

# The Rossmoor Fox

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## INSPIRED BY MY DAFFODILS SURVIVING THE SNOW

By Norman Perkus

The way I  
grow  
is not straight  
up  
reaching towards the  
sky  
but bending and  
drooping sometimes  
buried in  
emotional snow  
but the snow  
melts  
and I extend  
myself  
towards  
the sun



## DANCE

By Carol George

Dancing classes at Rossmoor  
Come, dance with me my darling  
Hear the Salsa and the Waltz!  
Hold me tight and then lead me  
To the music and the schmaltz!  
  
Do the box step and the rock,  
Feel the crossover and the twirl;  
Just two hearts are dancing,  
Just my sweetheart and your girl.

## WORLD-WIDE TRANSPORTATION

By Steve Marcus

Around the world in many places  
I've ridden on things with wondrous faces  
Horse, camel, burro, llama  
but now machines provide the drama.  
Tuk-Tuk, moped, rickshaw, bicycle  
sports car, station wagon, trolley, tricycle  
motorcycle, lorry, moving van, roadster  
scooter, unicycle, ox plow, coaster,  
freight train, omnibus, coach, minivan  
SUV, crossover, coupe, big sedan.

## SHORE SCORE

By Pam Toplisky

Gathering at the beach with friends,  
to spend a relaxed day, have fun,  
to chase and swim in swirling surf,  
enjoy the burning summer sun.  
Children build castles in the sand.  
This is a day for everyone.

In comfort beach wear splash and play,  
relax and chat, catch up with friends,  
over a net lob volley balls,  
'til tired out on our towels lay  
and into forty winks descend.

A bullhorn blazes through the air  
urging swimmers back to shore.  
"Clear the beach," the lifeguard shouts.  
"Pack your things and leave, before  
medic waste accumulates."

In disbelief the faces stare  
Bewildered, with the day destroyed.  
A few ignore the clarion call,  
while lifeguards race at frantic pace  
disaster to avoid.

The Jersey Bay sinks medic waste,  
in biohazard boxes deep  
but broken spillage, ocean wide,  
upwards through the dense depths rise  
from insecure bands tied.

Instruments of healing  
— in a darker phase —  
float upon the water's edge,  
roll forward, wave on wave.  
Broken needles, shards of glass,  
scalpels chipped and thrown aside,  
snapped off syringes race the queue  
of vials and tubes and lancets cast  
into a biohazard tide.

Slowly, unhappy beach folk move,  
belongings stashed away.  
Weary and tired, their day denied  
upon the sands to play.  
How much nearer creeps the tide,  
with briny, medic waste,  
as global warming swells the seas  
and water infiltrates our streets!  
Will ocean's tireless surge flow on

through towns and villages around,  
and crop fields saturate with salt,  
no farmer wants to own.

The oceans and a country's land  
cannot themselves obtain.  
A constant vigilance requires  
a fruitful Earth sustain.

## Will the Real Me Please Stand Up

(Based on an old TV Show Scenario)

By Norman Perkus

Will the real  
me  
Please Stand up

The one who  
sits  
in a corner  
and  
just wants to  
be left alone

or  
The one who  
reaches out  
embraces challengers

or  
The one  
that's deep inside  
of me  
that I yearn  
to reach  
(the knowing self)

We're all the  
real me

And the more  
we talk to  
each other  
We'll all be  
the knowing self

We will all  
stand up



## ON A HORSE *By Ken Thomas*

This anecdote or short story does not require a long introduction. What could be more mundane than a horseback ride? Where's the humor in Giddy-Up? Never the less, "words failed me."

This was the trip of the year for our boys. For me, it sounded like heaven; no hiking, no paddling, no bicycling and no climbing, just a nice ride on a horse. Many fathers signed up for the trip, even dear father **Jack**. For a very modest price, we would camp in the fields near the ranch house, ride for three hours on Saturday, learn about ranching and horses from a "real" cowboy and finish with an early ride Sunday before driving home. Who wouldn't call that a great "Giddy-Up?" In early spring, we drove up into the mountains of New York State. The directions indicated a three-hour drive, so our ETA would be about nine o'clock that Friday night. As usual three hours turned into almost five. We didn't have GPS systems in those days, and the ranch was hidden between two mountains off a two-lane country road. By the way, five hours in a car with four boys is definitely a "words failed me."

As we entered the parking area, I could only see one other car. Two fathers and three boys were putting their gear in an old wagon, which was attached to a tractor. The tractor was the only vehicle that would make it up the road to our camp site, because of the mud. If you could measure mud like snow, I would guess three inches, not counting the puddles of water and ditches. Would the tractor make it? Then we met Rueben. Rueben's cowboy hat looked like the thirty-nine-gallon size, if that's possible. He was chewing tobacco, spitting and giving orders using language that would definitely be considered "ranch hand, bunk house

conversation." Every other word would be rated "PG" and some words fit the "R" category. This was one mean cowboy, I thought. Anyway, we loaded the wagon and headed up the road, throwing mud, sliding sideways and bouncing like basketballs. Rueben threw a couple "Wahoo's" our way to make the trip more interesting. As we entered the campsite, I was



surprised to see a small camp fire and a huge stack of wood. Rueben smiled, spit and cursed, when I thanked him. He helped the boys pitch their tent and headed back down the hill to pick up the rest of our group. For hours, Rueben repeated the downhill, uphill trips until we were all accounted for at one AM that morning. He warned us not to leave the campsite because he was going to let the Dobermans out. What Dobermans? "Words failed me!"

In the morning after an early breakfast, we walked down the hill to the barn, stepping carefully to avoid deep areas of mud. About 16 horses were saddled and waiting for us. Rueben was also waiting and in his own linguistic manner ordered some fathers and boys to help saddle and prepare other horses for the whole group. Mrs. Rueben introduced herself and her teenage son. They helped everyone choose a horse and get mounted. With a smile, she commented on this group of "cowboys" ready to ride off into the sunrise. There were cowboy shirts, belts, vests, boots, dungarees, neckerchiefs and hats in some combination on every boy and

father. **Jack's** cowboy shirt screamed "dude." I wondered what horse I would ride. Ruben came out of the barn with this huge animal and shouted "who's the #@\$%# leader of this #@\$%&\* group?" I've heard this question many times before and at no time did my answer result in a pleasant experience. I imagined my horse would be named Black Devil or Rage. Rueben handed me the reins to "Joker". Maybe this horseback riding experience would be better than some of my other "leader" experiences; wrong, wrong, and wrong! Rueben led the way up the trail with his son bringing up the rear in case of problems. I learned a few things about horseback riding that I did not anticipate as we left the barn and started up the horse trail past our campsite.

- Getting on or off a horse is not as easy as it looks on TV.
- Steering a horse takes skill, strength and more determination than the horse.
- Going uphill or downhill..... "hang on."
- Even at a fast walk, a rider will bounce 1-2 inches in the air and maybe a height of two feet in some cases.
- Saddle seating surfaces are not as comfortable as you might think.
- Joker must be blind, because he kept walking into trees.
- Horseback riding is fun?

Our view of the mountains and valleys was awesome. The spring flowers in the fields were beautiful and the weather a perfect sixty degrees. The boys urged Rueben to go faster and in open spaces we picked up the pace to a trot. I prayed to the cowboys above Rueben would not think about a gallop. I knew a gallop would end in a tree, specially selected by Joker.

Our Saturday and Sunday rides were not without some adventure. A minute by minute

description would be boring, so here are some highlights.

- Joker walked into a birch tree.
- Crossing a stream, one of the horses decided to lie down and cool off.
- Joker walked into an oak tree.
- Trotting around a corner in the trail, the horse went right and the rider went left off. The rider was my son [no injury].
- Joker walked into a maple tree.
- The boys were laughing and screaming, having fun. **Jack** kept screaming, "Whoa, Whoa!"
- Joker walked into an elm tree.
- We took a lunch break on the top of a mountain. Some fathers and sons just barely made it back onto their horses even with a push.
- Joker did not walk into a tree [no trees].
- The boys enjoyed helping the Rueben family water, feed and comb the horses after each trip [but not cleaning up the stalls].
- I gave Joker back to Rueben with a few Rueben words of my own.
- Sunday morning as we gathered by the barn, Rueben yelled out, "The Dobermans are loose." As we looked for places to hide, Mrs. Rueben appeared with five miniature Dobermans barking a friendly greeting as they ran among us.
- Rueben turned out to be a tobacco chewing, gruff, curse a minute "pussycat." Everybody loved him, even me.

"WORDS FAILED ME," BUT.....I sent Rueben a bottle of Jack Daniels. Ride on Rueben! Ride on!



# *The Sounds of Silence* By Betty Emmons

BUTTON BLESSING MULTIPLIED  
By NORMA EVANS

*I can hear silence - can you?*

*It is in the beauty of a flower that needs no words.*

*It is in the face of a hungry child - a plea unspoken - can you hear it?*

*Open your heart so you can see and hear the silence of beauty but even more loudly, the unspoken words of need and pain.*

*Not in silence, and you will be rewarded in silence by A peace and quiet that can be seen and heard by others though not a word has been spoken.*

*And that's the Sounds of Silence.*



## TRUE WORDS THROUGH FALSE TEETH

By Steve Marcus

It was an annoying, very mild, tooth discomfort.  
It increased. I'll rinse with saltwater. I'm sure it'll get better.  
I rinsed. It got worse.  
We were on vacation. Touring in Britain. Forty people on a bus.  
Manchester today. Carnarvon tomorrow. The pain subsided.  
Next day the pain is back. It is really back. Very uncomfortable.  
Next stop Bath. Really want to see the Roman ruins and eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture in Bath.  
Instead tour guide helped find a dentist.  
She took an X-ray. Said I need a root canal.  
Tooth too infected to work on it. Need several days of antibiotics.  
Will be home in five days. Get it done soon when you're home she says.  
National Health Service charge. Ten pounds, about fifteen dollars.  
Take prescription to be filled. Ten minutes. No charge. Why? Over sixty.  
Call Silicon Valley endodontist. Set appointment for next Tuesday.  
Continue on tour. Take antibiotics. Get severe intestinal discomfort but toothache is gone.  
Arrive at SFO Monday night. Tuesday morning go to endodontist.  
He does root canal on tooth number 14. Cost 1100 dollars.  
Go to regular dentist for post and crown. Cost 1900 dollars.  
Three years later. Tooth 14 fails. Needs extraction. 500 dollars.  
Now need a permanent bridge anchored by teeth thirteen and fifteen.  
Remember 14. That 1900 dollar crown now needs to be destroyed in order to make way for 3400 dollar permanent bridge.  
Bridge installed. Working fine.  
Three years later tooth fifteen has bone loss. It must come out.  
3400 dollar bridge must be destroyed. Need new crown for tooth thirteen.  
Extraction of tooth 15 is 700 dollars. New crown for 13 is 1900 dollars.  
Bone loss must be repaired with artificial bone replacement, cost 2700 dollars.  
Never mind that my smile shows a gaping hole.  
Get an implant for tooth 14 space. Cost 1500 dollars.  
Wait six months. Implant is working. OK to get crown on implant.  
2400 dollars. What a deal.  
16,100 dollars and six different dentists and specialists later I smile with confidence.  
That's nothing. The dentist I used in Los Angeles for ten years once said,  
"Steve, Thanks for the pool."



**I**t started very small, a little ball of cancer found in my left sinus behind the cheek bone. Proton Radiation at Procure in Somerset was the treatment decided upon.

When the 33 treatments were almost over Procure stopped treatments for a day to have a behind the scenes tour for clients, families and friends. My son William came from work, and quietly handed me a pin-on button which said "Think like a Proton, Stay Positive."

When I put it on, everyone who saw it wanted one. When Procure marketing saw it they were interested but if wasn't in their budget so I ordered 50 buttons from William and his three sons.

I donated them to Procure, and they take 25 cents contributions for each button. Some people even give more. The contributions are put into a little bank on the front desk and are used for special gifts and treats for the children of all ages from many countries who come to Procure for cancer treatments.

The 50 buttons were gone in a short time and Procure is ready for another batch which has been ordered from William and Sons.

God is using my little cancer tumor and treatment connections at Procure together with the creative skills of the Evans family to bless many. Little is much when God is in it. Thank you, William, Will, Zech and Isaiah for your compassionate hearts and willing hands and thank you God for turning my struggle with cancer and treatment side effects into a small way to encourage others who are going through similar challenges.



## IN THE KRUGER PARK (CONCLUDED) *By Pam Toplisky*

Breakfast at Satara had to be on an open fire. Eating in the shelter, the birds kept us company. We had seen the birds at previous camps, and recognized the tiny, yellow weaver bird, so called for its woven nests. The acacias are covered with their pear-shaped nests, anchored to a bough with intertwined threads of grass. From these hanging fibers the nest is constructed downwards, and entrance gained through a narrow tunnel to deter egg-eating monkeys and snakes. Campers throw out scraps. This has made the birds comparatively tame, in particular the blue starlings and the hornbills. Blue is inadequate to describe the starlings' peacock-black plumage, iridescent in the sun. Red and grey hornbills, named for the colour of their bills, have chunky bodies only slightly larger than their bills. Breeding females were holed up in tree cavities, in which their male partner sealed them in with clay, leaving a small space to pass food. During incubation the female molts. The male postpones molting until the young can fly.

Letaba, the last camp on our visit, lay 43 miles north. But we

would turn off at the junction for Olifants Camp, to follow the Letaba River along the border with Mozambique. A while after we left Satara the graceful



sable antelopes and the mother rhino with calf were spotted. Further on, hyenas and jackals alerted us lions might be ahead. Rounding a curve, we almost collided with four lions leisurely crossing the road. Three more lazed in the grass not far off. However, there was no evidence of a kill. In the northern section of the park, there are fewer roads, and the animals have greater space to roam.

Visiting a waterhole there were giraffe drinking at the pool.

It was amazing to watch them straddle their two front legs in order to reach down and drink. A vulnerable position. Yet, when fully standing, the giraffe

can give a lethal kick. Buck also moved around the waterhole.

On the road again, we reached the turn off for Olifants Camp, and from there it was six miles to where we could get out of the car and stretch our legs. At the camp a café was open for lunch.

Setting off after sandwiches and cold drinks at Olifants, we followed the winding road that parallels the Letaba River. Kudu and eland browsed on the spring grass, and further on in

the distance, we could see at least 70 elephants crossing the river. Many youngsters were barely able to walk, and mothers and aunts steadied them through the water with trunks wrapped around their small bodies. They struggled across and safely reached the park, although at a distance from us.

Letaba Camp came up a short time later, a small camp without a café. A shop had supplies for cooking a meal on an open fire, but first drinks on the stoep. We were a little sad on our last night, and when we fell into bed we agreed we would return. We, and the night, settled down. A breeze riffled the tall grasses, and out in the bush snarls and snuffles decreased and stillness claimed the African night.

Note: In the nineteenth century 70 African mammals became extinct. In the twentieth century 40 more have disappeared. Undoubtedly, further losses will occur in the twenty-first, though many stalwarts are endeavouring to save them.



## MUNDANE MEMORIES *By Dale Frost Stillman*

Katie and Barbara procured a booth at Schaeffer's Luncheonette on Tulip Avenue in Floral Park, quite the coup on a busy Saturday afternoon. "This street reminds me of Easter," Katie said, "flowery name." Spring had not yet crept into town, but Schaeffer's had already decorated their walls with bunnies and placed fake carnations in plastic vases on the tables.

Barbara had not a jealous bone in her body. Fun-loving and adventurous, she dismissed the attention that Katie craved. In their thirties and two years apart in age, they enjoyed each other's company though Katie often wished she could be more like Barbara.

"The name of this town makes Easter a year-long holiday here," Katie said as she reviewed the menu. "I'm getting the tuna, just like old times. I remember it came with those colorful toothpicks in each quarter of the sandwich. They

reminded me of paper frills Mom put on baby lamb chops. I think she referred to them as pants, but they are called manchettes or the cuff of a sleeve." She was familiar with instructing her sister in an attempt to seem smarter.

"I got the hot dog and fries in those days, no mustard. I'm switching to a cheeseburger now that I'm an adult," Barbara said smiling. "But I'm still not a fan of mustard. Weren't there pickles in a small silver bucket right on the table? I don't see those anymore. Hey, remember Aunt Daisy's potato salad? No one could get her to divulge that recipe. Dad said she always drank a daiquiri while she was preparing it. You never saw Daisy without that round feathery hat on her head just in case there was a sudden need to visit Our Lady of Victory," said



Barbara, remembering the church they attended every Sunday and the holy days of Obligation.

"But Georgie was always her favorite. She made that clear early on. I hate it when aunts play favorites," Katie said, twisting her mouth in childlike disapproval as she bit the inside of her cheek thinking about her cousin. "I bet Georgie has that recipe."

"This book," Katie said, "will be based on our childhood memories. I'm glad we decided to come back to town. Returning to the scene of our childhood should trigger things we may have forgotten." Katie presumed herself the author. She had brought along her younger sister to jog her own memories, but certainly not as a co-author. Perhaps using "we" was not the right way of stating this, Katie

thought, constantly editing her speech.

"Sounds kind of boring, Katie. Why not write a cookbook instead? Who wants to read about picking peaches from the tree in Aunt Daisy's backyard, or how Grandma roasted a chicken to perfection in that downstairs oven only to see it transformed to chicken a la king the following night? Though if you added the recipes, there's your cookbook. Don't forget the chicken salad sandwiches she made the next day, carefully buttering each slice of bread. Mom never used butter on sandwiches with mayonnaise fillings like tuna or egg salad," Barbara said. "It was redundant, but Grandma claimed it kept the bread moist. I think she even buttered the bread before she ripped it up to make the Thanksgiving stuffing. Remember the tales of

(Continued on page 8)

## BOYS TO MEN *By Dale Frost Stillman*

The approach of summer signals hot days, hot dogs and baseball. I grew up loving the Yankees. If I tried, I might recall their entire 1962 roster. My Mom inspired my baseball fascination. My Dad politely escorted Mom, my sisters and me to his company's box behind home plate at Yankee Stadium several times a season. That gesture ended his participation in the game the rest of us relished.

I married a Yankee fan, and my boys succumbed to slight parental pressure becoming fans as well. Naturally this increased their enthusiasm for playing Little League. From the regular season in April until the end of the All-Star season August first

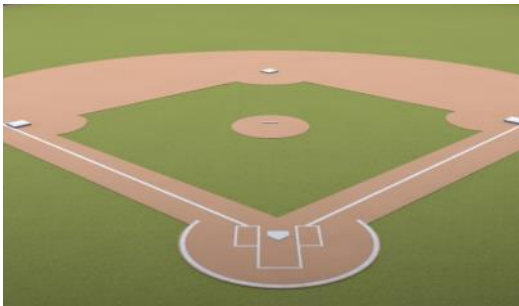
until Fall Ball started in September, my car resembled the dugout at Yankee stadium replete with bats, catcher's equipment, soda, water and various team members.

Ryan was a pitcher and Travis, a catcher. The Stillman battery as they referred to themselves when practicing with each other, occasionally were on the same team, but more often than not, I drove them to different fields.

What constitutes a team? I wondered recently. Is it too simplistic to define it as a group of individuals working toward a mutual goal? The common goal in most sports is winning. Encouraging fair play and increasing one's athletic skills and knowledge of the game were stressed at early ages. By the time my boys advanced to JV and Varsity, beating other schools was the focus. The coaches were not as kind as those Little League coaches who though taking the games seriously were more interested in inviting parents to a post-game tailgate beer.

Friendships formed among team members. Players developed a sense of belonging, a purpose, if you will. They developed a trust that the person you throw a ball to will catch it, or that a coach knows when that guy on second should steal third without getting thrown out.

The endurance for decades of these friendships formed through baseball teams is the reason I wondered about the role of teams in people's lives.



Ryan and Travis, now 37 and 35, still play ball. And just like old times, I went to see Ryan pitch last Sunday.

"Shouldn't you be coaching your son's team," I asked him, "instead of possibly injuring your arm at your age?"

"Eli doesn't like baseball," he said. I remembered he tried T-ball last year, and it was not for him. Eli, I thought, would prefer watching the science channel.

"Maybe Drew will like baseball," Ryan added wistfully.

Ryan struck out eight batters during the six innings he pitched. When he returned to the dugout, his teammates slapped him high-fives. Over the years these adults have gone their separate ways: a couple of guys work for FedEx, Jesse owns his own business, Dan is a local cop who shaved his head. When he is not directing traffic, he organizes home run derbies for charity. When Ryan is not worrying about his pitch count, he confided that he is concerned about not being sucked out of a window on the

Southwest flight he booked for next week's business trip to Denver.

Travis switched to a more relaxed team of softball rather than baseball where he pitches and is the designated hitter. He relinquished his catcher's mitt because his knees took a beating over the years. Many of his friends from the eight-year-old All-Star team belong to his softball team. Burke is married and has a son, Jesse and Matt from Ryan's baseball team also play on the softball team. Sean just had a daughter. Travis takes the team in stride which is the manner in which he approaches life.

"Ryan is too serious about pitching. We're not in high school anymore," Travis told me in typical brotherly fashion. He dislikes rules of any sort being imposed on him. I am not surprised that he is an entrepreneur.

Elston Howard, Joe Pepitone, Clete Boyer, Phil Linz, Bobby Richardson, Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Al Downing, Tom Tresh. (I swear I did not Google this.) Those were the days when the Yankees could not lose. Travis' opinion is that the 2018 Yankees look very good and will only get better next year. In the meantime, baseball continues as a recurring summertime theme. The goals have changed a bit over the last thirty years for those boys of summer: passing the love of the game to the next generation, reuniting with old friends and just getting a bit of exercise. It's no longer about the win.

You can put that in the books.

"You gotta be a man to play baseball for a living, but you gotta have a lot of little boy in you too." - Roy Campanella

## My New Song

By Norman Perkus

As  
The spiral of  
my life  
winds down  
I have  
a choice  
Do I sink  
with  
it  
or try to  
reach  
beyond everyday  
routines  
and break  
my mold  
and emerge  
newly hatched  
and peep out  
my new song  
to the old  
world



## WHERE IS MY NEW SELF

by Norman Perkus

The rungs of  
the ladder  
I'm climbing  
sometimes seem  
to lead to  
nowhere  
I yearn  
to be on  
my way  
to heaven  
but I just  
might slip  
and fall  
into  
my true  
self



## I LOOK TO THE STARS

By Norman Perkus

I look to  
the stars  
I run rambunctiously  
into roadblocks  
But I find my way  
around them  
and look up again  
and  
the moon is shining  
and  
I feel free



# DEAR DIARY *By Erin Medicott*

**March 29, 2018**

At last I found a bagel store worth every penny they want to charge: Manhattan Bagels, in Spotswood, at 100 Summerhill Road, in a little strip mall across from Spotswood High School.

The store is only open for breakfast and lunch (6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.). But the more I thought about it, that's pretty much when you would want a bagel. No one really eats them for dinner. The owners, Ayman and Jodi Bayoumy, just completed an update to the interior of the store and want to engage local customers. Their current promotion is a raffle, to be held April 6<sup>th</sup>, where the winner can win free breakfast for a year!

As their motto says, "we serve fresh-baked bagels every day, made in store the classic NY-style way - boiled and baked with love." Well, having been badly-burned before, I'll be the judge of that!

I wandered in, and all the tables and chairs were full of customers. And all I could smell were the pumpkin and blueberry bagels right out of the oven, on the cooling racks. They smelled so good. A server walked past me carrying a tray of brownies that looked delicious. Then, I saw it. Slightly crispy on the outside, perfectly seeded, there it was behind the plexiglass -- my totally perfect Honey Whole Wheat Everything bagel. It looked too good to eat! But, proceeding with caution, I ordered it toasted with Honey Almond reduced fat cream cheese, for \$2.45.

Oh, this was a good bagel alright. I liked it so much, I went back to the counter and ordered a "baker's dozen value pack" (13 bagels) to go. . . 2 blueberry, 2 rye with caraway seeds, 2 cheddar, 2 garlic, 2 honey whole wheat everything, 2 pumpernickel, and 1 salt. The special pricing also comes with 2 containers of cream cheese.

Stuck them right in the freezer and now I can toast and enjoy them whenever I want.

So, my search for a good bagel has ended. Now it's time to embark on a new quest - finding just the right BLT....

**April 14, 2018**

What's up, New Jersey? We dropped 48 degrees F. in the last six hrs.

We were 88 degrees F. at 4:00 pm—We are 40 degrees F. At 10:00 pm -

This is how people get sick!

**April 21, 2018**

Yesterday, yet ANOTHER school shooting, post-Parkland, in Florida...

Sky Bouche, a 19-year-old former student of Forest High School in Ocala, entered the school, put on a tactical vest and gloves, then randomly shot one round from his sawed-off shotgun through a classroom door. One student was shot, but thankfully not killed.

Police apprehended him quickly. Handcuffed and shackled, he was taken to jail. Bouche told reporters he bought the shotgun WITHOUT A BACKGROUND CHECK from a private seller online, a week after the Parkland FL massacre.

While being questioned by police about his motive, he replied after purchasing

the gun, he began researching different types of mass shootings and chose to target a school because he thought it "would gather more media attention."

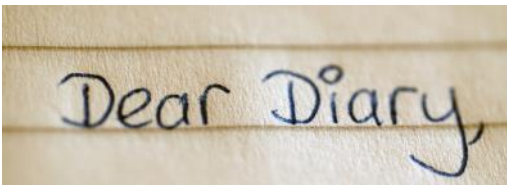
I know there are lots of things that urgently need our attention here in the U.S., but God Almighty, gun control should at least be in the top five.

**May 17, 2018**

Excited to be touring the U.K. But definitely NOT loving the food here.

In an Edinburgh bookstore I'm looking through the cookbooks, on shelf after shelf, arranged by country. In between Argentinian Tapas and Chinese Wok Delights, I see a pamphlet, titled "British Dining."

I open it up. It says, "Eat in Another Country."



# BOTOX *By Subodh Shah*

(Note: Botox injections are used to remove wrinkles from the skin and impart youthful appearance.)

When sacredness becomes a slogan and holiness a hoax,  
When priests become pedophiles and bishops be jokes,  
They need Botox.

The Botox of hypocrisy and hype, to protect every pedophile  
To remove the wrinkles from the Father's file  
And inject the appearance of youth  
Into all that is uncouth.

O The defenders of dogma!  
The shepherds of sheep!  
O Incinerators of infidels!  
Do your souls perchance sleep?  
And bury your senses  
In a Botox of pious pretenses?



Then:  
They hanged Him on the cross  
Now:  
They hang the cross on their necks  
And put pious veils over pulpits  
To cover the wrinkles of the culprits.

May it please your worthy Worship:  
Please pray to your Lordship for a smoke detector  
With a loud alarm embedded into your arm  
So, a child sweet may keep away  
From your pious harm and charm.

When a business goes bankrupt,  
They put it into Chapter eleven.  
When piety goes pedophilic,  
What Chapter will it be?  
The END?

# PLAY DOMINOES By Ken Thomas

I only met my wife's grandmother once on a trip to Michigan with her father and mother. My spouse's family were all Michiganites and we were going to their family reunion. I was not completely "enthralled" with using my vacation days to visit grandma's farm and attend a reunion, but as a newlywed I was learning about the "decisions" in our house. At least, we would travel with style in her parent's Airstream trailer. I could hardly believe the stories about "grandma" as we traveled from New Jersey to upper Michigan. This woman was almost ninety years old, lived alone, grew her own food, raised pigs and chickens, and didn't have a television; ten days, no TV, "words failed me."



When we parked the Airstream near her house, grandma was not at home to greet us. A note on the door said, "gone fishing." My wife and I volunteered to go get grandma. The "ole fishing hole" was just "down the road a piece." Have you ever noticed that people's directions change, when the skyscrapers are gone and they're surrounded by trees? The "ole fishing hole" was a pool of water about 100' by 100' in a creek under a bridge. We followed a trail down to grandma's "spot." Picture a 5'1", gray haired little woman clad in bib overalls, oversized black galoshes, waving a straw hat [lures attached], when we saw her. After hugs and kisses, we helped grandma pack up her fishing gear. I took a peek in her fish basket. Stunned, I saw two good size small mouth bass. "Words fail me." She started up the trail. I have never used the word "sprightly" to describe anyone, but in this case "sprightly" described grandma absolutely. With a "follow me," she took off down the "middle" of this country road in an old Ford like a race car driver. I'm going 60 MPH, and she's pulling away from us. I was stunned. Again, "words failed me." Back at the farm, there were more greetings

and hugs. Of course, she gutted and cleaned the bass in minutes. Next, grandma marched my wife and me out to the garden to pick vegetables. More family would be coming to grandma's house for dinner that night.

I had never dug for potatoes and carrots or picked cabbage and corn before, so grandma gave me lessons. She dug, picked and gathered the vegetables faster than both my wife and I, shaking her head and calling me "city boy." Besides my "city boy" ways, grandma was also not happy, because some critter/critters had been nibbling on her vegetables. She pointed at a couple of trails through her fields to the garden saying "dang woodchucks." My wife knew my father and I used to hunt woodchucks on Hiram's farm back in Pennsylvania. Hiram's cows were always stepping in the woodchuck holes, so he said, "dang woodchucks" a lot also. She told grandma and suddenly "city boy" might be useful. After we lugged the baskets of vegetables into the kitchen, grandma called me, a rifle in her hand. I was stunned again. How many times would I say "words failed me" about her? She gave directions to the ladies for cleaning and preparing the food then announced, "we're going to shoot some varmints." Grandma handed me the rifle as we entered the fields, explaining that her eyesight has been a "bother."

As we topped a little hill, there he was "woodchuckus varmituckus," the vegetable thief. He was half in and half out of his hole. Somehow, he sensed, smelled or saw us. Every time I raised the rifle, he ducked down his hole. Finally, I squeezed off a shot and "woodchuckus varmituckus" bit the dust. One more varmint of the same species bit the dust and we started back to the farm house. Grandma was affectionately holding my arm and even her "city boy" was not as negative any longer.

Dinner with the relatives was interesting, a variety of people. Family members chatted about cousins, aunts, uncles and children. To my surprise, cabbage turned into coleslaw. I am a coleslaw connoisseur and grandma's coleslaw got a B+ rating, three helpings. Now, I was one of grandma's favorite visitors. I shot varmints and loved her coleslaw. The men sat on the porch while the women cleaned up after the meal. Soon, grandma came out on the porch and announced, "the Domino game is about to start." She turned to me and said, do you "play dominos?" Most everyone went into the living room and took seats around the big family table. I was not interested in Dominos at all, and only HBO could save me. Grandma took my hand, led me to a chair and announced that I would be her partner. "Words failed me." Have you ever played Super Duper Triple Thermal Nuclear Dominos? Not this "city boy" either. To make my day even more exciting, grandma handed me the score pad. The evening turned out to be an enjoyable family night. Dominos is not a very difficult game and grandma had a gambler's luck. The most difficult part was the scoring. Grandma stunned me again. She could add up the scores almost as fast as my calculator. "Words failed me." Sitting at that Dominos table, we laughed at dirty knees from gathering vegetables, a coleslaw addiction, woodchuckus varmituckus, "city boy," "gone fishing" and the slowest score

keeper in Michigan. "Jeepers Creepers," we won the Dominos game! I'll never forget my wife's grandmother. The family reunion was interesting also, but that's another story.

"WORDS FAILED ME," BUT.....Grandmas are worth more than every "words failed me."

## *Where There's a Will, There's a Play (Dedicated to Shah)*

*By Carol George*

*Shake the cobwebs from my brain,*

*Spear my heart with poetic pain;*

*Set the twelfth night*

*As the time to write*

*And feed the poet's corner*

*With iambic pentameter;*

*Love the roses and the month of May,*

*Caress the spring drops of dew I say;*

*Chuckle at the pansy's grin;*

*Invite the bard his sonnet in.*



## *When Weeping Cherries Bloom*

*by Norman Perkus*

*My heart turns over*

*when weeping cherries*

*bloom*

*skips a beat*

*as their*

*spreading crowns*

*extend towards*

*the earth that*

*nourishes them*

*that nourishes*

*me*

# The Rossmoor Fox

## A Publication of The Rossmoor Writers' Group

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I reach into the cardboard shoe box and pull out a stack of small black and white photographs. They do not depict my life but have captured events and people important in my parents' lives prior to my arrival. So indeed, they mean little to me—other than my parents often spoke of the wonderful times they'd enjoyed with the Watchung Ski Club on weekend trips from New Jersey to the shimmering mountains of either New Hampshire or Vermont. That said, perhaps these trips had been remembered with particular fondness because all members had had to pool their gas coupons to make these outings even possible? See, so many of them had taken place while our country was immersed in World War II.

I glance at the date on the back of the first picture, and then I turn it over and examine smiling male and female faces. The thought crosses my mind that likely, some of the men in the photo were ultimately shipped off to Europe or places beyond. And while the young women perhaps never had to set their skis aside, some of them likely had brothers or boyfriends—or former boyfriends—whose lives were snuffed out in some place where people likely had, only a short time earlier, believed themselves to be too civilized to allow such a war to ever become necessary.

I now look at these pictures of nameless people differently. Is this the face of someone who is perhaps buried in some place unknown to family and friends? Or, was he one of the fortunate ones able to return and once again experience the thrill of schussing down ski slopes, the wind blowing in his face, while the magical world that snow-covered mountains



invariably create stretched about him in a wondrous playground?

I ponder multiple questions there never seemed a reason to ask in years past. In fact, why do there have to be so many of them at a time when no one is left who can provide the answers?

I pick up another picture and stare at it. Then, like the other photographs depicting faces and experiences unknown to me, I set it in a pile to be trashed. Yet, as I do so, I suddenly feel a sense of anxiety arising within me. Am I symbolically just tossing aside the lives of people as if they never had any meaning? In other words, is it better to give these people a chance to live on in the box of photos which might make me question, when I sort through them yet again, who they were and what their lives were about? Furthermore, did they play significant roles in my parents' lives?

I finally gather up the pile of those pictures I'd set aside to discard. There are so few of them. Indeed, the box I return to the drawer is still almost full. I place it in the midst of other shoe boxes filled with small black and white photos, too.

I will try this again another day—next winter, perhaps. Except why is this so hard? Do I feel that in erasing what was a significant and joyous time in my parents' lives, that I am somehow dishonoring them? Or, could it be I sense I am erasing something of my own history as well—because such events helped shape my parents into the vibrant people I'd come to know and love?

Another thought arises. Perhaps I want these photos forever available to remind me that in former troubling times, when the world was encased in much suffering and death, my parents were nonetheless able to find joy in their lives? So, perhaps it is acceptable for me to do so, too—especially when so much that's happening in our world today is outside of my control?

I shove the drawer closed and realize that while some of us are fortunate not to find ourselves surrounded by war, we nonetheless allow ourselves to be at war with ourselves—in our minds, that is. But how pointless is that? It ruins the blessings that each day might well be delivering—if only this personal war could be won.

I sit down on the leather sofa and silently pray that the day might arrive when I can truly be at peace with the course of my life's journey. For while I have experienced life's ups and downs, I have also been blessed. I must force myself to continually remember that.

So, perhaps gratitude is what I should most attend to as I march down the homestretch of my life's journey? In fact, could that become the source of all my smiles in any future photographs?



### Mundane Memories

(Continued from page 4)

Grandma getting up at five in the morning to get the turkey in the oven when we never ate dinner until six anyway? A freshly killed turkey was the only kind she bought which sounds vile to me."

"And you're not the vegetarian," Katie said imagining that Barbara was already well on her way to writing the cookbook for her. As Barbara continued, Katie realized that her own memories were not as vivid as Barbara's. A look of disillusionment came over her face. What if she could not write this

book? What if her recall paled in comparison to her sister's? How could she claim authorship if all she did was repeat Barbara's memories? Barbara had more knowledge of the cooking end as well, Katie thought with envy.

They left Schaeffer's and walked across the street. "There's Key Food," Katie said pointing at a dingy grocery store they had been in many years ago with Aunt Daisy. Remember the narrow aisles?"

"Yes, but I am drawn to the pizza shop next door. I remember the unique smell since Mom never allowed us pizza. Uncle Blaine bought us our very first slice. I thought I had died and gone to heaven," Barbara

said, again trumping Katie, albeit unintentionally.

"Now that you mention it, I do recall," Katie lied, annoyed that the pizza place had not come alive for her as it had for her sister. If she pursued the book, it would be a boon to have Barbara's memory at her disposal. But her sister's memories bothered her. Time to put an end to family memories she had not paid much attention to, she said to herself furrowing her brow.

"Barb, remember the time that spoiled Georgie grabbed a knife from Grandma's kitchen drawer in her upstairs' apartment? Aunt Daisy would not take it away from him even though he wielded it with skill

threatening to hurt Grandma? Grandma called the police, and they took Georgie away to a special school for behaviorally disturbed children."

Barbara stood still. How had this happened without her knowledge, she wondered. "Not at all," Barbara said astonished that no recollection of the event emerged. Sure, Georgie went away to school, but because of an attack on Grandma? She was way too nice to question her older sister's memory.

Katie smiled to herself for having deceived her sister. She would write the book after all even if memoir morphed to fiction.

