

Print News Items from Jan-Feb 2020

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Can-Do Attitude Made Villager a Trailblazer

Ruth DiDomenico was a lieutenant in the women's specialist medical corps from 1952 to 1955.

By FRANK ROSS
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Ruth DiDomenico has never let anyone tell her she can't do something.

The Village of Bitherswood resident grew up during the Great Depression and has a great appreciation for the frugal practices that resulted her family to put food on the table during those difficult years.

After graduating high school, she planned to be a woman's gym teacher. Then, her mother told her she couldn't afford to send her to college.

Undaunted, she hitchhiked to Eastern Michigan University and met with the women's dean to see what she had to do to study there.

She explained the need to have a job and pay her own way but was promptly told that freshmen were not allowed to work.

"I'm going to come to this school and graduate," she said. "If you're going to help me, fine. If not, just don't stand in my way."

The dean thought for a few minutes then picked up the phone and made a call, lining up a job for her.

"I worked really hard, and working down that state (at graduation), I thought I'll see do this I can do anything," she said.

At her first job in a school, she spent more time in the principal's office than the students and realized she didn't fit in.

Then, she saw a sign at a U.S. Army recruiter's office that said "free coffee and doughnuts," figured the price was right and went in. The recruiter talked to her about becoming a physical therapist for the Army.

"I didn't know what that was, but it involved a free trip to Texas, and I'd never been there," she said with a smile.

DiDomenico, however, a physical therapist and was a lieutenant in the women's specialist medical corps from 1952-55. She loved the work.

She was stationed in San Francisco, made port for wounded troops returning from Korea.

"We got them who, the med and we took them," she recalled. "They were proud of what they had done, wanted to get well and want as much fun to work with."

During her enlistment in the Army, she attended a few nights at an air base when she met her future husband in an airplane engine to the Air Force.

After her honorable discharge, she used to go to work for the state's Department of Physical Therapy at the University of Washington while Lou worked for Boeing.



Credit line: Ruth and Lou DiDomenico, of the Village of Bitherswood, with a physical therapist in the Army from 1952-55, treating wounded soldiers returning from the Korean War.

That and her military training prepared her to become the owner and administrator of a rehabilitation agency and a private physical therapy practice for 35 years.

She wrote about her experiences in a book, "Chapter 11: A Bankruptcy Personal Reorganization," discussing her personal transition when Lou, her husband of 62 years, died of a stroke.

DiDomenico is a new member of the Tri-County Women Veterans group, which meets at 11 a.m. on the third Monday of the month at Palmer Legends Country Club.

Sue Roper, of the Village of Bonita, is president of that organization.

"We're just really proud of Ruth and see her as a trailblazer for us women veterans who came after her because she really paved the way with her can-do attitude," Roper said.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2020 | THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

VILLAGES AUTHORS

JANET KARR PALMER
The Village of Amelia



Writing "The Misadventures of Cassie" was an opportunity for author Janet "Jan" Karr Palmer to look back on her childhood and find what was positive.

"I created this little girl who was like me but generic enough," she said.

Palmer, of the Village of Amelia, said she wrote the book 40 years ago but put it aside when she had children.

"Then I moved here and found so many opportunities for writers," Palmer said.

She joined Writers League of The Villages and Writers 4 Kids, and she found book publisher Tom Freeling.

"The book deals with a lot of pre-adolescent things children go through," Palmer said. "It's about her learning to figure some things out for herself."

"It's a little poignant and charming, so I've been told," she said.

Castle's escapades are fairly universal, she said.

"My grandsons loved it," Palmer said. "I was surprised little boys would like it so much."

The book is available on amazon.com.

— Dayna Strahley, Daily Sun

D6 | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2020 | THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

VILLAGES AUTHORS

LARRY MARTIN
The Village of Hillsborough




Larry Martin, former president of the Writers League of The Villages, has another new book.

Lakeside Press published "What Just Landed in The Villages?"

The title story is a 75-page novella about something strange that landed on a golf course in the protagonist's backyard in the Village of Hillsborough. It shook the house and neighbors in the middle of the night. They walk out of their lanais to the seventh fairway to investigate.

The protagonist worries about his tee time on the course the next day. Residents just want it to go away so they can get back to their active lifestyles.

The book, illustrated by local artist Dan Traynor, also includes 11 of Martin's short stories. Several won prizes in the Florida Writers Association's Royal Palm Literary Awards competition.

"What Just Landed in The Villages?" is available in print from amazon.com and is being sold at All Booked Up in Colony Plaza at a discount from the Amazon list price, Martin said.

— Dayna Strahley, Daily Sun

Want Advice on Being a Better Writer? These Folks Will Help

By **ALEXANDRIA MANSFIELD** | *Daily Sun Staff Writer*
 Wannabe Writers focus on helping each other to write — whatever the genre. The Wannabe Writers group is comprised of about 30 members and begins at 8:30 a.m. Mondays at Lake Miona Recreation Center. Writers can bring anything to the club, from short stories to book chapters. The club typically listens to and reviews eight to 10 stories. "The critiquing really helps," said Wannabe Writers Leader Rick Greenberg. "It's really good. Nobody writes a perfect book on the first try," Greenberg said he joined the group in 2011, because he "was writing something at the time and wanted to be a writer." "People come in and want to learn how to write," he said, "and it helps them." Marian Davenport's devotional story about "loving

Please See **WRITERS, A9**

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Cindy Skop | *Daily Sun*

Members of the Wannabe Writers club silently read along as another writer reads their story aloud.

WRITERS

Continued from A1

"God above all else" was one of the works critiqued at a recent Wannabe Writers meeting. While most of the feedback she received was positive, members also discussed what could be improved and asked questions about the meaning of her content.

When asked if loving God above all else includes her husband and children, Davenport, of the Village of La Belle, said yes and offered to further explain her ideas.

The genres in the club vary widely, said Greenberg, of the Village of Hillsborough.

For example, Davenport's story was immediately followed by Greenberg's chapter about the Vietnam War, which is part of a larger work.

The process of group editing is the club's biggest

draw, Greenberg said, because everyone has something a little different to offer.

Commentators can offer insight on word choice and content, or ask questions for clarification after reading a copy of a writer's story while he or she reads it aloud to the group. Afterward, individuals raise their hands to express their feelings on the work.

One person notices one thing while another sees something else as the story's takeaway, Greenberg said. These varied perspectives ultimately help the author communicate more clearly.

"We're a very open group," Greenberg said. "We don't tell anybody they can't write something."

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VILLAGES AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

THE BOOKSELLER'S DAUGHTER

by Steve Burt, Village of Woodbury

Genre: Adult fiction mystery/fantasy

Grand prize winner for adult fiction at the 2019 New York Book Festival Awards.

Could Things Get Any Weirder in Wells, Maine?

Working at her mother's hole-in-the-wall bookstore, Annie's Book Stop, 17-year-old Keegan has read plenty of mysteries. But she's never been part of one— until now.

It starts when someone, or something, steals an obscure book from Toil & Trouble, a store that specializes in occult, magic and rare books. Who but a collector would want the book? Things get stranger when a visitor appearing to be a hunchbacked nun comes into Annie's Book Stop and asks Keegan to order a reprint of the same book, plus two books on local graveyards. Before the woman returns to pick up the books, an ominous hooded figure breaks into Annie's to steal them. Now Keegan has a mystery to unravel before an unseen enemy closes in. "The Bookseller's Daughter" sweeps readers into a small-town drama where a cast of delightful characters emerge and a compelling story takes hold.



Q: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO WRITE YOUR BOOK?

The bookstore owner at Annie's Book Stop in Wells, Maine, where we live half the year, suggested I write a 'fantastical' book about Wells, so I not only took up the challenge but wrote about Wells and her bookstore.

Q: WHAT CLUBS, ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES DO YOU ENJOY?

I'm a member of the Writers League of The Villages (WLOV). I enjoy golf and church activities. My wife and I sell a lot of my various novels at seasonal craft shows on the town squares.

Q: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOK?

All Booked Up at Colony Plaza in The Villages; Amazon; Barnes & Noble.



The Writing Bug

By Mark H. Newhouse



Love & Laughter...Meet Mike Doyle

Making adults laugh takes a particular skill. Mark Twain, Max Shulman, (remember Dobie Gillis?), and Erma Bombeck had it. My friend, Michael Doyle, never fails to make the **Creative Writers Group**, (Wednesdays, 11-1 pm, Laurel Manor), laugh. He takes the things that drive us nuts and turns these 'heart-breakers' into Valentines.

A FUNNY FOOTBALL COACH?

Most people are surprised to learn Mike was an English-teaching football coach. "I enjoyed and survived forty-two years in the high school classroom." He coached high school football for twenty-six of those years. He says writing for him is a "recreational activity. The joy is in completing the story or novel and liking what I produced." Although he says, he

primarily writes for himself, "bringing laughter to others is wonderful. When I read one of my stories aloud in my critique group, the laughter of my fellow writers motivates me to write more." And we do laugh.

Mike is an excellent example of how most of my Villager friends feel about writing: "Although it would be great to reap the riches and fame that Grisham and McMurtry get, the joy with seeing my name on a book is enough for me."

Continued on page 44

MIKE'S JOURNEY

While humor dominates his writing today, his first book, *Whitewater, Ohio*, has been described as *To Kill a Mockingbird* meets *The Wonder Years*. It's about a boy discovering the existence of racism in a small town, north of the Mason Dixon Line. Mike cares intensely for others. His second novel, *Bubba and the Bedroom Cowboys*, was a mystery that revealed his comedic side, but also his ability to create a tantalizing page-turner, featuring a musical band in the bayou of Louisiana. Loaded with great descriptions, wild characters, and unforgettable humor, I can't wait until he completes the sequel, which he promises soon.

But what I love best is Mike's humor. As he says,

"Jimmy Buffet sang, 'If we couldn't laugh, we'd all go insane.'" Mike finds every-day life to be a storehouse of material for humor. "Grocery shopping or driving through round-a-bouts with one's spouse provides laughs that people, especially seniors, can relate to." He's captured the ridiculousness of life in his two books of short stories, *Mugs, Jugs, and Hugs* and *Cruising, Boozing and Schmoozing*, which feature love birds, Miriam, and Floyd Busby. "The Busbys are like most of us. Theyicker and nag. They disagree on many things, but they also share an undying love for each other." They're an active couple living and laughing through their golden years in a large Florida retirement community. (Sound familiar?)

MIKE'S LOVE STORY

Mike should know. He's been married 44 years, with one daughter and two grandsons. "I was attending a football coaching clinic in Pittsburgh in January, with one of my assistants. We found a disco (yes, it was 1974) with great live music and, we assumed, a bevy of beauties for us to meet. Dressed in jeans and sweaters, we were told gentlemen were required to wear sports coats. We debated whether or not we should walk six blocks in frigid weather to our hotel and change clothes. We did, and as they say, the rest is history. I met Denise Cincione, a lovely Italian girl, who I married less than a year later."

Mike takes things that happen to all of us and

turns them into gems that good-naturedly tickle our funny-bones — the only bones that never get too old! Here's an excerpt from "*Marshmallow Pinwheels*" in *Mugs, Jugs, and Hugs*, where Floyd's sweetheart deals with Floyd's sweet tooth. Remember Pinwheels!

"MARSHMALLOW PINWHEELS" FROM MUGS, JUGS, AND HUGS

Floyd carried a package of marshmallow pinwheels on the top shelf. "Are we out of marshmallow pinwheels?"

"We've been out of those sugar bombs since 1998, and we'll continue to be out of them in perpetuity." Miriam deposited a small package of sugar-free shortbread cookies into the shopping cart. "With your sugar problem, these

cookies are better for you when you crave sweets."

"They're sure not marshmallow pinwheels."

"Floyd, wait here. I forgot to pick up a jar of mayo. I'll be right back."

As Miriam disappeared around the corner, Floyd grabbed the pinwheels and buried them beneath a large bag of low-salt pretzels.

Miriam returned with the mayo and a bottle of sugar-free barbecue sauce. "Oh, shoot, I forgot to get tartar sauce. Floyd, go back to the condiments aisle and get some tartar sauce. Check the calories!"

She waited until her husband moseyed out of view, searched the cart, and put the pinwheels back on the top shelf. Floyd returned with the

tartar sauce. Miriam smiled. "Did you check the calories?"

"Don't I always do what you tell me to do?"

"As a reward, I bought these ginger snaps for you. They're not sugar free, but I know how much you like to dunk them in your coffee. If you eat five cookies, it's only 150 calories and not too bad on sugar grams."

"Thank you, darling." He kissed her on the cheek and rolled his eyes.

LEARN MORE

You'll be rolling with laughter when you and your sweetheart read Mike's stories. Look for *Holiday with the Busbys* soon available on Amazon and Kindle. And please visit www.slnet.org for a list of our local writing clubs, authors, books, and

speakers who are eager to share laughs and help for anyone who loves writing or reading.

Mark H. Newhouse is the author of the Gold Medal Historical Fiction/Best Published Book of the Year (Florida Writers Association), *The Devil's Bookkeepers*, a suspenseful story of love and courage

in the holocaust ghetto his parents survived. He is founding president of Writers League, Top Cat of Writers 4 Kios and Youth Chairperson/Board Member of the Florida Writers Association. You can contact him at www.newhousecreativegroup.com

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