

## **Pen & Ink Writers' Group**

**The truth is...**we gather on the Third Monday of each month to practice our writing skills. We listen and share in each other's work. We are small in number and our commitment is strictly to produce and foster creativity among our members.

**We started** in July 1999 and consist of adults that enjoy writing memoirs, commentaries, essays, poems, and/or prose. Our simple method each month is to use a pre-selected word or phrase as the basis of a story, an idea, an opinion, a derivative of, or an implied essence of and write a 1 to 1 ½ page document. We share our stories, comment, and in that way build up our writing skills through practice and presentation. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive, and the feedback is gentle.

**Curious?** Always wanted to try writing for fun, entertainment, or even profit? Come visit with us at any of our open meetings. Bring a sample of your work. Sit in and see what we do. If you like it, join us every month and become a member.

### **Works of the Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group © 2014 Pen & Ink Writers' Group**

#### **January 2014 selections – Window**

##### **The Wicked Window By Jamey Damert**

*(On New Year's Day, 2014 and touched up a few days thereafter)*

I'm setting the scene now. When I'm finished, my tale will begin. That's how us professional writers work, you know. When we do work, that is. When we don't work or at least aren't working. It doesn't really matter. But, hey, why am I telling you this?

We find ourselves at a home, the home of Mr. Buckings, but it could be any other home. It just so happens that it's the one Mr. Buckings holds the deed to. All paid for now is Mr. Buckings' little domain, ever since the last mortgage payment was sent in last month. It's got two bedrooms, unless you count the kitchen where Mr. Buckings frequently sleeps for no known reason, and remarkably five bathrooms, two of them full. Mr. Buckings believes you never know when you might have to go or want to read a book, so it's best to be prepared. And if nothing else, Mr. Buckings is on the mark in the preparedness department.

Anyway, Mr. Buckings sat nervously on a recliner on the open front porch on the blistering hot mid-summer evening, and he was bleeding sensationally on account of because he unintentionally quite by accident broke a window and jabbed his wrist into one of the treacherous fragments created thereby. A doctor going by the name of Dr. Phineas Bump, last and most successful of a slew of lesser Bumps, was just passing by. Ain't that coincidental?

After the standard introductory who's whoing, P. Bump announced to no one's great astonishment, "Hey, that's some kind of cut you got there. I imagine it bled a lot. Those things generally do. How'd you come to get so intensely wounded, Mr. Buckings?"

"I was playing around with my window and it just got a little smashed, and my wrist just happened to be at the wrong place at the right time, as they say."

"Playing with a window,' that's what they all say. Let me check this glass out so's I can get a handle on what we're dealing with here." Dr. Bump deftly picked up a piece of the foul window and carefully examined it with every test at his immediate disposal. "It's as I feared, Mr. Buckings. The window was covered with DAC."

"What's DAC, Doc?" Mr. Bukings made clear he wanted to know.

"It's an acronym that stands for 'dirt and crud,' and it's a sure sign that we've got to get you to the nearest hospital in a big hurry." Dr. Bump assiduously maneuvered his cell phone. "Operator, I am Dr. Phineas Bump. How far away is the nearest fully-staffed hospital from where I'm standing?"

"Where are you standing, Dr. Bump?"

"I'm at the home of Mr. Buckings, a man who single-handedly dealt himself a mortal blow."

"That sounds serious, Dr. Bump," the operator calmly announced. "Don't you think you should get him to a hospital as quickly as possible?"

"Good idea," Dr. Bump said somewhat sarcastically, "Why didn't I think of that?"

After a good deal of further discussion, the telling of which would not greatly interest the average reader, an ambulance was summoned and Mr. Buckings was transported to the emergency room at the Basic Service Health Clinic, where everything humanly possible was done for him until barely one hour passed before Mr. Buckings was pronounced dead from his window wound.

It's a tragic tale, and it pains me to lay it before you, but there you have it. There are several morals here, I think. Do not play around with tainted glass for fear it is covered with the dread and deadly DAC. And furthermore, do not place your hands in the care of Dr. Phineas Bump. That fellow definitely quacks like a duck.

*(650 words and not one more or less from beginning to end.)*

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## **Window** **By Elvira K. Castillo**

To some, a window is their only connection to the world outside, as you can imagine if you are bedridden or incarcerated in any other way. Can you imagine living anywhere without windows?

When I was young we lived in a small frame house with windows all around. The house was on a corner lot and there weren't a lot of cars and traffic, so in winter when the snow fell, there was clear, clean snow all about. I can recall the excitement of watching

for the first snowfall; looking out the dining room window and seeing the world turn in to a white blanket. It was a sight I shall never forget.

I can also remember anxiously waiting for my mother to come home when she went shopping, as I stood on a kitchen chair, looking out the window wondering if she had brought home a surprise for me, like a new coloring book or a book of cut out dolls. I spent many hours sitting in front of the window, drawing pictures, coloring or sewing doll clothes.

There's nothing like waking up in the morning to bright sunshine peering between the window blinds and perhaps hearing a bird or two chirping outside. And, speaking of bedroom windows, I recently had something miraculous happen. Last year I took care of my neighbor's cat during the Christmas season. Unfortunately, later in the spring the cat was killed. Well, shortly after his death, I happen to look at my bedroom window before going to sleep, and I saw a perfect image of a cat curled up and an image of a figure that looked like Jesus looking down at the cat. It was just the shadow of the trees outside my window, but I felt it was a special message for me. The image was there for about a week and disappeared.

Several years ago when I purchased my home, the one thing that sold me on the house I picked was that it had windows all around, and especially, it had a window over the kitchen sink. I really enjoy seeing all the squirrels, bunnies, and birds while washing the dishes. The only thing I didn't think about was washing the window above the sink. You don't want to see me climbing atop the sink to do this task!

Of course, during the Christmas season, there's nothing more beautiful than driving through the neighborhood, looking at all the various Christmas trees in the windows.

Needless to say, windows are a connection to the outside world and to the beauty of nature, not only for some but for everyone.

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### **Window Into My World By Stephanie A. Tonn**

I have fallen for the second time this year and I am back at the same rehab facility I was at six months ago. My wife and daughter always say to me, 'Please sit down and rest so you do not fall again'.

I would sigh and say to myself, "I can walk; I just have to stay focused and not stumble." Of course that is hard for me because I am 95 years old.

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My long lean muscular legs now are shaky and worn down. I used to run up and down battlefields dodging bullets during the war. I would run for my dear life just trying to survive. I would think of my wife, Eleanor at home with our first-born waiting for me to come home in one piece. Now I can barely get to the bathroom on my own without someone to help me get off the toilet. Last week I was sitting in a chair with my wheel chair close to me and I quickly slide off the chair as I was transferring to the wheel chair. One of the other residents found me on the floor and she got a nurse to help me.

She said, “Elmer, why didn’t you lock your wheel chair?”

I responded confused, “I thought I did, must have forgotten before I dozed off to sleep.”

Then my therapist came in repeating something similar to what the nurse said, “Elmer, you know better, why didn’t you lock the wheelchair?”

Once I was left alone I felt like they were treating me like a child. I chose to not lock the wheel chair but I was wrong because I had fallen again. I wasn’t looking forward to hearing what my daughter and wife had to say after the nurses told them I fell today.

As I sit in the reception area and looked out the window the young receptionist said to me, “Elmer, are you okay?”

I respond as she smiled at me, “Of course I am okay, a little shaken up but I am fine dear.”

She reminds me of my wife, with those beautiful green eyes that always twinkle when she looks at me. She is very kind and often talks to me when she is not busy. She was a little shy the first couple times I wheeled myself in the wheelchair into the reception area but she warmed up to me quickly. On the days when she is busy I look out the window and daydream about events that have occurred in my life.

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As I look out the window I begin to notice the cars in the parking lot. I used to love driving around town with my wife by my side, letting the wind blow my hair and smelling the sweet scent of Rosemary’s perfume. We would spend all afternoon just driving around talking about current events like, starting a family together and even thinking about getting a puppy. Those were the days, now as I sit in my wheelchair silently thinking I wish I could drive a car right now. As I look out the window I examine the black Lincoln in the parking lot and imagine myself taking a drive with my wife and kids.

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Tonight as I look out the window again I see my son in law’s silver Lexus pull up. I instantly feel my lips form into a smile as I see my daughter, helping my wife get out of the car. I lock eyes with them as if they have been on a long vacation and finally have returned. My wife greets me with a smile followed by a kiss. Each day as I look out the window at the rehab center and I see my family arrive I am motivated to get back on my feet. Looking out the front windows has made me realize how important time with family is. These windows have made events in my life come to life again.

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## **Watching Out the Window** **By N. Stewart**

Sitting looking out the front window, I see nothing but piles and piles of filthy snow along the curb and deep snow covering where grass should be. At first it was pretty with being pure white, floating gently toward the ground and fluffy. I’m retired so I can sit and look out without having to travel the streets or roadways to get to some specified

destination. However, looking out of the window is not like taking in the fresh air and enjoying the warmth of the sun on my face.

As my gaze turned into stare, I saw the prairie that was once next to my parents' house. It was late in the afternoon one summer day. Flowers were blooming in gardens, little kids were playing outside and making a racket, and I could almost imagine the feel of the air warmed by the sun. The north end of the prairie had been trimmed of weeds and a baseball diamond of sorts placed there. Old pieces of carpet were layed out as first, second, third bases and home plate. My brother, Wayne, was up to bat and Kenny was pitching. Strike one was the call from the ump as the ball flew over the plate. Wayne tapped the end of the bat in the dirt and shouldered it, waiting. Then came the fast ball, and a smack was heard as the bat hit the ball and the ball flew out into the field of weeds.

Ted was the outfielder and yelled "I got it," but he didn't have it as he stepped in a hole and went down hard. My brother continued to run around the bases, reaching home and scoring. Ted threw the ball to home plate where I was, but it was too late.

Another batter was up, Kenny's sister Doris and she struck out. Linda was up next and got on base. Wayne was up again and hit another long ball. Ted went back and this time caught the ball on a fly and with the thrown ball caught, Kenny then trapped Linda, running down the bases after tagging up.

The game went on for some time and the score was 1 - 1. Neighborhood bragging rights were involved and no one was going to give up even as the sun started setting and the field began to be shadowed in darkness. The street lights came on and we knew soon we would hear the all too familiar, "Where are you? It's time to come home" from all of our parents. The game would have to be suspended because of darkness...and parents. We agreed to resume the game the next day. Wayne and I went home. Ted went home through the alley, limping slightly. Linda, Kenny and Doris crossed the street and were home.

Sighing, I returned from reminiscing about yesteryear, and again saw the snow out my window. It will eventually melt, and summer will come again, but my baseball playing days are gone for good. Perhaps, just sitting inside by the window in the warmth of the house and enjoying the charming snowy view is enough for right now.

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**"Pregnant Nun Shocks Italy"**  
**By Jim Smetana**

Each time you visit the art museum you're different but the pictures are the same. Or are they? The last time I was there I was astonished to see that "On the Terrace" was in fact a picture of two sisters and not a mother and her daughter as we'd been told. And the Rembrandt? After uncounted years of being a Rembrandt, well, it's a van Hoogstraten now! The art museum was always a slippery place; in spite of what the Picture Lady said you still had to make up your own mind about things. That picture of the wild pigs attacking a rattlesnake? I guess it's my favorite painting in the whole place and I'm not even sure why. And the mermaids sitting in chairs? It's still the creepiest one by far. Although it looks like the pigs are getting the better of the snake I wouldn't be surprised

if someday the snake was able to turn it around. And those mermaids could just jump back into the ocean where they belong. If Mme Cezanne got out of her Yellow Chair and turned on the TV, I would not be at all surprised. Not at all. She might enjoy “Sherlock Holmes.” The history and science museums on the other hand were places where you had to understand things: understand how it works now, how it used to work four thousand years ago and how it’s gonna work in the future where the girls wear sexy space suits like Judy Jetson. The pressure was always on in the science museum: the hatching chicks staggering out of their shells, the frequency distribution balls bouncing down the pegs to make a perfect bell curve then drop through the floor like a Las Vegas magician and start all over again. The pressure of the art museum was a different kind of pressure altogether--it was more like church. Just believe everything you’re told and hope for the best. But the contemporary art museum is a different story. There’s no map, there’s no compass. There’s a wall covered with moss. Is that the art? Yeah, I guess it is. A pile of bee pollen--is that the art? You bet? A wall sized window that birds fly into?

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**Helpful Hints for Writer’s Block (as discussed at our January meeting)  
By Nancy Stewart**

Here are some suggestions that may help in overcoming writer’s block:

**Plan** your work using a *planning stage* (think about what you want to write), *writing stage* (begin writing after becoming familiar with the characters, plot, setting, purpose, and style), and the *delivery stage* (revise, correct errors, complete the work, distribute).

**Be consistent** in the time and place where you write, and write every day or at least on a regular basis.

**Set** deadlines and keep them.

**Work** on more than one writing project at a time and switch back and forth.

**Write** a piece at a time: start at the middle of the story and then write the beginning and end later, start with what you know well and develop the rest from there, do sections/chapters out of sequential order.

**Take** notes on life as it unfolds, jot down ideas and catchy phrases, flow chart the ideas, draw pictures, store the information in a convenient accessible location, etc.

**Try** working on writing exercises: free writing, brainstorming, word cluster.

**Listen** to music or look at photographs for inspiration.

**Leave it go:** take a break, let the work sit for a few days, do something entirely different, go for a walk, meditate, sit and think, sit and quiet the mind, etc.