

# Author's **BAZAAR** ONLINE

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dean Rea



*W*HEN superstorm “Sandy” approached the East Coast, I got in touch with one of our regular contributors and invited her to write about her experiences if the storm were to strike her home on Long Island. In this issue of *Author’s Bazaar* June Bassemir describes how she survived the storm that wreaked havoc in New York City, New Jersey and other communities.

Another water-related story comes from the pen of Monty Dennison, a retired professional journalist, who met an interesting person while sailing on cruise ships as a dance host.

Columinst and book author Bob Welch offers a tip on writing, and Lee Kirk, a regular contributor to *Author's Bazaar*, tempts us with a mouth-watering story.

Two writers share poems with us, and Delores Miller, a retired Wisconsin dairy farmer, describes her second bout with cancer.

If you have taken a favorite photograph during 2012, you are invited to submit it to Author's Bazaar for publication in the February issue.

Meanwhile, we're looking forward to the holidays and wish you a blessed Thanksgiving.





AN UNINVITED GUEST

## Photos and story by June Bassemir

“Sandy,” an uninvited guest, visited us early Monday, Oct. 29 with her buddy “winds” and “high tides.” We really didn’t want to see them, but they came anyway.

I live in Jamesport on the north fork of Long Island, and my back yard faces the Miamogue Canal. My house sits on one of the highest spots in Waterview Terrace, a development of 55 houses with only 17 occupied year round. The others are secondary homes for folks living elsewhere.

I was at home talking on Skype with my daughter in Japan when my power went off at 5:20 p.m. Monday, and it didn’t return until late Thursday afternoon.

Meanwhile, I watched the groundwater rise in my basement as the tide began to rise in the canal about 30 feet from my back door. High tide was expected to be about 11:30 to midnight and with the full moon that meant a higher tide than normal. First it was 2.5 inches of water on the cement floor, then 5.5 inches, then 9 inches.

The wind was furious and the gusts were even worse; branches struck the window screens. With no TV, no battery radio, no land phone, no cell phone (I had misplaced

it several weeks ago) and only hurricane lamps to read by, it was a pretty dismal evening. So, I went to bed early unaware that the water in the basement had risen to 18 inches.

Fortunately, it was not cold at that point, so I didn't miss the absence of heat. I woke refreshed. I thought that a bright light coming in the window was dawn even though the wind was howling. However, the battery-operated clock said (to my dismay) 10:10 p.m. Yipes, it was still Monday! The light wasn't dawn but a bright full moon.

My son lives 3 miles away but on high ground and not near any waterway. On Monday he brought food, news from the outside world and a pump for the basement. Unfortunately, he didn't know that the power went out 10 minutes before he arrived. He offered another cell phone but it was too complicated for me to try and use in the dim lamplight. So, I was alone again.

The boats on Miamogue Canal are kept on bulk-headed docks. Each dock has a ladder-like ramp that rises and falls with each tide. There were two such docks on my side of the canal, and there are numerous ones on the other side. We watched as the ramps went up in the air as the tide rose until there was no place to go, a strange sight. Fortunately, many of the boats had been removed before Sandy arrived.

A two-lane road is located on the strip of land on the



The storm uprooted a tree next to June Bassemir's house, and numerous houses were damaged by water.

other side of the canal that carries a fair amount of cars, light trucks, motorcycles and bicycles. The rising water eventually flooded the road and crawled up my side of the canal to within 20 feet of my back door.

All traffic stopped when motorists could see the extent of the water except for one foolish guy who plowed into it and got stuck. The car was abandoned and the water got up to the door before it was towed away the next day.



When I woke at 7 a.m. Tuesday, the sun was shining, the road was clear, the water had disappeared because it was low tide and it looked normal again with the exception of two long docks that had lodged on a lawn probably because they didn't go out with the tide.

The storm was over although it was still windy, and people were surveying the damage. I didn't lose any trees, shingles on the roof or have any property damage. I wondered about my furnace and water heater, but they started



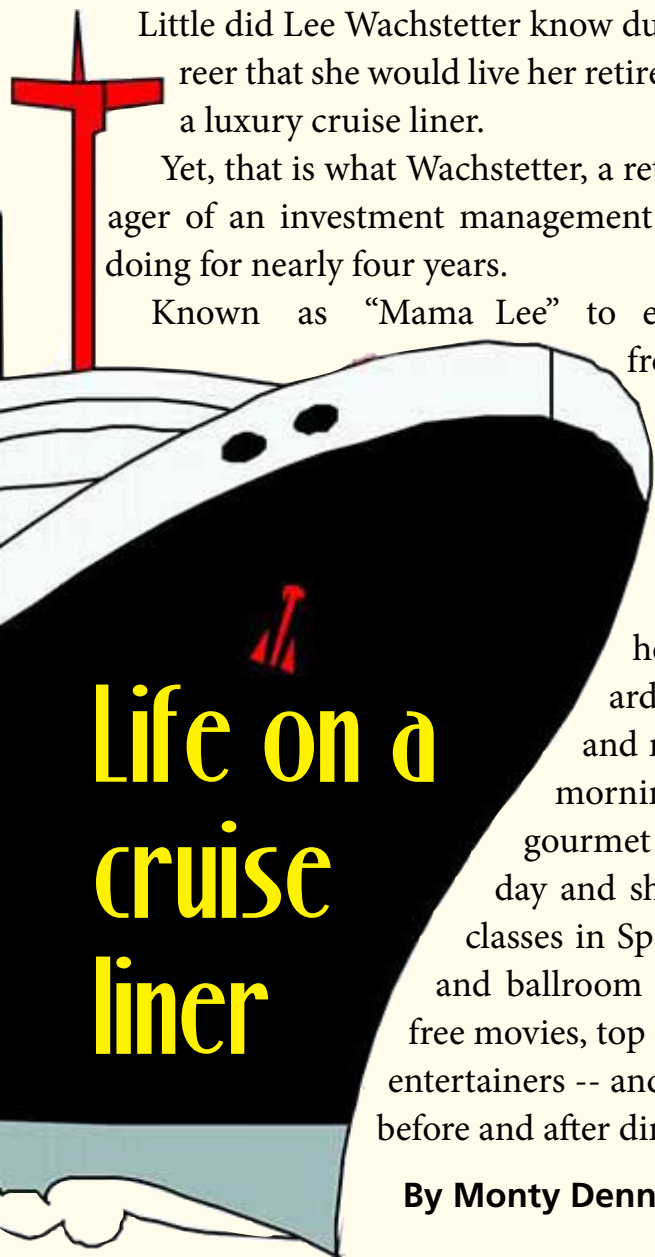
A boat ramp broke loose from its moorings during the storm in Miamogue Canal.



when the power came late Thursday afternoon, which was fortunate because the temperature dropped to the 40s at night.

Unfortunately, the homes of our neighbors in Waterview Terrace that faced south and the Peconic Bay received lots of property damage when the water came in the windows and doors, encircled buildings, uprooted trees and deposited much mud. It will take lots of money, time and effort to restore them. However, we can be most grateful not to have lost any lives. The rest can be replaced.

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A stylized illustration of a cruise ship. The mast is a red T-shape on the left. The funnel is large and black with a white top section. A small red anchor logo is on the black part of the funnel. The ship is shown from a side-on perspective, moving towards the right. The water is represented by a light blue area at the bottom.

Little did Lee Wachstetter know during her working career that she would live her retirement years onboard a luxury cruise liner.

Yet, that is what Wachstetter, a retired nurse and manager of an investment management company, has been doing for nearly four years.

Known as “Mama Lee” to everyone on board, from crew members and captain to other guests, she leads a life others only dream about.

Everyone greets her by name, a stewardess cleans her room and makes her bed every morning, she has access to gourmet meals three times a day and she can take onboard classes in Spanish, computer use and ballroom dancing. There are free movies, top quality lecturers and entertainers -- and she can go dancing before and after dinner every evening.

# Life on a cruise liner

**By Monty Dennison**

“Other people have more money than I have, but they’re too scared to do this,” says Wachstetter, a native New Yorker who moved to Florida in 1946. “I didn’t really plan this kind of life, but I always liked cruising, and my husband Mason and I used to cruise a lot, especially after he retired from his position at a savings and loan in 1976.”

Until then, the Wachstetters had taken relatively short cruises because of work commitments, both at the savings and loan and the management company they had set up to deal with investment properties they began acquiring early in their marriage.

“We joked that if we could take a long 16-day cruise without killing each other, we would do more,” Wachstetter says with a laugh. By the time of Mason’s death in 1997, they had taken 89 cruises, including one world cruise of four months.

After the death, Wachstetter had no idea she could travel as a single person. Like many women of her generation she had gone from living at home to college and nurses’ training, then directly into a marriage. “I never had a day to myself, and I never yearned to be alone, so after Mason died, I initially only cruised with friends.”

Of the many things she enjoyed about cruising she particularly liked dancing. When she heard about Danc-

ers at Sea, an organization that sponsored ballroom dance cruises, she decided to join their cruises. She discovered she didn't have to have a partner to dance with because they were provided. She enjoyed the experience so much she decided to take her first world four-month cruise by herself in 2002.

"I remember Mason telling me as he was dying to never stop cruising, and I haven't. I would return from a cruise, unpack, stay home for a couple of weeks until another cruise was leaving Ft. Lauderdale or Miami, and then go out again."

As the number of days at sea began to outnumber those on land, Wachstetter realized she didn't need her three-story, five-bedroom house and all that went with it – yard work, utility bills, maintenance – so she sold it. She now lives in a room that's about the size of one bedroom in her former house and she adheres to the philosophy that "less is more."

Although Wachstetter is able to travel now because of the financial worth she and her husband created, she does not have the drain on her resources she would have if she owned a house, drove a car and led the kind of social life people have on land. "Many people don't want to change the way they lead their lives," she says.

Wachstetter has completed nine world cruises on virtually every major cruise line, taken nearly 300 cruises and seen the world many times over. She has been onboard



Author Monty Dennison met Mama Lee Wachstetter when he volunteered as a dance host on several cruises.

Crystal Serenity, her current home, for 100 cruises over a nearly four-year period. She chose Crystal because it offers “ambassador hosts” – older single men who are available for dancing every night – on every one of its cruises. Her former home was on a ship that decided to do away with the dance host program on most of its cruises.

“I loved to dance and didn’t do it much during the 50 years of my marriage because my husband didn’t care for it,” she explains. “When I first started cruising I found myself dancing up to five and a half hours a day.”

In addition to dancing, Wachstetter takes great pleasure in needle-pointing, with each needlepoint picture taking two to four months each to complete. She can be found most days sitting on deck working on a new creation that she will inevitably give away.

An attractive gray-haired woman who marked her 84th birthday earlier this year, she has become unofficial mother and grandmother to the hundreds of crew members. It was the Filipino deck hands, in fact, who initially gave her the name “Mama Lee.” She is instantly recognizable because of the brightly colored and embroidered blouses, gowns and dresses she has purchased around the world.

Wachstetter has been away from the ship for a few weeks for dental work and to visit her family at Christ-



mas but sees no reason to live anywhere else. “Most of my friends at home have died, and I am always meeting new interesting people on board, many of whom become close friends.” Her children and grandchildren see her as much as they might see her at home, sometimes cruising with her. They applaud her decision to live on a ship.

(Wachstetter has not disclosed the cost of her shipboard life, but the Cruise Lines International Association estimates that cruisers typically spend about \$1,700 for an average one-week vacation or about \$88,400 a year.)

“Don’t be afraid to take a chance,” she says. “I didn’t know whether I would like living on a ship, but I was willing to try it. I realized I didn’t need a house and all its trappings.”

## **Mama Lee’s travel highlights:**

### **Number of countries visited:**

More than 100.

### **Favorite destinations:**

China, Greece, Turkey, Japan and Brazil. ““I love the music in Rio.”

**Best shopping:**

Bali, Istanbul and Kusadasi, Turkey. She loves to bargain.

**Most unusual purchase:**

A five-foot tall mahogany giraffe, which is now in her granddaughter's house.

**Least favorite area:**

West Africa. "When I hear there will be no bathrooms on shore or dead animals for sale in a voodoo market, I'm not keen to get off the ship."

**Celebrities met:**

Rita Moreno; Wayne Newton ("he kissed me on the cheek"); Patricia Neal, whom she helped get to the stage; Luci Arnaz; Barbara Walters , and Marvin Hamlisch ("he asked to meet me when he first got on-board") and Archie Mason Griffin, Ohio State running back and the only person to win the Heisman trophy twice. He asked her if he could pose for a picture with her, rather than vice versa.

**Most memorable excursion:**

A tour of Phuket, Thailand, a year after a tsunami swept the town. "I could not believe the devastation."

**How many times seasick:**

Never. As a child, she was always car sick, so she fully expected to be queasy on her first short cruise in the Caribbean. On that cruise, which proved to be turbulent, everyone in a high school class that was on board, most other guests and 90 percent of the crew were sick. Not Mama Lee or husband Mason.

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# Radio Nights

By Sheryl L. Nelms

a bowl  
of popcorn

the new  
episode

of Bob Hope

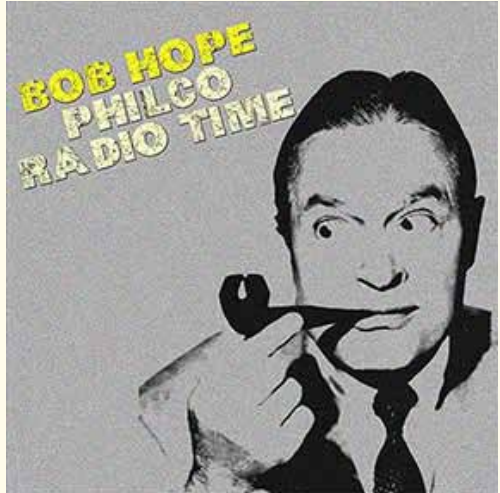
and a spot  
near

the Philco

was  
all it took

to enjoy

a Saturday  
night



# What's your story *really* about?

**By Bob Welch**

I was pretty pleased with a story I'd once written on a Deadwood logger who nearly died when a falling tree pinned him to another tree. My editor, Kevin Miller, bristled.

"You missed the story," said Miller, now editor of the *The Oregon Stater*, OSU's alumni magazine. "It's not about a guy who nearly died. It's about a guy whose grandfather and father worked in the woods. A guy who is now in a wheelchair. It's about a guy who knows nothing but logging but now can no longer do it."

Much as I hated to admit it, Miller was right.

Too many stories fail because, from start to finish, we miss what they're really about. We dish out a bunch of info instead of telling a story. We include a bunch of stuff that might be interesting but has little to do with the essence of our subject.

Focus, focus, focus! Know your story so well you can state it in a single sentence. Read Jon Franklin's "Writing for Story," the best book I've read on winnowing down a story to its true meaning. Above all, before setting finger to keyboard, know precisely where you're going — and why.

(This writing advice appeared in the October newsletter published by Bob Welch, a columnist for the daily *Register-Guard* newspaper in Eugene, Ore., and founder of Beachside Writers. You can find a list of books he has written at [www.bobwelch.net](http://www.bobwelch.net))





# Cupcake Comfort

**By Lee Kirk**

When I was growing up in Portland, Oregon, many grocery items were delivered to homes or neighborhoods. Dairies left regular orders of milk, butter, cream, and even eggs. Produce trucks parked in neighborhoods to sell fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables as customers gathered around to snap up their offerings. Ice cream carts announced their presence with bells or music, alerting children who came running with nickels clutched in their hands to buy ice cream bars, Dixie cups, Nutty Buddies, and Popsicles and Fudgesicles. But there was one truck I waited for more expectantly than even the ice cream wagon – the Ann Palmer bakery truck.

Of course the truck carried regular orders of bread and pastries to be delivered to individual homes. But there was always a small supply of items to cater to impulse purchasing, and one of those tasty pastries was a cupcake that was the zenith of my desire. I'd try to save the required nickel during the week. Failing that, the appearance of the truck would result in some fast and major negotiation with my mother to acquire the needed funds. Then I'd scoot out to the truck, waiting behind it for the deliveryman to return and hopping up and down, trying to see if the cupcake shelf was burdened or empty.

It didn't take long from the time of my first rapture over one of these cupcakes, and the subsequent dedication of my life to acquiring more, for the deliveryman to recognize the earnestness of my weekly quest. Sometimes he'd pretend to have no idea what I wanted, and he'd make me describe the cupcake in detail. Other times he'd look at me in astonishment. "Oh no, I think I'm all out of cupcakes today," he'd say mournfully. Then, "Well, I'll just take a peek waaaaay in the back here in case one got pushed out of sight." And, of course, one would have.

The cupcakes were dark, rich, spicy, moist, and full of raisins, and each paper-skirted cake was topped with a charming swirl of chocolate cream frosting at its center.

There was a ritual to eating one of these cupcakes. It had to be done properly to draw out the pleasure for as long as possible.

The first order of business was to find a secluded spot where no one could interrupt my pleasure. Then I peeled off the paper, being very careful not to remove any chunks from the cake to spoil its perfect symmetry. Any crumbs that clung to the paper were removed by tongue. That done, I flattened the blob of chocolate frosting out to cover the top of the cake – my tongue worked well for this task and gave a little foretaste of pleasure yet to come. Next, I separated the top from the bottom of the cupcake, and consumed the lower portion in small, well-chewed and fully appreciated bites, sometimes rolling the juicy raisins around on my tongue a bit before biting into them. Then came the ultimate part of the treat: eating the top with its layer of



frosting — again, slowly and mindfully. Finger-licking was the proper mode of clean up.

Sixty-odd years later I can still taste that spicy, rich flavor and sense the moist crumbs on my tongue. Over the course of these years I have tried to find a recipe to duplicate that cupcake, if not all of the childish pleasure in it. Was the moistness from molasses, or applesauce, or both? What were the spices that gave it such a sharp, rich flavor – cinnamon, mace, ginger, nutmeg, cocoa? Many a cupcake has tumbled from my baking pans over the years, but no recipe yet has done more than come close.

This recipe is for old-fashioned spicy cupcakes with a nice dense texture, but it's still

## NOT QUITE THAT CUPCAKE (Old-fashioned Spice Cupcakes)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease bottoms of muffin tins, or line them with paper cups.

Yield: 12 cupcakes

In a large bowl, mix together:

1 ½ C all purpose flour

½ C sugar

½ t salt

1 t baking powder

1/8 t baking soda

½ t cinnamon  
¼ t ginger  
1/8 t nutmeg

Add:

¼ C soft shortening  
½ C milk (at room temperature)  
1 egg  
½ t vanilla  
¾ C seedless raisins or sultanas

Mix until well incorporated and add:  
¼ C dark sweet molasses

Beat until well mixed. Pour into tins. Bake at 375 degrees F. for about 15 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Frost if desired.

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Delores Miller with two granddaughters, Alyse and Tierney.

# *My Turn for Breast Cancer* **AGAIN**

**By Delores Miller**

Five years ago Russ and I had been married 50 years, and we organized a celebration for family and friends. In



the midst of the planning, a cancer mass was discovered during a routine mammogram. This was followed by surgery for a lumpectomy and radiation. All without telling family and friends who had gathered for the anniversary party. The Lord was good to Delores and Russ.

Things went along fine for five years, living in denial of the malignancy. In spring of 2012, I started planning a 55th wedding anniversary party. I had survived the 2011 tornado catastrophe that destroyed our farm buildings. Russell's 80th birthday was approaching and we had lived in this Hortonville farm 35 years. It was time to celebrate. One hundred-eighty friends, relatives and family gathered over Memorial Day for catered food, visiting and a phantom barn dance in the new car shed. Again I did not burden anyone with the carcinogenic diagnosis.

Overnight the other breast became inflamed and engorged, and information on the Internet suggested Stage Three inflammatory breast cancer, which needs immediate attention, biopsy and a catheter port implanted in the chest. (Being retired dairy farmers, I insisted to the surgeon that it was nothing but mastitis that cows develop. He nixed that idea.) X-rays, CAT scans, blood work became almost a daily occurrence.

Eight intensive chemotherapy infusions of poison di-

rectly from the port into the chest, neck and heart. Two week intervals. (One has to admire the chemo nurses who deal with very ill folks every day). Extra fluids and Neusta injections to combat anemia. Nausea, hair loss, fatigue, memory loss, sleepiness, weight loss, dizziness followed. Lots of things were lost due to cancer. Not the spirit. Prilosec to stop nausea.

Genetic testing to see if the cancer gene was inherited from the Zillmer/Lembke relatives to be passed on to my daughters. Nothing concrete was proven. Where does cancer come from? It was my turn. Statistics prove one in eight women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.

Russell took over all the housework, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, yard work and tending a huge garden. Besides chauffeuring to hospital visits 15 miles away in Appleton. For the first time in 53 years I was unable to bale hay, no strength to hoist myself on the Oliver tractor, and I couldn't throw hay bales hither and yon.

The five far-away children rallied and took turns visiting physicians and taking notes, sharing via e-mails. Russell is hard-of-hearing, and I cannot remember so the family runs interference with doctors, nurses and oncologists. Giving moral support to their elderly parents.

Surgery early in September, double mastectomy, re-

removal of the port, 13 lymph nodes were excised, 9 were cancerous. One node full of cancer was unable to be removed; it was too close to the lungs and chest wall. Two units of blood to combat the anemia. Removal of a cancerous nerve in the right armpit. Physical therapy, exercise and dancing recommended to get the strength back.

More medications, Arimidex, a hormone receptor positive cancer drug, which I will have to ingest the rest of my life however long that is. Side effects is osteoporosis, more hair loss and bone pain.

Thirty days of radiation began at Oshkosh, 27 miles away. Complicated highways, road construction and roundabouts which us dumb farmers do not have the intelligence to navigate.



Good people remembered me with cards, visits, telephone calls, prayers and good wishes and were all appreciated. Home-made food from their kitchens, produce from their gardens. Thank you. Friends Hilda and Ken weekly brought bouquets of flowers, zinnia, gladiolus and dill.

So now what? Optimistic out-

look that by Christmas, my hair will have grown back and energy returns for the new year of 2013.

This is my story of inflammatory breast cancer, which was my turn, and I did it my way. With the Good Lord's help, I can recover.

Remind me, though, Lord  
that there is much in this world  
I do not and cannot control:  
But the most fruitful prayer is  
Not my will, but Thine be done.

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# God Likes Colors, Too

By Abby Van Wormer

I never really got it until You showed me today  
That you speak to each of us in many different ways.  
For some it's through music with beautiful sounds,  
For others it's nature that makes their heart pound.

Or those who feel closer to You when they dance —  
They know it's on purpose; it's not just by chance.  
And even for some it's a hug here or there,  
Which is all they need to know that You care.

Or when babies are born, there's no denying  
The breath You've given them is the reason they're crying.

You know what gets to us, what makes us tick,  
So, you give us those moments when things just click.

Today, I saw the rainbow You painted in the sky,  
It was bright, and radiant, and pleasing to the eye.  
I watched it and thought about the promise You made.  
But even more came to mind as I watched it fade.

This is your artwork, displayed for all to see  
But I felt like You put it there just for me.  
You didn't make me who I am out of the blue.  
You spoke to my heart today — You like colors, too.

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