

**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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**January 2017 selection – Bucket List**

**Before You Kick it Over**  
**By Sara Schupack**

Before you kick the bucket, you make a bucket list

What is kicking the bucket? It's worse than kick the can – you do this when you rush out of the woods and your teammates successfully distract the opponents and there's a mad dash with yells and arms reaching and voices stretching but you make it and you win for your whole team who hails you the hero.

Or you trip on a tree root and fall and try not to cry and are barely noticed as you limp back to the cover of the forest as more capable teammates rush forward.

But even the biggest failures and worst embarrassments are still not as bad as knocking over the bucket that is life. That's why we dust ourselves off and try again, because there is still that bucket, looming and reminding us to kick habits and kick up dust and kick up our heels, anything but.... When we kick it over, does it spill and make a mess? Does the bucket that you kicked become an empty vessel for a new life? At least kicking that bucket seems to connote one last action, and with the foot. Do not go gentle into that good night. Go out kicking and screaming.

Does the bucket of life fill up over time? For some people it seems to brim and shimmer after only a few years, while for others, one stingy drop at a time accrues towards the half empty mark after 90 years or so. Clearly there is no correlation between the fullness of the bucket and the time of its kicking over. So sometimes, a flood of rich, thick, life, tangy and tasty or gritty and dense as maple syrup (the real kind), spills out, and sometimes it's a trickle of wan material that is barely noticeable and has a faint smell of vinegar or old shoe.

Perhaps a bucket list is a person's way to fill up that bucket to its fullest with the sweetest, richest life possible. But if that list is anything like New Year's resolutions, it's mere busywork that gets us nowhere and doesn't improve the contents of the bucket. Maybe the best bucket list is the one we don't write down, we don't even make into a promise or a goal, which will only ever fail, because even if we reach a goal, the rules change or the finish line moves, or we make the wrong kinds of sacrifices just to get there and end up with more regret than victory. The best bucket list is the nonexistent one, one that we make up as we go along and mix in plenty of forgiveness, fun, friendship, and forgetting.

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### **A Hole in My Bucket** **By N. Stewart**

"Well, this is a nice lunch get together. Good to see you again," said Linda.

"You, too. It's been awhile. The last time we talked you mentioned that you wanted to ride on a motorcycle. Were you able to do that?"

"Yes, I did ride a motorcycle. I was never so scared in my life; holding on for dear life and watching my feet swinging out over the open road was no fun, but I'm getting ahead of the story. I got an offer to ride from a relative's friend and I took up on the offer. The bike was huge. First, I stepped on the foot gizmo thing to get on and attempted to climb aboard the Harley. My knee doesn't bend like it used to, so the next thing that happened was my leg got stuck half way over the frame and I had to pull it with my hands, kicking the driver in the back. I put the helmet on and got my feet where they belonged. I leaned in and put my arms and hands around the driver's waist, tightly clasping my hands together. The driver released the kickstand, revved up the engine, and me and the bike shook all over. *What the heck am I doing?* I asked myself as we took off down the road. The wind whistled passed me and a few bugs smacked into my helmet visor. We picked up additional speed and headed to a main road where traffic was swiftly moving along and we joined in. Shortly, we made a left turn at an intersection and tore off down a country road. And, I mean tore down the road...at full speed with engine roaring. I was barely hanging on and by now just praying for the ride to be over...and come to a safe, not a catastrophic, end. The driver did a "wheelie" or some such thing and I could feel my strength and resolve for this adventure rapidly fading. Bucket list, Smucket list. It wasn't any fun and it might very well have ended being the last thing I ever did. Please slow down I heard myself say again and again. We zoomed over the county side, over hills, through dips in the road, turned sharp corners, and laid rubber at a stop sign or two. By now my eyes were sealed shut in fear, arms and legs immovable, yet my lips kept moving, saying "I want to live, please Clarence, I want to live." Finally, the bike zoomed into a driveway and came to a sudden stop, spewing gravel. My horror had ended. After I opened my eyes and gathered my wits, I crawled off the bike and stood on the ground with shaky legs. "Yeah, that was a lot of fun" I heard myself saying, but let's not do that again...ever...was what I was thinking.

"Sounds like a really great adventure. Any more items on that bucket list of yours that you have tried?"

“No, after that one I put a hole in my bucket, letting all the dumb, hair-brained, daredevil ideas drain out, living out each day and enjoying every minute of it is now enough adventure for me.”

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**Bucket List**  
**By Elvira K. Castillo**

If I understand correctly, “Bucket List” is a list of things you have not done, but wish to do before you leave this world. I have to admit that I’m the guilty one who submitted “Bucket List” as a theme for our writers’ group stories, which puzzles me because I really do not have a “Bucket List.” I am very content with my life, as I have everything I need, have done everything I’ve wanted to do, and am free to do what I want when I want. I guess I got the idea of this theme from seeing someone else’s list. If I had a “Bucket List,” it would be to relive the many experiences in my life. For example:

1. I had a fulfilling childhood, doing all the activities I loved with complete freedom and able to develop my imagination and creativity.
2. I enjoyed school and am grateful that I went to school at a time when there were no problems with offering a full curriculum, no teacher strikes, no free lunches but plenty of milk at two cents a bottle, and you could safely walk to school. I personally walked a mile to school and loved the wild flowers in the prairies in spring and summer and snow in the winter.
3. I had lots of friends in grammar school and high school, and, again, we had a full curriculum in high school, including art, music, athletics, and dancing. I went to the senior prom at the beautiful Edgewater Beach Hotel (no longer in existence), and I’m sure the cost of prom night was not out of sight like today.
4. I anxiously rushed home from school to listen to my favorite radio programs, which were clean and adventuresome, I often tried to imagine what the characters and scenery looked like.
5. It was great to have simple family moments like walking to the corner grocery store on a Saturday night to get the Sunday Tribune and two pints of ice cream, and later reading my favorite comics, while my parents, brother and I each ate a half pint of ice cream.
6. Our family went downtown on the Addison bus (no longer available), which traveled down Lake Shore Drive, looking forward to our destination - The Chicago Theater - where we saw a movie, listened to Lou Breeze’s orchestra, and saw a stage show with many celebrities. After the show, we’d walk to the Forum Cafeteria for a delicious and affordable meal.
7. Don’t want to leave out all the fun of ice skating at the ponds in the neighborhood, going roller skating at the Hub Roller Rink (no longer there), and dancing at various dance halls to the music of popular dance bands.
8. Being fortunate to have good secretarial positions for over 40 years, and to even have a job until retirement in 2000.
9. Also, I was able to continue my education while working, going to Wright Jr. College (no longer there) and to Northeastern Illinois University, obtaining a

special Board of Governor Bachelor Degree, a degree which gave credit for work experience, etc.

10. Traveling and vacationing in many states such as California, Florida, Michigan, Kentucky, New Orleans, New York, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and through thirteen countries in Europe.

11. And, although I went through a divorce, I was fortunate to have a son, which truly gave me even more purpose in life and encouraged me to make many brave decisions, making me a stronger, independent person.

Like George Bailey in "It's a Wonderful Life," I really have had a wonderful full life, but don't need an Angel to tell me. Yes, my "Bucket List" would be to do all the above over and over again, especially in the same time period. One thing I might add would be I'd love to dance with Fred Astaire. Guess my list is in the Twilight Zone of Memory and I'm thankful for that, too.

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### **23 Boy Band Slow Jams That Made You Believe In Love**

**By J. Smetana**

Rush is 3 guys. Mahogany Rush is how many guys? We know it's at least Frank Marino. Maybe it's Frank Marino and Steam. Or Frank Marino and the Archies. Bang Shang a-Lang! I'm seriously thinking of goin' on that Psychedelic Rock Cruise next month. It wasn't on my bucket list before but it is now. I'm gonna ask Marge if she wants to join me but I already know she'll say nix. While I'm sailing the Seven Seas jamming with Iron Butterfly she could be home and cozy working on her textiles. Better make sure I bring my strawberry alarm clock--I don't want to miss a single minute of fun! I saw Foghat at Retro on Roscoe a few years ago. I'm saying Foghat, but? They kinda sounded like Foghat, at least they played the Foghat songbook. But they really didn't look all that much like Foghat even in a Foghat-GuysGotten-Older-But-Still-Trying-To-Look-Young kinda way, thin brittle hair grown long and dyed. I asked one of the promoters how many original Foghat guys were in the group. Just the drummer, he said. JUST THE DRUMMER? MAJOR BUMMER! I could be one of the Beatles as long as I've got Ringo. And two other guys. (Let me tell you about Beatle mania. I don't know how I survived it!) Or I could be a Stone if I snagged Charlie Watts and 3 other mopes. The Stones are bad boys. I want to be a bad boy! If our psychedelic cruise ship capsizes like the one in Italy I'll show you what a bad boy I can be. I'll make the captain walk the plank! But after capsizing, the plank would be upside-down. He'd have to walk it in anti-gravity boots, like Batman. Maybe he could just walk like an Egyptian. Maybe I should take the Country Cruise instead. If I need any help getting into a lifeboat Reba McEntire might be more useful than Alice Cooper. I wouldn't mind getting stranded on a tropical island with the Judds.

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