

Worlds Upon Worlds

Watch as a natural librarian in their habitat walks up and down the aisle scanning no, hunting for lost books and people all trying to find their way. They read books of all shapes and sizes for the momentary pleasure of being lost in a different world. With stories beyond comprehension pirates that stole and looted or the space travelers in ships so massive with lasers and powerful beings. You too can have access to all this knowledge for essentially nothing; just walk to your local library and ask the clerk for a card. And your wish will be granted.

-Colton Schaefer

The Book Feast

As the librarian walked into the library, her hands were as bright as the sun. As her shoe clanked against the hard floor, she used her well of magic to float up into the air. She pulled a book and immediately a passage opened. She would go to where the good books were, the tasty ones. As she saw all of the books her brain growled. She took one of the books out and feasted on all the knowledge the book had. After the feast of books, her magic well was full, and all of her hunger for knowledge ceased.

-Kellen Schaefer

Library Adventures Led by....

The swashbuckling, intrepid guides wielded their great weapons. Daggers? Pistols? Cannons? Nay, nay and nay! We all know the pen is mightier than the sword, do we not? And that knowledge is power? Yes and yes! These guides' weapons were books, events and more, all wielded via relentless charm offensive. For it was the young, old, and all between who entered the guides' realm, and they all would be changed. And while visitors were to be quiet they would never be speechless, except when they were. The guides were, after all, none other than the Camas librarians in their library.

-Barrett Schaefer

Love in the Library_

My life was changed forever by a chance encounter in the Camas Library. It was the summer of 1998, and I was using the dial-up internet terminals in the children's section when I met my future husband, who worked at the library as a Page. After several conversations we had our first date, and a year and a half later he proposed to me (where else?!) in the children's section of the Camas Library. We've now been happily married for 22 years and have 2 wonderful children. Thank you, Camas Library, for our happily ever after!

-Victoria Rogen

Temptation

Spine cracking, the spellbound book on her desk fell open. A scarred hand rose from the pages. Long fingers beckoned.

His deep voice spilled forth, smooth as honey.
“Come back to me.”

She wilted, obligations rounding her shoulders.
“I should be working. I have deadlines.”

“I can’t go on without you,” he coaxed.

A heartbeat later her shoulders straightened. She spun away from her computer and slipped her hand into his. With a tug, he pulled her back into his magical world of intrigue, dragons, and malevolent royalty.

Sorcery sizzled as his fingertips traced her jaw.
“Welcome back, dear reader.”

-Katie Krueger

Books Inspired a Book

My mother brought us to the Camas Library once a week. I could barely write my name and they gave me a library card. Every week I brought home as many books as I could carry. This continued through my high school years. Reading all those books caused me to dream of writing a book. I have accomplished it. The book "The Sun Can't Hold a Candle" is set in the Northwest. It is available on Amazon. Hours and hours of reading and the Camas Library set me on a course.

-Virginia C. Schroeder

The Librarian's Hope

The Librarian sat upon muddy ground, crisscross applesauce, staring at the river. Ashes floated by, warm and filled with sorrow.

A sad teenage girl with bow and arrow and true aim, stepped close, whispering. "Tomorrow brings hope." A man with a pipe spoke. "My skills of observation and deductive reasoning cannot be stopped."

"Have you seen a great whale?" the man with a harpoon asked.

"No whale sir, it be treasure I look for." Remarked the lad in ragged clothes.

A boy with a wand sat down by the Librarian. "They cannot stop the books from being written or read."

-Vicki Cook

On Waiting to Bloom

“Don’t worry,” Baba said, stroking my hair and drying my tears with her soft muslin handkerchief. “Flowers need water, sunlight, and mostly just time before they bloom.”

At four years old, I had little patience for the realities of horticulture.

My little African violet did eventually bloom, cheering my bedroom with its soft purple petals. I bloomed, too: into a woman, a mother, and an enthusiastic—if sometimes-impatient—amateur gardener.

In those moments of frustration, when my cuttings won’t take, or my fruit won’t grow, I still hear my grandmother’s voice: “Just wait,” she’d say. “Just wait and see.”

-Izarra Moore

Visible Legacy.

Innate in me has been the desire to somehow improve the world.

Neurodivergence, bad genes, generational trauma; whatever be the reasons, I struggle daily to give the working world something it merits.

Feeling devalued by the adult world and all of its trappings, I still feel destiny calling me to do something of lasting import. Perhaps this story is it.

I feel my invisible disabilities are often labeled “willful laziness” and that those who can fit the career path mold often feel justified in marooning those who can’t.

Perhaps my value would be more visible if this mold were recast.

-Candice Nichols

One Hundred True Words

This is a true story. When I was in school, my mom was the children's librarian in the Camas Public Library! I felt so lucky because I loved everything about the library: reading, helping my mom check books out and in, reshelving, helping kids choose books to read, helping select books to buy, and reading picture books to youngsters.

But one of the coolest things was exploring areas people seldom went: The stacks—old books, a little creepy and dusty, underground hallways, a forgotten elevator shaft, the tiny lunch room, the open loft and every secret corner of the library!

-Jennifer Pratt-Walter

Jerry and Moana Going to the Candy Store

Jerry and Moana were going for a walk until Moana stopped, she pointed ahead with her finger. Look, Jerry, she said. There's Rocket Fizz! She exclaimed. Jerry laeged*. That's not a "Rocket Fizz", Moana, he said. That's actually a candy store. Candy? asked Moana. What is candy? Candy is a sweet thing "that everyone likes". Jerry replied. Hmm. Good to know! said Moana. We don't have candy on our Island, said Moana. Wach* out! Cried Jerry. The door's opening! Moana and Jerry got out of the door, just before the door could slam them and into the warm candy store.

-Diya Kumar (age 6)

The words that are asterisk were spelled incorrectly by the child.

All the punctuations are written by the child.

Wach* = watch

Laeged* = laughed

A Family Treasure Survives a War

In my family tree I have a photo of a quilt. The description of the photo says Quilt owned by Cloe family. It was buried in a lard can during the Civil War so as not to be destroyed. Made by Mary Cloe in 1855. To escape the war Mary, with three young sons and a daughter, walked from their home in Missouri to Sherman, Texas. With them they carried some staples; coffee, sugar, and a quilt made by Mary. They carried it in a little cart pulled by two calves.

Quilt is currently on displayed at Missouri state museum.

-Peri Muhich

Another Grave

Standing beneath the tree, clutching one child to my breast, I was sobbing while another was being returned to the earth.

My tears and my heart went out for a daughter who would never climb a tree or buy a movie magazine. She would not feel the pangs of first love or the depths of passion for another human being.

Born prematurely in 1964, she only lived three days. I remember standing at the hospital's nursery window, watching a nurse gently rubbing her back, trying to provide some comfort to my small daughter who was losing her fight to live.

-Norman Paulk

Catholicism

I learned of the new law through a midnight legal solicitation on broadcast TV, three thousand miles away. It wasn't joyous.

The particulars gave me limited time to act, a lookback window. Should I?

For decades the abuse hadn't defined me, hadn't factored in. A teenage suicide attempt, but blissfully suburban thereafter. Besides, he's senile.

My spouse offered the same stunned silence they had previously. The adult children of my extended family can't know. My children won't know. My neighbors prefer a smile.

I drank more. I exercised more. I slept worse. I decided. Hate isn't enough: I'm a plaintiff.

-Anonymous Camasonian

Chunky the Raccoon

Once there was a raccoon named Chunky. He lived in a little chunk of a family's roof; he was lonely. There was some children that liked to watch him. They seemed happy together. It was mating season, so he decided that year he'd find a mate. He went out searching, and after wandering for hours, he found a friendly raccoon. He found the courage and went to talk to her. After communicating, somehow, they'd become best friends. They weren't going to mate, but they would move in together. The children never saw him again, but they knew he was happy.

-Lucia Perez

Everyone Has a Story.

“I’ll be alright,” she said choking softly on her tears. Cheryl was a paramedic who had done physical exams for my life insurance applicants.

In passing one day she mentioned her brother was disabled and lived with her and her partner.

This call was different. Her brother had died.

What do you say when someone is grieving? Who can escape experiences that overtake us, sometimes like a freight train. We watch people drive by, walk by, or act out roles on television and in movies. They might be famous or nameless and unknown to us, but everyone has a story.

-Norman Paulk

Finding the Best Campsite

Growing up in the 60's, every summer our family including five kids went on a two-week camping trip around the country. In those days, you could camp in national parks for free, and it was getting very popular. If we got to a crowded campground, we had a routine. As we drove around and our parents saw a vacant spot, they would drop off a kid to sit on the picnic table. We could thus hold up to five sites. Then they picked the best one before collecting all the other kids from the unchosen sites.

-Bill Baird

Geppetto's Wooden Children of Pens

Large snowflakes drifted past windows, promising us that our world could be covered in beauty by hiding scars, disappointments, and failures. Promises rarely kept.

Hot tub lid cantilevered back. Snow, slush, water collecting in the gazebo's sagging pockets. Dripping excess water, ink, blood; shedding an overflow of imagination.

Geppetto's wooden children of pens. Ink dripping onto paper, blots adding to the accumulation of sadness and loss. The reservoir of ink running dry; ink that once was life's blood. The euphoria that the numbness brings helps replace and nourish the flow of ideas, yet soon becomes the cannibal of saddened creativity.

-Norman Paulk

I Did Not Sit on Santa's Lap

My wife and I enjoyed a lunch at a buffet in Vancouver. Near us sat an older, heavy-set man with a grey-white beard and hair wearing a red shirt and red pants. Pointing him out I said, "I always wondered how Santa spent his time between Christmas holidays".

Later I went to the men's room. Unfortunately, it was a "one holer" and the one toilet was occupied. I waited till I heard the toilet flush and then "Santa" came out. This led to the following poem:

"I did not sit on Santa's lap but I did sit where Santa sat."

-Norman Paulk

I Love my Monster

I was walking down the street when I saw a nice monster. I loved him. Mom made lunch for us, but after lunch I lost him! I searched the whole neighborhood, but I couldn't find him! I kept looking and looking. When I came back to my house, he was sitting on my front porch!

I said, "I thought I lost you! I came out this door, but I didn't see you."

"It's okay," he said. "I was sitting here doing a puzzle because I needed alone time."

I brought him a humongous hamburger and gave him a big hug.

-Carson Hoel

Irreplaceable

"That's the cliff with the overhang on the map! The water is higher now."

She noticed his eyes, intense, gleaming.

"That ledge could fall anytime, so as soon as I go under, you paddle the skiff across the cove."

Taking a deep breath, he dove into the dark water. Thirty seconds later massive bubbles boiled to the surface, the cliff shuddered, the ledge broke free. Horrified, she felt the crash, the boat rocking and outer spray. Stillness then, just floating debris.

Suddenly, two strong wet hands lifted the small golden chest over the side and into the boat.

"Oh Indie!".....

-Bob Whiting

Philosophy Class Discussion

“What’s Love?” asks the Professor.

“An emotional, physical, profoundly human expression,” responds Tim.

“Deep affection for family, friends, Mother Nature’s Beauty,” chimes in Maria.

“Loyalty to friends and country, kindness to neighbors, even pets,” says Antoinette.

“Appreciation for fine art, poetry, even precious rocks,” adds Henry.

“Willingness to solve problems peacefully, without resorting to anger and violence,” whispers Tom.

“For me,” begins Zandra, “love’s a surprising mix of joy, gratitude and grief. My treasured SUV was totalled this morning. Sadly, it died while its seatbelt and airbags were protecting me. I hugged the police officer and cried on his shoulder.”

-Sandra Gangle

Love Lies in the Library.

Ali put his book down quietly on the wooden table that sat beside him. He looked around, noticing a familiar girl sitting next to a window across the library, reading a book. He'd been thinking for a while but maybe today, on Valentine's Day, would be the day he had enough courage to ask her out. Having not put much thought into it, he got up and walked to her. "Hello," he whispered. The girl finally noticing him replies with, "Hello," a warm smile on her face.

"Would you like to be my valentine?" Ali asks.

"Sure, I'd love to"

-Adam Fong

Love Melts

In a pocket not too far away, lived a not-perfect crayon. A well-used one shaped by a small left hand. The communicator of small dreams, it used to reside in a beautiful box not alone but with many. When the small hand chose you, you were the interpreter of their visions and the more colors on the paper the higher the energy. Sometimes we would melt from all that perfect love.

So many did not return to the box but we knew we'd see their energy again. On the refrigerator displaying perfect dreams of the small enlightened hand.

-Gabby Navidi

Magic of Electricity.

Born in 1944 in rural central Texas on a cotton, corn and cattle farm, I remember the day in 1949 when electrical workers came to our house. The workers planted tall poles in two places and strung electric wires on them to our house.

We soon had one light in the middle of each of our five rooms hanging from two-foot wires with a pull chain. Nice bright light rather than shaky kerosene lamp light shown in our rooms. Later we got our first refrigerator so we could freeze ice cubes and keep milk, meats and soda water cold.

-Mary Ann Eichler

MG Stands for “Mothers Guardian”

A two-hundred-mile journey in an MG would have been a fun trip. To my seven-month pregnant wife, it was 4000 revolutions per minute of uncomfortable bouncing and jiggling. She, however, was willing to put up with it on Good Friday, in order to be with her parents for Easter in Elkhart, Illinois.

The morning before Easter, coming early from the bouncing and jiggling, our son was born. His umbilical cord was tied in a knot. He might not have been born into this world at all had it not been for the bouncing in our Mother's Guardian, 1959 model.”

-Norman Paulk

My First Texas Hold'em Tournament

Sometimes it is difficult to compare one thing you have done in life with another. However, I had no problem with comparing and sharing these two situations. Images of both are clear in my mind.

My first Texas Hold'em poker tournament played at the Orleans casino in Las Vegas, January, 2005 was not unlike my first sexual experience.

- I certainly did not know what I was doing.
- What I did know, I did wrong.
- Nobody helped me with anything.
- It was over much too quickly.

If there is any other similarity, it is that I look forward to trying again.

-Norman Paulk

Naomi Was Extremely Hungry.

Hearing the rumbling garage door opening, Sarah quickly turned the volume down on the TV.

Jeremiah ran upstairs to his bedroom just before the door opened.

"Welcome home Mom," said Sarah.

With no words and no looks, Naomi headed straight for the refrigerator.

Zach tentatively set his game controller down on the couch cushion. His sock feet helped him slip quietly out of the room.

Slamming the refrigerator door, spinning around to lean her hands and head on the counter edge, Naomi scowled, "Who ate all the leftovers?"

Hangry hung in Naomi's stomach like a rock. The room stood empty.

-J Todd McMillan

Not Taken for Granted

It isn't so much that I take things for granted. It is more that I forget. I go about my life doing each day the things that need to be done.

Occasionally I will hear a song from now or before. I stop everything and listen. Chills envelop me when I hear Mario Lanza sing "Ave Maria". The richness of Nelson Eddy's voice or sounds from Linda Ronstadt cause feelings to ripple through me.

More than the words, it is the sympathetic vibrations within my being created by certain sounds. I do not take hearing for granted; I just forget.

-Norman Paulk

River's Footprints

River was a handsome pup who melted hearts. A tri-color Aussie Cavalier mix, with stubby legs, floppy ears, and a fluffy tail that wagged high and proud. His life was short but full. He left icy footprints in the snow in March, and squishy footprints by Lacamas lake in May. He left dusty footprints at Mt. Ranier in June, and wet footprints by the riverbank in July. The inoperable cancer claimed River at only six months old and he left the biggest footprints in our hearts when he crossed the rainbow bridge. We love you, we miss your footprints, River.

-Stephen Nygaard

Skydiving: I Heard God Talking

I reached out and grabbed the strut connecting the plane's body to the overhead wing. Stepping onto the wheel, I swung my body out.

I pushed off with my body at a 45-degree angle, falling away from the plane, hearing a swooshing sound as the chute filled with air.

Suspended in the sky, I thought God must be talking to me. I could hear words. Then, I saw a couple walking down the road. I was hearing them.

I landed in my mind before my feet hit earth. Stretched out on my back thinking, "Glad I am wearing a helmet."

-Norman Paulk

Thank you, Sir

A panhandler was at the intersection. Older gentleman with a backpack at his feet and a sign in his hand. Signs say things like “Out of work. God Bless”. His sign was blank. I slowed and handed him a Covid mask. He said, “Thank you, Sir”.

My thoughts were full of wonderings. What is his story? Why was the sign blank? Was his life blank? What I did expect was that the mask could protect his health and seeing him masked might make other drivers more comfortable stopping to give him something. “Thank you, Sir” kept running through my mind.

-Norman Paulk

The Chameleon

The sound was the soft scraping, rolling, bouncing noise of the tiny pebbles that the chameleon's feet knocked aside as he skittered across the desert boulder. His sides pumping as he gasped for breath, blending into his surroundings as he tried to stay safe and alive.

What makes me a man, rather than a chameleon is that when I blend into the rocks, I become rocklike. I take up each characteristic as a part of me. When I use camouflage, I lose sight of myself and then need to search me out again. This is the price my survival demands

-Norman Paulk

The Extremely Interesting Thing That Happened

Once upon a time, an extremely interesting thing happened. This extremely interesting thing was caused by a fifth-grade girl, in a small school in Washington State. It involved slime, feathers, a book, a poster, a pencil sharpener, a toilet, toilet paper, a pair of scissors, some hand sanitizer, toothpaste, a microwave, the original United States constitution, a boring history textbook, all the girls in the classroom, the teachers, and a tissue box. After three weeks (two to gather materials, and one to prepare), the extremely interesting thing that happened was, absolutely, extremely successful. In the fifth-grade girl's opinion, at least.

-Angie Pardo-Montiel

The Fantasy Book Tour

The library books, on the shelf, stood at attention, awaiting my hand to release them. What an eruption! My head went spiraling into another dimension of time and place:

Ouch! Who are you?

“To be or not to be”

Shakespeare? Only men allowed on stage. Farewell.
Chauvinist!

My tour was now whirling me to a Broadway stage in 20th century America.

You're Marilyn Monroe's husband.

Arthur Miller, a famous playwright.

Where's Marilyn?

Get off the stage!

Surely, women are allowed now.

Women? Yes. You? Leave.

What a grouch!

“Wake up, Ms.”

“Where am I?”

“Camas Library.”

“What a book tour!”

-Susanne Conger

The Gourd

In a village near a stream lived a family of invisible raccoons. One day while foraging through a compost pile on the outskirts of town, they came across the shell of a gourd. But not an ordinary gourd – a glowing gourd! After examining it carefully, they decided to take it home.

They hung it from the ceiling of their cottage where it cast a pleasant glow over the room. It had been a long day, so they decided to go to bed. When they awoke in the morning, the gourd was no longer glowing, and they were no longer invisible.

-Kim Kuhle

The Mighty Quandale Dingle

In a forest there was a magnificent being called Quandale Dingle. It would wake up in its forest and hit the griddy as it ate its breakfast. In the afternoon it would attend its Quandale party and laugh at kids, as it's their mighty Dingle God. "Rehehe!" Then it blasts 'Whopper' on its radio and says "slay" when it's over. For exercise it flies attached to a string. A child came innocently wandering towards its cavern. The Dingle flew into a tree, and then in its rage, ate the child. Smacking its lips, it hit the griddy towards its bed.

-Lila Joseph

The Slide

We stood at least 50 feet up on a wooden platform. Our hearts were beating really fast. We got up on the raft. I almost fell out. Water rushed around us as we started going down the red water slide. We dropped down, almost vertically. We went into a BIG yellow and red room. We went up the sides and almost up the top of the room. The current pushed out of the room and into a smaller tube. We were taken out of the tube and into the main part of the water park. It was scary but fun!

-Ella Labbe and Chloe Young

The Tree

Wisps of red hair peeked out from his blue rain jacket and his red boots sunk softly into the mud. He was not much taller than the cold metal shovel but he lifted it with strong, determined, 5-year old arms. He wiggled the shovel back and forth to open a spade-shaped pocket in the earth and cradled a tiny seed to rest in the damp crease. His small hands gathered a blanket of soil that patterned his fingers with rich brown speckles, and enveloped the seed in its new home. He patted the ground gently and whispered, "There you go."

-Juliette Fernandez

Tom and Jerry going to Powell's Bookstore

Jerry decided to go to Powell's bookstore. Tom,! he cried exitedly*. Would you be avalible* to go to Powell's bookstore with me? It's the biggest bookstore in the US! Tom yawned. I want to sleep. Please come, said Jerry. Ok, said Tom. I guess I'll go with you. Yay! cried Jerry. Jerry looked at the time, it said 4:00 clock. Yikes! cried Jerry. "We have to be there in 10 minets*. Tom and Jerry packed food and water. They ruched* to the car. Whew! said Jerry when they reached. We're on time. Good luck in Powells! Gerta, Jerry's friened*, said.

-Diya Kumar (age 6)

The words that are asterisk were spelled incorrectly by the child.

exitedly* = excitedly
avalible* = available
minets* = minutes
ruched* = rushed
friened* = friend

Unicorn Bob in a Pickle

There is a Unicorn named Bob. Bob lives inside a pickle in the forest. But he also is in a pickle. Like he had a problem. His problem was that he needed an oven so he could cook his pizza. He really loves pizza. So, he went down to the town to find a job. Then somebody asked him to pack chocolate in heart boxes for \$25. He finished all the boxes in 1 hour. Then he bought an oven with the money. He immediately got some pizza and cooked it in his new oven. He was happy.

The End

-Paige Knapp

We Have an Emergency.

“Papa, what is a Twinkie?” Can you imagine a child who has never had a Twinkie?

Hand-in-hand we entered our local QFC. Seeing a man who looked like he could be the manager, I raised my free hand into the air and boldly called out, “We have an emergency.”

Back in the car we opened the package and as I revisited my childhood, my grandson took his first bite. I then told him that a Twinkie will explode in a microwave in about forty-five seconds. Alex’s eyes lit up and he asked, “Can we go back and get another one?”

-Norman Paulk

Who is There?

“Who is there?” I was sure I heard someone outside the door; but there rarely is. It has been dark so long. Memories speed through my brain like they all need to be the first out. They slam into one another like particles in an accelerator; some parts get mixed up. Then they are gone again; changed and unrecognizable. Faces with the wrong names. Places with the wrong faces. Her grave marker is no longer in that green grassy place beneath the trees. It keeps appearing in unright places, marking other deaths ... other failed beginnings... other aborted efforts.

-Norman Paulk