



Writing Our Journey: Poems and Essays by Family Caregivers

Each meeting has a suggested prompt, or idea, for people to write about. Everyone is free to interpret that prompt however they'd like. Below is one of the prompts, followed by a sampling of what was written in response.

Please remember that each piece of writing belongs to the writer and, if quoted, must be credited to that writer.

An article of clothing

Write about an article of clothing that holds a distinct memory or meaning.

- "Fashion Statements" by Kathy Mullery
- "Drive By" by Brenda Considine
- "Thank Heaven for Little Boys" by Lisa N.
- "Hoodie" by Ann C. Martinelli

Fashion Statements

You are 13 and you are so cool. It's that new bathing suit, the one you picked out. That must be it. The one with the loud and colorful, green and yellow pineapples and blue wavy – what are they – skulls? How in the world did anyone ever think to pair those two things on a bathing suit, the scary, aversive and mysterious with the sweet and succulent, most welcoming of fruits.

Who doesn't love a pineapple? Whenever I see a lovely summer fruit platter, it's the pineapples I reach for first. They both startle and soothe my senses and bring satisfaction like no other item on that tray. Skulls... I can barely move my mood away from that yellow and green to even glance at them or think much about them. I suppose they appeal to the cool kids looking for outrageous board shorts, like you. This is something only a cool kid would understand.

And there you have it. Every summer day I see you reaching for that suit when you have two others you could choose. You race to get changed on the hottest of days and say to me, "Wanna come?" and of course, I do. Only you can interrupt my busyness, my immersion in household tasks or on other less satisfying days, waken me from my malaise and invite me to the cool water. Who can resist? Who doesn't love a pineapple? You have me jumping in and wondering if I can still dive, and then I do dive, forgetting to consider that I get water in my ears when I dive. We find the skipper, your name for that water frisbee and I am in the deep end laughing as you see how fast you can throw it, like me, better righty than lefty. You show me how you are now putting your head down when you dive and can hardly wait to show me that you can hold your legs straighter this time in the handstand. I watch you swim the length of the pool under water and you didn't call my attention to it. "When did you learn that," I ask you, and we laugh some more.

When we leave the pool (always my idea) you remember to bring that suit of yours to the deck railing to dry. I see it there often during the summer; glancing from the kitchen window, it seems to always catch my eye. It brings a smile because it gives you pleasure. It takes only water to please you. You wear it and you are showing off, telling me in the languages of fun and action that you are like any teenager, so cool.

Still, those scary, stubborn blue skulls won't blur from my view. They use a different, more disturbing language that reminds me I had to tie that string for you because you can't quite get it right; that you swim with your mom because there are no friends to invite over; that I still have to remind you about privacy when

you take off that bathing suit; that you won't get to be on a school swim team because your swimming techniques would be too slow and imperfect. You have no idea about skulls and skeletons, the mystery of them. At least I don't think so. We haven't discussed them. This is not something that cool kids, probably, discuss with their mom.

© Kathy Mullery

Drive By

When I drive by the rows of illuminated houses at night,
I imagine inside
The neatly folded shirts,
Khaki pants pressed and hung in roomy closets, evenly spaced on wooden
hangers;
Flattering family photographs; arranged in albums, or displayed on dust free
shelves;
the bathed and powdered children asleep on clean sheets.

Returning home, I believe I am the only one
with a dried out pork chop
on a greasy paper plate in the fridge;
with dirty laundry on my bedroom rug;
and with plastic boxes in my cellar,
filled with musty clothes that no longer fit me.

© Brenda Considine

Thank Heaven for Little Boys

It was such a surprise to receive a gift for our new baby from Mrs. Arnot. As the Mother of one of my “guy friends” from college, a gift from her was most unexpected. Although appreciative of the gesture, our baby was so sick when the gift arrived all I saw was a blue outfit.

I was busy begging a God I wasn't sure I believed in, “*Please, please don't let my baby die. Please let my baby live.*”

Weeks later when we were finally home from the hospital, the nightmare behind us (or so we thought) I rediscovered Mrs. Arnot's gift. Soft cotton and warm for both my son and me, it became one of my favorites. A one piece, long sleeved sky blue outfit complete with footies. The color perfectly matched Eric's clear blue eyes. Four or five little snaps closed the back. Thin white piping accented the script across the chest: Thank Heaven for Little Boys.

Thanking a God I still wasn't sure I believed in, holding my baby in Mrs. Arnot's unexpected gift, I'd say out it out loud: Thank heaven for little boys.

© Lisa N.

Hoodie

It's a hoodie. Black. It's a pullover, no zipper, size large. A white oval sits in the middle, across the chest area. "The" is neatly arranged in the area closest to his right arm. A large black "X" splays at an angle towards his left arm. 88.9 fm, written in smaller black lower case letters, can be seen near his left arm.

It lays neatly folded in the middle drawer of his dresser six days a week. On the day of the radio show, it emerges, ready to be worn. Six thirty a.m., time to get dressed. Carrie will be here at seven! He's so ready for today; jumping in his chair...hurry, hurry, hurry. "Will Furg be there when I get there where's my parking pass maybe Donna will be there first, you know Donna, she's Furg's helper maybe Donna will be in the parking lot when we get there sometimes we meet her in the parking lot did you know Donna sits outside the booth did you know we can see everybody walking past the booth while we're on the air did you know that Furg makes faces at people from the booth are you going to listen to my show today where are you going to be when you listen to it in the kitchen are you going to listen to it on the radio are you going to stream it online did you know there's a webcam and you can see me do you want me to wave to you can you call the request line Furg will answer if you call what do you want to hear you can ask for Bruce Furg can pull it up on his computer and play it for you Carrie's mother watches it online from her desk at work she works in Pennsylvania and she can watch it online can you see my microphone don't forget if you can't see me call the request line and tell Furg and he will tell me to move closer to the camera so you can see me do you want me to wave to you do you think Furg will talk about the Yankees with me you know Furg is a Red Sox fan do you think he knows the Yankees are playing the Red Sox again this season do you think I should tell him we're going to both Yankees/Red Sox games should I tell him Jenna is going, too he knows Jenna, remember she came with me last year when Carrie was in the Academy, she filled in for Carrie so I could still be on the show do you think Furg will be happy to see Carrie again?"

It's a hoodie, but it shouts "I belong."

© Ann C. Martinelli