



Newsletter

Volume 20, Number 2 Fall, 1999

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The best teachers of writing are writers themselves. This tenet is fundamental to National Writing Project philosophy and holds true for PAWLP as well. We don't just believe this to be true. We truly know that teachers who write understand the writing process in ways that teachers who don't write cannot. Teachers who write experience the exploration - and anxiety - of prewriting and drafting, the struggles of revision, the discoveries of peer response, the pleasures of publication, and the recursive-ness of the process itself.

Teachers who write can share their experiences with their students and can empathize with those students as well. They understand writing as something everyone does, not just those with a gift for writing - or an assignment.

There was a time when this *Newsletter* regularly provided opportunity for publication of teacher-consultants' writing. Not just their articles and columns, but their essays and poems, personal narratives and reflections appeared in every issue. During those early years the *Newsletter* was more of a patchwork, a collection of pieces of all kinds trying to serve all the purposes possible for a Project publication.

Two years ago, we decided the *Newsletter* needed a clearer focus. It needed to be more of a *NEWSletter*, a news-you-can-use

publication for its audience of educators in so many different settings and positions. The response to our new look and clearer focus was overwhelmingly positive. Readers unanimously applauded Steve Heffner's "E-literacy" column and teacher-consultant-written "Best Practice" ideas. They enjoyed "Education Matters" by Michaels Associates' wonderful authors. They liked knowing about new PAWLP courses and programs, and they really appreciated Ann Mascherino's more accessible, reader-friendly new design.

Then the whispers began filtering back to the office. "Whatever happened to teachers' writing?" I was asked. "Shouldn't we be encouraging writing - and literature - teachers to write? What about all the wonderful work our Institute Fellows do?" And so on.

You get the idea. And so you get this *Newsletter*. Beginning with this issue, the *PAWLP Newsletter* will be published five times a year instead of four. Each additional annual issue will feature all kinds of writing by Project teacher-consultants. This first edition features writing by participants in our 1999 summer Writing and Literature Institutes. Future editions will feature writing by any TC's who have something to say, something to share, something to celebrate.

So send your pieces for publication to me at the Project office. Remember: the best teachers of writing are writers themselves. And many of

them are the 1980-1999 PAWLP Writing and Literature Institute participants reading this *Newsletter* right now!



20th Anniversary Issue

The next annual edition featuring writing by teacher-consultants will be published in the Fall of 2000, PAWLP's 20th anniversary year.

We would like to feature memories of Project events and experiences. Brief anecdotes, stories, and even snapshots are welcome. Please send all submissions to:

Andrea Fishman, Director
PA Writing & Literature Project
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383
afishman@wcupa.edu



If you are interested in becoming a teacher-consultant with the Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project, please call 610-436-2202.

We begin taking applications for next summer's Institutes in January.

Writing Institutes will be held in Doylestown and West Chester, PA and in Haddonfield, NJ.

The Literature Institute will be held in West Chester or Montgomery County.

Teacher-consultants are eligible to coordinate graduate and in-service programs and teach in our summer Youth Programs.

The Best Things in Life are Free?

by Maria Walton
'99 Literature Institute

The best things in life are free; at least, that's what everybody says. While I was reading the book *Laughing Boy* by Oliver La Farge, one theme in particular struck me. The main characters were constantly working toward getting more money while putting their own happiness aside. I'm just starting to realize how the process of accumulating wealth can affect the way people behave.

When I was in college, people were proud to say that they had no money, no jobs, and no worries. It was common to hear people talk about buying clothes at the thrift store, and the person who paid the least for her clothes was someone to be admired for not contributing to some overpriced department store. Nobody I knew would worry if someone spilled a drink on their clothes or borrowed something and forgot to give it back for two months.

But fast-forward to five years after college. Most of my friends and acquaintances now are gainfully employed. We still go out together, but things have changed a lot. As a professional person in my twenties, I am constantly amazed at the conversations I hear among people my own age. Now, we wouldn't dream of lending clothes to each other. Our garments are marked *Dry Clean Only*, and even a little spill of water could easily ruin a \$75 blouse. I know people who don't mind wearing ugly clothes as long as they have the right designer label. Is something better just because you paid more for it? In the novel, *Laughing Boy* wins a belt made of silver and turquoise. He likes the belt, although it is ugly, because it is valuable. *Laughing Boy* wears the belt proudly and doesn't want to sell or trade it. It makes him look rich.

I've also noticed that appearing to have a lot of money is really important to people. It seems that the race is on to see who can attain the biggest house and the best 401K.

Hearing people I know compare

how much they pay for their vacations, cars, and mortgages often shocks me. It seems that the question, "What does your investment portfolio yield each quarter?" is now suitable dinner conversation. These people aren't rich, but those designer labels, the new SUVs, or expensive jewelry give the appearance of wealth, and that's their primary goal. One of the first things *Laughing Boy* notices about Slim Girl is her jewelry and fancy clothes, and she is quick to tell him that she is rich. Those clothes make a powerful first impression. It's sad that often people do not take time to look past what kind of car a person drives or what brand name is sewn onto their clothes. Think about it: how many people marry or date someone because he or she has a great job and makes a lot of money? It happens all the time. Otherwise why would people sign prenuptial agreements?

Money even comes into play when negotiating power in intimate relationships. *Laughing Boy* knows that his family won't want him to be with Slim Girl, but he breaks tradition and leaves his family to be where she works. He only does this because she makes a lot of money. He wishes they could move closer to his family and she would do more traditional work, but he doesn't bring this up with her because he has been seduced by her idea of getting rich fast.

Slim Girl is controlled even more by her greed. She prostitutes herself to an American, constantly wishing to leave the town to live a more traditional Navajo life. Unfortunately, she is unable to give up her easy money, and wants to wait until they have more material possessions.

I have seen several of my friends struggle with comparable issues. They live and work in places where they are unhappy, but they deny their own feelings because they are unwilling to give up worldly goods in exchange for personal satisfaction. It is sad that so many people base their choices on financial concerns rather than on whether they are the right decisions.

Working to increase our own wealth affects how we choose people with whom to spend time. Slim Girl constantly thinks about how much she hates the Americans. However, she

pretends to be in love with one because he makes her rich. This again makes me think of my own life. In college we had many "unusual" acquaintances; we prided ourselves on having a large variety of friends who played in bands, got tattoos, and wore dreadlocks. We liked people for who they were, not for what they could do for us. Now my friends spend time socializing with people they don't really like because it is good for their careers. What does this say about us? Those people who planned to change the world and do things differently from their parents were awfully quick to sell out. But who am I to say what should make other people happy? I guess that for some people the best things are free, but it doesn't work for everyone. At least I know which one I am.

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

◆ The Keystone State Reading Association (KSRA) will publish the first issue of its educational journal in 2000. The purpose of the journal is to provide information to help improve the literacy achievement of students and provide a forum for literacy educators to share their expertise. The audience is classroom teachers and reading specialists. Educators interested in literacy development including classroom teachers, reading specialists, and reading supervisors should consider submitting manuscripts for this publication. Appropriate subject matter includes tried and true reading, writing, listening, and speaking lessons, effective teaching methods in the literacy classroom, and research studies. For more information please contact:

Dr. Nancy Nagy, Editor
Marywood University
(570) 348-6211, ext. 2407
E-mail: nagy@ac.marywood.edu

My Father's Son

by Andrew Huber
'99 Literature Institute

Jonesboro, AR; Paducah, KY; Edinboro, PA; Springfield, OR; Littleton, CO. The list of shootings and violence in schools has grown at an alarming rate over the past few years. While this trend is alarming in itself, it is even more troublesome when you consider that all of these incidents were committed by young men. Many attribute these instances of violence to violent video games, television shows, and movies. I think this shocking trend has another cause behind it: the lack of strong male role models in modern American society. Rather than humble, honest, and hardworking male role models like the one I had in my father, many young American males are stuck with role models like Latrell Sprewell, Austin Powers, and Bill Clinton—images of violence, sex, and adultery. While reading Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* and admiring what a great man Captain Forrester was, I was once again reminded how good a role model my Father is: strong, sensitive, hardworking, responsible, even-tempered, and caring. Looking back on my life, I can remember how I learned what a great man my Father is.

When I was young, I hated going to school. There were many mornings when I faked sickness, creating a fever with a thermometer and a lightbulb. I can't remember any real reason why I did not want to go to school, but I certainly remember what I did when I stayed home. As soon as it was safe for me to make a miraculous recovery, I sprinted down the stairs and dug out my Mom's slide projector. Rather than sinking into the couch and watching television, I would sit on the floor and watch scenes of my family's life together flash onto the blank white wall of our living room. There were scenes of me, my brother, and my sister at various ages and in various bathtub settings designed to embarrass us in front of future dates, as well as ones of each birthday cake we sat in front of to make a wish. There were slides of various Easter and Christmas mornings, with the appropriate eggs or wrapping paper strewn around the room.

After sifting through years and years of memories, eventually I always seemed to find my favorite box of slides. These were the pictures of my parents while they were

dating and in the first years of their marriage, while youth still shone on their faces and before my sister, brother and I wore that youth out of them. Of course there were wedding photos from the little white wedding chapel in Elkton, Maryland to which they eloped and pictures of their short honeymoon. Finally, at the bottom of the stack, I found my favorite slides resting where I had carefully placed them the last time I was deathly ill between seven and nine A.M. on a weekday. These were the slides of my Father when he was twenty-something, with his flushed face, his bright smile, and his 1950's era flattop haircut.

The first slide was of my Father in his fire company uniform - black pants and a pressed white shirt, complete with a badge on his left breast pocket. I remember a few years before these impromptu sickdays hearing the fire department scanner in the kitchen go off, and watching my Father rush away from the dinner table to save someone else's home. It was then I learned the value of giving of yourself to help others. In *A Lost Lady*, Captain Forrester does the same thing—willingly going into financial ruin to help the immigrants who invested in his bank. Rather than shortchanging them, the Captain gives all his money to his investors so that they will have better lives.

There was a slide of my Father sitting on the back porch with his shotgun on a hot summer evening, trying to keep the groundhogs out of my Mother's garden. Looking back, I was very proud of this because my Mother made my siblings and me spend many hours in the garden weeding and planting and picking various things. It was her own version of slave labor. I guess it made me feel good to know that my Father was protecting something I made. A few slides later there were pictures of the sheep my family used to have. I remember running after my Father and his shotgun as he went out to the pasture to protect the one remaining sheep that had not been slaughtered by some rich lady's German shepherd. Blood and various sheep entrails clung to the panting dog as it sat in the front seat of that lady's Mercedes. It was one of the only times in my life that I have seen my Father angry. He didn't shoot that dog (or that lady), and I guess this was the beginning of my even temper and my valuing of the things I have created and cared for. Captain Forrester must feel and control the same anger as he watches Ivy Pe-

ters tramp through the rose garden the Captain spent years creating.

There were slides of my entire family outside chopping wood. Throughout my life, my family has always had at least one woodstove burning nonstop in our house between the months of October and April. It was my brother's and my job to bring in the firewood from outside, but it was the whole family's job to chop the wood. In the beginning, I considered this as much slave labor as helping my Mother in the garden and was constantly "getting something in my eye." Eventually I grew too old for that and learned the value of hard work, chopping wood by my Father's side just as Neil Herbert recognizes the value of the Captain's hard work.

Captain Forrester also has a caring side. He is completely devoted to his wife, Marian, and often calls to her during his last days just to feel that she is near him. While the picture I have painted of my Father is of a rough, tough, gun-toting outdoorsman, this is only one facet of my greatest role model. Many years after my slide-viewing days, my Mother got a job in Harrisburg and commuted back and forth from Oxford every day. My Father and I took over the cooking duties and had dinner waiting for my Mother when she got home. Of course we ate a lot more pizza and fish sticks than when Mom cooked, but we tried our best. I remember sitting at the kitchen table doing my homework before dinner during these years, watching my Dad pace back and forth in front of the window, checking his watch, praying that Mom would get home safely once again. This is the same window he stands at today when he watches me leave after visiting them. This is the caring side of my Father—the side that waited up late to hear his children open the door when they came home at night; the side that would almost have a heart attack any time the phone rang after dark, fearing that something had happened to one of us; the side that I saw cry when he left his Father's hospital room after saying goodbye for the last time.

I am the last of the Huber line because my brother's children are all beautiful young girls. There is nothing I wish for more than having a son to raise the way my Father raised me. There can be no greater accomplishment for me than to be the kind of man that my Father is.

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PAPER PILLS

by Kelley Mallon
'99 Writing Institute

Anthony, at twelve, had lived in more places, more houses, than the average person does in a lifetime. Because of his father's job as a sales representative for a pharmaceutical company, his father and he followed where the business led, even though it meant a move about once a year.

Anthony's mother had been unable to adjust, so at a time when it was fashionable to "do your own thing" she did, leaving her husband and son to search for a world of her own, a more stable one if possible. They never heard from her again.

Anthony's father managed to deal with her departure calmly and cleanly, like he dealt with everything. But Anthony, being so much like his mother, needed hugs and promises, and those did not come. He loved his father, but their relationship was respectful and quiet. Anthony clearly sensed that he was not becoming the man that his father wanted him to be.

With each move, Anthony was forced to change schools. He never received the school picture with his current classmates; by the time the pictures were given out, he was in another classroom in another school with a new set of friends. No, not friends—the closed society of the junior high didn't encourage friendships with temporary students. His father, who easily adjusted to his new lifestyle with each promotion, could not see what was happening to the boy.

One night, Anthony enters his father's dark study and locates the cabinet that holds samples his father gives to customers. It is locked, but the boy is able to jimmy the door with the pocketknife that had been in his stocking last Christmas. The door springs open, offering Anthony a variety of new and different sensations.

He knows from overhearing his father's cocktail party small talk which pill produces which sensation. And he is searching for a particular sensation - a numb one - forever. Anthony is tired. Tired of trying to balance bad times with good ones. Tired of not finding a friend in his junior high world. Tired of things over which he has no control.

About a month earlier, Anthony had discovered a control - a power - over what went into his body, what he ate.

It started actually by accident during a quiz in his pre-algebra class. He hadn't studied, counting on his ability to remember things easily. This usually worked, since his classes were filled with students of much lower academic skills. However, this time Anthony sat, staring blankly at his quiz, and nothing clicked in his head. Without knowing it, he started tearing off the corners of his paper and putting them in his mouth. After a few chews, they were swallowed. Before he knew it, he had eaten the entire quiz.

When his math teacher asked for his paper, he admitted that he had eaten it. This triggered a wave of laughter, and the teacher's wide-eyed expression guaranteed that any chance of education that day was lost.

Lost on all but Anthony, that is. He had stumbled onto a new power, and he used it. His appetite for paper grew with his reputation, and soon he achieved the status of junior high hero. He was consuming up to 4 pages a day. Each of his teachers was aware of his paper eating but chose to ignore it, not wishing to focus attention on him.

His classmates who moved from teacher to teacher, room to room with him were able to keep a daily record of his consumption. By the time the entire faculty became aware of the situation, Anthony was eating the contents of a small examination blue book each day.

This obviously left little room in his stomach for a balanced, nutritional diet. Therefore, as the boy's appetite for paper increased, his weight began to decrease. Sunken cheeks and thin arms protruding from his sleeves gave him a look that matched the bizarre quality of his behavior.

Anthony enjoyed his new-found celebrity status, and he felt a certain smugness when his father finally took notice of his weakening condition. About the same time, the school officials had contacted him to talk about his son's behavior and had recommended that Anthony be the subject of the next Child Study Team meeting. His father agreed, wanting to know what they were planning to do for his son.

So the boy was tested and observed and studied and scrutinized. The accumulated data was studied and probed and discussed and scrutinized. The resulting decision was to assign Anthony to a class for socially and emotionally disturbed students. He took the news in a grand fashion and used his last day to set a new record for paper consumption.

A week in isolation in the new environment brought him to his current situation-sitting on the soft, dark carpet of his father's study with the release from all his troubles in his hand. They would not allow him paper or pencils or even books in his new class. There were no admiring glances, no smiles of recognition from his peers in his new world. Once again, Anthony was nobody. His father was satisfied that the system was properly handling his son's problem.

Now, his scrawny fingers prepare for a struggle to open the bottle, but the top easily gives way. A sign, the boy smiles. He empties the contents on the soft, dark carpet before him, and, just as he had done with the corners of his pre-algebra quiz, he slowly eats them, one by one.

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Charmed

by Maureen Noonan
'99 Literature Institute

"Can you tell me that story about your grandma again, Mom?"

Trying to keep my eyes on the road, I wondered why my ten-year-old son had asked me about this particular relative as we wound our way home on the leaf-canopied road in northern Chester County. I could sense his summer-touched face turned toward me, blue eyes wide, as he waited for my response. Another grandmother had been on my mind lately—Charlie Kate. I had met this no-nonsense natural doctor in Kay Gibbons' novel, *Charms for the Easy Life*, the book I chose for a Summer Lit Institute assignment. Now I needed a topic related to this reading for a written piece that would not be a "typical English class essay."

"Come on, Mom. Tell me the story before we get home," my impatient passenger insisted.

Feeling serendipity—hearing Wesley's request, reading this work about a strong woman, discussing gender issues in class, hunting for a topic. Were these activities converging as bolts to collide into an epiphany? (Well, maybe not a major transition in life, but a bit of enlightenment that could help my topic search!) *Charms* involved the saga of three generations of women, power-based in Charlie Kate—a person with an herb, method or advice to treat any ailment—her daughter Sophia, and her granddaughter Margaret. This self-designated physician interacts equally with the range of citizenry of her rural North Carolina area during the pre-Civil Rights era of the early twentieth century. Although Charlie Kate and my grandmother are separated by the Atlantic Ocean (which both enjoyed) and reality, I realized that they had a major experience in common. Each risked danger to help others, knowing what had to be done to achieve goals.

The incident my son wanted to revisit reminded me of the rescue and care of "the old man who shined shoes at Poole's Pie Parlor" in the novel. Charlie Kate helped this black man, despite the possibility of retaliation by the local Ku Klux Klan. With this fictional incident

in mind, I began to reveal the story to my son as I remembered my father revealing it to me.

"One afternoon my grandmother, your great-grandmother, left her family's farm and walked toward Ballindine, a nearby village, to help an ill, elderly widow. When she completed her chores there, she noticed that sunset was arriving too early for her to get back to her house by the curfew. In those days all Irish had to be inside by dark by order of the British who were governing Ireland. Bridget Heneghan, newly engaged to Michael Noonan, realized she would have to run across the fields to avoid being found by the guards. She pulled up her long skirt as she turned off the dirt road and climbed over a low stone wall. Hurrying through the darkening field, she heard voices—British voices—and saw some figures walking up the road. As she tried to make her way across the recently harvested ground, she felt pieces of dirt hitting her with cracking sounds. To her horror she determined that shots from the patrol's guns were challenging her trip home. Grandma just kept running, with bullets flying around her feet. Muted laughter followed her over the hill to the safety of her farm. Luckily my grandmother survived her 'mission of mercy,' as her experience came to be described, or we wouldn't be here today."

Wesley nodded slowly at the end of this legendary incident of our ancestor's life. (Yes, oral tradition still exists!) Bridget had ventured into the danger zone while helping another and had encountered intolerance as Charlie Kate had also, I recollected.

Reflecting further about these two, I could see how both had faced reality and had done what they felt they must. For instance, after my grandparents had been married a little over a year, they left Ireland for America by boat, to seek a better life for their soon-to-be-born child, my father, and any future children. Grandma also made sure her orphaned younger siblings got to "the States." Their house filled with their children along with newly arrived Irish relatives and friends. Despite their oppressed, rural Irish heritage, with their mother's encouragement, six of the eight children graduated from college, most achieving advanced degrees. In the novel, Charlie Kate's daughter finally finds happiness,

and her granddaughter heads off to college, all with the matriarch's guidance.

Strange how an encounter with a book and a child's question inspired me to recall this strong woman. Her spirit will continue through my children now, inspiring them to work for goals in spite of the odds.

Turning up the familiar gravel driveway, I realized I had finally discovered a topic for my assignment, thanks to my son and others no longer (or never really) among us. Writing—what a process!

Whiskey Springs

By
Diane Dougherty
Writing Institute Co-Director

Whiskey Springs. It is an adventure-hiking to the springs to pick huckleberries and have a picnic. Six of us: Theresa, Mary, Tony, Ray, and me and my dad. We pick huckleberries in the summer and sell them to the local diner and to housewives for 25 cents a quart. I am eight years old.

On Saturdays Ma packs up a hamper with fried chicken, home-baked bread and butter, and chocolate cake. Water, cold, clear and delicious from the mountain springs, quenches our thirst. We sit on a threadbare orange colored blanket, soft on the grass. I am the baby of the family, so I get to rest on the blanket more often than the others.

The huckleberries are warm and sweet. Five go into my mouth for every one that I drop into the bucket. My purple mouth betrays me, but Daddy just laughs; Ray and Tony scold. We work at the picking until the afternoon sun begins to fall into the mountain horizon. Then we begin the long trek back.

I love these days. I don't ever want to grow up.

TWO WEDNESDAYS

by Sultana Schwartz
'99 Writing Institute

It was on a Wednesday in late March when Hal was first placed in my classroom. My immediate feeling was one of irritation that I was getting a new student so late in the year. It meant that I would have to fill him in on classroom procedures, issue him books and supplies, and devise an assignment system for him. In other words, more work.

Soon, however, concern replaced my feeling of irritation. Hands thrust deep into his pockets, Hal arrived every day as if he were sleepwalking and just happened upon room 201. He carried nothing with him and sat slumped forward in his desk as if he were about to throw up. His hair, stringy and chestnut in color, was cut at a slant so that it fell forward to cover all of one eye and most of the other. I carefully watched that eye, but it never watched me back. Day after day he sat ghost-like in my classroom. Hal's body came to class daily, but he was not there.

The other kids were drawn to his shell of a human being like a tongue to a wobbly tooth. Despite my dark glances and carefully worded warnings, they had him pegged for the anomaly he was and devised all kinds of ploys to torture him into response. In the face of all their verbal poking and prodding, Hal never acknowledged their presence with so much as a glance. Once or twice I feigned a certain degree of ignorance of these tactics in the hope that maybe their perseverance would elicit some kind of reaction. In the end, I always admonished the other students before they had gone too far.

After Hal's second day of class, I approached his counselor. The reasons for Hal's emotional withdrawal became painfully clear. He had seen combat in the form of a very messy divorce, a move across country with his father, and then the devastating, accidental death of his older brother. This kid was shell shocked. He had lived through a war, but lost himself.

I redoubled my efforts and always included him in activities in spite of

his oblivion. "Hal, would you like to read the next two paragraphs?" "Hal, why don't you try number seventeen, please." I tried squatting to address him at eye level, and I turned the pages in his book. I smiled. I greeted him personally. I did everything short of cartwheels. No sign of life. And so it went class after dismal class until that other notable Wednesday five weeks later.

Every other Wednesday a different student chose a story from our literature book for the class to read aloud and discuss. This week's story was about a boy and his first fishing experience.

"Mrs. Schwartz, did you ever see all the teeth a shark has?" piped Jeremy Green (the king of lesson diversion).

I soon found myself telling the students about the huge shark tank at Baltimore's Inner Harbor. The delighted looks on their faces revealed that I had once again been successfully manipulated off track. I described the lives and habits of the fifty or so sharks of various species who were constantly forced to swim circles in the vast tank because it was the nature of the animal; the shark had to keep moving or die.

As I scrutinized their rapt faces, I happened upon Hal's nearly visible eye and I faltered in my speech, stunned by what I saw there. It was momentary but unmistakable. He was paying attention.

Hal continued to take some baby steps back into the world of the living. His metamorphosis was slow; he started with eye contact, actually looking at the other students who still occasionally teased him. He never volunteered answers or opinions, but he did start to respond when called on. Clear and resonant, his strong voice surprised us all and belied his tremulous emotional state. By the end of the year, Hal had begun returning good-natured barbs with the other boys in the class who were proud of his progress. After class one day Jason approached me inquiring, "Mrs. Schwartz, isn't it cool how Hal talks to us now?" In an unspoken bond, Hal had united us in a very special way.

Hal never became the prom king or valedictorian, but he did manage to graduate two years later, eat lunch daily with his small coterie of friends, and smile shyly at me in the halls the following school year. I claim no credit for his awakening, but I am convinced that it was on that day in my class as he listened to the story of the indefatigable shark swimming for his very life that Hal's healing process began.

I Still Believe

...continued from p. 7, column 3

I then began to teach my lesson just as I would on any other day. As each of my other two classes entered the room, I reiterated my story and my plea in much the same way.

All day I waited. I checked my mailbox between every class and scanned my desktop each time I re-entered my room. Nothing! Oh well. Even if I didn't get them back, I knew that I had acted, and reacted, in the proper way. And I honestly took some comfort from that.

I left school resigned to the fact that my paper clips were gone. I pushed the incident out of my mind and was determined I wouldn't obsess over it.

The next morning I unlocked my door, gave it a slight shove, then reached in to flip on the light switch. Something on the floor caught my eye. It was a small white envelope with my name, misspelled, printed in childish block letters. Obviously someone had made an effort to disguise his or her handwriting. When I opened the flap, I found a scrap of folded white paper. As I unwrapped it, out tumbled all four paper clips. On the paper, in the same printing, were the words "TM SORRY."

With a smile on my face and an unexpected dampness forming in the corner of my eyes, I carefully reinserted each clip.

As I looked up, straight ahead on the back wall a poster drew my attention. On it was this quotation:

"I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart."

-Anne Frank, 1944

I Still Believe

by Carlene Ettele
'99 Writing Institute

As I rounded the corner, my steps slowed visibly. I inched down the silent hallway and stood before my door. I could picture my room as I had left it: desks in rows, bulletin board artfully decorated, desk pad cleaned off, plan book above the pad with the brightly colored heart and star paper clips efficiently separating each of my classes' grades, books on shelves, scissors in the wicker basket, notebook paper in its wire basket.

I inserted my room key carefully and slowly turned it to the right. A soft click, a twist of the handle, and I was in my classroom.

Do I turn on the lights and let the destruction hit me all at once? Or do I wait for my eyes to adjust to the emergency lights and gradually take stock of the devastation?

You see, the day before I had been at a conference. I teach Spanish and English and my substitute was certified in neither. My lesson plans, therefore, were 90-minute, "keep them busy," generic classwork.

With all the courage I could muster, I opted for the "jump right in" approach. I flicked the light switch and involuntarily winced. Carefully I peeked, first with one eye and then with the other.

The desks were all in neat rows, the dictionaries were in the bookcase neatly lined up, the students' papers were in three perfectly aligned stacks on my desk, and next to these was a memo from my sub stating what he had done and declaring how well behaved my class had been.

"This is great!" I rejoiced. I could hardly believe what I was, in fact, seeing. Difficult as it was to believe, I had successfully missed a day of school and returned to find everything in perfect order.

I pulled out my chair, sat down, and reached for my plan book to check the day's activities. That's when I realized that my absence had not gone as smoothly as I had initially thought.

The paper clips that I used to separate my classes were gone. The little metal heart clips and the pink star clip had vanished.

My first reaction was disbelief, followed by outrage. How could these young people, whom I had trusted, betray me like this?

Wait until they get in here. One class at a time. I'm going to verbally abuse them. I'll take away every privilege they've earned, and give

them enough work to keep them busy until Christmas."

As I planned my attack, tears that had threatened to spill over just moments before streamed down my cheeks in hot torrents. And that's when it hit me.

I'm not angry. I'm hurt. These same children who entrusted me with their purses, their sports equipment, their inner thoughts, their secrets, had stolen from me.

My faith in the teenage world had crumbled. Suddenly I knew what I had to do. As a calm from some higher power washed over me, I serenely waited for my first period class to arrive. When everyone was seated and quiet, I began.

"Good morning, everyone. I have something very important to tell you. I want all of you to listen carefully to what I have to say."

I then relayed for them the series of events that had transpired when I had arrived at school that morning. I graciously complimented them on how perfect the room looked, how well they had completed their assignments, and how well behaved they had been. Everyone was smiling and softly congratulating himself or herself when I let the "bomb" drop.

"Unfortunately, not quite everything went as smoothly as it could have. While I was gone, someone took my paper clips from my grade book. Now, I know what you're thinking. "Grow up." "They're only stupid paper clips." "Get a life."

Well, maybe I should explain what those "stupid" paper clips mean to me. When I began teaching here at Antietam High School, my mother gave me those paper clips for good luck and as a reminder that she was always here, in spirit, with me.

Three years ago my mother died. And those paper clips have sort of kept her here with me ever since. That is, until this morning.

So, what I want is for whoever took them to return them. You can leave them in the office. Lay them on my desk between classes. Give them to someone else to return them to my room. I don't care. The only thing I insist upon is that NO ONE tells me who took them. I'm afraid if I knew, I would wind up disliking a child who simply made an error in judgment for the rest of my life. And that wouldn't make me a very nice person. So I'm appealing to your sense of righteousness to give me back my clips."

....continued on p.6, column3

The Same, Yet Different

a two-voice poem by Debbie Dinsmore, '99 Literature Institute

Together,	But on our own
Mom's tired.	Mom's tired.
She's worked all day.	She's worked all day.
Typing letters	Wiping tables
Answering phones	Taking orders
I need some help here!	I need some help here!
Buy her time	Buy her things
I'll make the dinner.	I'll make a sale.
Good, nourishing food	Hard, cold cash
That's what we need!	That's what we need!
Get a good education -earn money	Work hard - earn money
The American Dream	The American Dream
Study those books	Sell that crack
Get good grades	Collect hard cash
Options open - hope	Options closed - hopeless
Your final reward is coming	Your final reward is coming
When?	When?
Soon!	Now!
What?	What?
A good job	No...heaven

Based on the book *Third and Indiana* by Steve Lopez

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The Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project

West Chester University

West Chester, PA 19383

(610) 436-2202 fax (610) 436-3212

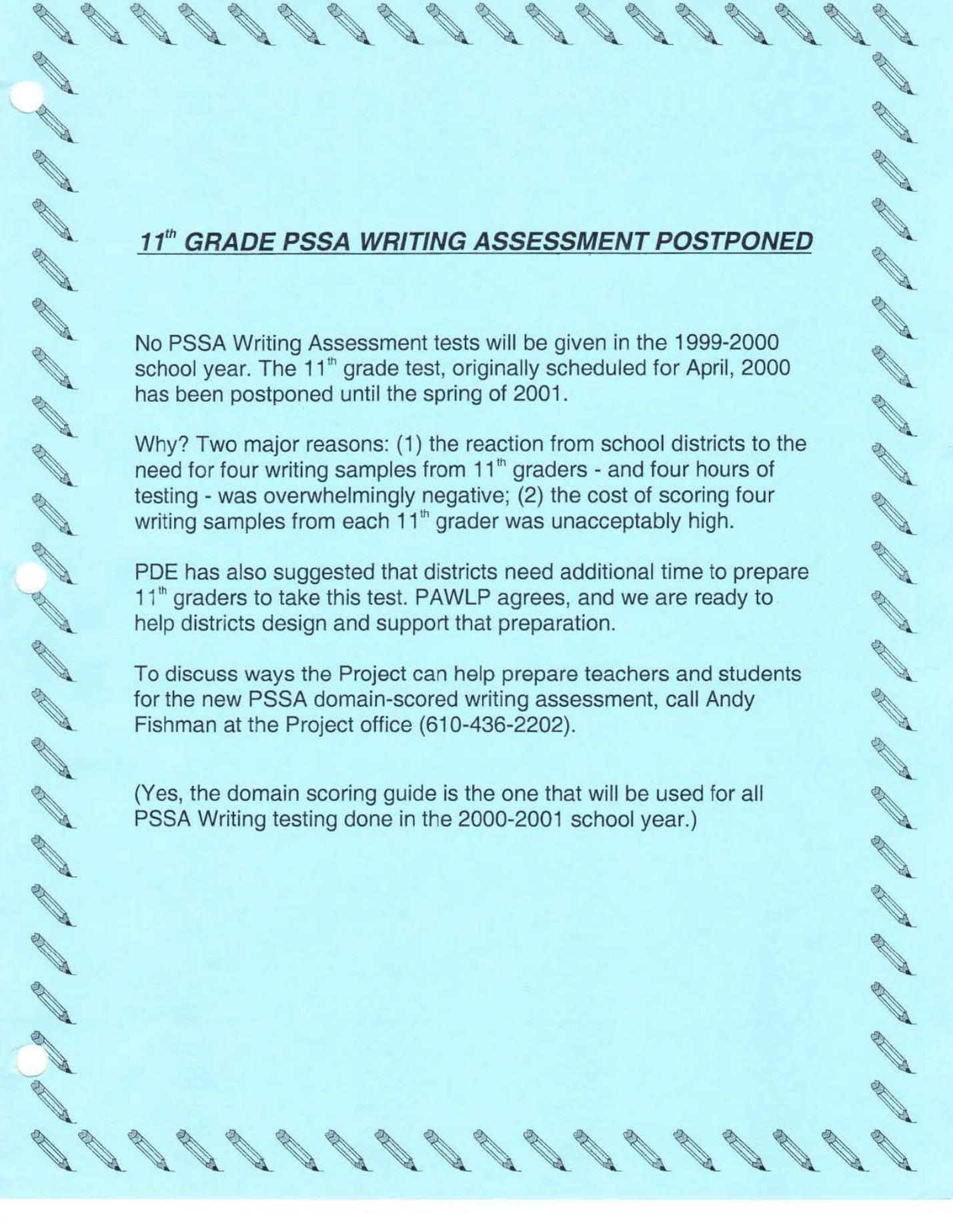
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A decorative border of small pencil icons surrounds the text on the page. The pencils are arranged in a rectangular frame, with some gaps on the left side where punch holes are located.

11th GRADE PSSA WRITING ASSESSMENT POSTPONED

No PSSA Writing Assessment tests will be given in the 1999-2000 school year. The 11th grade test, originally scheduled for April, 2000 has been postponed until the spring of 2001.

Why? Two major reasons: (1) the reaction from school districts to the need for four writing samples from 11th graders - and four hours of testing - was overwhelmingly negative; (2) the cost of scoring four writing samples from each 11th grader was unacceptably high.

PDE has also suggested that districts need additional time to prepare 11th graders to take this test. PAWLP agrees, and we are ready to help districts design and support that preparation.

To discuss ways the Project can help prepare teachers and students for the new PSSA domain-scored writing assessment, call Andy Fishman at the Project office (610-436-2202).

(Yes, the domain scoring guide is the one that will be used for all PSSA Writing testing done in the 2000-2001 school year.)