

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
© 1999 - 2023 Pen & Ink Writers' Group

May 15, 2023
Word: Hero

My Hero You Are Me
By N. Stewart

Through all the many years of
joy, disappointment, fear, loss, envy and love,
you stayed with me and guided me.

We walked together toward,
challenging difficulties from our very beginning,
through school, career, caregiving, retirement and
now as we approach our final years.

Neither did we dive into the abyss of self-pity.
Nor did we soar too high in celebration, but
remained grounded, level headed, and sincere.

Many times along the way
friends, and family assisted and supported.
Other times we were alone.

We sought what was needed and necessary.
Sought joy and love,
kindness and understanding.

Who would we be without each other?
Where would we be without the other?

You are my hero.
My hero you are me.

###

Murder and Mystery on the Delta
By J. Smetana

Did you ever know that you're my HERO and everything I would like to be? Peaches are you doing karaoke again or are you handing me an insincere compliment? Hey man is it true you and Aunt Judy had a fling when Jerry was in the Nam? Peaches Jerry was never in the Nam and what are you talking about "fling"? It was just one of those things just one of those crazy flings one of those bells that now and then rings...

###

Stanger Hero
By Sherry Avila

Suddenly, a tough-looking, tall, dark-complexioned, slender young man with dread locks crosses the street in front of the Day Care Center where we are waiting for our daughter, Audrey, to come out with our 14-month-old granddaughter Francesca to return to her condo. His body sways from side to side; and he surprisingly and abruptly stops on the sidewalk next to our blue 2014 Taurus Ford car.

With his fists, he pounds and pounds on the driver's side windshield and then on the side door window behind which my husband Frank sits and screams "RACIST!" Then, he walks over to my passenger side of the car, and he pounds and pounds on my side of the windshield and screams "RACIST!" again.

Hostility seeps into our car mixing with my anxiety and fear. Does this stranger want to carjack us? Does he have a weapon? Will he hurt us? He seems unstable. We feel unsafe. What does he want? Is he on drugs? I try not to make eye contact.

It seems as though we are trapped in our car forever with this stranger outside of it. I think of the framed picture of the Guardian Angel that my Mom said would protect my family and me. Guardian Angel, we need help!

Not wanting to further disturb the stranger who pounds on our car and screams at us, Frank whispers to me, "Should we call the police?" I whisper back, "Yes!" He calls 911 on his Cell, "There is a tall, slender young man pounding his fists on the windows of our car and screaming

at us. We don't know if he is going to carjack us, attack us with a weapon, or what he wants. We are in front of a Day Care Center trying to pick up our granddaughter. We need help!"

When Frank and I turn our heads to see Audrey stepping out of the door of the Day Care with Francesca in her arms, the Stranger who is harassing us also turns his head to see them at the door. Audrey's face crumbles when she sees us trapped in our car with the stranger threatening us.

Stranger Danger quickly runs over towards our daughter and granddaughter. Audrey very quickly backs inside the Day Care, and the administrators of the Day care lock the door. He pounds and pounds on the wooden door and tries to force it open.

A car pulls in behind us, and a tall, muscular dad who is picking up his baby/toddler observes the disoriented young man pounding on the Day Care Door. He gets out of his car to deescalate the situation, talking and walking with the stranger up and down the sidewalk in front of us. He is part of some law enforcement agency although not with the Chicago Police. Our Guardian Angel sent us a HERO.

Finally, Stranger Danger walks north away from the Day Care out of which Audrey and Francesca come. Should we wait for the police? NO! We do not want to take a chance that he might come back to our car and harass us. So, we drive back to Audrey's condo.

As our car drives down the street with the winds blowing around it, I look up and cry out, "Thank you! Guardian Angel, for protecting us from Stranger Danger with this wonderful HERO whom I may never see again. Thank you for helping us let go of all that hostility and return to joyfulness!"

###

My Heroes By Carol Karvon

I've been lucky enough in my lifetime to have had two real heroes as part of my life. They were very important to me and I feel fortunate they were always there for me as long as they lived.

I'm thinking of my mom and dad. They were very special people.

Even now when I think of them, and I do think of them often, I remember their special qualities. I often want to talk to my mom or dad and then remember they are long gone from this earth.

Dad died in 1985 in his 80s and mom went in 2008 at 93 years plus 6 months.

I could call either of them and talk to them about whatever was going on and find out how they were feeling. They always made time to listen and chat. Although mom had a little trick to get off the phone when she was done talking. She'd simply say, "there's someone at the door." She

wasn't fooling anyone. But I knew they were people I could always depend on and could ask for something as simple as a recipe or advice about something troubling me.

My dad emigrated to America with his family, mom, dad and younger sister when he was 8 years old. His family settled in Dawson, NM. Grandpa was a coal miner and Dawson was a mining town. My dad went to work on the railroad with an uncle when he was quite young. He was a waterboy in the dining car where his uncle was a chef. Dad's job was to lean out the window when the train slowed as it came to a water tank besides the tracks and fill a water container. Just imagine that. He was just a young boy. He never even completed grade school. He later became a chef and learned to cook from his uncle.

My mom was born in Chicago, the first generation in her family to be American born. During her lifetime she worked in a candy shop, Navy munitions factory, meat packing plant and various other places. While still a teenager she had to quit high school six months before graduation to help support her parents and three siblings. Times were hard and her meager salary working as a chocolate dipper in a chocolate shop was important to the family's survival. Her boss told her she had to work a full day or he'd get someone else.

My dad was bedridden for two years with some type of crippling arthritis when I was very young and mom worked the second shift in a meat packing plant at the stockyards. She was the family's breadwinner. I never heard either of my parents complain about the lives they were living. That wasn't part of their makeup. They were survivors.

After dad recovered and was able to work again my parents managed to save enough money to buy a restaurant at 26th Street and Pulaski on Chicago's Southwest side. At that time, the neighborhood was mainly Bohemian and Polish. Our restaurant served basic meat and potatoes meals – you know, meat loaf, soups, stews and other hearty entrees. My dad got up very early to get his soups, stews and roasts started. Mom held down the fort from early afternoon until around midnight. We lived only a block away on the second floor above a bar and I often kept mom company and walked home with her after she closed up in the early morning hours.

My parents weren't perfect. I heard them disagree, but I also saw them kiss and make up. They set a realistic example for me that things are not always perfect, but even bad times can get better when you try.

My parents were ahead of their time. They were independent business owners. Mom was unusual for the times, she worked almost my entire life at a time when most moms were at home. Dad was an example of living the American dream, coming to America as an immigrant, meeting the love of his life, raising a family with her and enjoying life to the fullest.

One thing they told us that has always stayed with me was that we could tell them anything and they'd understand, but we always had to tell the truth. There's so much more I could add, how mom and dad fed hungry people, or took groceries to homes of people in need. Dad was always available to drive us and our friends anywhere we needed to go and always made sure we had enough money to make a phone call if we needed him. He wanted us to be safe. We also always knew they loved us!

It's a lot of little things I remember, that were actually big things to me. All these little things add up to heroes for me.

###

Who is Your Hero? **By Kelly Tansor**

Short answer - no one. Wow, what a buzzkill. This girl must be fun at parties.

Let me explain.

I do not like to see the world as “heroes and villains.” It feels very black-and-white to me. I think we all know by now that not everyone is 100% good or 100% bad. The older I get, the less inclined I am to consider anyone my “hero” or “role model.” It doesn't feel healthy to put someone on a pedestal like that. If you want to look at it in a more cynical way - as I am prone to do - there have been times when my “heroes” have let me down. On the flipside, though, I've also seen people seen as “villains” put in the hard work to redeem themselves.

So instead of looking for a “hero,” I look for *heroic moments* from people.

This is, of course, subjective. For example, the person behind me at Dunkin' paying for a cheap breakfast sandwich for me may not seem heroic. But when you consider I was a broke college student at the time and have experienced not being able to afford the dollar menu at points, that can seem pretty heroic. Or at the very least an incredibly good deed. Another moment that comes to mind is when I tripped outside early on in my pregnancy (the baby and I are fine), and the mailwoman helped me up and offered any help I may have needed.

Interactions like these are why I still believe in the kindness of strangers.

My friends and family, of course, demonstrate all kinds of heroic moments. The day my mother passed away, I sent out a message to just about anyone who would listen, asking to be around friends (some people prefer to grieve privately, I am not one of those people). My friends all gathered with open arms and tabletop games. A few years before that, I told my friends my grandfather passed away. Before I knew it, my friends were preparing a three-course dinner, playing Irish music at my request, and hugging me as I ugly-cried the entire time. During the 2020 lockdown, my roommates and I essentially took turns aiding in each other's chaotic mental health (giving an ear to listen to, being a shoulder to cry on, helping through panic attacks, buying each other self-care items when we really needed it, etc.). A less depressing example: When I had my baby shower last month and I lost a vital helper at the last minute, my sister stepped up to do double-duty, while my cousin filed in to help during the festivities as well. It went from being the most stressful event of my pregnancy to being the most fun afternoon I'd had in a long time.

It's not just times of distress that heroic moments happen. Some time after I told my friends I was pregnant, they surprised me with food, gifts, and enough cases of diapers to create a

stack that went to the ceiling - which any parent will tell you is a huge help, to say the least. Another example: I was able to pay off my student loans with the help of a close friend helping me refinance my loan, then loaning me some of his own money. This wasn't necessarily because I was struggling at the time; it was just so I could save money on the interest - which probably saved me thousands of dollars.

And don't worry, I paid him back every penny.

I don't necessarily think you need to go above and beyond to be considered a hero to someone. I think all you need to do is show kindness. This is my cynical side talking again, but it seems as though kindness is hard to find most days. So when you're there for someone - friend, family, stranger - showing them just a bit of kindness might be all they need to have their day turned around. It doesn't have to be a big show or self-aggrandizing thing. Just a simple act of selfless kindness. Just to be kind.

###

**Hero: A person admired or idealized for courage, or outstanding achievement.
By Edward Schefler**

The family was proud of my nephew who
graduated with straight
A's
Commendable as it is such achievement
most common.

Regardless to such admirable qualities esteemed
as outstanding
Any repetitious reminder of Status Quo becomes
tedious,
Especially when without advancement of going any
further.

Avoiding Hero Worship

As the Laureate of Excellence is but
a trophy Award resting
in a dusty corner of
the room.
Reminder of such cold and voiceless
salutations.

Every hero becomes a bore.
(said Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Need I acknowledge a hero.

Perhaps, but silently and secretly to admire
their attribute of
unselfishness
fortitude
wisdom
and
understanding.
While trying discreetly to avoid the overdose of
flattery.

Compliments need not to be tossed about carelessly (said Eleanor Hamilton),
Ask anyone acclaimed as heroic and they
will tell you with all
modesty,
“I gave my best”
For such satisfaction onto confidence
is a completeness onto itself.

###

Hero
By Pauline Bastek

Remember, newspaper want ads? I used to love to read them. Especially the ones in the local weekly neighborhood newspaper. I would imagine what happened to the party selling a slightly used women’s bicycle. Did she fall down and is now hobbling on crutches or was she never able to ride it despite numerous tries. I for one never managed to ride a bicycle and was seriously considering an adult tricycle. Sad to say I also never mastered skating, not roller skating nor ice skating, so checking out the want ads offering these items was a comfort. I was not alone. There were others and likely not too far away.

Every so often an ad would appear offering a bridal gown, never worn. Sad, so sad.

Bridesmaid gowns appeared on a regular basis, promising that they were in “like new” condition. To me this was as good as saying that the owner sat out the dances at the wedding reception and never wanted to lay eyes on the gown again.

In my imagination I saw these ads all being cancelled when a hero appeared in the form of an athlete who would excel in teaching the uncoordinated owner of the bicycle to glide down the road effortlessly and skate to the beat of the organ playing at the skating rink. He would then fall passionately in love with her now beautifully coordinated self and propose so that she would be able to rescue the advertised bridal gown and with him live happily ever after.

My hero!

Alas, he never appeared and I eventually gave up checking out the want ads. I signed up for swimming lessons, having decided that the likelihood of a hero appearing to save me was but a dream and I had best rely on my own efforts to survive. So, I learned to swim and became my own hero.