

THANKFUL

By Cindy Peters

I want to thank the Windsor Gardens Writers Group for welcoming me to the group two years ago. I had never had many writing courses and never considered myself a writer. This group has opened a whole new world to me, and I discovered my love of writing. Some groups (not naming names) I have joined had their established friendship groups and were not friendly or welcoming. I have even been in oratory groups where nobody spoke to me.

I always describe myself as an introvert disguised as an extrovert. I was painfully shy as a child. I would fake sickness not to attend school. I was fearful of not having friends or not fitting in with the social groups at school. My mother knew my tactics but many times she took pity on me and let me stay home from school. My mother was an extreme extrovert and fit into any social group. I tried to pattern myself off some of her behavior.

Then I discovered drama groups, speech classes and choir. I spent my life in those groups to overcome my shyness. I overcompensated so much that in the 5th grade I was voted the loudmouth of the class! I had a horrible teacher that year who never should have had the class vote and put students in various categories. It was a label that hurt me for years and shut me up.

Then my fellow students thought I was funny. So, I became the class clown and surprisingly popular in middle school. I was popular, that is until I refused to join the snobby, shallow popular girl group.

Then high school hit, and I was a late bloomer. I did not do the three D's (date, drink or do drugs). So, I was either not invited to parties or if I was invited, I was too shy to attend. Then I fell in love with a boy at church. As a result, I rarely missed church services, choir, or youth groups just to be near him. It took him two years to discover me. I felt so honored that he dated me until he turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing.

College was more of the same socially as in high school. I continued to act in plays and sing. I did discover track and tennis which kept me in shape.

After college I had a great opportunity to work as a Social Worker with young girls that were even more socially inept than me. They did not have the good fortune and opportunities I had to get me out of my shell, even if it was just for a few hours while I was acting on stage.

Then I landed a job as Executive Director of Siouxland March of Dimes in South Dakota. It was the most exciting, painful torture of my life. I had to overcome my shyness and social awkwardness to reach out to the community. I had to do interviews on TV and radio stations. I had to beg for volunteers and donations from businesses, schools, entertainers, and other community organizations.

All in all, as difficult as these life situations were, I am incredibly grateful that I was able to work through my social anxiety, shyness and become more outgoing. Will I ever be cured? Not really, I think we all have our struggles and those will always be mine.