

## **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**

#### **April 2015 selection – Rain**

##### **Safe Passage (At Mother Nature's Discretion Revisited) By N. Stewart**

The rain was coming down so hard I thought we might be washed off the road. It started as a beautiful sunshine filled day when we left home for our fishing trip to Green Lake, Wisconsin. Cruising north after passing through Milwaukee, the radio program was interrupted, announcing that severe weather was imminent. The storm was coming from the southwest and on a potentially intersecting line with our northerly progress. We were driving on a four lane highway, trailing our 19 foot V-hulled fishing boat when the rain gently starting tapping on the windshield. Shortly, the onset of the lightning strikes and the roar of the thunder began.

About the same time as we caught the radio announcement, the sirens in a small mobile home park to our left began to wail and blare of warning as we drove on through a much heavier downpour. The radio announced that a tornado had touched down just west of the highway and commanded us to seek shelter immediately. Cars began pulling unto the shoulder of the road and some sought precarious shelter under viaducts. Because of the potential difficulty for other cars to see our trailer, we elected to continue on. The wind swirled, the rain plummeted, and the road in front all but disappeared.

The windshield was receiving buckets and buckets of water, giving the wipers no time to recover between swipes. The wind gusts became even stronger, rocking the car and trailer from side to side. We slowed to a crawl. I looked out the side passenger window and saw nothing but the swirling water and empty space next to me. Then, as I looked downward, I saw the ravine. If the strength of the wind got much worse, surely we could be blown off the edge, tumbling and plunging down into an abyss. I clasped my hands together, closed my eyes tightly, and asked for safe passage out of the storm.

Up ahead an exit appeared, going somewhere but we didn't know where. Should we take it? Are we better off staying on the road? There were but a few moments to decide before we'd pass by the exit. And, we decided to go on. The heavens really opened then, intensifying the downpour even more and the tornadic winds got even stronger. I was terrified, and could only think that the wrong decision had been made. Perhaps, we would have been better off exiting the highway and waiting it out, but, there was no going back to rethink that decision, so all movement had to be forward. We continued to move along very slowly in the right lane, hoping that the traffic behind could see the small tail lights of the trailer. Later, we heard that the town near that particular exit had been damaged, having been struck with very high winds.

After what seemed like an eternity, but in fact was only a few terrifying minutes, the sky started to lighten, the rain slowed, and the wind lessened. Having been granted safe passage out of the worst of the storm, we picked up speed and once again were on our way. Now, the rain over and the wind subsided, the bright sunshine and the blue sky returned to us. With much gratitude, we continued on our way to Green Lake with an incredible story to share.

###

**Zoey Deschanel Recalls Her Ultimate Low Rock Bottom**  
**By James Smetana**

I was thinking about Groban and I was trying to recall how I first met him. Then I remembered: I was at the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute to see some silly art film like "Red Desert" and I wandered down the hall probably to use the toilet or to smoke a cigarette in the cafeteria. There was another movie being screened in a side room and a tall rangy guy stood outside the door. "What's goin' on in there?" I asked him. "It's the World's Longest Movie," he told me. He being Lee Groban, of course. I looked in for all of 30 seconds. It looked like an incomprehensible mess. Years later I found out it was something called "The Cure For Insomnia," it had a running time of 87 hours, it was directed by John Henry Timmis IV and it "starred" Lee Groban reading his poem titled--you guessed it--"A Cure For Insomnia". "A Cure For Insomnia" was, in fact, the world's longest poem and it kept getting longer. It was Lee's life work. He was still writing it the day he died of heart failure in December of 2011. Lee was someone I'd run into occasionally but we really didn't travel in the same circles--the same social circles, the same cultural circles--so when our circles did intersect in that Venn Diagram of life I always enjoyed it, because being around Lee was something out of the ordinary.

###

## My Vacation

by: Susan J Wilfong

I looked at a map  
Like any tourist would do.  
Where should I go for vacation?  
I didn't have a clue.

Should I go abroad?  
Should I stay in my own state?  
I really need a vacation.  
For this, I cannot wait.

My passport is still good.  
I have it in my hand.  
I have now made my decision.  
I'll go to a foreign land.

I looked at a map  
Like any tourist would do.  
Where should I go for vacation?  
I didn't have a clue.

I've been to Africa,  
Singapore and China too  
Germany, Switzerland and France,  
Just to name a few.

I think I'll go to Spain this time.  
That's someplace I've never been.  
What's the weather like?  
When should my vacation begin?

What should I do when I get there?  
What sights should I see?  
I have so many questions.  
What would appeal to me?

I looked at a map of Spain,  
Like any tourist would do.  
I know where my vacation will be.  
I finally have a clue.

I want the answer to a question  
That has been rolling around in my brain.  
Does the rain in Spain  
Stay mainly in the plain?

Well, my vacation is now over.  
I'm safely home at last.  
My vacation was wonderful,  
Except, it went by too fast.

I have the answer to my question,  
About the rain in Spain.  
When it rains, it rains everywhere  
Not only upon the plain.

When it rains in the mountains  
It's in the form of snow.  
But down in the lower land.  
It rained wherever I would go.

I learned that rain is rain,  
Whether in Spain or at home.  
And the rain seems to follow me  
Where ever I may roam.

###

## A Tale of Rain Forest Water Gone Awry

By Jamie Damert

*(Empencilled on parchment by Jamey Damert, the Royal Empencillor)*

[The following is a transcript of part of a recent broadcast of the enormously successful TV show, Today's Success Stories, which is modeled after 60 Minutes, a halfway decent newsy show some of you may have heard of that comes on after golf when there isn't really anything worth viewing anywhere else.]

Eric Dumpfield, host of the show Today's Success Stories: We are honored to have with us the President and CEO of a company that has grown from the status of little to a little bit more in the surprisingly short time of eight years. I am speaking, of course, of Dr. Cecil Butbottom, who is seated with me in the studio as I speak. This being an informal program, Dr. Butbottom, may I call you But?

Dr. Cecil Butbottom: Sure as heck, why not, Dump? I'm an informal kind of guy, despite my phenomenal success that you've rightly taken note of.

E.D.: In reference to the unprecedented ascendancy of your company, But, I'm thinking that there are probably a lot of viewers who are unfamiliar with your burgeoning enterprise. Why don't you briefly talk about yourself and your success?

D.C.B.: I don't just like tootin' my own horn, but, Dump, as there's no one else here capable of doing it, I'll do my best. Eight years ago, conservation and purification got me to thinking about water. What could I do as a bona fide individual, which is what I was back then, to help get purified water into people's homes? And I don't mean water that's been distilled, filtered, chlorinated, oxygenated, fomented, homogenized, carbonated, or whatever. RanForWat is the name of the company I created, and only the purest rain forest water is what I proudly sell. Yes, eight years ago was just me, and now I have two part-timers to help me with all the miscellaneous falderal.

E.D.: And how do you get your virgin rain forest water? I'm sure our listeners don't imagine that you have safaris braving the elements to secure the water dripping down into the rain forests.

D.C.B.: No, we don't, actually. We're very streamlined and advanced. What we do is we fly drones way up high into the sky above the rain forests to catch the water before it falls through the atmosphere where it can pick up filth, slops, rubble, and all manner of cankerous refuse that needs be laboriously cleansed at exorbitant expense.

E.D.: So from that, I take it, But, your RanForWat water must be inexpensive?

D.C.B.: Oh, were it only true! No, RanForWat actually costs significantly more than the distilled crap you can purchase at any no-account store. You know, you can't make a vastly superior product and expect it to cost a pittance, Dump. Rome wasn't built in a day. RanForWat is featured in only the finest stores, Traitor Dicks, Ass-Whole Foods, and whatnot. Unfortunately, the initial cost and attendant maintenance of a small specialized fleet of rain-forest-water-collecting drones is quite substantial. And good part-time employees don't come cheaply, either.

E.D.: The more I talk to you, the more I think your story is not so phenomenal after all. That said, But, I thank you for coming in to lay before us your remarkable tale of woe, and I wish you the best luck, as I'm sure you'll be needing it, in your present endeavor or any other ridiculous venture you may undertake in the future.

D.C.B.: Thanks for the fine send-off, bonehead, and may this program of yours soon fall into the crapper. And I say that from the heart of my bottom. Goodbye, Dump, I'll bet your first name is really Humpty. Am I far off the mark?

Finally the End      only but just exactly 651 words

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**Rain**  
**By Valerie Collins**

Rain. It covers fields and folks with drips and downpours. It saturates ground to soggy mud. It swells the lakes and rivers to overflowing sometimes leaving flood frenzy in its wake. Oh the vexing bother that is rain. Children must stay indoors to play while the outdoor playroom is awash in precipitation. Rooftops may leak under the downpour. Certainly all those who venture out will surely get soaked in the process. The skies are gray and dreary for rain has chased the sun away leaving heavy-laden clouds in its stead. Thunder and lightening may blast through the air and winds may gust into high-speed wonderment. The rain stops us in our tracks. It changes our plans. It dictates our moods.

Then, and it happens every time, the sun comes out! Our moods lift. The air feels refreshed. The atmosphere has been washed and life outside has been renewed. It is clear now that the rain has cleaned nature's palette and fed the earth so growth and abundance may have its way. We see it in the vibrant green blades of grass and leaves on trees. Flowers of brilliant color seem to pop out of the ground before our very eyes. The soil itself wafts a sweet fragrance saying thank you for the fine refreshment. Now the sky has been transformed for the sun happily displays its splendor with bright, brilliance illuminating the whole of the firmament. Clouds are light fluffy cotton candy sights or thin translucent wisps that decorate the blue shaded sky. Renewal is in the air, it is on the earth, and it is in our hearts.

So it is in the journey of life. There are times of strife and storm where all seems dull and dismal. Gray is the palette with dark streaks throughout. Will this bad time never end? Will the rain never stop? Is that all there is...a muddy mess, a soggy ground upon which to stand, cloudy, colorless days to try navigating through? The storms are scary with thunder and lightening invading our thoughts. The wind gales knock us off balance as we attempt to stay on our feet. Our plans are no more for storm and rain has changed them for us. Let us not forget that, like in nature, and it happens every time, the sun comes out again! Life arranges itself back to order and color once again appears perhaps with even more dazzle than before.

After all, without the gray skies, without the menacing clouds, without the rain, the sun would not appear as bright, the skies would not be colored so blue and miracles of growth would not grace our lives in such vivid color.

###

**Rain**  
**By Elvira K. Castillo**

Rain can be a welcome event, but can also be devastating. Without rain, how can we survive? We need rain for the growth of plants, vegetation, etc. and to keep our rivers flowing and ponds and water holes filled for animals and other creatures to survive. Neither man nor beast can live without rain and water as we surely all know.

However, too much rain can be life threatening and ruin many lives with flooding, destroying everything we own and treasure. Can you even imagine having your entire home and its contents being taken away? I think of this every time I watch the news and put myself in the situation where devastating floods force people to leave all their belongings behind and are just happy to be alive. I know I have experienced many flooded basements in my home of over 40 years, but it doesn't compare to being completely wiped out and overcome by floods. Some people believe that eventually the waters of the world will swallow up the land, we will all perish, and the world will begin anew.

Now, on a happier note, let's switch our thoughts to how movies use "rain" as a prop for mystery, murder, fear, anticipation of something bad happening, but also to depict happy and bright outlooks of love, spring, and newness.

My son and I are fans of Sherlock Holmes movies with Basil Rathbone and Charlie Chan movies with Warner Orlin and Sidney Toler, both playing Chan. In many of these movies it rains and is dark with lightening striking, especially when they're investigating in a basement or some other hidden area behind a bookcase or whatever. We also love the old Frankenstein and Wolf Man movies from the 1930s and 1940s in which there is always mist and fog and lightening, thunder and rain to create the premise of fear and anticipation of horror.

On a happier note movie musicals like "Singing in the Rain" has the delightful scene of Gene Kelly dancing and singing "I'm singing in the rain, I'm happy again, just singing and dancing in the rain, etc." The rain isn't bothering Gene -- he's in love and the rain dances along with him in his happiness. And, going further back in time, Larry Parks playing Al Jolson and singing "Though April Showers may come my way, they bring the flowers that bloom in May"... In this song, the thought of rain is the anticipation of new hope and new life and the coming event of spring with beautiful flowers, etc.

Don't know how to wrap this up except to say that rain is needed and necessary for life, but at the same time it can destroy lives. Guess there's good and bad in everything.

###

## **Grandma** **By Vicki Elberfeld**

In the fairytales, the youngest daughter is usually destined for the handsome prince. He is the reward not only for her beauty, but for her patience and powers of endurance with the old and the helpless. As into each life a little rain must fall, sometimes she loses her prince and must experience unendurable longing, loneliness and physical hardship before she regains him. One memorable tale has the persistent princess wear out seven pairs of iron shoes before she even finds him again. Once she is reunited with her beloved, her sufferings are over and the two of them live happily ever after.

My grandmother was the youngest of three daughters and, like the princess in the fairytale; she was beautiful, destined for a wealthy, handsome man. I don't know if she was kind to animals or old people, but I imagine she was. Of course I didn't meet her at the beginning of her story, but when I knew her, she revealed a strong empathy for anyone in pain. And she always had time and kindness to spare for me, my friends, and whatever little dog was her pet at the time.

Grandma's sufferings actually began with her handsome prince. Her own mother arranged the marriage with this attractive, well-to-do man about town. My future granddad wined and dined Grandma during an extravagant courtship. But marriage ended all that. Once Grandma married, at the tender age of sixteen, the dining and dancing ended abruptly; Grandpa never took her out, except to family functions, and the beautiful, fun loving girl, popular with men and women alike, settled down to a dreary life of housework.

Grandpa didn't see Grandma's life as particularly difficult; after all, he himself worked hard to provide them with food and shelter. He was a miser though, giving his wife a meager allowance which barely allowed her to survive, let alone buy the dresses she loved so much. A jealous man, he did what he could to cut her off from the pleasing company of her friends and seldom had a kind word for her.

To me, Grandpa seemed so charming and clever, always joking, always putting a smile on my face, and I had difficulty reconciling Grandpa's public face with his private one. Mother had always warned me that he was charming with outsiders but a demon to his own family, as bad a father as he was a husband, an angry man who loved spoiling other people's joy. She spared no sympathy for him though his own history was possibly worse than the future he gave to others. His natural mother killed both herself and her babies. Grandpa's dad soon remarried. I heard an anecdote about the stepmother chasing Grandpa and his surviving siblings with a carving knife.

I don't know what Grandma expected from her marriage; I don't know what she expected from her life. When she spoke of it, instead of looking forward, she always looked backwards to what "could have been." She believed she could have been a singer, dancer, or musician if only she hadn't married so young, and I believe she often fantasized about becoming something other than a hausfrau.

So Grandma didn't get a real prince, and she didn't have a real career either, at least by modern standards. She took pride in doing clerical work for a few months while Grandpa was unemployed. He grew angry when she talked about this, for his pride was hurt to have a working wife, even for such a short time. Grandma was also proud of her work for the hospital auxiliary, where she made good use of her social skills. She took satisfaction in her clean and orderly house, her successful children, and her handiwork. She taught me embroidery and every winter made beautiful, sequined and beaded Christmas ornaments which I have to this day.

I always enjoyed visiting Grandma which happened often as we lived upstairs from her until I was twelve. I would come down with my mother and watch the two ladies play Scrabble for hours, the winner receiving one nickel. On sick days when I couldn't go to school, I'd come downstairs and watch Romper Room and eat Zwieback with milk. When I felt better, she'd help me with my embroidery, or we'd play some Scrabble, though not for money.

When we moved to the suburbs, Mom had a crisis of guilt for taking away Grandma's joy, her grandchildren, and leaving her alone with her husband. When things got really bad, Grandma left him and came to live with us for a while. Mom tried to convince her to divorce, but she eventually went back to Grandpa anyway. Mom said women didn't divorce in Grandma's day.

Though Grandma's life was stormy, I always felt unusually calm in her presence. I'd flee our rather chaotic apartment to visit my grandmother's peaceful, orderly home. While it seemed I would make a hundred mistakes a day in front of my mother, at Grandma's I could do no wrong, and she had nothing but praise for me. When she died, I felt I'd lost part of my childhood, a fun and carefree time. She had her compensations, of course, but I felt regret for the life she didn't live and for the prince she didn't find. And I learned from my mom that Grandma's older sister had, early on, divorced an abusive husband, remarried, and lived happily ever after.