

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.

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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August 2017 selection – Boredom

Coping with Boredom
By Phyllis Babbs

The street I lived on, as a child, was a mile long. But there were only 12 houses on the street and 2 of the houses were owned by folks who were only summer residents. In that huge acreage, only 3 children lived, me and 2 boys. Summers were great because the boys were not attending school but winters seemed endless.

Because we lived in an unincorporated area, we were the last on the list when it came to snowplowing. As a result, the neighbors spent the winter holidays together. From October to April, we didn't see many outsiders. So, I and all the women in the neighborhood were bored by the time April arrived. And the closer I got to attending school, the longer the days were.

I decided to end my boredom by making make a corn husk cigarette. The boys made them all the time and as I never thought of the boys as being particularly bright, I was sure I could make my own cigarette. But, as is often the case, proficiency makes a task look simple. So as I lit my cigarette, it unrolled and singed my bangs. My mother was not happy.

Then I decided to climb my uncle's tree. The branches I selected were the branches the boys were unable to climb. Because I was small for my age, I was able to climb up those willowy branches, convinced I could reach the sky. Not only, could I not reach the sky, I couldn't figure out how to get out of the tree. All I saw when I looked

down was open space. So I was forced to wait for my cousin, Jimmy, to come from school to direct my decent. My mother was not happy.

With Easter break upon us, the boys were available to play with me. We played cowboys and Indians and cops and robbers. We ended up in Jimmy's yard tired and thirsty. We drank water from the hand pump in his back yard. Sated, we stretched out on the grass and watched the clouds. One of the boys suggested we play hid and seek.

Because there were some neighbors who didn't want us on their property, we designated Jimmy's yard and my other uncle's property as the area would play hide and seek. They were adjoining properties and had the most out buildings and foliage.

Jimmy was it and Roy and I ran off to hide. I watched as Roy went to his favorite hiding place. Then I carefully and quietly went to my Uncle Albert's house and climbed into one of the rabbit hutches. After a few minutes, two thoughts hit me at the same time--I had to go to the bathroom and I couldn't get out of the rabbit hutch.

The longer I was in that contorted position, the more intense was my need to go to the bathroom. Finally I heard Jimmy. "Go call Uncle Albert! I can't get out!!!" Jimmy went to get our uncle while Roy went to my house to tattle on me. He was just such a little girl!

My uncle came and using a lever, pried the roof off the rabbit hutch. He was laughing as he helped me up and out. I had filled every square inch of that hutch.

"Babe, what would have done if I hadn't been home?" he asked.

"Peed my pants," I yelled as I ran to the outhouse.

When my mother got to my Uncle Albert's house, my Uncle was still laughing. "Albert, I swear you encourage that child!"

"Lucy, she's just a bright kid who's bored. Relax."

###

The Sealed Letter (Part 2)

By N. Stewart

I was coming back from advanced physics class and stopped to pick up my mail. A letter fell out of the box and I immediately saw the SWAK. I picked it up, slowly turned it over and saw her name on the front of the envelope. It had been some time since I had written or called or even thought about her, looking down on the letter I felt myself cringe.

“Hi there, Tommy,” came a sweet, sexy voice and placed her arm through mine and gave me a kiss on the cheek. I quickly stuffed the letter into the pocket of the jacket I was wearing and off we went to my room to study. It was several days later when I put my hand in that pocket and felt the envelope. Should I read it or ignore it? Thoughts of our time together came to mind.

That summer had been fun and filled with adventure, being a counselor at Wandering Rock Camp, nestled in the backwoods in Lower Michigan. That’s where we met. I was drawn to her the first night at the campfire. She was cute and had this gorgeous smile. We spent much of our free time together, laughing, talking and being friends, well maybe a little more than simply...friends.

I remember the required staff performances for the campers on the second Wednesday of their two week stay. We did a dance routine from “Dirty Dancing” where I was Johnny and she was Baby and then the next time we would change it up and I would be Baby decked out in a tank top and a short skirt. And (sniggering to himself) she would be Johnny with this really tight white tee shirt and awesome tight black pants. One time when she was Baby she came flying at me, attempted to jump up into my out-stretched arms, we somehow misconnected and both ended up on the floor in a tangle of arms and legs, laughing. We had the whole place hysterical with our unintended spoof. Neither of us was hurt and we occasionally built it into our routine. Sometimes she would fly at me and sometimes as Baby I would fly at her, and we would intentionally miss each other and fall down, laughing along with everyone else.

Maybe...it wouldn’t hurt to read the letter. We did have fun times. I turned it over and again saw the SWAK, sealed with a kiss that would be her and so I read.

Dear Tom,

Sorry for the intrusion on your studies but I was concerned that I havened heard from you in awhile. School has been very demanding for me, too, with graduation looming and finals just ahead. I start student teaching just after Christmas break and will be living in Peoria, Illinois. Graduation is set for May 27 at N.I.U. campus. Are you still planning on coming?

We had such a good time last summer together in Michigan. Since I haven’t heard from you for awhile I’ve been looking back at our time together and I started to wonder if it was just a summer romance or maybe a fluke that we always ended up together. We had fun times together and those moonlit kisses while hanging out in the North 40 were spectacular.

I’m not one for leaving things unsaid or leaving them hanging in limbo and if this is the end of us, I would rather know than continue to try to guess what is happening. Was I only a summer romance for you? Just be a man and tell me where you stand. Are you in or are you out? I hate to admit that I’m still hoping for our relationship and willing to work for it.

As always,

Beth

Am I in or am I out - now there is a question. I certainly had fun over the summer with her, but now that I'm back at school there are so many other girls closer at hand. I won't be graduating for another year, and need some time after that before making life-altering decisions or commitments. I'm not ready to be exclusive with anyone let alone seriously involved after merely spending a few weeks at a summer camp with her. I don't want to be tied down to a boring long distance relationship that will most likely end sooner than later. No, Beth there is no *in*. I'm out. I made no promises, no commitments to you. So long, it was fun, but whatever it was it is over.

"Ended right here, right now." The letter was thrown into the waste paper basket with the flick of the wrist. She'll figure it out soon enough, and picking up the Advanced Calc book, I left the room for a study date.

No mail has arrived from him, no call either. It's been weeks since I sent that letter to him. I think I'm finally getting it. There is no us, never was and never will be. There is no relationship to work on. Guess he couldn't man up and just call me, saying it was over, done with, finished, the end, goodbye. What a fool I am for sending that stupid letter. I just prolonged my own agony. But, what did I really expect? That after receiving the letter he'd immediately call and profess his undying love for me? To be honest, yes, I guess I did. But that is obviously not going to happen. What a fool I am.

Slowly sipping on a soda, "I lift my glass high and toast to the bitter end of a summer romance." Chalk it up to an adventure and a lesson learned. Shed no tears, my dear Beth, he is not worth another minute of your time.

###

Boredom? Not as a Senior **By Elvira K. Castillo**

Life is anything but boredom when you're a senior citizen. How can you be bored when you're constantly looking for things that disappear right before your eyes or you're busy racking your brain trying to remember names, the right word for something, or how to spell a word. Boring - NO - Frustrating - YES!

For example, let's talk about "disappearing items." I have a favorite small knife I use for slicing and cutting vegetables, bread, etc. Being my favorite, naturally it would disappear. I tore the kitchen apart looking in all the cabinets and drawers, searching under and in between things, and going through the garbage (can't tell you how many times I've done that.) After all this, I decided to look in the oven. Don't ask why? I picked up a pizza pan, which I store in the oven, and low and behold, there was the knife stuck to the bottom of the pizza pan. Now I use -- Wait, can't think of the word -- I have to go look for the product -- Ah, that's it, Reynolds Wrap -- (another bonus, forgetting) -- on the pizza pan, but always wipe the pan off before putting it back in the oven. I must have put the hot pizza pan on the counter top on top of the knife and the knife stuck to the bottom of the pan. But, why didn't the knife fall off when I wiped the pan? No, it wouldn't come off because it had to disappear and drive me crazy!

Some things have disappeared forever, but are long forgotten. Often I'll drop things, like a paper clip or the back of an earring. Wouldn't you think whatever I dropped would be close by. No way, I usually find it no where near it was dropped and a couple of days later.

Let me tell you, it's also fun and never boring working in the yard, searching and searching for a tool you just used, set down, and can't find! Speaking of things that are lost forever, I recently watched a video of my brother and sister-in-law's 50th Wedding Anniversary, where we were each given a cocktail glass trimmed in gold as a keepsake. I wondered what happen to the cocktail glass and looked in my China Cabinet (had to think what that was called), and it was not there. Again, searched through the kitchen cabinets, but GONE -- don't know where --just GONE! Another annoying disappearing item are tie twisters used to close the plastic bread bags. I've lost hundreds. Where do things go?

Enough of the disappearing subject. Now let's get to "forgetting." I live in a Georgian house with the bedrooms and bath upstairs and the washing machine, etc. downstairs. Can I tell you the thousands and thousands of time I've gone up or down the stairs not knowing what I went up or down for? It's a good thing I remember when I'm headed for the bathroom.

Now let's get to forgetting names. I forget names when trying to introduce someone and also when someone talks to me about an individual and I can't remember who they are. Also, every time I want to talk about a celebrity or movie star at home, I have to give a complete description of them to my son, so he can come up with their name. And, how about forgetting what you did or did not do? For example, did I put deodorant on? And, as I mentioned forgetting what things are called like the Reynolds Wrap and the China Cabinet. I see lots of movies, but can't remember what I've seen. Arid, not only do I forget words but spelling them is another problem. My dictionary is kept close by.

Don't know what category the following would fit, but here goes:

1. While driving, thinking a stop sign is a stop light or visa versa. Get confused about which is the light or the windshield stick.
2. Going blank on the computer, not remembering each step to get started, not saving material, or hitting something wrong and losing it all.
3. Putting the gas jet on "low" on the kitchen stove, forgetting it's on and almost burning my fingers.

I have so many more senior non-boring moments, which fortunately I can't remember, but one I'll close with is I put ketchup instead of chocolate syrup in my milk the other day. There were two squirt bottles on the counter top -- just took the wrong one.

Hope this tale wasn't too boring for you.

###

OWL By Vicki Elberfeld

The other day one of my friends, who shall be nameless, said he thought I was ridiculous for studying German — what could be more useless? — And that we really ought to have but one language for the whole world. Not surprisingly, he thought that should be English. Only one language? Oddly enough, this was the second time I'd heard this argument from someone close to me.

He claimed life would certainly be easier for some of us without having to worry about language study, interpreters, translators, and all those difficulties involved in foreign business and travel. These might be seen as pluses, but what about the minuses? Substantial minuses, no? My problem was, I hadn't really developed my arguments regarding all the losses that would ensue.

I love listening to the breathiness of Arabic, the strength of German, Russian, and other Slavic languages, the romantic caresses of French and Italian, and so much more. Not to mention English is such a mix of languages, whatever would we do without these other tongues to beg, borrow, and steal from? So many languages enrich our own, and their loss would impoverish us sadly.

And really, how on earth could one control this one, universal language? The French have to have an academy to keep foreign impurities from setting down roots among their precious words, and they have a relatively small population of speakers relative to English.

The thought of keeping English free from impurities is laughable.

I love our borrowings: Sturm und Drang from German as well as Liebchen and Gesundheit. Teens in the US quickly picked up “Voulez Vous Coucher Avec Moi Ce Soir” from the song, and I have always relished the Italian word for curses, Maledizione!

And what would it be like for anyone not allowed to use his or her mother tongue? Many speak English already but only as a second or even third language. No doubt they can express themselves more fully in their first language, and for some thoughts and emotions there will be no English equivalents for them.

And what of those who feel themselves too old to learn another language effectively? Why must they be silenced?

Language is so much a part of identity that to have one's mother tongue stamped out would be akin to the death of a soul. So, my friend's idea for a world policy of one language for all is not a good one, although it might be a good idea for a science fiction piece. Now if only I could think of a good name for the institution to disseminate and control this one world language.

I have it! OWL for One World Language.

But wait a minute here. Isn't the owl usually the symbol of wisdom?

Still, I have heard that owls are overall pretty dumb birds, and that if you want a smart one, you should pick a crow or a raven.

So apparently OWL works after all.

###

A Mandatory Meeting

By: Susan J Wilfong

I had to go to a meeting
A couple days ago
But I had so much work to do
I simply could not go.

I was told that it was mandatory
And I had to go.
"But I'm so busy".
How could they not know?

Meetings are so boring.
They're just a waste of time.
If I missed it,
Would it be a crime?

I finished my work,
The best that I could.
I packed up my paperwork
And stretched as I stood.

I headed for the meeting room
Hating each step that I took.
I peeked in the meeting room
Just to take a look.

Darn! Someone saw me!
Now I can't get out of it.
I have to put up with the boredom.
How am I to benefit?

I take my place at the table.
What else could I do?
Who sits down next to me...
That's right, it's "you know who".

Every office has a "you know who".
The gossip of the crowd.
This meeting room is filling up
And it's starting to get quite loud.

I glance up
At the clock on the wall.
Then I heard a noise
That came from out in the hall.

The room is now filled with people.
Some I have never seen.
Some look quite pleasant,
Others look downright mean.

Suddenly, it gets quiet.
The big Kahuna walks in.
"This meeting will come to order".
That's how he likes to begin.

Every eye was focused
On the boss in his grey suit.
Those standing, stood at attention
Almost ready to salute.

"You all know why you're gathered here".
"Yes sir" was their unanimous reply.
I had no idea why I was there.
I wished that I could die.

My thoughts started to wander.
Was my work not up to par?
Was I going to be fired?
I still have payments on my car!

The meeting continued
But I never heard a word.
I glanced up at the clock again
Which now, appears to be blurred.

A whole half hour had passed.
Then I felt a tap on my shoulder.
Had I been caught sleeping?
I suddenly felt a lot colder.

People were smiling
And shaking my hand.
What was going on?
I didn't understand.

Then I heard "Congratulations!"
I thought, Congratulations for what?
What have I done?
I wondered, but....

Then the big Kahuna
Stood right in front of me.
In his commanding voice,
Announced, it was my 20th Anniversary!

That was why this meeting was called
And why it was mandatory for me.
Why everyone knew why the meeting was called.
How sneaky could all these people be?

Now, I sit here thinking,
How angry I was when I was told
This meeting had been planned
And my work had to be put on hold.

I was afraid of the boredom
That meetings sometimes bring.
I thought I was being fired
And having no money to pay for things.

But this meeting
Turned out to be for me.
There was cake and food in another room
It was truly a surprise party.

And the "you know who" that sat next to me
Really wasn't so bad.
We talked together and shared some things,
And now, I consider him my comrade.

I guess, not all meetings are boring
Maybe they don't have to be.
This turned out to be quite a shock
Because it was called for me.

###

Boredom
By Pauline Bastek

“I’M SO BORED, I COULD KILL,” I DIDN’T REALIZE I HAD SPOKEN THOSE WORDS OUT LOUD, UNTIL I HEARD THIS DISEMBODIED REPLY FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CURTAIN SEPARATING OUR PEDICURE LOUNGERS,” I ONCE DID.” “OH, I’M SORRY, IT SHOULD BE, I COULD DIE, ISN’T IT.” “NO,” THE VOICE CONTINUED, I DID KILL, ONCE, BUT THAT WAS SO LONG AGO I ALMOST FORGOT UNTIL I HEARD YOU. PROBABLY NEVER WOULD HAVE SPOKEN, IF YOU HAD SAID IT CORRECTLY. STRANGE, ISN’T IT, HOW SAYING YOU COULD DIE WOULD BE ACCEPTED AS AN OLD SAYING, BUT YOU COULD KILL IS QUITE UNACCEPTABLE AND YOU IMMEDIATELY CORRECTED YOURSELF WITHOUT EVEN REMARKING ON MY COMMENT. THIS WAS GETTING STRANGER AND STRANGER AS ALICE WOULD HAVE SAID. THE VOICE CONTINUED. IT WAS AT A SCHOOL BOARD CONFERENCE, MUCH LIKE THIS ONE, EDUCATION, REAL ESTATE, PHARMA, THEY’RE ALL JUST AN EXCUSE TO BREAK THE BOREDOM AND END UP BEING EVEN MORE BORING. DIFFERENT LOCATION BUT SAME BUSINESS, SAME PEOPLE, I THINK YOU’D AGREE, IF YOU HAD BEEN ON AS MANY AS I, BUT THEN MAYBE YOU HAVE.

THE ONLY THING I WOULD AGREE AT THAT POINT WAS THAT IF THE LITTLE ASIAN PEDICURISTS DID NOT SHOW UP AND QUICKLY, I WAS GOING TO HEAVE MYSELF, WET FEET AND TOWELED HEAD TOWARD THE NEAREST EXIT. AND THEN WHAT, PARADE MYSELF THROUGH THE LOBBY ACROSS TO THE ELEVATORS. AT THAT MOMENT, THE SOUND OF HIGH PITCHED ASIAN VOICES SIGNALLED THE RETURN OF THE SMILING NAIL TECHS AS THE SPA REFERRED TO THEM AND AN END TO THIS CONVERSATION. THAT WAS NOT TO BE.

SHE CONTINUED TO DESCRIBE BEING ON AN EVENING DINNER CRUISE ON SAN FRANCISCO BAY WITH HER HUSBAND WHO HAD IMBIBED, WELL BUT NOT VERY WISELY, AND WAS REFUSING TO MOVE FROM THE RAILING OF THE TOP DECK.

I GLANCED DOWN AT THE PEDICURIST BUT SHE WAS JUST SMILING AWAY AND CHATTERING TO HER TWIN, THEY DO SO LOOK ALIKE, AND I REALIZED THAT SHE THOUGHT THIS JUST A NORMAL CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO CLIENTS THAT SHE DID NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND OR THAT APPLIED TO WHAT COLOR POLISH WE CHOSE, THAT SHE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT AS OUR SATISFACTION HAD A DIRECT BEARING ON THE SIZE OF THE TIP WE WOULD LEAVE.

WELL, AT LEAST I WASN’T BORED ANY LONGER. THINKING IT BEST TO TRY TO CHANGE THE TENOR OF THE STORY, I OFFERED AS TO HOW I

FELT SAN FRANCISCO WAS JUST TOO FOGGY. OH NO, SAID MY SPA MATE. FOGS ARE SO EXCITING, EVERYTHING SOUNDS AND FEELS AND EVEN LOOKS DIFFERENT IN A FOG. THAT'S WHAT MADE IT ALL POSSIBLE. MADE WHAT POSSIBLE? AT THIS JUNCTURE I FELT AS THOUGH I WAS THOROUGHLY EMBEDDED IN ALICE'S HOLE. WHY MY BOREDOM, OF COURSE, IT WAS SO EXCITING, HE TOOK HIS GLASSES OFF TO WIPE THEM AND I TOLD HIM TO HAND THEM OFF TO ME AND I DROPPED THEM, RIGHT OVERBOARD AND LEFT TO JOIN THE REST OF THE GUESTS DOWN BELOW. HE WAS LEGALLY BLIND WITHOUT HIS GLASSES BUT TOO VAIN TO ADMIT TO IT. AS LONG AS YOU HAD A BOARDING PASS AND A DINNER PASS, THE SHIP'S CREW FELT ITS WORK WAS DONE AND NO CHECK WAS EVER MADE WHEN YOU DISEMBARKED.

I DIDN'T EVEN HEAR THE TECH ASKING ME IF I LIKED IT, LIKE WHAT, I SAID. WHAT HAPPENED, I ASKED, DID HE GET DOWN FROM THE DECK WITHOUT HIS GLASSES IN THE FOG? OH, THEY THOUGHT HE MUST HAVE TRIED BUT THEY NEVER REALLY FOUND OUT. BUT, THOSE SEVEN YEARS WAITING FOR HIM TO BE DECLARED LEGALLY DEAD WERE SO EXCITING, NOT A BORING MOMENT. NOW, LIFE IS GETTING SO REPETITIOUS AND I JUST CAN'T DEAL WITH BOREDOM.

MISSY, MISSY ALL DRY, ALL NICE, SEE. YES, YES, OH LORD SHE WAS WAITING FOR HER TIP, DIGGING IN THE POCKET OF THE TERRY ROBE FURNISHED BY THE SPA, I HANDED HER A TWENTY, LOOKING UP AND SEEING THE WHITE TERRY CLOTHED BACK DEPARTING, I ASKED, YOU WERE JUST KIDDING WEREN'T YOU? OH, NO, I RARELY KID, I FIND IT DREADFULLY BORING, DON'T YOU? BEFORE I COULD REPLY SHE WAS OFF TO GET HER FACIAL MASK REMOVED AND THE CONDITIONING CAP TAKEN OFF AND I WAS STEERED BY MY ASIAN DOYENNE TO THE MASSAGE ROOM.

THAT EVENING I WAS SO BUSY TRYING TO FIND THAT VOICE AGAIN, THAT BORING WAS THE LAST THING ON MY MIND. WHO WOULD BELIEVE ME? HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY A VOICE? IF EVER I FEEL THE TENTACLES OF BOREDOM REACHING OUT TO ME, I JUST THINK OF THAT AFTERNOON AT THE SPA. I NOW MAKE IT A RULE TO BRING A BOOK OR MAGAZINE TO READ WHEN GETTING A PEDICURE SO I DON'T FIND MYSELF CHATTING UP STRANGERS.

THAT NIGHT WHEN TED SUGGESTED SKIPPING THE DINNER CRUISE WE WERE BOOKED FOR BECAUSE OF FOG PREDICTIONS, I HUGGED HIS ARM AND TOLD HIM I FOUND FOGS EXCITING, DIDN'T HE? YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN. HE DIDN'T REPLY, HE RARELY DOES, THAT'S WHAT SO BORING.

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