

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 document of no more than 1000 words (approximately 2 pages). 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 for information. [The Pen & Ink Writer's Group returned to the Eisenhower Library on July 18, 2022.](#)

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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December Selection - Personality

A Fairy Tail Christmas
By Mark Moe

As Winter begins to set in the City of Magnolia, both wizards and the normal townspeople are busy preparing for the annual Winter celebration. The Fairy Tail Guild hosts the weeklong event to help bring some joy during the time when weather gets colder and snow comes down from the nearby mountain range. The culmination is a gift giving event that everyone participates in where families and friends give each other wrapped presents. In fact, the entire city shuts down to allow everyone time to celebrate together. While the rest of the city begins to wind down, the activity within Fairy Tail is always moving at a rapid pace. The Fairy Tail Guild is full of many different types of wizards and most of them joined the Guild at an early age. Many were orphans who became Master Makrav's "adopted" children and as a result, became close with one another like real siblings. The Guild does have some real-life siblings, but there is not as much infighting from them as everyone else. To the casual observer, the Fairy

Tail Guild thrives on chaos and this continuous level of physical altercations that evolve from physical combat to fighting with their individual magic.

Mira Jane once explained this strange concept to their newest member, Lucy Heartfilia by saying, “This is how we show our support for one another, by constantly challenging each other in fighting and endless magic duels. We are really one big family and there is nothing we would not do to help each other especially if, other wizards from rival guilds attack our members.”

While Lucy sat there reflecting on Mira Jane’s words, she noticed Master Makrav looking sad and staring off in the distance on the second floor of the Guild. “I wonder what Master Makrav is so sad about this time of year. He is usually so happy with all that goes on with Winter Fest,” Lucy said to no one in particular.

Mira Jane overheard Lucy’s observation and sat across from the younger, blonde Celestial wizard and told her, “This is the first year since he expelled Laxus his grandson, from the Guild. It is still hard on him because even though the Master and Laxus were not on good terms, Laxus always would come spend a couple of days during the Winter Fest. Now that he is no longer part of the Fairy Tail family, he is not allowed to join us for these special celebrations, but he could still meet with the Master privately.”

“Which of course Laxus will not do because of his stubborn and arrogant *“personality.”* He is too concerned about his pride,” Lucy responded.

“Partially, but when he tried to use the forbidden spell “Fairy Law” to destroy the entire Guild because he believed we were all his enemies, he could not deal with the fact that the magic in the spell was able to read his heart. So deep down, he loved everything about the Guild and his only living relative, Master Makrav equally as well. That is why the spell had no effect on the members or even the building of the Guild-hall itself,” responded Mira Jane.

“Oh yeah, I guess I just thought that Laxus with his power he had as a lightning dragon slayer magic that he was unable to successfully cast the spell. I mean it is one of the forbidden spells after all.”

Mira Jane brushed some stray platinum silver hairs away from her face and said, “Laxus was on par with both the Master and Erza. Master Makrav wanted to give the Guild over to Laxus when he was set to retire in a few years. He was just as capable to cast it. The magic though, saw the truth in him and it did not wipe us from existence because of it.”

“Do you think Laxus will ever try to reconcile with Master Makrav? I know he can not formally accept Laxus back in the Guild, but it would be nice to see the Master happy again.”

“We can always hold out hope that either this Winter Fest or a future one will help to melt Laxus’s stubborn streak.”

###

Personality

By Pauline Bastek

All you hear about these days in the various social media is, personalities. We seldom hear about their personality traits. It's all about where they have traveled and who they impressed and how many followers on aforementioned social media they currently have. Now as the year draws to a close, they are outdoing themselves by choosing their favorite personality, based on what trait I can only imagine, or rather not.

If anyone asks me who my favorite personality is, the first person that comes to mind is, Miss Nenemim, the librarian at the Onwad Neighborhood House, that was located on Leavitt and Oakley Streets in what is now known as West Town or Ukranian Village,

It's been over sixty years since I walked into the dark red building with casement windows and into a room filled with books. She was sitting at a desk and looked at pigtailed seven-year-old me and asked me where I attended school and what grade I was in. I told her and remember asking her if this was a library and if I could borrow a book to take home to read. She handed me a file card and asked me to write down my name and address and my school and grade. She directed me to a table and giving me a pencil told me to return it to her and she would direct me to the proper section where I could find two books of my choice to check out and take home to read and return within two weeks. The fine was 1 cent per day if I was late returning them but there was no other charge.

When I returned the card to her, she stood up and walked me to the section that held Nancy Drew mysteries by Carolyn Keen. She asked me to read an opening page to see if it was too difficult for me. I remember stating to read and turning the page and going on till she stopped me and with a smile on her face told me to enjoy reading them and she looked forward to seeing me soon. And soon it was.

Before the week was up, I was back. I worked my way through Nancy drew and Sue Barton, student nurse, and so many others. I was soon taking home five books at a time.

Reading has been my lifeline and the tall slender grey-haired lady who wore print dresses with lace collars and shiny black lace up oxford shoes with her welcoming smile for a lonely pigtailed opened the door that sustained me and still does.

My favorite personality, Miss Nenemin of the Onward Neighborhood House, Thank you. The Kardashians can't hold a candle to you.

###

Four dogs and a Puppy

By N. Stewart

For those of you that have never loved or even had a dog, this probably will not interest you, but for those that understand the love and devotion of a dog you may. This story begins when I purchased a single-family house with a fenced-in backyard. I always had dogs growing up and I wanted a four-legged companion for my new adventure into adulthood. I began by looking in the newspaper for ads for Border Collies as I thought they were cute with their black and white coat, that's all I knew of them.

Ads for puppies were limited and I found one not for a Border Collie but for a Sheltie pup. Shelties look like little collies and I thought I would investigate. Only one puppy was available for sale, going to a special home because the puppy was born with a hole in his heart. With agreeable conditions to both parties, I bought him. He, Jamie, was taken to a canine cardiologist where I was assured that he would live about 5-6 years. He was shy and retiring and wouldn't go to any person other than me. One day when he was 14 months old, I heard him barking outside, saw him running along the neighbor's fence, and then suddenly all barking stopped and silence took its place. My heart fell as I saw him lying on the ground not moving. The breeder met me at the Emergency vet where Jamie's short life was declared over.

After a few days, the breeder came to my house with a litter of 5 Shelties and told me I could pick whichever one I wanted. There, of course, is no replacing one dog for another because they are all different and special. I didn't feel right taking a puppy, but Sharon, the breeder, made me feel comfortable with whatever decision I made, including taking no puppy. We played with them in the backyard and I picked them up one at a time. When I picked up Jenny, I knew I wanted her. She became mine. She was my best friend for 11 years. We went everywhere together. We did obedience training and won first place. She would do anything I asked of her. I was working and she would be alone all day and never complained, just happy when I was home. She was very frightened of thunderstorm and many nights I spent on the floor by her side, calming her down. If you could have a dog for a daughter, she would have been mine. When the time came, she died in my arms at home.

Then there was Misty, the sweetest, most gentle Sheltie in the world. She was always near me but never in the way. She was the only Sheltie that didn't bark. I was working in the suburbs and had to take the tollway home, never knowing if it would take 30 minutes or two hours. Misty would be waiting at the back door no matter what time I got home. I discovered that she would go up on the off-white couch to watch out the window for my car and then get off, standing innocently at the back door. My parents moved to a retirement home, and Misty and I would go in the car to visit them. She'd walk into the building's elevator, turn around, facing front and ride up to their floor. If someone got in, she never bothered the person. She knew which door to stop at and couldn't wait to see them. When she was 5 years-old, I found a pimple on her back that didn't go away and took her to the vet. It was biopsied and found to be a form a skin cancer. Every year from then on, Misty had 2-3 surgeries a year to remove other pimple-like growths. It was expensive but she was my girl and I wasn't going to let her down. The vet and

his staff became very familiar with her, calling both of us by name as soon as we walked in the door. Everyone there told me what a great, gentle, special dog she was. I concurred. Cancer finally took her 7 years later when it spread to her spleen. She was suffering and I couldn't let it go on. The vet told me I would know when the time was right for both of us. She died peacefully in my arms at the vet a few weeks later.

Molly Malone came next and she was not the usual Sheltie but had somehow been thrown back to her wild wolf ancestry. She loved to howl, throwing her snout up in the air and letting go. I should have known when I went to pick her up that she could be trouble as she had a reputation of being a "daredevil." When in obedience training classes unlike at home, she refused to do what I instructed her to do. If I said, sit she would stand, if I said stand, she would sit or walk around. After the sessions and on the way home in the car, she would look at me and grin. She had my number. She was independent, needing no human comfort. She claimed the bathroom as her domain, giving dirty looks and reluctantly leaving the area when asked to do so. She presented herself at dinner time, scarfed food down, and then chased her empty bowl around the kitchen floor. She would wait to see if table scraps were forthcoming and if not, she'd disappear into the bathroom until 10:30 when she would go out for last time.

Molly's life was cut short from canine kidney disease and enter the puppy called Abby Rose. Abby came as a 9-week-old comfort puppy to help soothe the sudden but not unexpected loss of Molly. I was numb from the loss and agreed to have her stay a few days. The days extended into a week and now 9 months later she lives here forever and is an energetic, warm, friendly, fun-loving and smart puppy. She entertains with her antics, loves to play ball, stays as close as possible to her human, even sleeping on feet while TV is being watched. She came at the right time and is the right dog for me. She knows what I need.

All dogs have their individual personalities and fill the life of their human with love, loyalty, kindness, and devotion. They ask for nothing but do need to be given a comfortable place to live, fresh water, and food to eat. Dogs come to their humans when there is a need to be fulfilled. Four dogs and a puppy at various times throughout my life have always met my needs.

###

His Personality By Kelly Tansor

My boyfriend, Hunter, always stops at my locker before school starts, and today is no different. As I take my books out of my locker, I see him walking toward me out of the corner of my eye. I hold back a smile as I take in his long messy hair draping over his dark eyes. The collar of his black shirt is popped slightly. He slumps his backpack over one shoulder as he saunters down the hallway, looking around him as if to observe everyone around him. But I know he only has eyes for me.

"Hey, beautiful," he says as he places his hands on my waist. I smile as I throw my hands around his neck.

“Hey, you,” I say before kissing him. I can barely keep the smile off my face. “I’m so excited for tomorrow! I’ve been looking forward to this all week!” I turn to finish grabbing my books for class.

“What’s tomorrow?”

“The homecoming dance, remember?”

He snickers. “You’re still going to that?”

I close my locker and turn to face him. “Well, yeah. My friends and I are going together, and you said you’d join us. I told you, the four of us made a pact to go to every dance together for our senior year. I know it’s not really your thing-”

“It really isn’t...” his voice trails off. We start walking down the hallway together. “You know, I was kind of thinking you and I could just hang out together tomorrow night.”

“Maybe another day,” I say, shaking my head. “I’m really looking forward to going to the dance with my friends.”

He shrugs and looks away. “Suit yourself.”

I don’t know where this was coming from. Before he was fine with me going to the dance. All of a sudden, he’s acting very strange about it, almost like he’s talking me out of it. Then again, it’s not like he’s *telling* me not to go. I decide to not think on it too much.

“Hey, yo!” Hunter raises a hand and shouts toward his two friends, Anthony and Frank. They are leaning against their lockers with their hands in their pockets. When they see Hunter, they smile and approach us. They exchange high-fives and back-pats. I slump my shoulders, unsure of what to do.

“What’s up, Hayley?” asks Frank.

“Isn’t she looking hot today?” says Hunter. “This top looks great on you. And them jeans!”

I smile and blush as I look down at the floor. I don’t even want to know how Hunter’s friends are looking at me. It’s sweet that Hunter compliments me. He’s a bit forward about it and it makes me a little uncomfortable, but he can’t help it. That’s just his personality. Besides, it’s nice to know he finds me attractive.

“Hey, are you guys going to that dance tomorrow?” asks Anthony.

“Well, my friends and I -”

“Nah, not really our thing,” Hunter interrupts me, then points at me. “Well, *she’s* going with her friends.”

“Yeah, we’re really excited about it,” I say quietly.

“I heard Carson asked Gianna to go,” said Anthony, “but she shot him down.”

“Aw, that sucks,” I say.

“Man, screw Carson,” Hunter says emphatically. “Dude’s always going on about how *cool* and *smart* he is. But he doesn’t even have a girlfriend. Like, how can you say you’re *so cool* if you don’t have a girlfriend?”

Having a girlfriend doesn’t make you cool, I think. But I don’t say anything. I don’t want him to take it the wrong way.

Just then, the bell rings. “Alright, I’ll see you guys later,” he says to his friends. He leans his face toward mine. “I love you,” he says softly before kissing me. Hard. And then he runs off to class.

I wave my hand shyly at his friends. “Bye, guys.”

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Personality
By Edward Scheffler

How easy to identify a personality.
Harder to explain it...

###

Ah, Travel!
By Vicki Elberfeld

Lately it seems that everyone around me is sick. Lowered immunities I guess, as folks emerge from the endless Covid lockdowns. Most of my friends have been brought down by flu, bad colds, and Covid too, and I can’t go anywhere without facing coughing and sneezing by those who invariably stand too close to me. Consequently, I go out only when needed, and I’ve said farewell to any serious travel.

But...that’s not entirely true. When I’m truly tired of staring at the TV or YouTube and the same four walls of my living room, I begin to develop a serious case of cabin fever. My stir craziness drives me to conclude I need to go somewhere, anywhere, as far away as possible. At such times, with remarkable consistency, I choose a remote island as a travel destination, and I never regret the choice.

Most recently, my mind has traveled to Pitcairn, a sub-tropical island in the middle of the South Pacific, over 3,000 miles away from any continent. It has a rich history, great natural beauty both above and below sea level, and people whose diet, education, and day to day activities are radically different from my own.

As I sit here gearing up for a cold Chicago winter, it's pleasant to think about a place whose temperatures are a consistent 69 to 78 degrees and rarely fall below 63 or above 80. I live in a landscape cluttered with shopping malls, whereas this island has but one general store which is grocery, department and hardware store all in one and is only open two hours per day, three days a week. While in Chicago I must be well stocked with coats, scarves, and a wide variety of footwear, islanders get along just fine with mainly shorts, tee shirts, sandals and bathing suits. To maintain my health, I regularly see a dentist, a general practitioner, and an eye and ear doctor as well as a neurologist and dermatologist, whereas Pitcairn inhabitants are two long days of sailing away from any hospital, and they have but one physician who is on call all the time! Nevertheless, most islanders live to be around 90 years old and die of natural causes. Judging by the rocky terrain, I would think that a common cause of death would be from falls, but apparently not.

To me the most exciting aspect of a Pitcairn vacation is the approach itself. You gaze from your cruise or supply ship upon a massive dark, volcanic rock which appears to be growing from the sea itself. Far from being a sandy beach, the dramatic shore consists of huge rocks receiving the full force of the crashing waves. Indeed, the cruise ship cannot dock there, and there is no port. Fortunately, smiling islanders come to the rescue, rowing their longboats to your ship in a kind of taxi service. Once you are actually on the island, you must ascend the Hill of Difficulty to take you to Adamstown, situated on a plateau over a thousand feet above sea level. Luckily you don't have to climb it, for most likely a quad bike will pick up you and your luggage. There is but one car on the entire island, a good thing as there is only one paved road as well. Adamstown is the only settlement on Pitcairn, and it is the smallest capital in the entire world.

While the greatest expense involves transport to this difficult to access island with no dock and no airport or landing strip, accommodations are quite reasonable. You will pay between one and two hundred dollars per night, including meals of yams, breadfruit, watermelon, sweet potatoes, pineapple, bananas, betel nuts, avocados, coconuts, and taro root, all grown on the island and, of course, a wide variety of seafood. There are no mammals native to Pitcairn, unless you count the whales, porpoises and dolphins swimming in the vicinity. Wild goats were introduced, but they caused too much damage to the vegetation. The local diet is quite healthy, enabling most to live to be old with very little in the way of medical care. As an ideal accommodation, I would suggest Little Flower at the very top of the island, well suited for viewing spectacular sunsets, the stark cliffs and lush vegetation continuing all the way down to the sea, and the glittering ocean itself. An excellent location for stargazing with no light pollution, and with electricity on the island itself going off at 10 pm.

In many ways Pitcairn is a paradise, a nice place to visit, but you might not want to live there. The average income is only \$4,000 per year and apart from minimal exports of their handicrafts such as jewelry made from purple sea urchins and black pearls imported from Mangareva, wood and bone carvings, and their world-famous honey, their only industry is tourism which is minimal anyway, due to the small size of the island (1.9 square miles or slightly larger than New York's Central Park), and its inaccessibility, requiring several boat rides and at

least two flights to get there. Thanks to Covid, tourism was shut down for a while, but now that the tiny population, fewer than fifty people, has been vaccinated, tourism has resumed. Inhabitants get their mail only four times per year from their supply ship. But all this pales in the face of one half of the island's male population being convicted of the sexual abuse of young girls in 2004. Some residents argued that this was simply the result of Polynesian culture where the age of consent was deemed to be twelve years old, at most. The men had to serve prison terms, a clear difficulty as there was no prison; therefore, the convicts themselves were drafted to build one. Once completed, the inmates only served their sentences part time, as their labor was sorely needed to maintain the island. Tourists must now get permission to bring along any children younger than sixteen, and a policeman was hired to protect the youth.

The history of the island's settlement by Euronians goes back over 200 years and has inspired any number of films and books. But if you listen to the scholars, you will watch the many takes on Mutiny on the Bounty, enjoy the acting of such luminaries as Marlon Brando, Mel Gibson, Clark Gable, Anthony Hopkins and Errol Flynn, but appreciate that a good story can often get in the way of historical accuracy. For example, the brutality of Captain Bligh has been highly exaggerated. Not that he never flogged his crew members, but he was far more lenient than other British Captains of the day. It was said that he only flogged those who deserved a good hanging, and he merely gave admonishments to those who deserved a good flogging. He had a mouth on him, was petty, socially awkward, and rude, but he wasn't a violent man.

In brief, Pitcairn was the island to which nine mutineers from the Bounty, led by Fletcher Christian, escaped. The Polynesians who accompanied them, for the most part, did not do so willingly. The mutineers returned to Tahiti and held a party aboard the Bounty, inviting their favorite people, mostly women. Without warning to the Polynesians they set sail, essentially kidnapping twelve female and six male Tahitians. Six additional women were on board but as they were "rather ancient," too elderly for the mutineers, they were set ashore at a nearby island.

As Pitcairn had been improperly charted over two decades ago by a European without a chronometer, the island was extremely difficult to find. All the better for mutineers who faced death by hanging if they were discovered. But to be absolutely sure to avoid detection (and to prevent one another from ever escaping and broadcasting the location of the hideaways), they burned the Bounty shortly after landing. They retained the sails to make clothing, and they later recovered nails to build their houses.

Just as today, many fruits were growing on the island, fish was readily available, and livestock from Tahiti had sailed with them, so access to food was no problem. The climate was temperate, and each mutineer selected a Polynesian woman as consort. This, however, left only three women for the six Polynesian men which triggered a serious problem. When a wife of the mutineers died - It's not clear whether her death from a fall was the result of accident or suicide, as one evening after she failed to catch enough fish to satisfy her husband, he actually bit off her ear - he compensated himself for his marital loss by taking as his next consort one of the three women allotted to the six Tahitian men. The mutineers further outraged their Polynesian captives by having them do all the manual labor, while they themselves drank and basked in the sun. Tensions resolved in a tragic way, as five of the mutineers, among them Fletcher Christian, were

murdered by the Polynesians who were themselves killed in revenge by one of the women and the surviving mutineers.

Of the four mutineers remaining, William McCoy, who had previously worked for a brewery, managed to distill alcohol which was both potent and hallucinogenic from the roots of the Ti plant. Here he was both creator and victim of the brew, however. Chronically under the influence, on one such night he killed himself, tying a rock around his neck and leaping off a cliff, into the sea. A second mutineer, Matthew Quintal, was executed for his violent behavior; he even threatened to kill the children of Fletcher Christian's widow if she didn't become his consort.

And then there were two. Ned Young was the first person in the settlement to die of natural causes, of asthma, but not before teaching the final mutineer, John Adams, to read and write from the Bounty Bible which remains on the island to this day. John Adams spent most of his days rather less than sober, but a hallucination prompted him to get religion and turn his life around. Apart from John, only women and children now remained on the island, and finally sobriety and harmony were restored. When the British eventually stopped at Pitcairn in 1814 and discovered the colony, seeing how well run the island was, they pardoned the patriarch, John Adams, for his role in the mutiny.

In 2021 there were only 47 people living on Pitcairn. In 2003 a baby was the first child born on the island in 17 years. Children are only educated through the ninth grade, and for a high school and college education they must go to New Zealand, and many never return. At this rate estimates are that there will be only three males of working age by 2045, and the rest of the population will be quite old.

But for the moment Pitcairn is still beautiful, still temperate, still brimming over with nature's bounty, and it remains terribly appealing to me back here in wintry Chicago. I can visit her in my mind whenever I like without the expense, stress of packing, and long waits for boats, planes and tickets. I can see glorious sunsets and the endless spread of the ocean, swim in natural pools, and view exotic birds.

When I'm not luxuriating in the natural beauty of Pitcairn, however, I worry about her. I worry about her dwindling population, lack of job opportunities, and poor economy. England subsidizes the island as a British overseas territory to the tune of three million dollars per year, but is continuing to do this worthwhile? And I don't know what I can do beyond supporting it by buying their jewelry and other handicrafts online.

Pitcairn needs people, ideally families with the children and young folks with strong muscles and adaptive personalities to help build this small community. And if you apply to live there and they accept you, they'll give you free land.

So perhaps I actually can help Pitcairn by simply getting the word out.

###

Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport
By J. Smetana

Listen I think your wife looks like Suzanne Pleshette.

Well that's because she *is* Suzanne Pleshette!

I don't understand. Isn't Suzanne Pleshette deceased?

Well yeah in a manner of speaking but you know that Chinese guy who's doing all the cloning?

You mean like the saber-toothed tiger and the woolly mammoth?

Yeah and Woolly Bully. All he needs is the DNA. You can get it off a cigarette butt or a coffee cup and then it's easy to just clone the whole animal AS LONG AS YOU GOT THE DNA!

Check out that catalog.

Vermont Country Store?

No, no, that other one –

“Hot Babes of Yesteryear”?

That's the one. It tells you who you can get and how much they cost. Raquel Welch and Brigitte Bardot are the most expensive.

Of course.

But Joey Heatherton and Tuesday Weld are pretty reasonable.

So why'd you pick Suzanne Pleshette?

Because she's got PERSONALITY!

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