

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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May 2019 selection – Disaster

Disaster Strikes on the Road
By N. Stewart

I waved goodbye to my weekend company early on Sunday morning. Straightened up the house and packed for home. I packed the clothes, food and the puppy and lugged all but the puppy out to the car, putting all in the trunk. Turned off the water and electric power in the house. Checked the gas stove, leashed the puppy and headed for the car.

I drove the 75 miles up without a problem on Friday and also drove to Big Foot Restaurant for a fish fry dinner that same night. That Sunday when I pushed the keyless start button all I saw was an orange engine light sign and it, the car's engine, wouldn't turn over. I hate cars when mechanical things start to happen to them and probably trade in cars too soon with very little mileage because of it. I feel insecure, inadequate and unprepared when mechanical issues begin to surface on my car. Fortunately, I was not on the tollway when my car decided to act up. Cadillac has driver assistance and I consider myself lucky that I was in my own driveway, not sitting beside the road watching cars pass by at 70 m.p.h. or better with Molly barking at each passing car. I called and was advised a technician would come out and see what was wrong. Hopefully, it would be an easy thing to fix and I would not involve towing the car to

the dealer. With nothing but waiting time on my hands, I decided it best to stay overnight and not drive home even if the car was fixed as I didn't know how long all would take or what would be required.

I reversed the procedure I had just done. I unpacked the trunk, dragged the suitcase and food back into the house, unleashed Molly who wasn't sure what was going on and turned the water, gas and electric back on. And, waited.

Of course, the fix would not be quick. After all it was Sunday and the dealer closed. The tech came, I handed him my keys, and he started up my car on the first try. The little engine light came on and all the rest did as well. The engine that wouldn't start for me purred for him. "Now, tell me again what you did when you couldn't start your car?" He said. I explained my routine for starting – foot on the brake, push the button and the engine would turnover. I explained that it started and stopped several times before I finally was able to keep it going and that I drove about a mile close to home. I was beginning to feel sheepish and a bit stupid, relating my tale of woe to the stoic mechanic. Can't fix what isn't broken. He could do nothing for me. He did suggest bringing the car into the dealer the next day when they were open to have the battery and the computer checked out. Since I am not a risk-taking type person, leaving it to chance without the blessings of the mechanic, I agreed to come in at 8 a.m. the next day.

After several hours my curiosity got to me and I wanted to see if I dreamed all this up in my head, so I went to the car, put my foot on the brake and pushed the button. It started right up. Son of a gun! Decision made earlier, it was too late to re-pack, re-load, and head out.

The alarm didn't go off in the morning but Molly was hungry and whined until I woke up. The hour quickly moved toward time to leave. I took my book, purse, credit card and headed to the car. I put my foot on the brake and reached for the starter button. Same thing happened - nothing but the appearance of the little picture of the engine. Come on! I again pushed the button and held it and miraculously the car started. But the glove box opened on its own, the parking assist tried to park the already parked car, the traction turned itself off/on off/on, and various other lights on the dash flashed and danced. Finally settling, a dash display said I needed to check the keyless starter system and the car continued to run. I became very brave at that point put the car in drive and headed for the dealer.

The dealer couldn't have been better, nicer, more serviceable, taking the car immediately and returning quickly with the results. I needed a new battery and the low voltage caused all the computerized flashing and dancing on the dash and also wouldn't let me start the car. They would have me on my way in about an hour.

Molly was waiting at home. Once there, I packed the car again and turned off the water and electric power again, re-checked the windows and the gas stove, and once more locked the front door. Molly hopped in the front seat and sat down, ready for an uneventful ride back to Illinois. Two hours later we arrived home safely and without further disaster.

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Disaster
By Carol Karvon

My first instinct as I walked into the kitchen was one of panic. It looked like a disaster had struck every surface. Dirty dishes and debris, even something red that appeared to be a smear of blood on the floor, crowded most of the kitchen surfaces.

I started yelling for my husband and kids — asking if they were okay. I was sure a burglar had broken into the house and ransacked every cabinet and shelf. And, maybe even hurt someone. Even the dog, Fluffy, our not so dainty 150 lb. bull mastiff, didn't come running to greet me as she usually did. Something very strange indeed was going on here. Then the thought occurred, do burglars stop to eat and leave a pile of dirty dishes? Not likely!

I realized the truth of the situation. They, my beloved family had left the kitchen in a horrible condition. What had they done in here while I was gone? I had taken a last-minute emergency trip to see my mom. She fell and broke a couple of bones and was hospitalized near her home in Minneapolis. I was able to visit her in the hospital and then stay with her at home for a few days. Once I was certain she was on the mend, I took the first plane home. I was in a good mood and feeling hopeful about mom's healing as I came in the door. That all changed the minute I arrived home. All the warmth and longing for my family soon turned into irritation. My good feeling evaporated at the ugly sight I was looking at. Something I'd probably have to clean up. Oh, they were going to hear about this whenever they showed up.

I called out for them again, "Okay, John, Becky, Melinda, David, where are you? I know you must all be here somewhere. I saw your cars in the driveway when the cab dropped me off from the airport. It's Saturday so I know there's no job or school to hide behind. Come out, come out, wherever you are." I had really wanted to surprise all of them, but the surprise was on me! How disappointing; no one here to greet me; not even my faithful companion, dear old Fluffy. Still no response. Maybe I misread the situation and there really wasn't anyone here; maybe some terrible disaster actually did happen. Come to think of it, my husband's car was not in its usual spot on the driveway. Maybe Mary, our next-door neighbor, knew where my family was. Before I could walk next door to talk with Mary, the front door flew open and my family burst through it bringing noise into the quiet room. They were all talking at one time; each getting louder and louder to be heard above the din. That wasn't working. The resultant chatter just created more confusion.

"Okay, can someone tell me what is going on here, one at a time please. I was so looking forward to seeing everyone when I got home and there was no one here and the kitchen looks like a disaster area that should be condemned. I assume you all have an explanation. And, by the way, in case you're interested, Grandma is doing well and sends her love to all of you. Now, Talk!

My husband, usually being the calm one started to explain, "Honey, we didn't expect you home so soon and were planning to get all this mess taken care of before you saw it. I'm happy your mom is okay. We had our own emergency here. The kids had some friends in for pizza last

night and with them going in and out the door constantly, Fluffy followed behind someone and her tail got caught in the doorjamb and it started bleeding. That's her blood on the floor. I wiped up most of it, but guess I missed that spot. Anyway, we couldn't stop the bleeding and she was in terrible pain so we took her to the emergency pet hospital. They cauterized the gash in her tail and bandaged it, but since it was late, kept her overnight for observation. We just left everything in the kitchen and rushed out to get Fluffy this morning. By the time all the paperwork was taken care of we just got home now. Sorry you had to see the kitchen looking like this. Don't worry about it, me and my accomplices will fix things. You won't even have to lift a finger. Leave it to us. We really missed you. Welcome home, sweetie."

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Harmony
By KS Van Ormer

Mostly, my days are sunny,
Life seems such a gift.
My loved ones are well and happy,
Only the odd one or two adrift.

The sun brings the wildlife in the morning,
Going about their daily tasks,
And darkness comes in the evening,
Cloaking the world in dusky masks.

It's a pity that we aren't more aware,
As the good days flow so much faster,
Of the darkness that's bound to present,
In the news of some troubling disaster.

To live in the present is affirming
That we have all that we need to be alive,
Accepting satisfaction in all that we have,
Knowing it's more than enough for us to survive.

For when the pendulum swings against us,
And tragedies occur,
We need to have a store of satisfaction,
To which we can refer.

A reminder that life is a balance,
And forces must necessarily shift,
That change is the only constant,
And it's up to each of us to uplift.

To be a human in this world
Can be a revolutionary act.
To be mindful of the delicate symmetry of life,
Is the challenge with greatest impact.