



Penwheels

For Escapees Writers . . . Published or Not

Spring, 2011

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR:

*"If you're going to be a writer,
The first essential is just to write.
Do not wait for an idea.
Start writing something and the ideas will come.
You have to turn the faucet on before the water starts to flow."
~ Louis L'Amour*

I don't know if I agree with *Louis* about ideas coming after we start writing and I think many writers' groups work that way – but then – my faucet drips continuously and sometimes it gushes. It is often difficult to turn off. My big obstacle is what I'm going to do with the words once they leave my head.

I wanted to meet and learn from other writers this winter and it has been wonderful experience. Meeting Carolyn Harris in Tucson just after *the shooting* gave me a sense of how people deal with such tragedy. Her first inkling was to go and give blood for the victims.

If there were more Penwheels at Quartzsite, I didn't meet them but did spend some time with Darlene Miller at the Authors' Fair at the Oasis Book Store.

Darlene, I'm sorry I missed your piece on the Christmas Trail in the skpstops section of the Nov/Dec, 2010 issue of the Escapees magazine. Please, you-all, let me know when you have been published to ensure your *Bragging Rights!*

Organize it and they will come! The Creative Writing Workshops we held at Kofa-Koop were more successful than I had ever imagined and our 100-Word Submission for the Summer Issue grew out of those workshops.

I *almost* made it to Jojoba Hills to join their writers' group but did manage to have a wonderful lunch and visit with Alice - next year, Alice – Fred promised!

We've had some fantastic contributions and resource hints – thank you all! They may not make our writing any easier, but certainly more interesting.

Thanks and Enjoy!

Lynne Benjamin

PS It's not a typo it's the Canadian way

"100-Word Submission" for the Summer Issue:

What is your Passion?

Send hard-copy submissions to:

Lynne Benjamin

c/o Joanne Alexakis, 140 Rainbow Drive #4093,
Livingston TX 77399-1040

Soft copies to: 2firststep@gmail.com

Submission due date: June 1, 2011

This issue:

- Penwheels Financial statement
- New Member and Profile
- What's Gone on between Then and Now
- Contributions
- "100 Word Submissions"
- *I've been published* – Bragging Rights!
- BLOG List
- Review & Resources

Meet your fellow Penwheelers

Post your photo at the Penwheels website, so we can 'get a look' at each other. It would be awesome for me personally to visit our PW website and see our entire group smiling back at me.

Joanne Alexakis SKP#19367

**PENWHEELS BoF
Financial statement for 2010**

| | |
|--|------------|
| Balance January 1, 2010 | \$536.01 |
| Income Jan 1 - Dec 31 | \$360.00 |
| Expenses Jan 1 - Dec 31 (Photocopying newsletters, postage) | (\$107.38) |
| ----- | |
| Balance December 31, 2010 | \$788.63 |

Number of members on Jan. 1, 2010 = 57
Number of members on Dec. 31, 2010 = 49

Submitted by Joanne Alexakis, SKP #19367
Penwheels BoF membership coordinator
Submitted - January 1, 2011

New Member

***Monegonda "Gonnie" Haring – SKP# 51937
Welcome!***

My name is Gonnie Haring. I live in The Netherlands together with my husband. We are Escapee members with number 51937.

I graduated from High School and worked after in several administrative functions. In the meantime I studied and finally graduated with a college degree for teaching Accounting and Economics.

I worked as a teacher for about 20 years. We have traveled through most of Europe. We also visited Indonesia and South Africa. Since 1997 we have travelled through the United States mostly in winter for the last few years. We have a lot in the SKP Kofa Ko-op Park in Yuma. During the years I volunteered working for several small magazines. I am still a member of an exam committee, writing and checking exam questions.

I like to read, to travel and walk around to discover my own interests. I also like to sew and sometimes do crafts.

What's Gone on between Then and Now

Contributed by Bernice Ritch

I belong to a Memoir Writers group in Truth or Consequences, NM. About 12 of us meet weekly and read our writings. We have a list of topics and all write on the same topic. It is interesting to hear different viewpoints on the same subject. Four of us are writing our memoirs with the intent to publish for our families and we slant our writings toward this end.

It would be great to have a professional visit us once in a while to give us pointers, but we are 150 miles south of Albuquerque, so....

Contributed by Marianna Nelson

Are you part of a writing group? Down here in Deep South Texas I belong to two writers groups: the Valley Byliners and the Writers Group at Fun N Sun. The Byliners was started in 1944 as a woman-only group by two female journalists who wanted to give women more opportunities to find their way as writers. Now, both men and women are members. Nine years ago I started the Writers Group at Fun N Sun to encourage writing of personal stories.

How often do you meet? Byliners meet once a month except in July. Writers Group meets once a week all year.

What do you do there? Byliners meetings feature guest speakers and an annual all-day writers workshop each February. Byliners published its fifth book in 2010. About two years ago, member Jack King started monthly Writing Challenges to encourage members to write more. It has finally caught on and now up to 11 people submit a story or poem each month. Winners are determined by members' votes and the winner receives \$10. All entries go into a repository for the Byliners next book. Each week, Writers Group picks a topic out of the grab bag as an "assignment" of what to write about during the week. The following week, writers read their stories and the Group asks questions and discusses the stories. The Group is working on their third book which will be published in January, 2011, its 10th anniversary.

What would make it better? Byliners is a not-for-profit corporation and needs more members willing to be officers and run the organization and its finances. The Writers Group isn't bound by the need for officers and regulations. The Group runs fairly well with some work from me and a few other key people. The Group's strength is the strong bond generated by reading our personal stories each week.

Unofficial report from North Ranch – Contributed by Helen Taylor

The North Ranch Writers' Group has been in existence for at least 12-13 years now. We have anywhere from 3 or 4 to a dozen members (male and female) show up weekly on Thursday mornings to share/read our essays aloud and get feedback if desired from the other members. We keep a running list of suggested topics as subjects to write about for any given week. At the weekly meetings we ask for those who have written "on topic" to read first, then anyone who has written on another topic, prior or totally off-the-wall, may read their contributions. A "moderator" for the week is also assigned along with the suggested topics.

Our meetings last about an hour, sometimes are shorter, once in awhile longer. But it is always enjoyable to hear someone else's take on the same subject.

One of our faithful members for years, Rosemary Starr, died just a few days ago, and we will miss her dearly.

Writing Groups – Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak

I sort of belong to a local writing group where we have a home base. I say sort of because I was unable to attend in 2010 because of a Webinar commitment that same day. I've gone once in 2011.

I started with this group probably 7 or 8 years ago. Over this time, four different people have assumed "leadership," and this has changed the character of the group. The first one did like the idea of actually writing; we met in her home. After she moved, we found a variety of public places to meet thanks to our second leader. However, the second one spent most of our time talking and we might have one writing exercise. The third person was young and dynamic and even created a private blog with a weekly "lesson" on some aspect of writing. She got others to present a topic during the monthly meeting. I was unable to attend most of those meetings. She has had a baby and recently passed the torch to another woman who did not send out a reminder this month so I missed. That is the main function of our leader - remind the rest of us and help us decide what we want.

Personally, the most inspiring thing in a writing group is to write. If we don't do one or two writing exercises, I feel like it has been a waste of time. Sometimes the group would rather write at home and then bring it to share. That's ok, but I still like a live exercise.

George belonged to the other writing group in the area for a while. They met once a week at a restaurant and that leader called every member a couple of days before to see if they were coming. It got people to the meeting. The purpose of this group was to critique. Unfortunately, most people brought something they had written years ago and perhaps even had already published. They were there more for the social aspect. I went once and found it wasn't a match for me. That group is under "new management" and that leader does not call. George found (and I would concur) that once a week was too often. The first group, which George sometimes attends, meets once a month. We tried to have a satellite meeting during the month but with George and I traveling so much, that died.

My Conclusions

- Find a group that matches your writing needs, be that a critique group, learning more about writing and publishing or simply inspiration through writing.
- How often do you want to meet? Ideally, for me, twice a month would be good so if I had to miss, it wouldn't be so long between meetings.
- A writing group needs a coordinator to at least be willing to send out reminder emails.

Contributed by Terry Hager SKP# 48315

I am in a writers group at SKP Park Sierra. We meet weekly. We do a timed writing, share something we've written during the week and give feedback. It's a great group of folks at various stages of writing that are friendly, interested and give lots of support. There is frequent turnover because of people being in and out of the park. I left before Christmas and won't be back until next fall. I'm the "token guy." (Hey, it's a tough job, but someone's got to do it!) It would be great to have more male members.

***Organize It and They Will Come!* – Contributed by Lynne Benjamin SKP# 86190**

Last year I managed to organize a Writing Session at Rover's Roost in Casa Grande. We heard that Kofa-Koop in Yuma had become more amenable and I decided to try for a Creative Writing Workshop during our time there.

I was pleasantly surprised when we attracted seven writers to the first session. Of course, that first session focussed on introducing ourselves and exploring our *personal passions*. Fortunately, one of the attendees brought a timer and each of us wrote about our *passion* for 10 minutes and then read them aloud.

I thought it was too close to the Holiday Season for another Workshop but the participants wanted one so we planned our second workshop for a week later with a memoirs topic.

Both workshops seemed to be enjoyed by all who attended. When we left the Park, there was talk about continuing with the group.



From the Escapees Happy Hour – January 19th, 2011 - Contributed by Darlene Miller

You can see from the blue sky and the short sleeves that the Escapees meeting in Quartzsite was in ambient weather. Entertainment, hugs, conversation and food were enjoyed by all of us.

[Darlene is on left and that's me from behind, on the right]

Thanks for the photos, Darlene.



Contributions

***Contributions – Spring “100 Word Submissions”
Which is a better pet - a dog or a cat? Why?***

Contributed by Joanne Alexakis

Which is a better pet - a dog or a cat? Why? Name one cat who can track a scent for twenty five miles, guide a blind person across the street, locate a body crushed under debris from an earthquake, dig out skiers buried in the snow of an avalanche, fetch a Frisbee, take a bullet for a cop, sniff out illegal drugs and bombs; locate lost children and hikers, protect their masters, hunt ducks and pheasants, be a trusted sentry in times of war, deter criminals, herd a flock of sheep, bark an alarm of smoke, fire or burglars, or tell you they worship you with their eyes. Dogs rule!

Contributed by Barbara A. Bowers, SKP #77439

Why Felines are the Cat's Pajamas Warm and furry, our cats rub against our legs and faces. Softly snoring or happily purring, their motors lull us to sleep. Big eyes stare up from whiskered faces, as if to say, “You know I am cute. I love you, too.” Insistent meows tell us that it is time to pay attention to them, feed them, or rise on a sleepy Saturday. Sandpapery kisses as they lounge upon our laps let us know that there is no need to rush. Playful antics end our days with joy and laughter.

Contributed by Helen Taylor, SKP# 295

What a challenge, to write 100 words about which makes a better pet, a cat or a dog! I am truly not an animal lover, but just have to try my hand at this challenge. Dog or cat, huh?

Our oldest daughter, a fully-grown adult, wasn't particular and brought home any stray she could find. Didn't matter which! Each stayed until finding a better deal, it seemed. (My younger brother, as a child, had this same trait.)

But, in my humble, uneducated opinion, cats are much too independent and self-centered. So, to choose, dogs, especially if you get them young, make the better pets.

I've Been Published – Bragging Rights!

Let Us Know About Your Current Publications

- Your Name and SKP #
- Title of Piece
- Magazine or Book and Date

- **George Bruzenak**, SKP# 19361, a photo of an Andalusian Chicken will appear in The Chicken Whisperer and George will get a free copy
- **Terry Hager**, SKP #48315, *DEATH ON THE NIGHT WATCH* is available at Amazon.com <http://www.amazon.com/Death-Night-Watch-Terry-Hager/dp/145289325X/ref=sr>
- **Carolyn Harris**, SKP# 51608, *Visit New Zealand, Escapees Magazine*, January/February, 2011, page 54
- **Barbara Kaufmann**, SKP# 95737, *Bullying: Not Just for Playgrounds Anymore, Speaking of Violence: Words In The Wake of Tucson's Tragedy*, Huffington Post, January 30, 2011, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-barbara-kaufmann>
- **Darlene Miller**, *Christmas Trail, skpstops, Escapees Magazine*, November/ December, 2010, page 75
- **Helen Taylor**, SKP# 295, *Grandma's Other Life*, self-published, Createspace.com

“100-Word Submission” for the Summer Issue:

What is your Passion?

Send hard-copy Submissions to:

Lynne Benjamin

c/o Joanne Alexakis, 140 Rainbow Drive #4093, Livingston TX 77399-1040

Soft-copies to: 2firststep@gmail.com

Submission due date: June 1, 2011

Review and Resources

Death on the Night Watch by Terry Hager, SKP #48315

Review by Darlene Miller

Death on the Night Watch is a mystery which depicts Reverend Rob Vander Laan's evangelical Calvinist background and funding versus his congregation of run-aways, druggies, streetwalkers, and gang members. When a young girl of this congregation is murdered, Ron Vander Laan feels compelled to assist the local Grand Rapids PD as an amateur sleuth, which interferes not only with the church's expectations but also with his family's needs. Rob, himself becomes a prime target.

Author Terry Hager skillfully weaves a great story that is exciting and fast paced with surprising twists and turns. His hooks at the end of each chapter such as “I wondered if the

murderer would show up at the funeral like in the movies.” caused me to read more and more until I found that I read the entire 294 pages in 12 hours.

Contributed by Margo Armstrong

In the February edition of *Writers Digest* - "Better Starts for Better Stories" - Ten tips given by the author, Jacob Appel:

1. Build momentum: An opening line should have a distinctive voice, a point of view, a rudimentary plot and some hint of characterization. By the end of the first paragraph, we should also know the setting and conflict, unless there is a particular reason to withhold this information.
2. Resist the urge to start too early.
3. Remember that small hooks catch more fish than big ones.
4. Open at a distance and close in.
5. Avoid getting ahead of your reader.
6. Start with a minor mystery.
7. Keep talk to a minimum, limit your dialogue.
8. Be mindful of what works.
9. When in doubt, test several options
10. Revisit the beginning once you reach the end.

For those of you that write to be published, check out the *Writer's Market VIP program*. It gives you access to their online publishing resources, including the new "flash fiction" market, plus the monthly *Writer's Digest*. In my opinion, the monthly magazine is worth the \$50 annual fee.

Contributed by Margo Armstrong

Adair Lara describes how to build your story around a foolproof framework in her article, "Elements of an Effective Arc" (July/August 2010 issue of *Writer's Digest*).

Creating the Desire Line: Answer this question - what did you want in the story you're telling? Keep in mind that the desire line can change by the end of the memoir (short story, novel, etc.).

Actions and Obstacles: What did you do to get what you wanted? What got in your way? List the actions and obstacles.

Emotional Beats: A memoir is an emotional journey. The events (beats) in the story are there not because they happened, but to show the shifts in emotion the narrator goes through, event by event.

The Initiating Incident: The most important event (beat) comes near the beginning. This is the day the trouble started.

The Ending Incident: Picking the end point is crucial. Life goes on and on, but memoirs must end. When the narrator gets what she wants, or doesn't, or stops wanting it, the story has reached the end of its arc. This beat that resolves the desire line must be dramatized in the scene.

Drawing Your Arc: When you have identified all the elements of your arc, it's time to put them together in a sort of outline. Using index cards may help you. Put each event on a separate card along with its accompanying beat. Lay all the cards out and arrange them in a line. See how it works when you rearrange the cards.

Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak, SKP# 19361

"Commit Random Acts of Writing" by Susan Sundwall, WritersWeekly.com

Not too long ago I was given the opportunity to participate in a random act of culture at a nearby mall. I counted myself and a few friends among dozens of singers who gathered at the appointed hour at Crossgates Mall in Guilderland, New York, stood up when the music began,

and belted out the Hallelujah Chorus. People stopped eating their burritos and pot stickers to stare and some even smiled and took pictures. I loaned my modest alto to the effort and our whole group was rewarded with thunderous applause at the last hallelujah. It was quite satisfying. Since then I've tried to apply that "random" mentality to my writing.

While channel surfing one evening I stopped at a popular talk show whose host was expounding on a poem by Rudyard Kipling, a poet I've always loved. As I listened to the analysis, words began to bounce around in my head. Being only a once in a while poet, I was nonetheless motivated to get to the keyboard and pound out what I thought were Kipling inspired words. At least one editor thought they were and posted them in Lyrical Passion Poetry e-zine. My random bit of surfing paid off, and was quite satisfying.

Haven't you ever been in a sudden situation where you think, I should write about this, but you rarely do? Maybe you didn't have a pad and pen for notes or you were distracted by the cell phone, television or an annoying co-worker. Bad excuse. One good way to conquer that distractedness is to make use of three simple steps. They'll help take random moments and turn them into story fodder.

1. Stare - that's right, stare. Laser in on the scene before you and take mental pictures. Begin with the focal point of the incident and then widen your circle about ten feet. Be absolutely robotic about it if you have to. Nobody will even notice. Really.

2. Mumble - I know, sounds ridiculous, but you've got to reinforce those mental pictures. Studies have shown that you must repeat something at least 25 times to lock it into memory. Mumble descriptive words about the situation so you'll remember them later. Was the woman wearing a red dress, red dress, red dress? Did the nurse bite her lip, bite her lip, bite her lip as she plunged the needle in? You get the idea.

3. Imagine - yourself typing the story as soon as your bottom hits the chair at the keyboard. Mentally stare at yourself in the chair as you drive home, mumbling the finer details you want to highlight. Then get into the chair ASAP and get the thing down. That's what I did with my Kiplingesque poem found here at the bottom of [THIS PAGE](#).

Random inspiration happens all the time. It could be in the garden, when you travel, when a song overtakes you, or when a child asks you why your ears are long like that. Take immediate advantage of the more striking scenarios and wrap your writing around them. You can remember stare, mumble, and imagine can't you? Go about doing so and treat an editor or two to a story they'll enjoy and want more of. Here are some diverse markets to try.

[Descant](#) - Pays \$100 honorarium

[Horizon Air](#) - Pays \$100-\$450

[Greenprints](#) - Pays up to \$150; \$20 for poems

[REI](#) - Pays \$12-15 per page

[Page 47](#) - Pays \$25-\$75

[West Branch Magazine](#) - Pays \$20-\$100

[Children's Writer](#) - Pays \$200-\$300

[The Waiting Room](#) - Pays \$20 for stories; \$10 per poem

[Country Magazine](#) - Pays \$250-\$2,000 and \$50 per poem

Contributors to this issue of the Penwheels Newsletter:

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Puns for Educated Minds

1. Fattest knight at King Arthur's round table? Well, naturally it was Sir Cumference.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. She was only a homely whiskey maker, but he loved her still.
4. A squirt gun was confiscated from a 6th grade algebra class, as it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. No matter how much you push the envelope, it's still stationery.
6. A dog gave birth to puppies near the curb and was then cited for littering.
7. A firecracker thrown into a kitchen in France could well result in Linoleum Blownapart.
8. Two silk worms had a race, and they ended up in a tie.
9. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall; as of yesterday the police are looking into it.
10. Time flies like an arrow and fruit flies like a banana.
11. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
12. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger, then it suddenly hit me.
13. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'
14. The midget fortune teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
15. A backward poet writes inverse.

PENWHEELS

An Escapees RV Club Birds-of-a-feather (BOF) group for RVers interested in writing of all kinds. Some are published and some are not. The purpose of Penwheels is to establish a support network of RVing writers for sharing information, discussion, critiques, and socializing in person, snail and electronic mail.

Penwheels is published four times a year. Subscription is \$8 (USD) per year. In order to belong to any SKP BOF group, you must be a member in good standing of the **Escapees RV Club**. You may contact the Club at 1-888-757-2582.

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PENWHEELS

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