o!
Don't fret, you'll survive,
Cuz it isn't alive.
It's been yanked on by Grandma Dagnillo.

With tears by the gallon,
she moans in Italian.
Her wailing gets louder and shrill-o!
And all the bereaved,
they hear, "Why did you leave?"
'midst the crying of Grandma Dagnillo.

Stand up, then pass out.
It's lament with a clout;
a service with plenty of frill-o.
To revive her, perhaps
some ammonia caps
will rejuvenate Grandma Dagnillo.

And out by the grave,
last farewells for to wave,
the service goes fine-up until-o...
A tisket, a tasket,
she faints on the casket.
Who else? Right! It's Grandma Dagnillo.

It's a sight to behold
when all has been told
She grieves just like nobody will-o.
And now that you know,
you can mourn like a pro.
Take a lesson from Grandma Dagnillo.

So if someone is dead,
don't worry your head.
And don't cry all alone in your pillow.
In heaven or hell,
a soul fares quite well
when it's mourned by Grandma Dagnillo.

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