

# VIEWPOINTS

## Same Thing Only Different

BY PAULA PASCO

This past year, I took up writing poetry in my spare time. Along the way, I learned a thing or two.

Writing poetry is a lot harder than it looks. And, I'm having a difficult time not seeing things poetically, as they say.

Like every year, the way we stand by helplessly watching summer disappear. Pulled right out from underneath us. Just like that. Then catapulted headlong into winter.

Got me writing this poem titled "Alums of summertime."

Here we sit;  
alums of summertime,  
waiting for winter,  
the afterlife,  
to rein.

Our tools of the trade,  
enablers of  
this earthly orientation,  
put away tidily  
in the garden shed:  
spades and shovels,  
rakes and hoes,  
trimmers and mowers.

Soon to barrel in  
uninvited,  
winter will demand  
an account  
of our due diligence.

Why?  
To prove who's greater?  
Summer,  
romantic and bright,  
preening our hearts  
with notions  
of daring radiance?

Or a place opposite?  
Winter –  
with its fragile darkness,  
prying open doors  
to our sustenance?

You want to know what I really like about poetry? You can get right to it. Quickly. No long winding paragraphs to traverse, although there can be hefty subtexts.

I love poetry. It packs a punch. Plain and simple.

Instead,  
we simply recall  
farewell kisses  
blown by

dewy morning light,  
delivered  
in birdsongs,  
curtseying sweetly,  
waving adieu.

Let me remind you  
of our intent  
to flag reinforcements.  
Saviors, no less,  
clutching unusually  
balmy forecasts.  
From the South.  
The deep South.

Here now  
on the sunny shores  
of these last hours  
of Indian summer,  
look away  
from those pooches,  
their noses pointed  
heavenward,  
sniffing  
kingdom come  
on a breezy Sunday  
afternoon –  
a balm for the senses.

For years, my husband has suggested that my writing is poetic. But I always brushed him off. He's not a writer. And besides, what does he know about poetry.

Yet, the more poems I write, the more I realize there could be a lyrical vein running through me, spilling into my other endeavors: photography, cooking, decorating. And, as much as I hate to admit my husband may be right, column writing.

Yes.  
Winter is coming.  
In a quick hurry.  
Whether we like it.  
Or not.

And, soon  
we will say  
the same thing  
in a different way:  
winter is here.

Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning writer whose columns appear weekly in regional newspapers in the Upper Midwest. The author conducts readings of her works and writing workshops for beginning writers. For more information, email [boscodamon.paula@gmail.com](mailto:boscodamon.paula@gmail.com).



## The City Of Light

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.  
Tribune Content Agency

"I believe the light that shines on you will shine on you forever ... though I can't guarantee there's nothing scary hiding under your bed." — "Father and Daughter" by Paul Simon.

My wife has a bad knee and isn't much for long walks, so that night after the Chunnel train had brought us over from London and we set out on foot from the hotel to do some exploring, I wasn't expecting to go far. Maybe a block, maybe two.

I have no idea how far we actually went, but I know it was a lot further than a couple blocks. I kept asking if she was okay. Marilyn kept assuring me that she was and wanted to keep going.

She was enraptured, as was I. Walking through Paris was like walking through magic. We went down a fairytale street, paused on a bridge overlooking the Seine to watch the glass-topped dinner cruises plying the water, ended up at the Place de la Concorde, looking west along the Champs-Elysees. In the distance the Arc de Triomphe glowed.

Some cities disap-

point you. Some cities you visit and that thing they are known for, that thing people come from around the world to experience, turns out to be exaggeration, myth or mirage. In the '70s, I used to feel sorry for tourists who came to Hollywood (which has since been largely redeveloped), only to find that the fabled film capital was little more than office buildings, souvenir shops and street corners where prostitutes gathered six deep.

But Paris is exactly what they say. Paris is, in reputation and in fact, the City of Light.

So I suppose we ought not be surprised that it now finds itself under attack from the forces of shadow.

By now, you've already heard all you can stand – and then some – about the series of coordinated terrorist assaults by ISIS that left well over a hundred people dead on Friday. By now, you have already wept or prayed or vented your fury or wondered aloud what this world is coming to or simply stood mute in the face of humankind's seemingly bottomless capacity for savagery.

I almost called it animal-

ism, but that's an insult to animals. They, after all, kill to feed or defend themselves. Only human beings kill for beliefs – in this case, a twisted, fundamentalist strain of Islam.

And it's no accident it was Paris. Like New York City 14 years ago, it was a representational target. New York stands for American power and Sept. 11 was meant to spit in the eye of that power. Paris stands for light and the events of Nov. 13 sought to eclipse the glow – not simply the glow of beauty and romance, but also of enlightenment and hope.

Paris has always been a beacon of such things. That may have been part of the reason Adolf Hitler ordered the city destroyed when his troops were driven out in 1944. It may have been part of the reason Gen. Dietrich von Choltitz disobeyed the order.

The quote at the top of this column is from a song not about terror, but about a father's love for the bright light that is his daughter and his promise to be there for her in a world of uncertainty and threat. But though they were not crafted for this moment, the

words feel apropos to it.

No, it is not monsters hiding under the bed by which civilization is menaced. But it is monsters just the same, forces of savagery, ignorance, hatred, fundamentalism and extremism striking from corners where light does not reach. And no one can guarantee perpetual safety against such threats.

But we can strike back hard when they come, as France is doing now. In the long run, though: It isn't bullets and bombs these monsters fear the most, hate the most, or that hurts them the most. No, that which lurks in shadow despises light – and well it should. Light reveals bankrupt ideologies for the failures they are. Light draws people together. Light gives courage. And light gives hope.

So Vive la France!  
And shine on.

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## Breathless

BY RICHARD P. HOLM MD

Defining the causes for breathlessness, or troubled breathing, illustrates how perplexing it can be making the right diagnosis when someone has a medical problem.

It was a party night while I was in college when someone's date was rushed into my dorm room gasping and breathing rapidly, asking if I could help her. Someone must have known that I had asthma when younger and that I might be able to help this desperate young woman. She seemed extremely anxious and I remember trying to reassure her unsuccessfully. I think she eventually had to go to the local emergency room and everything eventually turned out OK.

Years later in medical school, during a lecture on lung conditions, I remembered the young lady with the rapid breathing experience years earlier and realized that she likely had breathlessness from anxiety and hyperventilation, and not from asthma, or any other respiratory illness. Since then I have seen hyperventilation syndrome occur in many more people, mostly while I was working the ER.

It is important to realize this condition is a real deal. Anxiety-driven over-breathing causes the body's pH balance to go way out of whack, resulting in numbness and even severe

spasticity of the extremities, which in turn makes the patient even more frightened. One common treatment is to have the person rebreathe into a paper bag to normalize the acid-base or pH balance of the blood. I prefer having the patient go for a brisk walk, which reassures the patient they are not so sick, and works as well in returning the blood pH to normal.

Most of the other causes for dyspnea, or shortness of breath, are not so easy to fix. The following list, which is not complete, illustrates how diverse and varied the causes for breathlessness can be: obstructive lung disease like asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema; infections like viral influenza or bacterial pneumonia; excessive fluid and swelling within the lung like congestive heart failure or lung edema from lung infection; too much acid in the blood like diabetes out of control or with certain kinds of poisoning; and lung wall lining irritation like viral pleuritis or embolic blood clots to the lung. In addition, think how anxiety and hyperventilation might make all these problems seem worse.

So when you run into someone who is having trouble breathing, the one thing you know for sure is that it could be from many causes: maybe just a little anxiety, maybe something really bad, or maybe both. Bottom line, when breathless, always seek help.

## SILVER THREADS

BY NILA FOSTVEDT

It's 12 o'clock noon at Main Street Senior Center where lunch is being served. All eyes look up to the 6' tall man who softly walks in, often accompanied by his wife, Janice. Yes, Werner will be missed. A man who lived a full rewarding life. A father, a professor and a mentor to many young people, often hosting them in their home.

Thanks to all who showed support at the Silver Threads Health Fair, November 5th at Main Street Senior Center. Thanks to all who made won-

derful soups. I had Potato Sausage, a blue ribbon winner, and Strawberry Rhubarb pie, out of this world! HA! Much planning and volunteering went into this event. Sorry, if you missed it. Thanks to all the vendors who had displays and seminars.

It's beginning to sound a lot like Christmas, ever since I turned the radio on November 3rd. Let's not overlook Thanksgiving and all we are thankful for.

We've had many of our members and friends hospitalized for one reason or another. We miss them and

wish them recovery and return, soon to us.

Please visit Main Street Senior Center Gift Shop when you need ideas for gift giving. Many homemade articles and unique gift ideas. Visit the dining room, card room, exercise room, library-computer room. Also newspapers and magazines for your enjoyment. No transportation? Call Vermillion Transit at 624-7433. Other information, call Main Street Senior Center at 624-8072.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I've been out of Vermillion for a couple of months, and was pleasantly surprised to read the October 30, 2015 Plain Talk, "Growing into the Future". I rejoiced, my opinions were that the city's practices of not honoring code agreements with property owners by failing to adopt grandfathering was behind us. The city will entertain new ideas, formerly rejected. The City Council will listen to a room full of citizens asking to review previously questioned decisions.

City Council members will actually go out with property owners to see how codes are administered and their effect. Codes would no longer be used as a 3-year old would use a hammer.

Oops. The city didn't get the news, but the city didn't forget me. I got mail.

City demands for sidewalk repairs this time for several thousand. Goes well with the earlier \$15,000 cost demanded for replacement of very serviceable and safe ENERGYSTAR rated windows. An increase in assessed property valuation, some properties up over 70 percent from last year, increase taxes by more thousands. Does raising the cost to attend USD, really make Vermillion grow? It will take several years of rent increases to make up for this year's farce. If a person were just starting out in business, how would they survive these, what I think, should be termed, attacks?

Got the November 6, 2015 Plain Talk. We still have faith in growing the community. We have authorities from out of town who have successfully grown their

towns come to guide us. What I got from the article was that my personal "interesting relationship" with the city was right on target. Mr. Huether "explained that Vermillion has only had a 5 percent growth in population since 1980. In the same time Sioux Falls has grown 102 percent, Brookings 53 percent, Yankton 21 percent..." I hope the city administrators ask to be paid based on their performance. 1980 to 2015 is 35 years. Five percent growth divided by 35 years is .14 percent, or .0014, growth a year. If you trying to stop growth, this is a good figure. If you are trying to encourage growth, you'll run as fast and as far as you can from this statistic. I hope the city administrators and city council members embrace the consequences of their

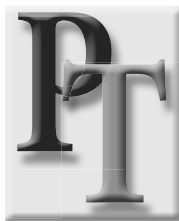
decisions.

On a personal anecdotal level, I have not built anything in Vermillion since 2011, both selling building lots, and not utilizing the low rates and ease of funding. Not because I didn't enjoy building, but I did not enjoy what I felt to be the expensive and obstructionist activities of the city. I know I'm small potatoes, but I bet I'm not the only person who feels they could have made that 5 percent number higher if not hindered by the city. I feel the situation continues to worsen.

If anyone wishes to see the properties affected, I'd be happy to drive you around Vermillion, after I return this spring. City officials are welcome.

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Vermillion



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