


PAWLP

SUMMER INSTITUTE 2018



Individually we are small
ripples, but together we make
a big splash!



To #sipawlp18:

Thank you for giving us our shot at co-directing! While we were excited to lead a Summer Institute, we worried that this experience would not be as transformative as in years past, since we were both first-timers. You inspired and impressed us with your tenacity. The passion and professionalism you brought to the table were astounding - we are so lucky to have been in the room where it happened. You all proved that, indeed, eight is enough.

We hope that when you return to work energized in the fall, you tell your children the story of PAWLP. Although you were a small group, you were but mighty; you came each day ready to work...werk! (snap). We watched in awe during each workshop as you wrote like you were running out of time. Our time together this summer has come to a close, but we have no fear that you'll be back! Raise a glass to the 10 of us!

With love and gratitude:

P. Schmidt

J. Greene

*There are 8 references to Hamilton: An American Musical embedded above. Can you find them all?

overcoming many obstacles and challenges along the way--literally and figuratively speaking. Martini's downfalls could be contributed to my own catastrophic mistakes in his training. My tangible love for 'Tini at times obscured the necessary distinction between my role of pushover treat dispenser and trainer. My own novice mistakes would at times turn Martini into one big fifteen hundred pound monster. I gave an inch, he took a mile. As it turns out, I myself was being trained, as well. Over the next year, we took the proverbial two steps forward and one step back together until the annual neighborhood show was finally upon us. In the days prior to the show, I clipped and bathed 'Tini, cleaned my tack, polished my boots, and mentally prepared.

"I don't care if we place. I don't even care if we win a ribbon. I just want Martini to behave himself in front of everyone. This is my chance to prove them wrong," I desperately explained to Cole that morning.

Cole patiently reminded me, "Just have fun," no matter the predictable commentary.

"Martini is ready," I confidently replied.

As usual, Cole made an accurate prediction of how the day might unfold.

Naturally the day of the show, Martini was ecstatic to be surrounded by his own kind. The electricity between Martini and the other horses was palpable. I presumed he would be overstimulated, yet I also trusted he would pay attention to my verbal and physical cues. Our first class was about to begin, and Martini was still enraptured by his surroundings. The faster my heart raced, it seemed the more distracted Martini became. We feasted off one another's nervous energy. *As we entered the arena, I felt a swagger in his step like never before...*

"What a disgrace," I repeated to myself.

Despite my incredibly low spirits and Martini's pitiful first showing, I knew I had a second chance. I had entered into an English pleasure class, as well. I still had time to get Martini acclimated to his surroundings and to change his attitude.

My trainer reminded me, "The biggest thing he has to be concerned with is you." We worked with Martini all afternoon, lunging him, riding him around the pasture, getting him to stand quietly and pay attention to all my cues. This was it, this was as good as it was going to get.

I entered the sand arena one more time. This time, however, Martini was different--we were different. I inhaled deeply, feeling my chest rise and fall with every breath. As I sank into my polished leather saddle, Martini relaxed beneath me. Between his ears I focused on the other end of the ring.

"Eyes up, shoulders back, heels down," I reminded myself. Our energy improved, as I visualized our cohesive movement. There was only one other competitor in the class, yet I was determined yet again to prove to others and myself I had a remarkable horse.

"Riders, you are now being judged at the walk," I heard over the speaker system. Shortly thereafter, "Trot," reverberated around the ring. With a subtle squeeze of my leg, Martini clip-clopped beneath me.

"Eyes up, shoulders back, heels down," I repeated. Upon the judge's command we slowed to a walk. Martini flexed his neck and glanced back at me with one sweet eye, almost asking for approval. After we were prompted to, "Canter," riders were asked to change direction. Flawlessly, Martini walked, trotted, and cantered clockwise around the oval. As quickly as we circled, the class had ended. Failing to mask my utter pride,

I smiled as I heard the judge's final command, "Riders, please line up in the center of the arena."

A Catcher of Dreams: A Poem
By Gina Bevan

Beneath the horizon, a golden circle cedes,
while a blinding darkness shades wavy window panes.

Blue atomic eyes peek out crisp white cotton sheets,
while lashes flutter shut and jubilant thoughts wane.

Quickly as a pillow absorbs the cumbrus crown,
they splash into view from abysmal ocean depths.

Emaciated fingers tug your dressing gown,
emerging from the basement taking your last breath;

Still out of the closet, they inescapably
Haunt you 'til you're shaking, the terrors of your dreams.

"Help me, save me!"

No one else can save you from terrors in your dreams.

"Help me, save me!"

No one else can save you from terrors in your dreams.

When suddenly by surprise, someone hears your plight,
who turns that monster in your bed to something bright.

And as those salty tears stream down cold cheeks at night,
the sun too glistens out the glass, urging "rise and shine."

Help from the Catcher of your Dreams, all's well and right.

A Day to Remember

By: Anne Busciacco

Everyone knows me as a sleeper. I take naps, I sleep like a bear hibernating for winter for countless hours every night, and you can't put on a movie without looking over to find my eyes "taking a rest" within the first half hour. Last night was different. I found myself tossing and turning and waking up every two to three hours to check the clock. All the excitement and nerves keeping me up, which I guess is normal considering today is my wedding day.

Countless years of thinking about the day my dad would walk me down the aisle. Thousands of "Say Yes to the Dress" episodes where my mom and I talk about how ridiculous people are for spending ten thousand dollars on a dress you wear for just a few hours. Everyone around me telling me that it will be the best day of my life. All these thoughts, critiques, and dreams have come to this very moment.

Its finally eight in the morning, time for me to wake up and begin the day. I roll out of bed wash my face and am greeted by the comfortable smile and enthusiastic voice of my mom. "Anne it's your wedding day," my mom exclaims as she kisses me on the forehead.

The tornado of the kitchen sucks me in. Chopped parsley, broken spaghetti, and tomato sauce splattered all over the counters. The aroma of garlic. Mom stands at the stove stirring her famous meatballs as I stand watching observing every move so that I can hopefully replicate them one day. One of the many things she has taught me that I hope to pass onto my children.

Over the next couple of hours, I am surrounded by those I love; my aunts, cousins, friends. The day is filled with hairspray, bobby pins, fake eyelashes, and foundation. Throughout the day I transform from a George Washington look alike, with my hair set in curls, to a bride.

Men truly have no idea what women endure to look beautiful. I put on the dress I have been waiting my whole life to wear and am finally ready to go see my husband for the first time.

When we arrive at the park Shawn is standing facing the other direction. He is wearing his crisp heather gray suit and his signature Cole Haan wingtips that peak out from the bottom of his pant legs. A million thoughts rush through my head. *Will he like my dress? What will his reaction be? This is so awkward everyone is staring.* I slowly make my way to him and am directed to tap him on the shoulder.

The smell of stale beer and a dimly lit bar swallow me up. Shawn is wearing his typical summer attire: a black V-neck t-shirt, khaki shorts, and leather rainbow flip flops. The first night we hung out with each other. Incredibly he didn't run away after several drinks and countless hours of me embarrassing myself on the dance floor, so I guess I shouldn't be concerned about him getting cold feet now.

We kiss and then immediately begin joking with each other. Calmness takes over, we might be a little more dressed up than usual but it's just

another afternoon spent with my best friend. Now that the first look is out of the way we are directed to pose and smile for hundreds of photographs. I grin and bear it knowing I want these pictures to look back on. *However, if the photographer tells me to smile or act natural one more time I might just scream.* After thousands of clicks of the camera it is finally time for me to take the walk down the aisle. I grab my dad's arm for support as I take my last walk with him as an unmarried woman.

The vision of a man standing in a purple dinosaur costume. "That's not Barney that's Daddy." I screamed as I pointed through the mouth of the Barney head. I can always count on him to go above and beyond for me. That is one thing I know will never change.

I feel like I am in a virtual reality hundreds of eyes staring at me. It is all a blur until I make eye contact with Shawn and once again tranquility overtakes my body. We stand in front of hundreds of people who are near and dear to our hearts placing the symbol of our never-ending love and commitment to each other. We share our first kiss as man and wife and make our descent down the aisle. It is now party time.

Through endless "I love yous," several groundings, and constantly observing my mom and dad they have shaped me into the person I am today. Because of them I am now ready to take on my role as a wife and move onto the next step of my life with Shawn, eyes wide open.

You Are With Me

By: Anne Busciacco

I wear a piece of you
around my neck
Silver, Glistening, Almond Shaped
Close to my heart
Warding off wicked wishes

I embody you
In the mall
Leaving a store
Headed in the wrong direction
Never able to find my way
Thanks for that Gram!

I am surrounded by you
Feathers fanning, Proud
Green, Blue, Purple Hues
Mugs, Grocery stores, Pictures
A constant reminder
You are never far

I carried you with me
Delicate, Tan, Shimmering
Wrapped around my flowers
You took each step with me
On one of the most important
Walks of my life

You are a part of me
Unspoken
Unseen
Hidden deep within
You are with me always

Gym Shorts Were A Bad Idea

By Kate Christein

“Jesus,” I whisper to Anne, leaning across the aisle of our 7th period AP Language Arts classroom, “It should not be legal for a teacher to be that cute and to wear khakis that are *that* tight.”

You should know that Mr. Matthews is the hottest teacher in our school. And I know that that might not sound like a lot, given that he is competing with Ms. Schenfelt—the 37 year old biology teacher who lives with her parents, visits Disneyworld yearly BY HERSELF, and, much to the delight and horror of the junior class, has self-published a series of porny vampire fiction (the “Natasha Carmichael Series.” I am not kidding. Google it.).

His other major competition here at St. Mary’s Prep would have to be either Mr. Bob Sonski, our PE teacher who is, ironically, I swear to God, one cheeseburger away from a triple bypass or Sister Gene who I do not need to describe because whatever you are thinking she looks like, you are probably right. So, bottom line is that Mr. Matthews is the hottest by a long, long shot. Like the longest of shots. Look at me with my sports references.

“Shhh,” Anne snaps. “And don’t take the lord’s name in vain, Cameron.” *Shit.* Anne is still pissed at me because I missed Star Trek Tuesday again. (Sorry, but it was the final of Ru Paul’s Drag Race and I told her to come watch it with me and we could push Star Trek to Wednesday, but she wouldn’t hear of it).

I know she is still annoyed because she only uses my full name when she is mad at me (otherwise, I’m Cam) and because I know damn well she doesn’t care how I use our lord’s name. Anne is a raging, albeit closeted, atheist—self-preservation first at St. Mary’s Prep.

“Oh, come on, Anny Bannany. I promise I’ll make it up to you. I’m coming over Friday night. Annnnd,” *I know this will get her*, “I will share my second tandycake with you at lunch.” She tries unsuccessfully to suppress a smile and then quickly purses her lips.

“I don’t like tandycakes anymore.” Bullshit. She and I both know that is a lie.

The bell rings and Mr. Matthew takes roll. I write a note to Anne and throw it on her desk.

Do you love me the most? Am I your best best best friend for ever and ever? Plz. Say yes. Ok love you. Bye.

Of course. I just don’t always like you. Love you. Bye.

And we’re back. We always come back.

Anne is the only one who knows. Anne. Anne was there in first grade when I peed my pants on the playground and cried. As soon as she saw it happening, she splashed her water bottle all over me and then on herself and told everyone we were having a water fight. We both got in trouble and had to go see Mr. Mason. But she never told. And she’s never told about *that* either.

Anne thinks she is plain and that her hair is not blond enough to be sexy or brown enough to be sultry and that her boobs are too small and that her forehead is too big. But she is wrong about almost all of that. Sorry, but I can only subtly mention bangs so many times; the girl will. Not. listen. And that is not my fault. But none of that matters.

The three things you need to know about Anne are these: #1. She is fluent in 10 different star trek languages. #2. She has donated her accumulated allowance on a quarterly basis since she was 7 years old to the Manchester Country Humane Society using the benefactor pseudonym “Mr. Pickels,” in honor

of her beloved and dearly departed Hamster who ultimately succumbed to gastritis after a prolonged period in which her little brother Seth fed him lucky charms because he “liked to watch him nibble the cereal with his tiny teef.” And lastly, and perhaps of paramount importance #3. She is the funniest person I know. Anne writes stand-up comedy for an audience of me.

On Friday nights, we host a comedy show called “Live at the Improv,” original, I know. Anne tells jokes and I play the host as “Lady Sunflower.” Anne’s closet does not give me a lot to work with in terms of drag, but I can usually make some magic. Anne doesn’t wear much make-up but I’ve convinced her to pilfer, one lipliner at a time, her mom’s make-up cabinet, the way I imagine other kids at our school probably steal booze from their parents liquor cabinet, ounce by ounce, replaced with water, just under the radar. That’s me. Just under the radar.

Mr. Matthews fumbles with a stack of papers. *Oh god, he graded our personal narratives. I am so screwed.* “I was really impressed, honestly, by all of your writing,” he explained. *Yeah, sure.* “But there was one narrative that really blew me away, and I was wondering if the writer might be willing to stand up and share it with the class.”

Ugh, I can already see Lynn Wang beaming. She knows it’s hers. We all know it’s hers. What a kiss ass. Mr. Matthews is walking down my row toward Lynn and then he stops. Right next to my desk.

Oh my god, what is he doing? He is literally six inches from my shoulder. I stare straight ahead, trying not to think about how close he is, but it’s not working.

I can smell his cologne. Axe, of some kind. He is still young enough to know what Axe is. Shit. Stop smelling him. *Would it be weird to plug my nose?* He would get the wrong idea. And then his

hand is on my shoulder. I repeat, his hand is on my shoulder. It has suddenly become very clear that gym shorts were a bad idea today.

“Cam Edwards.” The collective intake of air in the room reveals the truth. The rest of the class is just as surprised as I am. Lynn Wang sighs, audible and disgruntled.

“Cam, your narrative was raw and brave. One of the best I’ve read in a long time. Please read it for the class. Go on up.” He places the paper on my desk. His hand lingers. *Oh. My. God.* I cannot stand up. Ah-hem. Yeah, no. Now is a very, very inopportune time for me to stand up. Like, it is *really* not a good time for me to stand up. Did I mention that now is not an ideal time for me to stand up.

Anne catches my frantic, bugging-out-of-my-face eyes. *Shit.* She is still pissed. She meets my gaze with a cool disinterest. *Anne. Oh my god. Please help me. Do something.* We are on the playground all over again but this time, I’ve got bigger problems. If any of my so-called friends from Saint Mary’s Prep found out the effect Mr. Matthews’ tight pants had on me, I would get my ass so kicked. Or maybe worse. Maybe a good ass-kicking would be the least of my worries.

“Uh, yeah, um,” I am stalling. Desperate. Searching. “Sure, eh-hem, I, um, I can read it, yeah.” I brace myself on my desk, preparing to stand, (although in some ways, I am already standing at attention), preparing to meet my destiny, my fate: the end of my life as I know it; the searing of a target on my back for the remainder of my high school career, until I can get myself the hell out of this “house of god.”

And then it happens. A scream that sends chills down your spine. Anne. Anne is screaming; she is freaking out. “A mouse! There is a mouse!” and now she is standing on her desk. The rest of the

class, especially the girls, echo her screams, leaping from their chairs, sitting and standing on desks.

And I am sitting on my desk. Smiling. Safe for now.

500 Main Avenue
By Kate Christein

500 Main smells like a summer tennis game
and dewy grass
and lamb with mint jelly
and love
and heartbreak.

It smells like kids
and grandkids
and great grandkids
and togetherness
and abandonment.

It smells like old pictures
and crackling jazz
and rose petals from a garden
still tended by a woman
whose sinuous hands—
all bones and sharp angles
like the stalk of the bush
from which
she plucks
the buds—
still do the work.

It smells like oxygen tanks
and pills
and bathrobes
and emptiness.

And each year
She says
This is the last year.

But if you ask him
the only move
he will make
out of that house
will be a quiet one—
made on a stiff board
into a long car
with a tiny flag on the back.

And from that car
into a box
into the ground

and that will be the last move he makes.

Savor the Cookie

by Liz Corson

Maggie didn't even notice I was there. The longest two hours had finally come to an end. I'd rushed to be on time to pick up my one and a half year old daughter from her first day at nursery school to find her happily playing in the sand next to other toddlers. Just then, one of Maggie's preschool teachers, Carol, came up to me.

"Oh my gosh, I have never seen a child enjoy her snack as much as Maggie." She described how at snack time, Maggie sat with her chocolate chip cookie, slowly savoring each bite, making her way around the edges of the cookie until there was nothing left.

Fifteen years later, Maggie still takes her time with her sweets, enjoying her Halloween candy well past New Year's, Valentine's day, and even Easter. But now, we're visiting colleges, in anticipation of her upcoming senior year. We are attending information sessions and tours of campuses close to our house and up to a day's drive away. Looking out across the Berkshires, climbing the hills of Medford to enjoy a view of Boston from atop a library courtyard, striding across quads in Baltimore and Swarthmore and Pittsburgh surrounded by brick and stone and wood and glass dormitories, classrooms and labs.

Just as my dad had been for me thirty years ago, I am now Maggie's chauffeur and organizer of these trips. I love this time together, exploring, learning, eating, laughing, arguing, talking. Since Maggie is seventeen, she usually drives herself everywhere - to her friends' houses, to Panera, to Starbucks or to her lifeguarding jobs. So I don't see her much anymore.

Instead, I find evidence of her. Half finished glasses of water around the house, an empty ice cream carton with a spoon fallen to the bottom on a window ledge next to her bed, an almost empty gas tank.

An information session is about to begin at the fourth college we are visiting in two days. As usual, Maggie is taking notes on her phone. I stop myself from leaning over to tell Maggie my thoughts about the college. I want to tell her that I can imagine her being happy here with the four year language requirement, the gap year program, the science research opportunities, and even access to the Veterinary Science School. But I remember her wise council almost ten years ago, laughing that I'm still trying hard to follow it.

"Mom," Maggie admonishes me, rolling her eyes as I drive her to swim team practice after blurting something out that I should have kept to myself, "just because you have a thought in your head, doesn't mean you have to say it."

"I love it, maybe top of the list now," Maggie finally tells me after the information session and tour have ended and we're relaxing at a coffee shop, eating chocolate chip cookies. Well, Maggie is still enjoying hers. I have, of course, already finished mine. But I did wait for Maggie to let me know what she thought, keeping my own thoughts in my head.

Although I enjoy these college visits, I'm actually not ready for her to go to any. And some days, when Maggie's room is almost filled with dirty laundry she has yet to do, her school papers are all over her bed, and she's stayed up until two in the morning to finish a last minute report or project or book, I'm not sure she is either.

But then I remember the self assurance of that one and a half year old girl, sitting at the snack table, while everyone else has gone out to play. Enjoying each bite of cookie.

I remember her three-year-old self confidently starting to walk down the sidewalk outside our house, on her own, heading to Walgreens, sopping wet after playing in the sprinkler in our front yard in New Orleans. She hadn't bothered to wait for me as I ran into the house to get a towel to dry her off. She was headed to Walgreens to get some yogurt covered raisins, whether I was ready or not!

I still laugh at the memory of my husband telling a two-year-old Maggie to stop licking the chalk she was using because it was dirty from the sidewalk. He warned her he would take away the chalk if she kept licking it. She looked up at him and licked the chalk again, so he took the pieces of chalk away. Again, Maggie stared at him and then bent down and licked the chalk on the sidewalk where she had been drawing. My husband and I had to laugh at her defiant independence. No one would tell her what to do.

She is ready. It's me who's not ready. Not ready for the evidence of Maggie to be gone. For the gas tank to be full. For the window sills to be cleared of glasses and ice cream bowls. I can still hear Carol asking me at our first parent teacher conference, "Isn't that what we want for our children? For them to be independent?" Yes, it's what I want.



It's what I've seen from Maggie her whole life. But it doesn't make it any easier to let her go.

So I keep trying to remember to savor the cookie and enjoy each bite.



There

By Liz Corson

The sole is worn
especially on the outside of the heels
where the rubber meets the road

Pieces of mud and grass are
caked in between the grooves
from the moist trail runs

Ruby red flash, bold and bright,
there's no place like home
which is where these shoes take me

I am at home in them
no matter where we are
a quiet road, a shady trail, a hill or flat

Running takes me there.

Won't You Come Home
by Liz Corson

New Orleans
My first home away from home

New Orleans
where I became a teacher
where I first rented an apartment
where I met my husband
where my daughter was born

New Orleans
where fall was overtaken by summer and spring
where the pace of life slowed especially when the humidity rose
where everything grew all the time and the night blooming jasmine's scent
wrapped around our block on South Telemachus
as the leaves, vines, and flowers inched along the chain link fence

New Orleans
where I became a mom alongside my friends
where our children grew up together
where we became family after endless trips to the zoo and aquarium,
play dates at each other's houses, walks in Audubon park, and
sharing of snacks as well as hopes and fears

New Orleans
where I played my clarinet with Mo'Lasses and Parlor Jazz and
Lizard of Oz
where music was all around, especially in the Neutral Ground coffeehouse
where my husband and I met and performed
Where on Maple Street the Rebirth Brass Band's rhythm and power stayed in my
head
long after the set had ended

New Orleans
where my life was just starting
where I was on my own and then I wasn't
where I was a teacher and a wife and a mom and a musician

New Orleans
Now a memory but always part of me

New Orleans

Advice from a Five Year Old

By: Karen DiMascola

The spring of 2012 would prove that the best advice I ever got was from a five year old.

My daughter, Riley, is the oldest of two children by 17 months. She can best be described as resilient, ever-smiling, and easy going. Nothing seems to ruffle her feathers, including a younger brother who, despite his adoration of her, has his fair share of nerf gun sister shooting, around the corner sister scaring, and living room floor sister wrestling moments mostly met with Riley's lack of reaction.

One springy Saturday, we headed to a friend's house. The adults ate and drank, chatting away the late afternoon when a sad-faced Riley sauntered up to us seeking attention for a hurt wrist. She had fallen off her three-wheeled scooter and needed some kisses and comfort. Ever the loving mother, I smothered her with love and sent her on her way. The evening continued and nothing more was said of the scooter incident. A good day was in the books and we drove home and put the kids into bed, my husband and I tired but at peace.

As Riley thumped down the stairs the next morning, eyes sleepy and bed head blazing, she mentioned that her arm still hurt. It looked somewhat bruised and she was sore, but neither my husband nor I were worried; she had probably slept on it wrong. We wrapped ice packs in kitchen towels, kissed her head, and set her before her favorite cartoon shows for the morning.

Hours later, when playing outside, Riley again mentioned arm pain. My husband and I headed to the local Urgent Care for a quick x-ray just to be sure everything was okay. Verdict: one broken left arm. Hairline fracture. Treatment: One colorful cast for 6 weeks.

A weight of guilt smothered us. Why were there no tears? Why didn't we see this? What kind of parents were we? We swore to be better parents; we promised to be less selfish and better devote our attention to Riley. We apologized again and again. Typical Riley was unruffled and smiled back with her twinkling eyes. She loved her new colorful arm.

The weeks passed and Riley learned to be single handed. Not one complaint passed from her lips; there were only giggles and songs; inquisitive comments and responses. The best part of her day was matching her outfits to her colorful cast and having people sign her new piece of artwork.

One afternoon later that month, Riley and I had just come home from running errand. As I unpacked the groceries, Riley asked me to set up a game. In exchange, she would head up to my bedroom and get some "comfy clothes" for me so we could settle into a good, lengthy family game of *Candyland* first, and *Chutes and Ladders* second. She plodded up the stairs one armed, singing as her sweet little voice echoed through the hall. I began to set up the game, shuffling cards and placing the pieces in their designated spots.

The next thing I heard was a mass thumping and bumping, and that same sweet little voice calling from the landing, "Mom, I think I broke my arm."

I went rushing over to the stairs and there sat my calm, beautiful, brown-eyed girl in a small heap. One arm casted, the other one looking like the arch of a bow. Panic consumed me. I rushed her into the kitchen sat her atop a counter (clearly not thinking straight), and proceeded to call my husband: tears streaming down my face, my stomach twisted in a knot, adrenaline pumping through my veins. My. Brain. Not. Thinking.

Her arm was clearly broken in two. It was protruding almost through the skin – but had not broken through it. I was in full panic mode, pacing the kitchen, crying, not sure what to do.

I sat along-side Riley, touching her, trying to calm my already calm daughter as she sat there looking up at me with those big, brown, eyes and simply said to me, “It’s going to be okay, mommy.”

They say Helen was the face that launched a thousand ships. Well, that voice to me was the voice that launched all momentary reason. I looked at her and said, “Yes, Riy. It is going to be okay.”

Just. Like. That. Advice from a five year old. Calming, soothing, confident. And it made all the difference to me then and now. It was going to be okay. I was going to be okay. SHE was going to be okay.

We, of course, got her to the emergency room and she underwent two surgeries over a period of weeks. She wore two casts, one on each arm, smiling all the while, matching her outfits each day to them. We enlisted the help of school nurses, bus drivers, and teachers, and through it all, my girl charged on – not skipping a beat.

Seven years later, that advice from my daughter is a smile between us, soft words whispered as a mantra in times of need. Through the many challenges life has since presented, I realize the best advice I ever got was from a five year old: “It’s going to be okay,” and it always is.

Super Woman

By: Karen DiMascola

If I had a superpower, it would be to pepper the world with peace
I'd sprinkle it on pancakes like powdery sugar
Spread it into rivers that glide into the sea
And send it down in drops of rain, splashing on the world below
Plop

Plop

Plop!

I'd dust the tree limbs with a coating
Wrapping them in it like a snake skin
Birthing its leaves with veins of peace in spring
I'd sent it to each flower in bloom, like pollen.
A world full of peaceful pollen
Spreading everywhere
There would be joy and laughter
Hugging and harmony
No more

"I hate you!"

"You're not this!"

"You're not that!"

"I am not enough!"

Instead, there would be

Acceptance

Like glitter -

Seeping into the pores of the earth
Twinkling from the stars above
Finger painted from the heavens
And eeking out from the sunshine
Yes, if I had a superpower, it would be to pepper the world with peace.

Are We Ready for This?
By Melissa Keer

“So sorry to hear about your Riley.” Before I could respond I felt the words catch in my throat. I tried desperately to keep the tears from welling up again. It had been almost ten years since we had been on this very farm to rescue Riley, and now here we were again, much too soon, to hopefully bond with another dog.

“Thank you,” I managed with a smile to disguise my hurt. “We’re not sure we’re ready for this, but the house has been way too quiet over the past two weeks.”

“Are you interested in a certain dog?” a sweet woman at the rescue asked as we walked across the grounds. Her name was Dottie, and as it turned out she knew a teacher friend of mine. *Small world* I thought to myself.

My husband talked about the adorable Riley-esque black lab we saw on the website. But she was considered a pup, so she was in the “puppy palace” area of the farm, located in a big barn near the parking area. We were walking near the “tweener dogs,” those one to three years in age, making them much less adoptable than the cuddly puppies. “Let’s check these out on our way,” I suggested. Yet I knew that no dog would ever fill the shoes of our beloved Riley.

To say it was clamorous was an understatement. Barking, whimpering, clanging of dog bowls, playful yips, all mixed with human voices teaching commands and attempting to keep control of the situation! We started moving in the direction of a cabin-sized dog kennel with eight dog runs on either side. The structure was full to capacity with two dogs in each cage. Our pack of three approached to make a quick inspection.

Joe, my husband, made note of the females in the kennel: eleven dogs. We wanted another girl, thinking she’d be a bit more responsive to my rather timid, off-duty teacher voice.

After a few trips around the perimeter, a light brownish-red dog caught my eye, her nose as black as charcoal against her fur. Amidst the racket, she remained stretched out on her dog bed, yet followed us intently with her gaze. I stopped in my tracks by her kennel door where the names *King Tut* and *Macy* were written in a volunteer's care with black Sharpie.

When Dottie saw the pup meet my hand as my fingers poked through the fence, she proudly announced, "That's Macy. She's a real sweetie. Everyone loves her." I asked if Macy was attached to any other dog at the rescue, as I didn't want to break up a bonded pair. "Nope. She's a stray from Kentucky. We don't know much about her. But she loves other dogs and is great with adults and kids. Would you like to take her for a walk?"

I looked at Joe, who gave a nod. "Yes!" I smiled. *Oh boy, here we go.*

As Dottie corralled Macy and got her leashed my mind started thinking. *Why has this sweet dog not been adopted before this? Why was she a stray? What would Riley think of all this? Will we be okay with another dog? Is this the right thing to do?*

After a ten-minute jaunt around LaMancha's biggest field, snippets of Macy walking, running, and traveling with us began to dance through my head. *Could this pup be the one?* Dottie pulled two treats from a red bucket. Macy gently took a Milkbone from each of us after sitting without command and offering her paw—the deal was sealed! As the pup's whiskers gently brushed my hand and she accepted the Milkbone a la Riley, I knew my sweet girl was letting me know this new dog was okay, that Macy was a good fit for our family.

We never made it to the "puppy palace" that day to see the black lab. We instead went home with a blonde year-old pup with a kind face, a few scars, and an unknown lineage of mixed breeds. She enjoyed her freedom ride with a Philadelphia Eagles bandanna and a new name,

Matilda! I don't know that we were one-hundred percent ready to take on a new fur baby, but I'm so glad we rescued our Matilda. Riley's passing has left us feeling gutted with sadness and smiling with love at the same time. We enjoyed almost ten years of beautiful memories with Riley, and now we are embarking on a new adventure with Matilda. So yes, we're ready for this!

If You've Never Visited the Adirondacks (You Should!)
"If" Poem by Melissa Keer

If you've never visited the Adirondacks,
 you don't know Tail of the Pup.
Picnic tables, fire pits, an outdoor oasis
 after a tough day of hiking.
Pulled pork piled high,
 corn on the cob boiled up just right.
Even a tasty adult drink if it suits you,
 luscious ice cream treats to die for!

If you've never visited the Adirondacks,
 you don't know Big Mountain Deli and Crêperie.
Nestled amidst the quaint hustle and bustle of downtown,
 a rendezvous spot after a brisk walk.
Hearty breakfast burritos, bowls, and omelets,
 forty-six massive sandwiches to honor the high peaks.
Maybe a refreshing cocktail or two,
 mouth-watering crepes dusted with powdered sugar.

If you've never visited the Adirondacks,
 you don't know Lisa G's Neighborhood Restaurant and Bar.
Inside in a booth or feet dangling from a barstool,
 maybe soaking up the sun on the open-air patio.
Everything from leafy greens, to fish, to deep-fried delights,
 thin, crispy pizza with a plethora of toppers.
Flights of whiskey, bourbon, or scotch,
 delicious desserts depend on the day.

If you've never visited the Adirondacks,
 you don't know the Redneck Bistro.
Informal dining inside and out,
 utensils glistening from a white vinegar bath.
Comfort food to ease weary travelers,
 ribs, burgers, barbeque, and pools of gravy mashed potatoes.
An adult lemonade or sipping drink on the rocks,
 a slice of Grandma's apple pie to top it off.

If you've never visited the Adirondacks, you should!

First Dog
By Tim Patton

Three days after we got the dog, I realized we had no idea what we'd gotten ourselves into and had made a terrible decision. I had never had a dog growing up. I'd grown up with:

- 1 ornery cat that my parents had before they had even thought of having me
- 10-14 varied fish that were kept in my fish tank, most of whom died from me not knowing there's a difference between alkaline and acidic water
- 2 cats I'd adopted after finishing grad school and were probably the chilliest, most relaxed animals ever

Initially, Sophie seemed chill as well. Like she would fit in perfectly with the cats. I also figured that a relatively enormous dog couldn't move particularly fast or have a ton of energy. She sat calmly on the bed we got her; she ate her food calmly without making a mess; she would follow us around the house and learn her surroundings.

Then the drugs wore off.

We first met Sophie when we were volunteering at a local animal shelter. As we gave her a morning walk around the farm, she appeared calm, but was clearly unsure of herself and scared. Her tail was down, her ears flat, and a dim look to her eyes. It made sense as there were many loud, barking (and somewhat terrifying to me) dogs around her. On the day we brought her home, she'd just been fixed and was on painkillers of some sort. By her third day home with us, she was no longer the timid dog we'd led through the horse pasture.

I remember coming down in the morning, around 4 AM or so, because she was barking and smacking her cage. The dog flew out of it like a bat out of hell towards the door, pawing at it and continuing to bark. I opened the door and she went into the backyard, relieved herself, and

then refused to come back inside. I spent the next 45 minutes chasing her around the yard trying to get her to come back inside.

Finally, after carousing her back into the house, she grabbed an expensive remote control from the coffee table and chomped it into half a dozen pieces. She followed this by eating her breakfast and then taking a rather large dump in the middle of the living room.

In short, day three of owning a dog. Great success.

Over the next few days, I did everything I could to turn this monster back into the chill dog I had first met. And over those few days, my waking hours were filled with scratches, playful bites that still hurt, and poop. Lots of poop.

We also went for long walks and hikes through the local park. I'd put her leash on and we take a walk through the morning sun and a warm breeze blowing over the trail. I remember on one morning in particular, we went up a hill just past the trails and watched as the sun rose up into the sky. I sat on a bench with her laying on the ground right next to me. I put my hand on her head, giving her a few head scratches, and she turned and to look at me with unbelievably kind, happy eyes.

I saw those eyes more and more over the next few weeks. We did a lot more hiking and walks through nature preserves and trails in the area. We played more fetch and in the yard until we discovered her favorite toy was the strange purple thing we called "Wubba." After she'd catch it, she'd run back to me, those bright eyes shining with joy as she tore the purple thing to pieces. We've had many Wubbas since then.

Later that summer, I started sanding the deck down to put a new layer of stain on it. I let her out into the yard and would close the deck gate behind her. Instead of running around and

sniffing at everything, she'd stand on the stairs, watching intently, waiting for me to get done so I could spend more time with her. I'd get done each day, crack a beer or light a cigar, and sit down on the grass in the shade with her laying down next to me. Even when she caught the rabbit one early morning (she didn't kill it, simply brought it to me) and she looked at me, her tail wagging, going "HOLY CRAP LOOK WHAT I DID!" I couldn't help but smile as I yelled at her to "DROP THE DAMN RABBIT!"

That evening, she crept up on the couch between my wife and me, laid her head on my lap and started to snore. I looked at my wife and said, "This was a good decision."

The Hole
By Tim Patton

There's a hole in my leg
It's getting bigger every day
It itches, so I scratch
It'll get better...eventually.

The hole is bigger now
Big enough to see through
To wave my hand through
A gruesome magic trick
It'll get better...eventually.

My friends say go to the doctor
My wife says it's not right
My dog won't come near it
Even as my cat jumps through it
But I have faith it will correct
itself
It'll get better...eventually.



Storymatic: inspector, gun, unclaimed baggage
By Tim Patton

As an unclaimed baggage inspector, I have the most important job at the airport. Sitting behind a counter at luggage claim to make sure anything left unattended too long makes its way over to me. This mostly involves sitting

watching

sitting some more

watching again

napping here and there

Like I said, it is a very important job. Plus, I get a few perks like, if the luggage is left for over a month, it's up for grabs. Imagine the trove of goodies you might find in unclaimed baggage: rolex watches, casino winnings, etc.

Now think about the opposite. Dirty, soiled underwear. That's mostly what is in these bags. I did, on one occasion, find a cuban cigar WRAPPED in dirty, soiled underwear.

I did not smoke it.

Today, I'm sitting behind the glass, behind my monitor, behind veiled eyelids because I'm tired and was up late playing video games. And like most days, I don't feel like being here, and it's a weekday, so it's slow. Having nodded off, but not being fully asleep, I'm still somewhat aware of what is going on around me. Which is nothing. During the week, it's mostly business travelers. High-power corporate types who, after soiling their underwear on a business trip find it more convenient to leave it in their cheap luggage than to bring it home to wash.

A blaring horn announces the arrival of said luggage, cutting through my dreaming into my skull as the racks spin up. I open my left eye just a smidge so as not to give the sense that I'm actually paying attention or care about this job (I don't), but sometimes it's fun to see who

grabs which bag. Like sometimes, you'll see the corporate CEO grab a Hello Kitty backpack: daughter left it in his apartment in Seattle and he's bringing it back to her.

Baggage says a lot about a person.

The strange thing today is that no one is waiting to get their luggage. It usually takes a half hour or more of passengers waiting before the bags start to appear. Even on a slow weekday, there should be several irritated people waiting to claim their undergarments. Nothing gets moved that quickly around here.

On the conveyor belt, a single, lonely bag appears and flops down face first like a frat boy on a Saturday night.

Curious...

Over the next hour, the bag runs laps around the claim area, slowly following its preset path on the conveyor. I occasionally look up to see if it's still there and, without fail, it is. And it isn't a cheap piece of luggage either. A hardshell rollerbag. Black cloth, but shining like it was still propped up at Boscov's with a sale tag on it. It doesn't look name brand or anything; there's no shiny strips of brass proclaiming **Samsonite** or *Victorinox* in exclamatory or poetic fonts. It doesn't have front pockets either, which is strange for a piece of luggage. As it passes by me at the closest point on its orbit (the perihelion were I the sun as opposed to a black hole of apathy), it looks almost like a smooth black rock...but with an extended handle and chrome wheels.

One last loop around and I decide it's time for it to go to its proper place in holding. Rotating around the claim area for the better part of an hour, no one claiming it, something is fishy...and I'm bored. So up I go, shuffling over to the conveyor belt, hiking my uniform pants up and tightening my loosened belt (how's a guy supposed to sleep with the metal pushing against his belly) as the bag gets part way through its final rotation before I snatch it up and drag it back

to the office. Sitting back down in my chair, I continue my inspection of the bag and begin to get the paperwork I need to file out.

Date: I scribble something unintelligible

Time: See above

Description: Black bag. Wheels

Contents:

The bag has a small lock on it. Totally against the rules. I wonder why no one caught that. It happens on occasion, but now I have more work. I pull a pair of pliers out from one of my desk drawers and try to remove the lock.

Twist it off with the pliers. No dice.

Pinch the shank till it breaks. No movement.

Plunge the pliers into the body. Not even a dent.

Good God. What is this thing made out of? In a last ditch effort, I smack the whole bag against the back wall of my office. But instead of the expected THUMP and breaking of metal, I hear

POP

but not a pop like a balloon, but the pop of a gun going off. I fall backwards, letting the bag slip from my fingers, as I see a smoking hole an inch and a half from where my hand was. I turn around to see daylight coming through a new hole in my wall that hadn't been there a moment ago.

I turn back to the bag. It's fallen open, scattering money, lots of money, across the ground, and one smoking gun, laying on it's side, with the muzzle pointed towards me.

The Hole Truth

Peter was accustomed to thoughts swirling in his head. But these thoughts were different. These thoughts were not of dragons. Not of pirate ships. Not of racing to be in the front of the line at recess time. Not of convincing his brother, Timmy, to take turns with the video game controller. Not of chasing the squirrels in the small wooded area behind the creek near his house. No. These thoughts were heavier. These thoughts bumped against one another as he faced his special education teacher.

Ms. Carlson is just like Mom. If Ms. Carlson noticed right away, Mom will too.

But Ms. Carlson can't MAKE me say anything.

Just wait her out.

Mom is going to be mad.

Earlier in the day, before the first bell, Peter had visited Ms. Carlson. He often did. She knew how to listen and she helped him remember things. Ms. Carlson was his "other" teacher and she was quite different from his real 2nd grade teacher, Mrs. Stern. Unzipping his hooded sweatshirt, Peter bounded up to Ms. Carlson's desk. "Guess what I got! A new shirt!"

The t-shirt was an inexpensive cotton blend that hung loosely on his seven-year-old frame. The repeating "S" along the sticker was still adhered to his skinny chest and advertised its newness. Peter noticed it and proudly peeled off the label as he explained that his Mom had allowed him to pick the color.

"It IS exciting to choose something new," Ms. Carlson nodded.

Bolstered by his morning dose of special attention, Peter had turned on his heel. Halfway out the door, he spun around. "I forgot. This is for you. Me and my mom read my library book together. I wrote about it. I wrote a lot of sentences!" Peter buried his hand into his unzipped backpack, pulled out a wrinkled piece of paper, and dropped it in the empty IN-box. "Don't forget to read it," he added and trotted off to class.

"Peter?" Ms. Carlson waited for eye contact. "Peter, what happened?" She gestured toward the jagged three inch gaping hole just above the seam at the shirt's edge. Her eyes traveled from the shirt to his reddening face as his fist bunched up the material around the hole.

Returning her questioning expression, Peter simply shrugged as his thoughts continued to scramble.

Just wait her out.

Don't tell her.

A minute ticked by. Although teacher and student wondered how long this could go on, Ms. Carlson made every effort to appear unhurried while completely aware that the last bell was minutes away. She studied Peter's smudgy glasses, his clenched hand, and his concerned freckled face. Sounds of moving feet and shouting drifted in from the hallway in spurts. The quiet between them persisted. Surprised with how boldly he re-established eye contact, Ms. Carlson prepared to let him off the hook and inhaled audibly. As if on cue, Peter let out a responsive sigh and glanced up at the ceiling. With feigned confidence, he offered up his answer.

"Termites."

His single word response hung uncomfortably in the space between them. Ms. Carlson allowed herself a moment to swallow her smile.

“How dreadful.”

Peter’s serious expression never wavered, “Can I go?”

Nodding, Ms. Carlson released him.

I should probably check his desk for scissors.

I should probably inform Mrs. Stern.

Or maybe I won't.

Ms. Carlson’s eyes settled on the pile of students’ papers waiting for her attention in the IN-box. Retrieving Peter’s from the bottom, she felt especially curious as it had not been an assignment.

A dried uneven patch of brown, a chocolate milk stain perhaps, distracted Ms. Carlson’s eye from the words. Once engaged, even Ms. Carlson’s trained teacher’s eyes needed extra time to interpret the message hidden inside the reversals, gray eraser marks and cross-outs. The page, riddled with spelling errors had forgotten all punctuation.

Ms. Carlson read. The previously stifled smile spread across her face.

Such voice.

That boy is a writer.

She smoothed out the paper’s creases and posted it on the “Proud Work” wall.

Trees That I Know

by Leslie Wagner

(After Brian Kelley's writer's notebook entry: Rocks That I Know)

A simple platform
rests where the oak tree's branches
stretch away from the trunk.
Uncle Carl's homemade root beer in hand.
Hold the rope and find the footholds.
Climb to the perch and watch
the reunion of Eliassons and Johanssons
each summer.

Ipswich, MA
1967-1980

"A surprise for you"
Jack had whispered
as he parked under a starry sky
along the street that fringes Horn Pond.
The flashlight illuminated
the pocketknife's damage
LC + JM
and he had expected me
to smile.

Woburn, MA
1985

A photo shoot
the four of us with dog in tow
at the base of the majestic sycamore,
cajoling the boys "look here" and "smile",
hoping to capture an acceptable image
to announce our holiday wishes
in the sepia tones found
in the grays and browns
of the tree's skin.

Swarthmore, PA
2006

we Are
by reslee wagner

In the beginning
I am who I am wired to be

I am who I have been,
I am who I have been asked to be,
I am who I believe I am.

I
change
deny
accept
discover
succeed
fail
adjust
reflect
struggle
grow

I am who I strive to be.
I am who I wish I was not.
I am who others need me to be.

At the end
I am every one of these selves
wrapped up in a me.
we are me.

Inspired by Nathan Hill- author of *The Nix* pg 668:
"Seeing ourselves clearly is the project of a lifetime."



Gina Bevan is an 8th grade Social Studies teacher at Kennett Middle School. Wife to Cole and fur mama to her cat Titan and horse "Dirty" Martini. Gina is inspired by her family and history and Tim Patton.

Tim, what? How did you add that?



Anne Busciacco

Anne is a Reading Specialist at Valley Forge Middle School in Tredyffrin/Easttown School District. She teaches grades 5-8. Through the institute Anne has come to realize that Penny Kittle is her spirit animal. Anne's life goal is to spread book love and pizza love.

Please also spread pizzas. -Tim



Kate Christein teaches 7th grade English/Language Arts in the Central Bucks School District. Her hobbies include teaching and practicing yoga; running; camping; cooking healthy and delicious food; reading, listening-to, and writing humorous fiction and stand-up. David Sedaris is her god. As is Tim Patton.

That's not true, Tim.



Liz Corson is a 5th grade teacher at Swarthmore-Rutledge School. In her free time, she's also a Temple PhD student in Literacy and Learners and encourages everyone to join her doctoral pursuits. She loves to exercise and write about her daughter and how she doesn't fill the gas tank even when she didn't have the car, unlike Tim Patton, who is perfect.

No one is perfect, Tim. Especially you.



Karen DiMascola is an 8th grade ELA teacher at Kennett Middle. She is an avid reader, runner, and yogi. Through the PAWLP institute she learned that Jeff Anderson is her metaphorical "grammar daddy." #mushroomcaphalf

I got nothing on "grammar daddy". -Tim



Melissa Keer teaches sixth grade ELA at Kennett Middle School! She loves running with her husband, Joe; her dog, Tilda; and her friends! Melissa enjoys time in the Adirondacks and is looking forward to having a vacation home there! #runninggoals #ADKforever #RalphFletcherFan #TimPattonIsAwesome



"Tim Patton is" is a full sentence and definitely shows that he has complete and utter control of both grammar and sentence structure. He hopes to soon extend said control over all he sees. In the meantime, he'll continue to teach English at Unionville High School. His favorite phrases are "soiled underwear" and "BAMF."



Leslee Wagner

Leslee is about to embark on a new teaching journey as a 4th grade classroom teacher at Nether Providence Elementary School. She also doesn't like to conform to "standard" fonts or rubrics.

...Thanks, Tim.