

New in Town: Pour Me a Pint

By Shannon Romtvedt

When I was a kid, my mom tried to teach me piano. She was an excellent pianist and teacher, but she was also my mom. So after a year or so we called it a day. It's been a long time since I've touched a key but I will always remember that Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge and All Cows Eat Grass.

Phrases like these are momentous because once they're glued they stick. Teachers as well as advertisers rely on catchy phrases and mnemonic devices. It's an effective way to promote a product or plant an idea or keep a thought in your brain for life. So how about this for a reader board? Every Great Town Has Draft Beer...Every Great Town Has Draft Beer...Every Great Town Has Draft Beer.

Before its doors closed, I'd go to the Lyons Den to grab a beer. It had a

nice long bar, the same people in it every day, tippy stools, awesome waitresses, greasy food, and most importantly, draft beer. No ping-pong table, but cross the street on a Sunday, challenge the table, and you've got it all. The Lyon's Den had its faults, but it had draft beer.

A cold beer out of a bottle serves its purpose and really, it's not so bad. I like the mountain trick on a Coors, and a 12 pack of lager on a camping trip is a good time. The main problem with bottled beer, tasted side by side with draft, is that it takes on the flavor of bottle. You can taste the metal of the can and you can taste the bottle of the bottle. Freshness aside, it's tough to beat a frothy pitcher of beer, foam sloshing over the side as you pass it around a table of friends. It's the next best thing to having a keg at home.

True enough that Lyon's Den wasn't the only place to get draft beer in

town. But it was the only bar with taps. I love to eat breakfast at Café 47, have coffee at the Black Bear, play ping-pong and have mixed drinks at the Cedarside, eat dinner and listen to music or go to First Friday at the Blue House, and drink draft beer at the Lyon's Den. Not all on the same day, as far as I can remember, but that tends to be my pattern.

The friendly competition between the Lyon's Den and Cedarside also provided general amusement. Bar hopping, in essence, requires at least two bars. Having bars close by, or across the street in this case, makes the term come to life. People would walk, skip, and run back and forth. I've yet to see an actual hop but I was watching for it.

I used to scan the line-up on both sides watching people talking and smoking on my way home from work in the evening. It was a personal game to see if I recognized everyone or if there

was a newbie. All heads would rotate with general curiosity as my vehicle passed by. People would holler to the other bar, trying to get a friend's attention or just for the heck of it. On occasion a truck would bump its way out of a parallel spot, either against the sidewalk or the vehicles front and back. Made me wonder why there wasn't a sign in front of both bars that read, Park at Your Own Risk!

Rumor has it the Lyon's Den is switching hands and there will be a new place in town. I'm hoping people will go to it, for one. It's my town now and I want to see businesses thriving as much as the next Vernonian. Hope number two, drum roll please, is for beer on draft. Cross your fingers and chant together, Every Great Town Has Draft Beer...Every Great Town Has Draft Beer...Every Great Town Has Draft Beer!

THE INKWELL

By Lynn Berry

The Inkwell needs you. Send in a piece of your prose or your poetry. Art encourages others to create and expand. Be a part of this spectacular spiral of courage, motivation, determination, and expansion. These acts can be found among normal people, in everyday living situations, and when we choose to view the world from the writer's or artist's eye, we discover examples all around us.

When I was a freckle-faced little girl, my mother never told me of these qualities, she showed me. After my father had left when I was about five years old, my mother raised me and my little brother, and any orphan animals and friends we dragged in throughout the years, on a nurse's salary. I can't remember when she didn't work more than one job in her attempt to keep us warm and fed. Having to rent, we moved constantly, due to the whims of a landlord's decision or constant rent increases. I admire her resolve in the time she spent in between her exhausting twelve hour work-shifts, endlessly looking for a safe home that accepted kids, animals, a mediocre salary, and maxed-out credit. And she did it, every time. Courage, Motivation..... My mom jokingly says it was mere survival instinct, but I view it differently today. Moreover, she moved beyond her circumstances; she went on to complete her Master's Degree while we were still under her care, and her PhD later in her life. Determination, Expansion.....

Was our home life perfect? Absolutely not. Nothing can be exactly the way we want it to be, but in the understanding and in the accepting emerges the priceless treasures of insight, growth, and possibility. To want what we have and have what we want is freeing. My perception of my mother's example above will be created into poetry, adding to the artistic universe. Anyone can do this. You can do this. There are many examples of people's ability to reach and stretch. You may have your own story. Write it down, record it, share it.

On the new TV series, Oprah's Master Class, renowned poet, Maya Angelou, stated that although she has had many clouds in her life, she also has had many rainbows. Her poetry reflects this awareness. Our life experiences can lead us to insights that connect us to our higher selves, which then connects us to others. Writing helps us realize the consciousness, ideas, and different perceptions needed to expand.

In the poem below, much esteemed poet, Langston Hughes, writes a poem that reflects the spirit of his former life, through his mother's words, combined with the vernacular and fortitude of his culture:

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,

And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the
floor---
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's.
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now---
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal
stair.

-----Langston Hughes

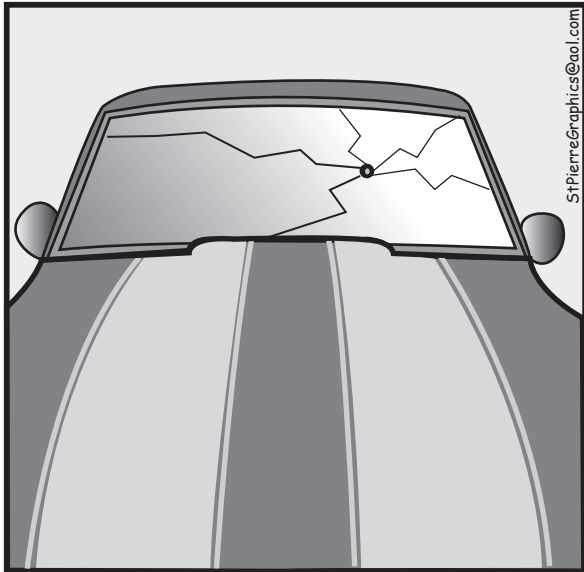
---**Writer's Idea:** If you don't already, start a daily journal.

---**Writer's Tip:** In the evening, write five positive memories or positive things that occurred that day. These can become starting points for additional writing projects.

---Please send your original submissions to, (or if you would like a copy of any of the published poems in their entirety), InkwellVernonia@msn.com or by mail: PO Box 333 Vernonia, OR 97064. Please include your name and contact information. Write--Express--Expand.

Lynn Berry holds an M.A. in English, specializing in feminist literature and literary criticism. She has spent several years teaching Literature, Composition, Poetry, Creative Writing, and Critical Thinking at various school districts and colleges, and occasionally provides writing workshops.


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