

NEW Writing Marathons

Spotlight writing from the 2015 Writing Marathons

I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.

John Muir (1838-1914)

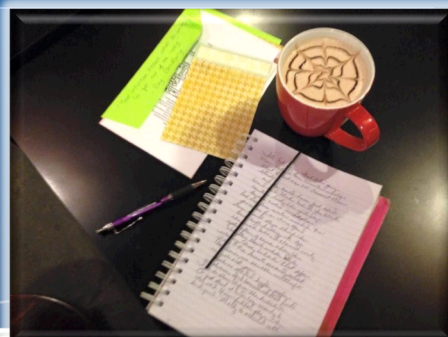
The Date Cont.

By Cynthia Meridith - Platte River State Writing Marathon

It all started very nice. He was waiting for me in the seating area at the front of a small Thai restaurant. I've not eaten Thai food so I thought of this as a new adventure in my new life. I have to be open to change. Not that I like change, but change seems to be the core of my existence since the divorce, so I'm going with it!

He had gotten a haircut just prior to meeting me and was dressed in office casual. He was clean cut and had a goatee. Not too bad looking, but I am not judging on looks alone, remember? We sat down and immediately I noticed in conversation that he had some - let's say - feminine qualities - to his hand gestures as he spoke. I'm not opposed to femininity in a guy. I know and deeply admire a man who is slightly feminine and is a wonderful husband and father. He bakes. A lot. That is a good thing!

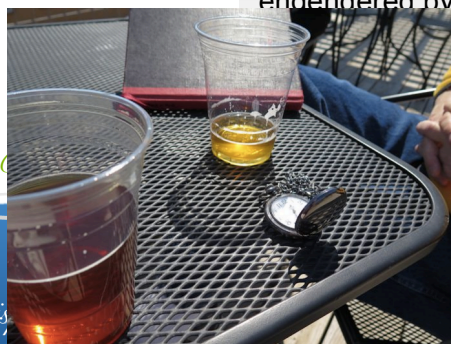
I tried not to be judgmental and just stayed in the moment with conversation. "Hello! Pleased to meet you." We shook hands, sat at our table, and he ordered a starter for us to munch on while we decided what we wanted. I checked out the menu out the night before and decided what I wanted then - nothing raw, no jalapenos or curry anything. That left me with an appetizer of chicken patay that came with peanut sauce and cucumber salad. It was delicious! Pretty brave of me, I'd say, for first time eating Thai food.



Reptilian Dark* - Jan Knispel

While each human is
Finding light in this reptilian dark,
The primal residents of the park
settle in:
Geese in humpbacked piles
Separately on the shore;
The crickets and frogs chorus out
Their nocturnes to the
Rose-red, lilac pale blue sky.
The trees hang with squirrel fruit;
While, in the murk, we scratch our
way
Across the labyrinth of thought,
Rattling a turning page
Minds sparking in the gloaming
Fanning the flame of creativity—

Found poem; this poem was
engendered by a phrase in Loren
Eiseley's *The Immense Journey*



Senior Discount – Jan Knispel

No one needs to know how old I am, except my God and my mother.

The Date Cont.- By Cynthia Meridith

As the evening progress, he talked. He talked. And talked. And talked. And talked. And talked. I got a word in and tried to brag a bit about my kids and dogs. But, he took over and talked more. In my head, I said okay and just listened. I'm telling you, I've never talked so little in my life! It was really strange not to be a part of the conversation!

I found myself thinking while he was talking. I thought about his goatee. If he would only grow his

hair out and maybe pierce his left ear, that might make him a little more appealing to me...maybe even sexy. Nah! No sexy here! He's too feminine, I thought. Too . . . soft. . . clean cut . . . I don't know! What's wrong with me! I'm not supposed to be being judgmental! What is it about him that's just a little to the left? Then he said it . . . "a priest once asked me if I was gay".

That was it! I was right! He is a little bit feminine. But what is so wrong with a little feministic mannerism? He's traveled all over the world! He helps poor people! He goes to foreign countries and teaches special needs physicians how to treat special needs people! That's very honorable! He even saves lives! For Pete's sake! He's a saint! And I'm sitting here judging him because he's a little femmy! For crying out loud! I am a horrible horrible person! Just horrible!

I tried consoling myself by telling myself that since he continued to talk and I continued to listen, I could judge. And after he talked for 2 1/2 hours, our "date" was over. We met. We sat. We ate. He paid. We said good-bye. I texted him and told him thanks again and next time I'd buy. He hasn't texted back. I must not talk enough for him!



Timber by Jan Knispel



This land once knew little
timber; most of the trees here
cottonwoods, slumbering
tall and broad by creeks and
rivers, the tossed leaves
flushing green-white-green-gray
green white, green white in the prairie breeze.
A few hardy cedars dotting
the prairie took their chances with
deer, elk, buffalo, rabbits' depredation
being roosts for grouse and wild turkey.
Only when pioneers crossed the
Great American Desert of grassland,
were stray seeds of ash, oak, elm deposited
But the homesteaders were impelled to plant
tree rows,
line by line
of deciduous columns,
now decimated by time
struggling on
the plains.

Feline Philosophy

By Jan Knispel

Cat on a hot pink leash?
Rarely seen are felines following
Some human pacing from place to place.
Cats live too purposeful or purposelessly
To be neck strung
To paltry people who want to wander.
Cats denigrates the dogs that do.

**A
day
of epic
creativity.**

SLWP



Benson, Nebraska: Place and Rhetoric

By Robert Brooke

Just yesterday afternoon, I was at the U.'s Rhetoric Society of America meeting, and Joshua Ewalt's presentation was on place and rhetoric. His core idea: what if we think of rhetoric as starting from place, rather than starting from the speaker? What if places have their own purposes, their own trajectories of change and transformation, for which they need the active voice of rhetoric? So instead of thinking about place as a kind of descriptive context to add color to our words, we thought of place in the process of becoming, and our words as part of that process?

I'm on the rooftop in Benson, and I sort of know how to think about this place. It's clearly New Urban Movement space—a reclaimed city center from an earlier period in regional history, newly remade into a walkable, human community. The sign across the street reads 1918, on the top of the filigree and ground brickwork of the building. 1918 was the end of the Great War, a time of relative prosperity in the Middle West. I can

almost imagine the community of Benson taking shape then: the prices of corn and wheat up; the growing river metropolis of Omaha just to the south for shipping them. Now, almost a century later, this same monument to civic possibility is repurposed – a tattoo parlor, Edward Jones investment, and Jake's saloon currently inhabit the storefront, across the street from the trendy bar's rooftop I'm on.

This movement of place—from the 1918 shrine to civic development, likely centered in banking of commodity trading, to today's recreational space – it's just what Joshua Ewalt was talking about yesterday. Places, and the people in them, moving through time, in a network of becoming that transforms the past in search of a possible future.

What does this place want to persuade me of? As a visitor, or a potential dweller here?

It's Saturday afternoon, offering in the wind and sun an almost ideal version of what the Midwest can be. On the rooftop, I am surrounded by writers. I'm feeling warm. I want to be here—imagined into my consumer role by the place as recently configured. I could sit here all afternoon. I could live here. And that's a rhetorical message.

Bricked Inside

By Diana Weis

Bricked in,
 Bathed in sunlight.
 The marquee's sign announcing
 this weekend's line up outside.
 The busy list of obligations January
 has shuffled out for me
 are carried away by
 passing street sounds.

The roof top view blocking me
 from following them.
 Allowing me
 to rest in the warmth here
 Sheltered, and only able
 to gaze,
 from my pen to page
 or
 Brick to sky.

Detritus

By Jan Knispel

The rattan bust of an unclothed
 mannequin,
 a red, rusted tool box
 the lid of a Roy Rogers 1950's
 lunch box
 lost at the elementary school,
 a treadle sewing machine like
 grandma used
 How did these come to lie
 abandoned?
 What hand touched these last?
 What detritus of mine is museum
 bound?

Survival

By Jan Knispel

What predator, bird bill or child's
 grasp
 broke the wings, tore the tissue
 of golden brown?
 Two large bites from fragile
 tissue
 Had I such wounds I would die,
 but
 this unknowable creature flies on,
 in spite of death dealing
 attempts,
 She perseveres.

Writers Write...

By Jan Knispel

And pick their postures...
 Flat on the floor,
 Rucked up on upholstered
 chairs
 Propped against pillars.

By Kate Brooke

Last night the moon rolled over
 so its belly was exposed, like a
 silver sliver about to shimmy the
 way Robert's nickels wind down
 when he spins them on a
 restaurant table.

"I learned..."

By Jan Knispel

When I quit teaching in 1980 worn
 senseless from the job's demands,
 I found what I thought was a 9 to 5
 job on the Pine Ridge Indian
 Reservation.
 I learned
 ...the Lakota ways and names
 ...that a man the "spit and image" of
 my grandfather
 had 11 children, 56 grandchildren
 And 16 great-grandchildren.
 ... I was an "auntie" to some and a
 grandmother to others and a
 Tyrant to the three wasting their
 money on pot,
 worrying their grandmother Grace.
 I learned
 ...to drive with my windows up and
 never let anyone approach
 The state car when on home visits—
 Gene got a broken nose from a punch
 in the face
 At the Wounded Knee turn off—
 New blood on an old massacre
 ground.
to stand with my back to the wall,
 not to the door.
 I learned that, for some, lease money
 was more potent
 than protection of their children.
 I learned I would rather be a teacher.



Whether you are new to writing marathons or a veteran, 2016 is an exciting year. It marks the eighth anniversary of writing marathons in Nebraska. Information is located at the close of this article on how to become involved with a marathon as well as when the 2016 marathons are scheduled.

It's hard to believe it but NeWP is celebrating an anniversary in 2016. This year marks the eighth year of the organization's writing marathon. The inaugural marathon took place in September 2008 at Platte River State Park. Writers filled three cabins that weekend to set forth in the woods to write together. Susan Martens, director of the Prairie Lands Writing Project and then NEWP leadership team member, organized the event after experiencing the event at a NWP conference. "After I did one, I realized how perfect it was, how simple but also how powerful. It's the relationship between the writer, the group and the place."

Participants find writing marathons to be one of the most refreshing writing activities. Students and teachers revel in their freedom and the creative inspiration that seems to present itself when one pauses to notice. Since the introduction of the writing marathon to Nebraska by Susan Martens in 2008, the NeWP has held four writing marathons a year, one each season. Additional marathons sites have varied between urban, rural, and suburban sites as well as within museums, forests, and even kayaks. "NeWP was always a great place for marathons to flourish because our site is so committed to the principle of the best teachers of writing being teachers themselves." (Martens)

It's true. A writing marathon becomes a unique opportunity to put pen to page with an incredible community of writers. You are invited to join in celebrating this year. Grab your pen, favorite writing notebook, and a comfortable pair of shoes. The 2016 NeWP writing marathons are set, and waiting for you to join. RSVPs for the writing marathons can be sent to dweis@cox.net

Winter Marathon - Downtown Lincoln
McFarland's and Sons' Irish Pub
710 S P St.; downtown Lincoln, NE
Saturday, January 23, 2016
Lunch at 12:30; launch at 1:30

Spring Marathon - Stuart, NE
Cast Iron Grill
806 East Highway 20; Stuart, NE
Saturday, April 9, 2016
Lunch at 12:00; launch at 1:00

Platte River State Park Marathon
14421 346 St.; Louisville, NE
Owen landing boat dock
Saturday, September 24, 2016
Meet and greet at 11:00; launch at 12:00

Platte River State Park Retreat
Owen cabins 8 & 9
Friday, September 23rd-25th
RSVP for a space in the NeWP cabin



