

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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May 2018 selection – Seascape

Come With Me
By Val Collins

Come with me on my journey paths,
come with me to explore,
the ocean's rhythmic music,
the birds on sandy shore.
Walk with me on the beaches,
inhale the salty air,
embrace the ocean's breezes
that frolic through my hair.
Bask in the warmth of summer sun,
Let it linger on your face.
Soak in the calm and beauty of this pure idyllic place.
Delight in golden sunset,
stroll with me as I go,
along the beach to finally see the silver moon aglow.
Come with me on my journey paths,
we're really not apart.
Come with my son,
I know you will,
for you're always in my heart.

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Letters From the Oregon Trail
By KS Van Ormer

July 20, 1845

Dear Sissy,

Last week our wagons made it to the halfway point of the trail. It is there that the rivers have the distinction of draining to the west, the Pacific Ocean, and where it is called the Great Divide or Continental Divide. Our travels since then have brought us to Fort Bridger, a trading post and blacksmith shop established three years ago by a Mr. Jim Bridger and Mr. Louis Vasquez. They offer the luxury of posting a letter so I will inform you of what has transpired since my last missive.

Sadly, we have lost three more of our group, bringing our current total to 231 out of the 245 who started. A great tragedy was the loss of one young man, Kenneth Collins, who was only 16 when he fell under the wheel of his family's wagon while pushing it out of a creek. But, we have also had the great joy of a new life joining us with the birth of Rebecca and John Goodwin's son, Robert. Abraham, Sally and I have experienced some illness but none so devastating as the fever that has taken so many others. We continue in good spirits and know our destiny awaits in the new land.

God bless you and your family.

Your devoted sister,
Hannah

October 12, 1845

Dear Sissy,

I write to tell you that we have arrived in Oregon City! After 165 days on the trail, we will finally bathe in privacy and eat something other than dried beef and hard bread. Several weeks ago, we tasted the last of the pickles you so lovingly made for us and now I am longing for some of the beautiful fruits and vegetables I saw in the farmer's wagons as we came into town.

While we will stay here a few days to gather our strength and buy provisions, our journey has not yet ended. Abraham has become friends with a group from Missouri who made their livings fishing and trapping, as did he. They told him of coastal land that can be reached in six to seven days and we have decided to throw our lot in with these families.

I do not know the circumstances of living where we are headed, but I will send a letter at the first available opportunity.

God bless you and your family.

Your devoted sister,
Hannah

November 7, 1845

My dearest Sissy,

We have found sanctuary with a small group of settlers here on the Pacific Coast. The beauty and splendor of this land is something my poor words cannot describe. It is a scene from God's own imagination, like no other.

Let me take you back.

The journey from Oregon City took us seven days as the trail became so narrow, we were forced to cut our way through thick woods on the last two days. By the end of the seventh day, we emerged from the forest and beheld a most glorious scene. The full golden sun was just beginning to dip into the deep azure waters of the Pacific Ocean. Below us, a shimmering silver strip of sand beckoned. It was a cove, with outcroppings of tall cliffs that were formed from volcanic lava. The rugged majesty of the cliffs in contrast to the jewel-like water creates a beauty that dazzles the eyes. We all stood silent for several minutes, then one of the men, Joseph Ellis, dropped to his knees and we all followed suit as he led us in prayer.

That was the last night we spent in our wagons. The next day we met with the group that has settled in this area. As winter is setting in, they invited us to share their homes until spring, and then we will build our homes here, too. In the meantime, there will be fishing and hunting for food, as well as some trading that goes on in the camps.

This letter is being carried back to Oregon City by one of the traders who assures me there are many who make this trip every month or two, so we will be able to keep in touch. It is my greatest wish that you will be able to come here yourself one day to experience the beauty of God's creation.

God bless you and your family.

Your devoted sister,
Hannah

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Whispering Sands **By Phyllis Babbs**

Cassie had been Amy's confidant, mother and father and support system since the whole affair started. And she had been her bridesmaid and then Alan's godmother. She knew this trip was going to be difficult for Alan on so many levels.

She looked in the backseat. "You okay, buddy?" The boy shook his head in the affirmative. He clutched the urn closer to his chest.

"There's the beach!" Alan said excitedly. "Whispering Sands Why do they call it Whispering Sands?"

"Actually, your father named it. But we'll talk about that later." Cassie looked out the car window. "Alan, all your grandparents are here. We need to have a talk with all of them and then bury your Mom."

Cassie and Alan got out of the car and walked over to both sets of grandparents. "We brought Amy home to bury by Brad. My assumption is that by now you have all read and clearly understand the letters you received from Amy attorney. So if you have read and understand those letters, there is one other thing you need to understand. I am not related to any of you and refuse to make any concession for any of you. My main concern is for Alan."

Amy's mother stepped forward. "Cassie, why don't you introduce us all to Alan? He can ask us any questions and then we can put Amy's ashes by Brad's so they can be together. Oh, and Cassie thank you, thank you for all you have done."

"EXCUSE ME!" Alan said. All the adults turned to him. "I have some questions I want to ask you. Grandpa, why didn't you like my father? And Grandfather, why didn't you like my mother?"

The grandfathers, each took Alan and led him to the bench. They all sat down and began talking at once. After a few minutes they all hugged and called the women over. They all stood by the small head stone, marking Brad's burial. And Brad's father began to dig a narrow trench. "I thought we were going to spread Amy's ashes, her mother said. "NO!" Alan and Brad's father said at the same. "She'll end up in China!" "I want her and my Dad to be together."

Then a gentle wind began to move the sand. Two small eddies of sand spiraled across Alan's shoes and began moving to the shoreline, growing larger with each rotation. Then the sand stopped and there stood Amy and Brad, like gauze. They waved and then they were gone.

Alan took the young woman's hand. "My father named this beach whispering sands. He believed lovers came here at sunset and vowed their love for each other. And if you listen carefully, you can hear them professing their love."

She laughed. "That's a lovely fairy tale."

Alan shook his head as the whispering began.

###

Sea Escape
By Sara Schupack

Fleeing the city, work, confining shoes, confining crowds
Salty breeze, sand massaging the bottoms of feet,
The universal lullaby of waves always soothes.
Mysteries and treasures hide buried in the sand or wash up on shore
Messages don't need translation, shared in the cry of gulls,
in the hiss and slap of crashing then retreating waves, in wind or calls
and laughter of people down the beach
Maybe a dog bark or two
Secrets in bottles, in the moist air, in memories
Of those who have escaped here before
Or who will, later
Communion
With something larger
Gritty sand, ground up ancient ocean artifacts,
droplets, sunshine, mix into hair, clothing folds, toes
Where you can jump, cry, yell, run, roll
Or just sit
And breathe.

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Seashores and Life's Challenges
By Elvira K. Castillo

I woke up this morning thinking of another challenge to face at almost 83 years old - my driver's test. Wondering whether I might also have to take the written test since I had an accident last year that totaled my car. Then I thought of my Mother at my age and her challenges - no comparison!

Life and its challenges can be calm and beautiful as walking along the shores of a peaceful seascape in perhaps Jamaica or Clearwater, Florida, or along a tranquil shore as shown in the inspirational photo I'm looking at. On the other hand, life's challenges can be like a tsunami or fierce hurricane. Whether we're alone or not, we feel very much alone when facing life's challenges.

Today, I'm afraid; life is more like a tsunami than a peaceful shore with every little thing becoming complicated and overwhelming with all the technology. I doubt very much whether at 83 my mother could cope with life today.

Since I started this essay with my driver's test, let's look at today's transportation. There was a time when you could catch a bus to go anywhere in the City and you simply paid the driver as you boarded the bus, and you knew the fare. Mom got around quite well on public transportation. Now one must have a Regional Transportation Authority card, which has to be filled with money, in order to pay the driver and hope you have enough on the card to pay. Yes, a card is a must. Many of the routes have been eliminated, so you just can't get everywhere easily. I wouldn't be able to go to my church or the library without a problem if I didn't drive, It's also great fun putting gas in the tank of my car - so glad I can still do it at my age. Can't see Mom filling the tank or taking a driver's test. There are too many challenges to get into in our tsunami existence and my essay would be too long, but the point is nothing is simple and peaceful as a quiet seashore anymore. We can't do anything without a cell phone or a computer for shopping, for employment, for relationships, for school, for books, for constant communication -- Let's face it - for everything!

I'm afraid for me; life is not easier but more difficult like- a rough sea, swallowing everything simple up and away forever. Guess I must rely on faith to guide me by the still waters and through today's troubled seas.

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Perfection By Pauline Bastek

Is this how it all looked, blue skies dotted with white clouds, green trees, grey hills, all surrounding the endless blue water with white surf reaching the pale sandy beach.

Fish in the sea, birds in the sky, animals in the bushes, present but not see. Contrast this sight with hordes of vacationers crowding onto every available grain of sand.

Some would call it isolated, they would be right, but so necessary for survival, nourishing to the spirit and the body.

After a week of human overload, the sight of nature absent humans reminds me of the old gospel verse, "There is a balm in Gilead," viewing this sight would be a balm to the spirit.

Enjoy before the marauding developers descent!

###

A View from Above
By N. Stewart

Sitting on the outdoor wooden deck, I can hear the gentle roar of the continuous surf as it slowly rolls in to meet the sandy shore. Beyond the bubbly surf, the water is shades of brilliant blue, turquoise, and lavender with a little sea green thrown in once in awhile. It's quiet here at Cascade Head Ranch and I'm enjoying the solitude. My book sits unread in my lap and the glass of local Oregon wine remains undisturbed on the table beside me. This is my last day here.

Life gets so hectic it seems or am I not acclimating to the new electronic norm of never being away from multiple forms of communication and the constant cacophony of voices, screaming and yelling wants and demands. Here my cell doesn't work well and I find myself turning it off anyway. The gibberish that constantly bombards me drains more and more energy away until I'm exhausted.

This is what I like to do, sit in amongst nature, listen to birds sing, bees buzz, and leaves swish in the wind. A world that is gentle, carefree, and so relaxing. I think I will take a walk down to the ocean. The road here is steep and winding as any one can see by how far away the water looks from where I sit. There's a swimming pool down by the sea, waiting for someone to jump in. Off to the side is the beach shelter for picnicking and changing. The Salmon River empties into the Pacific, becoming no more than a trickle in the sand, marking its march ever onward to the sea.

This entire cabin where I stay was designed and built about 40 plus years ago by my brother with assistance and willing hands from my very young niece and nephew. Over a period of summers, the cabin was completed and furnished in a rustic manner. It's two storied with the front picture windows facing the Pacific. It's cozy with a pot belly stove in the corner for warmth on damp days and places for well-enjoyed books to be collected and reread at leisure. There is a bunk room on the first floor with built-in beds and plenty of play room for children to settle down, playing board games and doing jig saw puzzles on rainy Oregon days. Two bedrooms are upstairs and they also face the seascape. At the back of the house, the kitchen window looks out on a forested area with a steep incline that when topped becomes a walking path, reaching the very end of the Head with nothing before it except air and ocean. Occasionally deer and other woodland creatures visit and can be seen up close by looking through the kitchen window.

Tonight, I will be heading to Otis Café near Lincoln City for some homemade soup. The Café has been there for years and the people line up, waiting to get seated. There are about 5 tables and several stools along the counter and that's it. The soup is delicious and so are the early morning homemade breakfasts. But you have to be prepared to be patient as many people line up, waiting for seats in the tiny, tiny well-known restaurant. People are friendly and conversation flows easily, making the wait seem less lengthy. Tonight, it is fresh clam chowder directly from the shoreline of the Pacific. Something you can't get back home in the Midwest.

After dinner, perhaps a short car ride into Lincoln City to look around a final time before returning to the cabin. As all things come to an end, so does this visit. I will pack all the souvenir trinkets, Tillamook cheeses, and my Otis Café t-shirt tonight for the return trip. In the morning, there will be a two hour drive back to Portland, then off to the airport for a flight to O'Hare, and the reemergence of that pesky cell phone that never seems to stop ringing, pinging, and buzzing. But for now it is time to take that pleasurable and leisurely walk down to the ocean and enjoy nature as it surrounds me.

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