

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

June selection – Summer Wind

Surprise By Carol Karvon

Being a teenager at an all girls' boarding school was a great life experience but the lack of boys nearby caused some of us to be obsessed with boys, especially those of us who were boarders. The day students lived in the nearby town and went home every afternoon after school. Some of them had boyfriends waiting for them.

Some girls actually spent a lot of time doodling a boy's name on their notebooks with their name underneath it, all enclosed in a heart with an arrow running diagonally across the whole thing. The creative girls could make this into a work of art. The boy's name would change each time a new crush entered their lives. Much time was spent in wishful thinking and daydreaming.

This was the prevailing atmosphere when a request was sent to the school from the Great Lakes Naval Base for anyone interested in writing to a serviceman. This was a daring and exciting idea to a group of boy starved teenage girls. Anyone interested could check out the list of available sailors to get their names and addresses in the school office at lunchtime or after classes. Our country was not involved in any war or major conflict at this time, but we considered this a patriotic duty; to support the morale of our service men by becoming pen pals.

Those of us who were interested and had the time to write letters chose our pen pal and started writing. My first letter to my pen pal was short and contained only a few details about myself. He answered me very soon afterwards with a few facts about

himself. It seemed we were only a couple of years apart in age, but the similarity ended there.

He was from a small town in Ohio. I was from a huge metropolitan area in Illinois. We came from very different backgrounds, but continued to write. Over the next several months we found we had a lot of things in common, or so I thought.

As we continued our correspondence I started to sense his letters becoming a little more personal and I was beginning to become uncomfortable but I didn't say anything and just avoided mentioning it. Because his letters were leaning towards romanticism, I pictured a tall, handsome sailor — someone akin to a recruiting poster. After all, I was a teenage girl swayed by the idea of romance and like many others, spent countless hours daydreaming.

We stayed at school for most of the month, but students who lived in the area could go home for a weekend visit once a month. And, of course we had the whole summer from the end of May to the beginning of September at home with our families.

I was home from school for the summer but, I usually worked in my parent's restaurant during the summer break. At the time, I resented having to spend my summer vacation working. Looking back I realize my mother was a very shrewd woman. She kept us nearby and busy. We didn't have the time or energy to get into trouble.

I'm not sure if my parents knew about my pen pal, but one day when I wasn't working, my dad said, "there's someone here to see you". I couldn't imagine what he was talking about. I wasn't expecting anyone. I went to the door and was surprised to see two sailors standing there asking for me. I'm not sure how they tracked me down since I had been writing from my school and using that address, but they did.

My pen pal introduced himself and his friend and suggested going out somewhere. After seeing him and thinking of some of his letters, I was not anxious to go anywhere and made up an excuse that I had plans. I think my sister or one of my girlfriends was standing by and agreed with me. That was the last time I had any contact with him. He had made me uncomfortable with some of the things he had written and I had the good sense to realize that at a young age.

Besides, he was not the handsome young sailor I thought of in my mind. He was short, a little chubby, wore thick glasses and had a creepy look. Maybe I was a callous, judgmental teenage girl at the time, but looking back many years later, I think I did the right thing and had no further involvement with my pen pal. I thank goodness our correspondence ended there and that he wasn't the handsome sailor I had pictured in my mind or I may have been more tempted!

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Summer Wind **By Valerie Collins**

As the summer winds usher in the season, so too waft in warm memories of summers past. Some might say that summer is not necessarily the most pleasant of the seasons. Scorching days blister with the heat of the sun. Humid air filled to overflowing leaves skin sticky with sweat. Dry parched stillness of field and sky linger everywhere like a heavy blanket on a hot night. Yet always the scorch and blister, the sticky air, and

the parched stillness eventually give way to welcome summer breezes. Indeed summer simmers with excitement for it is a time to kick up heels, run with the wind and give way to the free spirit longing to awaken from winter slumber.

Rolling back time I remember the little girl donning summer clothes brought out of storage...Polka dot shorts and halter tops to match, colorful swim suits, and baby doll pajamas for nighttime comfort. A new yet familiar wardrobe is one of a small girl's simple pleasures. Early summer mornings bring promise of glorious days to come. With the arrival of this season comes the exuberant feeling of freedom and lighthearted bliss. The rigors of school become a distant memory while fun and frolic are just on the horizon waiting to be inhaled. As the day awakens the summer sun begins to rise stretching its beams across the sky. The air warms as water in a teakettle, slowly rising and promising the heat of a boil. The young girl rushes outside into this summer day ready for anything. Meandering into the woods, which is her backyard, will often be a choice. With dolls and their paraphernalia in tow, imagination runs wild. The sticks and branches will form rooms for a house, the leaves and pine needles will make a fine bed, while pinecones, acorns and wild blueberries become food on the plates of bark. There is content pleasure in this little world.

On especially hot days when summer wind seems to be in repose, the young girl and her mother may take that mile walk down to Lake Eno. Oh the fun to be had there brings on gleeful anticipation. Scramble into that bathing suit! Fetch that towel! Finally off they go! It is a long walk for time moves so slowly when one hungers for the prize of a swim in the cool water. The mother sings to the girl and she joins in the familiar refrain..."Oh come to the church in the wildwood, oh come to the church in the vale. No church is so dear to my childhood as the little brown church in the vale." The destination is now near for they are at the top of the hill. Excitement builds with each scamper and skip down. Now the lake is at hand. Into the cool water goes the girl slowly and gingerly letting the wonderful wetness kiss her skin while the mother sits on a blanket taking in the scene. Such a simple pleasure this lake visit yet one that will live strong in memory. Tired and sunburned, the pair gathers themselves after a wonderful afternoon and trudge back up the hill and down the road toward home. The hard climb underscores the mood of leaving behind such a wonderful adventure.

Always in summer are trips to the ocean and these excursions are the best of the best! Again swimsuits, towels, pails and shovels, and picnic delicacies are packed and piled into the car along with squealing children eager to begin the day at the shore. It is only a thirty-minute ride but seems like an eternity. As the car nears its destination a chorus of voices ring out..."Smell the salt air...see the boardwalk and the rides...look at those waves!" Time to step out of the car and feel that summer wind gliding off the ocean! There is magical coolness at the ocean. First must come the race to ocean's edge, waves rising high only to pour down again in rhythmic motion. The chase to follow the waves pull is followed by the frantic dash to escape its return. Squeals and laughter ring out with this game of chase and dash. "Don't go too far out," warns the mother as she keeps close vigil on her charges. Bravery will surely get the better of these rascals for they will always venture out a bit too far only to discover...again...the heavy handed strength of the swirling water. Like a lasso pulling in cattle so the wave pulls anything in its path with superhuman force. Lesson learned. Again. Soon the children find themselves

in rhythm with the rolling waves. They go out far enough to catch the water's swell then ride it back to shore. They are one with nature's force and splendor.

There must always be time left for playing in the sand. The children begin their rituals of digging holes for water to rush into, creating elaborate sand castles and structures, and burying bodies up to the necks with warm soft sand as they lay down face to the sun. Picnic lunch is passed around. Time out to watch the calming pulse of the ocean keeping time to beating hearts. Hours of this summer pleasure go by when time has come to visit the boardwalk. Pack up the gear, dry wet limbs, brush sand from bodies and trudge to the world of magical fun. Oh the rides, the sweet delicacy of cotton candy, and the stuffed animals won at carnival games are all wrapped up into one prize package! This is the finale of a day at the beach with thoughts of soon returning to this summer wonderland. With windows down, summer winds gently blow coolness on the crew as the car finds its way home again.

Now August has arrived and it is time to celebrate the little girl's birthday. Long tables are set up in the yard among the tall pine trees. Birthday tablecloth, festive plates and balloon bursts of color are assembled. Friends arrive one by one and leave pretty packages adorned with ribbon and bows in a pile begging to be explored. Birthday hats are donned, noisemakers with streamers are sounded and favors of toys and candy are examined. Soon comes the cake with a chorus of "Happy Birthday" to follow. The cake is the girl's favorite and only enjoyed on her birthday for it is that special. Graham cracker whipped cream cake is always the treat of choice on this important day. All through the celebration the summer wind moves through the tall pines and cool the partygoers without them even noticing.

Summer slowly slides into autumn and the summer wind turns a corner with promises to return again. Warm memories are tucked away and new ones are sure to be made with the next arrival of the summer wind!

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"Here come the Kingfish"

By James Smetana

If you want to go to the Old Town Art Fair Saturday I think we should take the CTA. We can get on the 81W bus in front of Allegretti's. The fare is something like two twenty-five or two fifty-- I'm not sure which. We gotta ride to the end of the line then get on the Blue Line. When we get to the Blue Line we gotta pay another fare 'cause they don't issue transfers anymore in case you haven't noticed. I think we should take the Blue Line down to Clark and Lake then transfer to the Brown Line then ride that to Sedgwick. It's kinda circuitous but I think it's still faster than getting off at Damen and riding the (ugh) North Avenue bus east to Sedgwick. If there is a bus line in hell it's the North Avenue bus. Once we get off the train at Sedgwick it's just a coupla blocks walk to where the action is. If we have time we could stop off at Joyce Saxon's for an eye opener. Always a party at Joyce Saxon's! What's the game plan, you ask? Well, I'd like to see Barbra Streisand's Gay Son--they play at four o'clock--and some of Shirley Baugher's cooking demonstration which runs all day long intermittently. And anytime we wanna sit our tired asses down the auction is always good for a laugh: The celebrity auctioneers are all TV news personalities so if you haven't gotten your fill of these pinheads at 5 6 and

10 you can relax with a beer in one hand and a brat in the other as you revel in Kathy Brock's grimace, Jerry Taft's over inflated red-faced bulbousness, Walter Jacobson's grinding nasally voice, Ron Mager's robotic cool and the rapidly aging Jackie Bange. And don't forget Weather Bunny Cheryl Scott! The highlight of the day is gonna be the Rudy visit of course. If you don't know Rudy already you're in for a treat. He's an old friend of the family and a first-rate watercolor painter. He has a real gift; you'll see for yourself. And Victor Ing is not to be missed either: another fine watercolorist, taking a completely different approach and (of course) a good friend of Rudy. If you wanna buy some jewelry for your mom or your sister you'll find some quality items at a fair (unintended pun) price. The weather is always nice so it's a good scene for "people watching." I remember every year a guy used to have a boa constrictor snake wrapped around his neck but I haven't seen that guy in awhile. You'll probably run into someone you know; I almost always do. Last year I saw a Filipino guy who was in my improv class. In the class we had to split into teams of six and give ourselves a name. Ours was "Summer Wind."

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Summer Wind
By Elvira Castillo

Summer Wind - Sounds lovely. One thinks of a nice breeze as you walk along the beach or perhaps the flowers and trees gently blowing while you sip a glass of lemonade on the patio. Sounds lovely, if we in Chicago actually experienced a gentle, relaxing summer wind or breeze.

It may just be me, but is there ever a day--summer, winter, spring or fall--where we have a pleasant wind or just a breeze? My son and I walk a mile or more every day, and every day it's WINDY! I mean WINDY, not just a pleasant, gentle experience. Well, it might not be every day, but pretty close. I have to tighten my sun bonnet or winter hat so it won't blow off my head, and readjust my sunglasses. We pick up debris as we walk along, and many times it blows away from us and we're unable to catch it. Sometimes I think I'm going to be blown away with the debris. In fact, a long time ago, I actually was blown off of a sidewalk by the wind.

This never-ending wind also makes a mess in my yard from my neighbor's trees, one a Weeping Willow, which not only drops leaves but branches everywhere. I sure get my exercise picking up all the branches and raking up leaves continuously. What gets me is that nothing falls in my neighbor's yard because of the direction of the wind. Let me tell you, we have yard work almost on a daily basis due to the wind blowing everything in our yard.

The wind also, as we all know, can be very destructive, too. I consider myself very fortunate when our neighborhood has not been hit by a tornado or have had our roofs blown off or trees knocked down by the wind.

I have to say, I don't remember all this wind when I was young and outdoors playing. I know Chicago is known as the "Windy City," but I think we got the name from our windbag politicians. Perhaps the climate change is causing all this wind, but a nice summer wind or breeze would certainly be welcome and a relief occasionally from the strong winds would also be welcome.

Summer Wind

by: Susan J Wilfong

I fear the Summer Wind.
I fear the blazing sun.
I don't like the raindrops,
Once they have begun.

I certainly don't like snow,
Or the ice that hides beneath.
I don't like being cold.
Or the chattering of my teeth.

I don't like smoking.
I don't like alcohol.
I don't like loud arguing,
That can end up in a brawl.

I don't like waiting for busses.
They never come on time.
I don't like washing windows,
And cleaning off the grime.

I don't like waiting in lines.
I want to be served right away.
I don't like screaming children,
When from their parents they stray.

It seems I don't like anything,
But that simply isn't true.
I enjoy walking,
Especially at the zoo.

I like looking at rainbows.
The ones those raindrops made.
I like those special days at work,
The days that I get paid.

I like reaching my destination.
Wherever that might be.
I like eating fattening foods,
As anyone can see.

I like looking at flowers,
If their aroma isn't too strong.
I like being silly,
Even though I know it's wrong.

I like hanging out with my family.
I like hanging out with my friends.
I like going places,
Where the fun just never ends.

The Summer Wind is a lot like me,
I see, from this little poem.
We both are hot and cold at times.
And in freedom we like to roam.

So now you know of the Summer Wind,
And a little bit about me.
We know how quickly things can change.
And how wonderful it is to just be.

A Problem with Ants Wafted in by Those Summer Breezes

by Jamey Damert—cheater deluxe

“What are we going to do with these ants?” Mr. Ebenezer Kneefisher asked his wife, as if the poor woman, having an I.Q. barely above the single digits, could possibly know. The basement of the Kneefisher home, you see, was being overrun with the dastardly little creatures.

But his wife nevertheless hazarded a guess as to what might be done. “Why not call the exterminating people?”

“I guess I could do that,” Ebenezer sheepishly admitted. “I shall consult the phone book straightaway.”

Mrs. Emma Kneefisher, who had the enviable habit of paying absolutely no attention to her husband, said, “Why don’t you look into the phone book?”

“An excellent idea, dear,” Ebenezer said, having forgotten by then that the idea was his own. The man was getting old, and his memory, which had never been an enviable commodity, was failing rapidly.

After a short time, Ebenezer announced proudly, “I believe I’ve found it. Listen to this.” And lo! Emma listened. “Are you being antagonized by ants? We have the antidote. Send us \$35 and anticipate never having to call on an exterminator ever again.’ How does that sound, dear?”

“Let us go and destroy the piggy bank,” Emma boldly responded in her assent. It was true that the Kneefishers actually kept a bank roughly in the shape of a wart hog in which they kept funds to be used for household improvements. And certainly the elimination of the insect problem fell squarely into this category.

“Yes, and so we shall.” Ebenezer went and got the bank. After 20 minutes attempting to extract the cork ever so well shoved into the swine’s belly, Ebenezer took to whacking the thing with a sledgehammer. The piggy bank was utterly destroyed and the handle of the sledgehammer broke in two, too.

It was discovered that the coins in the bank added up to a bit over \$50, well past the amount needed to pay for the guaranteed eradicator of unwanted bugs and a new sledgehammer, to boot. Thus it came to pass that Ebenezer made the call. He was informed that what he ordered would be shipped immediately.

And immediately it must surely have been sent, for in a mere two days a delivery truck found its way to the front door of the Kneefisher home, lodgings for two peoples and numerous uninvited insects.

A driver left the cab of the vehicle and deftly climbed into the trailer. The Kneefishers watched expectantly as the man came forth with a closed crate approximately three feet square. He obliged Ebenezer to sign something acknowledging that he was in receipt of the parcel.

“Well, let us see what we have here,” Mr. Kneefisher said to his lovely wife when they had carried the box into the living room. He took a pry bar and began to open the mysterious container. He was surprised to hear a curious hissing sound.

“What was that?” Emma asked, having heard the selfsame foreign sound.

The pry bar having become hopelessly misshapen, Ebenezer naturally went for his new sledgehammer to finish the job. He slammed it into the side of the box and heard additional hissings as the side of the container fell away and a small creature left its enclosure.

“Egad,” both Kneefishers exclaimed in unison as they watched a young opossum make its way to where the ants clustered in profusion and proceed to devour them with furious abandon.

“We did good,” Emma wisely observed, and her husband nodded in agreement.

[in exactly 600 words]

