

THE FICTION FLYER
An Ezine for
Readers and Writers of Fiction
 TRI STUDIO BOOKS LLC
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Letter from the Editor



Dear Readers,

Happy New Year! We wish all of you the very best in the year to come, and hope that all your writing dreams come true. Welcome to the first issue of *The Fiction Flyer* in 2007.

This issue is packed, and it took longer than expected to get it all together. We are happy to bring you many exciting articles, including the second half of an article by Phil Harris, *What Every Author Needs to Know Part II*. You'll find Part I in the October issue of *The Fiction Flyer*. As I was cutting and pasting his article into this document last night, I had my earphones on while listening to Writers FM---Radio by Writers for Writers. (<http://www.writersfm.com/writersfm/>) Ironically, the music stopped and an interview began with Phil Harris. I was both surprised and pleased with my timing, and enjoyed the chatty interview. His words echoed the ones I was copying onto the page, and it was like having him read his article to me live. He has a lot of information to offer new writers—not always good news, so you know you can trust it, right? He offers much hope for writers, too.

We have more great submissions in the Flash Fiction section for you, and a wonderful interview with the award winning short story writer, Mike Kechula. Please don't miss his *Beasties* story – it is soooo funny! Carolyn Howard-Johnson offers some sound advise for working with editors, and Miki Hayden presents language tips, such as the appropriate use of "who" vs. "that," "ago" vs "before," "such" vs. "like"...you'll never need to question those choice: again! Ray has included his article on Investment Perspective for Writers--this time, he defines terms to ready readers for future articles. If you have started thinking about your financial future and wondered how to build one (even on a modest income), his articles are a must.

Finally, I included an article that I wrote about the news and how it is changing as it moves from traditional print to online sources. I had intended to show case the advantages and opportunities for writers through the new venues, but as I got deep into the research, I realized that something very important is happening in that arena that concerns us all. Reporting of the news is, after all, the first and foremost act toward the expression of free speech in our country. It is up to us to safeguard that freedom and keep it intact and healthy for many generations.

We are, as always, open to suggestions for future articles and welcome your input. We'd love to look at your articles for consideration to publish. We cannot pay you (yet), but hopefully that will change. Send to Kathe at kgogolewski@sbcglobal.net or Ray at raygogo@sbcglobal.net. That's it for now!

Happy Reading!
 Kathe Gogolewski

JOURNALISM AND ETHICS: NEW CHALLENGES IN A WIRED AGE

By
 Kathe Gogolewski

On December 25, 2006, I read a holiday testimonial by newspaper magnate, David Copley, published on the front page of his paper, the San Diego Union Tribune. In it, he honored the less fortunate souls on our planet, most of whom do not reside in the developed world. Though not presented as part of this mix, he made passing reference to the Tribune and its dwindling circulation. The tribute may well have sprung from a personal accounting and fortune tallying for Copley, who had announced in November that Copley Press Inc. would sell or merge the company's Illinois and Ohio papers, saving only the San Diego flagship...for how long, no one knows.

Indeed, closing doors appear to be a growing trend among newspapers in general. Consider the sale of the news bastion, Knight Ridder, with 32 daily papers, to McClatchy last Spring, who in turn sold off some to MediaNews Group and the rest to Avista Capital Partners. The latter operates oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. What's drilling got to do with printing global and local news? The only thing they have in common is an interest in profit. What does this portend for readers and writers of their news? Will Avista Capital attempt to skew their reporting to support their own interests?

Some say it's just a matter of time before all newspaper giants follow suit. In the August 24, 2006, article in *The Economist*, "Who Killed the Newspaper," the author states, "Over the next few decades half the rich world's general newspapers may fold. Jobs are already disappearing." According to the Newspaper Association of America, the number of people employed in the industry fell by 18% between 1990 and 2004. Add rising newsprint costs to lost circulation, and it's easy to understand why they are floundering.

Continued on page 2

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TIP - When to use bullets:

In general, use bullets for a vertical list that is not ordered—that is, a list whose items do not need to be in a particular order to designate a hierarchy, a sequence, or steps in a process. Numbers suggest a hierarchy or a prescribed order. From Get it Write! At <http://www.getitwriteonline.com>



JOURNALISM AND ETHICS (Continued from page 1)

So why is circulation dwindling, and where are all those readers headed? You probably already know the answer to that one if you are between the age of 18 and 34. Readers, especially young readers, have flocked online to get their news—news that is more current than anything a print newspaper can offer—and it's free.

Indeed, it's more than current—it's often *instantaneous*. With blogging, IMing, handheld devices, and internet portals, instant journalism from citizens-at-large can reach wired households in the blink of an eye. Anyone can now be in the right place at the right time and relay an event to the world over. However, not everyone is a professional writer or journalist, someone who thoughtfully composes his or her work and checks the facts for accuracy. As a result, blogs with specious accounts litter the cyber-news landscape. It becomes the readers' responsibility to sort out the true from the false; a responsibility that many do not assume.

The layperson is just one source of online news. There has been an explosion of alternative news sources. However, for different reasons, they aren't necessarily better. Many established news providers have moved online to chase lost advertising revenue and, in order to compete with bloggers and other related sources, now offer free subscriptions. While operating online has fewer expenses (with distribution and printing costs now eliminated), these news organizations have lost their primary source of revenue: the paying reader. Suppliers of free news must depend on advertising revenue for their profit. The same is true for traditional print papers struggling to compete with their online counterparts. They, too, are increasingly offering free subscriptions and, consequently, must rely on advertising as their revenue source.

With advertisers driving the train, news can adopt an entirely different slant, which may affect a departure from unbiased reporting. Avista Capital, mentioned earlier, now has advertisers to please. Is a company that drills offshore oil for profit willing to separate that fine line of journalism from commerce? Or will they subject their readers to a blurring of that line in order to serve the needs of Avista advertisers?

Continued next column

JOURNALISM AND ETHICS continued

Consider the example of the *Palo Alto Daily News*, sold to Knight Ridder and later to MediaNews. According to Michael Stoll in a July, 2005 article called *At Free Dailies, Advertisers Sometimes Call the Shots*, the *Palo Alto Daily News* has advertising sales people who write entertainment, restaurant and art reviews, "masquerading as journalists while plugging businesses." He says the *Daily News* has a written policy encouraging journalists to write news articles and promote advertisers as if their businesses "were their own." This becomes obvious in some of their copy: "At the Dollar Warehouse, your 11th item is free with the purchase of 10 items all priced at \$1 or less—even the Mylar balloons. Stop in and tell Sam you read about him in the *Daily News*." This is pure advertising promotion, but nowhere on the page does it say so. However, on the website for the *East Bay Daily News*, it stated, at the time, that the column was "devoted to selling ads so we can make enough money to keep the people at corporate HQ happy." Now, if that doesn't say it all.

In addition, Stoll writes that another MediaNews paper, *The San Francisco Examiner*, accommodates advertisers by dropping "tens of thousands of copies in free boxes in San Francisco and the Peninsula to the south. But tens of thousands of other papers go toward targeted free home delivery—intentionally sidestepping poorer neighborhoods, where a free newspaper is arguably most needed." He continues, "The paper very carefully picks its readers based on who it feels can afford to buy products there."



Stoll quotes Kelly McBride, an ethicist at the Poynter Institute for journalists in St. Petersburg, Florida (Poynter Online <http://www.poynter.org>), who said the combining of advertising and journalism creates "competing loyalties." Even if there is no agenda to pay back advertisers or lure in new ones, you can't serve the reader doing both jobs. If you are a journalist, "it's the service to the reader you're trying to provide—a fair and honest assessment of a business in a business column," she states. "If the purpose is to generate ad revenue or reward good advertisers, then you've placed another value in front of serving the reader—the value of profit making—by virtually duping the reader."

Poynteronline

Continued on page 3

JOURNALISM AND ETHICS (Continued from page 2)

Whatever happened to the Code of Ethics outlined by the Society of Professional Journalism? In their preamble, it states "Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice."

Where in this code does it say that unbiased facts should give way to the greater need of commercial interests? What about the first amendment, free speech and the responsibility to hold governments accountable? Will Avista do that for us? MediaNews? How much do they care about global warming? A distant war? Genocide in a far off country? Will we see free speech sacrificed to the highest bidder?

Professional journalists, writing for print and online sources, are not entirely to blame. According to an August 24, 2006 article written in *The Economist*, research into the tastes of mainstream newspaper readers has long shown that "people like short stories and news that is relevant to them: local reporting, sports, entertainment, weather and traffic. On the Internet especially...they are looking to enhance their way of life." Political accounts, foreign affairs, and international news are low on the priority scale.

So who is watching Big Brother? Let's return again to that citizen journalist, the one who sometimes can't spell. In part, they guard the truth for the rest of us. In the article mentioned above, "Who Killed the Newspaper?" it states, "Several companies have been chastened by amateur postings—of flames erupting from Dell's laptops or of cable-TV repairmen asleep on the sofa." While some bloggers are capable of partiality and even lies, as a group, they offer a lot of information to digest. And a few bloggers, known for their accurate reporting, have gained substantial readerships and clout.

In addition, we can still count on high quality journalism in sources such as The Christian Science Monitor and the Guardian, both owned and operated by non-profit organizations, to offer news free of commercialism.

And writers, that is all writers who communicate ideas with clarity and accuracy, can add to the conversation through responsible blogs and ezines that hold those in positions of power accountable to the rest. It's our turn now, as citizens of the free world, to write what we know, what we discover, and "serve the public with thoroughness and honesty." Then, we must make the news as accessible as possible to as many as we can.

It's our turn.



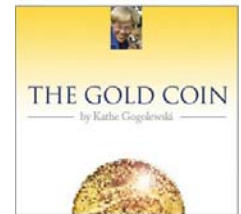
WRITER WRY TOON above: Figurative language

FROM AMAZON SHORTS:

The Gold Coin

By Kathe Gogolewski

★★★★★ (3 customer reviews)



Kathe Gogolewski talks about The Gold Coin:

This is a true story. My father wanted you to hear it, and so I wrote it for you, and for him, of course. Did you ever see the movie, Pay it Forward? It promotes a truly inspiring message: when someone does you a favor, no need to pay it back—pay it forward and do a favor for someone else. This story, my father's story, has an element of that in it. Perhaps it is more than an element. I don't know. You can decide. In keeping with the spirit of the story, 100% of my royalties will be donated to Casa de Ampara, a children's charity in my town of Oceanside, California.

Price: \$0.49

Length: 2,412 words, 10 pages

About Amazon Shorts:

- Amazon Shorts are available exclusively at Amazon.com; you will not find them anywhere else.
- Amazon Shorts are delivered electronically; there are no printed editions.
- Amazon Shorts are yours forever – after purchase, you can read them anytime at Amazon.com. (They'll be stored forever in Your Media Library in PDF, HTML, and text e-mail formats.)
- You are free to print Amazon Shorts to read in hard copy form at your convenience.

You can purchase the short here:

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Gold-Coin/dp/B000IB0JHK>

Website Tip: A graphically-driven website can actually distract your visitors away from your sales message. A sales message is the #1 most important factor in a website that generates revenue. If your visitors are paying more attention to your graphics, than your sales message, you've lost another sale.

INVESTMENT PERSPECTIVES FOR WRITERS

a monthly column by Raymond P. Gogolewski, Ph.D (also writes fiction as Ray Grant)

NEW YEAR - NEW OPPORTUNITIES



During 2006, we covered some basics on saving off the top, fundamentals of mortgages, the need for selective insurance, and IRAs. This year, I plan to delve into the *mysteries* of the world of investing.

A good place to start is with a few, key definitions (modified from the website of *TD Ameritrade* (<http://www.tdameritrade.com>)). *TD Ameritrade* is one of many sources for definitions of financial terms. Financial institutions provide definitions of financial

terms either at their websites or in brochures – usually, available for the asking. Alternatively, one can perform an online search on “financial terms” or “financial definitions.” You’ll be surprised at how many sites offer financial information to the public without charge.

Certificate of Deposit (CD)

A certificate issued by a bank or savings and loan that pays interest at a specified rate and that matures within a specified time frame. A CD typically pays a higher rate of interest than a standard passbook savings account.

Bond

An investment vehicle representing a loan to a corporation, government, or municipality. Generally, bonds pay a fixed interest rate and return the principal investment at maturity. Bonds issued by the U.S. government are guaranteed as to the timely payment of principal and interest if held to maturity. Other bonds are not guaranteed and carry varying degrees of credit risk.

Municipal Bonds

Bonds issued by state or local government to raise money to pay for special projects, such as building schools, highways, and sewers. The interest that investors receive is often exempt from federal income taxes and, in some cases, state and local taxes too. However, interest may be subject to the Alternative Minimum Tax

U.S. Treasury Securities

Treasury securities are all the debt instruments issued by the U.S. Treasury to help run the federal government. *Treasury bills* mature in less than 1 year; *Treasury notes* mature between 1 and 10 years; *Treasury bonds* mature at or after 10 years.

Stock

One share of stock is a specific fraction of current ownership of a publicly held company. Owners of stock receive voting rights on issues affecting the company and may receive dividends.

Dividend

A percentage of a company's profits paid to its shareholders.

Continued next column

NEW YEAR (continued)

Mutual Fund

A collection of securities — stocks, for example — owned by a group of shareholders and managed by an Investment Company. Mutual funds pursue a variety of goals, depending on their investment charter. For example, some funds work to generate income on a regular basis, while others seek to provide capital appreciation.

Bond Fund

Mutual funds that invest in bonds issued by municipalities, corporations, and the U.S. government and its agencies. Bond mutual funds do not mature, nor are they guaranteed, although some of the individual bonds they invest in may be.

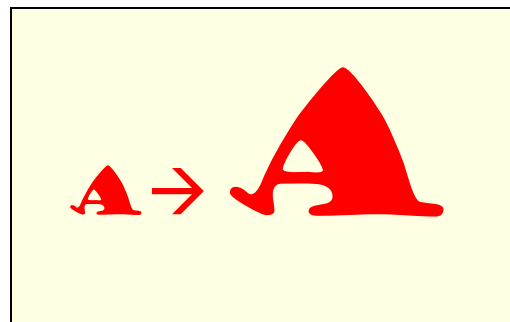
Money Market Funds

Mutual funds that invest in short-term money market instruments, such as U.S. Treasury bills, commercial paper, or certificates of deposit. An investment in a money market fund is *not* insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Although a money market fund seeks to preserve the value of your investment at \$1.00 per share, it is possible to lose money by investing in the fund.

Capital Gain

The profit earned from the sale of a capital asset, such as real estate or stocks. A capital gain is not “realized” *until* the asset is sold. A capital gain may be *short-term* (one year or less) or *long-term* (more than one year) and *must* be claimed on the owner's income tax return for the year in which the asset was sold.

Now, we have a basic vocabulary from which we can begin our discussions.



WRITER WRY TOON above:
A CAPITAL GAIN



Dear Writing Friends,

Please help us grow the Long Story Short School of Writing and the ezine – forward this to ten writers you know!

Now available for sign up is Jamieson Wolf's [Sampler: The Muse – Writing from Inspiration](#) – there is no obligation, it's all for fun. [Check it out here](#) at the top of the page. Sign up and write up your best response to his assignment – you might have your work published in Long Story Short next month! And you'll improve your writing besides!

We are offering some classes in [eBook format](#) now – a downloadable .pdf file for \$18.99-29.99. The Muse is one of them. There will no teacher, contact or feedback, but you'll own the course to study at your leisure and return to again and again! You will have the option at anytime of purchasing the interactive course for the difference in cost. More eBook Courses will follow in future mailers. Check them out:

- [The Muse: Learning to Write from Inspiration](#) - \$24.95
- [You, Me and Poetry](#) - \$39.95 for twelve lessons or the course in 2 parts for \$22.95 each
- [The Nitty Gritty of Good Grammar and Great Writing](#) - \$22.95
- [Modern Poetry: Broaching the Avant-Garde](#) - \$19.95
- [The Reel Deal](#) - \$22.95 for the entire course in Ebook format plus a free copy of Betty Jo's book, *CONFESSIONS OF A MOVIE ADDICT*.
-

[FILMMAKER PRAISES THE REEL DEAL COURSE:](#)

Whoever you are – a student, a teacher, or just a film addict who wants to move forward and explore the enigmatic world of cinema at a new, professional level, - Betty Jo Tucker's course on writing is the right place for you to be. Think about it: you're given six marvelous sessions that are meant to orient you step by step in the expanding cosmos of cinema by providing you with the most valuable technique, knowledge and advices one can only dream of. Metaphorically speaking, each session is your step forward toward a creation of your own world in which you, its spirit, soul, and creator, are going to thrive and develop in the direction your intellect and taste suggest.

Don't forget to sign up for one of Linda Barnett-Johnson's terrific writing forums, [My LSS Writing Friend](#). Here, Linda offers a prompt and the members write a first draft, rewrite and final story, all with intensive critiques by the other members. At the end of the month, they all have publishable, completed stories. If you or anyone you know is interested in joining, have them contact [Linda](#) and tell her why.

Thanks, Long Story Short

[Add me to the mailing list.](#)

WRITING FLASH FICTION

By Ray Grant



Heartening Drabbles

November's *Prompt* brought forth some heartening drabbles from our readers. I invited our readers to create a drabble, an *exactly one hundred word* story, about a *transition* since this is the beginning of the year, a time of optimism and new resolve.

Below are five reader's drabbles that may warm your heart and inspire you. I hope you enjoy them.

Occam's Razor By Dennis Houchen



Michael looked at himself in the mirror, disgusted at the man he had become. He drew his thumb across his father's old straight razor – watched the blood bubble.

What was he hiding from his wife? From himself? It had to end. Today, New Year's, would be his day of purification, simplification.

He rubbed his hand along the age-encrusted side. The swirled filigrees soon shone. He could defer the deed no longer.

All lives change, cross over. This day, he would expunge the horror.

Michael drew the sanctified blade to his neck and, in one swift stroke, shaved off his goatee.

A Matter of Perspective By Patricia Harrington



Martha sat in her breakfast nook staring out the window at the rain. "The older I get, the harder it is to change," she thought. And the colder her heart had become Since George's death. Martha

poked at the eggs on her plate, feeling full of self-pity.

Continued on page 6

Heartening Drabbles (Continued from page 5)

Suddenly, she saw something move -- "a cat, a yellow tabby!" -- its fur, dirty and matted. It left the shelter of George's bush to creep toward the house and the back steps. Martha looked away for a long moment. Then she straightened her shoulders, picked up her plate, and went to the back door.

**A New World
By Sis Zabrina**



He sat still. *Please let it be good news*, he prayed. Behind the doors, lives were at stake. The outcome would change his life forever. He glanced at the clock. Seconds ticking away seemed like hours. He stood up and paced.

Two doors cracked open. He stood and stopped breathing for a second. No one came out. The two doors closed again. *What?* He shook his head in disbelief. Nervous.

He cracked his fingers, shook his legs. The doors opened. A masked man in blue came to him. "Congratulations. It's a boy!" His face beamed—a father at last.

**Retirement
By Pamela Jenewein**

The droning beep of my husband's alarm clock penetrates my slumber. As he stirs beside me, I imagine him blindly reaching to turn off the noise.



Opening an eye, I glance at him as he throws aside the blankets and sits on the edge of the bed. He peers over his shoulder in my direction.

"Your first day of retirement," he says emphasizing the last word with light-hearted sarcasm. "How's it feel?"

I scoot to the middle of the bed and nestle deeper into a cocoon of pillows and blankets. "Hmmm... it feels comfy and warm. Want to join me?"

**Awakening
By Gloria Watts**

Cold, bones chilled to the marrow, I lay still. How long? I don't know.

Silence -- my ears ache with listening. If only a sound

Continued next column

Heartening Drabble (Continued)

would penetrate this place, a sign that I'm not alone.



I cannot look left or right. My eyes focus on blackness, eyes that do not blink, eyes that do not close. Earth, a pungent smell, I remember from when – where? Endless darkness,

an eternity of nothingness – why am I not afraid?

A light -- small, but slowly growing -- and brightness is about me. Fields, meadows, and a hill above me.

I see him and walk into his arms.

Thank you Dennis, Patricia, Sis, Pamela, and Gloria for your literary contributions. Isn't it amazing how much of a story can be conveyed in just one hundred words?

**Reader's Micros and January's Prompt
By Ray Grant**

Our readers' responses to the *November Prompt* are highlighted in my article, *Heartening Drabbles*, above.

January's Prompt

For our February issue, I'd like a **BYTE**, an *exactly sixty-four word* story, highlighting something special that occurred on Valentine's Day! Remember, a flash is a story with a proper beginning, middle, and end. Have fun with this one!



Happy New Year and may 2007 be the best year yet!

Sassy Brit Wants You!

Looking for something alternative to read? Would you like a way to promote your book for free? Are you addicted to books and can't get enough? Want to know where to turn for help? Look no further than http://groups.yahoo.com/group/An_Alternative_Read and get your free fix from the Sassy One and her Gang!

Whether you are a reader, author, agent, publisher, publicist, or just plain book kinky, this is the place to be. Sharing your book news, excerpts, or submitting your work – it's never been easier. The gang has even been known to offer a few writing challenges when the mood takes them, but you haven't heard that from me, right? Oh yes, and they give books away for free! True madness.

Any questions, please email Sassy.Brit@googlemail.com and she'll sort you out! Trust her, she's not a doctor!

Alternative-Read.com

<http://www.alternative-read.com>

<http://www.tjbook-list.blogspot.com> REVIEW BLOG (Most popular entrance!)

http://myspace.com/Sassy_Brit (Her space, not mine!)

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL A. KECHULA

**Publisher of *Flash Tales Magazine*
and Award-winning Author of Flash Fiction**

Conducted by Ray Gogolewski

Mike Kechula is a retired technical writer living near Phoenix, Arizona. Since switching to fiction in 2003, Mike has become an award-winning author. His credits include an award from The Binnacle, the official journal of the University of Maine. His flash fiction appears in publications in Australia, Canada, England, and the USA.

Mike has written seven flash fiction books including a book that teaches the finer points of writing flash fiction entitled "*Writing Flash Fiction – A Self Study Book for Beginners.*" He was Flash Fiction Editor of Apollo's Lyre magazine, Senior Editor of Nimue's Grotto magazine, and Submissions Editor for the original Coffee Cramp magazine. Now, he publishes *Flash Tales Magazine* (www.flash-tales.com), an online magazine dedicated to speculative flash fiction. He tells people, "I'll never write a novel. The longest story I've ever written is about 15,000 words."

Ray: When did you become interested in writing, in general, and flash/short fiction stories, specifically?

Mike: When I was seven years old and in the third grade, a nun in elementary school asked me to form a Storyteller's Club, and write and produce a play weekly. I also had to select the actors and rehearse them. This went on during the late 1940s until I was nine, when I was asked to write and produce weekly imitations of radio shows popular at the time. I included zany commercials spoofing real radio commercials.

In 2003, I decided to try flash fiction. I joined a Yahoo writer's group specializing in flash. Once I got the hang of writing stories of a thousand words or less, I submitted them to magazines and contests. Soon, I was getting published and winning contests regularly. Lately, I've succeeded in getting a story published about once a week. In addition, I've had eighteen stories accepted in eighteen different anthologies during the past eighteen months.

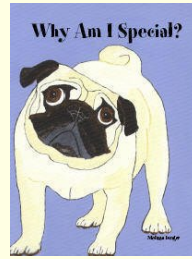
Ray: What draws you to writing flash/short fiction stories?

Mike: I like the challenge. Many people appreciate stories that can be read in five minutes or less. I really enjoy writing micro-fiction. These are stories that only take about a minute to read.

Ray: Do you enjoy reading the stories of other authors? Do you have any favorites?

Mike: The English author W. Somerset Maugham is my

Continued on page 8



Why Am I Special?

Written and Illustrated

by Melissa Langer

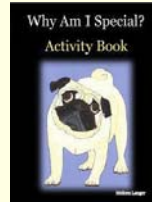
Join a pug named Emmitt as he answers the question...*Why Am I Special?*

Follow Emmitt's journey as he meets

dozens of dogs on his quest.

60 full color illustrations of pugs and other breeds pop off every page!

- Available in Paperback or Hardcover
 - Ages 2-8
 - 32 Pages
 - Full Color
- Featuring 60 of my original paintings.



A Companion Workbook to

Why Am I Special?

Filled with lessons for children in Grades 1 - 3, this fun activity book explores Emmitt's journey

through games, reading comprehension and exercises using the child's imagination.

© 2006 Melissa Langer

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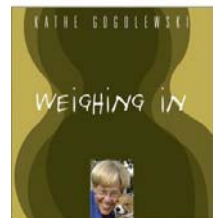
WRITER WRY TOON: Exclamation point



From Amazon Shorts: *Weighing In* by Kathe Gogolewski
Kathe writes about *Weighing In*:

This short is a light-hearted romp through weight discrimination reversed – thin people...beware! Many of us suffer from the struggles of weight gain. For a subject that is normally somber, I wanted to create an opportunity to laugh it off! (Oh, if only it were that easy!) To purchase for 49 cents, click here:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000HDZAXW/ref=sr_11_1/102-5486577-8896114?ie=UTF8



KECHULA (Continued from page 7)

favorite novelist. Also, I enjoy Guy de Maupassant, the French master of the very short story. Sometimes, I like to think that I imitate de Maupassant when I write flash fiction. I also love the Victorian writers -- Dickens, Hardy, and Eliot.

Ray: What aspect of a flash/short fiction story do you consider most important?

Mike: The story shouldn't be encumbered with non-essential details that have nothing to do with the plot. The most important thing is to tell a story in as few words as possible.

Ray: What POV do you usually employ?

Mike: Third person limited. Sometimes, I use first person to create a sense of immediacy.

Ray: Tell us about your style of writing. When do you provide descriptive information in your stories?

Mike: I don't know how to classify my style. I provide only descriptive information necessary to better comprehend the plot. I don't give my characters last names, unless it's necessary. In my stories, readers never see that someone turned to talk to someone else, nor will they learn what someone is wearing, *unless it's vital to the plot* -- the same for the weather, how the sunset looks, or any other details that work wonderfully in longer stories and novels, but not in flash fiction.



Ray: Have you won awards for your writing?

Mike: I've won first prize in six flash fiction contests, second place in one, and was a runner up in three. My most notable award was *runner up* in a short story contest held by *The Binnacle*, the official journal of the University of Maine. English instructors have told me that *The Binnacle* is considered a prestigious publication. What gave me the biggest kick was winning two Alien Skin Magazine writing contests in a row.

Ray: How do you structure a flash/short fiction story?

Mike: I try to give a story strong opening sentences. I use only a few characters and give them simple first names. I try to add dialog with punch and include a twist at the end. Sometimes, I write multiple versions of a story using different character and plot variations. Lastly, I edit each manuscript until the story is smooth and moves quickly.

Ray: What advice do you offer writers who are interested in writing flash fiction?

Mike: Here's what I recommend:

1. Devise a story you can't wait to tell someone.

Continued next column

KECHULA (Continued)

2. Write it the way you'd tell someone over a cup of coffee. That means free of flowery prose that you'd never use in conversation.

Here's an example: You'd say this to a friend: *He shot her.* To think you might do well in a creative writing class, you might write: *He reached for the pistol, felt its cold, clammy trigger, looked at her with disdain, and slowly pressed the trigger.* Then, instead of saying the top of her head blew off, you might tend to write a staggering number of words detailing what happened when the bullet hit her.

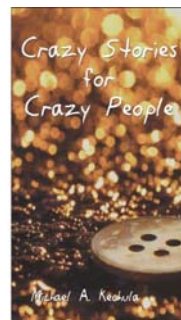
3. Omit non-essential details that don't affect the plot. For example, the color of a woman's dress. However, if the color affects some 'nutcase' to the point where he murders her, then the color is essential to the plot.

4. Omit similes. They tend to make a writer seem a bit incompetent because the same thought is repeated. It comes across as if the writer can't make the idea clear enough, so he has to embellish it by devising a simile. It's as if we, readers, are not capable of getting the point. Here's an example, *Jerry began to whistle as the trees of the country road drew in around him like a noose.* Here's why this doesn't work for me -- it's impossible for me to visualize how a country road can draw around the characters like a noose. A noose is circular. The road isn't. Otherwise, they'd be driving in circles!?

5. Don't include anything that throws the reader out of the story. This means unclear sentences, slang, and unusual idiomatic forms. When readers ponder what the writer means, readers are no longer in the story. Do this enough times, and your readers may just never finish the story.

6. Don't over-edit a flash piece to the point where it no longer reads smoothly

Ray: Tell us about your current publications, and how a reader can learn about/order them?



Mike: "Crazy Stories for Crazy People," ISBN 1-4137-5026-1, a paperback that can be ordered through any bookstore and through Amazon.com (www.amazon.com). It contains 32 flash fiction tales, 17 short stories, and 1 novelette. Some Barnes and Noble stores have this one on the shelf.

Continued page 9

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<http://www.tri-studio.com/CONTESTS2.html>
 submit to Kathe at kgogolewski@sbcglobal.net

KECHULA (Continued from page 8)

The following six books can be purchased by contacting me at m.kechula@att.net. By the way, I donate 40% of the proceeds to battered women shelters and food banks.

“5-Minute Tales for Busy People – Book 1: Twelve Humorous Speculative Fiction Tales.” These zany sci-fi, fantasy, and horror stories have been published previously in magazines and anthologies. Some won writing contests. All are a thousand words or less flash fiction. 36 pages. \$4.95.

“5-Minute Tales For Busy People – Book 2: Twelve Creepy Speculative Fiction Tales.” These sci-fi, fantasy, and horror stories have been published previously in magazines and anthologies. 32 pages. \$4.95.

“5-Minute Tales for Busy People – Book 4: Twelve Bizarre Tales.” Stories of various genres including crime, fantasy, sci-fi, horror, and others. All are a thousand words or less flash fiction. 28 pages. \$4.95.

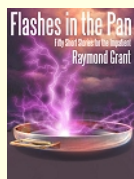
“1-Minute Tales for Busy People – 50 Micro-Fiction Tales to Warp Your Mind.” Many tales have been published previously in magazines and anthologies. Some won writing contests. 30 pages. \$4.95

“Z Is For Zombie.” Six unnerving stories, all of which have been published previously by magazines and anthologies. One won runner up in a contest. 28 pages. \$4.95.

“Writing Flash Fiction – A Self Study Book for Beginners.” 50 pages. The only book of its kind. Loaded with dozens of teaching points, 65 examples, and 60 challenging exercises. Includes answers for all exercises. 50 pages. \$14.95

Continued next column

FLASHES IN THE PAN by Raymond Grant



Flashes in the Pan, Fifty Short Stories for the Impatient, is a collection of stories, each ranging from four to less than two thousand words. The stories are grouped in six categories and designed to stir your imagination, bring a smile to your face, touch your heart, or stimulate your thoughts.

A typical story takes about five to ten minutes to read. So, when you're between tasks, delayed, looking for something to do, or when you're starting to feel exasperated, take five...read a story...and let your spirit soar!

Price: \$4.99 USD ISBN: 1-55404-357-3 Genre: Fantasy/SF - Fiction/Adventure Length: 94 Pages Available from Double Dragon Publishing

<http://www.double-dragon-ebooks.com/single.asp?ISBN=1-55404-357-3>

KECHULA (Continued)

Ray: Please enjoy three of Mike's flash fiction tales below:

**HEAD DOCTOR *
By Michael A. Kechula**

“Doctor! Please help me!”
 “What’s the problem?”
 “I can’t write short fiction.”
 “Let’s have a look. Uh-oh. Your head has too many bumps.”
 “Is that bad?”
 “Might be. Ah-hah! Your Fiction-Writing Bump is an inch too high. Makes you too wordy. Hmm. Your Excessive Description Bump sticks out too far. Makes you write trivial details. Both bumps need adjustment.”
 “And then I’ll be able to write short fiction?”
 “Yep.”
 “What’s your fee?”
 “For \$200, I’ll fix everything.”
 “When?”
 “Right now. You got insurance?”
 “I’ll pay cash.”
 “Wonderful. Just lay back and get comfortable. Nurse, help me with this sledge hammer.”



* The First Prize Winner in a writing contest sponsored by *The Muselt Up Club* (2004).

**HOW EARTH WAS CREATED **
By Michael A. Kechula**

“Let’s begin the regression. You’re getting very sleepy.”
 Minutes later Susan was in a deep trance.
 “Go back in time,” the psychiatrist commanded. “Back. Back. Where are you?”
 “I see Egyptians building pyramids.”
 “Back. Back. Where are you now?”
 “I see huge dinosaurs.”
 “Go back further. What’s there?”
 “Nothing.”
 “Perfect,” the psychiatrist said.
 “This must be the moments preceding the creation of Earth. Is there anything in the sky?”
 “Three moons. They’re colliding! They’re exploding!”
 “Eureka!” the doc yelled. “I’ve discovered the creators of Earth!”
 “Susan, do the three moons have names?”
 “Yes.”
 “What are they?”
 “Larry, Curly, and Moe.”



** A Drabble, *Flash Shot Magazine* (2006).

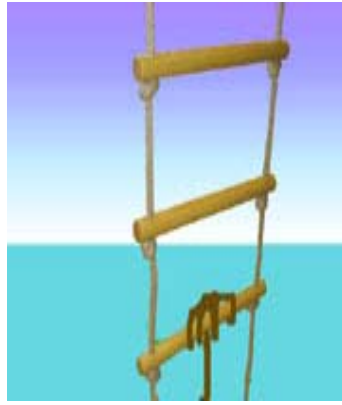
Continue page 10

KECHULA (Continued from page 9)

BEASTIES****

by Michael A. Kechula

"I've seen little men coming here from the Moon," Brown said.
 "How do they get here?" I asked.
 "They lower rope ladders, then climb down. Millions of them."
 "Once they're down here, what happens?"
 "They look around for stuff and pick it up."
 "What kind of stuff?"
 "Whatever they see, I guess."
 "Give me some examples."
 "Wads of gum. Candy wrappers. Cigarette butts. Whatever's in the gutter."
 "Let's say they pick up a cigarette butt. What happens next?"
 "They form a long line. They pass the butt from one to the other, all the way to the rope ladders. Then they start passing it up one of the ladders. I guess they carry the butt all the way up to the Moon, and put it some place. Maybe in a junkyard."
 "I see. Well, that's all the time we have for today. See you Wednesday."



WEDNESDAY

"I saw the Beasties again."
 "Do you mean the moon men with the ladders?"
 "Yes. I decided to call them Beasties."
 "I see. Do they remind you of your mother?"
 "Not really."
 "What about your alcoholic father?"
 "No. I haven't seen them drink whiskey. Well, not yet anyway."
 "When did you see them this time?"
 "Midnight. They dropped their ladders, came down, and started picking up things. Bigger things than before."
 "Give me an example."

"One of them—I guess he was the leader because he had a flashlight—picked up a banana peel from the gutter. He made squeaking sounds.



They formed a straight line, spread themselves a few inches apart, then passed the banana peel toward the ladders. They hauled the banana peel up one of the ladders until I couldn't see it anymore."

"How big are they?"
 "The size ants would be if they stand straight up on their hind legs."

"How many ladders do they have?"
 "Countless. Too bad you weren't around to see them last night. Their leader spotted a dime. I saw it shine when the flashlight beam hit it. This time a whole bunch of them gathered around the dime to look. Then they picked it up and set it on its side. The dime started to roll down the street. That's when I heard them laugh. They fell on the ground laughing."
 "What did their laughter sound like?"
 "Squeaks."

KECHULA (Continued)

"Perhaps they fell and laughed because they were drunk. Sounds like your father. You told me his drinking buddies called him Squeaky. And when drunk, he often acted like a beast. Perhaps he and his drunken friends who passed drinks around could be thought of as Beasties."

"I don't want to talk about him right now. It's more interesting to talk about the Beasties and what they did with the dime."

Though I tried to show him the connections between his moon men hallucinations and his past, he refused to acknowledge the associations. He spent the rest of the hour describing how Beasties passed the dime from hand to hand, and up the ladder. I wanted to remind him that beer in the brewery town in which he'd grown up, had cost a dime a glass.

FRIDAY

"I saw them again last night. They only do this at night, you know."

"Your father only drank at night."

Brown ignored me and continued. "This time they passed a soccer baseball back to the ladder."

"Hmm. They're moving larger and heavier objects every time they show up,"

I said. "Your father's drinking got heavier. Sometimes they had to carry him home. And when he went upstairs, he sometimes beat you for no reason. You said once it was after a soccer game. The game your team won. The one you'd wished your dad had attended so he could praise you, and notice what a fine player you were."

He grew silent.

"Do the Beasties remind you of anybody?"
 "Not really."

"What I want you to do is say Beasties ten times, then tell me what comes to mind."

"Beasties....Beasties...Beasties...french fries."

"Good. What are your thoughts about Beasties and french fries?"
 "One has legs, the other doesn't."
 "Go on."

"One can think but the other can't. One can pick things up and pass them up ladders, but the other can't."

"Perhaps the Beasties represent your father. You said he's French, and he fried his brains through excessive use of alcohol."

"But they don't look like him."

"They don't have to. It's a question of associations. Let's stop for now."

Each time my patient came, he reported larger objects that the Beasties had relocated. First a table. Then a dish washer. After that, a motorcycle and a recreation vehicle.



Continued page 11

Continued next column

KECHULA (Continued from page 9)

He missed an appointment. And another. Then I got a postcard with a moonscape on the front.
 "Greetings from the Moon. When the Beasties came down their ladders, I asked them to take me away. It's nice up here. I like it. I'm never coming back. Regards, Bill Brown."
 The city grew more silent each day as one building after another disappeared.
 Lying in bed, pondering the meaning of it all, I heard a barely perceptible knock on my bedroom door.
 "Come in."
 They came in under the door. First, the one with the flashlight, then thousands of others.
 "It's time," the leader said.
 "I understand. What's the procedure?"
 "Stay on your back. We'll do the rest."
 "May I bring my copy of Freud's Interpretation of Dreams? It comforts me."
 "Certainly. We desire only your comfort."
 "Will it take long to get there?" I asked as uncountable tiny hands lifted me from the sheet."
 "Yes. It's a 385,000 mile journey."
 "When I get there, may I have a woman?"
 "You can have two if you like."
 "Sounds nice," I said, as they passed me through the front door of the house toward a ladder.

**** First Published in *SciFantastic Magazine*, a print publication in England.

Ray: Thank you, Mike. You've provided us with a glimpse into your background and views on writing and a wonderful sampling of your imaginative stories.



TATO BY KATHE GOGOLEWSKI

Fantasy Adventure for middle grade readers "Compelling" and "well-written" – Piers Anthony; science fiction and fantasy author of the Xanth series

TATO captures children's imaginations by recognizing their desire to earn the admiration of the adults closest to them. The story casts Michael Tate, an inventive and willful boy, and his bossy older sister, Nicole, into a strange world filled with mirrors and strange creatures where they must rescue their parents from the evil power that rules the realm.

Michael's trouble begins with the passing of his grandfather and best friend, Gankum. Rebuffed by his family when he insists that Gankum now lives in his closet, he confides in his grandfather's spirit that he wants someone new to love him. When he learns the secrets for creating a baby brother by soaking a potato in a magic formula, he jumps at the chance.

He botches the formula, however, and instead of a brother, two creatures are spawned: One, soulless and desperate, kidnaps Michael's parents. The other, Tato, part human, part potato yet irrepressibly warm and affectionate, accompanies Michael and Nicole in their quest to find and free their parents. Danger and treachery greet them every step of the way. Children will be enchanted by this tale of a young boy who acquires magical powers that get him both in and out of trouble.

Available from Wings Press

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/netcart.asp?MerchantID=19895&ProductID=2571398>

Paperback price: \$9.95

ISBN# 1-59088-564-3

Available in trade paperback and eBook format



Quark Soup

Forget the ivory tower and mushy sentiments. *Quark Soup* takes its cue from quantum physics and cosmology. Magdalena Ball is an award winning poet, novelist and editor of *The Compulsive Reader*

<http://www.compulsivereader.com/html>. While the poetry is rich with science; *Quark Soup* is no treatise. The work is ostensibly about what it means to be a human, and tackles subjects like love, birth, and death; uniting the domestic with the esoteric. The work has been described as "finely crafted", "exciting", and "comparable in spirit to the early works of Picasso." For free samples, reviews, more information on *Quark Soup*, visit:

<http://www.compulsivereader.com/html/images/quarkin dex.htm>



WRITER WRY TOON above: A Rough Draft

WRITER'S TIP: Are your characters real?

Here's a useful barometer toward understanding that your characters are consistent unto themselves: If they aren't talking back to you and saying things like, "No, I would never do or say that," then you may have stopped listening to them. If you feel you've lost their presence in your story, go back in until you "find" them again, and pick it up from there.

WHAT EVERY AUTHOR NEEDS TO KNOW PART II
by Phil Harris

In my first article (The Fiction Flyer October issue for Part I: http://www.tri-studio.com/files/The_Fiction_Flyer_-_October6.pdf), I painted a rather bleak picture for new authors. Allow me to continue in that vein for a few moments. In an article on gawker.com (11/8), it was reported that many literary agents are a little on the mentally challenged side of literary circles. The writer indicated that many manuscripts were sent to her (we assume she is a publisher) filled with typos, poorly constructed letters, misspelled author AND agent names, poorly formatted and error ridden manuscripts. So much for holding out for the agent who promises a book contract but does not even take the time to spell their own name right.

The next bit of information comes from the Jerry Simmons newsletter. Citing the Nielsen Bookscan result for 2004, we see the following information:

- In 2004 1.2 million titles were published (excluding self-published and I believe POD titles).
- Of that total, 950,000, 79%, sold fewer than 99 copies.
- 200,000 titles, 17%, sold fewer than 1,000 copies.
- 25,000, 2%, sold more than 5,000 copies.
- 10, you do the math, sold more than a million copies.
- Average book sales were 500 copies per title.

On the bright side, if you can sell over 100 books you are in the top 20% of books sold; a good marketing ploy when contacting bookstores.

As a new author there is little going for you. Many agents are not worth the postage to send them your book. It might be wise; if you go this route, to start with those who accept e-mail submissions and save the envelope. This will at least give you a feel, at no cost, as to the interest in your book. The mainstream publishers are not on your side. You have little chance of getting the book in their hands. The numbers are not on your side either. 80% of titles sell less than 100 books. As I said in my last article, if you are not willing to put body, mind and soul into your work there is little chance of being on Oprah.

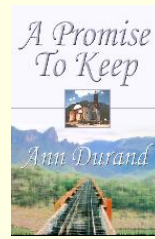


So what is on your side? Family and friends? Well, depending on your popularity, there's the first ten books sold. Then what? The best weapon in the author's arsenal is-THE AUTHOR! If you are behind your book-100%-you are on the path to getting what you desire for your book. You are the one who will market and sell your book. Your belief and

enthusiasm for your work is the key to turning the numbers in your favor. Your belief that you have a work worth reading will set you above the pack.

You must make one key decision and then you are good to go. You must honestly evaluate your book and decide,

Continued next column



A PROMISE TO KEEP
BY ANN DURAND

A Suspense with Romantic Elements

The tidy world of schoolteacher Karen Hudson turns upside down as she embarks on a reckless

chase from a small town in California to a jungle in Mexico, searching for the truth about Michael Browning, the man who has captured her heart. Stunned when he disappears without a word, she soon learns that he's been charged with murder. Her quest to locate him and unravel the mystery surrounding the charge makes her the next target for murder.

Michael Borbeau, alias Michael Browning, never intended to mislead Karen, or to fall in love for that matter. Only the need to protect his daughter forced him to choose a new town and a new name. Now, the whole mess is threatening to surface, and he must flee to keep his daughter safe.

Will he ever see his beloved Karen again? Will she discover the truth before the killer strikes again? Will she succeed in reuniting with the only man to ever unlock her heart?

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GOLDEN WINGS AWARD WINNER from Wings Press

WHAT EVERY AUTHOR...PART II

for yourself, that it is the best you can do and that it truly says what you want it to say. If you are unsure, find a new occupation or hobby. But if you truly believe that you have a winner, it can be a winner. With a positive attitude, a clear vision and a strong desire to succeed you will be on your way to publishing heaven. You will find a way to publish your book and will find a way to reach the right markets.

If you have been a part of The Secret phenomena, you already know what I mean. The film has been a worldwide hit and recent guest appearances on The Larry King Show, national news outlets and popular talk shows have many in a positive frame of mind to create their own reality-including publishing and selling your book. If you think this is bunk-move on to the next article in this newsletter. But if you are sure that you desire to be a writer and that you have good ideas that you want to see in print and on bookstore shelves, then read these last lines. If you can visualize (see) your book in print; if you can see it (in your mind) on the shelves of bookstores: if you can see readers buying and talking about your book; and, if you can do this with a deep sense of emotion and gratitude, it will happen. If you can read some of the

Continued on page 13

WHAT EVERY AUTHOR... (Continued from page 12)

negative items I have written about your chances for success and say, "this guy is full of...I know my book will sell," then you will succeed. If you let nothing deter you from your vision and desire, you will be published and you will sell books. You are no longer looking for 'the big break,' you are making your own big break. Any successful new author will tell you, even if they do not understand why, that total belief and commitment to your project is the key to success.

Allow me to coin a new term, "visualized marketing." See it, feel it, taste it, smell it, and touch it in your mind, and you will have a book worthy of all of the major bookstores.

BIO

Philip F. Harris was raised in Massachusetts. He attended The American University in Washington, D.C. where he received his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science. He also completed graduate work at Howard University and the University of Northern Colorado. He has worked at every level of government, participated in political campaigns, and has extensive experience in the private sector. He is a member of the Authors' Coalition and Authors Den. He is also a nationally syndicated writer for the *American Chronicle* (www.americanchronicle.com). With a lifelong interest in mysticism, he is also a member of several mystical, fraternal organizations. He and his wife currently reside in Maine.

Harris is co-author, along with Brian Doe, of *Waking God*, a controversial novel that explores humanity's past and future in a context of religious myth. It is based upon a sleeping Adam who is dreaming himself into existence. Story highlights: The Tarot Code; a god seed imbedded in DNA; angels as the myth builders; and, a fast-paced chase through Europe and Mexico.

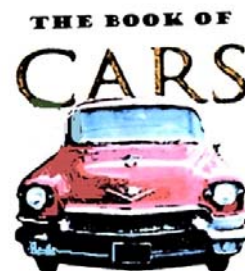
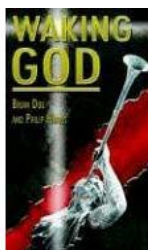
"A fast moving story with thriller aspects, interspersed by serious religious discussions...there is real thinking here. A provocative novel, part thriller, part religion. It should make you think."

Piers Anthony, *New York Times* Bestselling Science Fiction Author

www.wakinggod.com

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AUTOBIOGRAPHIES**



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WRITER WRY TOON: UPPER CASE



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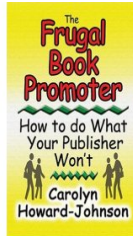
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VALENTINES FOR EDITORS



By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

author of *The Frugal Book Promoter: How Your Publisher Won't*



The Frugal Book Promoter's Famous Phrases That Make the Media Love You

Endear editors to you at Valentine's and forever more. You show you really care by saying:

- Do you have a moment now (and then take only a moment)?
- Do you have a list of topics or themes for the coming year?
- When is your deadline (and then have what they need to them early)?
- Would you like me to provide a head shot or book cover art?
- Do you prefer that I put my material in the mail or send it electronically?
- Do you accept attachments or prefer an e-mail copy and paste?
- May I send my media kit to help you out?
- Would you like a list of possible questions for your interview? (This only works for web or radio interviewers, not reporters for print media.)

Help editors out by suggesting:

- I know other experts you might talk to on this topic.
- If you need any other information for this story; maybe I can help.
- I am also available as an expert on (fill in the blank) if you should ever need me.

You will ruin good vibrations if you blurt:

- May I read your piece before it is published?
- Why didn't you include the information I offered on (fill in the blank)?
- Any comment or suggestion other than correcting an error that is pertinent to the piece is not appropriate.
- Oh, sorry, I know I promised but...
- I can't make it; I have to wash my hair.

Here are the happiest words of all:

1. The book launch is Tuesday. I'd love to have you come. (Your contact may not be able to make it but she is rarely asked!)
2. Thank you. These two little words are second best in the English language. They come right after the traditional Valentine's message, I love you.

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 Verna Harps Morrow Executive Author & G. Harris Hollingsworth
 Executive Editor

Book Marketing with **FRAN**

Book Marketing with Fran is an Internet radio show on Achieve Radio, www.achieveradio.com in which Francine Silverman interviews authors, publishers, publicists and literary agents about their book marketing strategies.

The show airs live on Tuesday, noon to 1 pm (MST), 11 am (PST), 1 pm (CST) and 2 pm (EST). During Daylight Savings Time, the show airs at 11 am in Arizona, which does not change its clock. The archives are available 10 minutes after the show ends.

To talk to Fran and her guest, you can call toll free 800-920-3717 (Phoenix area – 623-772-9379) To email them, click "In-Quick Message or Call-In" (In-Quick only works during live shows)

Fran's email is franalive@optonline.net and her website is www.bookpromotionnewsletter.com

My Mommy Wears Army Boots by Verna Harps-Morrow



This children's book helps military mothers explain to their children the necessity of military duty and sacrifice. Special treatment is given to the unfortunate separation of mother and child due to military service. Pride and patriotism are presented in

order to supplant anger, sadness and resentment, the negative emotions that may be felt by military children when their mothers leave to serve or go to war. The story, based on a ten-year separation experienced by the author with her children, culminates with a joyous reunion.

Verna Harps-Morrow
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creativeforcespublishing@yahoo.com



THE INSIDE STORY AS TOLD BY
SASSY BRIT AND HER GANG.

WRITING TIPS:

Excerpts from *The Naked Writer*
by G. Miki Hayden

We don't have to be perfect. We do have to try to understand our flaws and compensate for them. We don't even have to overcome the flaws, you see; all we have to do is make sure they're covered over in public. That's the secret, if not to brilliance, then at least to appearing brilliant. And if you think appearing brilliant isn't more important than being brilliant, ask yourself how long brilliance really lasts. Better yet, ask a very senior citizen.

The nice thing about the written word is that we can hide a lot of sins between the moment of committing something to paper and the moment of turning in the manuscript.

That versus who.

This is one that stabs me in the heart every time, which means I get stabbed in a vital organ an awful lot, because people confuse "that" and "who" so consistently that I sometimes feel I learned a different language in my youth than they did.

Wrong: I do, however, feel a strong attraction to companies who give generous vacation time.

Correct: I do, however, feel a strong attraction to companies that give generous vacation time.

Wrong: The boy that came with me already left.

Correct: The boy who came with me already left.

Companies are entities. They are not persons. People are represented by the pronoun "who" and companies are represented by the pronoun "that."

Ago versus before.

Poor choice: Charles remembered the last time he had seen his father, three years ago.

Better choice: Charles remembered the last time he had seen his father, three years before.

"Ago" (prior to the present time) puts the reader into relationship with a "now" that can't really be traced from the moment of reading the sentence. If we use, instead, the word "before" (at an earlier time), we shift the sense of time to that of the person or character being discussed.

This doesn't mean that "ago" is always wrong and "before" is always correct in writing. That's not the case. You must examine the point of view of the sentence and whether "prior to the present time" is meant or "at an earlier time."

Poor choice: "I went three years before," said Mrs. Reynolds.

Better choice: "I went three years ago," said Mrs. Reynolds.

Toward versus towards.

We use "toward" in writing American English. From that, I conclude we also use "backward" rather than "backwards," "downward" instead of "downwards," and so on.

Continued next column

WRITING TIPS Continued

Such as versus like.

In making comparisons, *like* is considered a preposition. Using *like*, you can construct a prepositional phrase. Like shouldn't be inserted in front of a clause.

Correct: He looks like Jack.

Incorrect: He looks like he's going hunting.

Correct: He looks as if he's going hunting.

Edgar winner G. Miki Hayden is author of the award winning *Writing the Mystery*.

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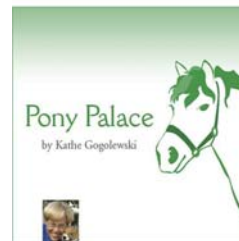


Instead, all Wilder was getting at the other end of the phone line was a whole lot of ringing. So when the woman at the bar in the tight black satin dress flashed some leg, what's a man supposed to do?

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