

## Pen & Ink Writers' Group

**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.

### Works of the Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group © 2014 Pen & Ink Writers' Group

#### July 2014 selection – Frantic

#### *What's happening?* By N. Stewart

*How did I get this way? What happened to me? I can't seem to even go to the grocery store to shop any more. Good Heavens someone is in line at the checkout counter ahead of me. Oh my gosh there is not one but there are two people in line ahead of me! My mind goes into overdrive and my thoughts run from "I'm going to faint" to "I'm having a heart attack right here, right now." Who's going to know what hospital I've been taken to or perhaps people will just walk around my body to get to the checkout counter. I don't want to make a scene.*

*I begin to ring my hands together over and over. Come, on, come on hurry up. I can feel it building and intensifying with every minute I stand in line. Sweat begins to bead on my hot brow, my face is on fire, my stomach turns over and the bile shoots up into my mouth, and my eyes begin to blur and I can't clear the fuzziness. My mouth went dry, and I can no longer swallow my spit. My hands are sweaty and clammy, my knuckles white as snow as I hold onto the cart handle for dear life.*

*I have to run away – just leave the grocery cart where it is and run, run out the door. I need air...Oh, please help me! Someone help me! I can't do this.*

*As I begin to turn my body to the right to run, a wave of dizziness hits me. I can't move my legs because they won't follow any commands. I'm dizzy. My heart...it's leaping out of my chest and the pain is crushing. I'm going to pass out right here. I'm not crazy. I'm not. This is real.*

My left hand grabs around my throat. *I have to get out of here. I gotta get out of here...now. Leave the cart then. But if I do I will have to shop all over again – then just stay a minute longer, breathe, you can do this. Wait another minute or so and you're out of here. Breathe. Put the groceries up on the belt. Do it. You're next.*

*Hurry up. Please hurry up and put the bags in the grocery cart. Stop talking. I don't know what you said anyway – I can't understand your gibberish. I gotta get out of here. My hand is shaking so badly that I can hardly write the check. Please. I have to get out of here. Push the cart. Walk out the door. Do it. Fresh air – I can breathe. Groceries go in the trunk. Open the car door. Get in. Sit and breathe. Take a deep breath...and start the car when you are ready. Okay, I can drive home now.*

I made it home. I'm safe. I'm better now. No more shaking. No more chest pain. No more dizziness...symptoms are all gone. I feel okay now. That's not normal is it? Maybe I am crazy.

I better go lie down.

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### **Frantic** **By Carol Karvon**

Frantic — An appropriate topic, I think. The first definition listed in Webster's dictionary describes frantic as emotionally desperate.

I get this frantic feeling almost every month when I realize our meeting is just days away, sometimes only one day away and I haven't done my homework. Then it's a scramble to the topic list to see what we're writing about for the current month. Some people may plan their writings ahead of time and write outlines. I've never had much luck with that approach. Sometimes I can plot something in my head, but if I don't write that idea down, it may get lost. Even worse are the times when I plan to write it down later and can't remember what it was because I didn't take a moment to write it down immediately. I'm getting frantic just thinking about this topic!

I may think about the topic and an idea will burst into my brain and I head to pen and paper or my computer. At such times, my fingers seem to fly over the notebook pages or keyboard and my paper will almost write itself.

Other times, I resort to writing down the first words that pop into my head without giving them too much thought. I'll go back to the words and try to connect them into something I can write about. I think this is called a circular approach or method - just letting your random thoughts float to the surface. They almost take on a life of their own. This could be the start of a surprisingly enjoyable story.

To me frantic can be a physical feeling of increasing intensity and frenzy that may or may not result in any solution but can cause anxiety, like running in circles. There's no result or accomplishment involved, just a lot of expended energy and wasted time. Have you ever watched a dog chase its tail, going round and round, but getting nowhere? Do you ever feel like that?

Sometimes being frantic is the result of a scare or frightening episode brought on by watching a movie or TV program. This feeling can become a living, breathing thing

and grows all out of proportion. A few deep breaths and calmness can soothe the anxiety most times. Usually I just try avoiding these kinds of programs late at night.

Did you ever read a book that held you captive? You couldn't put it down because it captured your attention so thoroughly you just kept reading even though you knew it would cause you to have a frantic feeling and maybe lie awake half the night, thinking? You had to keep on reading even though it was causing you anxiety? I try to avoid these books late at night too, but sometimes the urge to read on is greater than the frantic feeling of fear I know will follow.

Sometimes a dream can be so powerful it'll wake me from a deep sleep feeling frantic, anxious and exhausted. A dream can seem so real it becomes physically tiring and emotionally scary. Have you ever awakened from a particularly vivid dream and thought it was reality? You might have dreamt about running away, or falling over a cliff, or getting chased. The feeling of danger is so real you have to shake yourself mentally and realize your home safe in your own bed. Again, deep breathing and a calmer attitude works wonders.

Our minds are very powerful instruments. They can let our imaginations run wild. We may see ourselves in all kinds of dangerous situations just by reading something and inserting ourselves into the story.

Just the word frantic stirs strong feelings within me. I can induce them just by thinking about what the word means; emotionally desperate. I can bring on this state just by thinking about being frantic and how that affects me.

Okay, time for deep breathing and calmness. Aaaaah! Much better!

###

**Probablement La Plus Belle Brochette DeMusiciens De La Creation,  
Au top Absolu DeLeur Talent  
By James Smetana**

I live my life according to the Top 40. But not the Top 40 of today, rather, the Top 40 of yesteryear when music actually had melody, harmony and rhythm. Pull up a chair, young sprout, and I'll tell you all about it! In the year 2525 if Penny Blubaugh is still alive she might just let me host an interactive musical media event at the Eisenhower Public Library. Since I've perfected the art of human cloning (see last month's story) I've gone it a step further and brought back to life entire epochs of music with the standard bearers who made them possible. I started with the classical birds--more correctly the baroque, classical and romantic birds--because that's where the money is. You know that if you ever listen to the beg-a-thon on WFMT: "We need three hundred thousand dollahs in the next five minutes! We need three hundred thousand dollahs in the next five minutes! If you love Carl Grapentine, all 400 pounds of him, call now! He would tell you himself but his mouth is full of scones!"

After I re-introduced the world to Bach, Mozart and Beethoven--not their music but the actual dudes themselves I brought back drunken Janis Joplin, guitar-burning Jimi Hendrix, totally nuts Jim Morrison and the original Willy Wonka of the Rolling Stones, Brian Jones. The 2 dead Wilson brothers (Beach Boys) too! It's kinda crazy--my basement looks like Clone City. As you probably know (if you read the Daily Herald) my

first experiment in the Art of Human Cloning went terribly awry. I got a little careless and sloppy; I guess my enthusiasm just kinda ran away with itself and instead of a regular Suzanne Pleshette, the kind you could take to Family Palace or go shopping with at the Jewels I got an 18 foot monster version of the beloved actress! I have to admit though she came in pretty handy for tree trimming and cleaning out the gutters. The “Suzbuster” I dubbed her. But knowing she was on the loose made me frantic, so I had to put her in a situation where she would not harm herself or others. Right now she’s living in the forest preserve. We drove her over there on top of Miner’s car and I wished her “good luck”. I know I told you I was going to start with Sarah Jessica Parker and that truly was my intention. There’s something about Ms Parker--I can’t put my finger on it--that fills people with a sense of dread. So she’s a funny-looking chick who starred in a bad sitcom--aren’t there hundreds of such people? But it’s Ms Parker who strikes terror in the hearts of otherwise sensible people. And when you get one science catalog you get a hundred. I still can’t believe it: Sarah Jessica Parker’s DNA for only eighty dollars! What a bargain! I’d buy it even if I wasn’t going to use it for cloning. Just to put it on a shelf and look at it. How could I resist? I know some people have “moral” objections to human cloning just like they have “moral” objections to TV sitcoms. So go ahead and let them object. Object all you like! Just don’t rain on my parade, babes, and I promise to keep my Suzbuster out of your back yard!

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**Frantic**  
**By Elvira K. Castillo**

Recently I attended the 80th Anniversary of my old alma mater, Steinmetz High School. The school was built in 1934, the year before I was born. I attended Steinmetz from September 1949 until June 1953, and I have to say it was a great school. The anniversary celebration included five inductees into their Hall of Fame. One inductee was Chuck Schaden, whom I listened to on the radio from 1979 till his retirement in 2009. The show is “Those were the Days” and consists of old-time radio broadcasts. Luckily I’m still listening to it every Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. as Chuck was able to hire a replacement host. I remember Chuck in high school as he was just a year ahead of me. Another familiar name for the Hall of Fame was Hugh Hefner, and I think we all know him.

Going back to the school brought back a flood of teenage memories--things that seemed to be so important to me at the time. Now I wonder why I’d got so frantic about things that weren’t really that critical. One of these frantic situations was the Senior Prom. To me, this was an extremely important event and one that I’d “just die” if I didn’t get to go to it. Problem was, I had broken up with my first and very serious steady boyfriend months before the prom. I don’t even know why we broke up because I was very fond of this guy and thought we’d probably get married some day. All my girlfriends had their steady beaus, but they couldn’t compare to my boyfriend Al. He was two years older than me and very mature. Of course, I was a very naive girl, thinking my life would be work a couple of years and then get married and have a family, as most

young women thought back in the 1950's. I never thought of having a career or that I had 40 plus years of working ahead of me.

Now let's get back to the prom situation. The prom date was getting closer and closer, and the only one I really wanted to go with was Al. I wasn't shy, but I was never forward, aggressive or flirtatious towards boys, and certainly never asked a boy for a date. However, I was beginning to get, shall I say, frantic and wondered if I could swallow my pride and call Al to ask him to the prom. I just couldn't get up the nerve, so I decided to write to Ann Landers in the Tribune and ask her if it would be okay for me to call an ex-beau and ask him to my prom. I looked in the paper day after day, and no response to my letter. The prom was getting closer and, of course, I was really getting more frantic. Finally, I just couldn't wait any longer so I picked up the phone and called AL He apparently still cared about me because he agreed to take me to the prom. He came over to see me before the prom, and even though it was just a few months that we hadn't seen each other, we both had some physical changes -- Al grew 2" and I gained 20-lbs. Now he was 64" and I was a chubbier 5" 1". Al was still glad I called and we were both happy to be back together again. Mom bought me a beautiful pink gown and I found the highest platform shoes, and we made a good looking couple at the prom.

Al and I dated for a couple more years after the big prom, but, unfortunately, marriage wasn't in the cards. He joined the Army and wasn't ready to commit to marriage. At the time, I'm sure I wasn't ready for marriage either. In fact, I learned much later in life, and after a short marriage, that I probably should never have married at all. Don't even know if marrying Al would have worked out. Such is life. I realize now how silly it was to place such importance and become so frantic about minor situations, but I'm still happy I went to the prom and I never forgot Al. As Oprah Winfrey once said, "It's huge to finally embrace the life you never planned on." By the way, Ann Landers did respond to my letter much after the prom and said it was okay for me to call my old beau.

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**Romance on a Dog**  
**(An irrationally fictional animalish story brainlessly concocted)**  
**By Jamey Damert for no known reason**

'Willie Whackaster would surely have been very upset indeed if he had realized that a plethora of bug activity was almost constantly taking place on the dog he had had for 12 years, the mutt named Groucho. As for Groucho, he gave no indication that anything was to be bothered about; not the brightest canine ever to be born, he just figured the itches and bitey things going on in his back and tail were just natural tickles, and he laughed them off in the way doggies have of laughing off things.

In fact, a very strange and wonderful thing was happening toward the tail end of Groucho on his driver's side. Whereas the Fleas and Ticks that inhabited Groucho's body were generally heavily at odds with each other, Billy Flea anti Frances Tick, hereinafter known as Fran Tick, formed a bond with each other that called for an official wedding ceremony, quite spectacularly unusual on Groucho or any other dog that I know of

It is common practice, it occurs to me, that most dog owners employ flea & tick collars or liquid controls or whatever to get rid of these insects, thereby rendering such significant events as that which took place on Groucho quite out of the question. This is a terrible waste of the marital spirit that lies within the little fellows known as fleas and ticks.

Anyway, getting back to Billy Flea and his beautiful bride Fran Tick, a great gathering of Fleas and Ticks gathered at the reception, and there was much singing and dancing, and the fleas engaged in jumping contests and demonstrations. There was blood aplenty, and poor Groucho was having trouble sleeping through the whole blessed commotion, but sleep he did. And the sad fact of it is that he never woke up again.

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## What Does Frantic Mean?

by: Susan J Wilfong

This month's word is Frantic.  
So what does frantic mean?  
The Mariam Webster dictionary  
Has the best definition I've seen.

"Emotionally out of control",  
Is what Mariam has to say.  
There are days in everyone's life,  
When we just feel that way.

It may be stress at work,  
Or an appointment you must attend,  
Or those year-end Holidays,  
That never seem to end.

It could be your children,  
Or a problem with their school.  
It may be those "Extra" kids,  
That are part of your car pool.

You might be low on cash,  
At the end of any given day.  
It may be those bills that come,  
That never go away.

You might be invited to a party.  
And parties are supposed to be fun.  
Then you think of what you have to do,  
Those things you haven't begun.

But, being frantic is not your fault.  
It just how your brain is wired.  
I know from my own experience,  
Being frantic makes you tired.

Worry, is the misuse of the imagination.  
And frantic is exaggerated worry.  
So stop what you're doing and take a deep breath,  
And ask yourself, "Hey! What's the big hurry?"

When you feel frantic,  
Like you're losing your mind.  
Remember, it's not your fault.  
That's how you were designed.

To calm your nerves  
You may try different things.  
You can look at what you have,  
And count your Blessings.

You can sing a song,  
Or go for a walk.  
You can call someone on the phone,  
And just talk, talk, talk.

You can go to the park,  
Or ride on a bike.  
Just take a moment for yourself,  
And do something that you like.

It's much harder at night,  
When you're trying to sleep.  
Your mind keeps racing,  
And into it, strange thoughts will creep.

Wouldn't it be wonderful,  
When your frantic mind races,  
If you could pack up our worries,  
Into your old suitcases.

And put them by the garbage can,  
And hope someone takes them away.  
Then you could relax,  
If only for a day.

In this crazy world we live in,  
Everything is at a frantic pace.  
I wonder if that's why,  
We call it a rat-race.

My lunch break is over  
So I must end this poem.  
I have so much to do,  
Before I go home.

I'm not frantic yet,  
But soon I might be.  
Then this little poem,  
Will be all about me.