

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 2019 selection – Anger/Angry

Angry Lizzie
By Carol Karvon

Lizzie stomped into the kitchen and startled mom who was peeling potatoes at the counter.

Lizzie took off her new shoes and flung them into a corner.

"Stupid shoes," was all she said.

It was the first day of school and she was in 3rd grade.

"Lizzie, you seem really angry, did something happen at school to upset you?"

"Stupid school. They all laughed at my new shoes — even my supposed-to-be best friend, Janie. I tried to tell them these were special dancing shoes, but they still laughed. I'm never going to school again. And, I'm never talking to Janie again! So there!"

"I guess that means you're not going to Janie's party on Saturday. What a shame, all your friends will be there," said mom.

"Okay, Lizzie, I know you are mad right now and your feelings are hurt, and maybe you're right to be angry, but you'll have to go back to school tomorrow, even if you don't want to go to the party. Now, tell me what happened, okay?"

"Well, mommy, when I got to school after Janie's mom dropped us off, I showed Janie my new shoes and she said they were "baby shoes." She said her doll at home has shoes just like them, with the strap across the top. She even said they have a name. She called them "Mary Janes" or something like that.

I tried to tell her they were my special dancing shoes and the strap was to keep them on my feet, so they didn't fall off when I was dancing.

She told all the other kids that I was a baby and had to wear shoes that wouldn't fall off my feet. Then they all laughed at me and called me 'baby'. I'm never going back to school. And Janie is not my best friend anymore."

"Well I'm sorry you had such a bad day and that you're angry. Maybe I'll call Janie's mom and talk to her. You know she will be driving you to school again tomorrow. It's her turn all week. I'll drive you and Janie next week."

"Please, mom, don't call her. I'm just never going to talk to Janie again. And, if I have to go to school tomorrow, I'm not talking to anyone else either, ever again."

Lizzie's mom thought Lizzie was calming down now that she had expressed her anger and was heard. She had an idea.

"Lizzie, since your anger have given you so much energy, why don't you change your clothes, then go outside and run around in the yard. And take Squabbles (AKA — the dog) with you. You could throw her ball around and let her bring it to you. That way, you'll both get some exercise."

"Aw, mom, that's not fair, that's what you always say," pouted Lizzie.

"Well, if you don't want to go outside, here's a few more ideas. How about helping me peel potatoes for dinner. After that, if you still have energy, your bedroom needs straightening up; the bathroom needs cleaning. Should I go on. I can think of a dozen things to use up all that negative angry energy."

Lizzie took a minute to think things over and finally, said "Okay, okay, I'll change and take Squabbles outside."

Mom breathed a sigh of relief, another world-shaking crisis averted! She knew Lizzie would be back to her smiling little girl when she came back into the house. Ah, never a dull moment.

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Random Thoughts on Anger
By Val Collins

An emotion among many that we all experience as human beings is anger. The causes are varied with each person having specific reasons that set off this fiery reaction. Anger can range from subtle to intense and indeed it can even be useful and necessary at times, for instance as for a constructive intent. However, I believe anger, although a very normal human emotion and experienced by everyone in the course of a lifetime is for the most part a negative state of being. Well at least it is for me. There are those who seem to always be in a state of anger to some degree or another and indeed some seem to thrive on it. It appears to be part of their very make-up. I try hard not to let anger take over and rule my actions but on occasion it will. When that happens, I am very uncomfortable, very remorseful and these feelings sit with me for a long time. I review the situation that led to the anger and try to determine how it all could have been avoided and what my part was in the whole thing. Certain people tend to set off angry feelings in others by their words and actions and by the way they approach things. For them it seems to be a natural gift so to speak. Then again what is anger inducing to one may not be to another. It's mostly all individually personal.

There certainly are things to be reasonably angry about. For me one thing would be injustices. In these situations, anger can spur on actions to make changes or at least to raise awareness. If handled properly anger may be a driving force for good. Perhaps we can look at this emotion twofold... as healthy anger and unhealthy anger. It behooves us to know the difference.

As children we don't have the abundance of self-control we do as adults. Hopefully with maturity and emotional growth comes the ability to tamp down angry feelings and view situations with more reason and level-headedness. This is always the goal. But then there are those who have a quick temper and likewise are quick to anger. They must work hard to establish and maintain even control. I'm sure this is a great challenge for them but certainly one worthy of taking on.

I know much wisdom has been penned by the sages of the ages and I'm sure it would be prudent to seek out this wisdom. As for me I will always attempt to keep anger at bay and let peace, tranquility and serenity set the scene.

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Mike's Gift
By Dennis P. Johnson

The retreat was on for this German division and the only way was through little Marsette, a town untouched by the war and for the citizens of this hamlet it would hopefully remain that way. But, it didn't seem that that would be the case after what happened to Falace and Mortain not that far west of them.

Many of Marsette's citizens had fled to the countryside to avoid the bombing and shelling they expected as the retreating Germans were approaching their town. But, some remained. These

Germans were a remnant of a Waffen SS division that had been blasted into almost oblivion by British and American dive bombers.

They were in disarray, beaten up, unshaven, in their camouflaged garb, with parts of weeds and tree branches attached to their helmets. As their infantry caught rides on their Panther tanks, halftracks and Stugs, they kept their eyes fixed on the buildings that surrounded them, looking for potential snipers. But these French wanted no part of that or this war for that matter. Marsette had known peace up until this point. And the German commander surprisingly told the town leaders they wanted no trouble. They wanted to get through there as quickly as possible. That meant no reprisals, no placing of land mines or booby traps for advancing American troops who were advancing on them and were not that far away.

The towns people in hiding, some in wine cellars, others in remote underground accommodations listened attentively as the armor passed slowly and the sounds of boots and horse drawn wagons moved even slower through their little hamlet. They expected the fireworks to start but they heard no aircraft and no artillery. And before long but not soon enough the sound of tank tracks and engines, wagons, and marching soldiers were in the distance. The Bosch had passed through without a shot. At least they thought this was the case.

Lieutenant Forbes and his platoon had advanced to the outskirts of Marsette. Forbes gathered his men and gave direction for their next move. "Dempsey, you take the point again." was Forbes charge, Mike started to get angry as he thought about how many times he had been in this situation before. As he checked the clips for the Browning Automatic Rifle, he wondered again if this was going to be his last day on earth. Maybe some Kraut sniper, or a land mine or something else was going to do him in.

"Forbes really likes you, Mike." was Fortini's comical response. "Hey, Dempsey can smell Krauts. Maybe it's the limburger cheese or beer or something else." was Davis' addition. Of the two point men, Mike Dempsey was obviously the better. He had kept the company out of tough scrapes before. And again, he was scared out of his mind, or just about.

Marsette was a typical French hamlet with a town square or rather a circle. The platoon had made it to where the town started and to the main road, a narrow one, which was usually the case. The second building was a deserted bakery. The entrance was unlocked. Mike told the other guys to back away. Fortini grabbed a floral wagon that was in the front of the building. He shoved it right into the door and ducked for cover. The door opened all the way. No explosion. Mike exchanged the BAR for Davis' MI and the trio made their way to the back of the bakery as the other men in the platoon surrounded the building and looked for cover. They came upon a set of stairs that led downward to a cellar. Mike said to himself 'I don't want to go down these stairs' as fear gripped him which was usually the case. One step at a time, slowly, his finger just about glued to the trigger of the carbine.

And then he heard whispers and another voice. That other voice was crying. He grabbed his flashlight out of one of his pockets and shined it into a corner with his carbine directed at the same. There were two girls, one with her arms wrapped around the other and both very afraid. "Americans, mademoiselles!" Mike yelled out to them.

The town slowly filled in with more Americans as they moved quickly from house to house, knocking doors open with their boots and their rifle butts. And finding nothing as Sherman tanks started to advance from their rear. Dempsey, Fortini, and Davis emerged from the cellar with the two girls. They saw Lt. Forbes approaching. "No Krauts in this building, sir," was Mike's

remark. "There are no Germans anywhere around here. The mayor said that they moved through here very quickly with many of their wounded aboard their vehicles and armor and in their wagons. This must be one of the remnants that got shellacked at Falace," Forbes explained. "And the mademoiselles, Dempsey? "They were hiding. They thought we were Krauts." was Mike's reply. "Division has told us to stop and hold for a few days. These Germans aren't coming back. This bunch were shot to pieces. They're going to be hiding somewhere." was Forbes addition. The companies and platoons set up machine guns and mortars at strategic places at Marsette's east entrances. Nightfall was soon falling. Forbes left. Mike turned to the girls and introduced himself, handing them chocolate bars. In her broken English Genevieve shyly responded and introduced her sister Marie, who could speak no English at all. Mike went to his pocket again and grabbed his French dictionary. The two teenage girls cautiously smiled at him. Eighteen year old Genevieve would take the lead, her younger sister mostly listening. In a slowly methodical way, Mike learned why they were in the cellar and how the Germans were suddenly upon little Marsette and there was nowhere to hide. Genevieve spoke of her brother who was captured in 1940 when France fell and was now a forced laborer for the Germans. Mike shared his story with her as well with his broken French to fill in with his English. He was part of the 2nd wave that came ashore at Utah Beach on DDay. He was from Indiana and he was drafted in early 1943 and had been England from late 1943 up until D-Day. But, he didn't talk about all the combat that he was in up until Marsette. Marie said something in French and Genevieve blushed. Genevieve lowered her eyes and grinned. Mike smiled back at her not sure what was said. He hoped it was something nice and he thought it was by the way she looked at him.

The girls were not very nicely dressed. Their clothing was somewhat thread-bare, the result of four years of deprivation or at least short supply of most things. The occupiers had entered their town in 1940 and had told them who was the boss and that boss happened to be Vichy and for all intents and purposes Hitler.

But Mike didn't mind the tattered dresses and lack of make-up. He saw two beautiful girls and one at this point was a young woman, Genevieve Toussaint. But, the real fact was at this point they were the only girls in the world.

Their parents invited Mike, Fortini, and Davis back to the bakery for some bread they were making with meager supply. And the Toussaints surprised them with some very good wine that was hidden in the Cellar. Better to have Americans enjoying it than the Germans. Lt. Forbes entered the bakery and told them that guard duty on the east end of Marsette was their calling for the night.

Darkness had descended as Dempsey, Fortini, and Davis settled into their freshly dug foxhole. Their shifts would start as sleep could not escape any one of them. Lack of sleep being their worst enemy. Cold and lack of water being the other two, but this was still summer. Fortini and Davis dosed off as Dempsey had the 1st watch. He constantly scanned east as he looked for any movement that would dispel Forbes statement that these Germans weren't coming back. But from the rear he could hear a rustling movement. He grabbed Davis' carbine and yelled "Halt!" And out from the bushes emerged Genevieve with a little bag of bread and what was left of a bottle of wine. The two other soldiers had awakened. "It's OK. It's one of the girls from the town." he assured them. "Genevieve, what the hell are you doing here?" Mike asked in amazement. "Michael, I am not afraid of you and I come to show you" as she handed the bread and the bottle to him. "You don't belong here. If the Krauts come back, you will be in the middle of this!" "Krauts?" was her confused reply. "All right, Bosch. Now go home!" he yelled at her.

But, he really didn't want her to go. She was the first thing in a long time that didn't say WAR. And when they touched as they exchanged chocolate and bread, she said woman without saying a word. The strong truth was he was glad to see her with her blue beret and tattered shawl over her long brown hair. She finally left and went home before her parents suspected anything. Marie knew where she went, but didn't say anything. She liked Corporal Dempsey herself, but at fifteen years old, she was a little too young for a 21 year old soldier.

The next day Lt. Forbes confronted Mike concerning Genevieve. "Dempsey, you know what they told us back in England about girls in France, right? Some of them are collaborators and others are outright spies and if the Free French get their hands on them, they will shoot them without a trial." But, Mike knew in his heart that she was no spy or collaborator. "I believe she is OK, sir, but you are right," was his reply. But who was really going to care about a warning like this when things looked genuine and maybe felt genuine, he thought. And besides, Mike really didn't like Forbes anyway. He was getting most of the dirty work from him ever since their sergeant was killed by a sniper a few weeks before.

The time had come to move on. Orders from division. Soldiers were packing up. Dempsey, Fortini, and Davis would try to hitch a ride on a Sherman. Better than marching. Berlin was still a long way away. Genevieve came to say goodbye. "Genevieve, it's been great to know you." He gave her an invasion mark with his signature on it and a couple of packs of Camels for her father. She gave him the cross from her rosary and promised to pray for him. "Michael, please come back. I will be here." she said in French. She kissed him on the cheek. He let go of her hand and climbed on to the tank with the Browning Automatic Rifle and waved goodbye as the Sherman moved forward and eastbound. Mike could make no promises of any kind.

The End (© Dennis P. Johnson Oct. 2019)

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I am Not Angry By N. Stewart

What an angry world we live in. Everyone is in competition to be the loudest, cheekiest, and most obnoxious person in order to get what they personally want or, in some cases, to get what they personally need to survive. That was me, too. Angry, clawing my way through life, but I'm not angry any longer. I spent too many days and nights, months and years in angst, wishing for more than I was given. I was never happy, never satisfied. Always thought I deserved more than I got. Yet, now that I am older, I realize the enormous reality of what I was given over my lifetime. Maybe not what I expected or demanded it should be, but it has certainly afforded me a good and comfortable life.

I am not angry that my life is different than I expected it to be. I believe it is exactly where it's supposed to be. Every step along the way brought me here to this very spot today. Things happen for whatever reason. I may never know the why or the what. They just happened and I handle that now without jumping to anger.

I am not angry that I am old and no longer young. I have had good times, good memories, and a boat load of experiences over the years that have shaped who I am. I look around and I see other people some younger, some older and then look at myself in the mirror and think I look younger and healthier than many my age. It's all about attitude. Isn't it? With age comes wisdom, and patience, and tolerance...perhaps letting go of anger comes with aging also.

I am not angry that I never married or that I never had children. I would have liked to have been a mom and I think I would have made a good one, but it was never to be. I can still share special love with the people I connect with and with my furry, four-legged friends.

I am not angry at life because no matter what happens it has been a good ride even with the unplanned ups and downs of a topsy-turvy world. I'm much the stronger because of it. I have learned to be independent, to take care of myself physically, mentally, and financially.

I am not angry and I am thankful that I remain relatively healthy. I can walk blocks at a time without using any aid or being assisted. My hands and fingers work so I can cut up my own food and bring it to my mouth without assistance. Others may shake uncontrollably from Parkinson's disease and some like my mother having dementia are unable to recognize the child's face she bore.

I look into the faces of friends and family and I recognize their faces, know them, and remember them. My hands when outstretched remain steady. I tell my mind to do crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, read books and it follows my instructions. I tell it to raise my right hand and it does. I tell it to get up and walk and it does unlike the minds of some stroke victims that only wish they could be so blessed.

I am not angry at the world or at me anymore, but once I was angry at both. I see that it is so much better to let anger go and to be free of it as anger serves no useful, helpful or beneficial purpose. When I let it, anger raged at me and from inside me, too. If it had continued to feaster within me, it would have eventually ripped me apart. Hence, I say stay gone anger I want no more of you.

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Anger becomes Danger

By Pauline Bastek

Nice girls do not get angry. Nice girls smile and speak pleasantly. Why do we still tell girls to be polite, to diffuse awkward situations by showing a calm demeanor.

Put the letter D in front of anger and what do you get, danger.

We don't tell boys to smile and speak pleasantly when confronted with bullying. We applaud them for standing up in situations warranting a display of anger. In the New Testament, Jesus gives us the best example of righteous anger when He throws out the money changers from the temple they were defiling. I haven't been able to find an example of a woman in the New Testament using anger appropriately.

The Old Testament is a different story. Look at Judith, holding up the head of Holfornes, dripping blood, in one hand while the other hand is waving the bloody sword. I loved that renaissance painting, not a popular subject but it's very relevant in this day of the "Me, Too" movement. Girls are still not saying no in angry voices in situation calling for anger

They still feel they should hand over their cell phones and purses to attackers who then are released on \$100 bonds by judges to go on to bigger crimes. This just happened this past week, not in the ghetto, but in Lincoln Park.

Also, this past week, teenagers from the inner city, in the early morning hours, attempted to steal a car parked in the driveway of a North Suburban gated community. They were confronted by the 73-year-old male homeowner who had been woken by their headlights. They were quite open about their intentions. When he angrily confronted them, they continued to advance holding what might have been a weapon. He discharged his weapon, which he was legally in possession of, and a 14-year-old is now dead. He showed that there is danger when confronting righteous anger.

Were they thinking that the Lincoln Park thief was released at a cost of only \$100 bond, less than what he would have received when he sold the cell phone. So, why not go ahead with their plans to burglarize wealthy homeowners. This homeowner's anger turned into danger for them and a life is gone.

The girl, who was robbed in Lincoln Park could have just as easily been killed when she was attacked, others have been, if bystanders had not come to her aid. Or, the attacker could have been shot if she had shown anger and been armed.

We are showing our anger and there is danger in confronting us. The letter D is now in front of anger.

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