

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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November 2020 selection – Doubt

**A Harvest Festival Adventure
By Mark Moe**

In the land of Ohfun, the mostly female adventuring party was once again having to clean up after their hapless, impulsive, male member, Louie the Magician. While exploring another ruined castle up in the northern part of Ohfun, he managed to attract every enemy lurking in the area. "He went charging in using his fists instead of his magic again! Honestly, I do not know why he bothered to learn a mass paralysis spell. He had time to cast it, but decided to beat the Hobgoblins with his fists! This is totally against my will!" declared Melissa anxiously.

Genie the six foot-two, muscular fighter, who wields a bastard sword, looked over at her long, blonde-haired priestess of Mylee friend with concern. Louie the Magician came into her and her friends lives out of necessity to have a magic wielder to unlock magically sealed doors. Then he was chosen to be the Divine Champion by the War god, Mylee. Now Melissa, Merrill and Genie were permanently stuck with the brash Louie. Genie and Melissa were waiting at a local outdoor eatery for their tiny, flat-chested thief, Merrill and the long, blue-haired Louie.

When Merrill and Louie arrived, Melissa had calmed down considerably and was eager to discuss the new plan to raid the castle ruins that their group had previously attempted. Louie seemed distant and was not paying attention to the details. Melissa and the girls noticed immediately because, Louie was usually too excited to go on another adventure. "Louie, what is wrong? You are normally so ready to run off," stated Melissa.

Louie looked back at his team and said, “I was just thinking of the time before the Master Mage had adopted me and when I was in foster care. I just realized that I and the other kids never got to celebrate the Harvest Festival that Ohfun has each year. This is still true for all the other orphans today.”

Merrill practically fell out of her seat with shock and yelled at Louie, “What do you think we are running a charity organization here? No way! You want to help orphans celebrate the Harvest Festival, you do it on your own time!”

Melissa looked over at her brown-haired, little thief friend and replied, “Hold on Merrill, I am bound to follow my Divine Champion Louie, by my god Mylee. Let us hear what Louie proposes. Not everything can be about treasure and fame.” Merrill continued to grumble momentarily but eventually became silent.

Louie began to give the details of his idea to include the children from the orphanage in the upcoming Harvest Festival. Genie found herself surprised that Louie could be so compelling in his explanation and she knew that Melissa would follow him without hesitation. The only holdout would be Merrill, the greedy miser of a thief. There was little **“doubt”** that Merrill would be convinced unless she could receive substantial compensation for her forced generosity.

“Alright Louie, I will help you set up a hearty meal for your orphaned friends, but if anyone asks, you will give the credit of this generous venture to me. I could use the good reputation to further some of my other endeavors,” stated Merrill.

“Are you always such a money-hungry thief, Merrill? Fine you get all the glory and credit as long as the orphans get to enjoy the Harvest Festival,” replied Louie

“You still owe me for sending my darling jar into a natural hot spring geyser!” yelled Merrill.

“You will never let that go. I said I was sorry. Remember it was you who woke me up in the middle of the night to help you rebury your “darling jar” in a new location. The fact that it ended up in a hot spring geyser was totally an accident,” replied Louie.

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Filled with Doubt By N. Stewart

Where is this going? Who knows? I have my doubts that it is ever going to turn into something to read let alone be worth reading. Locked down these many months and staying within my four walls does not allow for being creative. At least it doesn't for me. I write stories about observations in life as I see them. With nothing coming to mind about the selected word “doubt” that I could use, I turned to the Internet to define the word and perhaps get another perspective of the meaning of the word. I looked for quotations on doubt to see what others thought. Zilch. Nada.

I brought up a blank screen and typed whatever doubtful garbage unearthed itself in my mind. And, I came up with nothing, nothing, not a freakin' idea. No story images come to mind: no words I'd written on the screen triggered any potential story plots in my head. Now, time is running short as the deadline approaches, and I'm forced to sit at the keyboard until something, anything with the word “doubt” magically appears. Is this it? Is this all I've got?

Why is the word doubt so difficult to incorporate into a story? Because I don't know “doubt” or I have never dealt with “doubt.” No, not that. Because I doubt everything in the world

now and can't pick just one topic. No, not that either. Because I'm filled with it and it overwhelms me. Perhaps, that is closer to the truth.

When I observe real life in the real world somewhere outside my four walls, I see and hear real people doing various real activities. I feel the real emotion that is given off by real people in real surroundings. A spark of an idea is lit in my mind from watching, it expands into images, and a story begins to write itself. It is slow developing at first, made more difficult by the transfer of thought to paper or screen, but it happens. When the pace slows or I get stuck, I walk away and let it settle a bit, allowing for the creation of further images to come into my mind. Then, coming back refreshed, I reread and edit out the words and sentences that no longer fit the direction of the story and also get rid of the cute, "oh, I'm so clever" author phrases that fall flat when read by an audience. The story evolves until it completes itself. But not today. Still nothing. Can't even get started. Doubt will remain without its story. I'm afraid.

Wait, something is happening. An idea... a man is standing before a fountain. In my mind, he stands there with a little child (a boy or a girl) of 6 or so next to him. They are both peering in a store window at what seems to be frozen water, cascading down the edges of the fountain. I see it, too. It's a wintery outdoor scene with ice skaters on a pond, kids with hats, scarf, and mittens throwing snowballs from behind their forts, and the picturesque fountain. It's a Marshal Field's Christmas window that we're all looking into. The man and child move over to the next window and we see inside a living room where a Christmas tree stands with presents scattered under it and a little red wagon. The child's face is red from the cold and his breath frosts the window pane. Joy lights up in the child's bright eyes as he sees the little red wagon, pointing it out to the man. The man's face saddens as he looks down upon the child. He knows he cannot afford the little red wagon and doesn't want to disappoint the child.

And so, the story will continue, but it is no longer about doubt, but instead twists into a Christmas time tale of fantasy. Doubt is out of luck, too late, and its story remains undiscovered, unwritten, and untold except where it exists somewhere in the inaccessible contours of my brain.

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Happy Birthday Senior **By Theresa Choske**

The walk-through of the new Eisenhower Library being erected at Wilson & Oketo, was set for the first Monday in December. Anyone from the Pen & Ink writing group that had an interest in touring the new facility, were to meet at the old Eisenhower Library on Olcott Avenue around three in the afternoon. While waiting for other folks to show up, I decided to sit down in one of the two chairs situated under the bulletin board in the entrance lobby of the library. These particular chairs seemed to me to be lower down than usual. I'll put it this way, it may have been my imagination but, it felt like I was closer to the ground than I thought I should be.

Sitting to my left, in the same type chair, was Esther Rappaport. She looked very erect and serene in her seat than I did in mine. Although we were in similar chairs, she didn't seem to be as uncomfortably seated as I was. Turning to talk to her, I mentioned I felt so low down that I may never be able to get up out of the chair without a great deal of effort. Esther, who is always so much more dignified than I am and, is so wonderfully optimistic and cheerful about every

situation in life, simply replied that if I had any trouble getting up out of the chair, she could lend a helping hand and, would be glad to assist me.

In case I forgot to mention, besides being cheerful, kind, optimistic and dignified, Esther is also a sincere woman in every way. I took her at her word and, knew she was serious about helping me to lift my bones from this down-to-the-ground chair. She went on to explain it would not be a problem for her and would be up to the challenge if, and when the need arose. She told me she's in good shape and, never lets a day go by that she doesn't do her exercises. She said it's routine for her to do twenty sit-ups, push-ups and, had recently added a new exercise where she gets down on the floor on all fours and, stretches out her left hand and right leg, while balancing herself on the alternate hand and leg. Sounds kind of tricky to me but, took her at her word and, I was more than impressed with her prowess. In fact, I was downright astonished. I know for sure if I got down on all fours, I would have to order a crane to pick me up and set me back on my feet. I can honestly say, I know people one-quarter her age who could never discipline themselves enough to do any kind of daily exercise. I happen to be one of those undisciplined people who shun exercise at all cost. I admire Esther for the way she's up for a challenge and never lets life defeat her. In my book, Esther is not only a terrific woman but, she is also a wonder. She could teach more than a few people a lesson or two. Through the years, she has learned how to stay active, healthy and independent.

She is one of the quieter members of our small Pen & Ink writing group and, has been a member since its inception more than nine years ago. She is the listener of the group. She is also a keen observer and listens attentively to what others have to say. She doesn't say very much but, then again, she probably doesn't get too much of a chance to voice her opinion at these meetings because, there is a lot of exchanges going on between some other members of this mostly social but, always creative writing group.

Finally, the assemble of touring people were all set to go – we were ready to survey the new building. Esther had no trouble whatsoever getting up out of her chair but, I figured that would happen, thanks to her daily regiment of 'running-in-place', 'leg curls', and 'cruncher' exercises. Even with her personalized hard hat in hand, it was no impediment and, she bounced right up. She was raring to get started. I myself, tried to pop up out of my seat, just like she did but, I struggled a little and, to get me started, I had to hold on to the arms of this chair. Finally, I did manage to hoist myself up out of my lowdown position, thinking all the while about what kind of exercise I could put into place to be more limber.

Some of the group decided to walk instead of driving the few blocks over to Oketo Avenue. I asked Esther if she would rather take the car but, she said she didn't mind walking and, off we went, arm in arm on Wilson Avenue. Since it was a dry but breezy day, Nancy and Elvira also decided to walk and, with a head start, sprinted on ahead of us.

It was a good thing for me that I was holding on to Esther's arm, otherwise, I could not have kept up with her. The uneven sidewalks, the unpaved parking lot or the construction barriers leading to the library did not deter her confident stride and, she out-stepped me all the way. I started out thinking I was walking her but, she put a halt to that, as it was, she that was walking me instead. I learned a lot about Esther Rappaport when I decided to go on the Monday afternoon tour of the 'still under construction' Eisenhower Public Library at 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights, Illinois. I know I am a far better person now for knowing Esther.

It's St. Patrick's Day today and, Esther is celebrating her 90th birthday. She looks way younger than her 90 years. She's tall and straight, like Lady Liberty. I'm sure she's holding some secret away from us. She probably has a Harley-Davidson motorbike hidden away in her

garage and, when she isn't busy going to some community meeting, she's haring around the neighborhood on this motorbike. She could also be a testimonial for the fitness guru, Jack LaLanne. I think Jack himself is a shade older than Esther. His website claims he is 90 plus but, the honest to God truth is that both Jack and Esther look like they are just a tad over 50 years old. They obviously have found the 'aging-well' secrets and, it shows.

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By Ed Scheffler

George Bernard Shaw, the famous playwright addresses an audience with these words:

“I don't doubt your ability to learn,
I doubt my ability to teach.”

George Bernard grew up with a stammer and of little self-confidence. With many of his plots centered on dysfunctional relationships, Overcoming his own doubts with the modesty of openness and honest confrontation.

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Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire (Part 3)

By Carol Karvon

Seemed someone “spilled the beans”.

Lionel was called into the alderman's office the first thing Monday morning. He had no idea why. Never a good thing.

The alderman asked Lionel if he were happy working in his office and, if so, why was he asking so many questions about local elections and who was qualified to run for office. The Alderman told Lionel he was having doubts about allowing him any further involvement in the running of the aldermanic office because he was beginning to view him as a political rival. There were many confidential matters that he had shared with Lionel and was now questioning his own judgement in letting him continue in his current role.

Seems rumors were flying about Lionel having lofty ambitions regarding a future in politics, to begin by challenging the alderman in the next election. Of course, the Alderman said, Lionel had to start somewhere and he'd heard Lionel was very interested in winning a place on the local school board. Was the rumor true, the boss demanded. Was he eventually going after the Alderman's position? Was the school board the springboard he needed to catapult him into the political arena and come after the aldermanic position?

Lionel was aghast! However, he couldn't allow anyone to see his feelings about this and stayed calm. He would not give anyone the satisfaction of knowing how close to the facts they'd come. Lucky guess, he wanted to think. But, in his mind he knew otherwise. How could anyone have guessed his intentions? The only person he could think of who might have something to do with the rumor was his friend on the school board whom he had asked for advice.

Lionel decided from now on he would trust no one. He would not ask anyone's advice in the future. Doubt now crept into his mind about even running for the school board, especially

since the Alderman had questioned him about his intentions. He hadn't even really checked into it. For all he knew you might need to actually have children in school to qualify.

All Lionel had always had going for him was a supreme confidence in himself. That was changing and self-doubts were surfacing. Did he really have a chance in any election? Did he want to confront his boss, his so-called friend, the rumors, and on and on, it went in his head. His thoughts were crowded with different scenarios, but he discarded all except one. He wanted power. He saw politics as the way to achieve his dream. He would banish his self-doubts and start the hard work of making his name and presence known to the general public, even if he had to kiss a lot of babies to do it.

First, he had to have a man-to-man talk with his friend on the school board and ask him if he confided Lionel's plans to anyone. He had trusted him, but didn't remember asking his friend not to mention their conversation to anyone else. He didn't think he had to caution him about gossip and how it could hurt Lionel's chances. But maybe it was for the best that this was out in the open now. He didn't have to pretend that he had no interest in politics anymore. He could openly make contacts and ask questions.

With all these things to think about, his doubt in himself slowly vanished and was replaced by his old confidence. He could do anything he set his mind to. Once again, he decided, he alone, knew what was best for him and put all his doubts aside. He would begin his plan and would win. Lionel was back!

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