

# The Writing Group ~No 8, 2021



## Editorial

Spring at last. A time when we can begin to enjoy the outdoors without shivering. A time of renewal. A time to appreciate the beauty in nature. It is a time when even members of the Writing Group shrug off the gloom of winter and do crazy things. In this issue we share some of the feeling of 'silly season' with corny jokes, but include more serious articles and memories of past travels to new places.

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote:  
"In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly  
turns to thoughts of love."  
But so do young women's...

She read the desire in his eyes and her  
ancient woman reared herself and filled her  
with the need to respond.

She turned her body slightly at an angle to  
him, lowered her head and fluttered her  
eyelashes while looking sideways at him  
over her shoulder. Crossing her legs she  
flapped her stiletto shoe on and off, arched  
her back, stretched – and saw the desire  
rise in his body.

Well, why not. They were alone. Their  
children were safely asleep and the bottle of  
wine nearly finished – why not?

Noreen Burton

### SEEDS of Wisdom by Sobhna Poona

Spring SPROUTS thoughts like  
GRAPES along a VINE...  
may writers BLOOM  
as words MUSHROOM  
WEATHER it be  
hot PEPPER days or cold CHILLI  
BEETROOT to our hearts  
abide a PEAS full mind  
SQUASH negativity  
make THYME for ourselves  
savour SAGE advice  
TURNIP for loved ones  
the past has BEAN  
LETTUCE be bountiful  
in RAISIN our minds

### Jumping Onion. by Sobhna Poona

I asked a visitor to help herself to lettuce from my  
garden. As she pulled up the lettuce, out came an  
onion seedling.

"I pulled out your jumping onion," she said.

"No, that's not a weed," I responded, "It's a sweet  
red onion."

"I don't mean a weed," she said. "A jumping onion.  
Whadu call it? Spring onion."

She replanted it. We both laughed.

She didn't realise that spring onions are so named  
because they are harvested  
in Spring.



Spring affects us all - -but don't get caught!

## The Black Phone

by Mike Abdinor (Cape Town)

"I think we should hike the National Forest Walk," says Jeanne, a petite woman of 35. Robert, her husband, a well-groomed man of 42, is watching the morning news. He grunts back. "Mm-hmm." She glares at Robert who has slumped deeper into his chair to carry on with his TV ritual. A few minutes later he mutters sheepishly. "I have to finish an assignment, so I'll be late." The front door closes, and Jeanne lets out a deep sigh.

After preparing the daypacks, Jeanne commences her household chores. Whilst dusting the top of their wardrobe, a vase comes crashing down at her feet. Lying amongst the broken pieces is a black cell phone, "What's this?" She utters in surprise. She tries their street number as the PIN, and it opens. Scrolling on, she screams. "You bastard!"

At midnight the door opens quietly. Robert heads to the sofa and falls asleep.

Early the next morning, Robert wakes up to the sound of a coffee mug banging on the table. "Sorry about the late night," he stammers.

"Get moving. We are leaving in 20 minutes," barks Jeanne.

They drive in silence. "Like some music?" Robert asks quietly. "Mm-hmm!" Jeanne mutters, not taking her eyes away from her smartphone.

Two hours later they pull into the empty trailhead parking lot. Donning their day packs, they march off in single file past the entrance gate. The walk starts amongst tall pine trees partially blocking out the sun. The smell of the undergrowth is refreshing. The trail eventually bursts out onto a rocky plateau. Way below the trail a blue lake sparkles in the sun. "Wow!" exclaims Robert. "Breathtaking," says Jeanne in a warmer voice. They sit down for sandwiches and coffee avoiding any conflict.

Walking on for 10 minutes is a sign: CONTINUE AT YOUR OWN RISK. They continue. The path ends on a cliff top with a sheer descent to the river far below. Robert turns around facing Jeanne and says, "Let's talk." "What about this?" Jeanne shouts and flings the black phone at him. For one second his face turns white, he stumbles backwards, loses his footing and falls over the cliff side screaming. His body thuds against the rocky ledges below. Jeanne screams, "Robert. NO, NO, NO," and faints.

Two hours later she is found by Forest Rangers. She murmurs incoherently. An ambulance rushes her to hospital. Robert's body is recovered by helicopter.

Two years later Jeanne has moved to the East Coast. Her thoughts now diminished about the police visits and the day when her innocence was proved beyond doubt. The black phone was never found.

Her daughter, Tyler, plays happily with her toys. Soon Charles will be home, in time for dinner, as he always is.



## Memories of travelling in South America, 1980

By Nancy Tietz



- Our towels were swiped on the first day of our tour, when we left them on the beach while swimming at Copacabana in Rio. We also discovered that Khaki was the best defence against stinging insects.



- On arrival at La Paz, Bolivia, one of the highest cities in the world, we were helpless in the 'thin air' so to help ourselves we tossed our hand luggage, bags with thousands of Pesos and coats out of the plane to children who caught them and returned them to us at Arrivals.



- It took 3 days to become acclimated, during which we were lifted on and off buses for scenic tours, and tip-toed through archaeological sites uncovered by Thor Heyerdahl. We drank gallons of coco tea to thicken our blood and needed to go to bed at 17:30 after an exhausting day.
  - In Lima our hotel was boarded up because of 'revolting students'. One night we had the confidence to go out on our own but were told to be back by 21:00. Thank goodness we were - there was much speedway driving and back-firing in the streets below. At breakfast the following day we were told there was a curfew from 21:00 to 0700 and anyone out at these hours would be shot on sight!
- Travelling through Paraguay our bus was held-up at gun-point, as we were prime suspects in the assassination of the President of Paraguay.



- Our pleasure boat taking us to our destination in the Amazon Jungle ran aground on a sand-bank and we disembarked on a narrow plank until it was shallow enough to jump into the Amazon River and walk to shore, where members of a local tribe carried our possessions, and were given bon bons for their service. We were told they were Jivaros - the head-shrinking group. We became extra courteous and obedient as we waited to be rescued, and even felt obliged to drink fly-studded milk from a Coco-de-Mer shell offered to sustain us.

• This was our best chance of seeing the Jungle at close quarters where everything is larger than life, leaves the size of lavatory seats, root buttresses large enough to enclose 20 -30 people, millipedes the size of cobras and ants to vie with Parktown Prawns. Eventually we were saved and taken to our stilted polythene camp in the tree tops and fed roots, stems, leaves, seeds and the meat of Capybara, a rodent that spends so much of its time in water, that in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the Catholics classified it as a fish so that believers could have



protein on Fridays.



- On our last day in the Amazon Jungle we went on a fishing trip through the streams and canals, and even walked on water lily leaves so huge it felt like a springy mattress on a giant size double bed with incontinent sleepers. We also caught heaps of piranhas from the pool we had been told on our first day, was safe to swim in. In horror we attacked the guide for allowing us to do such a dangerous thing on our first day and he calmed us down saying "On your first day you were quite safe because the mosquitos and other insects hadn't bitten you and there was no blood to attract the fish!"



- On our last night in the Jungle there was a tropical downpour for several hours, our motorboat broke its moorings and disappeared into the jungle and canoes had all been swept away. This meant we had to walk, carrying our suitcases, in the muddy sloshy jungle for 8 kilometres.

I've been thinking of that holiday, often on cold days this winter, as I haul out a poncho made of Llama wool from Peru. I didn't mean to buy anything so extravagant, but was persuaded to buy it by the Peruvian guide who insisted that it was the best defence against pick-pockets who are rife in South America. When wearing a poncho the hiding places and pockets in your clothing are suitably unreachable.

On our return to Rio we were united with one of our party who had ignored instructions not to use American Express Travellers Cheques. She had promptly been arrested and placed in a safe house at the expense of the government of Brazil, until our return to Rio.

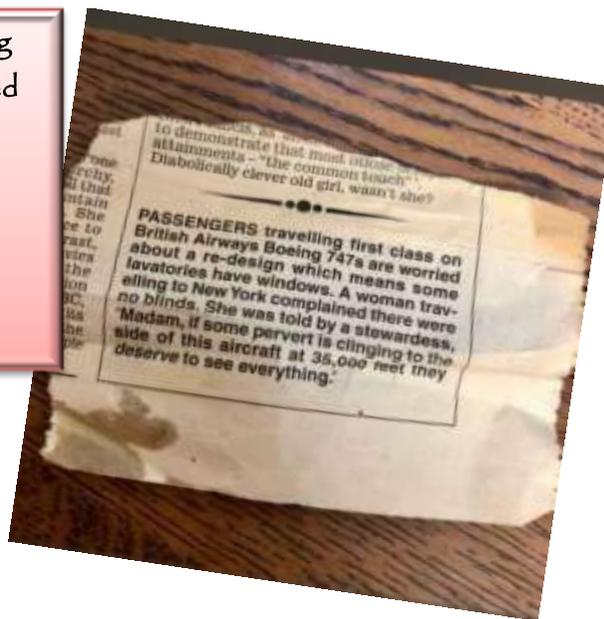
I was not discouraged by the lack of safety precautions and hap -hazard encounters to which we were treated, and since then have ventured twice to South America to see more of their wildlife and wondrous sites, experience their colourful cultures and get some understanding of their tortured history.

RMT

Sulphur and Chlorine, holidaying on Mercury, were sitting at the bar enjoying a drink together when Hydrogen walked in.

Chlorine watched with interest. Sulphur warned: "Be careful. If you link up with Hydrogen your relationship will turn sour!"

Never trust an atom – they make up everything.



Merle and Monty are tired of sitting in their tiny flat in the retirement village. Monty looks up from the magazine he is reading:

Monty: I'd love to go to Holland someday.

Merle: **Wooden shoe!**

Monty (showing off): I can name at least one city in France.

Merle (bored): That's **Nice!**

Merle (thoughtful): If he jumps off a bridge in Paris, he would be **in Seine.**

The couple act on their wish and set off to explore. While travelling in Germany, Merle and Monty pass a music shop. The sign reads: "**Gone Chopin. Bach in a minuet**".

At the end of the holiday the couple is standing in a queue at the airport waiting to go through security. "Look at that," observes Merle.

A photon is passing through security.

Officer: Any luggage?

Photon: No, **I'm travelling light.**

## THE NUMBER GAME: A story in 50 words

"Three numbers correct...

Four numbers correct...

I've got four numbers – I've won!

Five numbers correct...

Whoopee!

Six numbers.

This is unbelievable!

**And** the bonus number!

It can't be! Totally unbelievable!

Honey, I've won!

I've *won* the Lottery!

**I'VE WON THE LOTTERY!"**

"But darling, that's last week's ticket. Here's this week's."

*Noreen Burton*

## Are you a member of any of the U3A Writers' Groups?

If so you are welcome to submit articles for publication on this web page. We would love to hear from you.

Send contributions to Sobhna Poona, our editor:

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