

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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October 2017 selection – Tall Tale/Tail

Totally Real
Sara Schupack

So I met the ghost of Elvis Presley. And like, you know, I'm not making this up, because I'm 22 years old, and if I was going to make up a story about meeting a famous ghost, I'd choose someone a little more contemporary and cool, like maybe Kurt Cobain or the locally famous and very cool Dave and Dave from high school. They drove off the road totally wasted their senior year and then became the obsession of our class. They never talked to me when we were in high school, so I'd definitely get cool points if their ghosts chose me as a chat buddy.

But no, it was Elvis, and he appeared in the crappy, cracked back parking lot of the Shop n Save where I linger sometimes after a random shopping trip, because I need more time away from my parents' place, where I've been staying in the basement until I get a job or decide I can handle college again.

Maybe old Pelvis chose the grocery store, because of all of those checkout counter tabloids mentioning Elvis sightings way back when. My mom thinks she's so witty when she makes reference to those, showing how highbrow she is and how funny stupid people can be.

I had heard that he got fat towards the end. That always makes me sad, when the last image of someone really famous and really great is an ugly, deteriorating one. Aging with grace is fine. Like I don't love old people, but I can see how some of them act

proud and are in good health and then die in their sleep and that's a fine way to go. Getting all puffy and addicted and out of control but in a sad, not exciting way, is pathetic. The ghost sort of flickered between the fatter version and the hotter version, but you know what's weird? I found him sexy both ways. It was like the body shape didn't matter. Those eyes, they were deep. I mean, they had such pain and caring and yearning in them, you know? And he said to me, "Tiffany?" He knew my name! Any famous person, no matter how much of a loser they've become, if they know your name, that's just way cool. So he said, "Tiffany, you must love yourself." And he reached his arms out stiffly, like maybe he wanted to just hold my shoulders or tap his wisdom into me or something soft, not scary, but he couldn't reach me or he didn't have real arms, only ghost arms, and those don't touch. He opened his mouth again and it looked like he urgently needed to share something, something special only for me, but then the shimmering turned static like the TV when it goes bad, and he was gone.

Then lousy Jimmy Burrows drove by with the music pounding, as if blasting hip hop automatically erases your adult acne and your sucky job as a plumber's assistant. I was mad at him at first, like it was his fault I lost Elvis, but then I kind of felt for him, like Elvis' message was for him too.

Did you know that Elvis had a twin brother who was dead upon arrival? I just found that out. Maybe that was the layer of sadness he carried around with him always that gave him something extra.

An'ways, I went home after that. I kind of wanted to give my mom a hug, but that would have been just too weird, so I went to my basement space and put all of my diet books in a pile to burn later. And I started another of my collage projects. Dunno what they mean or what good they do, but somehow I felt good doing them. I kind of heard Elvis laughing in the background. It was like a private laugh full of hope. I never heard or saw him again.

You don't have to believe me. What do I care? I know what's real.

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Two Tall Tales
By Carol Karvon

Haiku # 1

A dog wags its tail
A cat wraps its tail around
People tell tall tales

Haiku #2

Tell a tall tale once
Or repeat it many times
Truth will still come out

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The Pack to the Rescue **By Phyllis Babbs**

Whitey heard the pack assembling. He wasn't sure they had heard his call. He nudged Pa again and still no response. When Whitey limped out of the shadows, the pack was stunned. Some of the smaller dogs began howling. "What was happening?"

"Who would hurt Whitey?"

"Now who's our leader?"

"Listen up. Everything will be okay. But right now, I really need your help. Some punks pulled up in a car and they took my Kid. Pa tried to stop them and they hit him, he's still down. And they hurt my leg." Whitey had trouble standing and dropped to his knees. "We all need help. But the Kid needs the most help. I'm afraid of what they'll do to her." All the dogs began whining.

Skippy stood next to Whitey. "Ok! That's enough. Are you brave dogs or scaredy cats? We've got to get busy and get help." The dogs quieted down.

"Now Squeaky, I think your human is a nurse."

"Yes."

"Go home and bring her here. She can help Pa and Whitey." He looked around, "Bubba, see if you can pick up their scent. Bring Gunther and Greta with you and maybe Pete. Get moving."

The dachshund's short little legs moved in frenzy trying to get home as fast as he could. The blood hound was able to pick up the scent and the two great Danes and the pointer keep pace, moving quickly and quietly. Carl, the German Sheppard joined them, for back-up.

"Fifi," Skippy called. "Go to the house and get Ma. She needs to be here." The French Poodle went to the back door and began barking.

"Cohn," Skippy called the English Sheep dog. "Go lay down next to Pa and keep him warm."

With all assigned jobs, Skippy went next door to the Chief of Police where he started barking and barking. The Chief went outside, "Skippy, are you doing a Lassie, on me?" Skippy let out a "woof!" and started walking. The Chief took off after Skippy.

By the time they got down the hill, Pa had come to and was able to explain what had happened. The Chief took out his phone and called the station. “Dan, grab a car and get Molly in a car and come to the house next to mine. Get the EMTs out here. Oh, and get in touch with a vet—one that will make a house call. This is all ASAP.”

The Chief went over to the old man, who was being tended to by the nurse. His wife had joined him. “I swear Chief, those dogs talk. If they are involved, they’ll find Mary Alice. I’m just worried about Al.” Just then, the ambulance and police cars pulled into the driveway.

“Molly, you go to the hospital and handle things there. Dave, come with me. I hear Bubba.”

Skippy lead the police car down the road, making a left turn and then a right turn. At the end of a driveway stood Pete, doing his job---pointing. Bubba was howling like crazy.

“Okay, boy. We’re here.”

There would be no surprise entrance with all the noise Bubba was making. So the Chief opened the front door and walked in. Mary Alice was sitting calming on the couch. The great Danes and German Sheppard each had a young man pinned against a wall. The Chief went to the girl. “Honey, are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Just been waiting for you to come. How are Pa and Whitey?”

“Pa and Whitey are being taken care of.” He stopped and frowned. “You knew I was coming?”

Mary Alice looked at him. The Chief felt there was a “duh” coming. “Your dogs are here!” she said rolling her eyes.

He looked over at the dogs. He would have sworn they were laughing at him. He began making phone calls, securing the crime scene, checking on protocol. It was nearly 2 AM when he crawled into bed. For a nanosecond, he thought about waking his wife and asking her if she felt the dogs talked. But he as quickly as he had the thought, he dismissed. He would work on that question on his own. Privately, nobody would have to know. He had been accused of many things in his lifetime. He didn’t want to add crazy to the list. He closed his eyes and drifted into a restless sleep.

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A Fish Tale **By N. Stewart**

On a sunny but cool day, I set out in my rowboat to fish the shores of Lake Hattie. I threw my line in a couple of times but to no avail, and then felt that familiar pull on the line. I jerked the pole upward to hook the fish. It felt like a really big one as it took great effort to pull it up to the surface. As it rose out of the water, its huge mouth opened wide and I knew it was trouble. I quickly grabbed the knife to cut the line but it was too late. Its mouth closed and I was swallowed along with the rowboat.

I floated down a long dark tunnel. I couldn't see much of what was around me. The only light was being filtered through the skin of the fish and had an eerie greenish glow. I tried to calm myself and look for a way to get out of this perilous situation. My knife wasn't long enough to cut my way out, so I would have to wait for a different opportunity to escape.

Some time later, and while still inside the fish body, I came to a harbor and my rowboat, not in my control was drawn into one of the piers along the harbor. The boat abruptly stopped at a ladder and I cautiously climbed the wooden steps. As my eyes were level with the dock, I could see a small quaint village with lit vintage lamp posts along the shore line. Houses, store fronts, a church, and a tavern could be seen beyond. The sun was rising behind the village and the night shadows were disappearing. The village was coming to life as I watched.

I climbed on the deck of the pier and saw that it ended at the base of a bridge. I would need to cross it before going into the village. As I approached, there sat what looked like my dog Jenny from a long, long time ago, wagging her tail, waiting. As I neared the bridge, a rainbow appeared. Jenny, speaking English welcomed me. "Come join me, I am indeed your Jenny and I am your personal guide."

We entered the village together. Jenny explained I would see many old friends and relatives and have a chance to speak with them about the journey I had unknowingly undertaken. There was neighbor Betty, my Aunt Ruth, my Mom and my Dad, and others that I haven't seen for many years. I spoke at some length with each one and an unexplainable peace settled over me. Jenny took me over to where the Kids, Misty and Nik, were standing. Misty licked my hand and Nik sniffed my leg, meowed in greeting and then like days gone by walked away.

After the visits, Jenny brought me to a robed counselor. "How did you find things," he asked. I was overwhelmed with all that I had seen and with all those I had met and spoken with again. I was unable to answer his question and could only stammer. He went on to say the choice was mine whether to stay in this grace-filled village or to return. Jenny sat at my side and I rubbed her ears. It felt so good to be with those I loved and so fondly remembered. Was the time right for me to stay here or was there more for me to do elsewhere? I looked into Jenny's dark eyes and I could see my answer reflected back. It wasn't time. I had to go back, but I knew I would return to this special place

some day. "I choose to go back," I finally answered. "So be it. Off you go then. You will remember none of this encounter," he said as he kissed my forehead.

Jenny led me to the dock. I climbed down the steps of the pier and got into the rowboat. I wanted Jenny to come with me, but she said, "No, it was not possible, but she would see me again." Without any help from me, the boat started the journey up the long body of the fish. I suddenly felt very sleepy as the rowboat gently rocked back and forth.

"Darn it," I said out loud, "If my line hadn't broken just when it surfaced, I would have caught that monster of a fish." I fixed the broken line, baited the hook, and then threw it into the water. The sun shined down upon me as I sat in the rowboat, waiting for the next fish to bite.

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The Tale of Joe
By Susan J Wilfong

This is the tale of Joe
He met friends wherever he'd go.
Joe didn't work
But Joe was no jerk.
That's something his friends didn't know.

He had sixteen wives
They all had complicated lives.
And all of his kids
Ran around like squids
But somehow each one of them survives.

Joe would set out each day
He would hunt and he'd play
He'd bring home some food
To feed his whole brood
And then he would run away.

You see, Joe was a Lemur
And yes, quite a schemer
With his tall tail of rings
He could do many things
But most of all Joe was a dreamer.

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