

**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](mailto:nestewart@ameritech.net) to zoom with us during COVID restrictions.

**Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group**  
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**March Word Selection – Zoom/zoom**

**Zoom**

**By Pauline Bastek**

Before the pandemic began two years ago, whoever heard of Zoom? Sure, we heard the word used as a verb and we may have heard of the children's book "Zoom City," and on occasion we heard of business meetings being conducted with the Zoom app. But in the last two years, Zoom has become an everyday part of our lives. We hate it, we depend upon it and yes, many of us grew to love it.

Not me, but much to my shock I found members of a writing group I belong to that owed its survival in great part, to being able to continue on Zoom, when offered a choice of in-person meetings this April or the option of continuing on Zoom, noted their preference to be Zoom.

I could not believe it and called a close friend in the group to commiserate. She told me she definitely would prefer Zoom in winter rather than driving in snow and rain. She's survived Chicago winters for over 70 years and now she prefers hibernation to in person socialization. I'm still stunned.

When one of my sons who is a CPS teacher expressed his preference for continuation of Zoom and used safety as his reason, I admit I lost it. I told both him and my friend that they just didn't want to make the effort to get up and get dressed. Sad to say, they agreed that it was no small part in making their choice. Also, it eliminated the necessity for pleasantries that is a required part of in-person meetings.

I thought back to when I started working in a business office. Our stature was determined by having a private office. Then came the era of open space plans, where we were practically forced to rub elbows. Well, COVID took care of that through Zoom.

We don't even have to look at the other participants, if we don't choose. Great, we don't have to phone each other anymore, we can just text. We don't have to write letters, just send an e-mail, and we don't need to get dressed to go out to eat, just order home delivery or go out in our sweats to pick up and have a server deliver to our car in the designated parking spot.

Zoom, will allow us to work and study from the comfort and safety of our caves. Instead of bringing us together as a temporary solution in this pandemic, Zoom is allowing us to remain apart.

It worries me, does it worry you?

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### **Slap-style bass guitar**

**By J. Smetana**

As far as I know a ZOOM is a lens movement and a dolly is a camera movement. "Wavelength" is a slow zoom across a lofty room. Maybe Mr Snow decided to zoom and not dolly 'cause there was lots of trash on the floor.

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### **Zoom's Peppy Cousin**

**By Carol Karvon**

Zoomba, what is it?  
Exercise, fun, or dancing?  
All of these, I think!

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### **A Fairy's Journey to Chicago**

**By Mark Moe**

Last year the leprechaun Miles O'Brien left the Emerald Isle to experience the American version of St. Patrick's Day in Chicago. He became the talk of all the leprechauns throughout all of Ireland. His fame even reached the fairies who live in the county of Sligo in Knocknashee. One fairy in particular, Brigit was most enamored with the exploits of Miles O'Brien. She was named Brigit in honor of Brigit of the Flame because of her fiery, long, curly red hair. "Oh, how great it would be to go on a similar adventure outside of living in this hill and being constantly groomed to take my mother's place as the new Queen of the Fairies," she thought.

As much as she wanted to remain in her reverie, Brigit's mother Diana, called out to her to come down from her room and was expecting her in the Grand Hall by the throne room. The magic associated with being the Queen allowed her mother to project her voice to any and all the

fairies living in Knocknashee and all over the Emerald Isle regardless of distance. It was a power utilized by previous queens during times of war and conflict. Now her mother uses it as a means to keep her daughter on top of her never-ending schedule. She quickly picked up mint green and silver crown and placed it on her head. She opened her wings to her full extension and started to fly off her soft, comfy bed towards the sound of her mother's voice. Fairies usually choose to fly more often than not, but Brigit enjoys the feel of the ground beneath her transparent, lace-padded slippers just not when she was running late. She knew when she arrived, she would have to brush the wrinkles out of her light mint-colored dress. It was one of the hazards of flying, but protocol required her to take the time before she presented herself to the queen as flawless as she could.

Her mother the Queen was the only one allowed to wear the darkest and most vibrant emerald green. The crown she wore was inlaid with gold, emeralds and intricate designs of four-leaf clovers in silver. Unlike Brigit, Queen Diana had strawberry-blonde, long straight hair. They shared the same delicate nose and small mouth. She looked irritated with Brigit's rushed entrance. She believed a princess should always be early. Being on time was considered late for royalty. She had to look up to her daughter because Brigit towered over most female fairies and a fair amount of the guys as well. Although her mother named her in honor of Brigit of the Flame, she could not help but wonder if she was indeed a reincarnation of the Fairy goddess herself. History reported her to be the tallest of the fairies and her daughter was certainly living up to it. She knew that Brigit would love to **"zoom"** away to visit America much like that crazy leprechaun, Miles O'Brien. Fortunately, no fairy could fly that far in a short amount of time.

"I hope she doesn't discover that Hawthorn trees can act as a means to teleport anywhere in the world. She knows that fairies can change themselves to a human form and lose their wings as a way to camouflage themselves. If I can keep her occupied with all that she needs to learn, just maybe she will forget about the rest of the amazing planet she lives on and choose to focus on her people. She might hate me for it, but I am sure she will understand eventually," Diana thought to herself.

After several hours of practicing speeches, Brigit finally had freedom to relax and fly around the Irish countryside enjoying seeing the green fields. She always flew outside without wearing her crown so that she could be treated more anonymously. She also enjoyed watching people go about their daily lives both in the city and surrounding villages. As she was flying by one of the many Hawthorn trees in bloom with white flowers, she was surprised to see a leprechaun magically appear outside of the base of the tree. It was not just any leprechaun it was the infamous or in her mother's eyes notorious Miles O'Brien. She flew down and landed next to him. If she were to change in her human form, he would definitely have to look up to her, but right now he towered over her at his height of 4'8. Before he could introduce himself, the fairy clearly recognized him and said, "You are Miles O'Brien the leprechaun who went to Chicago and won all those drinking contests! I am Brigit of Knocknashee. How did you come out of that Hawthorn tree?"

Miles blushed a shade of rose pink at the story and tipped his bowler hat as he confirmed he was indeed Miles O'Brien. "Yes Miss Brigit, I am Miles O'Brien and I was told by another fairy about teleporting with Hawthorn trees to any location in the world. I wanted to visit some friends that live out this way and decided to try it out. I must say it works great and is definitely a time saver. I save a lot of taxi money as well that can be put to better means."

Her face shown bright with excitement as she asked, “You mean you teleported here and the trees can teleport you anywhere in the world? How does it work? Do you think you could teleport all the way to Chicago?”

He replied, “Calm down, lass and I will explain it to you. It only works for magical creatures like you and me and you the starting point must be a Hawthorn tree. You walk up to the tree or fly up to the tree in your case and place your hand on the base of the tree and picture the location in your mind. Then you must wish yourself there. The tree with its magic combined with your own sends you to that location. Now you wouldn’t be going to Chicago to just break my drinking contest records at all the bars on the Northside, right?”

Brigit shook her head emphatically and said, “I just want to experience the world outside of my hill. I want to see how other people dance and celebrate. I think by going on St. Patrick’s Day to Chicago, it will be easier to blend in with the type of clothes I wear. I can make my own wings disappear easily for a fair amount of time so the humans would not be so scared. I can not wait to see all the stimulating sights. Thank you, Miles! When I get back, I will treat you to a drink. I have to make some plans since St. Patrick’s Day is only a few days away.”

“What a nice lass that Brigit is, and I hope to run into her again,” said Miles as he watched her soar away rapidly into the sky.

The next couple of days went by in a blur. Luckily both of the wee races leprechauns and fairies treat the arrival of St. Patrick’s Day as the equivalent to a holiday. They celebrate vigorously with alcohol much like the humans they coexist with throughout the Emerald Isle. Even her mother the Queen, gave her the sixteenth and the seventeenth to rest and celebrate with her people. Her mother had planned a very ornate celebration, but was unaware that her own daughter would be absent in attendance.

On Tuesday night, after her mom released her from the clutches of royal protocol, Brigit packed a small duffle bag with a few changes of clothes and headed toward the nearest Hawthorn tree. She was eager to begin her journey. Miles had given her a small bag of magic gold coins to use on her journey. Each coin could change into two U.S. one-hundred-dollar bills. He also gave her a reloadable visa gift card with about \$150 remaining on the balance. He even suggested a hotel to bring her close to the action.

She glided down to the base of the tree and placed her hand on the smooth bark. After hearing Miles’s adventures repeatedly, it was easy to envision the city of Chicago and let her magic combine with that of the tree. She then wished herself there. In a flash of golden light, the fiery redhead fairy vanished and reappeared a few moments later in the Northside of Chicago. She scanned her surroundings to ensure that it was clear and changed to her human form. She then made her wings vanish. The young woman who now walked down the street looked like a super model heading to a big celebrity-filled event. She stood almost 6’0 tall with long, slender legs and a fiery mane of curly red hair and bright blue-gray eyes. She used some magic to change her footwear into mint-green running shoes because she recognized that the minimal padding on her lace slippers could be problematic for continuous walking on asphalt and concrete surfaces.

When she received some questioning glances about her attire, she thought it might be better to blend in at least until the day of St. Patrick’s Day itself. She took note of some outfits that other, young women were wearing and stepped through a revolving door at a hotel and adjusted her clothes accordingly. As the door spun at an incredible rate of speed, her clothes changed from the light and airy, mint-green dress to more modern looking clothes. Brigit still

looked like a high-end model but now, one that was a fan of Notre Dame athletics with the trademark fighting Irish leprechaun on the gray sweatshirt and a pair of black leggings. She also had a small black purse with a narrow strap slung over her right shoulder and the mint green running shoes on her feet.

She found her way to hotel referred by Miles and was fortunate enough to get a room for the next couple of days. The hotel even gave her a discount because they believed she looked like a famous celebrity, from Notre Dame. “I never would have guessed that I have a famous human doppelganger. I might as well take advantage of it,” she thought.

After settling in her single room, she came down to the front desk to ask about some of the different celebrations going on in the next couple of days. The young, brunette front-desk attendant named Ashley, asked her, “Are you more interested in the bar and restaurant events or other St. Patrick’s Day activities?” Brigit responded, “I would not mind trying some local restaurants, but I want more unique events. Anything with dancing would be fun!”

Ashley clicked through some screens on her computer and sent some pages to her printer. Then she retrieved the papers and highlighted several items with a bright green highlighter. She gave Brigit the pages and returned to her spot behind the front desk. While she looked them over, Brigit wondered when her mother would realize that her five-hundred-year-old daughter was not going to the Grand Celebration on St. Patrick’s Day. “Would mother even realize that I am not there? I mean there is a good chance that she will be so occupied and so drunk that she will think I am off with other fairies doing the same thing. The only way she will know that I am not there is if she uses the Queen’s voice to summon me. I will have to make certain that I leave early the day after St. Patrick’s Day just to get back before her morning summons.”

On Wednesday morning, Brigit enjoyed an American take on Bangers and Mash at a local restaurant on the Northside. Then she went to watch a St. Patrick’s parade on the Southside. Later at night, one of the dance clubs was featuring traditional Irish dancing with a “techno” twist. The dance club was hosting a dance competition to help a local Irish dance company fill last minute openings in order to perform at the main parade on St. Patrick’s Day. Now most of the competitors were too inebriated to walk straight, but Brigit was beyond anything they were expecting to see in terms of performance. This fiery redhead could easily be the leader of their girl group. The choreographers asked her some questions about her experience and hired her right away.

Brigit was so excited to find herself in the parade that she hardly slept in her hotel bed. She met the other girls and the choreographers real early dressed in her mint green fairy dress. Luckily, she did not have to change her outfit because it was similar to what the other performers had as their costume. The choreographers were not too concerned again because of the last-minute timeframe and gave her a matching jacket that the other girls were wearing as well. Brigit and her dance group performed admirably in the parade, but were just beaten out of first place by another dancing company. One of her teammates made a small misstep and that was the reason they lost by a point. Overall, the choreographers felt it was a great performance and offered Brigit a permanent spot on the team. She kindly refused citing a familial obligation. She was a fairy princess and as much fun as it was pretending to be human, she still had a responsibility to her people. “I might have to make this an annual trip,” said Brigit when she was out of earshot of the choreographers. Brigit ended her holiday festivities by going out to another restaurant and finishing her night dancing away at another downtown dance club.

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**Pine Wood Derby Car**  
**By Jeremy Tibus**

When I was a kid, I was in the Cub Scouts. We had a car race called the pine wood derby my dad helped me carve the car out of block of wood. Uncle George had been making the cars with his kids years before. He knew some techniques to make the car a little faster. He helped speed up the car by putting weights behind the back axle and putting powdered graphite on the nails that held in the wheels. In our cub scout troop race I came in first place. Our troop sent my car and a couple others to the city race where the best cars raced. The pine wood derby track is just a straight line and the cars are powered by gravity alone. A kid dropped his car and it broke in half and the mom started crying that she worked so hard on it. The car was supposed to be made by the kid with help from parents. In this case, it was just the parent who carved the car. The car that me, my Dad and Uncle George made was also dropped and sustained a bent axle. In the final race my car did not ride down the track too well and zoom the undamaged cars won the race. A couple years later I designed another car and applied all the techniques Dad and Uncle George taught me but the car was not as fast as my first car.

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**Ageing Gracefully with Computers**  
**By N. Stewart**

I was always up for learning new things about a computer. Still am, but it is more complicated than ever and there is a definite learning gap on my part. Computers didn't exist in my personal life when I was growing up. They only existed on Dick Tracey's wrist as a watch gadget that he could talk into and communicate with others. I didn't grow up with keyboards and computers but with paper, pencil/pens, and erasers.

I started my telecommunications career using pads of paper to take notes from customers and to resolve their problems. Our tutorial at work consisted of tomes of operational procedures and a looseleaf handbook as a literal sit-on-the-desk reference.

About ½ way through my career, personal computers came into use and we were able to e-mail each other and word process. Computers were challenging to all and seemed life-changing as they eased some areas of concern, allowing contact via the written word rather than playing telephone tag for days. The disadvantage was we now had to type our own work and not rely on a secretary to find our errors and to formalize the processed work. Certainly, by today's standard, doing everything by hand with paper and pen seems archaic. It was all we knew.

At first, when using the computer, we had to literally save our work every 15 minutes or lose all that we had done. We had to "code" entries before we began to type in words. Many a time I forgot to save my work and had to start over. Fortunately, I was still in the habit of writing out an outline of what I wanted to say and perhaps had a few sentences or paragraphs written on a piece of paper I could use to

recreate what I had already done. Alas, other times when typing directly into the computer, the created information was completely gone, the screen blank, and no matter how much I swore at the computer, the information would never, ever return to that blank screen.

There were occasions when the computer didn't work as it was supposed to, everything was forever lost even though I had saved it every 15 minutes, or the computer "froze" up and striking the same key multiple times in frustration meant nothing to it. I would swing around in my chair three times, go for a walk, come back and try again to find that the computer was now ready to work. On some days, I began to believe that my strong personal magnetic and electrifying powers were at play for, perhaps, evil and interfered with our established human to machine rapport. That's when I had to call IT for help in undoing what my mind had accidentally or intentionally done to the computer. After a few years of trial and error, it became easier to work with a compute, but nowhere near as easy as it is today.

Now, we can also use the computer to Zoom into and out of meetings. Meetings of old were held face-to-face, requiring in some cases traveling to other cities to discuss or resolve issues. For local meetings, everyone would sit around a huge table and a leader would explain and control the discussion. Coffee and snacks or lunch were served to keep up the attention span. Assignments were given and another meeting scheduled. As a result of these meetings, we got to know our human counterparts, easing any disagreements or conflicts.

Today, we can have many more people attend meetings without the necessity of travel or the supplying the coffee, snacks or lunch to all attending. The meetings, however, are seemingly more difficult to control, requiring a different needed skill set then merely the "look" from the boss across the table, or using silence to stop the unproductive chatter, and in allowing for one person at a time to speak.

Computers have become even more complex in their performance abilities, and are forever becoming easier for the user, thereby providing us with faster communications with others at work, at home and across the world.

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**Sammie**  
**By Edward Scheffler**

The spectacle of the Winter's Olympics is upon us,  
Aided by a camera lens of close ups with a backdrop of  
Wide angle shots.

As we zoom in on athletic events of the day,  
You may have seen dog, Sammie, a special canine breed,  
Strolling alongside Team U.S. A. in the closing festivities,  
Honoring all participants of those in the  
Taking of the gold.

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