



# Penwheels

For Escapees Writers . . . Published or Not  
Summer, 2008

## MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR:

It's been a VERY busy few months BUT a productive time. (*See the Bragging Rights section*). **Procrastination** is the theme of this Summer Newsletter.

**Procrastination:** According to Wikipedia, procrastination is *a type of behaviour which is characterized by deferment of actions or tasks to a later time*. . . "Pro-cras-ti-nate: belonging to the morrow; to put off doing something until a future time; esp, to postpone habitually". (Helen Taylor - *from the Spring/08 Newsletter*) Why do it today when you can put it off til tomorrow?

Paul Graham (I don't know who he is, but I like what he said) talks about *Good and Bad Procrastination*. He says "*The question is not how to avoid procrastination, but how to procrastinate well. There are three variants of procrastination*", he says "*depending on what you do instead of working on something: you could work on (a) nothing, (b) something less important, or (c) something more important. That last type, I'd argue, is good procrastination.*" (<http://www.paulgraham.com/procrastination.html>)

My partner (Fred) thinks I'm a procrastinator. He tends to be 15 minutes early for everything and I hate to do anything ahead of time – I would say that I am a *good procrastinator*. I can always find *something more important* to do than what I didn't want to do in the first place. See what others say about *procrastination!!*

Thank you all for your great contributions. ALSO thank you to Betty Prange for reviving the writing practice assignments – there's no doubt that fellow Penwheelers have enjoyed the challenge of writing on a given topic for 10 minutes.

**WE DO NEED YOUR INPUT!!** With the increase in the costs of printing and postage, our costs for the Newsletter are going up, too. We need to do something about it. We've come up with: cutting size; cutting frequency; raising fees – what do you think? Any other suggestions? You can e-mail suggestions to Joanne Alexakis at [joannealex@earthlink.net](mailto:joannealex@earthlink.net) or snail mail to 140 Rainbow Drive #4093, Livingston TX 77399-1040. MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS also go to Joanne.

Beth wanted to pass on the following message: "A very mangled newsletter was returned to me by the post office because I was asked to seal the sides as well as the center, but the seals I used didn't have very good glue. Please put an apology into next quarter's Newsletter and I'll buy the expensive seals next time" – so here it is.

**Remember:** "A Newsletter is "news" . . . news about what we have done, are doing and how; news and resources to help us get to where we want to go as writers; and the opportunity to share and celebrate (or commiserate) with others. It's all about you." And it's up to you!!

*Lynne Benjamin*

*PS-Sometimes the way I spell things may not be the same as you, but I am Canadian, eh?!*

**This issue:**

- What's gone on between then and now
- Writers' Groups News
- Contributions and Contributors
- *I've been published* – Bragging Rights!
- New Members and profiles
- Resources

**Next Issue:**

***Writing for Magazines***

What has been your experience writing for Magazines  
– good and not so good?

How do you find out what Magazines to approach?

What about guidelines/copyrights, etc?

Can I expect to be paid?

**Submission due date: September 1, 2008**

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**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

You can post your suggestions on the Yahoo forum group or e-mail them to Joanne Alexakis at [joannealex@earthlink.net](mailto:joannealex@earthlink.net) or snail mail to Joanne at 140 Rainbow Drive #4093, Livingston TX 77399-1040

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS also go to Joanne

**What's Gone on between Then and Now**

**Writers' Groups News – Helen Taylor, SKP 295**

As Editor of the **North Ranch Hoot**, I have been working on the next issue, due out in July, very shortly after returning home from Escapade. It will be a mad dash to get the issue out in mid-July, but do believe I have it under control. My plan is saving a spot in the Hoot to include a little about the Escapade so it's current info - instead of about three months later. The North Ranch Writers' Group and the "Girls of Summer" who wrote and published the *Mystery at North Ranch* have been using the book profits to send used paperback books to troops overseas in war zones. Since last November we have mailed off well over 100 boxes containing many thousands of books donated by North Ranch residents, visitors, and residents of Congress, AZ. We have received many thank you letters, emails and cards from the troops, including an American flag that had been flown over the base in Iraq, along with a Certificate of Appreciation signed by the base commander. We plan to frame these and display them somewhere in the North Ranch Clubhouse. It's been fun!

If anyone is interested in subscribing to the North Ranch Hoot, please send me a check for \$6 along with your name and mailing address, and I'll add you to our subscription list. The \$6 fee is for a year's subscription of at least four issues. My mailing address is: Helen Taylor, P O Box 1003, Congress, AZ 85332-1003

## *Contributions*

*Posting #1552 – April 21, 2008*

*We all have it!*

*Writers' Procrastination!!*

*What gets in your way?*

*What do you do about it?*

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Judith D. Ackerman SKP#97113

Oh gosh. I hope I am not too late? I meant to write this weeks ago, but suddenly found I needed to cut my toenails. Then I thought I would write my essay the next day, but the trash kept staring me in the eye, and talking to my nose, so I just had to care for it! The next day my petunias needed plucking and after that, I needed to caress the cat.

Somehow, I found that a whole week had passed and I still hadn't written my essay. This stressed me out so much; I went into a mediation trance and didn't wake up for days! I felt so guilty about this that I settled down to re-read "How to Make Peace with Procrastination without Feeling Guilty about IT." I spent the next few days trying all their suggestions. So now I am ready to write my essay, but it is probably too late. Oh well; maybe next time, or the one after that?

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Denise Gray

Ah, procrastination, what a rotten word! It is a little devil which seems to climb into my subconscious, and takes my time away. I am not sure how it manages to get into the clock, and move the minutes forward. Suddenly, those sneaky little black hands have used their clockwise momentum to steal the written word from my computer. Words are flying in my head, but never seem to channel through my fingers onto the keyboard.

I blame procrastination! Couldn't possibly be me, as my bottom is in the chair, and I have spent all those hours hard at work on my computer. I only answered a couple of emails, posted to my Blog, checked out You Tube, and only completed one scrap book page, honest! Procrastination, that dirty little thief!

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Jackie Barker, the wanderer

Procrastination is caused by many things but I have my own slant. It took a bit of thinking to figure out the cause of it with me. Then I realized the problem. I can think great thoughts but when it comes to putting it down on paper (or in a computer file) I pause. I want my thoughts to be clearly written with no grammar mistakes. That means I must take the time to spell correctly and punctuate properly. And then there is the problem of figuring out when to start a new paragraph. I have many books on writing waiting for me to read them but there seems to be so many other things waiting to be read, like all the Escapee magazines and other RV related material. The past couple of months I have been spending much of my spare time in the Hogwarts learning the stories of the students attending school with Harry. But now that I am started and in a place where I will have internet access for the summer I have no more excuses. You will be hearing from me more often. I will learn how to make a proper paragraph and the computer will check the spelling. Bye for now from Apple Blossom country.

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Betty Mulcahy SKP#76334

Procrastination is easy when you're not fond of what you're doing. And I am not fond of writing. I write to have written. And I write to re-write. But writing itself is difficult, and ideas don't come any easier than forming the words to execute those ideas.

So.....I put off writing whenever something more exciting pops up. I delay for many reasons. I know that I'll get back to it. The work will get done some day. Sooner or later I'll sit in front of my computer long enough to jot a few words. At length, words will become sentences which become paragraphs which become a complete article. Ultimately, I'll have written something that I can toy with and edit. In due course, I usually get around to it. Eventually, I'll produce what satisfies me. In the long run, I will complete what I embarked upon.

But..... perhaps...that...can...wait...until...tomorrow...or...some...other time .....

**Procrastination**—Contributed by Betty Prange, Nomad (from somewhere on the road)

This is being done as a writing exercise....no editing, no sitting back to think. Just hitting the keys on the keyboard as the timer makes its clicking sound.

I am really good at it. It must be all that school training where they gave you deadlines and threats. I still expect deadlines and threats. If I am writing an article its usually done just in time to meet the deadline. Oh, I think about it, take a look at notes, information about it, find the photos in my collection to go with it, but the actual writing gets left until close to the deadline. Then I do a draft. Let that sit a few days. Let the deadline get closer. Then edit and finally send it.

How do I procrastinate? Recently while trying to get started on an article I promised to RV LIFE Mag, I cleaned the refrigerator. I hate doing that. How can that be better than writing? Yesterday, while waiting for the final, polished editing, I cleaned out my clothes drawers and closet and made a contribution to the local thrift store. I guess it is good that I procrastinate on writing because otherwise my rig would never get cleaned. So, procrastination must be a good thing. Of course the fridge was really gross because I had procrastinated on that for a long time. I procrastinate on lots of things, then something new comes along to procrastinate about and I find myself handling one of the earlier delayed projects. This time the article actually has more than a month before the deadline. How did I manage? It was snowing outside, the wind was howling, and I am headed to Yellowstone for my "summer" job. I had to get it done because once training starts I won't have time. I know it wouldn't get done there. So, yesterday I sent it off from Idaho Falls. Good, one project done, a clean fridge, lighter closets. Wonder what will prompt me to go thru some of the other cabinets in my home on wheels.

**"I have not yet begun to procrastinate,"** said my friend who is a lot speedier than I am –  
Contributed by Joanne Alexakis

My sister finally sent us some of our boxes of stuff she has been storing/saving for us since when we began full-timing over ten years ago. My husband was sorting through a few of those boxes and he stated, "I'm making my first pass." As Nick sorted through his mementos, he fingered, felt, and fantasized over each piece. We haven't had a use for all these goodies for ten plus years and still we can't get rid of them. Delayed decisions at our best.

Some organized folks have a saying, "Never handle anything twice." In other words, make up your mind the first time you fondle it - keep, toss, or give away - and you won't be stuck making a decision about that object again. But procrastination usually rears its ugly head in our household.

Now, where was I? Guess I got side-tracked there for a little while... few days... Good intentions, but reality, need to do projects, have to get done projects/stuff/things, MUST get done... overtake us.

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Sandy Johnson

I would rather do anything than write. But I love writing, so what's the problem? 1) Somebody may read it! 2) They may not like it. 3) They'll think I'm stupid 4) I don't have

anything "important" to say, 5) I'm an amateur, 6) and worst of all, everyone will hate me, and think I should shut up and drop dead. Oh, shades of my childhood. Procrastination is all the hang ups of many, many years. But at the age of 64, this is what I now think. What the hell? Who cares? They may hate me, love me, or are totally indifferent. I need to write, so I dang well better do it before I die. Who else will do it? Who else will care? Who else will put my thoughts and fears out there? Who else will take this risk? It may not be important to anyone else, but it's danged important to me. So I better do it now. Time is running out. Procrastination is no longer an option.

***We employ procrastination in our lives in order to create the illusion of control.*** – Contributed by Barbara Kaufmann

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Kay Kennedy

In my case, I'm always putting something on the back burner for a few days until it is convenient to do it. Then I simply forget about it. It just isn't always convenient to act immediately, especially while we're traveling. And maybe being unorganized has a lot to do with procrastination. When I had a stick office, I always had a place for everything, including a "do it now" folder, which kept me on my toes. In a motorhome, things aren't always so neatly organized and categorized, and I certainly don't have a visible spot to stick an important folder that requires immediate attention. Whatever causes it, I'm very familiar with that "Oh crap" moment that comes when I realize that something I meant to do didn't get done on time.

**Procrastination** – Contributed by Joan Pomeroy SKP #75145 (*edited*)

Oh how it is so much easier to have a project waiting to get finished than to start on the project now. Wouldn't I rather just sit and watch a movie now than to get busy? If I can procrastinate long enough will it go away? Some things do, and then I wonder what I missed by letting this opportunity slip by.

There are two reasons I write a travelogue. First: a younger friend uses the travelogues as a home schooling aid. I want to make sure the historical facts are recorded correctly. Second: to keep a record of our years of traveling, I want to record the events that are important to our travels.

It is so easy to make note on the computer about the day, and then when we settle in a location for a few days, I can take the time to write about our adventures. This works well until I procrastinate, and never get them written. When I start to reach my goal of finishing the travelogue, I realize that I have to research the pamphlets; I have collected for the information. This is where I face the most procrastination, for this process is so difficult.

Tomorrow and procrastination must be related; tomorrow never comes because when it gets here it is today, procrastination puts off for tomorrow what could be done today.

Procrastination can be the root of what could have been instead of what is. Presently I received a copy of my uncle hand written memories of the Coal War of 1927 in Southern Colorado.

Not only was a lot of family history documented and saved, but it tell the history of the problems the coal miners faced, and brought to my mind how long the Coal strikes lasted in Colorado.

If he had procrastinated writing his memories for just a few more months he would never had written them down for with in a year he had passed on.

I applied this new idea to our pieces about procrastinating, and realized that I too procrastinate writing about my history and I wonder what has been lost for future generations.

Not that I consider my history so important but then my father considered the times he lived in would not mean anything to any one else,

Procrastination can be the end to a good book, a beginning of new things, time is short and valuable, and we become so busy living today that we do not have time to record it for tomorrow.

How many of us have taken time to write about the historical times that have happened in our life time, such as: Where were you when - JFK was assassinated and how did this affect you? Do you remember when Martin Luther King was making the "I have a Dream Speech"? How about Woodstock? September 11, 2001? And I almost forgot Bobbie Kennedy and his assassination during the nomination of Presidential Candidates in 1968.

**Writing Exercises** - Here are two writing practices from Natalie Goldberg's *Old Friend From Far Away*. Choose one and share with us.  
 - Perfect: Was there a time you tried to be perfect?  
 - Lucky: How lucky have you been?

**Lucky** – Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak

Me lucky? I wouldn't say so. I've never won the lottery on my own or in a pool. I bet on one horse race and didn't win. I've contributed to causes with a chance to win a prize and never won. My only "luck" has been that my name has been drawn for two prizes in the course of my life. Both times I "knew" I was going to win.

Once was back in the 1970s when I was teaching and went to an after-school workshop for teachers. All the attendees' names were placed in a drawing for a teaching aid. I had a feeling my name would be drawn. It was. Since the prize was more appropriate for an elementary teacher, I asked that someone else's name be drawn.

The other time was last July in Maine. We took a ferry over to Monhegan Island for the day. On the way back, they had a drawing of all the passengers on board for another of their boat rides. I won. We went on the puffin cruise a couple of nights later.

Maybe I have been lucky in other aspects of my life. Bad things could have happened but didn't. Or a bad choice on my part ended up having a silver lining. Were some good events a matter of luck? I'll never know if luck was the cause, though.

I've read that gamblers who consistently win have a different attitude than those who don't. They expect to win, for the right cards to be drawn or the dice to roll their way. Most of the rest are hopeful but figure it the chances of it happening are slim. Maybe since luck is unearned it isn't deserved so we are afraid to be too lucky.

Even though I occasionally use the term I don't look at life as a matter of luck. Then it seems you have to watch what you do. Some people believe certain rituals bring luck, wearing a certain outfit or piece of jewelry, following a certain routine or paying attention to numbers that just might win the lottery today. Hey- maybe I'm lucky I'm not obsessed with winning.

**Lucky** – Contributed by Joanne Alexakis

I consider my full-timing RVing life lucky. How 'lucky' I am to experience it. But it wasn't luck that got us on the road. It was my husband's determination. He's never wanted to be rooted to one spot. It's the vagabond life for Nick.

I'm lucky cuz I'm seeing many, many areas of the U.S.A. as much of the population never will. Oh, they'll visit all these places on vacation - Atlanta/Hotlanta, for instance, will be their 'destination'. But to 'settle down' and LIVE in that region for several weeks or a few months so that you really have an opportunity to 'feel' that area is wondrous. I know it is just another part

of the U.S., but the plants in some parts of the states: the stately saguaro cacti in Ajo, Arizona, the spreading live oak trees in Tallahassee, Florida, the vivid-purple Jacaranda trees in Santa Paula, California are so splendid. The flowering azalea was just a potted houseplant back home in Minnesota - in Arabi, Georgia it is a huge blooming bush!

And all the hills and low mountains ranges. For someone with roots in the farming flatlands of Iowa - these bumps on the earth are awesome. I love the ocean. Being from lands of dairy cows and oinking pigs and corn fields, I never knew the sea and now I feel a closeness with it and its surgings. I can stand here in Ventura, California and look across this water and see all the way (almost) to Tokyo, Japan where my brother lives. Amazing!

**Was there ever a time that I tried to be perfect?** – Contributed by Joan N. Pomeroy

Once I was successful at being perfect, and I tried my best to be perfect all the time. It was the summer when I was fifteen. My older sister and I had been invited to participate in a beauty contest, with several other girls, for Golden Girl of Gilpin County in Central City, Colorado. We had about two week to find a character from the history of Gilpin County hay-day and then to memorize a speech about this charter.

My sister and I started by going to the Denver Public Library and researching the historical characters who were female. Then we had to write about what who we chose. It was easy for me because I wanted to be a teacher, and I picked the first teacher of Gilpin County.

Next we met with the owners of the Toll Gate Bar in Central City, who also owned the only museum. The museum had several old fashioned dresses and shoes. We had about an hour to pick out a dress to match our character. That was hard, since there were no pictures of the teacher, how could I be perfect and get the right outfit. In the long run the perfect dress for a teacher to me was a prim and proper dress with a bustle. Let me tell you first hand, old fashioned close never seemed the same. It was so uncomfortable. And the shoes with the little hooks that need a special tool to fasten, they are also uncomfortable.

When it came time for our speeches on stage, I was last, and nervous. The Television camera from the major net works in Denver were filming the beauty contest. I wear glasses and can not see with out them. But on stage they made me take off my glasses, until after the speeches were over. Perhaps that imperfect vision helped.

When the winners were announced, I won.

This perfect moment in time, I felt I had done things perfectly, but looking back, that moment in time changed my life forever.

As part of the prizes I won a modeling course at John Roberts Powers in Denver. It was there that I learned; the best models, the riches people, and the most famous are not perfect.

**Contributors to this issue of the Penwheels Newsletter:**

Judith D. Ackerman  
Joanne Alexakis  
Jackie Barker  
Jaimie Bruzenak

Denise Gray  
Sandy Johnson  
Barbara Kaufmann  
Kay Kennedy  
Betty Mulcahy

Joan Pomeroy  
Betty Prange  
Helen Taylor  
Sharon Vander Zyl

## *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*

### *Kudos to:*

**Sharon K. Vander Zyl** SKP#91843 – “Taking Time Alone” March/April 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 65)

**Helen Taylor**, SKP # 250 – “Cross-country on a Motorcycle, Our Second “RV” - Road Roamer News/TOP 3” - May/June 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 84)

- Arizona Republic (May 10/08) – article on Mothers

**Beth Ramos** SKP #86268 – “Downsize to Upgrade” - Different Viewpoints - May/June 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 11)

- “Books for Babies” – article published in a local magazine “Celebration Life”

**Joan Pomeroy** SKP #75145 – “Better Safe than Sorry” - Different Viewpoints - May/June 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 11)

**Darlene Miller** SKP #50781 – “Real Cowboys” - Road Roamer News/TOP 3” - May/June 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 84)

**Betty Mulcahy** SKP#76334 – “What’s In Your Daypack?” - May/June 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 16)

**Janet Carter** SKP#3419 – “The Original Ranch” - May/June 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 97)

- “The oasis of Tra-Park” - March/April 2008 issue of Escapees magazine (page 17)

**Lynne Benjamin** SKP#86190 - “Destination—Québec City” - Road Roamer News/TOP 3 - March/April 2008 issue of Escapees magazine

- “Jacob’s Tails” – serialized in “Canadian Stories”

- “A Cross-Country Adventure”–RVwest E-Mag.-

[http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/index\\_benjamin.php](http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/index_benjamin.php)

### **Attention: Contributors to the Escapees Magazine:**

When you write the author blurb that accompanies your article, please add a phrase that you are a member of the Penwheels BOF. This will help build an awareness of our BOF in the community. I've met many Escapees in my writing workshops at Escapades who weren't aware there is a BOF for writers. Thanks and hugs, Alice Zyetz

## *New Members and Profiles*

**Gwen & Dale Prohaska** - My name is Gwen and I am a native Oregonian living in Oregon. I have been an Escapee for about four years now. I currently work for a mountain resort during the season, which is from April to October. I have been a line cook and prep cook for the resort but have switched duties to be their housekeeper. The reason for this is that I want to have a summer! Cooking entails very long hours and being on my feet most of those hours. It seemed I was only working and sleeping my summer away last year. Hopefully, being outdoors and



working 6-8 hours will be a treat!

I am a mother and grandmother and love both titles. My hobbies include digital scrap booking, reading, writing, knitting, kayaking and hiking.

My husband, Dale retires in 534 days, when we will become full-time RVers and get these wheels rolling. Even though we live full time in our RV, we move from the mountains to the valley each year so Dale can commute to work. We are now working on our first book, a testing of the waters, to see if this is something we like to do and make a little money to boot.

**Alice Zyetz – PWBB Moderator**

To join the **Penwheels** bulletin board and get daily (almost) digests, send a blank e-mail to: [penwheels-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:penwheels-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

Please send an e-mail to me, Alice ([youshoulda@aol.com](mailto:youshoulda@aol.com)), as well, letting me know that you have subscribed, so as Moderator I can inform Yahoo to accept your request. Include your name, **SKP** #, and when you joined **Penwheels Bof**. Make sure you sign up for the daily digest once you have been accepted. If you don't start receiving your digests, please contact me. Welcome and many hugs, **Alice Zyetz**, Moderator and **Jaimie Bruzenak**, co-Moderator

*Resources*

**1. How to Write Books While Still Having A Day Job - Jaimie (Hall) Bruzenak**

Author Peter Aleshire was the guest at an Arizona Press Women’s lunch meeting in Payson, near where George and I have a homebase. Peter now writes for the local Payson Roundup but in the past worked for the Arizona Republic, was past editor of Arizona Highways, a professor at ASU and has written 12 books.

Peter’s spoke on how to write books while still having a day job. Peter had an advantage as a reporter; he researched many of the topics he later wrote about. His columns and articles became the basis for his books. And when he was teaching, he had summers off to write.

While most of us no longer have a day job, one suggestion could be helpful.

Set aside a regular chunk of time each day to write. He got up early before the family did and wrote 2 or 3 hours. Peter pointed out that many books are around 100,000 words. If you write 1000 words a day, in three months, you would have a book. Taking time off for family and other things, in six months would (should) be a piece of cake. At 500 words a day, a year should see your book completed.

He observed that there seems to be a psychological issue with finishing a book. Many writers will pen 8000 words, get disgusted, then start over at word one. Maybe if we writers are still working on a manuscript, we can’t be judged. Once it’s finished, it could be lousy!

Peter’s 12 books are non-fiction. An agent approached him early in the game and has sold all 12. He has written three novels, however, which remain unsold. His agent tried to sell them but found she didn’t have the contacts and expertise for fiction so advised him to get a fiction agent. So far he hasn’t found one. He’s working on another novel.

Peter’s background is in history. Two of his books looked very interesting to me. One is Warrior Woman, the other Cochise. He has also written some science-related books. With non-fiction, he pointed out, you do not write the book until you have sold it. Ask for a big advance because you rarely see any money beyond that.

And, then of course, you could also self publish!

## **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.

**Editorial submissions** are best submitted via e-mail to: 2firststep@gmail.com

Or snail mail to:  
Lynne Benjamin

c/o Joanne Alexakis  
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### **Writers-in-Residence**

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**FIRST CLASS POSTAGE**