



Pens & Keystrokes

Pens and Keystrokes

Pens and Keystrokes

Writings from the
YCCC
Community



Spring 2015 Volume 11
York County Community College
Wells, Maine

Pens and Keystrokes

~ Acknowledgements ~

Many thanks to all who made this magazine possible. The English and the Humanities Departments sponsored the magazine financially. Special thanks to Vice President/Academic Dean Paula Gagnon for her support of this publication over the years

Thank-you also to the photographers who submitted many wonderful photos. I could include only a few, due to space limitations and the reality that the magazine's black and white format can't do justice to the more colorful work submitted.

Thank you also to the poets of the world. Several poems in this volume were inspired by other poems and poets, including Robert Pinksy's "ABC," Donald Justice's "The Assassination," and Billy Collins's poems, "Flames" and "Death of a Hat." All of these poems can be readily found in one form or another on the Internet.

Finally, thank you to all of the writers who contributed work to this 11th volume of Pens & Keystrokes. You produced wonderful work that will inspire others.

~ Dianne Fallon, Editor
English Department Chair

Cover art, "THE PATH OF THE BUTTERFLY"

Original photo by Stefanie Forster

Cover design by Mike Lee

Title page art, "BOOKS AND WORDS WITH PENCILS"

By YCCC alumnus Donald Martin

Pens and Keystrokes

Table of Contents

An Unnatural Love, by Vicky Kent.....	5
Always Being Careful, by Lydia K. Welch.....	6
Boys, by Stephen Allain.....	6
Opposites, by Miranda Hussey.....	7
On My Honor, by Anonymous	9
Mazeroski 1960, by Jesse Miller.....	13
My Hero, by Timothy M. Kusturin.....	14
Truth, by Dani Bree Main	15
The Waiting War, by Ro Jean Straw	16
The End of the Dock, by Paige Tranchemontagne.....	19
My Day, by Tammy Rabida.....	20
Stumbling Out of the Closet, by Alex Giguere.....	21
Chips, by Stephen Allain.....	27
The Stork, by Craig Merrow.....	29
His Plaid Shirt, by Catarina Michaud.....	31
Camp Calms, by KMP.....	32
Nature's Fury, by Shari Norton.....	35
March, by Kurtis Grant.....	37
Taking Back Lunch, by Rosaleen Moore.....	38
Dylan: A Pantoum, by Dani Bree Main.....	43
Wherever You Are: A Villanelle, by Lydia Welch.....	45
The Beginning: A Villanelle, by Tammy Rabida.....	46
A Prisoner of Winter, by Paula Gagnon.....	47
Uniforms, by Sam Bunker.....	48
My Chair Don't Rock, by Sara Tremblay.....	49
Heartbreak, by Kelly Normand.....	51
Spring, by Emma Cee.....	52
Broken, by DJRF.....	55

Pens and Keystrokes

ADHD Sonnet, by <i>Kurtis Grant</i>	56
Tech Intoxication, by <i>ART</i>	57
Look Away: A Villanelle, by <i>Clayton Martin</i>	61
Love at First Sight, by <i>Lauren Chasse</i>	62
The Undefined Moment, by <i>Morgan Wadleigh</i>	63
Perfection, by <i>Anonymous</i>	64

Pens and Keystrokes

AN UNNATURAL LOVE

They don't belong together-
Their worlds are just too different.
These two.....they are the Romeo and
Juliet of education.
Birds and fish understand
that they cannot be a couple,
so why arrange a marriage between
these two academic wonders?
Numbers belong with numbers,
and letters should stick to their own kind!
Oh, the blasphemy of Algebra!

~Vicky Kent

Pens and Keystrokes

ALWAYS BEING CAREFUL

Always being careful
doesn't ever feel good.
However, it just keeps letting me
never offend people.
Quite regularly,
someone's temper
upsets.
Very wisely:
X = your zone.

~ Lydia K. Welch

BOYS

All boys,
capricious, daring~
eager.

Failing goals.
high in justice.
keep

lingering
memories near.
Over

petty quarrels
rests silly
tempestuousness,

until very wise
xenophobes yell
zealously.

~ Stephen Allain

Pens and Keystrokes

OPPOSITES

Opposites
divide the world,
conquer thinking.

As children we learn
black and white
day and night
happy and sad
good and bad.

Two sides to every story~
They tell us
one is right,
one is wrong.

Why cats and dogs?
Polarized thinking:
It always decides
but can't explain.

Adulthood brings us to worry:
What is sin?
What is virtue?
Attempts to define
bring us back to children.

You and me
becomes
us and them.

The opposites become more complex~
Republican and Democrat,
science and religion.

Pens and Keystrokes

We hear endlessly
the two poles.
But we meet people~
They are always between

Nobody I know
will place themselves on either end~
The voices of the people
are a spectrum.

Neither the right,
nor the left~
always inching toward one
but never reaching the end.
The far sides are too extreme.

I have seen them,
The way they operate~
the same exact way
but different reasons.

Obedience, or nothing,
compliance, or nothing.
You give,
they take.

Two people become
halves of a whole
when they lower the voice
that says
I am right.

~*Miranda Hussey*

Pens and Keystrokes

ON MY HONOR

It was mid-March. There remained a lot of snow that had not yet left the ground from the long New England winter. I was approached by two of my friends concerning being a part of a personal plot against another classmate of ours. This plan was an act of revenge over an incident that had happened two days before. I wanted nothing to do with this. I was eleven years old and very impressionable. I thought of myself as one of the good guys in our class of 60. I lived in a middle-class family and was involved in all the community things most of the other children in town were doing

Chuck and Marcus were two of my friends. We were connected by being in the same class, church group, 4H and Boy Scouts. We attended each other's birthday parties and were constantly thrown together on a day-to-day basis. They were not my closest buddies, but still, we were friendly. I knew of the incident which these two talking about, but it was nothing that involved me and nothing I wanted any part of. I tried to separate myself from it, but those two kids were big guys, and I wanted to stay in good graces with them. They yelled at me, "If you are not with us, you are against us and for that there will be consequences for you also!" So being eleven years old, valuing my body and not capable of telling them to "Get a life!" I told them I was in on their little plot.

Roger was also a friend of mine. He was a rather strange boy. He was more of a loner and wasn't into the local group of boys. He was the kid who was always the last one chosen to be on the kick ball team or any group sport. No one wanted to be stuck with Roger. Roger didn't want to

Pens and Keystrokes

participate in any group sports partly because he knew no one wanted him. His family was lower middle class. Roger and I had been partners in a class project one time and he was also in Scouts. He was a good kid. He wore glasses and was what some would categorize as "nerd" and "weirdo," and he was very vulnerable. The boys were always playing pranks on him. On the way home from school one afternoon, Chuck and Marcus attacked Roger as he was walking home.

They blocked his way in the middle of the sidewalk and started throwing ice balls at him. They finished by tearing pages out of his latest library book. His face was scratched from the ice balls. Roger went home and had to tell his parents about the incident. They were, of course, questioning his face injuries. His parents told him to report the incident to the principal the next day. Roger did just that. Chuck and Marcus were called into the Principal's office, with the result that their parents were called, and they would be attending two Saturday detention sessions. The two boys were furious at Roger and made a plan to get back at him. They had recruited some other boys to help them weave this little plot. The decision was made to "get Roger" after the next Boy Scout meeting the following Wednesday afternoon.

Knowing about this ate away at me and I just knew I could not be a part of it. Of course, I now realize now that I should have told Roger and I should have told my parents. But at age eleven, you think mostly about your physical well being and you don't want anything to happen to you, and you want to be accepted by the other kids in school.

Pens and Keystrokes

Wednesday arrived. I went to school dressed in my Boy Scout uniform like I did every week. I had already decided what I was going to do. Mid-afternoon I went to the Nurse's Office and faked sick. I stayed there resting for the next hour until school was dismissed. The boys thought I had gone home sick, so they were not suspicious when I never showed up for Scouts. The boys attended their meeting. I went to the Library and pretended to read a book for the next hour.

When the meeting was over, the boys invited Roger to use a new short cut they had blazed the weekend before. It was in the woods and they convinced him it would be a quicker route for him to go home. They had also convinced Roger that they were sorry for what they had done to him and there were no bad feelings. Roger chose to believe them.

It wasn't very far into the woods, but you could not see the area from the road. They approached an old gazebo-type structure. The two ring leaders had already been there, and left behind all the things they needed ~ basically a rope and some tape. They walked in and then it happened. Chuck and Marcus grabbed Roger, and yelled, "It's payback time!" Then with help from the others they undressed Roger and tied him to a bench in the gazebo. Roger was scared, crying, and begging them not to do this. They finished their abuse and left him in only his underwear.

It was late afternoon, but daylight still remained. I watched the boys go by the Library and then I left. I ran to the back of the hall where Scouts was held. The boys had told me what they were going to do, so I knew where to find Roger. I got to him as fast as I could. By now he was screaming for help. I helped him get back into his clothes and invited him

Pens and Keystrokes

to my house to get warm. Plus, I wanted to discuss what would happen next. He stayed for dinner that night at my home.

The result of this event is strange. I don't really recall talking to Roger much about it. We never mentioned this incident to anyone. Not my parents, not his. The boys never questioned how Roger got loose. It was strange. That was so many years ago, yet it is an event I shall never forget.

Roger and I have remained friends to this very day. A few years ago we met up for an afternoon of reminiscing, and this event came up. He told me he had never forgotten it, and I said that obviously I had never gotten past it. Neither of us will ever know why we did not ever tell anyone. How could this could have happened and been forgotten as nothing? I wonder at times if any of those other boys involved ever think about what they did? Did any of them ever go back to check on Roger? How could you sleep at night knowing you had left someone tied up in the woods? As for me, my Father was a Police Officer. Was this why I never said anything?

These were Boy Scouts of America. These boys meet and say a Pledge: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the scout law. To help other people at all times." Really? Did it mean nothing? Roger has long ago forgiven this incident, but it is not forgotten. I personally wonder if any of those involved ever think about it? I do. It will be in my memory forever.

~ *Anonymous*

Pens and Keystrokes

MAZEROSKI 1960
(For David)

He doesn't smile
quite, turning his cheek
into a fist
before winding up the bat.

All the names you know
waited for the ball
to carom off the ivy
and fall back into play.

His arms
still ringing from the bat
rise over his head
as he leaps toward third.

Coming home
before the mob convenes
he raises his cap
like the head of Goliath.

~ Jesse Miller

Pens and Keystrokes

MY HERO

People have said that he is a legend
with a fist of iron, and that he flows
like the water in the gentle blue stream.
A bright candle, being its own fuel.
Ten thousand kicks, trained to perfection,
the same move daily, over and over.
Fury and a passion, driving his soul,
tempered his temper, a hot mind now cool.
Never with a limit, he became free,
lived a full life, for immortality.
I now try to strive on his principles,
become like him in my own little way.
Our paths will never cross, because he's gone.
I wish I could have met, Bruce Lee Jun-fan.

~ Timothy M. Kusturin

Pens and Keystrokes

TRUTH

See, there's lots of things
you don't know about
me. Secrets buried
too deep to dig up.

Disguising darkness is far
easier than one might think;
Supplying you with a more
pleasing persona to love.

Sometimes I long to be
free. The words are so hard
to find. I can only
speak of it in my dreams.

Will you be my undoing?
Or perhaps I will be yours.
Still, Father Time may tell we
are perfect for each other.

~ Dani Bree Main

THE WAITING WAR

“It’s just seven months, mom.” Dan’s eyes were shining and his voice resonated so bright and cheery. The dimples, his father’s dimples, were charged into action by his froggy smile. His father, taken from us by cancer three years ago, would have been so proud of him.

Seven months seemed an eternity to me, the mother of a child going off to combat. He was going away, too far away for me to do anything for him. I was no longer needed to bandage a knee. Dear God, what a silly thought to cross my mind. Nerve induced? I guess and stress... and fear too.

The sprite of a child, Claire, his girlfriend, his best friend since 6th grade, held tightly to his hand. I thought they would have to cut her fingers loose when the time came.

Oh and the time came. We watched him climb on the bus. I must have played that scene over and over again when sleep would not come. There he was leaning back from the bus doorway opening, giving us a quick flick of his left hand and a wink to Claire. The time away began just that quickly, but the sleepless nights were slowly measured.

We started a calendar marking the time away. It was in the kitchen and Claire would come by every night to place a big fat red “X” on each space. She would call and tell me I had to do the duty or wait for her to mark off two spaces if she needed to be absent from our ritual.

Pens and Keystrokes

The seven months dragged by and then another seven were added. Claire and I cooked, baked and wrote diligently to Dan for those long arduous months. We were lucky enough to receive email from him on occasion. Once when he was on a short leave, we caught a good look at him for about ten minutes via the computer. One of his guys had access to a camera mounted on a computer. Claire's brother, Gerry, attached one to Dan's home computer, so we could have that special time with Dan. He checked it out by rushing home to connect with us via his own laptop. Claire and he made faces at each other. Claire's mom's face appeared on the screen and wished us all luck. "Tell that boy of yours I miss him."

Gerry was pleased with the sound and video. I could hardly wait to see my boy. We set Dan's machine up in the kitchen, so all of us could be part of the scene.

Claire and I hugged each other and cried ourselves to laughter after those ten minutes. We described and dissected those six hundred seconds for hours. Dan seemed so much older and definitely thinner. His smile and dimples were just the same. I remember touching the screen as if somehow the warmth of my hand could reach his cheek. I saw Claire pull back and away from the camera space to dab at the corners of her eyes with a napkin. Her brother did a great job of small talk about the local ball teams and the Red Sox. Toward the end I didn't trust my voice to hold solid and strong. Gerry signed off loudly and with regards as Claire and I quickly said, "Love you!"

A showery day in March we received news that Dan's unit would be home in two weeks. Claire was already planning

Pens and Keystrokes

great things for his return and I called everyone with the news. I began to complain to a dear friend of mine that this had been just too much agony. Jillian allowed me no sympathy. She reminded me of all the families who only received ancient letters or an email on occasion at best. Many had not seen their soldier for months and years. Family members were added and subtracted during those years away. She reminded me of those who had men in dress uniforms appear at their doors speaking those somber, odious words, “Mrs. _____, we regret to inform you...” There are no words for the feeling that penetrates one whose sight and sounds are filled with that sorrow.

I await him now, sitting in the high school gymnasium, remembering the first time Dan played ball here. His dad hardly sat down the whole game. My boy, our son, our loved one is coming home. I am truly blessed.

~ Ro Jean Straw

Pens and Keystrokes

THE END OF THE DOCK

As I sit at the end of this dock
and look around at the fall foliage,
I think about how quickly things change,
Things that are simply out of my control.

As I sit at the end of this dock,
I think about how the leaves
have no control over when they fall,
just as we have no control over the people
who stay in our lives.

As I sit at the end of this dock,
I wonder how often you think of me.
But then I realize I have no control over
that either.

~ Paige Tranchemontagne

Pens and Keystrokes

MY DAY

When I woke up from my bed to start my day,
I fell in love with a smile on the face of my son
and later I fell in love with the gesture of his hands.
My oldest son was coloring a picture with my youngest son.

After I ate my sandwich in the kitchen,
I fell in love with my massif brown and white dog.
He was wagging his tail while holding his toy.
He wanted to go outside to play in the yard.

When the sun went down and the clouds came out,
I fell in love with a boy in his truck pajamas.
Teddy bear in hand, arms open wide,
he came down to hug me and say good night.

When I went to bed to call it a night,
I fell in love with a reflection my reflection,
a feeling of happiness for the good job I've done.
A pillow and blanket, the night has begun.

~Tammy Rabida

Pens and Keystrokes

STUMBLING OUT OF THE CLOSET

Most people assume that coming out of the closet is something that happens once in a lifetime; once you're out, you're out! From first-hand experience, I can say that is simply not the case. Just last week, I came out to one of my college classes. It wasn't a profound moment where I stood up and announced it to the class, I just said that I'd be writing my essay on the topic of coming out. However small the act was, it was still a coming out experience. This was the first time in half a decade I had come out to that many people at one time. My heart was racing and I was very nervous, like I hadn't felt in a long time coming out to people. Explaining my sexuality in this manner was something I thought I was done with, but I realized in that moment that it never truly ends. Coming out will happen for the rest of my life. A chapter that I thought had ended will always continue. However, I know how to handle myself in these situations now because of my past. In 2008, I came out for the first time, an experience that changed me forever.

I could write an entire other essay on what I call "the discovery process" of figuring out who I was, and who I would become. When you're young and sexuality is a new concept to you, figuring out where you fit into the equation takes a lot of self-awareness and time. It doesn't just happen overnight, but rather is a process that takes years, and for others much longer, to go through. Keeping a long story short, I figured out I was gay in the sixth grade, at age 12, after a few years of questioning and internal struggle. Realizing this massive piece of myself was a huge step, but now I had to keep it a secret. I felt like I couldn't tell a soul,

Pens and Keystrokes

and it was truly petrifying. All my life, I had grown up to believe being gay wasn't something I should be proud of, and that I shouldn't tell people. The scariest thing in the world was the thought of the wrong person finding out. If one person at school found out, everyone would know. That's just how it is these days, no one has secrets. I didn't want everyone to know because I didn't want to lose anyone close to me. I didn't want to become an outcast. I also knew that if my school found out, my family would be right behind, and that was just as scary. I didn't want them to think any differently of me. I wanted everything to stay the same.

So for almost a year, I hid that piece of myself. Every day, I woke up wanting to tell everyone, and went to bed having told no one. I distinctly remember, in the sixth grade, deciding that I would come out to everyone my sophomore year of high school, meaning I would be in the closet for about three to four years. Looking back now, I realize how ridiculous that plan was, and just how impossible it would be for me to achieve. I'm the type of person who shows all his emotions on his face. People can always tell how I'm feeling or what I'm thinking, which is a really unfortunate thing when I had such a big secret to hide. Deep down, I knew this would be impossible.

However, I tried my hardest. I entered the seventh grade going to a new school for the first time since I was six. I went to a small, Catholic elementary school for seven years, with a sixth grade class of twenty-five people, and suddenly was thrown into a class of three hundred, the vast majority of whom were complete strangers to me. This also meant that I was a stranger to them, and I thought that maybe I could

Pens and Keystrokes

hide who I was easier than before, because they didn't know me. I could maybe act a little less "gay" and maybe people wouldn't suspect anything. This proved to be an incorrect hypothesis. Constantly, almost daily, people would come up to me and ask, "Are you gay? Huh? You can tell me. Are you gay? You kinda act gay." Every day, I would deny. Deny, deny, deny. It was the only thing I could do. At the same time, it was so tiring. I just wanted to be free of this weight on my shoulder.

Finally, one day in December, I just couldn't take it anymore. I finally put an end to the internal hell I was enclosed in. Over the months, I had become good friends with a few of the girls in my homeroom, Brooke and Angel. One day in history class, Brooke knew what I was hiding, and she basically forced it out of me. I knew I couldn't keep the secret any longer. Finally, during a free moment in class, I sat down with Brooke and Angel and proclaimed, "Yes, I'm gay!" I was shocked the words were even coming out of my mouth. It was the strangest feeling in the world. They were the first souls I told. I didn't exactly know how to feel at first. I was just so overwhelmed by the fact that I confessed!

What I experienced next was a profound feeling, something I never thought I'd feel: satisfaction. I was so scared to tell people, that I never realized that the consequences might not all be bad. Brooke and Angel, being the sweethearts that they were, reacted so positively to me. I had truly never felt better in my life. They welcomed me into this new world with open arms. I felt free, even if only for a moment. I realized a new juggling act would occur: being out with the people I was out with, but also staying in the closet with the

Pens and Keystrokes

people I wasn't. I knew that the more people I told, the easier it would get. Just a few moments later, I decided to tell another one of the girls in my class. As the weeks went on, I told more people, and became more comfortable with the fact that yes, I am gay, and yes, I should be proud of it. That feeling truly got me through what could've been a very hard year. What also got me through was the support I got from most of the people I came out to. Most of them were girls, so it was easy to come out to them, and they were all very supportive.

However, I knew some negativity would come my way sooner or later. Being a thirteen-year-old boy with friends who were guys, all of the reactions weren't always positive. In fact, something happened that I really hoped wouldn't, what I had feared from the start. As my guy friends started to find out I was gay (none of whom I had actually told myself), they stopped talking to me. I was shocked at how fast the change was. Some of the people who I considered my best friends in the world stopped talking to me forever, and I don't exaggerate when I say that. It's been six years since then, and most of them haven't had a full conversation with me since.

Looking back, I should have been really depressed over this. Not only did I lose all my guy friends, but they started bullying me as well. I was called a faggot to my face, which should have bothered me. However, that feeling of satisfaction from the first time I came out stayed with me, as well as all the positive reactions that followed. The experience of coming out for the first time truly made me stronger. I realized who was there for me and who wasn't. I realized who was important and who wasn't. In those revelations, I realized whose words mattered to me and

Pens and Keystrokes

whose didn't. I could've been called a faggot a million times to my face by as many ugly thirteen-year-old boys as the world wanted to throw at me, and I simply didn't care. The support I gained from the girls who surrounded me was immense and overwhelming. Not only did they stand up for me, but I learned to stand up for myself. One story, which I actually don't remember, but which has been told back to me, is that I stood up to one of my bullies, and yelled in his face, "There is nothing wrong with being gay and I am proud of who I am, so you should just shut up and leave me alone!"

I was also able to gain strength from music. As the year continued and my life continued to change, I grew closer to the music that I loved. Artists like Lily Allen (who has a lyric that states "You say it's not okay to be gay, well I think you're just evil") and Lady Gaga (who has been a firm supporter of gay rights since she burst onto the scene) made prominent impacts on my life, and they still do to this day. These musical bonds helped me maintain my sanity through the year, and this reliance on music as a form of therapy has continued on with me through other situations in my life.

My newfound confidence also helped me when it came time for my family to find out. Unfortunately, I never got the true opportunity to come out to my family. I was actually outed to my Dad, by one of my cousins who was in the same grade with me throughout school. She obviously found out from school, and because we didn't have a close relationship at the time, she blabbed to my whole family. One day, out of nowhere, my dad confronted me about the situation.

Pens and Keystrokes

In the middle of my episode of *Grey's Anatomy*, he walked up to me and said, "So I hear from your grandmother that you're gay."

Instead of hiding it like I would have in the past, I just decided to end it. "Yep, I am!" and that was that.

The situation with my family knowing was a little awkward at first. No one was really negative about it, but at the same time, no one wanted to address it. As time went on, things became normal, and now my sexuality is just a normal part of our lives. The biggest fear that I had from the beginning ended up being almost a non-issue in the end.

As the years went on, the bullying at school decreased, but I still carried the strength from that initial coming out. I realized that I should be proud of who I am, and not to care what other people think. Without that mind set, being in junior high and high school would've been so much more miserable than it already was. Coming out of the closet made me a much stronger person. I still feel that strength every time I come out to someone new. I also learned through the experience not to hide anything or wait to do something, and to just go for it. There's no point wasting time thinking, "I wonder what will happen." I'd much rather look back and say, "Oh well" than "what if?"

~ Alex Giguere

Pens and Keystrokes

CHIPS

He was always hungry,
eating from his bag
of Cape Cod potato chips.

IBM stock moves slowly,
as do all Blue Chips.

The porcelain mug was her favorite,
blue with dainty flowery designs,
ringed with a chipped pattern.

Speed and capability are assets of youth,
and the aged creep by
with poor performance.
A click and a smile
as the motherboard accepts
its new chipset.

Like father, like son.
He is a chip off the old block.

Mother and Father are worried
about what their child is shown
about how life is on the television,
worried enough
to engage the V-chip passcode.

The crowd goes wild
celebrating the end of the clock,
watching the goalie hold up the puck
from that last chip shot of the game.

Pens and Keystrokes

Always after a movie
she craves a bit of Mexican fare.
After two years,
Chipotle's is a tradition.

Twelve minutes at 350 degrees
produces eight to ten
of the best chocolate chip cookies.

Nothing seems to get him down.
Not storm, nor job,
he is forever chipper.

She was there to think,
nothing more.
After the third come on,
she yelled at the bar,
"Leave me alone!
I am NO chippy!"

Redskin, savage,
Apache or Sioux,
The ignorant conquerors
know nothing of the Chippewa.

Superior and righteous
she flays him with a look
as he returns from Tens with his friends.
Little does she consider the hypocrisy
as she looks forward to her girls' night out
at Chippendales.

~ Stephen Allain

THE STORK

Once upon a time, there was a stork who was born into a middle-class family. He had a happy childhood and did well in school, made the football team, and graduated with honors. Then he got drafted into the Army Air Force and served his country well during World War II. After the war, he went to college under the GI Bill and earned a degree in Business Administration.

Putting his education to work, he identified a niche market and started a baby delivery service. The stork soon found that he had a pretty good racket going for a high-demand product; business was brisk, with the orders just pouring in. It wasn't long before he built up The Stork Company into a successful enterprise, launched an IPO, and had shares being traded on Wall Street. His stocks soared in value, as he had the entire market to himself, and people were eager to invest in his company, product, and services.

It was easy to place an order; all you had to do was look in the back pages of *The Saturday Evening Post* for the Stork Company ad and send for the catalog. When you received it, you filled out the order form, checked off the options you wanted, included a check or money order, and mailed it in. Sometimes he even offered a two-for-one special. Then you waited about nine months, because each baby was made to order, and they had a huge backlog, but he always came though, delivering a bundle of joy to your doorstep.

Pens and Keystrokes

With a solid business plan, low overhead and high profit margins, everything was just fine and dandy at The Stork Company. Until one day, sometime in the Sixties...
...Somebody invented sex.

It didn't take long for people to figure out that they didn't need to order a baby from the stork when you could just build one yourself from scratch. It still took nine months, of course, but it was a lot cheaper and you didn't need to fill out an order form, or even buy the kit. As the do-it-yourself approach gained momentum, the stork saw his market share shrink and the company stock plummeted. By the time 1970 rolled around, he found he could no longer compete and liquidated his remaining inventory before he closed his doors for good. He was disappointed about it, as he had built his fame and fortune around the baby delivery business. Down, but not out, he still had good entrepreneurial skills and a keen eye for opportunities; drawing on his vast experience, he set out to reinvent himself and established a whole new enterprise to meet the demand of expecting mothers.

And that, in a nutshell, is how the stork got into the business of selling Vlasic Pickles.

~ Craig Merrow

Pens and Keystrokes

HIS PLAID SHIRT

He wears it around the house all the time,
smelling of Old Spice.
His favorite is blue, green, white, and black.

It compliments his bright blue eyes,
that have less sparkle now.
Beginning to show the wrinkles of time,
of the many memories that sit in his cranium.

He wears this shirt with faded jeans, suspenders,
a white tee shirt with a hole in the front, and his black
sneakers.
He doesn't like change.

Now his shirt is all I have of him.
Just the lingering of his scent.
I will always have the memories,
but I wish I could hear, "I love you," one last time.

~ *Catarina Michaud*

CAMP CALMS



That summer of 1958, Camp Calms at Moose Pond in Bridgton, Maine, wasn't *Lake Placid*—but those tranquil waters held their own secrets. The lazy hum of insects was a perpetual background chorus. While my parents wanted my sister and me to busy ourselves with fishing, I never took to the hook and line—all that tearing of tender fish flesh by the jagged nasty hook turned me away. Soon I would be hiding along the bank watching the lily-pads float over the breeze rippled water. Occasionally a tiny green head would appear above the surface, then a webbed arm or long green leg, glistening with droplets of water. Mounting a gently rocking lily-pad, the young frogs would bask in the warm early summer sun. Drowsily, my head nodding as I tried to fight off the mesmerizing spell of the lake, the first warning came as all the frogs abandoned the lovely pads and waxy white lilies with their sunny yellow centers.

Pens and Keystrokes

Moments later I heard scrapping as the metal bottom of the rowboat was dragged along the shore—then the telltale swoosh and slap as it dipped into the water. Hiding in the shoreline vegetation, I could just glimpse parts of the oars as my cousin, “little” Paul, rowed past—his pet snapping turtle sometimes shared the ride. The rhythmic dip and splash of the oars would be followed by eddies of water reaching for the shoreline. The lilies dipped and bobbed as they rode in the wake. Within moments an ear-shattering, “ARROUGA,” would rend any last shreds of calm from the early morning lake.

And that was my call to action. At first, I went on rescue missions alone. Within weeks the fledgling FFFA had three members: my older sister, Dianne, my brother, Henry, and me. I had christened our mission of mercy the Freedom For Frogs Association. Once “little” Paul was out of sight around a bend, we would make use of any cover to conceal our passage—objective, my Uncle Paul and Aunt Julia’s camp. Beside the snapping turtle’s cage would be what was left of the last haul of tiny frogs, submerged—terrified—in a bucket with sides too high for them to escape.

We would dump the contents back into the safety of the pond and cover our tracks sweeping with brooms made of brush and grasses. Then quickly we would high-tail it back to our former occupations. Sometimes this was quite tricky as we never knew when my aunt or uncle might be around. And “little” Paul’s trips became shorter as he caught on to the fact that there were just too many “accidents” involving tipped buckets that couldn’t be accounted for by sudden gusts of wind or his dog Yogi’s overactive tail.

Pens and Keystrokes

The climax soon came as “little” Paul took a different route one day and cut back across his yard to catch us in the act of freeing the frogs. I stepped to the fore though he was twice my size—after all; I was the founder of the triple FA.

His face flushed a ruddy shade of red, “little” Paul shouted, “I’ll sue you for every penny you’ve got.”

And I responded with all the pent up courage of the true defender, “Good, because I don’t have any pennies!” I knew, even then, that the snapping turtle had to eat—and frogs were his daily fare. I just wanted the frogs to have a fighting chance to live.

Fifty-seven years later, that sense of fair play has never left me. Neither has the knowledge that there will always be those who stack the deck unfairly—who do not use just and equitable standards. It’s not as simple these days. There are no buckets for tipping or nearby havens of deep water in which to free the victims. But I still use myself as a shield whenever I can. When things seem serene on the surface, I remember those Camp Calms days. I’ve learned the power of resilience. And somewhere, either beneath those waters or sunbathing on a lily pad this summer, is the long distant relative of a frog who was rescued by the FFFA.

~KMP

Pens and Keystrokes

NATURE'S FURY

The clouds rolled in quickly
and the thunder roared loudly.
The lightning flashed furiously everywhere
and my heart started beating faster than usual.
I was scared of the loud thunder that was roaring outside
and terrified of the severe lightning that lit up the entire sky.
The wind was whipping around outside.
It all sounded like a freight train was heading our way
so I hid in fear from the path of danger
in case a tornado that was heading our way.
And I prayed faithfully for my safety
and for God to spare all our lives.
I knew I did not want to die
not even at that moment in time.
With each clap of thunder the fear in me grew even stronger
and with each flash of lightning, I whimpered in fear.
The fear in me grew stronger and stronger
as the storm seemed like it was getting worse.
I wished for the storm to pass quickly,
leaving the skies clear up above.
As the storm moved away slowly
I could hear the clap of thunder in the distance and the
lightning so shallow.
As it moved farther and farther away
I felt like I could breathe again.
I was hoping that the storm would not return and it would
be all over.
When I felt it was safe
and I could come out of hiding,
I opened my front door

Pens and Keystrokes

and found the sky was all blue and shiny.
A few white clouds lingered in the sky up above
with some dark clouds left in the distance
from the storm that was just here.
There were leaves on the ground
that the wind had plucked from trees that now looked
ruffled.
But all in all we all survived the wrath of this storm.
I did not know what to do if the storm was indeed a tornado
as the New England area I live in is not prone to having
tornadoes.
We would not know what to do.
The weather indeed is crazy everywhere people live.
I guess it is best to be prepared in such cases-
Nature can be surprising anywhere these days.

~ Shari Norton

Pens and Keystrokes

MARCH

Nine to the front, six to the rear~
This is the way we do it here.

Fifteen inches all around
with our feet hitting the ground.

Left foot, right foot, left foot, right
making us look, quite the sight.

Left foot, right foot, left foot, right
here we go, in to the night.

Nine to the front, six to the rear~
This is the way we do it here.

~Kurtis Grant

TAKING BACK LUNCH

On looking at my friend's lunch tray and back to mine, I saw great discrepancies. She had apple crisp that seemed to beckon with its golden-brown cinnamon crumble and delicious smell and I had two large and orange marshmallow peanuts instead. They were an odd orange, and why orange for peanuts; who made that decision? She also had a large, warm pile of Tater-Tots in the area of the plate where I had four bedraggled French fries.

This was just not fair, I told myself as I sat down for lunch; this was wrong! I was not alone in my misery, which gave me no comfort. All around me, people from Mrs. Mesa's class were sizing up their lousy lunches with great distaste. None of us received dessert, or Tater-Tots and some even missed out on the hamburger and were given peanut butter sandwiches instead. It was a great miscarriage and all around this area of the cafeteria kids were comparing lunches and grousing.

"This really isn't fair," I announced to those around me. "We pay for these lunches (ah, that would be our parents, but the point was clearer than the details). "They owe us what we were told we were having for lunch. They never said anything about these crappy peanuts!" We all spoke at once, complaining, agreeing, and finding great comfort in our communal anger.

These lunch disappointments were becoming more common. Six times in the last month. At first, they had been easy to forget. The nice weather of early spring had

Pens and Keystrokes

rendered such complaints a distant memory as soon as we went outside for recess. But today was the second time this week!

Our class was cursed. Mrs. Mesa moved in a way where she always appeared to be standing still. She must have been great at Red Light/Green Light. She was old, past 30, forgetful and did nothing quickly. If we ever had a real fire instead of the drills, our class was looking at a fiery end. Lunch was no different. No matter how cooperative we all were about following her directions, she just could not get us out of that classroom on time. Then she would trudge creepingly slowly down the hall and would make us stop moving all together if it seemed that anyone was attempting to speed up. So we had learned: we would be late, always late. But it wasn't our fault, so why should we suffer?

"We should protest," I proclaimed. Everyone looked at me. "Yeah, if we don't like this, we should protest," I continued, working it out as I spoke. "We should refuse to buy hot lunch if this is going to happen. If we all start bringing our lunch, they'll notice." There were two fifth grade classes with about 55 kids total. Everyone's eyes were on me and they looked willing for direction. "We just ask our Moms to make us lunch." Most kids bought lunch because it was hot and easier for the mothers involved. I lived in a largely Irish-Catholic community of very large families. We all agreed, and, excited to have a plan, exited to recess with renewed enthusiasm for time outside.

My Mom was not happy to have to make me lunch. There were six of us and what one received, the others wanted. Amazingly no one else requested a home lunch. Probably

Pens and Keystrokes

because my mom was committed to carrot sticks and fruit as side dishes.

The first day the lunch count was taken and only two ordered hot lunch, there was definite excitement in the air as we all looked to each other with silent glee. Mrs. Mesa, like the rest of the teachers, never listened to the hot lunch count and so was oblivious to the “event”. The kid chosen to deliver the count to the cafeteria left the room, as if on a mission, full of purpose and haste.

The next day there were no hold-outs: a perfect 100% of both fifth grade classes brought their lunches. At recess, I queried my two younger sisters and found there was only one in each of their grades still ordering hot lunch. Success! By day three and four, we were down to one hold-out in the second grade class of my youngest sister. She had nine in her family, and her mom had won the battle on behalf of convenience.

We were now at Friday and, buoyed by our numbers, we were prepared to go on as long as needed. At recess we gathered both fifth-grade classes to strategize. Yes, the home lunches were dreary for some, I was among them with my ubiquitous carrot sticks, but it was sacrifice for the principle! We agreed Monday would be no different than the rest of the preceding four days. I let all know I would be talking to my younger sisters at this recess so that they might gain their grade’s continued support. By the end of recess all was in place to continue amongst the three grades.

Monday came with the rustle of many home lunch bags signaling our commitment. We were now entering a second

Pens and Keystrokes

school week of protest. Yet, there was something else different today. When the lunch count was taken, Mrs. Mesa was listening. I don't know what she usually did during that time, but today it was less important. She watched as the lack of hands for hot lunch was recorded on a slip and said nothing. A few of us noticed and exchanged glances. Jo-Jo Hanks, my best friend, was elected to bring down the count. He looked a little less than thrilled. Usually it had been a great honor and garnered the person celebrity status during recess as they could recount the cooks' response to the lowly numbers. He left hesitantly and slowly. Joe was gone for a little longer than usual. When he finally returned he was with the principal. Mrs. Mesa stepped into the hall with the two of them. Low murmuring voices ensued. Then Mrs. Mesa stepped back into the classroom and asked me to join them. Hmm, I felt caught, but intrigued.

Mrs. Mesa then asked the rest of the class to go into Mr. Pirillo's room and the four of us headed towards the cafeteria. Mrs. Skogg stood waiting in the hall, massive arms folded across her chest. Mr. Sparks, the principal, began with questions about our motives and listened as I explained our righteous cause. All we wanted was what we had paid for and not the odds and ends they were serving us. When I finished, Mr. Sparks thought for a few minutes and then told Joe, Mrs. Mesa, and me that we could return to our classroom with the knowledge that there would be no need to protest any longer.

We departed much quicker than I had ever seen Mrs. Mesa move. I so wanted to look back and see what was happening, but I was also afraid. Mrs. Skogg was the head of

Pens and Keystrokes

the kitchen ~ her position and her general demeanor inspired a sort of fearful respect. I don't know what I thought I would see if I looked back, but I feared meeting her gaze and so I proceeded straight ahead.

At recess, the two fifth grade classes gathered as if drawn together by a magnetic force. Joe and I delivered a detailed recounting of the meeting, emphasizing how reluctant we were to even look in Mrs. Skogg's direction. She had been silent, although it seemed that was not by choice. Mr. Sparks was not mad at us, we explained, and he really listened. Mrs. Mesa had said nothing the whole time, even on the way back to our classroom.

We stayed like that, discussing and dissecting the whole event. So much purpose and energy had gone into it. When we were finished there was a sense of shared accomplishment. We had seen a problem and banded together to find a solution. We had all gone to school together since the first grade, but it was this moment which made me feel like a group.

Just as effortlessly as we had been drawn together, it was decided that a game of kickball was needed. As we ran over to get a ball and enjoy what was left of recess, I realized that next year there would be less recess and more difficult classes. The sixth grade loomed large and ominous. Somehow now I felt ready. Like in my showdown with Mrs. Skogg, I would just not look back and keeping moving forward. We really were the oldest class in the school!

~ *Rosaleen Moore*

Pens and Keystrokes

DYLAN: A PANTOUM

I only ever knew your name,
My eyes had never before met yours.
I'd never taken in your face. Strange,
Since it probably would have seemed familiar.

My eyes had never met yours,
yet I assumed you'd look like him.
Something about your expression is familiar,
reflecting the spitting image of my father.

I assumed you'd look like him because
you have the bloodline that I lack,
although I'm told I'm his spitting image.
But they don't know that I'm not really his.

You got the bloodline that I lack,
and I got the father to raise me.
No one really knows that I'm not really his.
He stepped up when my father didn't want me.

I got your father to replace him and raise me.
What did you get to replace him?
My real father hadn't wanted me, but
I don't think that's the reason he left you.

Did you get a new dad to replace him?
He said he was young at the time.
I think *that's* the reason he left you,
an unfortunate consequence of foolish youth.

He's said he was young when he had you,

Pens and Keystrokes

just as you were young when you said goodbye.
An unfortunate consequence of foolish youth,
an impossible quest to fill a void left inside.

You were still so young for his second, final goodbye,
too soon to be taken from this world
chasing an answer, perhaps to fill a void inside,
Exhausted you to the need for a long, peaceful rest.

Too soon you were taken from this world.
I only ever knew your name, Dylan.
Exhausted no more, now you rest in peace eternal,
And though I never knew your face, strange,

I felt the sorrow.

~ *Dani Bree Main*

Pens and Keystrokes

WHEREVER YOU ARE: A VILLANELLE

Wherever you are
my love will follow you
whether you are near or far.

Searching the night sky for the brightest star
my heart will be broken, I will feel so blue
wherever you are.

When you get ready to leave and drive off in your car
I hope you know that our love is still true
whether you are near or far.

Without you by my side my soul will have a scar
but know that my heart always belongs to you
wherever you are.

In bed late at night I will wonder where you are
knowing all of the dangerous things that you do
whether you are near or far.

Someday you will return from someplace so far.
Until then realize that our love is not through
wherever you are
whether you are near or far.

~Lydia Welch

Pens and Keystrokes

THE BEGINNING: A VILLANELLE

When the sun comes up, I hear the wind blow.
The moving of the tree brings such a rush,
moving swaying look at them go.
The rain has started I can see the gush.

The moving of the tree brings such a rush,
leaves are falling down to the ground.
The rain has started I can see the gush,
swirling and swirling around and around.

Leaves are falling down to the ground,
brown red green fall is in the air.
Swirling and swirling around and around,
a big wind is blowing and moving my hair.

Brown red green fall is in the air,
School has begun ~ I see a bus go by.
A big wind is blowing through my hair,
now a quiet road only the sound of my sigh.

Leaves are falling down to the ground,
moving swaying look at them go.
Swirling and swirling around and around,
when the sun comes up, I hear the wind blow.

~ Tammy Rabida

Pens and Keystrokes

A PRISONER OF WINTER



~ Paula Gagnon

Pens and Keystrokes

UNIFORMS

March march march
beat the drum and sound the horn
the boys in red and gold and white
go to war.

The brass band plays as they go
the cheering crowd, the ticker tape
the boys go to war
in their reds and golds and whites.

The battlefield is grey and brown
the boys, red and gold and white
can be seen across the front
they make good targets.

The men in green and grey
the men with rifles and cannons
they know not to fight fair
unless they want to fight again.

The boys still wear red and gold and white
the blood doesn't show
they can never take them off
they are buried in their uniforms.

~*Sam Bunker*

MY CHAIR DON'T ROCK

The morning dew is dripping from the electrified squirrel folded over the high wire. Its yellow teeth are exposed by the drawn back cheeks like it died screaming ~ ferocious thing. Its wet tail is dangling like a poor man's paint brush. A small puddle is growing below it on the sidewalk at the end of my chipped cement path. The smell of Spam sizzling on the stove follows me as I make my way to my lawn chair on the front porch. I grab handfuls of fat from my hips and squeeze my buttocks between the grungy white plastic armrests.

"Regina!" I call. "That ham ready yet?"

"It's coming, Grammy."

I push the warped splintered floor boards with the balls of my feet. I kick up like a rookie on a bull. I forgot, my chair don't rock.

"Here it is, Grammy."

"I know. That screen door speaks fer itself." I take the plate and set it on my belly. "It ain't burnt."

"It's more cooked than last time."

"When them smoke detectors go off, you'll know it be right." With my lips, I pull a piece of Spam off my fork.

"Now, Regina, don't do no poutin'. Yer just learnin'." I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand. She forgot to bring me a napkin, but I don't say nothing cause she seems delicate today. "Sit down by Grammy," I say. "Flip that cushion over so you don't get none of that sticky stuff on them shorts."

"What happened to the rocker?"

"Broke on me. I drug it out to the road last week. Them sanitation men left it again. There's a town meetin' tonight. I'm goin' to voice my concern. Them meetings contain lots

Pens and Keystrokes

of busy bodies. Some of ‘em yuppies, some granola, but they don’t scare me. Ever seen yuppies, Regina?”

“I don’t know.”

“Look. Two women yuppies are comin’ now. They got them strollers with bicycle wheels, and they’re pushin’ ‘em on the sidewalk.” I shake my head. “They ain’t walkin’ er runnin’. They just wiggle them fannies.”

Regina giggles.

“Close them eyes of yers, Regina. Them spandex things ought to be banned, ‘sides, I can see their cellulose jigglin’ back and forth in them shimmerin’ thighs. I know I got fat, but you ain’t gonna catch me flauntin’ my body around town with my pony tail swishin’ through a hole in my hat.” I lean forward. I yell so they can hear me. “Hey, your babies ain’t sleepin’! They is squintin’.” They pause with a start at my walkway. “Keep movin’! You don’t want no squirrel water in yer eyes.” Some water splashes off one of them visors. That other woman, with her hand, wipes the spray off her cheek.

“Now, can I look?”

I sit back. “Yeah. They crossin’ over the street where there ain’t no crosswalk.” I chuckle. “They think that ‘cause them canopies is pulled over them babies that the sun ain’t gonna get ‘em. Regina, you know why they sayin’ there’s a rise in skin cancer among kids?”

Regina shakes her head.

“That’s why.” I nod. “Them foolish parents only thinkin’ ‘bout themselves.”

“Grammy, do you want me to get you some more Spam?”

“Can’t eat no more; too disturbed.” I hand her my plate. “Go finish what’s left. Don’t do no hurryin’ with them dishes. We ain’t got nothin’ but time.”

Pens and Keystrokes

~ Sara Tremblay

HEARTBREAK

Heartbreak, a painful part of life
we all must endure
with chest pain as sharp as the stab of a knife
we all crawl, looking for a cure.

With butterflies dead
whose wings no longer fly
going over words once said
and questioning it all, with why?

In hindsight, we clearly see
and see more of what we left behind
that some things just aren't meant to be
and that we all can be a little blind

Heartbreak, such a painful part of life
teaches hard lessons only learned through strife.

~ Kelly Normand

Pens and Keystrokes

SPRING

Although fall is my favorite season, spring always brings a fresh new sense of beauty, hope, and renewal as Mother Nature, yet again, awes and inspires me. Part of the wonder of spring for me is the migrations and return of numerous species, big and small. Countless animals will fly, swim, or walk great distances, sometimes thousands of miles, on their journey to the Northeast. This includes songbirds and raptors returning from Central or South America, monarch butterflies leaving their winter homes in Mexico, alewives trading the ocean for rivers to spawn, or whales heading north from their calving grounds in the Caribbean to feed in the Gulf of Maine. All are great feats to be sure, but I would be remiss if I didn't give kudos to the many year round resident species that stay and survive the harsh New England winters, or those that stay, but avoid it (sort of) through hibernation in dens or makeshift homes under mud, water, and leaves.

Of course, spring also means the return of color! No longer do we see simple browns, greens, and white. Crocuses somehow burst forth through inches of snow with their bright purple and yellow faces to give us encouragement. Daffodils erupt in a splash of yellow and green to show us that warmer, brighter days will soon follow. Tiny tear drop shaped buds suddenly emerge everywhere; a sign that despite the illusion of stillness, much is happening beneath the surface.

I have always been an early riser, but the lengthening daylight hours and uplifting melodies of various bird species

Pens and Keystrokes

beckon me to get an even earlier start in the spring. Impatiently, I gather my things and head out the door with my favorite canine companion, eager to enjoy the serenity of greeting a new day and to see what we will discover that morning. Sure I can see some animals any time of the year, but there's something about the possibility of seeing them with their young that gives our springtime walks additional appeal.

Animals are my passion, so one of the reasons I have always enjoyed early morning walks is the opportunity to catch a glimpse ~ however fleeting ~ of wildlife. Of course, spring means pup season, so I take care to not let me or my dog disturb fox or coyote dens. I have been lucky enough to observe coyote pups at a den, but was able to leave the area quietly without disturbing them or arousing the protective instinct of their parents. White-tailed deer, sometimes with a spotted fawn or two trailing behind, have surprised us in places we didn't expect. Sparing us a quick glance, they'll bound down a trail or into the woods with a flick of their white tails. Female raccoons with their young scurrying to catch up as they amble along a stream bed have also caught our eye.

Despite being more of a mammal person, some of my favorite spring discoveries have included a variety of other species. One morning, a loud chorus led us to a vernal pool. There, we were able to witness a large group of frogs performing their mating rituals (just one of the reasons vernal pools are so important!). And how could I forget watching a parade of about 15 wild turkey chicks cross a trail with two hens to guide them? Some may not think wild

Pens and Keystrokes

turkeys are the most beautiful birds, but their chicks are definitely cute!

Then there were the turtles. Sure, I've helped an adult turtle safely cross a road in the direction it was heading, but got an even more pleasant surprise when I came upon baby turtles! While walking along a pond's edge, I spied a handful of these quarter-sized beings laying on logs and rocks to take advantage of the sun's rays.

Unfortunately, my discovery was soon followed by multiple "plunks!" as they all dove into the water when they detected my presence. One of the disheartening sights we do see most often, regardless of where we are, is trash left by humans. I have picked up countless plastic bags, Styrofoam cups, and an assortment of other items that are not only detrimental to the environment, but also to the wildlife that call each of those habitats home. Although definitely disappointing, my purpose is not to preach here, but rather to focus on the positive sightings of this time of year.

Spring is a symbol of hope and renewal for me – whether it's seeing new baby animals, trying a new activity, or just the simple enjoyment of listening to the peepers and watching the bats perform their insect control duties as I wind down for the evening.

So what does spring mean to you? Are you ready to stretch your own wings and try something new today?

~ Emma Cee

Pens and Keystrokes

BROKEN

Cold, dust covered, still.

Empty, alone and longing to be filled.

Wishing, wanting, needing to be whole once more.

Memories of past days, disappearing, no more.

Falling, dropping. Broken, every last drop of hope, gone.

No more future. Teardrops fall, careless looks, no one to
help, no one that cares.

Strong, proud and willing, willing to walk, walk ahead and
find hope, hope for a new day.

Reaching, running, chasing the hope. Slipping, crashing and
broken once more.

Weak, tired and broken. Laying face down in shame. All
that is, all that was, is gone. No more
hope.

~DJRF

Pens and Keystrokes

ADHD SONNET

As I walk into the wooded barrier
the night descended with swiftness.
The moon has become my dream carrier
bringing forth scenes, never to be witness
reaching towards my slumber's solitude.
My mind floating ever forward
Always moving, never meaning to intrude
like a boat moving ever shoreward.
My mind racing around and around ~
though I am dreaming, I am awake.
This medicine keeping me bound
I feel as though I am ready to break.
This ADHD that feels so alive
Can really be quite a dive.

~Kurtis Grant

TECH INTOXICATION

I can't say that I've always had the newest and greatest technology. I was born into the Digital Age, but growing up in a big family, money was tight. My family couldn't afford basic cable or internet, let alone expensive electronics. Most of the electronics we did have were often a few years out of date. This inexperience led to me being a little apprehensive about technology, including the internet. Like a lot of kids my age, I heard many horror stories about online chatrooms and people who weren't who they said they were, which made me especially wary of the internet. Because of my upbringing, I have a complex and unique view of the world of electronics and interconnectedness that we are all exposed to on a daily basis.

Although we didn't have a lot of money, I always found a way to listen to music. When I was about seven, I somehow came to own a massive, 15-year-old, hand-me-down stereo system. Its components included a record player, a tape deck, a CD player, and a radio, all wrapped up in a faux wooden exterior. By the time it reached me, however, only the radio and one of its two speakers were functional. Despite this, I loved listening to any radio station that I could pick up in my tiny shared bedroom, hoping to drown out the noise of my siblings in the next room. Unfortunately, my brother spitefully cut the power cord to the stereo, and I had to look for new ways to entertain myself.

When Christmas rolled around that same year, my brother and I received a PlayStation. A PlayStation 1 in 2006 wouldn't have been such a big deal to most people, but it

Pens and Keystrokes

was the first piece of videogame technology we ever had in my house. The console was so out of date that I honestly don't know if new games were still being produced at the time. After Christmas, we went to the local GameStop and picked out some games, most of which were eventually scratched or cracked until we only had one game left, "The Emperor's New Groove." Soon, playing the game turned into a hassle because we only had one controller, and my brothers and I would fight over it. I tried to find something that my younger brothers weren't interested in. I tried a variety of things, knitting, climbing trees, and playing board games with my family, but I found that I didn't have too much interest in any of these activities. That's when while at my grandparents house, I finally ventured on to the internet.

I braved the screeching sounds of the dial-up modem and amongst other things, I found Youtube, and I started listening to music like I used to. On Youtube, I was amazed that I could not only listen to any song I wanted to, but also as many times as I wanted to hear it. Soon after that, I found another website called Youtube Repeater which played the video on repeat automatically instead of having to do it manually every three or four minutes. Using Youtube helped me to realize that the internet wasn't as scary as some people made it out to be. I became curious about the internet outside of Youtube, Google, and all the websites I used to play games on. I started wondering about how people used the internet to socialize.

I was about 12 when kids at school started instant messaging. I remember going on AIM and looking at the little green circles that indicated that a person was online. I was usually too shy to talk to most people on AIM, so my instant messaging phase didn't last very long. However, I

Pens and Keystrokes

wasn't completely done with social media. In June of 2010, after I completed the 8th grade, I made my Facebook profile. At first, I was excited to see what my classmates and family members were up to over the summer. For a while, it was fun to talk to my friends everyday, post pictures, and update my status for the world to see. I would read through the posts of my over 300 "friends" which were often riddled with spelling mistakes, sexism, and uninformed political rants. I eventually got tired of reading the Facebook posts and seeing all the overly edited pictures of my peers. I was so fed up, I deleted over 200 of my Facebook friends, and stopped posting photos and updating my status. Now, I only maintain my account to talk to my closest friends and family members, and I don't miss the arbitrary posts of my peers. While I don't necessarily enjoy reading my distant cousin's unfiltered political blabber on Facebook, I do genuinely love the internet.

Being an introvert, using the internet allowed me to explore the world around me in a way that I felt comfortable with. I could I could get the news, play games, talk to friends, find new music, and read articles on Wikipedia about my favorite things. I used the internet to visit websites that allowed people to discuss things that they were interested in. I found some that talked about things that I liked, and I read them everyday. I read about my favorite bands, gardening, painting, and cooking. It seemed that every topic I was interested in had a selection of websites to explore. I learned how to cook, draw, and cut my own hair from information I read on the internet. The internet offers up a plethora of ways to learn new things ~ all any one has to do is click.

Besides the educational benefits of having my iPod, I could

Pens and Keystrokes

also use it for playing games, socialising, listening to music, and of course, surfing the internet. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't use my iPod in one way or another. You could say that I use my iPod almost as someone else would use their smartphone. It lets me block out the world around me when I need it and connect to it when I don't. I'm not saying that my 4-year-old iPod is the end-all and be-all of technology, but it has made my life easier. I can't justify buying my own computer when my iPod is almost as good, and it fits in the palm of my hand. I can do all the socialising on my iPod that I could do on a computer. As somewhat of a high school outcast, the internet made me feel less alone and helped me realize I wasn't the only kid who felt the way I did. It helped me educate myself about Vincent van Gogh, or early 1900s quack medicine, or where sesame grows, or whatever random thing came to mind.

Ultimately, I agree that many people today are too attached to their electronics, but I can also attest that technology has the ability to improve the lives of millions of people, and not just in the usual ways. If an old stereo had the ability to make my life a little bit better, I can only imagine how another person's life must've been improved by something like a cellphone or a GameBoy. The way that technology improves our lives is astonishing. However, I think a person has to be responsible for their own actions regarding technology in order to not be carried away. Technology can be great, but in the hands of someone who doesn't appreciate it, it can also be controlling. I think growing up without the latest technology helped me to understand its power to improve lives, I only wish others would appreciate it as much as I do.

Pens and Keystrokes

~ART

LOOK AWAY: A VILLANELLE

You are the change you display.
Pixels dance for your attention
sometimes it's hard to look away.

Kneeling to God as they pray
oppressed people take action.
You are the change you display.

Looking down as you text your "bae"
you don't notice the faction.
Sometimes it's hard to look away.

A neck tilted the wrong way
trying to avoid communication ~
you are the change that you display.

Watching others as they play
there is no real interaction.
Sometimes it's hard to look away.

You grab for it as you lay
easily giving into its attraction.
You are the change you display ~
sometimes it's hard to look away.

~Clayton Martin

Pens and Keystrokes

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Love at first sight ~
after months of convincing,
our parents finally said yes!
As ecstatic as my sister and I were,
it was off to the Windsor fairgrounds.
It was finally time to meet our new best friend.
He may have been one of the smallest race horses,
But he'd still won a handful.
In just three weeks' time
there would be no more waiting,
Flight Forty Eight was coming home,
to be part of our family.

~ *Lauren Chasse*

Pens and Keystrokes

THE UNDEFINED MOMENT

It flickers, in the evening.
It courses through their veins.
It smells of burnt leather and sounds of slow heartbeats.
We can only hear silence. Faint sound of cries in the
background.
We drive by and no one thinks.

Now it begins. Now the loud noises in the distance appear.
Now the crying begins as the noise gets closer.
Now it is running down a face.
The slow feeling, of blood dripping everywhere.
And now the breaking begins with glass flying all around.

Here goes the beginning of a long journey,
Here are the men helping, moving
the bodies carefully to safety.
By telling each will be okay. Are safe now.
It's done. Look, we made it.

~Morgan Wadleigh

.

Pens and Keystrokes

PERFECTION

There is an idea.
It's in everyone's head.
It's always being heard,
but is rarely said.

Many aren't granted this title.
This thing is called perfection.
Getting held to these standards.
There can be no exception.

What some don't realize,
yet some still do,
is that deep inside us,
none of it's true.

There is no perfection.
We're all different you see,
but beautiful in some way.
Just like you, just like me.

So just be yourself.
Always be true.
Because you are
your own perfection.

Don't let anyone change you.

~ *Anonymous*

*Enjoy the diverse voices of the YCCC
community in this 11th annual collection
of poetry, stories, and non-fiction essays.*



**YORK COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

2015