

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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January 2018 selection – Commercial

The Gift Horse
By Sharon Uzarewicz

It could have been a commercial for heaven.

As we approached Galena, the terrain began to soften and flat roads eased into small hills. The hills gained in confidence and grew steadily steeper, puffed with pride at what lay on the other side.

Breathtaking was an insult. Each rise that we conquered presented a vista that gut punched you with the power of natural beauty. I'd read somewhere that the glaciers missed this area when they flattened most of Illinois. Perhaps God was leaving himself a memo.

We'd come to this place with purpose. A quest of sorts. Retirement was a mere year away. A glaring signpost of a reminder that life had reached the final quarter. A wake-up call to the hopes of someday.

I'd come to see a horse.

My sister had gifted me a weekend in Galena to meet with a breeder of Norwegian Fjords, a breed I'd stumbled upon in researching suitable horses for people who wanted

to re-connect and live to tell about it. An ancient breed, sturdy, reliable, affectionate, they sounded too good to be true. We wanted to see for ourselves.

In the silence of post dawn early, the car's tires crunched loudly as we pulled up and parked on the gravel incline before the barn. We approached the fence like intruders despite the fact that the visit was pre-arranged. It felt like trespassing to go any farther than the inside of the fence. However, there was no one around, the barn was mere feet away and I so wanted to see these creatures of myth.

From our vantage point we could see into the dim aisle of the barn. Suddenly a horse peered over the half door of its stall and looked directly at us.

Inquisitive, curious, calm and regal, the softness of his large brown eyes seemed to take our measure as he snorted an invitation to join him. I'd been around horses before but never a creature like this. He snorted again, pawed his bedding and waited to see if we would come. There was a gentle strength in those eyes, a kindness, and I knew with certainty that if I were ever brave enough to travel down this road again, I had found my traveling companion.

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The Boy Choir **By N. Stewart**

(Tap, tap, tap) "Stop, stop, stop! Johnny, you sound like a run away train. You are ahead of everyone else. Slow it down. All of you watch my baton and it will provide the tempo. And, what are you smirking at Tommy? You are dragging your wagon and a little behind. Boys! Stop laughing and stop being silly. Pay attention. All of you are to start each word at the same time and not make it sound like one giant slur. Let's try again."

"S-s-i-lent night, H-o-ly night. Allll is calm, all is bbbright."

"That's a little better. But all of you need to watch the baton. I will give you a count of 3 since we are in 3/4 time to get ready to sing. Watch me. On 1 I'll bring my arm down, representing the downbeat, on 2 my arm goes across to my right, and on 3 the arm goes up again. Then on the next downbeat you will start, saying "Si," sliding the syllable and off we go. Now, let's give it a try. Shall we?"

"S-s-i-lent night, H-o-ly night. All is calm, all is bright."

"Good, keep going. Don't forget to breathe."

"Round yon Virgin Mother and Child. Ho-ly In-fant so tender and mild.

"Catch a breath. Watch the baton"

"Sleep in heav-en-ly peac-e. Sle-ep in heav-en-ly peace.

“Now hold that last note and watch me so that we all end at the same time. Two, three and, stop. Your families are going to be so proud of all of you at the Christmas concert. Let’s do it once more and then we will take a break and have some cookies. One, two, three begin.”

*Silent night, Holy night,
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

“That was wonderful. Give yourselves a hand. Let’s take our break now and have some goodies.

###

Commercials, Commercials, Commercials **By Elvira K. Castillo**

Commercials, Commercials, Commercials
Oh, please don’t bring the subject up!
My eyes and ears can’t take much
More of today’s, shall I describe as the,
E xplicit and *G raphic* ones on TV.
Remember the “Good Old Days” with only one per show?
Come, let’s look at our commercials on TV now:
Icky looking trolls with running noses,
And, close ups of bladder control panties, love handles and thighs shown on barely
covered ugly torsos, the worse bags under the eyes I’ve ever seen, and
Let’s not forget the constant reminder of belly fat by loss of weight - *Bye, bye Belly Fat!*
Sales of humongous mounds of foods, skin and body products, pain relievers, fast cars,
etc. are pushed into your face so grossly that I’d like to push back, but I’d break
the TV.

Take me back to “Old Time Radio” when Don Wilson wove “*Jell-O*” into the conversation on the Jack Benny show and “Waxy” a.k.a. Harlow Wilcox did the same for “*Johnson’s Wax*” on the Fibber McGee and Molly Show!

###

The Commercial Success of the Bronte Sisters **By Dennis P. Johnson**

My wife and I watched a Masterpiece Theatre presentation called “To Walk Invisible” It was the story of the Bronte sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne. I was moved by it. Their personal struggles, the times that they lived in, and their personal sorrows. It covers the period when the sisters wrote their poems and novels. “Jane Eyre” by Charlotte, “Wuthering Heights” by Emily, and the “Tenant of Wildfell Hall” by Anne.

What interested me was the commercial success of their novels and poems which occurred for a short time during their brief lives, but much more after that and down through the decades. As far as I know the Bronte sisters’ success has no heirs. None of them had children and their father Patrick died at the age of 84 having outlived all of his six children, Charlotte being the last one to pass away. I have to admit that this subject rather depressed me. It was a time when lives were short. People died of things back then that are just about unheard of today. Women were looked down at as far as the social and economic ladders were concerned. They had no property rights, excepting the ruling class and royalty in England. It was the period of the Industrial Revolution; a successful but a cruel time as well as the greedy became richer at the expense of the poor and working classes.

What impressed me about the Bronte’s is how they persevered in spite of the roadblocks that were in front of them. They published their novels and poems under male aliases. Charlotte was “Currer Bell.” Emily was “Ellis Bell.” And Anne was “Acton Bell.” But, their publishers always suspected that their novels and poems were written by at least one woman. It was Charlotte and Anne who traveled to London to their publishers and set the record straight that all three sisters were indeed the authors of these literary works. Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights met with great success, but the Tenant of Wildfell Hall as well as Anne’s other efforts had a more modest reception. Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights were made into full length films and theatrical stage productions. The parsonage in Haworth where the girls grew up and lived has become a place of pilgrimage for those of the literary interest and it has a notable museum.

Three literary geniuses from one family and the commercial success that succeeded them in the decades that followed is a rare thing in this world. © 2018 Dennis P. Johnson

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Essay on Commercial **By Edward Von Scheffler**

Many TV commercials are laughable Bordering on the ridiculous. Take this ad soliciting the TRUMPY BEAR at \$19.95 with the American flag tucked inside his pouch. As the proud owner is a Motor Cycle hood, taking TRUMPY BEAR for a spin on his bike.

Then there is this...illustration to sell Fireworks on the 4 of July, portraying we Americans as Fanatics with bulging eyes. All the while the children in CHINA are assembling explosives in the basement of their schools. As the Imperial Capitalist are laughing at us - all the way to the bank.

*Toys and Trinkets no doubt.
All for the name of tradition
4th of July*

For it is Rumi who said:

Sell cleverness and buy astonishment

In that the reason of wonderment compliments our curiosity.

Yet the necessity into practical matters take dominance

Said by the great American scholar, Alfred Otto Allison

*“Commercial values rest in a mutual interest.
Where the benefits of exchange in giving and
in receiving are indistinguishable.”*

With for some a delight to browse on Amazon or retail shops.

The commercials appear mind controlling: Let the buyer beware to choices and to what offers be given.

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Commercials are Commercial By Pauline Bastek

My eight year old granddaughter loved to watch old commercials on YouTube and would ask me to tell her what commercials I liked when I was her age.

Doublemint gum, remember the twins singing “Double your pleasure, Double your fun with Double Good Doublemint gum.” Later on, Hamm’s beer, a truly awful beer, had that wonderful, “From the land of sky blue waters” jungle. Who could forget Snap, Crackle and Pop of Rice Krispies? And, Oscar Meyer wieners had us all hoping to see the famous “Weinermobile.”

Their primary purpose was to sell the product enjoyable, painlessly. Entertaining us into opening our checkbook. This they did.

A few years back the TV series “Mad Men” captured Emmy after Emmy showing us how Madison Avenue advertising created our life style brainwashing, some called it, but it was very selective. When did it change?

I truly believe that the DVR which allowed us to record show and skip over the commercials, allowed advertisers to bring Viagra, Laxatives, pharmaceuticals of every ilk into our homes so that adults could not longer use the commercial break to get the beer or

hot dog, or cereal and enjoy it while watching their show, instead forced them to fast forward the DVR, so that they did not lose their appetites over constipation details, or their tempers while trying to explain the reason for Viagra to an eight year old.

How do you explain Oprah extolling the benefits of weight watchers to a young girl while she became the world's wealthiest woman while overweight by weight watchers standards. You freeze the picture and say, it's a commercial. Commercials are selling tools. This proves it and the eight year old says, "But it's Oprah."

All Wrigley wanted you to do was to buy a package of gum, and Oscar Meyer, a hot dog and we knew it and our parents could enjoy their Hamm's while watching the Cubs.

I can't watch the evening news while munching a snack without skipping a commercial. Sure to ruin what the news anchor (hasn't already ruined) by broadcasting the latest tweet from our fearless leader. What ever happened to FDR's famous Fireside Chats that created a cushion of safety during our nation's perilous forties?

They've been replaced by commercials from big Pharma, urging us to ask our family medical practitioner to prescribe the most recent and, of course, most costly pill so that we can frolic through life as the silver foxes and vixens on their commercials do. We only need the money for them and their lifestyle will be ours. AlkaSeltzer, BromoSelzer, where have you gone?

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