



INSIDE

- Short Story Advice
- Why Do You Procrastinate?
- Basics of Self-Publishing
- Questions for Collaborators
- Organize Your Article Photos
- One Man's Meat . . .
- Friends Who Write
- HEY, Editor!
- and more!

Solid Information and a Sense of Humor

Lemonade from Lemons

By the time someone reads this, things will be different. But as I sit here now, leg elevated and packed with ice, walker beside me, I wonder how this happened. Did bad choices put me in this state of pain and helplessness?

in there somewhere, about body parts in the morgue and the crazed surgeon who plans to rehab and sell them, only to . . . gulp! [scream!] As for sci fi, what if you got a new hip made not of titanium but of material from another world, which gave you the power to . . . hmmm. Or imagine a thriller about the physical therapist who helps people walk during the day, but at night hits the streets and . . .

Hey, that's a good beginning for a story. Maybe even a non-fiction article or two. The reality is: I WAS laid up in May when I wrote that, and stressing about having a front page editorial ready for the next issue. I had had my second total hip replacement, which is somewhat of a life-altering experience. "Maybe that's a jumping off point for a story?" The narrator informs the reader that a life-changing choice has caused something catastrophic. What happened?

Hello, Fodder

Nonfiction topics are endless. Body part replacements of the future; the journey that begins with the decision to "go ahead with surgery"; the day-to-day of an orthopedic surgeon and his team; a state of the art hospital . . . in 1900 (!); the body's remarkable ability to rebuild itself; occupations in home health care; fun stuff to do while convalescing (is there such a thing?) . . .

If you're stuck for writing ideas, check your life; it's probably full of them. Make lemonade when fate hands you a bad lemon. Write about it.

I started thinking about all the stories that could be spun from an event like this. There's the woman in the chair, bemoaning her fate, perhaps a kind of Daphne du Maurier heroine. Or any of the many daily dramas in the O. R. of a major hospital. Maybe the anesthesia nurse falls for a lovable loser who has a new hip but has given up on romance. There's a horror story

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With a Twist

**Short Stories—
Advice and Observations:
William Sydney Porter
" & Me"**

by Guy Stewart

[I write an occasional short essay where I look at advice from famous writers and then extract ideas I either HAVE used or discover in their writings, interviews, or novels. This one about William Sydney Porter is my most popular. -- G. S.]

Without further ado, short story observations by William Sydney Porter —with a few from myself. Oh! I suppose I should start off by saying that William Sydney Porter is most famously known as O. Henry.

Unfortunately, he only gave one interview during his career, and that was in 1909. A long-time recluse, all the world ever saw of him was his work. I'll be drawing heavily from the interview. However, other people have analyzed his works as well and some have deduced lessons from O. Henry. Herewith, I offer a few.

To begin: "[Poet] James Whitcomb Riley thought of [Porter] only as a literary genius who with pen wand conjures from his ink pot 'delectables conglomerate . . . ' In spite of the fact that for the past six or seven years O. Henry has been one of the most popular short-story writers in America . . . acclaimed by many . . . as one of the greatest of this country's tellers of short tales."

Physically, at the time the inter-

viewer described him as "short, stocky, broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced, clear-eyed, and none of his hair missing. He has none of the wan intellectuality, none of the pale aestheticisms that are conventional parts of the make-up of the literary lions that disport themselves at afternoon tea parties.

One can readily see that he is the natural father of 'the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating,' which moral reflection is the thread upon which most of his stories are strung."

OK, now we're getting somewhere.

I'm going to gather all of these threads together at the end of this essay and reflect on how his work ethic and mine coincide or clash.

After several florid starts at various careers, he started to write in earnest in New Orleans: "I sent stories to newspapers, weeklies, and magazines all over the country. Rejections? Lordy, I should say I did have rejections, but I never took them to heart. I just stuck new stamps on the stories and sent them out again. And in their journeying to and fro all the stories finally landed in offices where they found a welcome. I can say that I never wrote anything that, sooner or later, hasn't been accepted."

The interviewer asked for advice to young writers, "[Here's] the whole secret of short story writing. Rule I: Write stories that please yourself. There is no Rule II. If you can't write a story that pleases yourself you'll never please the public. But in writing the story

forget the public. I get a story thoroughly in mind before I sit down at my writing table. Then I write it out quickly; and, without revising it mail it to the editor. In this way I am able to judge my stories as the public judges them. I've seen stories in print that I wouldn't recognize as my own."

The interview concluded with the announcement that he was writing a novel that would soon be published. But just before that, he said: ". . . change Twenty-Third Street in one of my New York stories to Main Street, rub out the Flatiron Building, and put in the Town Hall and the story will fit just as truly in any up-State town . . . So long as a story is true to human nature all you need do is change the local color to make it fit in any town North, East, South, or West. If you have the right kind of an eye—the kind that can disregard high hats, cutaway coats, and trolley cars—you can see all the characters in the Arabian Nights parading up and down Broadway at midday."

The essay points out aspects of what made—and continue to make—O. Henry's work vivid. ". . . humorous languages. He is a master of using paronomasia [aka 'word play' in its crudest form, 'puns'], metaphor, irony . . . skilled in conceiving the surprise but logical ending . . . the result always changes suddenly and contrary to readers' expectations. The unexpected endings can make people think more about the problems or situations that the story has revealed . . . [He writes in] the style of 'tearful smile,' which is the combination of comedy and tragedy . . . even though the

ending is sad, there are usually some hopes and lights in it.”

And finally, O. Henry wrote with common themes: “. . . deception (such as turning the tables on Haroun Al-Raschid, the caliph of ancient time who would mingle with the common people), mistaken identity, the effects of coincidence, the unchangeable nature of the fate and the resolution of seemingly unsolvable difficulties separating two lovers . . . the pre-tense and reversal of fate, discovery and initiation through adventure, the city as a playground for imagination, and the basic yearning of all humanity.”

Everyone knows that O. Henry was an absolute master of the surprise ending: “[His stories] lead you on in the beginning with a thought that everything is going according to plan. He lets the reader . . . think that we have it figured out, [but] he has something waiting for us at the end of the book. Something that would seem like it came out of nowhere” but is perfectly logical on later reflection!

It's clear that this master had a way with words, but is it something someone like me could imitate?

Maybe. Laid out plainly, there are six things that O. Henry did:

- 1) Start with a quick opening that pulls the reader into the action with a surefire "hook."
- 2) Add a confiding narrator who holds back important information until the last moment.
- 3) Write with a pleasant and worldly wise tone, including

chitchat, wit, satire, philosophy, and swank (i.e., behavior, talk, or display intended to impress others).

4) The open-minded use of a "humane renegade."

5) Make sure you add a dash of coincidence, usually with a reversal in which everything is saved and set right.

6) Last, of course, is his signature surprise ending.

In my own writing, I've learned to do the first. I've practiced so much that I can usually turn out a quick hook. The second thing may have changed since the early 20th Century. I've heard it said that we don't hold anything back—at least not important information. That said, it's no problem if we convey information that SEEMS unimportant but IS, and this is a problem that can only be resolved through practice.

My narrators seem to be one of my weaknesses. Sometimes I can create great ones, other times, they fall flat and are boring. Even to me. I've discovered that the fourth viewpoint character in my WIP (Work In Progress) is boring. Who knew? I can communicate well with realistic dialogue, but wit, satire, and swank . . . hmmm. Not so much.

The “human renegade” is a concept I never considered. But, looking at some of my favorite books and stories, I can easily see the character now. That's something I'll have to work on.

As for coincidence, I've heard it said many times that our writing isn't REAL LIFE; it's LIKE real life with all the boring parts cut

out. I happen to prefer “happy endings” to ones where heroes die a gruesome death through no fault of their own. On the other hand, if you've ever read Craig Johnson's Longmire books, you know that it's contrived coincidence that has kept him alive through twenty-three stories, novellas, and books!

And the surprise ending—sometimes known as “the punchline.” There are editors that abhor this kind of writing, but I think people still like the unexpected. When novels and stories pretend to mimic the random disasters of life, it makes me put the book down and say, “If I wanted to read something realistic, I'd go to BBC.com.” I don't always want to read something that's realistic. Sometimes I need to read something that seems realistic, but isn't at all.

Anyway, I've learned a bit from this. If you'll excuse me, I need to go make some changes to my WIP!

- *The only interview O. Henry ever gave:* <https://library.greensboro-nc.gov/research/north-carolina-collection/o-henry-portal/resources-at-the-greensboro-public-library/o-henry-s-only-interview>
- *Themes, Style, and Technique of O. Henry:* <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/english-literature/themes-styles-techniques-ohenry.php>

You can access my other essays on writers at <https://faithandsciencefiction.blogspot.com/search/label/Writing%20Advice%3A/%20Short%20Stories>.

[I, too, like to think that manuscripts journey to and fro until they find a welcome! -- Ed.]

F E E D B A C K

Our first ever Poetry Issue seems to have been a big hit with readers. Go figure! Thanks for your input and feedback. And if you'd eventually like to see Poetry Issue #2, feel free to send in more poems or articles on the subject.

"This is wonderful!!! It was my favorite issue yet, even before I found my poem on Page 5. It is so well done and interesting. I have printed a hard copy so I can reread. Thank you so much. Now how about a 'poetry edition' once a year?"

-- Ann Spier, online

[We aim to please! -- Ed.]

"I see—a newsletter full of poetry! When I was a child I loved Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. I think I liked the way words were put together, and I went around the house quoting one poem that I especially liked. Until one day my mother took me aside and told me that I was mispronouncing the word 'Sioux.' Hey, in first grade I was taught to sound out the words and that's the best I could do at the time. (If someone's not familiar with the little poem, maybe it'll encourage that person to look it up. Ha!) I always enjoy reading your Feedbacks."

-- Marion Tickner, online

[Sy-ocks? Sooks? -- Ed.]

The Waiting Game

Why Do You Procrastinate?

by Barbara Florio Graham

I have had two interesting mentoring experiences in the past few years, which deal with the problem of procrastination in different ways.

One woman is recently retired and determined to make a second career as an author. She has taken courses and workshops, participated in various contests giving a time limit to write a certain number of words, and hired me to mentor her.

Her book idea was clever and she writes really well. We reworked the beginning, to inject some action and leave the backstory to later on, and the book was really moving along beautifully, until she came to a stop.

This was before COVID hit, so her excuses included needing to get to the gym to drop pounds she had added over the holidays, then renovating their basement to create a proper office, the search for the perfect desk and desk chair, the laundry room which needed reorganizing, and on and on.

I recognized all the excuses I've heard before that procrastinators use to avoid writing. But she had written 90% of what was turning out to be a really good book! What was keeping her from finishing it?

The other case was a bit different. He was a teacher, just a year from

retirement, and spent a full summer working on a book he'd had in mind for a while. He already had fragments written, so my job was to help him pull it together and organize his interesting characters into logical chapters.

He knew the ending, but kept avoiding actually writing it. I sensed the same procrastination problem I saw in my other client.

He kept going back to rewrite perfectly good chapters, to add material that wasn't necessary and detracted from the plot. He actually admitted that this could be a series. I agreed, but urged him to get the first book finished.

One reason for procrastination is fear of failure. If you don't finish and send out the book proposal I've helped you prepare, you aren't risking rejection.

Or if you actually send out proposals to the first round of publishers we selected, but find all kinds of excuses not to follow up, you may also be avoiding accepting the fact that new authors often have to persist with several rounds before finding a good fit.

If fear of rejection is your problem, do a bit of research.

Theodor Seuss Geisel's books have sold 600 million copies worldwide since his first book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, was published in 1937. It was rejected by twenty-seven publishers before being accepted by Vanguard Press.

Madeleine L'Engle was rejected by publishers 26 times before *A Wrinkle in Time* was finally on the book shelves.

J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, the first person to become a billionaire by writing books, was rejected by 12 publishers.

In a few rare cases a writer doesn't really want to be published. They've read about how difficult it can be to work with an editor who wants to change your cherished characters and plot points to improve the book. They dread the book tour, and find in-person interviews scary.

An analyst would reveal that this person loves to "be a writer" but doesn't envision what it takes to become a published author.

So if you're procrastinating, it might be a good idea to find out why, and discuss it with someone who can help you get over what's holding you back.

This article was first published in Freelance Writer's Report. Consider joining their excellent organization at: <https://writersandpublishersnetwork.com/> and mention that Barbara Florio Graham referred you. Check her website at <https://SimonTeakettle.com>.

**WW Lost in Space??
Don't let it happen!
Let us know if your
email address changes!**

Taking Charge

The Basics of Self-Publishing by Patricia Fry

Today's publishing climate offers authors many options. You can submit your work to traditional publishers. If you happen to land one, they will make all of the arrangements for having the book designed and printed and they will foot the bill. They may also ask you to rewrite your "already perfect" book. They'll probably change the title and choose a cover design without getting your input.

Now you'll collect royalties on this book that you barely recognize. How much? Generally, anywhere from 6-15 percent of net—that is, whatever the publisher collects for that book. Most of the books are discounted, so your royalties will be discounted, too. If you get 10% royalties on a \$10 book and, the publisher discounts the book by 40%, your cut is a mere 60 cents. And this goes on only for as long as the publisher is willing to promote your book, which might be a mere 12 months.

You can partner with a co-publisher who, with your money, will produce your book, do limited marketing, and give you around 40% of the profits.

Or you can take control and self-publish your book. Here are the benefits:

- You'll definitely see your book

in print.

- You can have a finished product within weeks or months.
- You have the potential to make more money.
- You have all of the control.
- There are tax breaks to owning your own business.
- You are the best possible marketing agent for your project.
- Your book will keep selling for as long as you are willing to market it.

What about the down side?

- Self-publishing a book is a full-time job.
- Self-publishing requires a lot of decision-making.
- Promoting a book is 100 times more difficult and time-consuming than writing it.
- Your book will keep selling for as long as you are willing to market it.

If you're still interested in self-publishing, here are some of your options. You can get it printed through a traditional printer, take it to a Print-on-Demand (POD) company, print and bind it at home yourself, or produce an ebook.

The most expensive way to

produce a book is through a traditional printer. But it's also the best way to get a quality product.

There are definitely differences in quality and price between printers. Ask several for price quotes, samples of their work, and references. Expect to pay anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 for 1000 to 5000 copies of your book (depending, of course, on page number, number and type of illustrations, binding style and so forth).

If you want to test your market and/or don't want to store boxes and boxes of books, POD may be the right choice for you. You can have anywhere from 5 to 100 books printed at a time, for example. And the turnaround is fast—usually a week to 10 days. However, the cost per book is generally higher through a POD company. An advantage of using a POD company is that you can make changes each time you go to print. I have friends who change the text for their travel guides nearly every time they place an order with their POD company.

Some self-publishers forego the hassles of dealing with outside print companies at all by producing their books in-house. Anyone with a home computer and printer has the capacity to manufacture a book. You can even bind it yourself using a special stapling machine or a plastic comb binding. Some new publishers use this method to test-market their books.

Once you've self-published your

book and proven it in the market place, you may be able to interest a publisher in it. Two of my self-published books have been picked up by traditional publishers.

A major part of self-publishing is promotion. In fact, some experts say you should set aside as much money for marketing the book as you paid to have it produced. If you're not an aggressive marketer, hire someone who is.

Don't expect to produce a book, do a blast of marketing the first few months, and then just sit back and collect money for evermore. A successful self-publisher must have a business head, ongoing enthusiasm for the project, and a bent for promotion. Your book can live for as long as you are willing to promote it. Once you stop, however, it will likely die.

Hopefully, you will prepare a book proposal before writing your book and that proposal includes a marketing section. This is where you determine who your audience is and how you will reach them. Be realistic, how will you market your book? Don't assume that Barnes and Noble will clamor to get copies of your book to stock by the caseload. It's getting more and more difficult for the small publisher to get shelf space in the big bookstores. One way to get their attention is to publicize your book widely and strongly enough that customers start asking for it by name.

Find out where other books on

your topic are sold—specialty shops, gift shops, county fairs, the school system? Dan Poynter's parachuting books sold thousands through skydiving-related shops. My book on presenting a Hawaiian luau did well at barbecue events, barbecue kitchen stores, and Hawaiian tourist shops. You might also consider your book as an incentive item for a banking organization or a large company.

Request reviews. Write magazine articles on your topic. Give workshops on your topic. Invest in mailing lists involving the demographics of folks who would purchase your book. Send press releases nationwide, if applicable. Draw attention to yourself and your book. If your book is for diabetic children, for example, do a fund-raiser for the local diabetes association and make sure you get national coverage.

There are numerous things to think about when contemplating self-publishing. I hope this article will help you make the decision that's right for you.

Patricia Fry is the author of over 50 books including Publish Your Book, Promote Your Book, and Talk Up Your Book. She is the publisher at Matilija Press and author of the popular Klepto Cat Mystery Series (available at Amazon in print and for Kindle). For more info go to matilijapress.com.

[OK, you entrepreneurs. We'll have more tips on promoting self-published books next time. -- Ed.]

Phrases That Need to Be Retired Permanently

"head space"

This is another phrase that seemed to get a workout during the winter Olympics. "She's in a good head space." "He's not in a good head space." It's really just talking about one's frame of mind. I looked up "head space" to see if it's an actual thing, and here's the definition: "The volume left at the top of a filled jar, tin, or other container before sealing." So there's your head space!

Uniting and Writing

Questions to Ask Before Collaborating by Moira Allen

Book collaborations begin with the best intentions. Someone you know has an idea or area of expertise that, paired with your writing skills, should lead to a surefire success. You're the best of friends, so surely you can work well together. What could possibly go wrong?

The answer is: Plenty. While many collaborations proceed

without a hitch, others fail disastrously. Good intentions alone can't sustain a partnership through the lengthy process of completing a book, and when those intentions fail, you may lose not only the work you've invested in a project, but the friendship that began it. To collaborate successfully, you need a plan, and the answers to the following important questions:

1) Who will contribute what?

In nonfiction projects, it's common for one partner to contribute ideas or expertise, while the other handles the actual writing. While this seems straightforward, you'll also need to agree upon how much information the non-writing partner should contribute, how much control the writing partner has over what information is included in the book, and how much control the non-writing partner has over how that information is presented.

In fiction projects, both partners often share the task of writing.

Again, you'll need to reach an understanding about who should be responsible for what: which sections will you write and which sections will you leave to your partner?

Will each write an even share of the novel? Will one partner focus on a particular aspect of the writing (such as action sequences) while the other concentrates on dialogue and character development? How will you ensure that your sections mesh, your styles match, and your work share remains equitable?

2) How will you determine the relative value of each partner's

contribution? Most collaborations begin with the intention of a 50-50 split. Often, however, those intentions break down when one partner perceives that s/he is providing the lion's share of the work. If a 50-50 split begins to appear less equitable than you'd thought, consider developing another method of "valuing" each partner's share of the work, such as a time-based percentage.

3) When will partners be responsible for delivering their share of the work?

Many collaborations fail (and many friendships end) when partners fail to provide their share of the work in a timely manner. Different people have different work habits and different obligations, and as any writer knows, it can be difficult to sustain momentum through even the most exciting project. It's vital to establish timelines for each person's share of the work, and to live up to those timelines.

4) Who will have the final say over issues of style? If one partner is doing most of the writing, will that partner have sole discretion over the organization and presentation of the material? If not, how much control will the "information" partner have over these issues? If you are both writing sections of the book, how will you resolve differences in style or voice? Who will be responsible for a final edit of the book? Arguments over style and grammar can turn a project into a nightmare.

5) Who will handle the business

side of the project? While you may both be involved in market research and make joint decisions about where to submit your work for publication, one person will probably end up doing most of the paperwork, i.e., writing query letters, printing manuscript copies, following up. Make sure you've factored these tasks into your work-share agreement.

6) How will you share expenses?

Again, a 50-50 split is common, but you must also have a method of determining and reimbursing expenses. It's probably unrealistic to wait until the book has been sold and you've received an advance. So be sure you're ready to reimburse one another for out-of-pocket expenses incurred along the way. You'll also need to decide how to handle project expenses on your taxes.

7) How will you share the credit?

Some collaborations crash and burn over the issue of whose name should be listed first on the cover. You'll also need to decide whether your partnership should be defined as "and," "with," or "as told to." Some fiction collaborators solve this problem by inventing a "single-author" pseudonym. Another solution is to list your names alphabetically.

8) What are your rights if your partner chooses to "opt out"?

In many cases, a collaboration ends when one partner loses interest or is unable to complete his/her share of the work because of other obligations. Sometimes the end

comes abruptly; sometimes the collaboration suffers a slow, withering death. Sometimes the partner formally withdraws from the project, but often the project ends simply because a partner simply ceases to contribute.

The dissolution of your partnership can be an emotional time and, therefore, not the best time to try to reach an agreement regarding the project's future or the remaining partner's ongoing role in the project. It's far better to decide in advance what will happen to the project if either partner chooses to leave the collaboration.

Who will own the rights to the project? Will the remaining partner have the right to proceed alone—or perhaps even to take on a new partner? Will the withdrawing partner still own a share of the project based on work already contributed? Will that partner still have a right to control what happens to the work, or even block its publication? Will the withdrawing partner still receive credit (e.g., part of the byline)? Ask these questions now, while you're still on friendly terms, and you may prevent a great deal of pain and heartache in the future.

9) What happens if one partner dies?

While this may be the last thing you want to think about, it's an important issue. If one partner dies, will the other become "sole owner" of the project? Or would you prefer to ensure that your rights (and profits) are inherited by your heirs? Don't assume that

you both have the same preferences in this regard; discuss how rights and proceeds will be handled in the event of either partner's death.

Get it in Writing

At the very least, you and your partner should discuss these issues, and any others that might arise in the course of your collaboration. Talk to any victim of a failed collaboration, and you'll hear the same cry: "If only we had had a contract!"

Unfortunately, many people consider it an insult to ask a friend to sign a formal contract. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A contract simply is a way of acknowledging that what you are about to undertake is not only a mutually enjoyable project, but a business arrangement with long-term ramifications. Developing a contract in advance is the best possible way to protect both partners from future misunderstandings. Circumstances, interests, and enthusiasms may change for both of you; a contract can prevent those changes from turning into major conflicts.

There is an additional benefit to spelling out the terms of your collaboration in a formal contract. By doing so, you and your partner become answerable to the contract, rather than to each other. Such a contract can act as a powerful vehicle of enforcement, reducing each partner's need to nag the other for compliance. As such, it can

help protect not only your work, but your relationship.

A collaboration can be a wonderful experience, and produce a far better book than either you or your partner might have produced alone. To ensure that this experience goes smoothly, why not make a simple agreement your first piece of "collaborative writing"?

Moira Allen is the editor of Writing-World.com and several other websites. Her numerous books include Starting Your Career as a Freelance Writer (in its third edition), The Writer's Guide to Queries, Pitches and Proposals, and Coping with Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet (also in its third edition!). Check out her Victorian history website at www.victorianvoices.net. Contact Moira at editors@writing-world.com.

[Anyone want to collaborate on a little writers' rag? -- Ed.]

MORE FEEDBACK

"I've just read your recent newsletter and learned a bit about poetry in the process. I am not what I'd consider a 'working writer,' though I have had several short stories published, as well as a memoir. I've also taken a shot at a poem."

-- Mary Jo Latham-Martin, online

[You're a working writer. -- Ed.]

Picture This

Making the Sausage by Karen Kruse

When I wrote my book, *A Chicago Firehouse: Stories of Wrigleyville's Engine 78*, I sorted info into chapters. To do that, I wrote each idea on an index card, then played "Solitaire" with the cards, putting each into the appropriate chapter pile. I paper-clipped each bunch together, then set them aside, concentrating on one chapter at a time. The trick is to break any large project into manageable smaller pieces. This makes it easier to conquer each chapter. Writing a large article works the same way.

One of my passions is visiting cemeteries, especially national cemeteries. There is a misconception they are all the same. They are definitely not, thus my reason for writing my latest article for *The Quarterly*, the publication of the Association for Gravestone Studies, a group to which I belong.

The first step was to locate all the pictures of the 70+ national cemeteries I've visited with my boyfriend. That, in itself, was a project. As I located useable pictures, I put copies of them into a "Working" folder. All pictures were also labeled with the name of the cemetery. The number or anything else included as part of the original label didn't matter at this point. It didn't matter if I had multiple copies of a similar view. I would edit later. The point was to grab all I might use for the piece.

Once I knew what I had, I could craft the text portion. Once I did that, I needed to figure out how to organize the photos so if I was looking for an American flag, for instance, I would be able to find all versions I had to choose from. I was afraid with nearly 250 pictures from which to choose, I could miss the best version of the shot. I decided to make sub-folders for each item; thus there are folders for "American Flag," "Cannons," "Special Markers," and so on. I made 38 and dumped each photo into its corresponding folder.

Now I could easily put the photos in the proper order. The problem remained: how to label them so they would stay in the order of the article and, perhaps more importantly, add photos in between if I found something I needed to include later or made a mistake along the way. Using a straight numerical numbering system had its drawbacks. It was possible to have a picture labeled "003," then later need to add another before or after it. When the folder was re-numbered it would be a challenge to avoid having two photos with the same number. Instead, I used an "A" before the number.

I went to work grabbing one or two of the best photos (to allow my editor to decide which was better) from each sub-folder in the order of the article, placing them in the "Master" folder. When I thought I was done, I went back through the sub-folders and found some pictures I thought I had

moved to the master folder didn't get there. Oops. Here is where the renumbering worked well. I could add the new item as "A003a -- Arlington," for example. I also checked the article itself against the Master folder to make sure all the pictures I needed were there. Again, a picture or two were missing, so I located them and moved them into the proper position using "a," "b," or whatever I needed to make sure the pictures lined up properly according to the article.

Everything was now in the proper order, but labeled in an inconsistent way. I retitled the Master folder of photos numerically, remembering to keep the name of the cemetery. Thus my Master file of photos looks something like this: "001 -- Arlington," "002 -- Raleigh," "003 -- Jefferson City."

The last step was to write captions for my editor after the text of the article, so the list looks like this: "001 -- Arlington: Each national cemetery has an American flag, this one displayed in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA." My editor can adjust the caption if she wants, but has complete information. I don't want an editor asking for the name of the cemetery or location because I didn't include it. That's the reason I added the cemetery name when labeling the photo. It makes it easier for both of us!

This may seem like a lot of work, but in the end, I know my output is accurate and consistent. A nice bonus is that it's easier for my

editor, and as a result, I may have a larger piece published and be welcomed to do additional work in the future. Isn't that the goal of every writer?

Take the time now to meticulously work through the pieces you need for your project. It will save you time later.

Karen's book A Chicago Firehouse: Stories of Wrigleyville's Engine 78 is available at achicagofirehouse.com. Her articles and photos have been published by the Association for Gravestone Studies and the Illinois State Genealogical Society.

[That's what I call thorough! -- Ed.]

--Abecedarian Corner--

*Inspiration and advice
for aspiring scribes*

One Man's Meat by Willma Willis Gore

In late 2006, I read in a marketing email: "\$1000 offered as first prize for the winning short story accepted by Montana State University for their annual *Journal of Literature and Art*." I'd just finished writing and re-editing my short story "Cellmates," and submitted it.

Within a month I received a personal apology from the editor of the journal. He reported that the donor of the \$1000 prize had withdrawn the funds. No reason given.

However, he added, "We love your story. May we publish it anyway?" My story was published in the 2007 journal *MO: Writings from The River*.

At the same time, I had entered "Cellmates" in a contest offered by Decatur Illinois Library Association. My \$5 entry fee brought me a long letter explaining that "the plot is weak, the heroine unconvincing, the ending inconclusive . . ." to mention just a few of my story's many faults.

Early in 2008 I received a message from Writer's Institute Publications in Connecticut, publishers of an annual magazine market guide as well as an excellent newsletter, *Children's Writer*, and other publications for writers. The editors had found "Cellmates" in the *Montana State Journal* and would like to include it in a new volume, *Voices in Today's Magazines*, "designed for use by creative writing teachers at the college level."

They also wanted a photo. I sent permission and the photo promptly. They paid \$100. The 2010 publication of *Voices* includes the fiction and nonfiction of 76 authors and my photo is one of the nine included on the cover. Happy days!

Of course, just as we lowly readers enjoying reading different kinds of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, so editors and contest judges may have totally different takes on the precious words we submit for their consideration, for prize money or publication.

We all need to recognize that old cliché: "One man's meat is another man's poison."

Willma Willis Gore is a much published writer of fiction, "how-to" nonfiction, a memoir, children's books, articles, essays, and short stories in both regional and national journals, including the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.

[What's good for the goose . . . -- Ed.]

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Pen Pals

Friends Who Write by Margaret McCaffrey

In 2020 my writing group published an anthology entitled *Every Second Tuesday*. Elwood Writers is four in number. The anthology features poems, fiction, and memoir either previously published or newly minted.

We oversaw the publishing process ourselves, launching via Zoom with a popular Melbourne bookshop, and had copies avail-

able in retail stores and online. To follow up the publication, one member wrote a guest post for an Australian writer's blog. Barry noted that while our group work together successfully and with *bon ami*, our prime connection is through a love of writing. That's as it should be. He explained: "With (our) disparate histories and interests outside writing it's unlikely we'd have otherwise met."

This put me in mind of one of my four brothers announcing years ago that were we five children not in the same family, "we might not be friends." (The jury is still out on that one.)

Barry's statement got me thinking. What constitutes a friendship?

One definition from Irish poet David Whyte is that a true friend is one who shows "tolerance and mercy" and who sees the "essence" of who you are. A friend, he says, is the person who accompanies you on the journey that is "impossible to accomplish alone."

Before I joined Elwood Writers in 2013, I was of the opinion that friends were people with whom you had one important thing in common, like school, for example, or a significant trip away, a shared place of work. When I began my studies in creative writing, I barely knew a soul who wrote. I still don't know many. But I understand that by sharing my work and workshopping with the others, I'm engaging in the generous and privileged act of giving and receiving.

David Whyte says the main "touchstone" of a real friendship is to bear "witness." As writing can be the place where we humans reveal the deepest part of ourselves—particularly in memoir—having a person or people we trust to witness our process along the way is a precious gift.

Many writers prefer to work alone. But even the greatest—Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ezra Pound—attended Gertrude Stein's Saturday soirées, or met in Parisian cafés at the close of day. Surely they discussed their work.

Three of my group are "mature-aged" writers. Barry says that our differences are our strength. We meet once a fortnight in a member's apartment or online, we send work around beforehand, prepare an agenda, and keep minutes of the meeting.

This may sound over-zealous, but it is particularly helpful in recording our forays into submitting and getting work published. While we have catch-up time for fifteen minutes at the beginning of each session, the formalities depersonalize things, and keep us on track.

If my theory on friendship is correct—that it relies on having at least one significant event or interest in common with another—then I'm happy to have my new professional relationship bound by an abiding passion for writing. Without the other three as my companions, I doubt I would have

accomplished alone as much of the writing journey as I have.

Margaret McCaffrey is an Australian-based writer who completed her MA in Creative Writing in 2015. Her memoir pieces have appeared in American Writers Review and The Door is Ajar. Other stories can be heard on Vision Australia Radio and be read in the anthology Every Second Tuesday.

[I've never met most of my writer friends! -- Ed.]

The Gallery of Language Pitfalls

by Ulla de Stricker

Is it all over the map, or have payments been made?

WRONG: The funds have been *dispersed*. The family has members *disbursed* all over the world.

CORRECT: The funds have been *disbursed*. The family has members *dispersed* . . .

Trick: *Disburse* means "remove from the place where the money is" (from French *bourse* meaning pouch or purse). If the idea is "spread far and wide," then use *disperse*. Of course, disbursements can be dispersed to far-away places!

More on request from ulla@destricker.com.

"A hedge between
keeps friendship green."
~~German proverb~~

Pet Peeves

HEY EDITOR!
by Cheryl Struzer

I mean "Dear Editor," of course.

Do you really have to stamp the first few pages of my manuscript with a "date received" stamp?

If you render it not acceptable for your wonderful publication, guess what? I can't resubmit it elsewhere, without having to reprint it.

Really glad I sent the postage on the return envelope.

Multiply that by 200 of my latest submissions, and you can see how unnecessary that stamping "date received" practice really is.

And, do you really want to send the message out to writers, that the manuscript you are returning in April, was submitted in November?

Also, if you have that one minute to explain that you receive many many manuscripts, so you won't

be commenting on my work, do you think perhaps you could put that one minute to better use and explain what you did or did not like? Just saying, that in place of the rambling about your busyness, you could be of real help to me.

And Madam/ Sir, I know an editor's salary might not compare to a doctor's, but heck, did you really have to steal, I mean, *keep* that beautiful large pink-colored paperclip I used to attach my cover letter to my manuscript?

I mean, I bought the beautiful expressive clips for presentation purposes. Competition is stiff out there. But I did not buy them as a gift.

And I am certain you could have fit it into my very large SASE.

Just saying.

Cheryl Struzer has been writing books and monologues and poetry for years. She has a lot of experience with rejection letters.

[OK. OK. I'll give you the pink paperclip back! -- Ed.]

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the Next Issue!**

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See you in September '22!