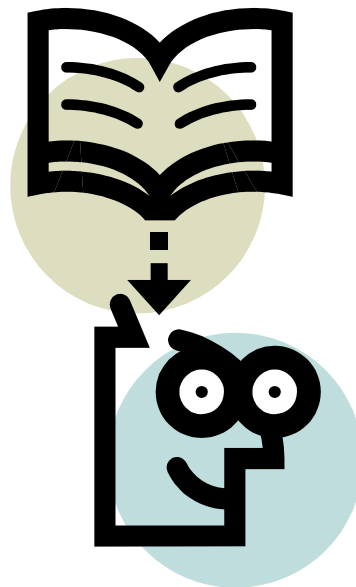


An Idea for our own....

**MAGAZINE!!**

**READER** MAGAZINE



...where we can still be writers, when we  
can still find time to write.....

Put very simply; would you like to contribute, as & when you can and feel like it, to an in-house publication for WaC members? It would be a vehicle where we could publish anything we have written which we feel worth sharing with each other [for whatever reasons]. It would be a monthly publication distributed like the newsletter & you would be free to do with it what you wish...forward to friends or enemies, family, neighbours, people you met on the train, in fact to anyone or no one.

I have put together a sample copy, it's not meant to be definitive, just something to get us thinking [if we want to...no pressure!]

So, here goes....

# READER MAGAZINE



## **Death in Office.**

*How many US Presidents have died in office...?*

*And more importantly, what killed them?*

## Contents...

Editorial.

Articles.

Poetry.

Cookery.

General Interest/excerpts from work in progress...

Book/Film/TV/Radio reviews.

Quiz or anything else that might be broadly classed as Fun.

Anything else anyone wants to submit....with one caveat:

*I don't think we should include any submission whose correct home would be*

*The Author.*

*Cover image. President Zachary Taylor.*

**Editorial...**

*Anything anyone wants to contribute which has a current relevance and not only to publishing or caring; politics, society, the media, sex, greed, Vegetable gardening... rants would go here quite nicely.*

## **Article.**

### **A Meeting will be held...**

I suppose there is no such thing as a typical Catholic Parish so there can be no such thing as a typical Parish Council and no typical Parish Council meeting. But in my experience, which is considerable, there is something that all Parish Council meetings share, – they go on too long and they achieve too little. I do not blame them, how could I? I have often done my bit to generate more heat than light and produced untold cubic metres of hot air. But now I think I have attended my last meeting, as ‘Scotty’ in Star Trek famously said, “I canna give you any more, Captain”. I know just how he felt. The final blow fell when my wife and I agreed to attend our Parish meeting. It all seemed so depressingly familiar, the hall, the tables organised in a large oblong, the hard chairs. It was as if some unseen hand had forced us into setting the whole thing up in as unfriendly and coldly impersonal way as possible. Yet my wife and I helped lay out the tables! It was a Parish Council Meeting. How else did we expect things to be arranged? And it all unfolded with the awful inevitability of a Greek Tragedy. After a prayer solemnly intoned by the Parish Priest there were formal Apologies, Chairman’s remarks, and we then moved on to the first major Agenda item, Finance. This took a long time due to the fact that there was nothing to report. The first item not reported on was the Presbytery roof which didn’t leak! A long and lively debate ensued on what should be done about this roof and how, with careful neglect, it might be allowed, over time and with a suitable lack of Diocesan support, to deteriorate to the point where it might be brought up under Finance at some future Parish Council meeting when there *was* a leak. Then a voice audibly muttered that Father wasn’t the only one with a roof and found support when another voice asked, what about the church? The church roof didn’t leak as well, in fact it was in excellent order and if something had to be allowed to deteriorate then surely the church was more important than the Presbytery? My wife and I sat in silence as the debate rolled back and forth. Years ago I would have felt it my duty to join in and it would have gone on even longer and been even more futile but instead I found it all rather funny but also sad. Sad because these were good, committed people, people who cared, gave up their time and worked hard for their Parish. They ran the Breakfast Kitchen twice a week to feed the local homeless, they ran the Children’s

Liturgy, prepared the First Confession, Communion and Confirmation groups and did all the other things that committed, caring people in parishes up and down the country do. Yes, it was indeed sad, but to me, the funny side was definitely ahead on points. For instance after Finance we moved on to that topic so beloved of all Parish Councils, Fund-raising. I don't know how long we discussed Fund-raising, all I know is that it seemed a very long time indeed at the end of which it was agreed to form a committee which would - yes, you've guessed it - discuss fund-raising! Then, as if scripted by some gifted writer of comedy, we moved on to our next item - Preparations for the coming Liturgical events which included Lent, Holy Week, Easter and after that May Devotions. This generated almost no discussion as it was passed on the nod that no committee was necessary as Father would see to it all. It had been put on the agenda and voted on, that was enough as all present knew very well that Father wouldn't let this element of Parish life out of his hands. See what I mean? What were we to do, my wife and I, weep or laugh? Of course we did neither. I doubt this particular Parish Meeting is so terribly different from many other similar meetings of good, caring, involved people but why do we make it so hard for ourselves? Maybe it's like when we were children and asked about the Blessed Trinity in Primary School - it's a mystery, dear, we're not meant to understand. Maybe it's all something to do with the people we become when we go to these meetings, maybe somehow we change. I remember an incident many years ago when I was attending a Parish meeting as head teacher of the local Catholic primary school, I was tired, we all were, the meeting had badly overrun and we all wanted to be on our way. The last item on the Agenda was Date of the Next Meeting. A date was suggested, I checked my diary and said, "No, sorry, that Monday's no good, it's Ash Wednesday," and everyone nodded and began to leaf through their diaries until a puzzled voice asked, "How can a Monday be Ash Wednesday?" The answer was simple, I had scribbled Ash Wednesday on the Monday page to remind me that we needed to have a rehearsal of our school liturgy. But for a moment we had changed, all rational thought had been suspended and we were going through the motions of being committee members not parishioners. As my wife and I left our final meeting and walked home I looked back over the years and felt that nothing about Parish Council meetings had changed and probably never would. Why was that? Could it be... "The fault, dear Brutus, lies in ourselves..."?

## Poetry

Many poets have been inspired by writers who have gone before them. To base a verse on the work of another is not to steal or copy, it is form of homage, an acknowledgement of their talent. However, to see an inspiration in something another artist has created does not mean the divine fire will light, to paraphrase the Master, a poet may yearn to burn but never raise a blaze. Often the first or second line come almost without thought, but not the Full Monty that takes effort. I have decided to take one of the best known of the poems which over the years has attracted the poetic moth only to send them on their way well singed. The poem you will recognise at once...

### **Casabianca.**

The boy stood on the burning deck  
A string of sausages round his neck;  
The crew looked on in fear and awe  
From the safety of the shore.  
They were not cruel, they were not bad  
They did not want to lose the lad.  
They were not selfish or unkind  
But to a man were of one mind.  
None of them would leave the land  
To give the boy a helping hand.  
They'd talked it over and made their choice.  
So they ignored his plaintive voice.  
The lad stood there among the flames  
Calling them some awful names.  
They all felt sad the boy must die  
But how else would the bangers fry?

*My tribute to the immortal Felicia Dorothea Hemans.*

### ***Thoughts of a Poet at rest.***

I'll settle for sitting in Nice,  
forgotten.  
I'll settle for success  
however ill-begotten.  
I'll settle for staying in print  
though thought of by critics as rotten.  
I'll settle for being the past  
as long as the royalties last.  
I'll settle for another sunny drink,  
I'll not write anymore, just think.  
I'll settle for what I can get -  
and yet, and yet...  
No, don't be silly, don't fret.  
Just settle for sitting in Nice.



## **Cookery**

*Cookery writing doesn't appeal to everyone. For instance I'm sure more men would read cookery books if cookery writers were prepared to change their style a bit and go for stronger story lines and better characterisation!*

### *Santini's Last Meal.*

**'Out on the dark streets in the black, dangerous alleys the night the big city went its pitiless and indifferent way. Life or death – it was all the same to the city at night. Santini stood in the window and looked down. Soon a dark figure would cross the street below and begin to climb the stairs to his apartment. Time was running out for him, he had to make his move now or it would be too late. One way or another it had to be settled. Santini went to the table, on it lay 'The Philip Marlowe Private Detective's Cook Book'. He picked it up and flicked it open. It was loaded....'**

Some people say that the real art of cooking is to be somewhere else while it is happening and arrive when it's done but in good time to have a drink first. However, as in all things, there are exceptions. As Shakespeare nearly said, 'some men are born to cook, others choose to cook and some have cooking thrust upon them.' He wasn't wrong. Those born to cook become chefs, those who choose to cook buy cookery books and get on with it, but those who have cooking thrust upon them are alone in the dangerous and violent world of the kitchen. This article is for you, men, alone and facing an oven without benefit of a recipe book, with nothing but a frying pan that will probably jam or misfire to rely on, here's looking at you kid! I have been there. In fact, I'm still there. I am the living evidence that you can not only survive, you can succeed. The rules are simple.

- Don't cook if you don't have to. If God had meant all meals to be cooked in a kitchen he wouldn't have created the take-a-way.
- Be adventurous, if you have to cook it is better to fail gloriously than perish over a soggy shepherd's pie.

- Make sure the drink is good, strong and plentiful, some of the most memorable meals ever eaten have left the plates half full but the bottles empty.
- Don't, **DO NOT**, under any circumstances let anybody see the kitchen, before, during or after the meal. That must remain your own awful secret.

So when does push come to shove and you have to cook? Now I am not talking about a quick re-heating for breakfast of last night's take-away found in the fridge. Nor the making of sandwiches. I'm not talking the lite-bite or the smoke-laden fry-up. I'm talking real meal.

Well, one time, which comes to all men sooner or later is the time to show you can not only cut it in the kitchen, you can enjoy it and do it well. It's reverse macho time. So don't fight it win it. This meal is the one you appear to do at the drop of a hat. It's the, 'Look, why I don't cook you dinner tomorrow' meal where you cut the ground out from under your own hunk image and show your soft side. And this is how you do it:

Serves 2 (if you're cooking this meal for more than 2 get out of this article!)

You will need: a kitchen, an oven, a biggish frying pan, kitchen roll, more kitchen roll, a work surface, a big sharp knife, more kitchen roll, a telephone and a friend who can cook and who will be in when you are getting the meal ready. You will also need the telephone number of a really fast pizza delivery service in case you need to 'phone for back-up.

Before you begin to cook: Lay the table, open the cheap wine (this is for you to drink to keep your nerve while cooking not for use in the meal), and open the good wine you will have with the meal... anyway you get the idea. Get everything ready that you can. Oh, and get something to put the meal into to bring it to the table, a nice bowl or something.

Ingredients: 1lb minced lamb, 2 peppers (choose for nice colours, they all taste much the same cooked) a tumblerful of wine (I leave the size of the tumbler and the colour of the wine up to you but *don't be a cheapskate and choose Lambrusco*) a handful of raisins (fill your fist and don't pick up the ones that fall on the work surface) onions (if you really like onions 2, if not 1, if you hate onions use leeks, if

you hate leeks use whatever the hell you like) 1 medium sized cheap can of chopped tomatoes. A packet of roasted peanuts! (Actually you can use any nuts you like but don't overdo it. This is lamb with nuts not nuts with lamb) you can also add a bit (and I mean a bit, a medium spoonful) of any of the following; tomato sauce, brown sauce or chilli sauce or sand (to create a sea-side picnic effect).

Now,

Chop the onions up, not too small it's hard work and takes too long. Put them somewhere but don't lose them. Take the top and bottom off each pepper. Be ruthless, its only money you're throwing away, cut them in half and get rid of everything that is not the right colour. Chop the peppers into biggish squares. Put them somewhere else.

You should now have ready; the mince, chopped onions, chopped peppers, a tumbler of wine, raisins, nuts and whatever sauce you're going to use. Put the tomatoes in a pan and start to warm them up, enough heat to make them hot but not boiling. If you really want to be good, warm the bowl you'll be serving the meal in.

Put the frying pan on the ring and put something in it. You can use Greek Extra Virgin Olive Oil if you like, you can even check the motoring section of Car Magazine and choose a modern engine oil. They're so good now you must be able to cook with them! Use what you like, I recommend the cheapest oil you can get, you'll never tell the difference. However, be sure to cover the bottom of the pan. Get the oil hot but *not smoking*, firemen can be *very* coarse and spoil a romantic meal for two. Put the onions in the frying pan, if they spit, spit back, but use the sink. Give them five minutes but keep moving them around or you get a choice of burnt or raw. Add the lamb, move it around and break it up as much as you can. Give it a hard time for a good five plus minutes (don't be tempted to hurry but if it finishes up half cooked say you meant it because its the only way to taste really good quality lamb, also have the doctor's telephone number handy). Now add the hot tomatoes, the raisins, the wine and any sauce you want and stir it all up until it begins to bubble. Phone your friend or the pizza place **NOW** if things are going pear shaped, remember you might really have to eat this!

OK, steady, don't panic. Have some wine, I am and I'm only writing! Is it hot in here or is that my imagination? Anyway, turn the heat down a bit so the whole lot

gently bubbles, gently is the word but it must bubble. Keep moving it about. If you can see through the steam and still dare to look it should begin to be less liquidy, it should begin to thicken. It will need about fifteen minutes depending on the heat you're using. Don't let it go too dry. OK it must have had about half an hour so switch off the heat, add the nuts, stir about for a bit to distribute them and pour it all into your serving bowl. You're ready to go.

It can be served with a salad (buy one ready made) or bread (buy something exotic don't just shove half a sliced white loaf on the table). It can be served with other things but you wouldn't want to know so don't ask.

Well, that's it. Take it in and look nonchalant.

An old family recipe your dad taught you, Sweet Lamb with nuts. Sure, all the men in your family can cook, but with them its an art, only done for very special people on very special occasions and...well, if you don't both die or get hospitalised I would call that a success, wouldn't you?.

*That sort of thing or a simple recipe you fancy sharing.*

*How many US Presidents have died in office...?*

*And more importantly, what killed them?*

## DEATH IN OFFICE....



While researching the above series of fictionalised novels, which illustrate the rise of the US Intelligence Services from 1802-1947 [the creation of the CIA & NSA] and based on real events & characters, I found that the following US Presidents died while in office:

- 1841: William Henry Harrison....died after just one month in office, official cause, pneumonia. For the probable cause see: [What Really Killed William Henry Harrison? - The New York Times](#).
- 1850: Zachary Taylor....official cause of death: died from sitting in the sun and eating cold cherries & cream. Probable cause: poisoning by Southern slave-owners. Taylor's body was exhumed for re-examination in 1991.
- 1865: Abraham Lincoln....assassinated.
- 1881: James A. Garfield....assassinated.
- 1901: William McKinley....assassinated.
- 1923: Warren G. Harding....official cause of death: heart attack. Probable cause of death: poisoned by his wife when she found he was having an affair.
- 1945: Franklin D. Roosevelt....official cause of death: massive cerebral haemorrhage which is also the probable cause. But who ran the US in his last years as the war came to a close?
- 1963: John F. Kennedy....assassinated and still an ongoing question as to who killed him & why.

*I don't see why we shouldn't carry self-promotion alongside what we submit.*

## **Quote Yourself Happy!**

*Wit, wisdom and wickedness, they're all there in the quotes of the famous. Comments, insults and observations which are as interesting or amusing today as when they were first spoken. Can you put the right names from the list to these quotes?*

1. The golf course is the only place my prayers don't get answered.
2. A whip for a horse, a bridle for an ass, and a rod for the fool's back.
3. Why don't you get a haircut? You look like a chrysanthemum.
4. Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?
5. Perched on the loftiest throne in the world, we are still sitting on our own behind.
6. I am not one of those who say, 'It is nothing, it is a woman drowning.'
7. Tact consists in knowing how far to go in going too far.
8. There is no God, and we are his chosen people.
9. Self-sacrifice enables us to sacrifice other people without blushing.
10. Silence, more musical than any song.
11. He could not see a belt without hitting below it.
12. Ducking for apples – change one letter and it's the story of my life.
13. Never complain, never explain, get even.
14. I don't even know what street Canada is on.
15. Never trust men with short legs, their brains are too near their bottoms.
16. I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage and haddock by writing them down.
17. I'm as pure as driven slush.
18. Mad, bad and dangerous to know.
19. As I know more of mankind I expect less of them.
20. I'll not listen to reason...Reason always means what someone else has got to say.

- a. Mrs. Gaskell.
- b. Robert F. Kennedy.
- c. Billy Graham.
- d. Samuel Johnson
- e. Woody Allan.
- f. Noel Coward.
- g. Lady Caroline Lamb on Lord Byron.
- h. Book of Proverbs.
- i. Tullulah Bankhead.
- j. P.G. Wodehouse.
- k. Margot Asquith on Lloyd George.
- l. Mark Twain.
- m. Dorothy Parker.
- n. Montaigne.
- o. Christina Rossetti.
- p. G. B. Shaw.
- q. Al Capone.
- r. Jean Cocteau.
- s. Virginia Woolf.
- t. Anon

*A score of over 15 is excellent, over 10 very good, over 5, OK and less than 5 – well what do a few silly quotes matter?*

Answers.

1.c, 2.h, 3.j, 4.l, 5.n,

6.t, 7.r, 8.e, 9.p, 10.o,

11.k, 12.m, 13.b, 14.q, 15.f,

16.s, 17.i, 18.g, 19.d, 20.a.