

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

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June 2016 selection – Betrayal/Betrayed

A Special Friend By Susan J. Wilfong

Everyone needs a special friend
To help when times are tough.
A listening ear or a gentle hug,
Many times, is enough.

A special friend likes you,
Just for being you.
They don't think you're crazy
For the silly things you do.

A special friend stands by your side.
They let you blow off steam.
They allow you to lean on them,
For they are on your team.
A special friend will listen

To the things you have to say.
They may not always agree with you
But this friendship, they won't betray.

To have a special friend
You need to be one too.
Be there to support them
When they are feeling blue.

Stand by their side
When they feel all alone.
Take a couple of minutes
And call them on the phone.

Let them know how special they are,
Or how much they mean to you.
Listen to what they have to say
The way you want them to listen to you.

To have a special friend and to be a special friend,
Makes the world a better place.
To be a special friend and to have a special friend,
Are gifts to us, by God's Grace.

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My Grove, Your Move **By J. Smetana**

A true betrayal has got to be one of the worst things to go through, whether you are the betrayer or the betrayed. I would not want to be on either side. Nothing lets you off the hook and time doesn't change anything. Maybe death is an escape. Death is always an escape. The all-time betrayer has got to be Judas Iscariot, am I right? Take the time now to ask 5 random people--the first five you encounter--"Just who is the world's greatest betrayer of all time?" At least 3 will say Judas. I guarantee it. Go ahead--try it now.

Of course, I don't agree. Saint Peter gets my vote and if you can count on the fingers of one hand, he'd get yours. I know what you're gonna say: He denied, he didn't betray. What difference at this point, does it make, one might ask. Judas did what he had to do--if he didn't, there'd be no Jesus. Think about it. Then he had remorse and took himself out. Peter on the other hand betrayed and betrayed and betrayed again. Truly the king of the mopes.

I heard that a Chinese cab driver bought a Modigliani (it's a hundred years old!) for \$ 170 M. You heard me right: One hundred seventy million buckaroos for a Mo Dig Lee Ah KNEE. Can U DIG it? That's a lot of cab fares. Or UBER fares. Do you think Martin Buber drives for UBER? My favorite UBER story (so far) has got to be that guy who killed people at random...between picking up and dropping off fares! He even got a few old ladies walking into the Cracker Barrel! Boom! Somehow it just doesn't have the neo-

noir cachet of that Tom Cruise/Jamie Foxx movie. God Bless America. Everything is beautiful in its own way. Sing with me now--you know the words:

Author was unable to obtain performance rights for Ray Stevens "Everything Is Beautiful." For the present time the karaoke portion of the program is cancelled.

Do the Pony like John Mahoney.

Do the Watusi like I Love Lucy.

Keats and Shelley, Margie Skelly.

YOU MAKE ME WANT TO SHOUT

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Layers around a Core By Sara Schupack

Imagine the self as an inner core wrapped in tissue-thin papier-mâché layers and layers of experience translated into personality. The layers are goopy and wrinkly with the paste that is life. Which parts are nature, which nurture? Maybe we'll never know for sure. Even if the postmodernists are right, and we play different roles, multiple identities depending on context, there is something deep in there that is the self. What others see, understand, love, hate, interact with, may never be exactly that core, but being true to oneself does mean something, and so does the opposite, betraying oneself.

Imagine a teenage boy suffering from depression. Did that disease betray his inner self? Did it worm its way through the fragile layers and corrupt that core? Was it always there, or did the diagnosis, the naming of it, become his identity and block the rest from coming through? It might inhabit only the crumpled few layers most recently accrued, mucky green like a dirty pond or rotting vegetables. Perhaps, with the right smooth additions of softer, cleaner folds, the original self can be expressed. The muck is forgotten, or blended in and diluted. There are layers with tears and bumps made up of teenage hormones and worries and questions of identity. Those challenge the self, while also forming it. They are not like the depression, which is thicker, harder, like plaque clogging an artery.

The original self of this teenage boy is a cheery balloon one builds papier-mâché around. A red balloon at a fair that brings great joy to an excited toddler. The original self is one who, when first experimenting with standing in his crib, would turn each failure into a comedy routine. As he fell, he'd throw himself down and then pop his head up with a huge guffaw, inviting his audience to laugh with him. The original self is one who felt music in his fingers and toes and in his blood, the rhythms of tap dance and drumming.

That core being hears the rhythm in language too, and plays with puns and big words. “Quintessential” was a favorite for a few years. Perhaps the uncanny ability to choose the most expensive item in a store, the hyper awareness of moods and positions in a room, the ability to manipulate people and situations, these too might be there in the inner place, ready to be heightened, squashed, or nuanced by life’s currents.

Somewhere in that teenage boy is a memory of being cherished, of puzzling through to a solution: the joy of cleverness and creativity! Or even swimming in merriment and awe at the process itself, even with the failures. What does it take to soften the tough shell of disease or self-doubt or the scars from old pains? Are cuddles with a beloved pet enough? Are repeated reminders from a parent of unwavering love? There will still be life, the bad decisions followed by that same loving parent nagging and showing disappointed scorn. There will still be doubt and shame and trials and errors. How can we distinguish between the useful experiences that help refine and define the core self from the harmful ones that force us to betray who we should or could be?

That teenage boy was hurt badly by someone, someone who chose cruelty and got away with it, someone who challenged the loving mother’s reach and ability to protect. Then a father left the boy, sending another message that he was unworthy, flawed, unlovable. Imagine a fault line, a crack running from the center outward, and then something or several things, a broken friendship, those renegade hormones, other ‘triggers’, as mental health experts call them, rend additional tears from the surface to the center. Along both paths the thick, dark grime of negativity flows and corrupts all the layers in between.

Why bother to try if you’re convinced that you don’t matter? Why trust hope when you’ve been let down over and over? And then many smaller rejections from friends flock like magnets, as if receiving pain is inevitable; it’s who he is. The hurts worm their way into the cracks, like parasites in their dumb, eager journey towards destruction. How far does a person go from that core self, how many different frayed, dirty, lumpy layers need pile on, before a person knows he is losing his core identity and needs to rescue it? And how does one go about finding and then recognizing a lost self?

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**Betrayed or Betrayal It Depends?
Elvira K. Castillo**

Life itself can be a betrayal -- depending on your attitude in how you rationalize the various circumstances you face.

We can feel betrayed by having poor health, but then if we look around and see someone in far worse condition, perhaps a service man who lost limbs or a child or person with a life threatening or debilitating mental or physical problem. Do we still feel betrayed?

We may believe that our spouse or children have betrayed us. A spouse may not be the person, husband or wife that we thought they were, ending in separation or divorce. But, life is a compromise, and maybe with a little patience and understanding, spousal differences can be worked out and end up celebrating 50, 60, etc. anniversaries.

As far as children are concerned, hopefully they'll take heed to good parental advice, work hard, and live fruitful lives. However, all we can do is try to guide them to the best of our ability, and hope that outside influences will not lead them astray, which isn't easy in our difficult and violent world of today. But again, hasn't the world always had violence? Perhaps we've been betraying ourselves for decades, creating such a world? A little peace and understanding may be helpful all the way around.

Friends may turn against us or lie to us, making us feel alone and unwanted. We can feel betrayed by many things throughout our lives and we can make mistakes, causing others to feel betrayed by us. This is part of our growing to be the person we are, and our attitude towards all the "betrayals" we encounter will help us grow in the right or wrong direction. As was suggested in a recent newspaper article I read, "With kindness, patience, love and a little luck, we can make the betrayals become positive rather than negative experiences and make us the person we really want to be."

God help us to face our betrayals!

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