

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. Contact Nancy at nestewart@ameritech.net to zoom with us during COVID restrictions.

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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July 2021 selection – View

Mountain View, Wyoming

We arrived near Mountain View in the early evening. The stagecoach stopped at the station on top of a hill and Mr. Barker (as I called him then) helped me out of the stagecoach. The view of the little town, the surrounding area and the mountain was breathtaking. I had never seen anything so stark, so barren and at the same time so beautiful. I lived in the city with Mama and Papa and my sister Agnes and there were many stores, several churches, many places to visit and activities to do. As I looked down on the town, I saw a general store, a hotel with café and saloon, one building had a cross, and a few scattered houses; nothing like where I lived in the city. But the beauty of the rolling hills and the snow-covered mountain top left no comparison to the crowded, dirty city landscape. I drew in a deep breath and I knew instantly I was meant to live here.

We walked into town and everyone greeted Mr. Barker, Tom, and smiled at me. We stopped at a white house with a picket fence that was covered in a blanket of red roses. A lady stood on the porch and waved us over. It was Tom's sister's house where I would be staying until the wedding. She hugged Tom and introduced herself to me. "Everything is ready for you," she said. "Come on inside and meet my family. My husband, Ben, my oldest son John, Susie, and little Jeffery. We are so glad to meet you. Ben and the boys will fetch your things from the stagecoach station. You'll be staying with us."

The next few weeks were a whirlwind, meeting the town folk, arranging for the wedding, and visiting the ranch where I would be living with my husband. I was not one to be shy but I was overwhelmed with the wedding activities and overly concerned about my decision to come out here to marry someone I didn't know. In truth, I didn't know any of these people and I was so far, far away from home. I was lonely and longed for the comfort of my family that I had left behind.

Tom is kind to me and offered to buy whatever I wanted or needed to start our life together as husband and wife. It was several months ago when I asked for a diary to write my thoughts and early this morning, he gave me this book. It is the most beautiful leather-bound book that I have ever seen and my name, Annabelle Simons Barker, is printed in gold on the front cover. I've spent most of the afternoon on my front porch, capturing the beginning of my story as a mail order bride in it.

The wedding day came and his sister, Annie, was the Matron of Honor since my own sister, Agnes lives so far away. I had brought my wedding dress with me and red roses from Annie's garden became my bouquet. Tiny white flowers were woven into my hair. The town folk came at the assigned hour and walked me to the church. The service was simple, exchanging vows. What meaningful words could I say when I hardly knew the person? I was pledging myself until death do us part to this man that I meet for the first time a mere few days ago. Prior to that, we had only exchanged a few brief letters. What could I possibly vow to this man or vow to our ever-lasting future?

It was after the ceremony that all changed. Tom helped me up on the buckboard and we headed to our home as husband and wife. When we arrived, there were tables filled with wild flowers, meat cooking on the spit, dishes of food everywhere and town folk, family, ranchers and neighbors, waiting for us. As we approached, the crowd began yelling, clapping, and stamping their feet in recognition of our marriage.

The fiddlers struck a chord and all quieted. Tom stood and introduced me as his wife, Mrs. Thomas Barker, and another round of stamping and yelling took place. Then he took my hand, helped me down from the wagon, and led me into the circle of guests where together we thanked everyone for coming, and the party began. The music started up again and the men lined up on one side and the ladies on the other for an old-fashioned country reel. We danced, we ate, we laughed, and fires were lit as darkness fell. It was very late when everyone left and Tom and I were alone. We turned, walking toward the house and for the first time as husband and wife we entered our home.

Tomorrow's another day and there is more to my story but for now I will have to put this diary away and fix supper. Tom will be hungry after tending to the cattle all day, and I find myself looking forward to being with him.

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The Origin of Escanor the Lion Sin Pride

By Mark Moe

Three thousand years ago during the last Holy War between the Goddess race and the Demons, one of the four Archangels, Mael died at the hands of the Demon race. His magical power “Sunlight” was lost to all recorded history. Fast forward to the present and a scrawny, red-haired boy was born with this power. His parents named him, Escanor.

As Escanor grew he remained scrawny and sickly and his parents could not figure out why. They had no knowledge of the magical ability that he was born with and Escanor had accepted the fact that he would always be weak. When he reached the age of sixteen, his power manifested itself. He remembered it vividly, because he was trapped in an almost daily beating by the same group of older boys. Again, he was used to this and believed it was his lot in life since he was weak. The beating started right before noon. As noon hit, the Sun’s rays fell upon Escanor and he felt his entire body transformed. He grew a foot and half taller. His previously scrawny frame became solid muscle to the point of being ridiculous. In fact, he ripped out of his white shirt and his emerald green pants ripped into shorts. He looked like someone from the giant race, although he was still human. The blows from his opponents had previously left him feeling weak, sore and torn up all at the same time. Now as they struck him, he could hear their fists and feet breaking from hitting the equivalent of a stone castle wall.

As he raised his face to stare at them, he saw pure terror on all their faces. Escanor could feel the Sun’s energy coalescing inside of him and demanding a release. Somehow, he intuitively knew how destructive using this magical power could be and though he wanted revenge for all the beatings he received at their hands, he could not punish everyone else for his newfound rage. Escanor raised his head back as far as he could and gave into the power coursing through him. A fiery, golden blast of magical solar energy shot into the sky heading toward the upper atmosphere. The blast could be seen miles away from their small village.

The boys scrambled away in pure terror as quickly as they could considering their broken hands and feet. The ones that were closest to him found themselves singed and severely burned from the blast as well. After that day, he never had to worry about another beating from them, but the rest of the village had become weary of his presence. It was not long after that Escanor was driven out by most of the villagers.

He spent a couple of years contracting himself out as a human plow to several farmers throughout the countryside of Britannia. He was able to plow two dozen acres all before noon. Everywhere he went, he was able to help multiple farming communities go from struggling to prosperity. He also used his “Sunlight” power to help the plants grow, but he had to use caution because, it could easily create gigantic craters in the ground with the destructive power of a large meteor.

As the Demon race started to attack humans again, the country of Britannia was dragged back into the Holy War this time without the assistance of the Goddess race. A call came forth from the kingdom of Liones to seek out any individuals born with inherent magical abilities to become the new generation of Holy Knights to combat the threat of the Demon race. Escanor gave up his farming venture to train as a Holy Knight. He had trained a few years as an Apprentice Holy Knight and quickly was promoted to the rank of Diamond Holy Knight.

It was then that he met this short, messy, blonde-haired, young-looking man named, Meliodas. He was the captain of the King's Guard and an extremely powerful warrior with an equally devastating magical power called, "Full Counter." At the request of King Bartra Liones, Meliodas created an elite division of the King's Guard made up of seven different people and he called them, the Seven Deadly Sins. He invited Escanor to join this elite group of knights and he accepted the honor with much pride.

To mark them as one of the Sins, each one has a tattoo of their particular animal which represents their Sin. Diane of the Giant race bears the symbol of the Serpent Sin of Envy, Ban an immortal human bears the symbol of the Fox Sin of Greed, King of the Faerie race bears the Bear Sin of Sloth, Gowther a human-sized doll has the symbol of the Goat Sin of Lust, Merlin a female human wizard bears the symbol of the Boar Sin of Gluttony, Meliodas of the Demon race bears the symbol of the Dragon Sin of Wrath and their final member, Escanor bears the symbol of the Lion Sin of Pride. Each of the Sins was also given a sacred magical treasure to enhance their magical abilities. Escanor was given the sacred treasure Rita, an enchanted one-handed battle axe that acts like a focusing crystal to store more of the Sun's energy and help him release devastating magical attacks on his enemies.

Prior to gaining sacred treasure Rita, Escanor worried too much about releasing the full extent of his "Sunlight" power. He feared he would destroy himself and all of the Holy Knights serving in Leonis. Meliodas helped Escanor put it into perspective by saying, "Escanor, you have always taken great pride in your training. As such, King Bartra and I bestow on you the Lion Sin of Pride and the sacred treasure Rita which was named for a maiden adorned by the sun. May it help you see "**view**" of how much we need your strength to end this Holy War."

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A Story of the Four Cousins

By Megan Moe

There once lived four cousins on a floating cloud house. They had an awesome "**view**" because they could see everything from there. The first cousin was Mal with purple hair and green eyes. Evie the next oldest has blue hair with piercing blue eyes. The next youngest cousin, Jay has brown hair and pink eyes. The youngest cousin, Carlos has unusually white hair and brown eyes.

They can jump from cloud to cloud to get back to Earth. The four of them are kept trapped up there most of the time because they are being punished. They are only allowed to leave once a month under supervision to bring up more supplies for their cloud home. The reason for their restrictive freedom was the result of deliberate sabotage of an NBA game involving the Phoenix Suns and the Los Angeles Lakers. In particular, the four of them made the Basketball court unplayable because of a large amount of super slick oil that they applied to both the court and all the balls in the two teams' ball racks. After that the head cloud spirit watched their actions more closely as if he were a hawk.

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Drive With a View

By Carol Karvon

Several years ago, we embarked on a spontaneous driving adventure. Our final destination was to be Montana to visit a daughter who was living there.

Being retired we could drive at a leisurely pace and include side trips whenever we wanted. We planned to drive a maximum of 500 miles each day and then stop overnight at an inn or hotel. The next day was kept free of long-distance driving so we could spend the time being tourists on a sightseeing mission. We wanted to view as many of the sites in that area as possible in one day before continuing on our journey the following morning.

Before leaving home, being in an even further adventurous mode, we decided we would not make any definite reservations. We would take our chances that lodging options would be available along our route. Our Triple A membership included requesting and receiving maps, routing (if desired), and invaluable guidebooks. They would even make reservations for us, if we were in a strange city and didn't know where to go. Discounts are included with memberships and are available for many things including room rates at most places.

On a trip to Toronto many years ago we had car problems and CAA (Canadian Auto Association) advised us of reputable repair shops in the area. In Vancouver, BC, CAA made motel reservations for us after we cancelled the place we had reserved online. It had proven to be undesirable and not at all as it seemed in the online pictures. We lost a full room rate for the first night of our reservation for two rooms – an oversight on our part for failing to read their cancellation policy. A costly, but valuable lesson learned. It was a relief to learn that Triple A had reciprocal agreements with CAA.

A few days into our trip, we were driving through South Dakota headed to Rapid City, when we spotted a small road sign stating it was a Badlands Bypass. Had we blinked, we'd have missed it and the chance to view one of the most unusual places we'd ever seen. Visiting the Badlands seemed like going to outer space. It was like nowhere we'd ever been and like nothing we'd ever seen before. We could have been on another planet, that's how unusual it looked to us. It was surreal and we almost missed it!

We continued on our journey and found our way to the Mount Rushmore Monument. At first all we could see was the parking lot. The monument was not visible to us at all. Then there was a walkway through an array of state flags and probably a visitor's center. Suddenly we looked up and there was the monument. I actually think I heard a collective gasp from the people seeing the magnificent edifice for the first time. The view was incredible and the memory of our first sighting is embedded in my brain. It came as a surprise because we never caught sight of the monument until that moment.

The four former presidents on the monument were enormous and the carvings looked very white. We walked as close as we could get and stood there in awe with the rest of the crowd. It was a sight that I've never forgotten. I always thought we'd get back there some day, but it never happened. But then once you've seen that spectacular view, you'll never forget it.

This was only the first leg of our adventure with many more interesting places to see and things to do.

I immediately fell head over heels in love with Montana and would travel back there in a minute if I got another opportunity.

I understood why my daughter loved it so much. I truly know in my heart why Montana is called “Big Sky Country”. Beside the beauty of the landscape, everything is giant size.

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Walking Through My Hallway By Vicki Elberfeld

I know. I know. Walking through my own living room hallway doesn't sound terribly exciting, does it? But bear with me. We are, hopefully, in the final stages of a worldwide pandemic and shutdown, and so you have to appreciate that I haven't been out much beyond grocery shopping, picking up prescriptions, and occasionally visiting my brother and sharing carryout food. I am such a wild woman!

But I've been gathering with a small group of writers virtually through a group called Shut Up and Write! My problem is that I often show up with no ideas to get my writing started, and today was one such day. I managed to look up Shut Up and Write's home page where I found July's challenge to write about the senses. Today, Wednesday, July 14, we had to write about the sense of touch. We were to walk through a space and describe the sensations on our bodies. I chose my carpeted living room hallway, and to make it more interesting, I walked it barefoot with my eyes closed.

But before I even began my little journey, I couldn't help recalling a kind of Buddhist walk I undertook outdoors, decades ago, with a group of writers on retreat at the Clearing in Door County, Wisconsin. Of course, walking in a group was much different from walking by myself, as we developed a kind of group rhythm, all going at roughly the same pace and even synchronizing our steps, maintaining approximately the same distance between each other, front and back. If we stepped out so far we became too close to the person in front of us, we'd compensate on the next step by holding ourselves back a bit. Of course, for safety's sake we kept our eyes open and were rewarded by our views of wildflowers along with the beautiful tall trees found in Wisconsin's north woods.

My living room hallway doesn't present me with any such spectacular views of nature or even any comrades, so I saw no real reason to keep my eyes open. Of course, I checked out the floor first to be sure there'd be nothing to trip me on my special walk. I wanted my brief journey to be exciting, but not too exciting. What really gave me a sense of security was discovering that if I held up my arms, bent at the elbows with my elbows pressed into my side, my fingertips could graze the walls, keeping me oriented and balanced.

I loved the feel of the soft carpet on the soles of my feet, and the comfort of being able to press my fingertips into the walls whenever I felt the least bit unsteady. Recalling the meditative walk we employed on our retreat, I moved much like the tortoise in Aesop's fable who raced the hare and won with his slow but steady persistence. I just surrendered myself to the movement feeling very relaxed and ever so graceful. I continued the walk around the corner of the hall and partway into the bathroom. As soon as I felt the sink, I knew the bathtub was but inches away, and so suddenly stopped. However, would I explain tumbling into a bathtub without water?

I went back and forth a few more rounds. Walking so very, very slowly soon fatigued me, and balance became ever more of a challenge such that instead of fingertips, I balled my hands into fists, my knuckles pressing into the walls doing their part and more to keep me upright. I soon discovered however that pressing my right fist into the wall while my left palm pressed in on the other side was ideal for my balance. Corners were most challenging, and when I grew tired I rested my hip and shoulder into the jutting out corner to my right while removing my left hand from the wall altogether. My strides gradually became more consistent in length, and I found it typically took me twenty steps from the beginning of the hallway to halfway through the bathroom.

I don't know if this will become a regular practice for me, but I certainly hope so. It is rare for me to get both exercise and relaxation simultaneously. With sight removed, my tactile senses become so much more acute. My fingers feel the frames of the pictures on the wall and farther along the quilted square of soft satin made by a friend. Passing by, my hands often feel the roughness of the blowgun made from palm stems Mom brought back with her from the Amazon, and this triggers beautiful memories of a trip we took decades ago in search of Machu Picchu in Peru in addition to a species of shiny blue moth. A little farther down my palm grazes the pins marking all the places my family visited on the world map Mother hung on our wall decades ago. My feet feel caressed by the soft carpet in contrast with the cold bathroom tiles at the end of my journey. This is the sort of exercise I can indulge in immediately before bed. All I need to do is open my eyes as I leave the bathroom, turn slightly to the right to enter my room, climb into bed, and, continuing my slow breathing, within a very few minutes I will be fast asleep.

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Views
By Edward Scheffler

**“Tis distance lends enchantment to the view”
by Thomas Campbell**

It was a different world back then. For I would hitch a ride on my cousin’s tractor. As he sprayed the fields with a most sickening scent called D.D.T. After which we fed the hogs a mush composition called “Swill.” Then cleaning the barn from the refuse of wet straw and knee-deep manure. While the grain silo offered an infestation for breeding rats. We set traps, but nothing seemed to reduce their numbers. At six each morning then again, every evening my cousin who at the age of twelve would milk thirty head of Holsteins. While swarms of rancid flies would float on the unpasteurized milk, we skimmed them off and then drank it.

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A placid paradise with farms nestled amongst fields of alfalfa, corn, and clover. Where puffs of creamy clouds would settle motionless. Casting spotted shadows upon the terrain below. Where at dusk countless millions of fireflies display flickering flashes of radiancy seen from afar. While the warmth of summer nites reveal the heavens in all its splendor. Celestial domes of luminous shimmering stars. Dressed as diamonds in all its brilliancy. So close that you may feel you can reach out and touch them. And here for the first time I viewed the Milky Way Belt, stretching out in a diagonal path. As falling stars streak silently across the moonless sky.

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A view of the sublime:
Half in the envisage of transcendency,
Half in our dreams

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