

## **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**

#### **October 2014 selection – Gale**

##### **Gale**

**By Susan J. Wilfong**

A "Gale" is a strong wind.  
At least that's what Mr. Webster writes.  
That seem to come in the early mornings  
Or during the late nights.

It never ceases to amaze me,  
Just how weak we humans are  
How things we can't even see,  
Are stronger than us, by far.

We can't see the wind in a "Gale",  
But we can feel that the wind is strong.  
It picks up heavy objects  
And just carries them along.

Lawn furniture and garbage cans,  
Fly through the air with ease.  
Sometimes trucks and houses,  
Are things the wind will seize

I've never witnessed a "Gale-force" wind.  
But I have seen pictures on TV.  
The destruction that is left behind,  
Is some of the worst that I would see.

Cars, on top of trucks,  
Gently perched there, up-side-down.  
Trees and garbage scattered.  
All over the once, much cleaner, ground.

Houses, stores and hotels,  
May be missing a roof or a wall.  
People standing, just staring in shock  
Wondering when the rest will fall.

Many times I wonder,  
How things got their name.  
I figure, Gail must have been a "Blowhard"  
So a strong wind was named the same.

I've only known one Gail  
And that was back in school.  
She certainly wasn't a "Blowhard"  
But she was as stubborn as a mule.

###

**How a Mighty Gale and Castoff Lasagna in Conjunction  
Altered My Life's Perception  
Thunked up by Jamey Damert in 921 words**

What first came to mind when contemplating writing this story, and you may be sure contemplated a'plenty, was Gale Storm—what a name!—singing 'Dark Moon' so beautifully when I was an early teenager. However, this is not a story about Gale Storm. Indeed, it's about a completely different person, that person being none other than the one and only Gas Tonly, a stranger to himself before he met and got to know himself. Now he is a new man, which in no way is in any way meant to imply that at some past time he was an old woman. Of course not. That would be silly, and I am not a person to countenance silliness in any way, shape, or form no how and no ways. And let that be an end to the matter!

Anyway, old Cas, who chose to trudge through life using his middle name, which was Eusebius, figured he'd attend a football game on this day I'm writing about, even though he hated football, but at least it was better than golf, as he reckoned it. The thing of it is, someone had given him a ticket, and he couldn't bear to see it go to waste. So he got all

ready and drove over to the stadium. He dressed especially warmly on account of he'd heard on the radio that the weatherman, who incidentally was a meaty urologist, foretold that very strong winds were positively imminent, or at least there was a heavy chance of some windiness to come by.

Eusebius planted himself by one of the foul posts, a really foul one, he supposed, because no one was sitting anywhere near him. It wasn't long before the predicted winds were gusting their way hither and yon. Before many minutes passed, it was obvious that the game was taking a turn for the worse. A man threw the ball in a certain direction, but the winds took the ball and carried it off to some other random location. At intervals things did calm down somewhat and play resumed until—whoosh!—another blast of cantankerous air would completely mess things up again. It seemed quite obvious that the game would at some point—and soon—have to be postponed or terminated or something, but no one seemed ready to make that decision, and so several hours went by of unnecessary terrifying confusion.

Then it hardly seemed possible but things really began getting out of hand. I mean, things were getting tangibly rough. A smallish footballer, as footballers go, found himself being utterly blown away into who knows where. I was pelted hither and yon by articles of attire and eventually even body parts. It was very unpleasant, let me tell you. Was this CSI or reality? The stands of football devotees were gradually thinning out as one by one this person and that got carried away. A few more football players went away, too, and with them one of the referees, merrily blowing his whistle into the wind. It sounded like “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” Man, was the poor fellow ever disoriented, as well he should have been, too.

At one point Eusebius vaguely recalled being smashed in the head by a wayward quarterback or rear end or whatever with three or four cheerleaders in toe. He passed out from the force of the blow and was out cold for a substantial amount of time. Eventually Eusebius groggily gathered his wits together and took in the scene that lay before him. He grabbed hold of a passing paper towel and dried himself off.

Apparently all the players, fans, and referees got blustered away until eventually Eusebius realized that he was the only one left sitting there. Where had all the others gone? Clearly that was not his problem, but he couldn't help thinking about it. And why did he alone remain? Gradually the gale subsided and Eusebius viewed an idyllic scene of wondrous greenery, a park with all semblance of footballing cast away into unknown lands. The gale had galed itself out completely, and only a strange peace and calm came to the forefront.

The trees, what trees remained after the harrowing onslaught, moved barely, if they moved at all. What an extraordinary change had taken place in such a short time. Further reflection brought to mind the sobering realization that Eusebius was quite alone in the vastness of the present topography. He spoke unto himself, but none was there to hear him except himself, and the truth is that even Eusebius could barely hear himself on account of a congenital hearing loss that he had borne since he was born, which was why

it was congenital. Please excuse my redundancy, which follows only because I was once dundant, I guess, though I cannot for the life of me remember being that way.

Eusebius sat there for a long time reflecting on that strange afternoon. And when he finally prepared to leave, he discovered that he could not stand up. After fumbling around for what seemed an eternity, Eusebius extracted himself from his outer layer of clothing and discovered that he had been sitting on—and apparently glued to—someone’s castoff meal of lasagna with marinara sauce—and perhaps a wad of used up Wrigley’s chewing gum, too.

What strange things life gives us to be thankful for!

**The End**

###

### **The Weeping Willow Storm**

**By Elvira K. Castillo**

I don’t need a gale storm to feel like I’ve been in one--You see I have a gigantic Weeping Willow tree in my next-door neighbor’s yard. I’ve tried everything possible to persuade him to “cut it down,” but no soap!

Every time there is the least bit of wind--and not the 32 to 63 miles an hour wind like a gale--long switches of branches detach from the tree and fall only in my yard. Not the tree owner’s yard, not the neighbor’s yard on the other side of me--only my yard! Unfortunately the wind direction is always blowing towards the North and keeps my neighbor’s yard clean as a whistle, while I get all the debris.

Not only is it on the ground, but it fills my gutters up more than once a year. In fact, just a few days ago, I looked up at my roof, which is two stories high, and I think I spotted a small willow tree growing in the gutters. My son and I clean the gutters on the garage in the spring and fall, which are now sagging from the weight of the debris, but we’re not even going to attempt cleaning gutters on the second story of our house.

Believe me, this Willow may be beautiful in full bloom, but it is a real menace to my property. Our yard is literally buried in Willow branches and leaves in the fall. You can’t even see the grass and it’s impossible to rake all the leaves that look like tons of silver fish everywhere. Also, the branches are like whips and hard to manage. I always wear safety goggles for fear the whipping branches might cut my eyes while putting the branches in plastic bags or the garbage container.

There are various stories on why the Willow tree weeps. Well, my story is I’m the one weeping while I clean up the blustering gale of tree branches and leaves, and my neighbor sits cozily in his home, drinking beer and watching Blackhawk or Bears games.

###

**Tom Hanks is a Remarkable Walt Disney**  
**By J. Smetana**

Clouds in my coffee  
rocks, skateboards, buckets, pumpkins  
White People Dancing

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**A Halloween Birthday Party**  
**By Stephanie Tonn**

It was Sarah's 7th birthday and it also happened to be Halloween. Sarah really enjoyed dressing up in a costume at school the day before. Today was Saturday, October 31; Sarah was so excited to celebrate her birthday that she woke up at 5am. Her mother, Diane was used to her daughter waking up early on her birthday. Last year Sarah woke up at 4:30 and the year before that she woke up at 4:00 am. Diane could never get Sarah to go back to sleep the morning of her birthday.

Sarah liked to celebrate her birthday during the day and she was looking forward to trick or treating after dinner. Sarah was excited to wear her Cinderella costume that her grandmother sewed for her. She couldn't open her presents fast enough. Sarah could see her mother eyeing her because she did not say thank you for her presents. After dinner it was finally time to trick or treat! Sarah was walking with her brothers and sister as she felt a gale of wind blow her chocolate brown wig away from her face. She enjoyed the light fall breeze moving across the air. It was 65 degrees today, and a rather warm Halloween night. It was the first year since she started trick or treating that she didn't have to wear a winter coat and winter boots under her costume.

As Sarah and her siblings approached her grandmother's house she knew grandma would have a birthday surprise for her and a little something special for her siblings, too. As grandma opened the door a gale of laughter filled the outside air because grandma was dressed as Cinderella's evil step-mother. Sarah and her siblings couldn't believe it was grandma. Her costume was identical to the image of Cinderella's evil step-mother. Sarah's grandmother approached her grandchildren with a cake with lit candles for Sarah's birthday.

Grandma's house was the last house they trick or treated at that day. The family went inside to enjoy some more cake together. Sarah's nose turned up as she stepped foot into her grandmother's house because it smelled like carrot cake--Sarah's favorite cake!! At the end of the day grandma made Sarah's birthday even better. The house was filled with a gale of laughter and the scents of fall weather on an unseasonable warm evening.

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**A Storm Heading This Way**  
**By Carol Karvon**

The radio was on in the kitchen but they weren't really listening and barely heard the last part of a weather alert. The weatherman said something about "gale force winds." Mom was on the phone in the other room and just then walked back into the kitchen.

"Well, Johnny, that was the room mother from your school. Classes are canceled for tomorrow because of a storm heading this way with gale force winds expected and maybe large damaging hail. They're saying that trees could be uprooted and cars overturned. The heavy rain might cause rivers to overflow and flood the streets. So I guess we'll be staying in tomorrow. We can always bake cookies. How about making some of your favorite cookies?"

"But why do we have to stay in," asked Johnny.

"And what about me, do I still have to go to school," asked Mary. "It isn't fair," she said and stalked out of the room,

Johnny erupted into gales of laughter and mom wanted to know what was so funny. "I have a girl in my class named Gail. I'd sure like to see her blow down trees and turn cars over. I didn't know she could do that," he said.

"No, silly boy," said Mom. "It isn't your friend, Gail, they're talking about. They mean gale force winds. These very strong powerful winds can cause lots of damage. That's why school is closed and we've been advised to stay home, in the house, in a safe spot. So it has nothing to do with Gail from your class."

"And, Mary," Mom said, "I'm sure someone will call us from your school soon. In the meantime let's watch the news and see if they're listing school closings. Your school might have called the TV station instead of all the students."

Just then the phone rang again and everyone jumped to answer it. Mary reached it first, being a teenager and anxious to hear from her friends, especially a certain one named, Tom.

"Oh, it's just Dad," she said and gave the phone to her mom.

They heard mom say, "Oh, no, but I guess it's better to stay safe. Let us know when you can leave. Bye, love you, too."

"Well, seems this storm is huge and affecting a big part of the country. Your dad is stuck at the airport and all flights have been canceled. He'll be lucky to get out of there and home sometime late tomorrow. He'll be sleeping on a cot in the airport, waiting for the

storm to pass. So I guess we're lucky to be "stuck" at home where it's warm and dry. Now let's see if we have everything we need to make those cookies tomorrow so we can have a treat for Dad when he gets home."

"Okay," said Johnny, "but it would have been more fun to see Gail knock over trees and cars. I miss Dad and wish he could come home tonight. He always brings me the best gifts when he goes away."

"Oh, you're such a child," said Mary, "All you ever think about is what you're going to get when dad gets back. I just want him to be safe."

"Hey guys, I miss him too, said Mom but there's nothing any of us can do right now, but hope and pray the storm passes quickly without too much damage."

A bulletin flashed across the TV screen announcing all schools in Center City would be closed the next day. Mary was happy about that and rushed out of the room to call her friends. Now they would spend hours on the phone discussing their favorite topics, boys and other girls.

"Mom," said Johnny, "can we mix up the chocolate chip cookie dough tomorrow? I'm too tired for baking tonight."

"Me too," said Mom, "All this drama has worn me out. Now let's hope our electricity doesn't go out. I think I'm going to read a little while and then get to sleep. You can watch TV for 30 minutes and then up to bed for you. See you in the morning. Maybe the storm will pass us by without too much damage. Anyway, things always seem better in the morning. 'Night."

"Okay, Mom, good night. Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite! Ha, ha, gotcha!"

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### **While Shakin' in My Shoes**

**By Nancy Stewart**

It was a vacation and like some vacations things don't always work out as planned. Who knew the polar vortex or whatever it was would descend south into Wisconsin in October, bringing chilly weather and gale-force winds.

It was the last fishing trip of the season, the last time to catch one fish after another, the last time to take the boat on the water, the last time to enjoy the profusion of autumn reds, oranges, yellows and browns on the trees nestled along the shore.

The bay where we launch looked rather calm and peaceful as compared to what the weather report advised. The winds didn't appear to be 20 m.p.h., "coming out of the

Northwest with expected gusts up to 40 m.p.h.” As we looked on, we threw caution to the wind and set sail out of the bay for open waters. Immediately, just out of the sheltered bay area, the wind picked up, but it would be fine or so we thought - perhaps just a little choppy.

The trolling motor dropped through its slot and the propeller blades began to turn, heading straight for shallower water and for those elusive small-mouthed bass. Steering in a straight line against the waves was manageable, and to avoid objects in the water we needed to be able to move right and left. Something was wrong with the motor as we could only maneuver to the right. As my companion worked on repairs, we slowly circled around and around in the vortex of a whirlpool. We started the big motor and slowly headed for the nearest private boat dock as a cover from the wind. The wind too strong just took over and heaved us directly into the dock. The trolling motor smashed into the wood frame of the dock, breaking the handle off and cracking the side of the already out-of-commission trolling motor. To keep the rest of the boat and other motors from hitting as we were tossed around we physically strong-armed the dock.

To get away from the dock, using the big 150 horsepower motor, we struck the shallow lake bottom and as the motor revved, the rocks and sand tore at the propeller blades, sheering off or unmercifully curly each of the blades. The motor limped and cried its way out of the dock area against the wind.

But don't lose hope, we still had one more motor to use for fishing, the so-called kicker, and we managed to fish, catching little, for several hours before the wind finally reached its projected speed and though partially sunny the temperature dropped to 40+ something degrees.

Enough is enough. By now I had reached the extreme upper limits of my being cordial, loving, and forgiving so we headed back into the bay. As we side-smacked into the launch dock, I jumped out and with the rope attempted to tie up the boat, but the boat and driver pulled away, taking the rope from my hand. There I was standing on the dock, watching as the boat slid off to deeper waters. I yelled, “What are you doing and where are you going?” And, an ill-tempered reply came back, “It's freakin' windy out here!” You think? Just notice that now!

We managed to tie up the boat along side of the dock and retrieved the trailer. But that part wasn't going to go smoothly either. By now, I'm back in the boat, assisting with landing maneuvers. Because of the wind pushing at the boat and the lack of control from the shattered prop, the boat was off-center on the trailer and we had to reload. As I was leaning over the gunwale, pushing a paddle against the dock to center the boat against the wind, the car lurched backward, almost, but not quite, sending me into the water. We managed to get the boat on the trailer, but not before my companion slipped and unwittingly did a comedic routine, attempting to grab everything in sight as he fell into the water, landing on both feet in water up to his knees. Of course, all I could do was yell out his name and yell to be careful. Oops, sorry, too late.

Given the facts of that particular day, perhaps it would have been wiser not to have gone out at all. But hindsight is always better than foresight. Back on dry land, safe and calm with a glass of Pinot Noir in hand at dinner, the day didn't seem to be all that bad; after all it was still vacation.

###

**Fill Me with a Gale of Promise**  
**By Valerie Collins**

Fill me with a gale of promise as I gaze upon the earth,  
earth exploding with the wonder of Creator's power and mirth.

Help me see the awesome splendor in the sky at dawn's first light  
teaming with the golden hues, take pleasure in my sense of sight.

Let me walk about the fields and step among earth's treasures,  
soaking nature's bounty in, regaling in the pleasures.

Guide me to appreciate the gifts both big and small,  
the sweet rebirth in spring and the brilliance of the fall.

Lead me to sweet gratitude for animal and plant,  
from trees of mammoth stature to the tiniest of ant.

Let a gale of wonder fill my soul with pure delight,  
striving to appreciate and championing what's right.

May I be a steward to the sky the earth and sea,  
realizing the precious gifts entrusted thus to me.

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