

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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June 17, 2023

Word: Market

The Not So Cheery Nursery Rhymes
By Vicki Elberfeld

When I was a little girl my mother would often begin my day by sitting next to me in bed and taking my toes into her hands. Grabbing my big toe, she'd say, "This little piggy went to market." Then she'd take my second toe and say, "This little piggy stayed home." The third toe would yield, "This little piggy had roast beef" and the fourth was "This little piggy had none." But my favorite was the tiny little pinky toe which Mom pinched as she said, "This little piggy went wee, wee, wee all the way home." Mom squealed on the wee, wee, wees and she ended by tickling me just as the tiny piggy arrived home. Then I'd fall back down on the bed and we'd laugh, and laugh and laugh.

But the real story isn't funny at all. The first piggy, represented by the biggest toe, isn't going to the market on a fun shopping spree; it's going to the market to be slaughtered. The second piggy only gets to stay home because it isn't big enough to become bacon yet. The third piggy is being fattened up by eating roast beef, and the fourth piggy is also too small for the market and so stays home with the second piggy. The last piggy is much too tiny to be slaughtered, but it knows its fate and runs squealing piteously all the way home.

But the hapless piggies don't make up the only disturbing nursery rhyme. I also enjoyed:

*Mary, Mary quite contrary
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells
And pretty maids all in a row.*

Sounds innocent enough? Not really. The contrary Mary refers to Bloody Mary, Elizabeth I, the first queen of England to rule in her own right. She was Catholic and had several hundred Protestants executed for heresy and burned at the stake. This was done so that no body parts would remain to be treasured as holy relics of martyrs to the faith and ashes of the deceased could be quickly absorbed as they were tossed into the river. The garden referred to in the second line was a graveyard, growing larger and larger with the bodies of the executed. The silver bells refer to thumbscrews, instruments of torture. The cockle shells are also torture devices, attached to a man's genitalia. The pretty maids in the last row were Halifax gibbets, early versions of the guillotines.

And that was not the only rhyme inspired by Mary. The three blind mice were not thought to be mice at all. They referred rather to three Protestants (heretics) burned at the stake by the bloody queen. And they weren't just any Protestants. They were Protestant bishops who died writhing in agony. They were said to be "blind" to the truth of Catholicism.

One particular nursery rhyme had me deeply confused as a child. It went like this:

*Peter, Peter pumpkin eater
Had a wife and couldn't keep her
Then he put her in a pumpkin shell
And there he kept her very well.*

Why would someone be called a pumpkin eater unless he lived on pumpkins almost exclusively? And except for the seeds which are delicious when roasted in butter and salted around Halloween, pumpkin innards looked particularly yucky for eating. And what sort of wife would even fit into a pumpkin shell, even a very big pumpkin shell, and what could possibly be the motive for keeping her there at all?

Those were the questions that plagued me as a little girl. Now that I'm a big girl, it's been explained to me that Peter's inability to keep his wife referred to her inability to be faithful to her marriage vows. Oh. And Peter had to kill and dismember her prior to stuffing her into a pumpkin shell.

Georgie Porgie is more about male infidelity than female. And Georgie was rather on the heavy side for which he was often ridiculed in the press, hence "Georgie Porgie Puddin and Pie" which continues...

*...kissed the girls and made them cry.
When the boys came out to play
Georgie Porgie ran away.*

Georgie Porgie refers to the Prince Regent, later King George IV, who was a randy fellow having several mistresses and illegitimate children. The boys coming out to play referred to the husbands and lovers of Georgie's dalliances.

Humpty Dumpty wasn't even an egg, apart from Lewis Carroll's adaptation of it in *Through the Looking Glass*. Rather it was a powerful cannon, used by the Royalists in the English Civil war, 1642-49. In 1648, the Humpty Dumpty cannon was placed on the wall surrounding the city of Colchester. When the enemy's cannonball collapsed the wall, Humpty Dumpty took a tumble, and it was literally true that the Royalists' horses and men couldn't put the cannon back together again. Sadly for the Royalists, they lost the war and their king was executed.

*Ring around the Rosy
A pocket full of posies
Ashes, ashes
We all fall down!*

The above was always one of my favorite nursery rhymes although it has one of the least cheery origin stories. It was fun for me because I got to be part of a circle with my friends, and we'd hold each other's hands as we spoke the rhyme together and then broke apart and fell down at the end. This rhyme is said to refer to the massive deaths created by the bubonic plague. The rosy is the red circular rash appearing on the skin and the posies were herbs and flowers carried around to ward off the smells and the very real danger of the Black Death. And the ashes and falling down? They simply refer to the massive deaths themselves.

And of course *Rock A Bye Baby* is obviously gruesome with the bough breaking and the baby in the cradle falling most likely to its death. One theory has it that the wish fulfillment ditty was composed in a British pub during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The hope was that the heir to the throne of King James II would die in its cradle and that finally the reign itself would end. Yet another theory has it that women used to put their dead babies in cradles and hang them from trees in the hopes that this would revive them.

The scariest nursery rhyme for me? Hands down it is the nursery rhyme, also used as a prayer, Mother required me to say every night before bed. It went:

*I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
Watch over me throughout the night
And wake me with the morning light.*

Cheery enough ending, right? But once I was exposed to another variant ending,

*If I should **die** before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take*

it didn't take any scholarship at all to determine the real point of that rhyme.

So folks, sleep well. And don't forget to say your prayers.

Vicki ###

Return to Gummi Glenn Part 2

By Mark Moe

After a moment of reflection, Zummi said, "A lady in waiting to Princess Calla's cousin. We will send her a message so she can take you back to her castle. I am sure that Calla's cousin is concerned about your absence. We must ask you to give us your sacred word and a solemn promise on the Great Book of Gummi to keep our existence a secret. You see we have survived over a thousand years by limiting our presence in the world. So please follow us to the Great

Gummi Library where we will administer the promise and you can wait for Princess Calla there."

Kylie curtsied and responded, "Thank you for your hospitality and I will gladly make a solemn promise on your Great Book of Gummi."

"Sunni, would you take our guest through the quick tunnels to our library, while I send a message to Princess Calla?"

"Of, course. Kylie, follow me! This will be fun," exclaimed Sunni, the bear with the yellow fur and a dark green outfit that looked reminiscent of Peter Pan, but no shoes or stockings.

A few minutes later, the pair arrived at their destination. Sunni hopped out like the ride was nothing. As Sunni ran out and towards the library she noticed, Kylie was not behind her. She returned to find Kylie in shock. Kylie finally snapped out of it and responded, "You Gummi Bears always ride this thing? Has Princess Calla ridden this as well?"

"Oh, yeah. The princess is quite a daredevil. She loves it. Here follow me to the Great Book of Gummi so we can get your promise on record. The princess has been sent a message about you being here with us and the fact that you are a lady-in-waiting to her cousin. She will be here in couple of hours just as soon as she is done with her royal lessons for the day. Luckily, we have a special quick tunnel that the ancient Gummis built long before castle existed that we managed to open for either Princess Calla or Squire Cavin to use. They have been great allies and we would do almost anything to repay their loyalty to us."

After Kylie made her promise on the Great Book of Gummi in front of all six bears, the bears provided her a meal of cooked turkey legs, varieties of cheeses, breads, and their own red Gummi wine for her to enjoy.

"Thank you for the wonderful food. The only question I have is in regards to the wine. Is it made from Gummi berry juice as well?"

The youngest bear, Cubbi answered, "It is made from a small amount of Gummi berry juice and our own vineyard of red grapes. Do not worry! It is perfectly safe for humans to drink! Tummi wants to "market" it to many of the taverns in the area, if we ever give up our secret existence anytime soon."

The elderly bear dressed like a cook interrupted Cubbi, "Cubbi you know we are not supposed to discuss our plans if Lord Winthrop and his ogres are ever removed from the kingdom. Just like my plans for opening a bakery or Gruff's plan to open a tavern."

"Yes, Grammi, we all have plans when and if the ogres and Winthrop ever leave the country. Assuming some new evil does not rear its evil head. We all have plans, except for Sunni. That is also perfectly acceptable as well," replied Zummi.

A resounding knock on the great oak doors of the library stopped all further discussion as Gruffl in his beige singlet with forest green skull cap and Tummi in his medieval peasant's clothing with a red feather in his cap, moved quickly to open the doors. As the doors opened, a girl who appeared to be about sixteen with golden blonde hair in a long French braid and a powder blue dress walked in a light, regal manner into the room. The bears all bowed before her and said, "Welcome, Princess Calla!"

Princess Calla acknowledged the greeting and focused her attention on the tall Kylie in her pink handmaiden's dress and asked, "Could I speak to Kylie alone before I bring her back to my cousin?"

The bears all rose quickly and exited the library through the entrance that the princess had entered. Once the massive oak doors closed, Calla asked Kylie, "I know the young woman who is the lady-in-waiting to my cousin. Her name is Marie. So, who are you, really my dear?"

"My name is Kylie and I have a story that you would not believe."

Calla interrupted her, "Kylie I am friends with talking bears that wear clothes and drink magic juice allowing them to bounce all over the place. Try me, please."

"Okay, I am your descendent from the future and was sent back to your period when I held an artifact of the Gummi's in my hand."

"What artifact?"

"The Great Gummi Medallion," she responded.

"Please continue," Calla stated.

"In my time, I am a historical researcher who was researching the disappearance of the Gummi Bears. It was believed they were just a legend until an archaeologist paid me to come examine Gummi artifacts. Then he saw that the Great Gummi Medallion started to glow as I approached it. He placed it in my hand and I was transported to the forest. I do not know how to get back or why I was even brought here."

"That is quite a story. We will need the Gummi's help on getting you back to your time and maybe they can shed some light on why they disappeared in the future," Calla responded.

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The Rediscovered Genius of Bert Berns

By J. Smetana

Hey man we got some real music superstars coming to Taste of Norridge this year.

I know: Sting, Bono, Elton John and Elvis Costello! I wonder how the park got the shekels in the coffer.

Well there's a little-known fact of entertainment law: If you hire someone under his real name you pay only MARKET price. So Norridge Park is booking Gordon Matthew Thomas Sumner, Paul David Hewson, Reginald Kenneth Dwight and Declan Patrick MacManus!

Dig!

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The Meat Market

By N. Stewart

The two young women walked into a pub near Main and Webster Streets after a productive shopping adventure. They both felt a disturbing wave in the air as they stepped through the entrance into the darken bar. As their eyes adjusted, they saw every man, sitting at the bar, turning his head in the direction of the new-comers. The men lifted their eyes from the floor, up and over their bodies, and finally climbing to face level. The men hesitated there for a brief moment and then in unison, turned their heads back the other way and looked down to study their beer.

“Well, that was welcoming and apparently we didn't make the interest grade,” said Ellen.

Hannah replied, ‘Entering what seems to be a usual meat market, are we,’ and they both laughed.

The women checked out the bar area for a place to sit and then decided to take a table where they could talk. They hadn't seen each other in sometime and needed to catch up. Ellen was getting married to the man of her dreams, and had asked Hannah to be a bridesmaid. There was lots to say.

The waitress by the name of Honey as her name tag indicated came over. She was dressed in a very short black skirt that barely covered her derriere. Her slithery silvery top was low cut and stopped way short of her waistline. We could see the guys at the bar watching her in the reflection of the mirror behind the bar as she lazily saunter over to our table.

“What canna get you gals?” Honey said posed with pen and pad in hand.

“White wine, house,” said Hannah

“Me, too,” said Ellen. Honey left after writing the order down on the pad. Ellen and Hannah started talking about the wedding plans. Hannah wished she had found her man but so far she had not. Perhaps I’ll find him here, she thought and after looking at the line up at the bar of dirty blondes, dark-haired skinnies, baseball caps, and fat balding men, she decided no not here, not ever here.

The handle on the door made a noise as it turned. All heads at the bar turned in unison toward the door. As it opened a middle-aged couple entered. All heads at the bar quickly turned back, eyes landing on their beers. No one spoke

Ellen and Hannah looked at each other and softly snickered. “They didn’t make the grade either,” said Hannah. Honey picked up our drinks from the bar and brought them over. “Need menus?” she asked. We did and she left to get them.

The couple sat at a table and Honey made a slow trip over to get their order. She returned to the bar and stood there, waiting. Honey then took the drinks to the table where the couple sat and asked if they needed menus. She went back to the bar and got menus for our table and dropped them off. She then went back for menus for the other table and dropped them off.

Ellen said, “Man, she must put on a lot of miles on those feet. Use your brain or you use your feet as my dad always said about waitresses. This one uses her feet...”

And, whatever else she has to offer, said Hannah. They laughed together.

On Honey’s third trip, she asked what we wanted to eat. We ordered, she wrote it down and left.

The door started to open again and Ellen and Hannah turned their heads in unison along with the men sitting at the bar to see who was entering the pub. They both laughed at their unscripted action. “Catching isn’t it” said Hannah.

In walked a lone man and the men along the bar became animated. Everyone was “Hi, Bob” and slapping hands as Bob passed to sit down at the empty seat at the end of the bar. Honey was over to him in a flash, asking what she could get for him, took his order while leaning on the bar and so close to him that a paper napkin would not fit between them.

“She knows a good tipper when she sees or should I say feels one,” Hannah said. She waived Honey over and asked about their lunch order. Honey disappeared into the kitchen and after some time came back with the sandwiches. The middle-aged couple was still waiting for Honey to take their food order. Honey avoided looking in their direction as the man tried to get her attention, and returned instead to her position at the bar near Bob.

Ellen and Hannah finished their lunch and their wine. Getting Honey’s attention away from talking up Bob and then waiting for her to bring the check took forever. The two women paid for their food and drinks, got up and walked toward the door, conscious that all eyes at the bar once again had turned and were now fixated on their backsides. The door opened, the women stepped out into the day light, knowing that all those leering eyes would now turn back in unison and again seek out answers to life’s mystery in their beer. #####

Market
By Ed Scheffler

Everyone likes a bargain,
Coming from garage sales, flea markets
and resale shops.

At which I discovered a pin stripped suit at this
second hand clothing store. It's a black vested
three-piece suit. Something I have always wanted.
Only it's a bit rancid smelling and musky with a
preservative of moth balls and disinfectants.
Like it was soaked in a solution of Formaldehyde.

Asking the manage why this suit is selling
for such a bargain at
ten dollars,
"Well...", he said "A man was buried in this suit
after which he was exhumed."
And now...and now
This suit is mine.

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