

## **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.

### **Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group © 2015 Pen & Ink Writers' Group**

#### **January 2015 selection – Legacy**

#### **A Bad Experience on a Job Search** By the one and lonely Jamey Damert

“Mr. Gnurd, is it?”

“Is your name.”

“Is my name what? You do have a way of getting off the subject, and I don't mind telling you I'm finding this all a bit confusing.”

“As well, I think, you should, and I am entirely in accord.”

“In accord? Does that mean you are tied up? I could come back at another time if it would be more convenient.”

“No, no. I think it best we get this over with as quickly as possible.”

“Very well, then, let's get on with it.”

“The agency said something about the work you did prior to finding yourself being sent to us. Forgive me. I'm having a little difficulty finding your papers. Could you just tell me what it is you've been doing these last, say, 10 years or so?”

“I could. Yes, I definitely could. And I might if I had a mind to, and I might just have a mind to, but I don’t, as it turns out.”

“You mean you are refusing to divulge to me the nature of the work you performed immediately before coming here?”

“I don’t know that I am refusing to divulge anything, young man, for, you see, in actual fact I was not, properly speaking, involved in doing any work.”

“If you did not work, Mr. Gnurdt, how was it that you were able to obtain funds to, among other things, eat? It’s obvious you’ve been well fed for many a year. Perhaps you have some rich relatives who fund you, is that so, my good fellow?”

“No one, to my knowledge, is or ever has been in any way related to me. I’ve been quite on my own for way longer than I care to remember.”

“If not by work or sponging off relatives, then how did you come upon the wherewithal to maintain your existence?”

“Aha, I take it that you are asking me by what means have I been able to keep myself ticking, is that not so?”

“In a word, yes. I believe you’ve fallen upon my gist, Mr. Gnurdt.”

“Well and aptly put, sir. The nature of the means by which I was able to obtain the necessary ready cash to purchase my daily bread is from being a successful almsman.”

“Do you mean to stand there and tell me that for the past 10 years you’ve been a beggar?”

“Your terminology is a bit harsh, but, yes, I believe you’ve hit squarely upon it. I have been a mendicant—and a rather fine one, if I may say so. None better.”

“Well, I suppose that’s a wee bit better than being engaged in the profession of, say, shoplifting or wholesale plundering.”

“Quite so, quite so. Upon that we seem to be in 100% agreement.”

“As for your getting the job, however, it is patently out of the question for, you see, the position we advertised for never really existed. We were just checking to see if anyone would be stupid enough to respond to such a ridiculous ad. Your presence here makes it clear that there is. And for that, we thank you heartily, Mr. Gnurdt. We wish you continued success in the nature of your calling.”

“You mean I can go now?”

“It is highly advisable that you do so, Mr. Gnurdt. I very much hope that I shall not have recourse to summon our bouncer. He is a most uncivilized fellow and has been responsible for the bloody deaths of an impressive number of men and women.”

Mr. Gnurdt took the hint so severely laid before him and left at once, never to return to that place or any other ever again.

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### **One's Life Legacy** **By Elvira K. Castillo**

Legacy, according to Webster's Dictionary, refers to a gift by will, especially money or personal property; bequest; something received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past. This definition threw me off, because I planned to write about a person's legacy-like was he/she a good person, has he/she contributed to our society, etc. But, there was no reference to how a person's life might be remembered. I thought, am I wrong in thinking of "legacy" in this way? However, in Governor Pat Quinn's final speech, he hoped his "legacy" as a public servant would come up to his father's "legacy" as a war hero. I've also heard remarks on TV on what President Barack Obama's "legacy" will be. So, I will stick with my original thoughts on "legacy" -- Thus "One's Life Legacy!"

In fact, the beginning of a New Year is a perfect time to think about one's legacy, as it is a time of resolutions and change, and hopefully the changes we wish to make will lead to a richer legacy of our lives. Remember Scrooge, who was a selfish miser who had empathy for no one? Money was the only thing he cared about. His legacy was certain to be one of a cruel, greedy, mean man with a heart of stone. However, Scrooge was visited by three ghosts, one from the past, the present, and the future. The enlightenment of the three phases of his life helped him decide to change his ways, and therefore his "legacy," and he quickly became a kind, generous, loving man with a heart of gold.

In reading the newspaper over the New Year's holiday, there were many suggestions as to how we might help to change our ways like Scrooge, as I believe most of us would like to have a positive rather than a negative life legacy. For example: (1) Try to get better from whatever you did the year before. (2) Be a better friend, family member, neighbor, parent, citizen, etc. (3) Be caring and generous with your time and energy. (4) Contribute to society in whatever way feasible. (5) Practice gratitude and count your blessings. (6) Keep sight of what's really important. (7) Enjoy today. (8) Go easy on yourself, and give yourself permission to be human as we all have setbacks. These are just some of the suggestions given on how we might reset our lives and make amends for the past and present and try to prevent a disastrous future, bettering our "legacy" after death. We don't need ghosts to visit us, but we can think about how our relatives, friends, children, etc. will feel when it's our time. Will our "legacy" be, "Who cares about that stingy, miserly old crow" or will it be one of, "Such a great loss for a kind, generous and thoughtful contributor to society, regardless of what he or she left as a material gift or inheritance?"

Be true to yourself. Change is possible, but difficult. A good start is to be forgiving, both to yourself and to others. Or, perhaps you don't care about your legacy?  
Elvira K. Castillo

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**“Say No to Higher Gasoline Prices!”  
By James Smetana**

It was a dark and stormy night when Marge asked me about my legacy. “Do you ever think about your legacy?” was how she put it. I tried to ignore her; I thought maybe she was talking in her sleep, made restless by a so-called Chicago Style Deep-Dish Pizza. Or a Depp-Dish Pizza, Method Actor Johnny Depp now filming the bio-pic “The Lou Malnati Story”. For the part Mr. Depp has constructed hundreds of delicious pizzas at a top-rated local pizzeria. Mr Depp is known as Mr Deep for delving deeply into the research for his filmic roles. Marge loves to put me on the spot without really trying. I would never dream of asking her such a loaded question. It's more than loaded; it's a booby-trapped atomic bomb minefield! How do I dismantle this Engine of Doom without getting blown to smithereens? Do I cut the blue wire first or the red one? One thing that drives me nuts about Marge is her strange habit of removing the backing paper from a sheet of postage stamps. As she uses them she trims off the backing paper so the sheet gets smaller and smaller and harder to find. I tell her to leave it until it's completely used up then toss it, but she can't resist her weird compulsion. Sometimes there's some information or a little story on the backside I like to read, but once Marge gets going away with those scissors it ends up looking just like some surrealist poetry. I learned a long time ago that Life With Marge is a kind of give and-take. Some of that stuff, I just have to let it go.

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**Legacy  
By Valarie Collins**

What is your legacy? What is mine? Is it prudent to go down the path of exploration in pursuit of this topic? There probably is a point in ones life when thoughts of legacy occur. And it probably is wise to ponder on what our personal legacies might be.

I believe it reasonable to state that who we become by the time we reach an age of maturity is an amalgam of the dispositions we are gifted with at birth, and the myriad of life experiences. What we hand down to those who come after us then is the mark we make in our world. Indeed it is our legacy.

Great authors leave a rich literary legacy, great philosophers leave profound views on life, artists leave creative works and visions while scientists and mathematicians leave a legacy that shapes our world. Yet in many ways both great and small we the everyday people leave a legacy of rich views filled with creativity and vision that impact the world around us.

For me it is a legacy of love. I hold important the love we give to and receive from God our Creator. I believe in the love of self, which grows self-respect yet remaining selfless when called for in different situations. I hold dear the respect for life...for all people and of all ages. I believe in the idea of inclusion, embracing mankind no matter the race, religion, culture, persuasion, age or ability. These things are born of love. I am led to care for the earth and its life within. I desire kindness towards animals, growing things from the earth for beauty and health, respecting and caring for resources and embracing the magnificence of our planet. I highly value the act of kindness, which leads to the qualities of compassion, gentleness, thoughtfulness and charity. These things I aspire to and hope to attain if only for a portion of my time on this earth.

Finally I see this legacy shift down to my children, my five sons, and hopefully to their offspring. I observe their delight in small and growing children, their love and compassion for animals, their concern for the weak and less fortunate, their generosity and their embrace of inclusion. These sons and indeed all of us are a work in progress to be sure and remain far from perfect. We strive for less focus on the material and more on the spiritual. I am grateful for the quest. I am content with this legacy.

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**I'll Always Be with You**  
**By Phyllis Babbs**

“The light hurts my eyes,” the woman in the bed said. “Just turn on the night light.

The little girl turned on the night light and then she stretched to reach the switch to turn off the overhead light. She crawled up on to the bed next to her mother. She sat very still, her face somber, her eyes large and sad on her small face. She wanted to ask her mother a question. She knew her mother was sick, “Mama are you going to die?”

The woman caught her breath. “Everybody dies. Animals die. Plants and trees die.”

“What happens when you die?” the little girl asked.

“Part of what happens is that your soul leaves your body and goes to heaven. That’s the part of you that can’t be seen but the part of you that can be seen, your body stays here on earth.” How could she answer her child, her baby’s questions?

The girl’s lower lip began to tremble. “You mean I can’t see you anymore when you die?”

“I love you and I’ll always be with you, even if you can’t see me. When you love someone they are always with you, here,” she said putting her hand over her daughter’s heart. “But you and I have a special connection.”

She took her daughter's hand. "Look at your little finger." The little girl looked at her the little finger, the finger that wasn't quite normal. "Now look at my little finger," the woman said as she held up her hand.

A smile spread across the little girl's face. "They're the same!"

"You have my little finger. I'll always be with you. Whenever you miss me, just look at your little finger."

The little girl sighed; she put her head on her mother's shoulder and stretched out. She reached over and intertwined her little finger with her mother's little finger. Slowly her eyes closed and she quietly drifted off to sleep. She smiled softly in her slumber.

The mother rubbed her daughter's hand and said a silent prayer of thanksgiving, for the not quite normal little finger that would bring comfort to her child when the time came.

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### **Legacy**

**By Susan J. Wilfong**

I've been thinking about this word  
And what it means to me.  
I thought long and hard,  
Of what my legacy could be.

I'd like it to be a saying.  
Maybe something catchy or cute.  
Maybe something deep and thoughtful.  
Or maybe something astute.

To do this, I need to look inside myself,  
To see what makes me tick.  
I hope that the things I find inside,  
Won't gang up and make me sick.

Maybe, if I just peek inside,  
Then things won't be so scary.  
But I know that it will still be me,  
So I need to remain wary.  
Yes, I've thought about my Legacy  
And what I'd like it to be.  
I have looked inside myself,  
To see what makes me, me.

I really don't think my legacy could be

Catchy, cute or deep and thoughtful,  
Definitely not astute.  
That just isn't me. And that would be quite awful.

“The one, who snores, is the first one to fall asleep.”  
Or, “One day at a time.” or, “At least she tried.”  
Are all great Legacies  
That can't be denied.

Since I won't have a “Legacy”  
Until after I am dead.  
I will never really hear  
What anyone might have said.

So, why am I wondering,  
What my Legacy should be?  
Let me just live in this day  
And let me, be me.

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### **Legacy of a Generation** **By N. Stewart**

In my mind legacy is a very big word and as such too big to be used on an individual for a singular purpose, but rather used here to describe a generational significance or a change that happened over a specific length of time. The so-called Baby Boomer Generation born immediately after World War II has influenced the world by changing the accepted status quo. We are the largest generational group ever to be born, to have prospered, and will live well into old age.

Born in the aftermath of the WWII, we have since viewed and participated in the so-called military actions of Korea, Viet Nam, and the Middle East. We've been too young to understand the dynamics of war; we've spit and turned our backs on returning soldiers for following orders of the leaders of our country; we've condemned terrorism for 9/11, with vigorous flag waving and seeking revenge. We are doves. We are hawks. We are indifferent.

The Boomers experimented with drugs in the 60s and 70s, claiming going from marijuana to hard drugs and back had no effect on the mind. Yet, we watched as individuals flew through windows and jumped from buildings, became catatonic and totally wasted, or tripped out on LSD mesmerized by the psychedelic colors flashing in their heads. (Peace, my brother.)

Gathering at Woodstock and the like, freedom to speak was loudly expressed and not always eloquently voiced in appropriate language, but securely protected by the First

Amendment. Freedom from forbidden, illicit sex no longer under the guise of marriage became the new standard. Make Love Not War was the well-touted catchphrase. There was the “pill” and abortion if that didn’t work. Naked actors stood in all their glory on Broadway’s stage, singing about a red, white, blue ...and yellow flag while holding up two fingers on each hand, symbolizing peace.

Baby Boomer women are intelligent, educated, strong, and demanded to be recognized as equals. We paraded, we spoke out; we fought in court for our rights. We were heckled, jeered, booed and hissed, but we stood tall and straight, and won. (Here’s to our sisterhood.)

All Boomers were involved in the growth of the computer as it went from being housed in a huge room to fitting in the palm of the hand. We loved the Dick Tracy and Star Trek stories with personal computer and communicator simulators and became avid fans of technology. We may be slow to catch on to today’s latest and greatest computer advancement, but we get there.

We freely support what we believe in and it does not have to match what exists. We are confident in our answers to all questions. And, given any opportunity we are prepared to express our opinions either delicately or fervently, depending on the state of our conviction.

But, alas our generation's time is drawing to a close and soon we will fade into the fabric of our culture. Long after we are gone, our documented accomplishments or our unmitigated disasters will continue to be lively debated. We’re certainly not the “Greatest Generation,” but we may become the most forward-thinking and the most controversial.

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**Legacy**  
**By Sara Schupack**

The name is plain “Legacy,” not “The Forever Legacy Shop” or “Legacy Extraordinaire” or any such catchy or trying-too-hard cleverness. The font is Courier, like an old typewriter, not fancy scrolling letters, nor the corporate standard Ariel. It has the desired effect — it triggers my curiosity beyond the fact that I’m there on assignment. I’ve got to want to know, or else I can’t produce a good review.

The door swishes open in a vacuum smoothness connoting wealth and discretion. Framed pictures of luxury and success are spaced tastefully around the cream colored walls. The shop has a subtly musky smell, as if emanating from a confident, newly showered man smoking a pipe. Jazz plays in the background, neither the peppy big band kind, nor the modern, hard to follow kind. Unobtrusive yet not tacky.

Along the counters lay tablets as thin as a couple sheets of cardboard with pale blue glows across the bottom. These are the only visible “product,” available for clients to

peruse, with the message “Your future. Your past” appearing on the floor tiles lining up with each tablet, also in Courier, navy blue. Salespeople stand calmly against the wall, quietly waiting to be called for help. I don’t ever actually hear any such calls, yet by some sort of telepathic messaging, these helpers seem to move around to where they’re needed. I approach one table, from which flashes the message “You are the successor to an eminent vineyard and wine industry.” I tap the screen, and a story unfolds of grape varieties, the family seal, acres in Southern France and Northern California, and vacation homes in Morocco and South Africa. A tab appears reading “Choose your family.” I don’t dare press it. Others read “Long term investments” and “Fortune’s Demise.” Instead of exploring further or asking for help, I decide to step back and observe. I hope my look of alarmed skepticism does not show.

Out of nowhere, one of the salespeople in white and khaki appears and offers me a stool with a maroon padded leather seat. He doesn’t ask why I am there or if I need help. I sit and listen in, as another client looks through the offerings on a different tablet. This one parades the title “Hollywood, Broadway, and Near Fame.” From sifting and then strolling through the shop and sitting again, I gather that one can order a legacy to pass on to one’s children. Now my furrowed brows have probably made way for a smirk, something I also hope is subtle enough to allow me my voyeur’s place. The legacy packages include an imaginary trust fund that can be held out as a threat and carrot for the offspring to earn, and possible scenarios of how the child could fail, so that the nonexistent fund can conveniently disappear. The alternative story offers a black sheep relative who squanders the family fortune and achievements, thus providing family pride along with a moralistic warning about cherishing what you have and respecting your family.

The clients range in dress and age, some looking as if they slipped away from a power lunch, others as if they are ‘in between’ blue-collar jobs. All look giddy and sheepish. I start to feel sick. Magically a female salesperson presents me with a cup of green tea, which I accept gratefully.

As I sit with some nausea and some disdain, I can’t help wondering if perhaps I want more for my son, now eight and growing fast, as they do. He shuttles between my ex-wife’s aging house with dropping shingles and a sagging porch in the burbs and my shabby apartment where he has to sleep on the couch. I try to feel proud of my work. He gets a kick out of seeing my name in print, but how much longer will articles on the newest kitchen device and the trendiest kids’ park impress? He already has a fake contented look on his face when he enters my place that breaks my heart. It’s both placating and hopeful, as if he could maybe just wish a little harder and an extra room and larger TV might materialize this time, without my knowing it was he who wished it. In Legacy, I observe hushed conversations and lots of nodding, but can’t determine whether or not there have been any sales. What does purchasing a new past look like? I do see clients as they leave patting pockets, either to confirm a new business card, a receipt for a new life, or simply to assure themselves that as thin as the wallet might be, it’s theirs, it’s who they are, and that’s okay.

A third salesperson of indeterminate gender approaches me and says, "Here," gesturing for me to follow. In the back corner I lean into another tablet with the message "Pulitzer Prize Winner, Cheated by Imposter." He or she disappears, and I sit gaping at the message. I do not tap the screen. I stand, pat both pockets, press my notes against my chest, and leave with head down.

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