

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](#).

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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December 2023 Selection – Beyond the Pale

Beyond the Pale
By Edward Scheffler

Definition:
Pale
Bounds of Jurisdiction
Limits in which one
Is privileged and
protected.

The principles of
morality
expect a conformity onto befitting
rules of conduct.

While inappropriate behavior the
offensive
Is to be tolerated

This is why may criminals go
unpunished.

Our society makes allowance for injustice,
Absorbing the cost of theft. While passing the added
expense to the consumer.

As how many motorists have no insurance coverage,
Expecting the insured to pay
For their neglect.

Giving exemptions
while instilling the rhetoric
Equal for the favor in privileges,
But not in obligation.

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Beyond the Pail
By Carol Karvon

Ever since Timmy was a little boy, he had a passion for digging.

He would sit out in the yard with his sturdy metal pail and shovel and dig holes in the dirt. He'd empty his pail when it was filled and add the dirt to the ever-growing pile. Every so often he'd pour the dirt back into one of the holes he'd dug.

He told everyone he was digging for gold. It didn't matter that his big brother kept telling him you couldn't find gold in the ground because it came from mines. Even though he was just a boy the thought of going down underground to work in a mine didn't appeal to him. Just thinking about that scared him.

He loved being outside in his yard, digging and enjoying the outdoors. He could never work under the earth. He didn't think he'd be able to breathe down there.

His mom and dad just smiled at each other and were impressed with his determination and persistence. When he set upon doing something his stubbornness kept him with it.

They smiled at each other when he told them he'd find gold and get rich.

"When I'm rich," he said, "I'm going to buy you the biggest, best house you want. I'm going to buy you each a wonderful new car too. Then you can each drive wherever you want. You won't have to share the "beast." The beast is what they all called the car they shared now. It had been a hand-me-down from his grandpa years ago, complete with dents and rust spots.

When Timmy was older, he decided he wanted to be an archeologist. That's what he would study when he went to college. In the meantime, his high school advisor suggested he volunteer to go on an archeology dig to try it out.

Being a teenager, he was assigned gofer jobs at first. When the leader of the expedition noticed how willingly Timmy took on every task he was assigned, he asked him if he'd like to help with the digging.

The expedition leader gave Timmy a pail, a shovel and a fine haired paint brush. The brush was used to wipe away any soil or debris from whatever was dug up. Anything they found was sure to be fragile and needed to be handled with care. He led Timmy (now he preferred being called Tim), over to the spot the team was currently digging up and introduced him to the team leader. He was welcomed warmly and shown what they had excavated so far. The team was always happy to get a fresh pair of hands to help with the tedious grunt work.

Tim got right to work and was thrilled when he unearthed a shard of ancient pottery. The team leader verified Tim's discovery and was just as excited about it. One of the others mumbled something that sounded like "beginner's luck." If Tim or the leader heard the comment, neither of them let on and went on admiring the find.

Tim was determined to do the best job he could. He was more enthused about archeology than ever and hoped to discover more items, even if they were only shards of old pottery.

Later in the week when he spoke with his advisor again, he told her how thrilled he was to find anything, even if it wasn't gold. He still dreamt of finding gold, hopefully ancient gold coins or something like that. He hadn't quite given up on his hope of making an important discovery.

In his wildest dreams he became a famous archeologist with several museums wanting to exhibit his finds, particularly the beautiful gold coins. In his dreams the coins would be beautiful and shiny after cleaning. They would surely need cleaning, after all they had been buried for centuries.

In saner moments he believed archeology was the career for him and was excited about his decision. He couldn't wait to start. An added bonus would be showing off to his big brother who had graduated with an accounting degree and was a tax accountant who rarely left the office.

###

Welcome 2024, the Year of the Writer **By Vicki Elberfeld**

Thanks to my writing groups, Pen and Ink as well as Shut up and Write, I managed to write on a regular basis this year. It might not sound like a lot, one personal narrative or essay per month, but that is still more than I've written during any other year of my life. And as 2023 winds down, I'm thinking about ways to motivate myself to do better in 2024. I feel my writing will never improve until I do a good deal more of it.

As a child, I developed some peculiar and seriously limiting ideas about the process of writing. I found it impossible to accept that authors work diligently on editing and rewriting, believing instead that their success was the result of talent rather than labor; I could picture their masterpieces flying from their brains complete and perfect, just as Athena emerged from the head of Zeus, fully grown and beautiful. I regretted my lack of talent.

It is said that with age comes wisdom. I'm not entirely convinced, but in the past half century I've listened, looked around me and noted much of the obvious, coming to the belated conclusion that writing does indeed require hard work. With that in mind, I am resolved to develop some better habits in the coming year, and with the aim of spending more time on task, I have been doing my research, asking every writer I know about their process and reading extensively about the routines of well-known writers.

To my relief, I am finding many ways to develop effective and even comfortable habits for writing regularly.

And what a delight it was to learn that some folks actually write while lying down. Whatever time I get out of bed in the morning seems to be too early, and I am constantly seeking opportunities throughout the day to be horizontal. Only when the sun sets do I feel the energy to sit and stand and walk around, but then I don't feel much like writing. One of my favorite writers, Mark Twain, used to write from bed, propped up on many pillows, with his cigar never far away. Of course he was famous for the quote, "Never put off till tomorrow what may be done [the] day after tomorrow just as well," so perhaps this world famous author and I have more in common than just the desire to write in bed. James Joyce also preferred to write in bed, but lying on his stomach. He suffered serious vision problems, and lying in that position brought him closer to the page. Truman Capote and George Orwell also wrote lying down.

In contrast, Phillip Roth, with his computer on a lectern, wrote standing up to relieve his bad back. He would pace while he did his thinking, concluding he walked half a mile for every completed page. Ernest Hemingway didn't have Roth's back problems, but he too wrote standing up, believing it kept him focused to write terse sentences and put him in a state of mind to make corrections. Lewis Carroll, Charles Dickens, and Virginia Woolf also wrote standing up, whereas Vladimir Nabokov wrote standing at a lectern for the first three hours of every writing day, the next three sitting, and the final three hours he wrote lying down. Thomas Wolfe, at six feet six inches tall, used the top of his refrigerator as a desk and necessarily stood to write. Apparently there are a couple of schools of thought on writing positions, the Nietzschean and the Flaubertian, Flaubert believing that most creative ideas made their appearance while one was sitting with Nietzsche insisting on the need for movement.

I am also curious about the need, or not, to write in longhand. Prolific author, Joyce Carol Oats chooses to compose her notes, journal entries, and first drafts all in longhand before switching to a laptop. For some months I followed the recommended ritual in the Artist's Way which involved writing three pages in longhand every morning as a way of purging our minds of clutter before releasing our creativity, a ritual I plan to return to. Neil Gaiman writes longhand in his early drafts as it helps him focus on what he wants to say while avoiding the temptation to edit as he goes. Steven King mostly uses computers but switches to longhand occasionally to observe the process, remarking that longhand is slow, giving you more time to think. Consequently the end result is more polished.

Then there is the "where" of writing. I recall reading about writers who wrote in Cafés, coffeehouses, and restaurants, freeing them from their home's distractions, the background noise allowing them the freedom to turn inward. As a young college student, I enjoyed going to a local IHop to do my writing, devoting the time I would otherwise use for preparing a meal to my mental endeavors. It also helped that the place was always sufficiently crowded so that the patrons' conversations blended into a kind of white noise, and the waitress would also place a large pot of coffee onto my table. J.K. Rowling, Jack Kerouac, Malcolm Gladwell, Gertrude Stein, Franz Kafka, and F Scott Fitzgerald did some of their most creative writing in such places. But some prefer quiet places. Maya Angela would rent a hotel room and, around 6:15 am, she would begin writing in bed, though she did not sleep, and she would finish up around noon, adding a glass of sherry to her routine.

So there is no shortage of role models and examples of writing habits, rituals, and routines. It's not that I got the idea of writing in bed from the likes of Twain, Orwell or Capote, it's just that I feel more self-accepting about it now. Although I have not yet tried writing in a bathtub full of water as did screenwriter, Dalton Trumbo, and perhaps I never will. Even reading in the bath is a risk as I tend to drop things, including library books. I will also forego some of the more extreme locations such as writing in

an open coffin which was rumored of the poet Edith Sitwell, or putting on gravity boots and hanging upside down to think out stories such as the author of the Da Vinci Code, Dan Brown, did. I do find deadlines motivating, but mine are much less compelling than those of Victor Hugo who was said to have servants hide his clothes so he wouldn't wander off to a brothel rather than meet his deadline. Anyway I lack servants. I suppose for a need I could try writing standing up, for I agree with Sir Thomas Beecham who said, "Try everything once, except for folk dancing and incest." I've already tried folk dancing. And I will give writing in longhand another try.

So, here's to more writing in 2024. Wish me luck!

###

Beyond the Pale By Kelly Tansor

Early this year I was reminded of my "kindness" and what a "kind" person I am. I realized what an incredible weakness that is. I know the saying is, "Don't mistake my kindness for weakness" but it *is* a weakness. People see a kind person and instantly assume (sometimes correctly) that this is a person who can be manipulated. I've had friends literally brag *to my face* that they can manipulate me.

"I can manipulate her."

"I can talk her into it."

"Don't worry, she'll be fine with it."

"Treat her however you want, she'll be okay with it."

"Treat her like garbage and don't bother apologizing, just avoid her for a few months then act like nothing happened. She'll go along with it."

I've had it.

This year, I've stopped being a people-pleaser. I don't bend over backwards for anyone who wouldn't lift a finger for me. I don't go out of my way to accommodate people if I'm simply unable (or unwilling). I don't play nice with people who don't deserve it. I don't keep things casual or friendly if I'm angry with someone.

I smile less. I fight back. I challenge people when I know they're full of it. And I don't hold back.

I don't recognize this version of myself, but I like her. She doesn't take anyone's nonsense. She doesn't let people walk all over her. She calls people out if they even try to manipulate or gaslight her.

Still, this version is lonelier. She has a hard time staying close with others. She's weary of making new friends. Because she smiles less, people take it personally and see her as cold.

That's fine with me. I used to tolerate behavior that went absolutely beyond the pale because I was *so desperate* for love and friends. These days, I'd rather be lonely than taken advantage of.

I wanted to end it there, but it feels wrong to end on such a sour note.

I may be a cynic and a pessimist, but I still have joy in my life. I have my work and hobbies, which bring me a wonderful sense of accomplishment. Being around loyal and trusting friends makes me happy. My family makes me happy. A new addition to my family has brought me more joy than I ever thought possible.

That is what I bend over backwards for. *Those* are the things that make me smile. I'm saving my energy for only the things that matter.

###

Beyond the Paed Fence N. Stewart

Our story begins in Mid-March of a distant year at the Founders celebration. News had traveled far and wide about an evil, circulating the globe, causing much death. Conversations about that were taking place all over at the celebration but being trusting, no one showed any fear or concern. Little did anyone know what was to come.

Our heroine of the story, Lady Elwyna, was among those discussing the possibilities of life in the future and steadfastly believed nothing would change. Even if evil did come here, things would not be different because the elders protected the individual. All remained unruffled for a time when....

One morning while looking out of the castle window and beyond the paed fence, Elwyna found the land covered with a light fog. The fog, she noticed had appeared several days ago and never dissipated even when the sun came out. What could this be she thought? Being the curious type, she donned her ermine cloak, leaving the castle, opened the yonder gate, and entered the land beyond the boundaries of the castle. The fog swirled gently around her, calling her name *Elwyna*, *Elwyna* and pulling her further away from her home. She walked easily, being guided by the gentle calling of her name and followed without question. The fog became heavier and she started to feel that perhaps this wasn't what she wanted. Her steps slowed and she began thinking about where she was. The calling of her name reassured her that all was right and this was the best way for her. She went on, but perhaps less enthusiastically.

She spied a circular clearing ahead where she could see robed entities in a place of sunshine. She approached cautiously to take a closer look. She saw scholars reading, pointing, and talking to each other and knew they were druids, wisemen. She thought that was why she had come on this particular path and began heading in the direction of the scholars.

Suddenly, as if a cape was flung up over a shoulder, her vision of the circle vanished from sight. All that was left was fog, a deeper fog than before. It became difficult to see what was before her. With a gentle wind push, she was encouraged to continue. The calling of her name became more marked and she blindly followed the sound. A shiver went down her spine as she realized evil was ever so near.

The walk was long and tiring. Elwyna stopped to catch her breath. Up ahead she heard music and human voices singing. The fog was so thick now she could not see what caused the sounds to originate. The music was familiar to her and she hummed along, feeling stronger and determined to find its source. She stood tall and moved in all directions, attempting to locate the sound healers. She ran one way and then another. In her confusion she began to run in circles, losing all sense of direction, becoming even more confused. The music was nowhere but it was everywhere, vibrating in all the trees and all the bushes that surrounded her.

A wind picked up and the music abruptly stopped. Elwyna could no longer hear any of the sounds of the music. She fell down onto the ground. And she cried. She was lost in the evil fog, and she feared she never would find home again.

The fog roughly lifted her up off the ground and shouted her name, demanding her to follow. Elwyna didn't want to follow but she knew she couldn't fight the unrelenting calling of her name. Who are you and where are you taking me? She asked. Are you the evil that is spreading over the world? No answer came, and she did as she had been told.

As each step became harder and harder for our heroine to do, she caught a whiff and instantly knew it was the smell of the lake near her village. She at once knew where she was. Her strength and confidence quickly returned. No longer confused by the surrounding fog, she ran toward the smell and found the shoreline. The fog exhaled and began to thin as she ran.

Elwyna followed the shoreline, around to the village and from there she knew her way to the castle. She entered the paled fence gate and looking back saw the fog retreating. She was safe and now home. She had experienced the evil the elders had discussed at the Founders celebration, and now understood and believed that evil is capable of causing concern, fear and changes to the world.

###

Return to Gummi Glenn: Part 8 **By Mark Moe**

A few hours later the Gummi army started its march toward Gummi Glenn. Their presence would have been a surprise to the Ogres, if not for the extremely short Ogre scout named, Toadie. He was posted up in a tall tree with a spyglass and an alarm bell to alert the Ogres. In response to the alarm, General Roggi flung his shield knocking him out of the tree with a bouncing shot that angled up from the ground and then returned to his paws on another reflection. The other wizards near the general shook their heads and one of them said, "Really, General? You always have to have the first attack?"

"I would not be a legendary general of the Great Gummi Army if I did not."

The Ogres' main force relied on infantry because it was extremely difficult to find suitable mounts for seven-to-eight foot tall, Ogres and the fact that Morgana's magic provide massive enhancement to the Ogres weapons and in general.

Winthorpe yelled, "Form ranks, you bunch of green, walking, giant monstrosities! I want three wedge formations! We are going to plow through their infantry, smash their cavalry and scatter their wizards! The conquest of Britain begins with making the Gummi Army to serve me, Lord Iggthorn Winthorpe! Once we add their army to ours, we will be invincible!"

General Roggi dismounted from his horse and gave it to one of the other wizards. He adjusted his shield to his right arm and yelled, "Form ranks, my friends! Wizards enhance the Archers' arrows. Infantry stop their advance! Cavalry prepare to charge!"

General Roggi took his place at the front of the infantry and yelled, "Charge!"

The two armies cleared the distance between themselves in a matter of moments. The points of the Ogres' wedges fell upon the front lines of the Gummi Infantry and were immediately hindered. Between the Gummi cavalry and infantry, the Ogres could not advance.

Both sides were unable to hold their formations and it quickly broke into several large groups.

Fortunately, the Ogres were clumsy in most of their attacks, trying to club large swaths of Gummi warriors. The Gummis smaller and more agile bodies avoided most of the direct damage.

Shockwaves of emerald energy lanced across the battlefield from the Ogres' clubs whenever they pounded directly on the ground. It was most effective at scattering the Gummis for brief periods of time, while also knocking the cavalry from their horses. It seemed like the Ogres were playing the long game by trying to focus on injuring or incapacitating the Gummi Cavalry. The Ogres did not see the benefit of having even more fresh infantry troops for the Gummis. The Gummis capitalized on it to overwhelm more Ogres.

Meanwhile, Lord Winthorpe attempted to use his Catapult Brigade to target the Gummi archers, but was thwarted by one hundred Gummi wizards who tracked the trajectories of each projectile and either redirected it to some place harmless or destroyed them before it reached the archers. Lady Morgana also created opportunities to attack the Gummis across the battlefield, but spent most of the time having to be

on the defensive due to the sheer number of Gummi wizards launching all colors of magical projectiles at her.

"Curse these stupid Gummi bears and their insolent wizards," she exclaimed. As she dodged ten more magical attacks, she realized that the contingent of Gummi wizards attacking her was just barely missing on purpose. They were not trying to kill her, but preventing her from having a major deciding outcome on the battle. She pulled out a small silver hand mirror to communicate to Lord Winthorpe. As she began to speak, the magic of the mirror projected a visual image on Winthorpe's matching hand mirror and she saw his image appear on hers confirming he answered.

"Winthorpe, I need you to keep the Gummi wizards preoccupied. Redirect your catapults to focus on this group that has been keeping me out of the fight. I want them on the defensive. They will regret this insolence with their lives!"

"But what about the Gummi archers? I can not leave them alone! They will have free reign on my troops," he responded.

"They already have free reign on them, you fool! Did you not see that the Gummi wizards are protecting them from every boulder that you flung their way?"

"As you wish my Lady," he responded. It took a few minutes moving the catapults to target the group of wizards. Once he started, a force of Gummi infantry led by General Roggi quickly smashed every single catapult and as Lord Winthorpe looked across the battlefield, he saw most of his Ogre army had been decimated by the Gummies. Everywhere he looked, Ogres were felled like giant trees by Gummi bears bouncing all over the place. The last thing he saw before he lost consciousness was a red and blue shield hitting him straight in the face. The few remaining Ogres surrendered after Lord Winthorpe was taken out. The wizards trapped Morgana in a shrinking magical box that shrank smaller with every futile attack that she lashed out towards them. "This is "Beyond the Pale" of how an enemy should be treated!"

General Roggi responded, "Then quit attacking, you are defeated."

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