

The Best of the FreeWrites

Each month we will feature one of our four FreeWrites with participants choosing a piece of writing generated during a FreeWrite that they have revised and edited.

Prompts appear in bold in the actual writing

The Lewes Library FreeWrite

Where: Lewes Library

When: Wednesdays, 6–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Tom Hoyer

April, 2018

She gazed at him

“Carnival”

It seemed like a strange choice. While the array of prizes on the shelf behind the counter was not vast, they were of many colors, and included more than just a few. After winning the ring toss, he asked her which prize she wanted.

She looked at him, shifted her feet in a way that made him feel self-conscious, and whispered, “You pick. I’ll let you be the judge of what I want.”

Glancing at the prize shelf, he pointed to a stuffed purple kangaroo. Handing it to her, he said, “This reminds me of you because you are so unique. There’s no one like you. I want you because of who you are, not the color of your skin, or your size or shape. This is for you. Take it, please.”

Her smile deepened, her cheeks flushed, and she gave him a hug that brought tears to his young eyes.

They walked away from the concession stand hand in hand. He and she were among a crowd in the carnival that night, but they were walking on air. They passed by the shouts from the Ferris wheel and the screams from the bumper cars. They didn’t stop to savor the aroma of funnel cake or French fries.

She tightly held on to the kangaroo. His smile glowed from deep inside, an expression of ecstasy that he had not felt before. He turned to look at her as **she gazed at** his face, their moment frozen in time.

Phil Fretz retired in Southern Delaware in 2008, joined RBWG not long after. He has self-published several books and loves all the Guild's events. After a career that spanned the Peace Corps, US Army, and decades in computer services, he's happy to be swimming at the Y, writing, walking, cycling—loving this area.

June 1, 2020

A drunk man sits next to you in a bar, decides you are his friend and begins to confess "the truth." What does he say?

One listless day, on a lark, I decide to visit Jupiter. Not the planet but the bar down the corner. I sit at the bar, lost in thought when suddenly a drunk man sits next to me. He begins a conversation and I am utterly amazed when he tells me his name is Don Draper. My mouth drops. I am as wide-eyed as the rim of his Manhattan. *Seriously*, I tease, *Are you THEEEEE Don Draper from Lexington Avenue?* He looks at me with eyes like green marbles that roll as he stares. *Whaa*, he asks. Understand I know this is not the real Don Draper, the disdainful womanizing Ad man whom I have virtually slapped hard in the face a multitude of times during days and nights of binge-watching *Mad Men*. I turn slightly to this inebriated Don and I see a chance to let Don Draper (the *Mad Men* one) know I do not like him. I slap the unsuspecting Don beside me hard, and with a loud *Hmphhh*, I jump off the bar stool. As I walk away, I turn slightly to see him rubbing his cheek, his head leaning to the side, mumbling *Wha the fu??* I almost feel bad. On the walk home, I imagine Jon Hamm aghast, he who gave insight to the many cocktail-immersed Don Drapers in search of love and punishment.

Mary Lou Sinkey won her first poetry contest in the fifth grade. It was about the war planes that flew above her and the death missions she envisioned. She has been writing war poems ever since mixed with other themes as well. She is an avid reader, loves the Classics and Great Books. She is a happy member of RBWG and has benefited from many of the online classes she has taken. FreeWrites have become a favorite.

Date Unknown

Reasons You Can't Write

You have no problem with writing. You've been doing it all your life. You have a problem with using words like Christmas tree lights, wrapping them around your neck and waist as you speak, as if to say, *see? I'm not so bad. I'm not afraid. I'm just like you, only a tiny bit better.* You are terrified of the past and pull out what's ugly very carefully like bad teeth. You are terrified of the present. It will take you to yourself again and again. There is no future. There is no future unless you make it up, but do you dare? Do you dare offer something that is arrogant, silly, confused, tarnished, fearful, or god-help-us, reveals that you just make it all up as you

go? Forget humility. Soon you will have teeth and the freedom to use them. They will feed you and hurt no one. Here, take a bite.

Lora McKenna's wild and disorderly pursuit of the good, the true, and the beautiful has principally been in the area of the visual arts. She (and it) are currently located in Sussex County. Her entire life has led her to the threshold of this moment, a moment that she is on the very cusp of being able to describe.

July 1, 2020

Boy have I got a story for you.

It's an old line. The ancient mariner stoppeth one of three, having a sixth sense about which of the passers-by would be likeliest to stand still for the whole Rime. In *The Plague*, the guy in the bar has a nose for the fellow-drinker who'll listen to his endless parable about infectious fascism. Ishmael likely found his perfect listener at The Spouter Inn, in New Bedford and planned to spend the rest of his natural life getting free drinks for his tale. I have plenty of stories for you. I've been telling many of them for fifty or forty or thirty years. The armamentarium of tales is getting smaller, though. Mark Twain once noted that he'd reached the age where he recognized that most of his best stories were made up. That age must have been just over seventy, because I've been in it for a few years now. I never meant to venture into fiction but apparently, I'm more gullible than I thought.

Tom Hoyer moved to Rehoboth Beach in 2003 and joined RBWG in 2006. He keeps typing and leading FreeWrites in the confident hope that repetition builds competence. During that period, his skill at riding a bicycle has improved considerably.

May 9, 2020

You never know ahead of time how a free write is going to pan out. Some days every prompt spurs a flood of memories, emotions, and creativity. Other days you sit at the keyboard, your fingers locked in an arthritic claw and you've got—nothing. You can't push a noun against a verb for the life of you. You're dumb as a post, ideas dry as dust, hardly the sharpest tool in the shed. Your first reaction is—it's these damn prompts. They are empty, hollow, and lifeless. OK, deep breath. Crack the knuckles and stretch. Then it comes to you—it's not the prompts—it's you. You can write but maybe not at this moment. You're distracted, dreaming, wondering—*how did this keyboard get so grubby? Oh, look, my fingernail is split, yuck—there's a huge spider web in the corner of the window. Hey, let me write about the spider.* It worked for E.B. White.

Carl Frey moved to Lewes a few years ago based on a very brief visit, evidence of his finely honed decision-making skills. He must have watched that Charlie the Tuna commercial about how Star-Kist wants a tuna that tastes good, not a tuna with good taste because he

became an all-star flavor chemist, delivering good taste and good chemistry to the world. Here he explains that there is no substitute for just doing it.

June 24, 2020

The conversation seemed familiar. Had she dreamed it? She asked if they should go to Saketumi for sushi and she knew before he answered he wanted oysters at Fins. She heard his voice in her head before he said the word, “Oysters.” She had never eaten them. Only imagined them as slimy in her mouth. “Come on, honey. Try just one.” She knew the conversation would end with her giving in. Just as it did in her head, slimy in her mouth.

Susan Towers lives and writes in Lewes. She has published a few short stories after evolving from newspaper reporter to healthcare PR person to fiction writer. Sue walks daily with her Jack Russell terrier Duncan and dreams of hiking in the Sierras.

June 24, 2020

Calamities are only calamities if you define them as such. In reality they are only events and all events are useful.

You think so? Try telling this to Calamity Jane (*nee* Martha Jane Cannary). Or to Calamity Joe. Wait: there IS no Calamity Joe. Why not, may I inquire discreetly. The gender implies—nay, states—females are more calamitous than males. Therefore, a male must have coined the nickname. I wasn’t present at the creation, so it would be extraordinarily presumptuous of me to label that putative gentleman a sexist. But a preponderance of evidence, possibly even substantial evidence (we need not discuss beyond a reasonable doubt because it only applies to criminal cases, its standard of proof is the highest in the discipline, and we have not reached that stage—yet) indicates he leaned in that direction. I mean, he coulda named the sobriquet after himself. Only he knows why he didn’t. I surmise he was either too shy or wanted to keep his name out of the papers to avoid the inevitable death threats from women who wished to claim the territory as theirs. *There’s a calamity fer ya!*

Willie Schatz often prompts his life with FreeWrite prompts. He splits his time, and possibly his personality, between the Adams Morgan hood of D.C. and Bradley Lane in Lewes. He digs reading, writing (**not** 'rithmetic), waxing poetic, advising, counseling, and stirring it up.