

**Pen & Ink Writers' Group Meeting
August 21, 2023**

Word: Newspaper

**Man charged in fatal weekend shooting of girl in Portage Park
on August 5, 2023
By N. Stewart**

Here's the story. The Chicago Tribune newspaper's headline reported a shooting in the Portage Park area on the Northwest side of Chicago. It caught my eye because I live in a nearby suburb. Criminal activity has certainly increased in the last few years and is now spreading outward in every direction. It never happened before in my safe and secure area, but it seems to be encroaching.

As the story developed over several days, the initial "facts" on the perpetrator and the situation changed. It was reported that an 8-year-old girl, later corrected to 9 and her father were in front of their home around 10 p.m. on a Saturday night after returning from buying ice cream. Then it changed later and it was reported as the father was speaking to friends sitting inside a car. The little girl was given some money and went on her scooter by herself to the ice cream truck to buy ice cream.

As the story continues, her father told her to go back home when a man walked out of his apartment armed with a handgun. The unknown stranger, later found to be a neighbor was flailing a gun in the street and shot, striking the little girl in the head. The father ran to the gunman after hearing the shot, attacked him and another shot was fired, striking the gunman. A later report indicated the father did go to his daughter.

Is there more to the story, probably. But we will never know.

Here's my comments. The original story as presented may not be factual at all, but based instead on supposition and witness hearsay. When I read the first appearance of the story, I assumed it was credible. When the changes on a subsequent story came to light I wondered if the original story was factual or if it was a rush to meet a "deadline," exploiting the death of a child by yet another hand gun situation. What struck me was: Why was the little girl out so late at night? Where was the father's attention directed? Why didn't the father immediately run to his daughter to protect her?

Newspapers of old were noted for verifying facts and getting the whole story before going to press. Journalists sought out the Who, the What, the Why, the Where, the When of the story. The reader could count on the information being factual as it was all verifiable. Valid conclusions could be drawn on what happened and how it personally related to the reader.

Now, it seems information from the newspaper is released not as verified facts but as subjective reality, allowing the story to be changed later, leaving it up to the reader to discern fact from speculation. That is, of course, if the reader is the least bit interested in fully understanding the story. For some today, it is easier to accept what someone else wrote, then it is to question the

validity of the story. For others, it doesn't make any difference whether the story is factual or fiction. But for me, it still matters. What really happened on that Saturday night? Do I care? Of course, I care, a little girl was senselessly killed.

###

Newspaper
By Carol Karvon

The newspaper at the bottom of the dresser drawer was yellowed with age and fragile. It practically shredded in Julie's hands when she removed it. She laid a fresh sheet of paper in the drawer and added a few of her clothing items.

She had come to stay with Cara, her mom, for a few days and brought only the essentials she needed for the short visit. It wasn't an ordinary visit but an excuse to take her mom to a doctor's appointment she had scheduled.

Her mom seemed to be preoccupied at times and confused at other times. Julie was concerned enough to make sure her mom wasn't suffering from some condition.

She spoke with Cara's family doctor and they agreed it was time for a complete medical checkup including bloodwork. If there was evidence of anything unusual showing up on the tests, then a consultation with a specialist might be necessary. It might just be something simple like a vitamin deficiency. But the doctor stressed they should proceed with caution so as not to alarm Julie's mom. She had lost her husband a few years ago and still missed him. She could still be grieving and that alone might be causing some of the symptoms Julie and her siblings had observed.

Julie had noticed that the newspaper she removed was several years old. That was disturbing to her since her mom was almost obsessive about cleaning out the dresser drawers and replacing the old paper with new. It was a Spring and Fall cleaning ritual as long as Julie could remember. Even as a child her mom had stressed the importance of establishing good habits.

Of course, Julie had rebelled as a teenager and informed her mom they were her drawers and her clothes and she would do whatever she wanted with them. Now as an adult she could see her mom's point of view and the wisdom to keep on top of the mundane household tasks or they could get out of hand and be overwhelming.

Another thing concerned Julie about her mom these days. She had always been a strong, confident woman. She had been a manager of her department before she retired and was responsible for a sizeable budget and making all sorts of decisions daily. These days Cara had difficulty deciding what to eat, or what to wear. It was painful to watch these changes happening to her own mother and was scary to her.

She had observed similar things happening to some of her friends' parents in the past.

###

Return to Gummi Glenn Part 4 By Mark Moe

“Sunni, I would like you to meet Edward Folkien. He is the one who helped me find the Gummi medallion and to meet all of you Gummi Bears.”

“Wait a minute! Is that a Gummi Bear? So, they are real. I must call a press conference and inform the *“newspapers.”*”

Kylie placed her hands on Edward’s forearms and said, “Edward, I know you are excited, but there is a profoundly serious reason why she came back with me. We need to find out what happened to the other Gummis and she is the only one who can help us get into Gummi Glenn. It expands much further than you would believe. We are standing where the giant oak tree once covered the entrance to their kitchen and some guest bedrooms.”

“I see. Well as you can see, the day is growing late. We will have to come back in the morning. Come, let us go back to my hotel. We will need something to disguise little Sunni over there,” he replied.

When they arrived at the hotel, Edward reserved another room for Kylie since he had to cancel her previous room. Standing next to Kylie was a short-looking dwarf with yellow rain boots, a beige trench coat with a matching beige fedora with her paws firmly planted in her jacket pockets. She kept the collar of the trench coat standing straight up to cover the yellow fur on her neck and kept the hat down to cover her bear face. Sunni remained quiet until Edward gave Kylie a small plastic card and then asked, “What is that weird card he gave you, Kylie? It is not like a room key. It does not look like any sort of key that I have ever seen before. How is that going to open the door?”

The young lady behind the desk replied, “Is your friend from the countryside? It is always the country folk who are the most surprised that a small hotel has modern amenities. We are not all old fashioned my dear.”

Before Kylie could respond any further, Edward quickly escorted the pair away from the counter towards the elevators. The trio made it to their rooms where Kylie showed Sunni how the door card worked to open their door.

“Wow and you folks claim this is not magic? It sure looks like magic to me!” Sunni exclaimed.

Inside the room were two queen-sized beds, two dressers, a desk, a bathroom, a large set of windows covered by heavy brown drapes and a magic box called a TV sitting on top of one of the dressers. After Kylie made sure the door was locked, she turned to find Sunni bouncing up and down on the bed closest to the window and her disguise thrown on the floor. “Does everyone have beds like this? This is like Princess Calla’s bed, but much softer!”

Kylie smiled back at her new friend and replied, “No, this is just more common for hotels. Hey, are you hungry? I can order some food to be sent up.”

“Oh, yes! I did not want to say anything earlier, but some Gummi berry wine, porridge and a turkey leg would be great,” replied Sunni.

“I do not think that have that, but this hotel does have an extensive menu for room service. I am certain we can find something. Just make sure to hide in the bathroom when they bring the food.”

“Oh, right. A talking bear wearing clothes would freak people out,” Sunni interrupted. “Sure thing, Kylie. I do not want to cause trouble.”

After dinner, the front desk called Kylie's room and informed her they had found her bag in their lost and found from her previous stay last week. They brought her bag a few minutes later and again, Sunni hid in the bathroom. "I am so glad they found my bag. I was worried I would have to buy more clothes. Now we need to get ready for bed because the task of finding the other Gummis begins tomorrow." She looked over to hear a response from Sunni and noticed she was already asleep on top of the covers. "Good night, Sunni."

The next morning, the trio grabbed some breakfast to go and headed back to the dig site. "Okay, Sunni, how do we get into the larger portions of Gummi Glenn" asked Edward.

Sunni began to scan the surrounding landscape with a critical eye looking for another quick tunnel entrance. "If the land has not changed, there should be another quick tunnel entrance just over those hills in the distance," she responded. Twenty minutes of walking and Sunni reached down to remove a huge pile of dead brush and twigs to find a large oak lid with the Gummi Bear symbol etched upon it. She found the hidden release and it popped open with a loud creak. Right under it was a hollowed-out log with three wooden plank seats within it. As they piled in, Edward asked, "Is this thing safe?"

Before Kylie could answer, Sunni pulled the oak release lever and the cart shot like lightning down the track going around sharp curves and up and down steep hills. Edward screamed in terror, while Kylie attempted to hold on for dear life. The ride ended in record time as they arrived at the main hall of the Gummis. Sunni barely let the car stop and bolted out of the car to head toward Zummi's study. She hoped to find a clue to her friends' collective disappearance. On the desk under much dust and cobwebs was a sealed letter with Sunni's name written in Zummi's flowing, golden, fancy cursive. She hesitated to open it, but Kylie and Edward waited for her to compose herself.

Dearest Sunni,

I hope this letter finds you well and safe. I was worried that I sent you and Kylie back to the age of giant reptiles. A major tragedy has indeed befallen us, my dear. Lord Winthorp has joined forces with the evil sorceress, Morgana. Between her magic and his army of Ogres, we knew we would be overrun. I managed to open a portal to another dimension. I froze the others in a suspended animation state once inside. I did not freeze myself so that I could watch over them. Time flows differently in this dimension, so no worries about me dying. I will just be asleep when you find me. I have included the spell and its components to open the portal dimension to rescue us. It is in the top drawer of this desk. Hope to see you in the future.

Zummi

Julie had discussed her concerns with her sister and brother but since they both had family obligations and she didn't, they both suggested she visit their mom and observe her in her home environment. The doctor's appointment was Julie's idea and both her siblings agreed it was a good plan. Of course, they wanted to make sure their mom was healthy, physically and mentally, for her own sake and safety.

They had to tread lightly not to alarm their mother. Cara had always been the nurturer in the family. She had been the go-to person for any problems, big or small. They could always rely on her support in any situation. Sometimes she would just listen. Other times she might

offer a suggestion or two. There was usually something comforting she offered. Even their father deferred to Cara when he was alive. He always said Cara was the heart of their home.

It was painful and scary to think their mom's health might be deteriorating but it was better to find out for sure. One other possibility was considered. Perhaps Cara was self-aware of changes happening to her and welcomed someone stepping in and taking charge. Julie hoped the doctor's visit would alleviate some of these concerns. The appointment was for the day after tomorrow and hopefully would provide answers. They'd just have to be patient until then.

In the meantime, it was ironic that some old newspaper pages could be a clue or maybe they were just old papers that didn't get replaced until now.

###

Death by Clutter **By Vicki Elberfeld**

I was quite a messy little girl. I liked my toys to be scattered on the surface of my bed and all over the floor rather than neatly put away on shelves or in closets. This upset my mother who put her foot down by saying that if I didn't put my toys away, I wouldn't be allowed to play with them. My response? I gave up playing with my toys for a good long time. Playing simply wasn't worth putting all those toys in their proper places, and Mom delighted in sharing the story of my stubbornness. But after several weeks of this abstinence, I gradually began to play with one toy at a time, so that cleaning up after myself wouldn't be strenuous. Gradually I introduced more and more toys until I reached the point where putting them all away became too overwhelming. Once again Mother and I were back at square one, and my room remained a mess for another decade plus.

Even when I went away to college and lived in a dormitory, my room was almost always the messiest room on the floor. I briefly improved when I had a roommate who was almost a complete minimalist. She only owned two pairs of pants, two pairs of shoes, two blouses, two sweaters, a fair number of books and, I assumed, underwear. If an extra top was lying on the bed or draped over the back of a chair, she'd apologize for the room being "a mess." Because I liked and admired her, I kept my clutter out of sight, but my closet and the space under my bed were filled to the brim with my stuff.

Long after college, I happened to attend a picnic at a fellow storyteller's house just outside Milwaukee. I arrived at her house after my long drive from Chicago's Northwest suburbs, needing to go to the bathroom. All the guests were outside, and my hostess seemed reluctant to allow me in the house. I explained my urgency, however, and she grudgingly agreed to lead me where I wanted to go. Her house was filled with clutter stacked up against the walls, and she led me through a very narrow path leading to her washroom. Once there, I was hardly surprised to see the bathtub overflowing with books and papers. Fortunately there wasn't rain or our picnic would have had to be canceled. No way could people be moved indoors to be squeezed in among the clutter.

Recently I have been learning all I can about possibly the biggest hoarders in U.S. history, the Collyer Brothers, Homer and Langley. They were born in the 1880's to two first cousins: Herman Livingston Collyer, an eccentric gynecologist who paddled a canoe up and down New York's East River to commute to work at the City Hospital, and Susie Collyer, a former opera singer. In 1909 Herman purchased and moved his family into a four story brownstone in Harlem, at that time a very elite neighborhood, and the young brothers lived there until the end of their days. By 1929, with both of their parents deceased, and the neighborhood demographics changing radically as a result of the depression, Homer and Langley lived lives that were, for all intents and purposes, quite normal. They went to their jobs, Homer as a lawyer and Langley as a concert pianist and later piano salesman. They both taught Sunday school and were relatively social individuals.

In 1933 the brothers' lives changed radically as Homer suffered hemorrhages in the back of his eyes and became blind, and Langley quit his job to take care of him 24/7. Langley secured and prepared food for the two of them, bathed his brother, and entertained him by playing sonatas on the piano and reading to him from their extensive library. Homer later became paralyzed with rheumatism, but no medical help was sought as the brothers, sons of a gynecologist, did not trust doctors. Langley was convinced Homer's sight could be restored by a diet of 100 oranges per week and peanut butter on dark bread. Langley also saved every newspaper from every single day so that once Homer's sight was restored, he could read them, but such a fortuitous event never occurred. As the brothers were rumored throughout the neighborhood to be sitting on piles of cash and other valuables, several burglaries were attempted. Such break-ins led Langley to put bars across the windows, wire the doors shut, and to only leave the house after midnight, securing food and other items largely from dumpsters. He booby trapped the house with wires and trash against any intruders. Though they weren't broke, Langley neglected to pay the bills for heat, water, electricity, and even phone service. They never had visitors, and they became serious hermits.

In March of 1947 an anonymous tipster, most likely a neighbor, called to complain about a stench likely coming from decomposition at the Collyer's. The police struggled to break into the house whose windows were barred and doors wired shut. Eventually a patrolman broke into the window of a second story bedroom. It took seven men several hours to remove junk by throwing it out the window before they eventually found the body of Homer, seated, with his head resting on his knees.

The medical examiner determined he had only been dead for 10 hours due to starvation, dehydration, and heart disease. But where was Langley? No one knew.

Cleanup in the brownstone continued. By the end of this backbreaking work, 120 tons of refuse were removed including 14 pianos, crystal chandeliers, numerous baby carriages, a model T automobile, pickled human organs from the father's medical practice, bottles and cans, and tons of floor to ceiling stacks of newspapers. Weeks later, under a pile of refuse, Langley's body was found, quite decomposed and largely eaten by rats. Evidently he was carrying food to the still living Homer when he tripped his own booby trap and was crushed under piles of refuse, just ten feet away from his helpless sibling.

Hopefully Langley's death was quick, though I can't help but wonder about Homer's final days and hours. Had he realized his brother was dead? He must have, as Langley was a conscientious caretaker and Homer was awaiting food. And if Langley died slowly and could vocalize, did they communicate with one another, tragically separated by a mere ten feet? What was going through Homer's mind as he sat there blind, paralyzed, and finally terribly alone, waiting for his end?

No one knows, and perhaps it's just as well. The plight of the brothers saddens and terrifies me, as I turn my attention to my own need to downsize and to keep my house more orderly. And I imagine that parents of messy children in New York don't say to their children, as mine did, "Put your toys away or you can't play with them." No doubt they are far more likely to utter the chilling words, "Put your toys away, or you'll end up like the Collyer brothers."

###

What Happened to Chicago Theater By Pauline Bastek

The above headline is from this Sunday, August 20, 2023 Chicago Tribune Section 4 A&E and featured a photo of Chris Jones, Art Critic.

I mentions this, as he is one of the small minority of local editors remaining on what was once a newspaper I looked forward to reading. Since its takeover by an entity whose only object is to provide an excess of profits to its shareholders, reports on arts and entertainment in our city are sporadic at best.

While I agree with many of the reasons he gives in this article, I feel the answer to the headline question can be summarized in one simple statement. The viewing public is no longer being made aware of what is happening on the stages of Chicago theaters and Chicago theaters seem oblivious to what the ticket purchasing patrons want to enjoy for their money.

I first became aware of the theater when I was approached by a staff member from Human Resources at my first paid position as a staff member of the company newsletter asking if I was interested in joining the First Nighters Club. The cost was minimal and would allow me to purchase tickets to productions at the Harris, Selwyn, Blackstone and various other theaters at a discounted rate to see productions that were reviewed on a regular basis by all our newspapers.

They gave us opinions from Claudia Cassidy at the Chicago Tribune to whoever was on the entertainment beat at the Chicago Sun, The Daily Times, The Herald. We enjoyed as well a variety of opinions in the magazines that featured theater reviews. The opinions differed but then so do the tastes of the theater goers.

The Letters to the Editors took up a page of the newspaper and many a production was saved by a deluge of letters from theater-going public supporting it despite Madame Cassidy's poor review.

Now the public rarely knows what is playing and the theaters seem to feel that they are the arbiters of what the public should be seeing without any input from the ticket buying public. There is no venue left for the public to make an informed decision on a choice of production.

Thus, we are faced with innumerable repetitive Broadway musicals or "woke" productions that the grey-haired theater goers are told they need to view.

Sorry, but the buyer determines the product not the seller. In this instance the seller is not even interested in the buyer's interests having decided that they know best. If they did, we would have theater as it was, in Chicago, and elsewhere.

###

**Fake Heiress on House Arrest Turns to Podcast to Try to Repair Image.
By J. Smetana**

American Presidents for eight hundred please.

He was known as the Screaming Wildman.

Who is Harrison?

I need more information.

Who is William Henry Harrison?

That is correct—

Peaches are you watching TV?

Yeah you can't learn everything from the NEWSPAPER!

###

**Old News
By Kely Tansor**

When I was born, my mom's best friend gave her a certificate of sorts that showed various statistics and news from that day—weather, sports highlights, what was on TV that night, etc. It also showed the top news headlines, so here is one from July 15, 1992: Grammy Award winners Whitney Houston, 28, and Bobby Brown, 23, who have been dating for three years, will marry in Menham, NJ on Saturday.

This got me thinking...

Whitney Houston's "peak" arguably happened before my time. I Wanna Dance With Somebody, How Will I Know, Saving All My Love for You—these all came out in the 80's and, as I mentioned, I was born in 1992. All this to say I didn't exactly grow up with her music. Unfortunately, by the time I knew of Whitney Houston, it was when this ill-fated marriage to Bobby Brown was becoming very chaotic. Drugs, arrests, and even a reality show showed *exactly* how chaotic her life had become. Don't get me wrong, I understand this woman is an absolute legend, and I love her music to this day.

But I have a hard time picturing her being 28. My first memory of Whitney Houston was an interview of her on *Oprah* where she said "crack is whack." By then, she was obviously much older than 28. I've gone back and watched her music videos from the 80's and 90's. She was so bright, happy, and full of energy. It's hard to believe this is the same woman. I wonder what it

was like to have seen this young girl in the 80's and watch her become the troubled woman she eventually became.

I have a weird quirk when I see old photos of people I know. I picture them as the age they are in the photo telling themselves what is going to happen in the future. Here's an example: In my stepdad's house, there is an old picture of my mom in a grade school classroom. For some reason, *every single time* I see it, I imagine my mom at 10-years-old (or whatever age she was) thinking to herself, "I'm going to get divorced. I'm going to get cancer." And so on and so forth.

I'm sure none of us think this way at 10-years-old. But imagine being able to predict these things about yourself. I personally *never* want that ability. As I write this, across the room there is a framed picture of me at maybe 5-years-old sitting on my mom's lap and hugging her. I actually remember this day, and I know for a fact I didn't think at that moment, "My mom's going to get cancer one day."

But I'm certainly thinking that now...

Getting back to Whitney Houston, I worry that I've painted her in a negative light. Believe me, that is not my intention. Like I said, she's a legend, but she was not without troubles (then again, who is?).

I found a photo online of Whitney and Bobby on their wedding day. They're all smiles, and they can't keep their hands off each other. Part of me wants her to know what's ahead of her. Maybe as a warning? Maybe to protect her? I'm not sure, but I want her to know everything. How drugs will impact her life. How toxic her marriage will become. How much her lifestyle will try to bring her down.

But I also want her to know how the movie and soundtrack for *The Bodyguard* will do. How her cover of "I Will Always Love You" will be an incredible hit. How successful her future music will be. The fact that she'll have a daughter. The fact that she will be a legend in music long after she is gone. How much her life will offer her.

The next time I find that old photo of my mom in grade school, I want to tell her about all the positives coming her way. She's going to have 4 daughters and have that big family she always wanted. She'll even have grandchildren! Sure, she'll get divorced, but then she'll remarry someone a million times better.

As for the little 5-year-old me hugging her mom? I would tell her to just keep hugging your mom. You don't need to know everything that's going to happen. Just enjoy this moment while you have it.

###

Newspaper I **By Edward Scheffler**

Technology of the Internet News
media is turning newspaper print
into an obsolescence.

Gone shall be the days of reading the
SPORTS pages
and
COMICS.

Gone shall be the days of digesting the
EDITORIAL COLUMNS
and
CROSSWORD PUZZLES.

For the newspaper presented yet another
service.
When the homeless would stuff fragments
of the newspaper into their clothing as
an added installation against the cold
winter nites.

Moving also required newspaper inserted
between boxes filled with glassware to
prevent breakage.

Something the software of Internet news
media service cannot offer.

Newspaper II
By Edward Scheffler

The Wall Street Journal edition of July 14th posted a headline
'The Writers Strike'

With the issue of increased compensation on
royalties in question.

Appearing that there will be a long process
in negotiations onto a settlement. Because
both film and T.V. studios have a stockpile
of episodes good for another year.

Streamers such as Net Flex and Max were
wise enough to cover themselves. First
with commissioning a glut of available
writers.

Then applying a format of so-called artificial
intelligence.

For it's the Writers Guild which failed in foresight
by making themselves too available.

With a noteworthy remark by William Blake:

You shall never know what is enough.
Till you know with certainty what is
more than enough.

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