



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.

Other Thoughts

Sometimes participants share work that was not written for any particular prompt, but still speaks deeply to our caregiving experiences.

- "Tandem" by Brenda Considine
- "A Stop at the Light" by Kathy Mullery
- "Safe" by Ann C. Martinelli **NEW!**
- "A Day in My Life" by Lisa N. **NEW!**

Tandem

Your yellow kayak slips through
the pale sea;
A creamy moon rising in the clear Atlantic sky

Father and son glide
low and close to the water,
at last,
well balanced,
steady.

Together, you navigate buoys and anchored fishing boats;
a rising tide lifts you both.
With rocks and sandbars well submerged,
This time, you will not run aground.

Like a pull toy, your paddles churn in unison, until your boat becomes a
a thin gold thread.

Now, only your voices are left,
skipping like stones across water.

© Brenda Considine

A Stop At the Light

As I sat at the red light lost, I suppose, in the usual daydreaming, I could easily have missed it. The movement was subtle at first, almost imperceptible – the rocking in the minivan ahead. Was it someone adjusting himself to a more comfortable position... no, stronger now, steadier rhythm. And that's when I realized, it's a big strapping guy, with a disability, in the rear-most seat in an otherwise almost empty school vehicle, being taken to his summer school or program. He is – how old - hard to say. He is, I now see, fully engaged in his quirky rocking, the driver now turning to speak to him, trying to say something, to get through, to somehow interrupt this strange but stubborn behavior that puzzles her. "How do you make it stop?" she silently wonders.

And yet, watching this, it wasn't the boy or maybe man that I thought of, or his driver, or their destination, or even the patterned rocking. It was his mom, the mom that he just left at the bus stop. The mom who is now, I imagine, back in the house, breathing that Monday morning first sigh of relief. She gave her whole weekend, after all, to her son and struggled, as she has for many years now, to care for him, understand him, engage him, pray for and plan for him. Dare she now reach for that second cup of coffee, head to the couch and put the feet up for just one quiet minute. Or does she hop in the shower and get lost in her own daydreams, half consciously wondering if the next day will ever be different from the one before it, if the rocking rhythm of her own life will ever feel like the gentle calm of a sailboat moored at sunset, instead of that mild but persistent queasiness or sleeplessness of a long overnight train heading to an unfamiliar town. Another sigh. A first moment to finally relax -- or -- no, what time is it? She is now late for work herself.

I think back to the bus stop I left this morning - was it only minutes ago? The son I waved to, the weekend we had, the quirky and strange stuff he does as his driver takes him away. The sigh of my own that I now breathe as I turn to the day now before me. The rocking in the car ahead. The rocking in my head, in my world, in my Monday morning. I reach now for the radio, for a distraction. Perhaps I will sing along, tap my hand on the steering wheel in a pattern that is my own, that helps me cope, that can be seen from the car behind me. Sigh. Time to go. The light is turning green.

© Kathy Mullery

Safe

The red swells on the tips of the maple trees made their yearly appearance last week and it made me feel safe. Spring is coming and the earth is marching along as it should.

My daughter, Petie, called me Monday afternoon when she arrived home from her visit to Boston. It's a ritual we share even if we have spoken ten times that day, she will call when the door to her home is closed and locked behind her. My Petie was safe.

Joey went out with Ben yesterday morning. They went down the ramp from our house towards the van. Ben lowered the lift and made sure Joey's chair was turned "off" before he raised it back up again. He positioned Joey in the center of the van and secured the tie-downs, pulling them taut to double check. Ben climbed into the driver's seat, placed the van into "drive" and slowly moved down the driveway, stopping at the bottom to watch for any movement before he proceeded. I didn't see them again until the afternoon, but Joey was safe.

I saw my grandchildren yesterday afternoon. Adam rode his scooter with his red helmet securely fastened to his head. He smiled and waved as I drove past him towards his house. Anna's eyes widened when I crept into her room on all fours; she did not know I was coming to see her. Inside her Princess Castle/Tent she called out to me "Bida, come in, come in!" Abbey slept in her mother's arms, my newest granddaughter with my daughter. Russell arrived home from his office. They were all safe.

Joe sat at his desk this morning, not too far from the kitchen. He wore black sweat pants and a maroon tee shirt with the "Bud Lite" logo on the front. His gold reading glasses sat on top of his head and his eyes were fixed on his laptop. His fingers tapped away, answering emails. Joe was safe. I saw him glance out the window that is directly in front of his desk. Did he see the same maple trees?

© Ann C. Martinelli

A Day in My Life

Call for help
Get out of bed
Help Son
Try to sleep
Repeat

Morning time
Get out of bed
Start day
Shower Son
Wash hair

Brush son's teeth
Put on diaper
Shirt, pants
Sock and shoes
Son's ready.

Carry downstairs
Place in wheelchair
Make secure
Off to eat
Feed son

School bus here
Go down the ramp,
Up lift,
Drive away
Quiet.

Back so soon!
The bus is here
Lift down,
Up the ramp
Snack time

What to do?
Fatigued yet bored
TV?
Radio?
Chit chat?

Dinner time
Prep, cook and feed.
Thirsty
Not hungry
Ok

Family time,
Then up to bed.
Oh no!
Call for help.
Help son.

Day is done.
Rest is welcome
Lights out
Fast asleep
Mom! Pop!

Call for help
Get out of bed
Help son
Try to sleep
Repeat...

© Lisa N.