Covid Chronicles:
19-word Stories by the Brookfield and La Grange Writers Group.
COVID CHRONICLES

19-word Stories

by

The Writers

in the

Brookfield Public Library and La Grange Public Library Writers Groups

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  Lauryn Kotapish
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  Gregory Von Dare
  Sara Whittleton
  Kagen Aurencz Zethmayr

Compiled and Arranged by Marie Anderson
COVID is here.
For at least a year.
A dead man if I get it.
Vaccinate or forget it.

by Barry Abrams
Finished knitting the sweater
Finished cleaning the nooks.
Finished bingeing the shows and reading the books.
Finished . . . not yet!

by Marie Anderson
Sitting on the porch,
Watching the world go slowly by,
Families together,
Walking, biking, talking, laughing.
The good life.

by Laurie Whitman
Face masks everywhere
hiding smiles sorely missed.
Uneasy eyes meeting dart away.
Just not the same.
Sad, sad shame

by Jim Chmura
While Mommy teaches, your small hands reach out, but now, unlike before, I can snuggle you on my lap.

by Meg Ritter
Veteran telecommuter
Burning out on tele-socializing
Staying strong with kitty-cat-company, delicious take-out, and spacious hellos from neighbors on walks

by Kevin M. Folliard
Overwhelming, isolating, numbing grief,
A widow’s surreality.
Then, a smile, a little laughter returns.
Now, pandemic
Quarantine
Aw, c’mon!

by Bonny Kotapish
Everything on hold, including our breath,
Hold thermometer,
Holds on educations, jobs, taxes.
Hold the toilet paper,
Hold on.

by Pam Holtman

This reflection was first published by The Australian Writers Centre on 4/29/2020
I gain weight,
The days blend,
Social media trends,
I work from home now,
The stairs my only commute.

by Nick Janecki

This reflection was first published by the Australian Writers Centre on 4/29/2020
Closets clean
Books read
Careful now
Not to be dead

Staying in
Happy here
Comforted by
Doritos and beer

by Marge Hopkins
Inoculating my teen sons with full-time mothering.
1.3 billion school children learning at home.
Google and Zoom take attendance.

by Sara Whittleton
Days full of play and exploration.

Toddlers don’t understand pandemics.

But Mommy does.
And she worries about their future.

by Amy Gorchos
Just one little star, pushing through the clouds. Winking at me in the dark night. Saying: abide, abide, abide.

by Gregory Von Dare
Our deserted corner
a magnolia etched by snow
pink petals clasped shut.
My words stuttering syllables,
Illinois’ deadliest day.

by Maggie Van Dyke
Love
Laughter
Compassion
Patience
Solidarity
Tears
Comfort
A month together uninterrupted
Not knowing what tomorrow will bring
You again?!

by Lauryn Kotapish
Mankind retreats
Trump retweets
Nature tiptoes into cities
Trees inhale in Brooklyn
Smog lifts in Mumbai
The planet heals

by Margo Rife
Mourn
Snow-White’s virus
Winter infects Spring’s lungs

Masked warbler surfs Chinook
Bestowing hope

Unshackle Land o-Free
Kiss
Awaken
Arise

by Alan Seelye-James
Mostly reclusive already;
Doing spring yardwork alone.
Reminding myself to feed myself.
When on the phone,
I pace incessantly.

by Kagen Aurencz Zethmayr
Pleading with ghosts brings no closure.  
Yet I continue to beg, “Was it this, that, or fear of exposure?”

by Jeanne Jesernik
Work,    
    sew,    
    sleep.  
Work, sew, sleep work

sew sleep work sew  
sleep work sew sleepwork  
Sewsleep worksewsleep  
Worksleep sew  
So worksleep . . . .

by Nicole Peats
Wipes
Masks
Gloves
Soap
No water, paper towels, toilet paper
Social distance
Netflix booms
Grandpa learns how to Zoom

by Sally Anderson
I’m extremely bored
I buy things I don’t need
Just to get out of the house
Appreciating the sunshine

by Cary Pohlhammer
This damn thing is all scarred and scary
and up to no good,
got everyone shushed in my neighborhood.

by John Quinn.
Contributors

ALAN Seelye-James joined the La Grange Writers Group in 2019, sparking interest to read short stories, poems, biographies, and novels, and igniting a fire of childhood memories of his broad-smiling father leading the family to the La Grange Public Library, where Alan and his rambunctious brothers would transform into gifted acrobats balancing towering stacks of books. Later, Alan used this same learning routine with his own children. He is an LTHS and Northwestern University graduate and wrestler, avid birder, photographer, engineer, world traveler, and 2019 World Silver Medalist in Bench Press. He co-authored “Culture Clash: Managing in a Multicultural World” in 1995 and is now back to writing.

AMY Gorchos lives near Chicago, IL with her family. She earned her BA in Early Childhood Education from Governors State University and specializes in writing for children. She is a member of SCBWI and two fabulous critique groups. In her free time, she . . . wait, free time, what’s that?

BARRY Abrams is a pediatrician and urgent care physician with more than 40 years of clinical experience. Despite treating patients during multiple seasons and pandemics of influenza over the years, he has never seen any illness as medically and economically devastating as COVID-19. He lives in Oak Park, IL with his wife and has two adult children. Despite best practices with masks, hand washing, and shelter-in-place, he is concerned that they may all get infected with the virus. He enjoys writing poetry and has joined a narrative medicine group at a major academic medical center in the Chicago area.

BONNY Kotapish has always been drawn to storytelling, both written and spoken. Her writings are usually recollections of her family experiences or fictional relationships. As one of five siblings, mother to three daughters and grandmother to three, she has a lot to draw from. She has been a member of LGWG for eight years.

CARY Pohlhammer is a short story writer and National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) winner. As of yet, he’s an unpublished author, but one day hopes to write a bestseller. His writing companions are Pandora Radio’s Film Scores playlist and cans of tropical Red Bull.
GREGORY Von Dare is a writer and dramatist specializing in forward-leaning theatre and fiction. His stories have appeared in *The Copperfield Review*, *Soft Cartel*, *Out of the Gutter*, *50 Word Stories*, *Rejected Manuscripts*, *Silent Motorist*, and on The Horror Tree website. One of his mystery stories was printed last winter by Flame Tree Press in the UK, and one of his Hawaiian mysteries was included in an anthology by Zimbell House Press. Greg is a member of Mystery Writers of America and the Dramatists Guild. He now lives outside Chicago where certain people will never find him.

JEANNE Jesernik is an Adult Services Librarian at the La Grange Public Library. She is in the privileged position of assisting the La Grange Writers Group with organizing meeting spaces, creating promotions, and hosting an occasional Open Mic Night, in which some of the writers can perform their own work! Currently, she dabbles in writing book reviews and poetry. She is a lifelong archaeology enthusiast and keeps up with the field as a member of the Chicago Archaeological Society.

JIM Chmura’s favorite format is the short story. His 10 years as a stringer for a Chicago suburban newspaper taught him the economy of words. He was nominated in 2010 for the *Pushcart Award in Fiction* for his humorous short story about death. In 2015, he was published in the Chicago Tribune’s *Printers Row Journal*. The grittiness of his stories comes from childhood in Chicago’s Pilsen area. He has been published in several literary magazines. Living in Oak Park, IL, he is semi-retired and continues his endless wrestling match with the printed word.

JOHN Quinn is a child of the Depression. Raised in Chicago. Graduated from Notre Dame in 1957 with a degree in English. Married to Marilyn in 1961, father of two daughters, retired from IBM. His poetry seeks to avoid punctuation, adverbs, ambiguity, articles, and language he doesn’t want his wife or daughters to hear.

KAGEN Aurencz Zethmayr has taken his imagination and writing ability relatively for granted for most of his life, and is currently trying to remedy that oversight. A lifelong resident of La Grange, he writes poetry, psychological/speculative/fantasy/horror fiction, analytical essays, and lyrics (classically-trained singer-songwriter), and is a visual artist and illustrator who has done production design for film and stage. He is using his quarantine, in part, to make and upload solo performance videos, and is easily locatable online by name or alias of “Aureantes.”

KEVIN M. Folliard is a Chicagoland writer whose fiction has been collected by The Horror Tree, Flame Tree Publishing, *Hinnom Magazine*, *Thrilling Words*, and more. His recent publications include “Halfway to Forgotten,” featured on *The No Sleep Podcast*, and the *Short Sharp Shocks!* Halloween tale, “Candy Corn.” Kevin currently resides in La Grange, IL, where he enjoys his day job as an academic writing advisor and his active membership in the La Grange and Brookfield Writers Groups.
Laurie Whitman is a writer and memoirist. Her previous works include a weekly column entitled “Life in La Grange Park” written for Suburban Life and a recipe column “Hunt and Gather” for Patch.com. Her 100-word story about granddaughter’s birth was published in the True Stories section of Readers’ Digest. Laurie has served on the Board of the La Grange Park Public Library for nine years. Being a part of the La Grange Writers Group for the past 10 years has helped shape her writing style and composition.

Lauryn Kotapish has always had an affinity for the written word, which was only heightened when, within the course of a year, she was diagnosed with Charcot Marie Tooth, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, and developed a migraine that has kept raging for 16 years and counting. She became acutely aware of the magic of hope, camaraderie, escapism that could be evoked by a little bit of ink on a page. A member of LGWG since 2012, she usually writes Science Fiction and Fantasy, but occasionally strays to other genres.

Maggie Van Dyke lives in Brookfield, IL with her family and enjoys weaving poems out of suburban sights and sounds.

Marge Hopkins is a long-time member of the Brookfield Writers Group and continues to be amazed at her fellow writers’ work (both BWG and LGWG). Her essays have been published in Chicago Parent, Chicago Sun-Times, Suburban Life and, recently, The Erma Bombeck Blog. Her mother was a librarian, her daughter is a librarian. MARGE MISSES THE LIBRARY!

Margo Rife is fascinated with flash fiction (stories under 1000 words), and her flash “God’s Gifts Are Timeless” will be published in an upcoming 2020 anthology by Transmundane Press. In 2019, her 100-word horror stories, “Unholy Trinity Drabbles,” were published in Trembling with Fear. As a playwright, she has had three of her monologues staged and Zoomed in 2019/2020: The Women’s Theatre Festival, Odyssey Stage; MOJOAA Performing Arts in Raleigh, NC; and The Playground Experiment in NYC. Her 10-Minute Plays have been produced by the Theatre of Western Springs. Margo also produces Basement Stories, a podcast at the La Grange Public Library featuring local writers.

Marie Anderson is a married mother of three millennials. She grew up on Chicago’s South Side and endured two years at The University of Chicago Law School before dropping out. Since then, she’s worked in schools and offices and has written many stories. Her work has appeared in about 50 publications, including Woman’s World, Brain Child, Downstate Story, Who Knocks?, and Serial Magazine. One of her joys is learning from and interacting with the writers she has met in the Brookfield Public Library and La Grange Public Library Writers Groups.
MEG Ritter has lived in Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, California and, currently, Illinois. She graduated from Columbia College Chicago with a BA in fiction writing. She now teaches middle school students and lives in the greater Chicagoland area with her husband, daughter, and son. She is working on a memoir about why she considers Chicago, a place she moved to when she was 21, the place where she truly grew up.

NICK Janecki is a professional artist and animator who has worked on billboard and magazine ads, as well as video games. When he is not in front of a computer screen or talking with clients, he spends most of his free time with his family playing games, drawing & painting, and eating (he is a bit of foodie). He also tries to get outside as much as he can to enjoy the unpredictable Chicago weather. Nick also enjoys reading the stories he writes to his children at bedtime. They know all of his stories, just not how they end.

NICOLE Peats is the newly hired Teen Services Librarian at the La Grange Public Library. She has a Creative Writing degree from Southeast Missouri State University, and a Masters in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Her poetry has been published by Big Muddy: A Journal of the Mississippi River Valley, BlazeVOX, and Cave Region Review. She grew up in the Show Me State, right alongside Mark Twain’s muddy Mississippi, but moved to The Land of Lincoln five years ago.


SALLY Anderson lives in La Grange Park, IL. She holds a BA in Communications from Northern Illinois University and a Master of Business Administration from Benedictine University. Her first published piece, a poem about Molly Pitcher, appeared in her junior high school literary magazine. Sally has worked on the Triton College newspaper and also served several years as a writer and editor of The Voice, her church newsletter. She is also a contributor to The Wrong Coat, An Anthology by the Brookfield and Lagrange Writers Group. She is currently working on finishing her first novel.

SARA Whittleton is a third generation South Side Chicagoan who has lived, written, taught and studied in five countries. She is a returned Peace Corps volunteer from Botswana 1990-1993 and a writing teacher since 1988. She joined the La Grange Writers Group in 2018.
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