



# Penwheels Newsletter Winter Issue

*For Escapees Writers  
Published or Not*

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*Penwheels* is a private group of Escapees members who enjoy writing and discussing the writing adventure. The *Penwheels Newsletter* is digitally published quarterly.

[Archives Available](#)

## Happy Holidays to All



This holiday season holds the promise of good tidings for the New Year. The traditional publishing industry is beginning to offer more sophisticated options to get your book to the reader. Self-published authors are gaining the experience necessary to reinvent the entire writing and promotion experience.

Now is the time to make your move! Spend the extra time off during this holiday period to finish that book.

## Congrats to the Winner!

Many thanks to the five writers who submitted a total of six stories for the Penwheels Short Story Contest! We're happy to announce Maureen Kay Lynch's "*Chance Encounter*" as the winner and include her story in this edition of the newsletter.

All stories were read twice: first to get an overall impression, then to determine the winning manuscript. Special attention was paid to the areas covered in the Fiction Tips column -- characterization, setting, point of view and narration, and general story elements (see the Summer Newsletter column "Story... or Anecdote?" for more on this).

In just over 1800 words, "*Chance Encounter*" delivers two believable characters, their backstory, a setting we can picture in our minds, and a story that resolves itself in a way that changes the main character, which is a critical element that differentiates a story from an anecdote.

The other submissions each had their strengths and I'm grateful to all the writers for trusting me with their work and for supporting **Penwheels** by participating. One author even said she'd been meaning to write out a particular story, and this contest gave her motivation for doing that.

That's what we were hoping to do!

*Happy Holidays,  
Ellen Behrens*



## Chance Encounter

by *Maurzen Kay Lynch*

Chris sighed in frustration. A two-hour flight delay really messed up his week. He should have been able to make the presentation this morning so he could be home by four. Now he would have to stay overnight in Chicago.

But, he knew how to shift gears. Seated on a narrow metal bench across from the ticket counter, he used his cell phone to check email, and then considered breakfast. As it was a bit too early for that, he contented himself with people watching.

The male passengers in their drab business apparel were not nearly as interesting to watch as the colorful female travelers. Still, he was pleased to note that he did not share the wide girths and sagging jowls found on many of the men. He mentally congratulated himself on having the good fortune to keep up his appearance. Not thinking himself delusional, he was confident that he presented himself as a much younger man.

He watched a group of women hurry toward Security, noting that one wore extremely high heels and an abundance of jewelry. He shook his head at the thought of her dealing with the scanning machine.

And then he saw Claire. No, it couldn't be her. Too old.

Curious, he glanced at the woman again. She was in line for the ticket counter where he could only see her profile. As he watched, she shifted her jacket and shoulder bag, adjusted her glasses, and ran a hand through her hair, actions he acknowledged could be Claire's. Her sensible slip-on shoes and simple jewelry didn't escape his notice, causing him to smile. He recalled her as being pragmatic and methodical when they worked together.

"Wow," he thought to himself. "If that's her, she looks much older than I remember."

Well, of course she would. They hadn't seen each other in years. Other than the occasional phone call, they had mostly stayed in touch by email and text. Infrequently there were pictures attached, but only of his new car or her garden projects. Now her hair

was no longer brown but mostly grays, worn shoulder length and back off her face. Familiar, yet different. He also had a bit of distinguished silver at his temples, he acknowledged generously to himself, but he didn't think it aged him to the extent that it did her.

Glancing at his watch, he again considered breakfast. Coffee, at least. He stood, grabbed his roll-on and picked his way through the crowds to the main concourse to look for an open restaurant. As he walked, he found his mind wandering back to Claire.

They had worked at the same company many years ago where, although in different departments, various meetings and social events brought them together. He had a sense that she was interested in him but had steered clear of that. It was that age thing. He was nearly ten years her junior, and women his age seemed more, well, attractive. At least socially. No one questioned his choice of companion when it appeared they had started out in the same preschool class.

But there was something lacking in those women, he had to admit, briefly recalling the fashion-conscious passenger loaded with bling who had stumbled by in heels earlier. None of them could hold a long conversation without descending into trivia of some sort. Fashion, celebrities, whatever. Claire could talk, and in a good way.

They often chatted long into the evening, standing in a parking lot after the rest of their associates had left what had been a happy hour gathering. Nothing was forbidden. Books were shared and discussed. Issues were debated. Even arguments were resolved.

But he told himself she was only an older work associate, not someone with whom to forge a romantic relationship. Lost in thought, he nearly walked into an ornate iron fence. Realizing it was cordoning off the 'outdoor patio' of a café, he walked around toward the entrance and found himself in line behind the woman he had thought was Claire.

"Name please?" The hostess was asking the woman.

"Claire," she responded. The hostess jotted the name on a list on her podium before looking up at Chris.

"Chris," he answered before adding, "and I'd be happy to share a table with Claire here."

Claire turned quickly, the stern, 'don't mess with me' expression on her face dissolving into a happy smile as she recognized him.

"Chris! What a nice surprise!" She put an arm around his neck to give him a quick hug.

"Small world," he acknowledged with a smile. "What brings you to Cleveland?"

"Claire and Chris, right this way," the hostess interrupted before leading them to a small table in the corner of the fenced patio. "Away from the crowds so you two can catch up," she smiled knowingly at them both as she walked away.

"I'm here until Saturday for a convention," Claire resumed their conversation. "Where are you headed?"

"Chicago, to do a presentation tomorrow afternoon."

"You're going early, aren't you?"

Chris nodded ruefully.

"I was supposed to present later this morning, but there's a fog delay in Chicago so I won't get in on time. They rescheduled me for early tomorrow afternoon, and I was able to get a flight back tomorrow evening."

Recalling his usual summer schedule, she asked about his plans.

"Does that mess up your weekend at the state park?"

"It does," he smiled, pleased that she remembered that he loved to camp in his trailer. "I'm already set up so I can head over as soon as I get back, if someone can get Jake for me. Better to go for a shorter time than not at all."

"Good way to look at it," she nodded. "Don't you have a girlfriend who could get Jake?" she asked, Jake being the dog he has had for over ten years that she had never met. She smiled at the recollection of his stories of the puppy that grew into a sizable animal.

"Ah, no, not at present," he replied, shaking his head. "But if I don't find someone, it won't take long to get him. Then it's a short drive to the campground. It will be fine."

He glanced at his watch.

"How long do you have?" he asked. "We should probably order."

"Actually, almost three hours," she said. "I'm waiting for a couple of associates so we can Uber together to the hotel. And I'm starving!"

After placing their orders, Claire stepped away to the restroom. Chris did not fail to note the agility she displayed as she dodged other passengers who were preoccupied with suitcases, strollers and small children before reaching the line that snaked out of the ladies' room.

While waiting for the waitress to bring coffee, Chris continued to muse about Claire. Perhaps their age disparity made her safe to talk to, he wasn't sure, but it never crossed his mind that their friendship could be anything more. As he watched her gray head move through the crowd, he noted again that time had not been kind. At least not as kind as it had been to him.

And the strangest feeling overcame him, bringing a distinct frown to his face.

"Are you okay, honey?" the waitress asked as she brought a carafe of coffee to their table.

"What?" He almost jumped. "No. I mean, yes. I'm fine. Thanks."

"Something wrong?" Claire asked as she approached. "I heard her ask."

"Nope! Not a thing!" Chris replied with feigned brightness, shaking his head as he rose.

"My turn," he added before entering the crowds on the concourse, mulling over the odd emotion and wondering what had come over him.

She asked about a girlfriend. Was that it? He dated a lot but nothing stuck for long, and he was at a loss to figure out why. It was difficult to see most of his friends settled with families, to see the way they interacted with each other in order to make their way through the events of their lives together.

Several of them also camped next to his site at the state park. Sometimes it left him feeling quite bereft when the couples would duck into their RVs at the end of the day, some with children in their arms, while he stayed with only Jake for company in his "bachelor pad," as they teasingly referred to his RV.

It would be nice to have someone, even this late in the game. He felt he was capable of attracting the right person to share interests and talk to like he could with Claire.

His thoughts drifted over the list of women he had dated, causing him to shudder inwardly as he remembered the one time he brought one of them to the camp for a holiday weekend. After one day of dealing with her precious princess attitude, he had conjured up an urgent reason to return to the city, much to the relief of his friends.

He wondered how Claire was doing in the singles world. The subject hadn't come up thus far. It struck him that it might not because he wasn't sure he wanted to ask, and the odd feeling returned.

Approaching the men's room, he took his place in line. The room was bordered with stalls and sinks below mirrored walls. He briefly caught sight of what appeared to be the same jacket he wore but on a much older man. He glanced around to confirm his impression but didn't see the man again.

Moments later, after washing his hands and splashing his face with water, he waved wildly until the automatic towel machine dispensed a very short sheet of paper that dissolved in his wet hands as though it were made of cotton candy.

That's when Chris saw the older man with the matching jacket. Locking gazes through the mirror, he noted the gray in his hair, the lines around his eyes and mouth, and the extra skin below the jaw line.

And he realized he was looking at himself.

Sobered, he didn't move until jostled by others as the room started to fill again. Stepping away from the row of sinks, he found a manual paper towel dispenser. Pulling out two sheets, he slowly dried his hands and face before leaving the restroom.

From the entrance, he sought out Claire, suddenly anxious to see her.

Her silvery hair caught his eye. She was chatting with people at the next table, her eyes sparkling as she laughed. The waitress delivered their orders, and he saw how Claire scanned the crowd for him as their meals were placed on the table, concerned that his breakfast would be cold if he didn't return soon.

The observation warmed him, making the odd feeling fade. As he approached, their eyes met and he saw in them something he knew he'd been missing, and knew he'd found.

"I can camp any weekend," he smiled as he took his seat. "By any chance, are you free for dinner on Saturday?"



## Contest Rules for the Spring Issue

### Poetry and Nonfiction Contests

**Penwheelers**, send in your submission in one (or more) of the following categories. **Deadline for Spring Newsletter: Feb 15, 2018.**

1. **Poetry** - 45 lines including title, author line and skipped lines between stanzas. You may submit up to two poems.

2. **Nonfiction**: 500 words Choose one: (You may submit up to two nonfiction entries.)

- ❖ An incident you'd include in your family story or memoir. Make it come alive!
- ❖ A travel story. Make us see it!
- ❖ How-to article. Tell us how to do something. It could be real or write humorously and convincingly about how to use a "whatchamacallit!"

Send entries to Jaimie: [calamityjaimie@gmail.com](mailto:calamityjaimie@gmail.com).

Put *Penwheels Submission* in the **subject line** and the type of entry: *memoir, travel or how-to*.

If you have more than one submission, please send them separately. The best will be published in a future issue of *Penwheels*, as space permits.

**Submit by email** either in the body of the email or attach a document in *Word, Word Perfect* or an *RTF*.

Please spellcheck and proofread your entries and check the number of words. (Word count will be strictly enforced so use your word processing program to make sure you stay within the limits.)

If you send an RTF file or your submission in the body of an email, indicate any special formatting like bold or italics and be sure to skip lines between the paragraphs.

Jaimie (and perhaps a guest commentator) will send back comments on each entry.



## Penwheels History

*Greetings from the Penwheels Historian, Doris Hutchins #29167. valentinedh@gci.net*

I would like to brief new members and refresh older members on the origin of our organization. I have all the old newsletters from the beginning of this BOF stored in my home in Alaska.

Myrna Courtney started the club in 1994. She was also Newsletter Editor and produced a two-page Newsletter. At the time there were ten members.

Myrna met with a few writers and they became interested in communicating with other SKP writers. Eventually they became "Birds Of a Feather" in the Escapees Newsletter. In 1995 a contest was held to find a name for our club. The logo was designed by Joanne Alexakis, our current Membership chairperson.

Joanne Alexakis and Jaimie Hall Bruzenak became members in 1995. Jaimie served as Editor for two years. Joanne was Editor in 2004 and has been Membership Chairperson since 1998.

I was Newsletter Editor at end of 2004 before Margo Armstrong, our current editor. Members would send in their own interesting writings/stories to share with each other.

Joe and Kay Peterson were early members and they contributed articles to the newsletter. Joe wrote an article, "Self Publishing", in 1996.

We started out with a handful of writers and now we have 87 members. The number has fluctuated over the years. If anyone would like to ask questions, feel free to send me an email: [valentinedh@gci.net](mailto:valentinedh@gci.net)



## Book Review

*by Joanne Alexakis*

### Inevitable Moments

Lou Silvestri's quick-read books are always entertaining. I just finished "*Inevitable Moments -Short Stories*" by Lou Silvestri. Lou (SKP#9919) is 89 1/2 years old and we'll never keep up with him, his creative imagination or his sense of ironic humor. He has fun with movie classics, world history and gentle "adult content".

Lou is so good at illustrating (with his words) his stories, that I asked him if he had experience in the movie industry or performing arts. He replied, "The only background I have in movie/performing arts, etc., is being a very happy movie/theater goer back in the days when they were worth going to.

When I was in high school, I worked as an office boy for Samuel Goldwyn's NYC office in Rockefeller Center for two terrific summer vacations. What a time that was for a teenager. Also, worked for ANTA, American National Theater and Academy, in NYC, a government-chartered thing, before I was drafted into the Army and re-hired after discharge. Those were terrific, exciting days, too. Show business - such craziness!"

Lou stocks 32 short, short stories in his 110-page paperback book; a fast and lighthearted read.

#### From *Inevitable Moments*, "Almost a Butcher":

*"Billy, Billy, Billy. Why dost thou persist in torturing thouself this way. Thou hast tried over and over, but no one pays a heed. No one seems to give a pence.*

*"Thou artst running out of pounds and shillings. Rent is overdue. Larder needs re-stocking. The third feathers from the outer left wing of the swan are becoming more and more expensive, not to mention ink.*

*"Why goest on like this whenst thou canst work in my little butcher shop trimming fat off chops, sweeping away the gristle, and a hundred other little things to keepst thouself occupied. I'll pay thee a nice monthly wage.*

*"Rejection is a terrible thing, Billy. It can turn thee into a bitter man. Promise me thou willst give it some thought."*

*"Yes, I willst, dear friend. However, all I need is one lucky break. Maybe, thenst all my other attempts will be*

recognized. If I want to become successful I have to keepst trying. I have one more making the rounds. It's a tragic love story. If that fails, too, thenst maybe I'llst change the title or takest thee upst on your kind offer. It's called Romeost and Juliest."

The book is for sale on [Amazon](#).

## Braggin' Rights

by Joanne Alexakis

Escapes magazine Nov/Dec 2019 issue: Joanne Alexakis SKP#19367 wrote a short piece about line dancing on page 26. You can tell she loves to line dance—especially at Escapes Rainbow Parks!



## World of Publishing

### Does the Bankruptcy Clause in Your Publishing Contract Really Protect You?

Under a Chapter 7 filing, a trustee will liquidate a company's assets in order to earn as much money as it can to pay creditors.

The other point, the killer is that as soon as bankruptcy is declared, all assets are frozen. Since author contracts are counted as assets, that means the contracts do not tick down until they are disposed of, i.e., sold. So, if you are one year into a seven-year contract, when the contract is sold, you still owe six years on that contract, even if it took a year to sell.

If you check your publishing contract, you may see language that addresses bankruptcy and insolvency, similar to this:

"In the event of the bankruptcy, insolvency or liquidation of the Publisher, this Agreement shall terminate and all rights granted to the Publisher shall revert to the Author automatically and without the necessity of any demand or notification."

This is a bankruptcy clause, a.k.a. an ipso facto clause (because "the fact itself" of the bankruptcy or insolvency triggers termination).

It sounds straightforward—publisher files for bankruptcy, rights revert, the end. In practice, though, that's not how it works. Thanks to key provisions of the Bankruptcy Code, ipso facto clauses are generally unenforceable, and are treated as such by the courts.

[Read on . . .](#)

## 7 Legal Tips for Writers

Plenty of writers make it through their entire careers without any legal troubles. But there are plenty out there who are not so lucky. And while we tend to think of the big and the bad suits like defamation and copyright infringement, there are many kinds of legal trouble you can get into regarding your finances or contracts.

Here are 7 tips to protect your career and keep things running smoothly.

1. Avoid Plagiarism
2. Credit Sources
3. Credit Anyone that Helps You (If they Want)
4. Avoid Defamation
5. When in Doubt, Make it Fiction
6. Copyright Your Content
7. Ironclad Contracts

[For details . . .](#)





## Fire and Ice

by Ellen Behrens

Best-selling author Ernest Gaines once said, "Write with fire and edit with ice." Most of us, sadly, are doing the opposite: we're drafting slowly, second-guessing every sentence, every word choice. We read and re-read our all-important opening paragraph or two, wondering if it's the best place to start the tale, then fretting over whether it will grab readers enough to drag them through the rest of the book, which we haven't even finished writing yet.

When we finally click "Save" after typing the last words of the manuscript, we edit with fire. We blaze through the manuscript, fixing a paragraph here and there, maybe moving a section, but mostly tinkering at the word level. We're so relieved to have the darned thing drafted we rush through our editing, eager to get to the "published book" part.

The result? A finished manuscript, a published book, which we realize – too late – could have been better. "Why did I make this choice, miss that error?" we wonder. We'd had such a beautiful vision of this novel, but this isn't it. What happened?

What happened is we went about things backwards. As Gaines advises, we should draft as fast as we can, then edit as if we have all the time in the world.

Another way of looking at Gaines' words to the wise is that we should draft passionately – expend all the fire-breathing energy that got us motivated to write the book in the first place. Blaze through your draft like a fast-moving wildfire. Leave nothing in your wake.

When you've got it all down, when *The End* has come, sit back and look at your creation with the icy-cold eye of a tough critic. Where does the story fall apart? What doesn't make sense? Which characters are cut from cardboard, and which are three-dimensional? Cover all that *before* you start to engineer the paragraphing and wording.

All writers – even the best – hit a point during the writing process when nothing budges. The story doesn't flow, the right word doesn't appear in a

dream, and the book feels doomed. When this happens to you, remember Ernest Gaines' advice. Stoke the fire and get back to the business of drafting your novel.

Then sit in the freezer long enough to see your breath or feel your eyebrows start to frost over before grabbing your editing knife to carve your manuscript with a cold sharpness. Slice through every weak scene, each wimpy character. Surgically remove grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

If this is already your practice, good for you! Your books probably go out into the world fully-realized, completely polished. You will be able to look back at them years from now and say, "I'm still proud of that."

*Ellen Behrens (ellenbooks.com) is hard at work on the third novel in her Rollin RV Mystery series, **Superstition Victim**. She and her husband have been full-time RVers since 2009. Download a PDF containing her previous Fiction Tips columns in the same spot you get this newsletter.*



## Jaimie's Tips

by Jaimie Bruzenak

 Wattpad? Never heard of it, but Writer's Weekly answered a question about it in "[Is WattPad a Great Opportunity to Promote Your Writing – Or a Toilet to Flush Your Work For Free??](#)" It could depend on your goals.

 If you have skills as an editor or illustrator or provide a service that a writer might need to publish their book, you could be listed as a resource for those using BookLocker for their publisher. You can [read more and find a link to the application](#) in the Halloween issue.

 From the same Writers Weekly issue (8/23/18) is an article about [how writing short pieces could earn you money](#). Check out writing for greeting cards and gift books.

 Just because you receive something written from someone doesn't mean you have the right to use it. [Learn more . . .](#)



## Copyediting vs Proofreading vs Editing

**Copy editors** get into the nitty-gritty of your book to make it as grammatically correct as possible. They also help with rewriting, clarity, flow, word choice, and fact-checking.

**Copy editors** can tell when you're overusing punctuation or repeating certain words and can help you correct it. They can even help with organization and provide feedback on overall style.

**Proofreaders** are the final set of eyes that check for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and typos to polish your work. They are taking what is on the page (not adding or deleting anything) and making sure it's as error-free as possible.

In theory, the **copy editor** should work on a book only after the actual story, characters, and plot have been finalized by a **content editor**, and the **proofreader** should work on a book only after the copy editor has worked their magic.

Think of it like building a house. The **editor** builds the foundation and framework; the **copy editor** installs the floors and walls; the **proofreader** does the final touches and furnishes the house. You can't furnish a house before you build the framework.

For a list of proofreaders with proven experience, click [here](#).

Want to be a proofreader part-time? Check out this [online course](#).

## Kindle Unlimited Scams

In David Gaughran's post on Oct 9, 2018, he laid out the latest problem with *Kindle Unlimited* and the book stuffers/scammers.

If you have been publishing books on Amazon in the last few years (since 2015 specifically), you may have noticed that sales have slid to the bottom of the charts. It takes more advertising and promotion than ever before to keep royalties coming in at even lower amounts.

According to Gaughran, the "bad boy book stuffers" have figured out a way to game the Amazon system, particularly Kindle Select.

"A hardcore group of internet marketers invaded the Kindle Store and constructed an elaborate system for purloining millions of dollars from the Kindle Unlimited pot from our end, in other words.

Various seamy behaviors were engaged in from a menu containing rank manipulation, incentivizing purchases, mass gifting, click farms, fake reviews, formatting hacks, plagiarism, and book stuffing ..."

Using ghostwriters and phony publishing accounts, this circle of scammers unload hundreds of books into the system with phony reviews, fraudulent purchases and more tricks than a magician.

[Read more . . .](#)

## CreateSpace Dissolves into KDP Paperback Print

Ten things you need to know about CreateSpace's Death / "Merger" with KDP Print.

Like CreateSpace, if you take advantage of the free ISBN offered, KDP Paperback Print owns all rights to their authors' production files. This is what is known as the "[forced marriage contract clause](#)" and almost every publishing service includes this in their contracts.

This means if you use KDP resources to create your files, they own those files; you don't. This makes it very difficult for authors to move their books to another publisher or printer someday, even if they're upset with KDP Print.

To avoid this, always upload converted .mobi files to Amazon. For print, purchase your own ISBN from Bowkers LLC directly.

With the change, KDP royalty payments are delayed 60 days instead of 30 days as with CreateSpace. Other than the royalty delay, the other changes that anger authors primarily affect books written in languages other than English.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)

