



# Penwheels

For Escapees Writers . . . Published or Not  
Winter, 2010



*The Best of the Holiday Season to All*

## MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR:



*"Writing is an adventure.  
To begin with, it is a toy and an amusement.  
Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant.  
The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude,  
You kill the monster and fling him to the public."*

~ Winston Churchill

### ***Do You Love Your Characters and Other Mental Blocks?***

Not a very hot topic, is it? Contributions for this Newsletter were minimal so I went back over our communications and pulled together some resources about publishing. I hope they are helpful to you.

*"I love writing. I love the swirl and swing of words as they tangle with human emotions."*

~ James Michener

Editing the *Penwheels Newsletter* has been a labor of love. It is an exciting and frustrating adventure and a marvellous pastime. Most of all, it has given me the opportunity to meet, explore and learn from others who have been smitten by the *pen*. *Thank you!*

- How about you?
- Why do you write? Think about it!
- Tell your fellow Penwheelers about your motivation. How does it feel?
- Does the act of writing give you pleasure or is it frustrating or both?
- What do you do about it?



Let's share our wisdom and experience.

*Lynne Benjamin*

### ***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

### **This issue:**

- Contributions
  - 100-Word Submissions
  - Other Contributions
- Contributors
- *I've been published* – Bragging Rights!
- Resources for Publishing
- BLOG List

## Contributions

### “100-Word Submission”

#### *Do You Love Your Characters and Other Mental Blocks?*

**Contributed by Jeannie Winniford, SKP# 81050**

1. Most of my writing is about my travel adventures. That makes me the main character, so I guess the question is, "Do I love me?" Sometimes I do. When I lost so much weight after finding out I was diabetic, I really liked me. But then I gained it back so I'm kinda low on myself right now. When I'm on top of a situation, I love myself. When I'm late in getting the dues of the new members sent to the membership chairman, I'm not so fond of myself. Guess it is a love/hate relationship.
2. I've been wanting to write about breaking my leg summer before last and submitting it to the *Escapees* magazine. I want it to be humorous, informative, and encouraging to others who have similar events in their travels. Basically I know what I want to write and have worked on the article several times. The problem is getting that first paragraph. Maybe I should just use the classic, "It was a dark and stormy night," and not worry if that supports the rest of the article.

**Contributed by Helen Taylor, SKP# 295**

Wish I could "love my characters" and write good story fiction, but..... I'm still working on my "book" which consists of many of my essays, mostly personal, family stories, more or less. I'm in the process of trying to get it into publishable form, one way or another. If all else fails, I'll just get copies in print via Staples or the like. I want to use this book as Christmas presents for friends and relatives. If selling a few would happen, I wouldn't be unhappy. I've titled my book "Grandma's Other Life" letting all know that grandmas usually aren't JUST grandmas, aren't born grandmas, and all that kind of stuff, including things that grandkids wouldn't think THEIR grandma would do or know about. That is, there's nothing improper, of course, just maybe a few ideas that grandkids might now have thought about in the same thought as their grandparents.

**Contributed by Doris Hutchins, SKP# 29176**

I love my characters because I have the most wonderful people to write about. They are all a part of my continuing life story. Each family member has their own personal characteristic, like the tender hug of a little child, as its small arms encompass you in a big hug. Or the first breath of a newborn baby, filling its lungs with air and crying out an introduction to the world. I still marvel at the birth of every new member of my family as I reflect on their blessings. They bring forth an awakening of a continuing fourth generation.

**Contributed by Marianna Nelson, SKP# 45711**

On the subject of characters, a fellow writer in the Valley Byliners in Harlingen, TX, has a T-shirt that says:

"BE CAREFUL OR YOU COULD BE IN MY NOVEL."

She warns that she kills off her characters at the end.

The T-shirt has gotten her an up-grade in a hotel and a few extra perks sent to her room.

**Contributed by Lynne Benjamin, SKP# 86190**

I first thought “this doesn’t really apply to me. I only write non-fiction.” Then I realized that I had put off writing *Jacob’s Tails . . . (Back-to-the-Land)* precisely because I was concerned about offending some of those people I cared so much about. That is why *Jacob* narrates the stories. How could a precious little dog offend anyone?

***Other Contributions***

**From the Escapade or the prompt: “I remember” - Contributed by Barbara A. Bowers, SKP# 77439**

I remember when I first met my husband. Of course, by *met*, I mean *saw*. I had already seen his heart three days earlier when we spoke for four hours on the phone. He told me of mission trips that he had been on; I did the same. We spoke of ancestors who influenced our lives--those people who made a difference in not only our own and our families' histories, but also changed the face of America.

That Friday that I drove into the Perkins parking lot, I was nervous that the man who I had fallen in love with sight-unseen would be different in person. He was not--except better. My heart skipped a beat when I saw the handsome young man standing by the small red car. I approached and we walked in. We were led to a corner booth where we shared photos over glass after glass of iced tea. Many hours later--I think it was five or six--we exited to the parking lot where he wrapped me in the warmth of his wool blazer to negate the effects of the cool September, Iowa evening.

**Contributed by Barbara A. Bowers, SKP# 77439**

***Blocked by Memories***

Novel in November

Based in fact

Reality too close to home

Stopped after day one

One thousand seven hundred five words

Will conquer soon

Important to share

Life-changing for writer and reader

Story of redemption

***Destiny or Fate - What Role Does It Play In Our Lives?* – Contributed by Margo Armstrong, SKP# 47139**

There are many theories, myths and methodologies about how we reach our life goals.

Keep in mind that destiny has nothing to do with fame and glory. It is simply the place one finds satisfaction or contentment. Our question here is how much control we have to fulfill our destiny.

"People often meet their destiny on the road they take to avoid it" - French Proverb

"Destiny is something we choose to go after.... Fate is something that happens to us, and seemingly takes away our choices, but in fact actually leads us back towards the choice of Destiny we already made before we were born." ...Order Of The White Lion

"I seldom end up where I wanted to go, but almost always end up where I need to be."  
...Douglas Adams

"It is in your moments of decision that your destiny is shaped." ...Anthony Robbins

"The willing, Destiny guides them; the unwilling, Destiny drags them" ...Seneca

"Every man has his own destiny: the only imperative is to follow it, to accept it, no matter where it leads." ...Henry Miller

We are asking "why are we here" and demanding answers. Our children and grandchildren are asking the same question. The answers are out there, go find them...or perhaps we need to be open, allowing the answers to come to us.

**Contributed by Joanne Alexakis, SKP# 19367**

I am not writing my memoirs yet - I'm still making them. But if I did write my memoirs, I would include this snowy episode (and photo!) that represents winter really well for our PW Winter issue.



This photo was taken Dec. 31st, 2004 in Reno, Nevada where Nick and I were living in our 5th wheel. Reno had three good snow storms in the course of three weeks in December 2004 and January 2005 - a total of about 7-9 feet (yes, feet) of snow. They called it the 80-year snow storm because of all that white stuff! We are in southern California now - so that is all just

memories!

### ***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

- **Helen Taylor**, SKP# 295, *Grandma's Other Life*, self-published, Createspace.com
- **Betty Prange**, SKP #22195, *Trash-Can Turkey*, *Escapees Magazine*, November/December, 2010 issue, page 7
- **Barbara Kaufmann**, SKP #95737, "*Tickle Monster Therapy*", *Scrubs Magazine*, <http://scrubsmag.com/tickle-monster-therapy/>
- **Terry Hager**, SKP #48315, *Park Sierra SKP Co-Op*, *Escapees Magazine*, November/December, 2010 issue, page 78
- **Lynne Benjamin**, SKP #86190
  - ❖ *The Laws of Space*, *Escapees Magazine*, November/ December, 2010 issue, page 38
  - ❖ *Snowbirding 101*, *RV West*\_(E-Column) [http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/rvtales/snowbirding\\_1011/](http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/rvtales/snowbirding_1011/)
  - ❖ *See the Exotic*, *RV West - RV Tales*, [http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/rvtales/see\\_the\\_exotic/](http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/rvtales/see_the_exotic/)
  - ❖ *Jacob's Tails . . . (Back-to-the-Land)*, Barnes and Noble e-book, <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Jacobs-Tails/Lynne-Benjamin/e/2940011106088/?itm=6&USRI=jacob%27s+tail>

## Resources for Publishing



### *Kevin Hearne - the next JK Rowlings?*

- Contributed by Jaimie Hall Bruzenak, SKP# 19361

[www.rvlifestylexperts.com](http://www.rvlifestylexperts.com)

Publishers would love to find the next Harry Potter books. While Kevin Hearne's character might not appeal to children and teens—after all his character is a 2100-year old Druid—Del Ray, an imprint of Random House, is gambling on him. Kevin, an unpublished, unknown author, got a three-book, six-figure advance for his Iron Druid

Chronicles that will be released in the spring.

Kevin's mother is a member of the Arizona Press Women, which I belong to, so Kevin came to our area to tell us how he created this fairytale story and what he has learned about the publishing process.

Though Kevin hopes to be an “overnight success,” there is, of course, no such thing. Kevin began writing in college, about 20 years ago. He took 11 years to complete an epic and sent that to DAW, one publisher that will consider unknown authors. It wasn't rejected outright but while he was waiting and waiting, he began playing around with an urban fantasy story. He wrote that in eleven months. He found an agent, several publishers expressed interest, the agent auctioned it off and Del Ray bought that one plus wanted two more.

Kevin is getting faster at writing. The second book of the series only took about six months to write and the third just a couple. His first book will be published in April, but his outline for the next three books is due in November. Del Ray will need to decide if they are going to continue with Kevin before his first book comes out.

During his talk, Kevin busted several myths about writing. The first was the myth about overnight success. Another prevalent myth for breaking into fantasy and science fiction is that writing short stories is the key to publication. In a survey of fantasy writers, 16 out of the 246 had never sold a short story and most of the rest had sold only one.

Another myth is that you need to know someone to make it big. Of the 246 respondents, 140 made their first novel sale with no prior connection to the agent or publisher. Kevin did tell us that going to writing conferences, or in his case, the World Fantasy Convention, is an excellent way to make contacts and to get your query at least seen. He obtained some inside information at an APW convention in Tubac a few years ago also. The advantage is that agents and publishers who have met you at a conference will take the time to actually read your letter where unknown ones go in a big pile and may or may not get read.

Here are some resources Kevin uses and recommends:

- Find an agent: Querytracker.net and AgentQuery.com. He also checked reputations at Predator and Editors (<http://pred-ed.com/pubagent.htm>)
- Excellent information for writers wanting to write and publish fiction can be found at AbsoluteWrite.com in the Water Cooler section.
- Fantasy and urban fiction is hot right now. Kevin suggested looking for a unique angle. Vampires, witches and faeries are the usual characters in most fantasies and stories are based

often on Greek and Roman mythology. Kevin noted that no one (yet) has written about gnomes or trolls or used myths from cultures like Native American or African culture.

- Kevin has not quit his day job as a high school English teacher. If his Iron Druid Chronicles takes off, he may be too busy writing and promoting his books to teach. His will be an interesting career to follow. If you see his name on the best seller list, remember you saw it here first! And, in the meantime, check out Kevin's blog at [www.KEVINHEARNE.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://www.KEVINHEARNE.BLOGSPOT.COM)

**Contributed by Jaimie Hall Bruzenak SKP# 19361 ( [www.rvlifestyleexperts.com](http://www.rvlifestyleexperts.com) )**

- Nov/Dec issue of *Writer's Journal*, "There's (Probably going to be) an App for That" lists a couple of dozen URLs to help the writer. Though it is in a screen-writing column, it can give the fiction (or even non-fiction) writer information about any time period plus tidbits on all sorts of subjects. Here are a few:
  - ❖ BehindtheName.com/random - generate names for your characters using specific nationalities and historic, literary, mythological, biblical, rapper or fantasy monikers.
  - ❖ Rulers.org- learn about the rulers of anywhere in the world in a database that covers three centuries.
  - ❖ Fortunecity.com/tinpanparton/2/atoz.html. Find the lyrics to a song.

*Writer's Journal* is available at most newsstands that sell writing magazines so it's not too late to find your own copy. This article is a keeper.

***Remember who you are writing for*** - Contributed by Lynne Benjamin, SKP# 86190

A short conversation with Janice Lasko (editor of the *Escapees Magazine*) last week reminded me about the first question I was asked when I first asked someone to review my first draft: "Who is your audience?" This applied to writing for magazines, as well.

- ❖ Janice pointed out that we need to be aware of what is not printed in the magazine as well as what is. Example is that there is no poetry in the *Escapees Magazine*.
- ❖ Be aware of differences in spelling and grammar in the country where the article is being read – especially Canadians writing for U.S. publications because our use of languages is so similar.

Kerry Shellborn the assigning editor of *RV West* suggests:

- ❖ Make a good pitch - write an outline of the story
- ❖ Include photographs
- ❖ Think like an editor - ask how many words to write your story
- ❖ Be patient and don't give up
- ❖ Follow thru - make sure to follow through by submitting your article and photos on time

***"Book Publishing Advice"*** - ***Pete Masterson***, Author of *Book Design and Production: A Guide for Authors and Publishers*, Aeonix Publishing Group <http://www.aeonix.com>

Being published with a traditional publisher isn't the wonderful thing that many people seem to think that it is. (You still must go through a lot of work, jump through hoops, and promote your book.)

Getting an agent isn't the end of the process -- you still have a lot of work to do.

Many people's reasons for (wanting to) write a book are actually not very compelling ego is a big factor. Considering that many "wannabe" authors really don't realize or desire the amount of

hard work involved, they may as well publish through Lulu, since it is one of the least expensive subsidy publishers -- at least you won't waste too much money.

It all boils down to the message I've tried to make. If you are serious about publishing a book, then avoid the subsidy publishers; offer it to the traditional publishers (if you think there is a large enough appeal for the book) -- give it a year or so to make the rounds; then, if you're up to the task, consider true self-publishing and produce your book to be truly competitive to large publisher trade books by getting professional assistance in editing, design, typesetting, etc.

### **BLOG List**

#### **Lynne Benjamin**

- <http://firststep-andlifegoeson.blogspot.com/>
- <http://lynnefred-winter.blogspot.com/>

#### **Barbara Bowers**

- <http://blessed-b.blogspot.com/>

#### **Jaimie Bruzenak**

- <http://blog.rvlifestyleexperts.com/>

#### **Carolyn Harris**

- <http://blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/lynscircle/>
- <http://travelingnewzealand.blogspot.com/>
- <http://wednesdaywoman.livejournal.com/>

#### **Kay Kennedy**

- <http://boomersrememberhistory.blogspot.com>
- <http://portablewritingnewsletter.blogspot.com>
- <http://freelancewriter.booklocker.com>
- <http://travelingwithinky.blogspot.com> (the cat's travel BLOG)

#### **Barbara Kaufmann**

- <http://www.onewordsmith.blogspot.com/>

#### **Patty Lonsbary**

- <http://www.glotours.blogspot.com>

#### **Bess McBride**

- <http://www.rvromance.com>

#### **Darlene Miller**

- <http://rvchuckles.blogspot.com>

#### **Rose Muenker**

- <http://davidandrose.com>

#### **Marianna and Bruce Nelson**

- <http://www.otr.studio221.net>

#### **Betty Prange**

- <http://www.PrangeDePlume.blogspot.com>

#### **Beth Ramos**

- <http://www.rootsandrout.es.us>
- <http://www.peaceandgood.us>

#### **Elaine Seavey**

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## 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](mailto:2firststep@gmail.com)

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