

Scribbler

July 2020

ISSUE 104

Even before Crossroad Poets got under construction, Crazy Child Scribbler kids were romping in foundation trenches, making paper airplanes out of old blueprints and throwing them into the circus streets, jazzed that something's going on behind the clowning.

Editor's Note

I'm Robert Peck, a 68-year-old ex-hippie private investigator Lothario who's about to become an ex-real estate appraiser. Along the way I've seen the view from eight miles high, had many magical and tempestuous relationships, and been shot at, beat up, and jailed for solicitation, drugs and reckless endearment, mostly while an investigator. I wouldn't change a thing except getting shot at.

In more recent years I've been blessed with two developments: Internet dating and Viagra! By pure luck I've wound up with a lovely woman who is helping me take care of my Down Syndrome son from my second marriage who is now nine and the love of my life and hers. He packs every day with a month of highs and lows.

One of my Internet dates, a writer, invited me to a poetry salon run by Clive Matson, who quickly became my svengali. With his encouragement, over the last couple of years, I've written a memoir and am trying to get it either published or burned. I wrote the poems in this issue just to have something to read at his meetings.

The unifying theme for this edition of the Scribbler is: The unparalleled presumptuousness of the living. At this time with a president and a party of slime ball repuglicans and their nitwit minions who are bent on breaking everything that doesn't line their pockets, it's hard not to dwell on the double-speak and the hope against hope hail marys we try to lob over. Please enjoy these poems in spite of your best intentions.

—Robert Peck

Black Lives Don't Really Matter

Bunch of old white people,
lollygagging around, on the corner
of High and the freeway
every Friday afternoon.
Holding signs about black despair.
Favorite plaid shirt under a puffy vest,
or long faded hippie dress,
white hair whitening in a white world.
High fiving each other and jigging around —
ain't we something!
Doing a good deed for the day!
I give them all the finger every time
I pass them on my way home.
The fact is: they're old, because they're white.
I wonder if they ever wonder
why no black people ever join them...
They're an embarrassment.
They should be off trying to sell
back their timeshares on Maui
because they waited too long
and are now too decrepit to travel.
They should just go on back home
and walk their stupid dog.

—Robert Peck

My Gats Got to Get

Rolling around with a strap use
your thinking cap and not a gat,
to have a mother fucker played
out in your lap, bleeding and
you feel the life leave em but
you cold as ice, my boy said
he was kicked out of heaven,
I don't know if I believe em, he
still breathin so why dont he
believe in himself, to climb up
past serving time, maybe learn
how to rhyme, cuz we all shine,
down the line tryina buy a 9 cuz
he know I got the line on that
gat, tryina get a strap, told em
I ain't finna tell him what to do
but if I pass him that 22 he has
to have his target picked, know
what to do, no spray and pray,
to sort out his mentals before
doing something he cant take
back, that click clack

—Ezra Matson-Ford

Workshop Schedule

**note: All events and workshops
are online via Zoom**

CRAZY CHILD WRITING WORKSHOPS

(fee: \$80 or any donation; included in 10-week workshops)

Let your creative self write with abandon —

based on the tutorial *Let the Crazy Child Write!* (New World Library, 1998)

the third **Saturday** of the month, 10am to 5pm:

July 18, August 22, September 19, October 17

Register at clive@matsonpoet.com for the Zoom link.

10-WEEK WORKSHOPS

(fee: \$400)

poetry prose plays nonfiction

Wednesdays 6:30 to 9:30pm

Current sessions end September 9 — New sessions start September 16

Fridays 10am to 1pm

Current sessions end September 18 — New sessions start September 25

Register at clive@matsonpoet.com for the Zoom link.

2-BUSY 2-WRITE

(drop-in writing time)

(fee: \$10 or any donation, like healthy cookies)

Every **Tuesday**, 7 to 9pm

Register at clive@matsonpoet.com for the Zoom link.

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(fee: \$250 for ten weeks or \$30 per class) -

Reclaiming the Muse with some discussion of Modernism, feminism,
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Thursdays 7 to 9pm

Current sessions end September 17 — New sessions start September 24

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whole. Two-hour sessions, once a month, are devoted to each novel.

New sessions start when four authors declare their readiness.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
matsonpoet.com or phone (510) 508-5149**

POETRY SALOON

(drunk on poetry!)

Free — register at clive@matsonpoet.com
for **Zoom** link.

Second **Fridays**, 7 to 9:30 pm

*Bring poems or prose by you or others
to share, or join simply to enjoy.*

July 10, August 14, September 11, October 9

THE SCRIBBLER

PREVIOUS-ISSUE FINANCIAL REPORT

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DONORS (also see correction, bottom of page)

Sina Chau-Pech, Deborah Janke, Eila Kokkinen

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Workshop participants receive the Scribbler for two
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CORRECTION. Three donor names were left out of
the April issue: Elizabeth Woodbury, Wil Newman,
and Chuck Fisher. We apologize for the omission.

Some of the SCRIBBLER issues are
available online at matsonpoet.com.

If you wish to stop receiving the print version,
please notify us at clive@matsonpoet.com.

I Would Give Up Hope

Let me sing my way back to her
For she's my only daughter
She found her heart's desire
After she left my womb
And it was life itself

One of the greatest gifts I had...I gave away
The only thing I love more than my own temple
My one wish is that we could've stayed together
Losing ground running towards my little
Is what would happen if I tried to reach out
The ground would slip out from beneath me
I wouldn't fall so much as slide backwards
Towards uncertainty

But if I let go of everything I know
That's sacred
Then I just might get it back
But I wonder if I must let go of hope too
I have a fear that I will not let go of hope
And it will undo me and everything I have left

It will leave me stranded in a quagmire of fantasy
And it will be all I have left
It is all I have left, but I would give it up for her
For she's my only daughter
If only it were as simple as a decision to see her again
Confounded I stand my ground
Letting go is the only way to hold on
We are already a broken pair
So if I let go neither of us will get hurt
For trying to grasp the other
In the world's disregard for our love for one another

An earthquake is happening in our world
The earth's crust is separating us
A chasm is forming between us
I cannot jump across
So I let go and don't pull her in
Knowing that she lives
Is the only way the sun shines again

Though it always was
Even in the middle of the break between us
For she is my only daughter
And I would give up hope for her

—Julia Frazen

Suffering Because

You say we can fix things,
make pork leaner,
get more eggs,
increase milk production,
forcing, taking our way, grabbing
udders swollen years long,
chickens beakless, cramped,
thin pigs in pain,
mares, foxes, geese all suffering
because of us.

Does the sky calculate
how to keep the land down?
Do rivers plot against stands of trees
to claim their banks?

People separated miss the flow,
usurping instead of asking politely,
shouting down small peaceful voices,
inflicting pain they do not feel.
Deaf to beauty's whisper,
they kill the soft animal inside.

—Jean Hohl



Ceaseless Spring

Blooming bulbs were drenched in that time-slowness dust that had settled over all of us since the pandemic started...

Claire's daffodils didn't die, nor her tulips, nor the scads of yellow oxalis at the base of tall junipers bordering her Berkeley bungalow's front door.

She recalled what Lawrence had said thirty years before, "Time speeds way up the older you get – multiple decades become the two-hour film you see and forget on the bus ride home."

Prophetic for a twenty-two-year old.

Spring seemed ceaseless though.

Dutreaux had gone for good.

Claire sat in her living room.

Her waiting had a purpose. A guy was driving from Concord to pick up a carpet, the one with a crime-scene look – smeared in blood, vomit and feces, the blood came from Claire's copious nose-bleeds. She'd been dangerously sick the day Dutreaux left.

On his way out he'd whispered "Parasite" or "Paradise." Dutreaux was a poet, being stuck inside drove him nuts. "I can't stay sequestered with you anymore."

She was better now, her research indicated that she hadn't had the virus. Apparently a different illness.

The carpet cleaner would arrive any moment.

Through the front window she watched a van parallel park, a task that took ninety-five seconds.

Claire adjusted her face-mask.

He began talking as soon as the front door opened. She'd retreated a few feet back. He didn't have on a mask.

"Sorry I'm late." Breathing hard, looking left, he said, "I've got to get out of this place. California's for shit, Berkeley's the worst. But San Francisco's no better. That's where I was, right before I came here. I took a short-cut through a filthy neighborhood. Faces looked up when I slammed on the brakes. A damn body in the middle of the street. Lying flat on her back, on the trolley tracks. One was coming. I ran over. She had on white Keds and looked dead. Then a woman, eyes on her phone, called out, casual-like, from the sidewalk, 'Mabel, get up. Get up Mabel. Mabel, get up.' The streetcar was closing in, the body didn't move. The voice went on, 'Mabel, get up. I'll give you a cigarette.' The trolley was electric, no noise. She got to her feet. Just in time.

"I can't take this shit anymore."

He'd pulled out an over-used light blue surgical mask from his pocket and proceeded to attach it to his ears.

Then, squatting down, examining the rug, he said sadly, "This it?"

–Debra Janke

your morning eyes

your morning eyes shout *yes*
dream starlight pools
in time stream seeping
from your warm clock

a waking pigeon
sees some sinner
in the desert painted white

wheeling a bicycle loaded down with trash bags
filled with bottles clothes
one cloud after another in

heaven where i find
pools of starlight
shining in your face
a cloud invites my fingers to play
like rain asks children to
close the lizard's eyes

with last century's
cloud of dada poets
shouting einstein's film no more

this time i ask the silence
why morning curves
the light

–David Zeltzer

Going to Market

in first corona days
of the sixth extinction.

White clouds and blue sky
shrink layer by layer
to far horizons.

Side effect of the virus:
clean air and minor sound.
No particulates and no dioxides
from idle machines.

Walker approaches, danger! Danger!

Elastic bubbles project around
front to six feet. Avoiding collisions,
muggings, macking, small pox,

and now trillions
of colorful little spiked balls.

Maybe emanating from you.
Maybe emanating from me.

To mask? Or not to mask?

Open the market door
using wrestler techniques:
turn sideways,
elbow out, hook door handle,
push, slide, turn and walk in.

To glove? Or not to glove?
Grapes, dark chocolate, pistachios.
Examine bananas, dish soap
and the store's first hand wipes
in ten days. Couldn't find T.P.

What quantity, for two months?
Two days?

Drag my thoughts
through a sea of gluey tension.

No stress. No stress.
Clerk smiles and nods,
a gentle connection.
We handle the receipt with fingertips,
mine sanitized. His gloved.

If I could migrate
this foundation compassion
a half-step closer

my heart would rejoice.
A hundred steps closer.

Last dollar bill the clerk touched
might've carried fourteen poisons
ending with HIV, MERS, meth

and now Covid-19.
From nurse of patient on ventilator
and struggling to breathe.

Don't touch! Don't touch your face!

Tap four-digit PIN on keyboard,
spray sanitizer on fingers,
wrists, keyboard, receipt.

Wonder on the way out,
was I thorough enough?
Can I retrace my steps
one tentative foot in front of the other?

A pair of towhees
hop across the neighbors' gray stairs,
peeping as usual.

No change. No change.

Forty-fourth Street residents
meet on porch and stoop,
loop "hellos!"
and arm waves and hip-hop steps
across two lanes of virus free air.
Or virus laden air.

To mask? Or not to mask?

Hummingbird flits in and out
tiny blue flowers in front yard.
Darts
up and perches on electric wire
exact size of its skinny legs.

Peers down. "Still here, these bipeds?
What happened to 'Hurry-up disease'?
And where's FOMO?"

I lost my Fear Of Missing Out.
There's nothing out to miss.

One hot summer's dehydration
could slay the virus,
invisible mist in invisible air.

(continued on page 6)

Those miniscule clove oranges
ripen their ubiquitous corpses
for scavengers
in micro-micro worlds.

No stress. No stress.

Walker with dog approaches.
Danger! Danger!
Steps around parked car,
skirting
what I might, he might, they might carry.

Wave, smiling, "Hello. Nice day."
Subtext: "Thanks for the consideration."

Compassion and self-care link perfectly
in first corona days
of the sixth extinction.

Don't touch your mouth.
Don't touch your eye.

Are we looking at sky
for the last time?
Will we wake
again to another beautiful day
in the sixth extinction?

– Clive Matson
See the video: <https://youtu.be/ZFcvfu6dMFc>

Metals

The metallic taste will not leave the lick of a tongue upon encountering gunmetal.

The lead won't leave the metallic barrel without a finger to shoot it.

The metal pole doesn't allow you to pull your frozen hand from it in snow and ice unless another metal object cuts off a finger for release. In which case, you cannot pull any triggers.

Softer metals exist and beg examination? O it starts out positive. We should know better than to believe in the flare metal components spike, white, spark, burn. Spit on it, and the fire's out.

Soft as it is, your old gold metal band will leave an indentation on your left finger equal to the number of years married divided by one, a lattice of positive ions notwithstanding.

Are we the fools so easily duped by one little ring – that rings a sound as high pitched as the electrical conductivity that got us into trouble with that zinger of a kiss?

Unless we can conform with enough malleability to mold into one another, we feel imprisoned by a cylindrical form at our windows – wicked as bars of steel.

Everyone loves shiny, it seems, so we imitate it to please. With ignorance for its fakery, we look the other way as luster corrodes, believe it contains meaning.

As if conjoined by our primitive brains, we say, "Shiny. Sparkly. Gimme. Now I know you love me." We do it until we don't.

A metaphorical punch to the mouth with a set of brass knuckles, provides a causation realization. If we're lucky, it will knock out our rear teeth filled with more precious metals to add to our pawn shop pot of gold worth enough cash for a new ring and a gun.

–Sherry Fraser

She Cost Me

She cost me fifteen thousand
but boy was she worth it!
I got her thru a double blind
hack out of Macao –
bundled direct to my basement.
After the guys took away the box
accommodations she was all mine.
97% guaranteed free of the last three
pandemic vectors, starting with Ovid-19.
She came kind of freeze-dried.
It took about a week to clear her lungs and
Get her pulse rate up from around
One per minute to anything close to normal.
Her breasts filled out beautifully
And her shape went from
beef jerky to ravishing!
She had been a White Russian,
kidnapped before the last die-off
ridded the planet of the
remaining non-infected.
Had this Sharapova thing going on –
legs that went on and on forever.
She came with a brainwipe
And a built-in translator
But still had this endearing
Mother Russia accent thing
Going on that got all jumbled up
The first time we made love,
“Oh Robert, please to not stop now!”
It’s been about four months
And I’m still drilling for oil...
Some of her memories are coming back though...
Those wipes leave a lot to be desired.
So we probably have a trip east coming up.
At least the homing program is pretty
fool-proof – she’s definitely all mine.
She even looks good in a mask and gloves
And ventilator pack and transparent full body
zero micron-level contamination suit.
First time I took her to Whole Foodz
For some broccoli rabe
I had to dust a whole pack of rabid
FreeSkinners hanging out front,
their eyeballs bursting and bloody fingers
trying to rip into her suit.
It’s a good thing they’re easy to kill!
Like in the old nickel zombie
vids from the 21st...
How to fuck up the planet
And kill zombies was just about all
those bastards got right...

– Robert Peck

Thief Follies

Took her down on campus,
Weaving home from a dorm
cross-eyed drunk, leaning on me
How could I rob her? She blubbered,
“Carry my purse, wouldja help me home...”
It’s shit like this almost makes me
want to quit rippin and robbin!
But she was a looker so I pulled her into some
bushes but she threw up and pissed all over me
so I kicked her in the stomach and split.
The next one was just some chump in the
right place at the right time.
Then it got complicated...
Wiggled thru a dog door: Guess what?
Didn’t see the pittie.
Fucker took off half my arm
Only got some jewelry
Why is that shit worth anything?
Just about done my loop
Heading home, bleeding pretty bad
Fucking dog! Followed one more chick home,
kicked in her door
How was I to know
Charging crusader cop boyfriend!
Had to run like a bitch
Jumped a fence just before
he squeezed off a round
Had to leave my hot ride, though FUCK!
With all my hard-earned loot from the nite!
Emerged from the woods
behind a Circle K, beat, bleeding, pissed
Punched this civilian in the mouth
Got a Prius this time. Couldn’t figure out
how to turn off the goddamn radio!
Fucking country music blaring
Used the butt of my Glock
to smash the dash. Still wouldn’t stop!
Couldn’t stand it! Jumped out
Let it roll into a tree near my spot.
Walking home, 3am. Passed an accident.
Somebody hit a biker – bleeding pretty bad
weird – out of his ears... Got his wallet and phone.
Smacked the driver, got his shit.
Home finally. Cleaned up, flick on the tube
Suck a brew, count da loot...
58 fucking dollars! What’s wrong with people?
Nobody carries cash!
I’m paying \$1800 for this dump.
How are you supposed to make ends meet
in this day and age?

– Robert Peck

**WRITING HIGHWAY 395
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a one-day reading of the entire poem

**"Hello, Paradise.
Paradise, Goodbye"**

at the Art House
sometime in the future

Info will be posted at the website
matsonpoet.com
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Because of the pandemic, we'll keep everyone on the mailing list for another year.

We hope that by then, the situation will be over.

THE SCRIBBLER
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