

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

© 2016 Pen & Ink Writers' Group

February 2016 selection – Role Model

Bullets Go Through Everything But Water Balloons

By J. Smetana

I think the first time I told a lie was at Bell's Apple Orchard. Or at least that's the first time I got caught. They had a plate of cookies on a table--free samples! They were pretty tasty and I was really CHOWING DOWN while my parents were paying for the pick-your-own apples we'd just got done picking. One of the lady workers politely scolded me--there was a hand-lettered sign reading, One Per Customer, but she half let me off the hook, saying, but I guess you can't read. I was just a little squirt at the time so that might have been a safe bet. But my sister had to pipe up and tell her: He can read! I had taught myself how to read Hardy Boys books before I was enrolled in school. I knew there was great mystery and magic behind those blue covers and heart-stopping illustrations. The only word I could not figure out was "pliers" as in a pair of pliers. A tool found in any toolbox of course, I know that now, but a PAIR of pliers threw me, I thought it was like a pair of pants, something you'd wear, maybe if you were piloting a speedboat on your way to rescue your friends held captive in a lighthouse.

###

What Would Kristin Do? **By Vicki Elberfeld**

If I had to choose a role model, it would be Kristin Lems, the folksinger. Folksinger? She's also a linguistics professor who recently earned her Ph.D., a single mom, songwriter, and activist. I admire not only her achievements but her sunny disposition. We both love word games, and I hope I'm not bragging to say that I am nearly a match for her. But there, our resemblance ends.

I am often moody and tend to be depressed a good part of the time. While Kristin composes upbeat songs, my personal essays and stories may be quite gloomy. Kristin earned her Ph.D. in linguistics whereas, largely because I'd reached a point where it seemed neither practical nor fun, I dropped out of my literature Ph.D. program. Finally, Kristin has made a good living, supporting herself and children on her professor's salary, while I have eked out an existence working part time at various community colleges as an instructor, case worker, and tutor.

But it does no good to get into comparisons. I've enjoyed my vocation as storyteller as well as the jobs I've held to support myself. And we all need something to strive for. To quote the sage, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" I don't have to accomplish as much as Kristin, though I do intend to do a much better job of emulating her self-discipline.

And there are some evenings I lie sprawled in front of the boob tube, watching one lame sitcom after another, and I think about getting off my duff and writing. At such times I ask myself the perennial and sometimes motivational question, "What would Kristin do?"

###

Role Models **By Elvira K. Castillo**

I believe every person is born with God given special talents. For example, my mother had a beautiful voice and sang in a church choir when she was a young woman. I, on the other hand, cannot carry a tune for love nor money.

I also believe we develop in many ways through role models. These role models can help us grow and can influence us in things we want to become, in things we want to do, and in things we choose not to do. I have had many role models in my life, and when I look back and analyze myself, I can see how I've become me.

I'll begin with my first role model, my mother. The pros gained from Mom were being an independent woman, a survivor, self-sufficient, dependable, helpful, respectful, having good principles, truthful, forgiving, and feeling free to do what I wanted to do. Mom was an independent thinker, who never really needed a man to survive. When my father died at a young age, Mom went to work in a factory and kept home and family together. Since she worked, we kids had to do for ourselves. We didn't have Mom to walk us to school or

pack our lunches and this taught us self-sufficiency. She was not strict and gave us freedom, so we learned good and bad choices on our own. If ever we had a problem or trouble, you could always count on Mom to help. She was always fair to her children. To me, her actions showed love, respect, principles and truthfulness.

Now as to cons, Mom wasn't perfect, but I also learned from her imperfections. She did not favor housework and had a habit of leaving dishes in the sink to soak for days. When my older brother John returned from the Navy after WW II, he wanted to bring his girl to meet the family, so that house had to be cleaned up, and I became his helper and eventually the house cleaner. I learned at a young age that I wanted to live in a clean, organized house and could never be like Mom in this way. So, that covers two role models, my mother and my brother John.

Even though I was only eleven when my father died, I have to say he was another good role model. Dad was a friendly man and the neighbors all liked him. He loved the outdoors and planted trees, bushes, flowers, and a vegetable garden in our yard. I, too, love being outdoors and enjoy working in the yard. I also like taking walks and chatting with neighbors along the way. When Dad became ill and lost his legs, he taught me responsibility, confidence, tolerance of pain, and the appreciation of life. He gave me confidence and responsibility by teaching me how to care for him when he was bed ridden. Mom, of course, was working at the time, and dad made me feel important and that I was doing a good job.

As I grew up, I had many other role models, which I will discuss briefly. Mr. and Mrs. Lomax, my two best friends' mom and dad. They were like a second family to me as I often stayed at their home while Mom went to the hospital to see Dad. Their example was just being a good Christian family and not needing material things to be happy. Mr. Lomax played the guitar and tried to teach me to harmonize with my two friends, but, as I said I really could not sing. He also helped me with math homework, which became my best subject in school.

In the beginning of my teen years, I was very shy about boys and my friend Kay helped me overcome this. She was very cute and popular with the boys, and I met my first boyfriend because of her and overcame my shyness.

After graduating high school, I wasn't able to go to college, so I found a job working in a steno pool and eventually became an executive secretary, which was my goal. My role model for this was my Aunt Lu, who was a secretary at WIND radio station in downtown Chicago. I admired the way she dressed, her hairdo, and just being a sharp lady. I wanted to look, act, and have a career like hers.

Much, much later in life, after being divorced and a single mother, I met a wonderful man who was very helpful in learning to love again and just facing life. He was intelligent, honest, faithful, practical, and truthful, which, to me, was the perfect role model in a man. Life is very complicated and we all have our ups and downs, but if we're lucky to have some good role models in our lives, well, we're just darn lucky!

If I could Be
by: Susan J Wilfong

I don't remember having a role model
Back when I was a kid.
But I admired some people
At least I think I did.

Now that I am an adult,
I see things in a different way.
My role model is my mom
And I miss her every day.

I wasn't the best of children
My brother and I always fought.
But somehow we both learned
The lessons that mom taught.

As I grew through the years,
And with life, come change.
I could always depend on mom.
She didn't think I was strange.

My mom was a crafty woman.
She could make anything at all.
She made our Halloween costumes
And some of her crafts hung on our wall.

Mom joined a ladies craft group.
Mom sang in the church choir.
Mom liked to do counted cross-stitch
She never seemed to tire.

When dad died
In two thousand and two
Her heart was truly broken
But somehow, she made it through.

She stuck to her healthy diet.
She continued with the crafty group.
She walked as much as she could
Though now she had a slight stoop.

My mom was an awesome lady.
She loved her family and friends.
She was patient, kind and funny.
I hope my memory of her never ends.

If I should live to be one hundred
Or if I should die tonight,
If I could be half the woman mom was,
Then I'd know I was alright.

Thanks mom, I love you

###

It's Difficult to Find a Worthy Role Model
By N. Stewart

In today's world, are there any role models that we can look up to, learn from, copy their style and content and become better human beings as a result? I wonder. Look at athletes — highly paid, highly admired by many, skilled in their field and yet some of them beat up their wives/girlfriends, others take performance enhancing illegal drugs, and most show an “attitude” in their playing arena, expressing a self-conceived superiority over the rest of us poor fools. What about politicians as role models? They can't seem to ever tell the truth about anything, and they just can't seem to give a straight answer to even the

simplest of questions. They appear to be creatures of self-interest, obtaining more money and more power while claiming it is for the good of all people. Once law enforcement officers had an outstanding reputation, but now find themselves accused, and in some cases found guilty of misconduct, embezzlement, and racism? Are any of these examples to be embraced as role models?

Let's go on then. Should we call on our religious leaders as role models as we once did now that there is corruption, stealing, and unforgivable acts by some exposed in our churches? We have school teachers that spew their own personal activist agendas in the class rooms on impressionable minds without telling or allowing the other side of the story to be told. Most want to receive more and more money but want to spend less and less time at teaching. Some, certainly not the majority, take an all too personal interest in their inexperienced and gullible young students. And, what about the sport coaches that mold and influence young minds into thinking winning is everything at whatever cost it takes. It has been reported that some coaches even take personal liberties in certain situations. Are these better examples of role models?

What about social media that lets hidden-behind-the-scenes bullies spew uncensored, untrue, unrestrained, and unrestricted stories about individuals into cyberspace? Words on the Internet whether true or not can never be withdrawn or corrected, potentially destroying a person's reputation forever. Is using technology a good example for a role model?

And, where do journalists fit in when they take delight in stirring up problems where none existed just for sensational headlines, or editorialize rather than report the facts, or fail to tell the whole truth about a situation. Some even fail to use common sense or to self-censor and may possibly create devastating clashes or mortal conflict. Would this type of person be a role model?

So who is a role model? Where do we find him or her? Who should we admire and emulate? Who will teach us values, skills, and basic beliefs in the world? Perhaps it is someone that reaches out for all the right reasons; perhaps it is someone that we have great faith in, perhaps someone we can share our inner most thoughts with, perhaps someone we trust implicitly. For sure, it is someone that has to have our best interest at heart such as a parent, true friend, spouse, special teacher, a sibling, counselor, clergy, or even a boss at work. I suppose these work if they care enough, are wise enough, and are willing to accept the responsibility of guiding us to become better human beings.

###