

# The Gabriel Writer

For The San Gabriel Writers' League  
www.SGWL.net

January 2011

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## Melody Lovett Returns By Robert Fears

Those who missed an opportunity to hear Melody Lovett because they were watching the Texas/Oklahoma game last January 7 instead of attending the SGWL meeting, get another chance. Mrs. Lovett returns to discuss what writers should know about filing income tax returns. Those of us who heard last year's presentation found Mrs. Lovett to be a gifted entertainer with her facial expressions, body and hand movements and in the way she expresses herself.

Mrs. Lovett, a certified public accountant (CPA), graduated from Baylor University with an accounting degree and has worked 19 years in public accounting. Sixteen of those years were spent as a sole proprietor working with non-profit organizations and self-employed individuals. Melody is married to Chris Lovett, an SGWL member, and they have one child - Sierra who is 15 years old who is also a member of SGWL.

You don't want to miss the January 6, 2011 SGWL meeting to learn about any changes in income tax requirements and their effects on self-employed writers.

## 10-Minute Fixes to 10 Common Plot Problems

by Elizabeth Sims from [www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com)

**Note from the editor:** this is a many part series over the next few months . . .

*Structural problems can sink a novel.*

*Let's look at 10 common plot problems and how to quickly fix them.*

Good fiction takes time. You cannot sit down at the keyboard and pound out the Great American Novel in one or two sessions. (Take it from me; I've tried.)

No, we must be patient with our art and our craft, we must read, we must study, we must write. And write, and write. Then we must think, cut, rewrite, polish and look again.

But there's such a thing as agonizing too much over your writing. Just as excessive reworking with charcoal and gum will ruin a drawing, too much scrutinizing and amending will sap the vitality of your original words. Most aspiring authors fall victim to this from time to time, causing needless pain, delay and, frankly, stunted results.

It's the hard parts that get you. When you come up against a knotty structural problem, take a breath and do what professionals do:

- Calmly evaluate the problem.
- Decide whether it really is a problem.
- Work out a solution.
- Implement it.
- Move on.
- Revisit the situation later.

Did you pick out the key phrase in that list? *It's a solution. Not the perfect solution, but a solution.* There is no single best way to solve any given writing quandary. What seasoned writers know—and what we can all take comfort in—is that there are lots of fine ways to solve them all. So when a problem arises and threatens to slow, divert or even stop your creative flow, you simply need to find one of those solutions so you can keep writing—it's as simple as that.

Not every problem can be solved in minutes, of course; situations like editing out a main character or completely reworking a plot cost plenty of time and effort. But surprisingly many structural problems can be dealt with more quickly than you might think

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## Minutes for December 2010 meeting

No minutes — just a lot of fun and games . . .



**Dues are due !**  
**Single \$25.00**  
**Family \$35.00**

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### Member(s): New and/or Changes

**New Members:**

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What a great year 2010 was! I hope each of you had a productive year and are looking ahead to 2011.

I want to recognize our outgoing board members for distinguished service. Dede Harper, Helen Nardecchia and Jamie Roton served as Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, respectively in 2010. Each one contributed her ideas, energy and enthusiasm to the organization and helped to make my first year as president a great one. When you see them, make a point to thank them for their service. We're lucky to have Jamie staying on the board handling the web site duties.

Please join me in welcoming Sylvia Dickey Smith and Kayla Marnach as our new Vice President and Treasurer. Sylvia's no stranger to either the SGWL or the VP position—she served in that capacity with Dave Ciambone as president. This is Kayla's first time on the board, but she's a whiz with numbers— I'm counting on her to find a way to make two dollar bills make little baby dollar bills.

And I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the remaining board that's staying on from last year— thanks to Robert Fears, Joan Hall, Carol Menchu and Dave Ciambone for their hard work and for making me look good (a special *thank you* to Carol for putting up with my presidential tardiness).

As I mentioned in the opening, 2010 was a great year full of wonderful events, activities and fundraisers. It is imperative that we build on the momentum we achieved and continue to push forward to continue to make the SGWL the finest organization it can be. I've long wondered why our membership numbers have stayed constant amid the staggering population growth in our area. As we went out into the community through events like the Red Poppy Festival and Boo Run I received the answer. It became clear that

many people didn't know that we're here. It's not surprising— we're a relatively small organization with limited resources, so like so many non profits it's hard to get the word out.

With that being said, I'd like to announce **100 IN 11**. What is **100 IN 11**, you ask? It's a vision. It's a challenge. It's a movement.

100 new members in 2011.

Yep, you read that right. Our organizational goal is to grow our organization by 100 members by the end of the year. Am I crazy? I think that has already been long established. Is it really possible? You bet it is— but we're going to need the help of everyone to make it happen.

Our slogan for 2011 is "Write what you know. Learn what you don't. Join the SGWL." We're developing flyers and new brochures to help this cause. We're working on marketing and publicity plans to get the word out. It's no secret that we don't have a very large advertising budget so we need to get the work out grassroots style.

I'm calling for each and every member to get involved in this effort. Invite a friend; post a flyer on the bulletin board of your community center, bookstore or library; walk in the Red Poppy Parade; post on Facebook; blog; in short, promote the league and its activities.

The board is going to do our best to create avenues to promote the SGWL, but we need your involvement for it to work. Will it be easy? No, but nothing worth doing is every easy. But imagine what the 2011 Christmas party will look like with 100 new members. Imagine what our organization could do for writers, for the community.

Don't be afraid. **100 IN 11**. Dream with me.

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## Tem Minute Fixes . . . continued

Let's look at 10 common plot problems you can tackle in a flash—and then find out how to do it.

### 1. I'M MISSING A CRUCIAL PIECE OF INFORMATION.

You're writing a key scene, and you realize that you really need to know something, but it's either impossible to find out or too costly in time or money to do so.

#### 10-MINUTE SOLUTION:

**If you can't find the exact data you need, get as close as you can and wing the rest.**

Recently I was on a conference panel with other authors discussing intensive research, and after everybody shared exciting (or humiliating) stories about our quests for authenticity, we all agreed on one thing: When the chips are down, make it up.

Let's say you need to present exact details about the innards of a nuclear bomb. Current atomic devices are top secret, but you can learn a lot online about outdated ones. Then, use common sense and your imagination to take it from there. What might be different today in a bomb? Well, you can bet the electronics are smarter and smaller. With the addition of fictional details, you can BS your way convincingly through the scene:

The guts of the bomb were now open to his scrutiny. As the detonation sequence began, Agent 008 focused on the microchips, which were shielded, for fail-safe reasons, behind a thin titanium screen about the size of a credit card. Microchips are delicate. If he could somehow disable one, even by something as small as a scratch—that might do it. Nothing to lose at this point. He snapped the clip off his Montblanc Meisterstück and, using it as a miniature crowbar, went to work.

You might be surprised at how much you can make up in a convincing way. Maybe you need a recipe for the perfect poison and have no idea where to begin. Invent a character who's a chemist, and have that character develop a poison that's as lethal as cyanide, as innocent-smelling as strawberries and as traceable as water.

Be bold!

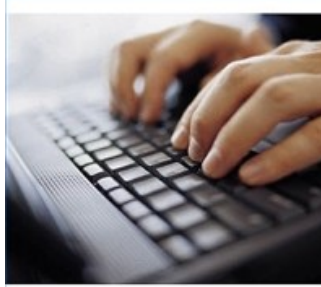
## Finding the Muse or “The Zen of Writing.” From Dave Ciabrone

You will hear writers sometime say, “I can’t write right now, the muse hasn’t been with me.” They wait for the muse or the inspiration to hit in order to write. You can wait forever. Writers have also said that once they start, sometimes they will get “into the groove” and things really come, it seems to flow. Why does this happen? Is there a muse? What is the groove and how does it work?

I have the answer. It is called self-hypnosis. There are those who don’t believe in hypnosis or think it is evil or the work of the Devil, but it isn’t. It is just an altered state of mind. It’s perfectly natural and normal. Have you ever been someplace or driving and heard a song in the background or on the radio that has a strong tie to something [usually pleasant] in your past? It somehow becomes louder, like magic. Your mind returns to that place in time and you can see the situation, visualize it, smell things from then and you will see the place. All of a sudden you realize you’re not there or something happens to “shake you out of it.” Have you ever been listening to a replay of an old time radio show or listened to a book on tape in the car and you are transported into the story and you can “see” the action in your mind like a movie. Later you wonder how you got to the place you were headed and don’t remember driving? You were hypnotized. You did it yourself.

When you start to write something you are interested in, your mind gets into a state where the physical aspect of writing [the typing] is “mechanical” and your conscience mind lulls itself into a pattern activity. This means it “doesn’t have to think” and “goes to sleep” or relaxes. Your subconscious mind is the creative part of your brain, and because your conscience mind is “asleep”, the subconscious takes over and the story and characters and plots get to come to the surface and start to flow. You visualize things and see the story before your eyes and the writing is nothing more than documenting what you are seeing. You are “in the groove” or “the Muse is working”. It is your subconscious mind at work. You’ve been thinking about a plot problem but couldn’t figure it out. While you were doing your normal daily activities and your conscience mind was working on life, your subconscious mind was hard at work on your plot problem. When you “got into the groove” the problem was solved. That’s when your subconscious mind got to surface

and tells you the answer. Time becomes irrelevant, you are in the world of your story and the plot and characters become alive. You are under self-hypnosis. People self-hypnotize themselves without knowing it all the time. It isn’t harmful or dangerous and is actually a means for your mind to accomplish some of the wondrous things it does.



You can get into this altered mind state by sitting down in a comfortable chair with your computer or word processor in a room or place that you like to write in, and relax. Take a few deep breaths and slowly let them out. Now, start writing. Start on your story and just write what comes to you. Before long you’re “in the groove”. You can go back and edit later, just create. Let your mind go and just write. The results will surprise you.



We wish for you throughout the coming year  
The joy of life—may all your dreams come true;  
And may you find good friends, good health, good cheer—  
The grace of God be yours the whole year through.  
And may your hands be occupied and sure,  
And may your feet be steady on your way,  
And may your eyes be sharp, your vision pure,  
And may your ears hear harmony, we pray.  
And may your voice be always sweetly tuned,  
And may your every word be eloquent,  
And may your mind be keen, your judgment sound—  
And may you find yourself at peace, content.  
And for ourselves this year, we wish that you  
Will hold us in your heart, as we hold you.  
**From Jeanell Bolton**

### Member websites

#### Anna M. Bell

Website: <http://www.annamaebell.com>  
Author Blog: <http://annbell.wordpress.com/>  
Educational Technology Blog: <http://annamaebell.wordpress.com/>

#### Ross Carnes

<http://webstarts.com/RHCarnesStoryTeller>

#### David Ciabrone

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

#### Mary Fenoglio

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

#### Joan Hall:

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

#### Sam Holland:

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

#### Melissa Leedom:

[www.forgive490.com](http://www.forgive490.com)

#### Linda Lipscomb:

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

#### Jason Minor:

[www.jason-minor.com](http://www.jason-minor.com)

#### Helen Nardecchia

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

#### Joy Nord:

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

#### Jamie Roton aka Lillian Grey blog

<http://lilliangurey.wordpress.com/>

#### Sylvia Dickey Smith:

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

#### SGWL website:

[www.sgwl.net](http://www.sgwl.net)

# A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other

author unknown (perhaps the Butler!)

The grandfather clock readies itself to strike the 12 of midnight at the turn of a year . . .



and gathered in a ghostly room, resplendent of every era, coffee, tea, and spirits in one hand; cigars, cigarettes, and pipes in the other, twenty people move around their host, **Edward Payson Powell**, pondering upon the momentous (?) occasion of their gathering: the birth of a New Year!

Hearing a side-remark about resolutions and New Year's Day, **Charles Lamb** says into the room: "No one ever regarded the First of January with indifference. It is that from which all date their time, and count upon what is left. It is the nativity of our common Adam. New Year's Day is every man's birthday."

"Why won't they let a year die without bringing in a new one on the instant, can't they use birth control on time? I want an interregnum!" **John Dos Passos** turns from the fireplace, where he has been contemplating the occasion. "The stupid years patter on with unrelenting feet, never stopping – rising to little monotonous peaks in our imaginations at festivals like New Year's and Easter and Christmas – But, goodness, why need they do it?"

Moving from the drinks trolley, **Hamilton Wright Mabie**, expounding, walks up to Dos Passos, "New Year's eve is like every other night; there is no pause in the march of the universe, no breathless moment of silence among created things that the passage of another twelve months may be noted; and yet no man has quite the same thoughts this evening that come with the coming of darkness on other nights."

"Time has no divisions to mark its passage." **Thomas Mann** breaks in with a peace offering. "There is never a thunder-storm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols."

**Ellen Goodman**, leans forward from the sofa on which she sits, puts her coffee cup on a side table, so she can include the whole room with the unfolding of her arms. "We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives ... not looking for flaws, but for potential."

"Now IS the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual." **Mark Twain** grins his impish grin at the

room, in general, as if knowing he is opening a can of worms.

Chuckling, **Oscar Wilde** looks up from his contemplation of the carpet's design, "Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account."

"I do think New Year's resolutions can't technically be expected to begin on New Year's Day, don't you?" interjects **Helen Fielding**, "Since, because it's an extension of New Year's Eve, smokers are already on a smoking roll and cannot be expected to stop abruptly on the stroke of midnight with so much nicotine in the system. Also dieting on New Year's Day isn't a good idea as you can't eat rationally but really need to be free to consume whatever is necessary, moment by moment, in order to ease your hangover. I think it would be much more sensible if resolutions began generally on January the second.

"But Can one still make resolutions when one is over forty?" puzzles **Andre Gide**, as he pours another Scotch. "I live according to twenty-year-old habits."

"Making resolutions is a cleansing ritual of self assessment and repentance that demands personal honesty and, ultimately reinforces humility. Breaking them is part of the cycle." **Eric Zorn** with the enthusiasm of youth and confidence, even among such learned company, bravely interjects his thoughts on the conversation.

Into the following silence, **Dave Beard**, with a loud yawn, stretches, "Many years ago I resolved never to bother with New Year's resolutions and I've stuck with it ever since."

"One resolution I have made, and try always to keep, is this: to rise above the little things." brags **John Burroughs**.

Looking up from a drawing of his next sculpture, **Henry Moore**, distractedly murmurs, "I think in terms of the day's resolutions, not the year's."

"I made no resolutions for the New Year. The habit of making plans, of criticizing, sanctioning, and molding my life, is too much of a daily event for me," contemplating which of the attending men would be the most interesting to get to know, **Anais Nin** looks around the room.

"No one ever regarded the First of January with indifference. It is that from which all date their time, and count upon what is left. It is the nativity of our common Adam." Pretentious as always, **Charles Lamb** tries for the last word and fails ...

"Never tell your resolution beforehand, or it's twice as onerous a duty." **John Selden** throws out, gallantly swinging his cape over his shoulders, heading for the door.

The others follow suit, gathering up coats, capes, stoles, hats, and canes.

First to the door, **Judith Crist** turns to one and all, "Happiness is too many things these days for anyone to wish it on anyone lightly. So let's just wish each other a bileless New Year and leave it at that."

Waving "Goodbye—safe home!" to his guests, **Edward Payson Powell** calls out "The Old Year has gone! Let the dead past bury its own dead. The New Year has taken possession of the clock of time. All hail the duties and possibilities of the coming twelve months!"

Human Trafficking professional Dottie Laster was narrating the radio chat room “Here Women Talk” in September of this year when she received an urgent message from one of the participants: “Do you know how to get someone out of a bad situation?”

That plea came from a nineteen year old woman named Lisbeth, (real name anonymous), whose experiences rivaled “Nightmare on Elm Street”. Her mother had forced her into occult sexual ceremonies since she was three, then transferred her legal guardianship at age seventeen to a man thirty years her senior. He sanitized communication over the internet to present himself as a licensed counselor and pastor who would treat Lisbeth for her problems. But instead of providing therapy, he moved her from Texas to Pennsylvania, forced her to dance in a strip club, star in pornographic movies, and submit to him sexually. Lisbeth fell into selfmutilation, depression, and hopelessness. Her situation was so dark she considered suicide.

Dottie and two private investigators, Vicki Siedow and Jennifer Keyseling, created a plan to rescue the woman, who agreed on one condition: her cat had to come along.

The victim took a walk in a local park, at a time agreed upon with the investigators, but found herself escorted by three traffickers. Suddenly, she bolted from them and ran into Keyseling’s waiting car. To avoid exiting past the criminals, Jennifer kicked her vehicle into four-wheel drive and plowed through the park. Then Lisbeth, carrying only a backpack, a laptop, and her kitten was whisked away to the airport.

The girl’s abuser attempted to return her back to his control. He told the police that the girl was mentally ill and relied upon him for medical attention, a manipulative response called “grooming the environment” by professionals. The officers stopped the plane the woman was on until they determined she was leaving of her own free will, and released her. Dottie and the investigators subsequently helped Lisbeth and her cat get the help they needed to start a new life. This was not an unusual experience for Dottie, President of Laster Global Consulting, and Executive Director of Million Kids. Her efforts to combat trafficking began in 1999 when she read about a ship of child laborers abandoned at sea. Angry and wanting to make a difference, Dottie returned to college and won her Masters in International Relations. In 2003 she began her career by leading task forces to combat slavery in San Antonio, Houston, and Orange County, California. After obtaining Department of Justice grants to assist victims and train law enforcement, she was one of a select few chosen by the Department to undergo preparation to train police officers about human trafficking.

Now, she heads a firm that educates organizations about the slave trade and how it impacts the workplace. Her clients include law enforcement, universities, attorneys, non-profits, faith-based and private organizations.

Dottie urges everyone who works in any capacity with trafficking victims to undergo professional training, because the crime has an uncanny ability to disguise itself and escape detection.

A police officer, a care giver, or a first responder will often be the victim’s best hope for a lifeline and the surest means of stopping a perpetrator. “First, officers need to

realize how huge a problem human trafficking is!” she says. Indeed, the facts are sobering:

- Human trafficking, the buying and selling of people into slavery, is second only to the drug trade and the fastest growing global criminal enterprise, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- Dr. Kevin Bales has conservatively estimated that twenty-seven million people live in slavery today, the State Department says that 70% of them are women and children. (Other sources place the numbers much higher.)
- A CIA briefing estimates as many as 50,000 workers are trafficked through the US annually.
- The Texas State Attorney Greg Abbott reports that one out of five people trafficked in the US pass through Texas.

Dottie encountered the last problem recently when she helped a woman named “Kiki” (real name anonymous). Traffickers lured her from Thailand to America with the promise of a lucrative job in a restaurant. After she arrived, however, she was forced into a life of prostitution, disease and mental trauma. Dottie recommended that she apply for a T-Visa, because it would enable her to get temporary residence and medical attention. Local police would not fill out the Declaration of Law Enforcement Officer for Victim of Trafficking in Persons, however, the first step needed to begin her application, even though her community had some of the toughest anti-slavery laws in Texas. The two turned next to the FBI, where Kiki did everything possible to cooperate: she traveled to Philadelphia at her own expense and met with agents three times to help them build their case. But the bureau deemed her “non-cooperative” and declined to support her application without explanation. She was later put in detention.

Dottie and other members of the Houston Coalition Against Human Trafficking testified before The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education to successfully urge it to make training for law enforcement mandatory by January, 2011.

She hopes that this education will emphasize the need to respond to victims’ requests to sign the Law Enforcement Officer Declaration for Victims of Trafficking in Persons – a simple 2 page form, even if an officer’s findings are negative.

“The police must follow through on this, otherwise the injured party gets cut off from needed support. Too many innocents get arrested, like Kiki, or sent back to their countries where their tormentors can retaliate against them,” she says.

“Even though we were one of the first two states to pass laws against human trafficking, state government must develop a policy that goes beyond law enforcement solutions. The most effective victim identification is done at the local level through small organizations and individuals that victims are more likely to confide in.”

Continued on next page



Frederick Coward, a former FBI agent and associate of Dottie believes that the Trafficking Victims Prevention Reauthorization Act (TVPPRA) of 2003 gives victim's greater leverage over their abusers because it identifies trafficking as a predicate crime under Federal R.I.C.O. laws. This enables prosecutors to seize criminal property and victims to sue their abusers for triple compensatory damages. Even with these powers, too many victims go undetected. Dottie gave an example:

"A couple from an Austin-area church told me that their daughter worked in a Hawaiian strip club, where she got men to buy her expensive drinks. The club owner allowed them to paw and fondle her. Now the twenty-three year old is having kidney failure from the alcohol she consumed. When her parents asked her to run away, she said she couldn't, her employer would hunt her down and kill her.

Dottie says that this is an example of why today's slavery is different from pre-Civil War days, when masters provided basic food and shelter. "Modern slavers threaten their girls with violence to force them to have sex with ten to twelve customers a day. The pimp does not provide decent living conditions or medical attention. When the girls get sick, he

dumps them. But it is not just prostitution; this kind of slavery takes place in restaurants, farms, even dentist's offices. There's always a huge supply of new victims to replace them with."

But Dottie continues the fight for abolition. One of her experiences furnishes peace officers with an example of what to look for in a potential violation of the TVPPRA.

"I am keeping track of a local situation that has all the signs of human trafficking," she says. "A van drives twelve Asian people the same time each day from a house to work in a nearby restaurant, then drives them back after they work thirteen to sixteen hours. They never leave that house except to go to work. If you look inside the restaurant, there's a camera every ten to twelve feet, even though it's an all-you-can-eat buffet. Would you believe it? The house they live in was previously owned by the people whose daughter worked in the Hawaiian strip club! What are the odds of that happening?"

Dottie and Fred consider police officers to be Texas' best weapon in the war on slavery, and would like to serve as their resource.

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## National Writing Project Launches Website to Explore Digital Writing

Date: November 16, 2010 . . .

**Summary:** NWP's Digital Is website is a collection of ideas, reflections, and stories about what it means to teach writing in our digital, interconnected world.

*Digital* is increasingly how we write, share, collaborate, publish, and connect with others today and into the future. What does that mean for the teaching of writing?

The NWP Digital Is website is a forum for exploring that question.

The website, which is part of NWP's Digital Is program, funded in part by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, is a collection of resources, reflections, and stories about what it means to teach writing in our digital, interconnected world.

It is also an emerging knowledge base curated by its growing community of contributors, readers, and discussants exploring three key areas:

"The site includes many rich examples of using new media for teaching writing, including reflections from teachers about the challenges and opportunities that arise when using these new tools in the classroom," according to the MacArthur Foundation's blog *Spotlight On Digital Media and Learning*.

### What will you find at Digital Is?

**Resources:** Digital Is contains a large and growing body of resources that have been added by its community of educators, kindergarten through university, inside and outside of school. Resources may document and share ideas for work in classrooms, share student work, point to useful external websites and organizations, or raise provocative questions.

**Collections:** Collections within the Digital Is website are sets of resources, curated by members of the NWP teacher network, that explore one of the three key areas of Digital Is.

For example, *What's New*, or *What's Good: On Writing*

*Connectively*, curated by Bud Hunt, teacher-consultant at the Colorado State University Writing Project, explores the question, "How can we use the connections provided by digital media to help students learn about civic—and civil—dialogue?"

Another collection, *Participatory Media*, curated by Dave Boardman, technology liaison with the University of Maine Writing Project, looks at how we are no longer pure consumers of media, but producers, sharers, and collaborators.

**News:** News items and forum updates are posted by the administrators of the Digital Is website to keep up on general Digital Is-related events.

**Discussions:** You are welcome to join the Digital Is community to participate in its many discussions. Members can start or join discussions connected to Collections, Resources, and News.

### How can you participate?

We welcome you to find and read collections and resources here or join the community to discuss and participate. Please see *Using this Site and Guidelines for Participation*.

We also welcome your comments and questions about the NWP Digital Is website and project. For more information, please email [nwpdigitalis@nwp.org](mailto:nwpdigitalis@nwp.org)



## Chapter VII: In which the hero makes a call.



Carl McGavin sips his vodka. He stopped bothering with the tonic an hour ago. It's not often you die and are reborn in a single day, even Jesus took three. He deserves a little liquid numbing. Carl sets his glass on the table next to his gun, a

Walther PPK, and the business card he took from Matt Richards's wallet. On the front is a dancing girl silhouetted in yellow. Carl flips it over to read the Chicago phone number scribbled on the back. Nights like this are why he quit the P.I. gig to be a writer. Hiding out in a rural hotel, wanted for double homicide, on the run with a nurse he kidnapped and her police officer brother, hunted all the while by people who want him dead for reasons he can only guess. It's no way to live. Carl should be safe in his house, writing his novel. Unfortunately, both went up in flames. Still, if he has to start over, the death and resurrection of his protagonist makes a great beginning.

*"Pop da trunk, Vince. Don't make this hard!" Officer Charlie Day was a short stump of a man with day old whiskers and bad breath. Vince Burke saw the worry on his sister's face as she watched from the passenger seat and considered coming clean. What choice did he have?*

*Fine Charlie, but don't fly off the handle." Vince popped the trunk of his old green Dodge, "I can explain all of this." What they saw left them both stunned. The battered body of Carl McGavin was splayed out before them. His face had been put through a meat grinder, his arm in a cast, and an elastic bungee cord wrapped tight around his throat. He looked as dead as they come.*

*Jesus, Vince! You stupid son of a..."*

*He..." Vince gaped at Carl's body and thought fast. "He killed my partner, Charlie. He was a stinking cop killer. I ain't the first to take one of them off the streets. You know what that's like, right?" He gave Charlie a conspirator's nod but officer Day stared daggers into Vince.*

*Hey Charlie!" Officer Day's partner yelled from the second floor railing outside the room where Carl had been lying low. "Someone was here, but they're gone now."*

*Alright, Mac." Officer Day quickly slammed shut the trunk of the Dodge so his partner wouldn't see the body. "Take another look around, I'll be right up." Day turns back to Vince and whispers, "Damn it, Vince. What was you thinkin?"*

*"I guess I wasn't."*

*Damn right, you wasn't." Officer Day looked around for any potential witnesses. "You get this car outta Austin now. Take a vacation, go to Fredericksburg; lots ah open areas out there to lose ah body. You hearin me?"*

*Loud and clear."*

*We already lost a good man when this sum' bitch killed Matt. I ain't losin another cop cause you did somthin stupid!"*

*I owe ya, Charlie." Vince said. Day shook his head and...*

A loud knock at the door rouses Carl from his musings.

"It's Vincent, Carl, open up." Carl finishes his drink and pours another. It's a good start for his new book. He'll change the names, of course, and it needs a lot of "play," as he calls it, but not bad. He staggers to the hotel door and swings it open. The stink of liquor makes Vincent wince. "You shouldn't be drinking."

"What do you want?" Carl takes another sip and falls back into his chair.

"Margo picked up some food. Probably better for you than that drink." Vincent tosses a fast food bag on the table.

"I disagree." Carl swirls his ice and takes another sip. "Why'd that cop...Day...why do you think he let us go?"

"I don't know." Vincent sighs, "Charlie lost a partner a couple years back. Maybe he was sympathetic. Or maybe he was just looking out for one of his own. He would choke if he knew I was really helping a cop killer." Vincent sneers. "What made you think of playing dead?"

"Best I could come up with. Why *are* you helping a cop killer?" Carl slurs. "And don't give me that crap about recognizing Matt's gun." He motions to the Walther PPK. "Matt was a lot of things but stupid he wasn't. He wouldn't plant a gun that could be traced back to him." Carl finishes off the glass and pours another.

Vincent is quiet for a moment. "Don't tell Margo." He says finally. Carl nods for him to continue. "Matt's been... different since his wife left. But things got bad a couple of months ago. He busted a prostitute. She resisted arrest. He snapped and beat the hell out of her...then he raped her. I wasn't there, but I knew, everyone did. Nobody in the department would do anything so I...I called Internal Affairs. Matt found out and threatened Margo if I didn't stop the investigation." Vincent pauses. "I said no. That's why I know Matt planned to kill Margo and frame you. If you're right, and he was on someone's payroll, then they might want Margo out of the way too. No loose ends. She's the only family I have left and I won't give anyone a chance to hurt her again." Vincent visibly shakes with anger.

"What Matt did, it wasn't your fault."

"Eat your food, stop drinking, and go to sleep. We leave in the morning." Vincent slams the door on the way out.

Carl finishes his drink and looks at the business card again. Matt had been a friend once, how could he be a rapist? Was someone using that to blackmail him? Maybe the same "someone" who has Katarina and her daughter...his daughter. He grabs the phone and dials the Chicago number.

"Alright, who are you?" Carl says as the phone rings.

"Who is there?" A thick Russian accent answers. Carl immediately thinks of Igor Sereda, Katarina's husband and the man who once shot him, but the voice isn't right.

"It's Matt...Richards." Carl bluffs but his words slur.

"Richards is dead. Who is this?"

"Carl McGavin, that's who I am!" Carl stammers.

Continued on the next page . . .

## Chapter Play continued

"McGavin dead too." The voice is leery.

"Wrong Ivan! You missed. I'm coming for Katarina and my daughter. You tell...you tell Igor I know what he did. I know..."

"This call was mistake, Mr. McGavin! You will be dead by morning. We..." The man is interrupted by a commotion then a woman's voice comes through the receiver.

"Don't come Carl!" He recognizes the voice. It's Saffron James, the girl he took into his care so long ago. "Please,

just run now before..." There is a smack and Saffron shrieks.

"Saffy! Damn it! Don't you touch her, I'll kill you!" The line goes dead. Carl tries to stand, to rush out the door, and get to Chicago as fast as he can, but the room spins and Carl McGavin collapses.

He awakes the next morning to gunfire.

To be continued...

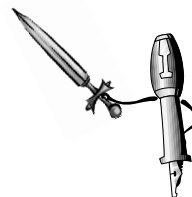
Catch up on the story at: <http://www.jason-minor.com/journal>

## Penn and the Mighty Sword By Sam Holland

*Penn is busy saving the World and will return post-hastily!*

*Next: The Enemy Revealed!*

Catch up on what you missed at [smh4@wordpress.com](mailto:smh4@wordpress.com)/penn.



## 3 Steps to Achieving Your New Year's Writing Resolutions By Leanne Johnston

Achieving your goals is easier said than done.

Achieving your goals has more to do with how you set them rather than whether you achieve them. When setting your goals make sure they are achievable (*possible to do*) and quantifiable (*able to be measured*).

To help you I have listed my 2009 writing goals below.

1. Write more and regularly. [**Not Achieved**].
2. Submit at least six articles to "somewhere" this year. [**Achieved**].
3. Increase daily word count for writing (start at 200 words per day). [**Achieved**].

Looking back over last years goals, it is glaringly obvious why I didn't achieve number one and number two definitely needs improvement. At least number three has a quantifiable measurement for success.

### Let's look at Why:

1. Write more and regularly. What is wrong with this goal?

It is simply not measurable or quantifiable, and therefore not achievable because even if you do write every day and more regularly you have not set parameters to prove how well you have done.

When you set yourself a writing goal you must make sure you also set the parameters or limitations of that goal and always quantify your success.

It would be better to have written the goal as:

Write 200 words every day, except Sundays. (Even writers need a day off!)

By setting the 200 word limit you can track your progress

on a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis. It is very simple to see if you met your goal because the goal is set in concrete. There's no weaseling your way out of this goal - you either achieve it, or you don't.

### Now, let's look at the second goal:

2. Submit at least six articles to "somewhere" this year. [**Achieved**]. What is wrong with this goal?

There is no **WHO, WHERE or WHEN** for the articles to be submitted. This makes the goal very ambiguous and the writer could easily loose focus. Luckily I knew I wanted to submit to, Ezine Articles, but it could have been disastrous to leave this goal so open. Don't say at least this or that amount, quantify the amount by committing to a definite number and stick to it.

It would be better to have written the goal as:

Submit six articles to EzineArticles, by December 2009.

And finally, the last goal, goal number three, wasn't too bad but again, keep your goal simple and measurable.

TIP! Break your goals down into smaller parts. It is much easier to achieve your goals if you see them as smaller bite-sized pieces rather than one great chunk. If you want to become the number one Writer on Ezine Articles, you have to work your way through many smaller goals before you can finally achieve that position.

— Leanne Johnston is a freelance writer who has been published in Australia & America. Last year she made a guest appearance on Vision Australia radio and read her latest work of fiction, Zinaida Alone. Leanne writes articles and edits others work. Ghost writing is also secretly mentioned on her portfolio, but "shhhh! Don't tell anyone."



## Who "said" ?

"Youth is when you're allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve. Middle age is when you're forced to. An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.

## Ask the Book Doctor: The article That Keeps on Going—and Going

Dear Doc

What are your thoughts on reselling articles? Could I resell an article published in *The Sun* to, perhaps, a regional publication like *Austin Family*, or to other community newspapers? Could it be resold without changing a word, or would I need to totally rewrite the piece?

Energizer Writer Keeps Going—and Going

Dear Energizer,

Most newspapers purchase one time rights (inquire to be sure), which means you are at liberty to sell reprints. It's up to the next publication whether or not they take reprints. If they do, you can use it verbatim, saying "first published in \_\_\_\_." More often than not, they seem to feel this lends weight to your article since more than one pub-



lisher liked it. I've done this several times. For example, a book I have coming up uses an article from a magazine that did require me to get their permission to reprint. They specified that I state, "This article was first published in (name of magazine & date of publication), and is reprinted with the publisher's permission."

However, chances are you'll need to change the title and alter the slant to be just right for a different publication. If it's very different, you don't need to get permission, though it's a good idea to inform both publishers. This makes both of them happy and lends credibility to you as a professional. Articles that are spin-offs from a book you wrote are great promo for the book.

Even a big magazine like *Texas Highways* was happy to cite my book, *Grand Old Texas Theaters...* and its publisher, which resulted in more book sales.

## Spelling Word Stories from Luis Menchu

I like to combine my daughter's spelling words into instant stories as I quiz her. It is made more fun, since the words must be used in the order listed in her book. Does this help with her spelling? I'm not sure but it makes listing words more fun. Here are the words for this week.



The **League** of Heroes is led by **Sergeant** Egglatch from the team's HQ **yacht**. Egglatch has **doubt** that the **fatigue** and **debt** weighing the team down is due to the ongoing **Blood** Wars. He also has **vague** recollections of an **anxious foreign** agent's **bargain** advice that may have led the League's troubles.

He would like to **condemn** the recent **in-trigue** on Soxoff, the **villain** spotted last week eating **cantaloupe** during a sewage **flood** at a Paris train **depot**. Soxoff may appear to be a **cordial** individual, especially while wearing a **subtle disguise**, but don't be fooled. This villain, according to the Heroes News **Bureau**, is **reminiscent** of every bad **adjective**. He is known for his long-winded and hot-tempered **mono-logue**. He seems just the type to have set the **environment** for Egglatch's angst.



## Special Interest Groups

**Story Spinners** critique group is now closed to membership. When a spot becomes available, we will again have information in *The Gabriel Writer*.

**The Williamson County Coroners** is a mystery/suspense group and participants must have novels in progress. The meetings are held at the 10:30 a.m. at the Red Poppy Café in the George-town Library. **And there is room for one more !!**

### Last Writes Critique Group—Full

Meets (usually) at 7 PM, 2nd & 4th Wed. each month, at Oaks at Wildwood Clubhouse. Novels in progress, varied genres. Membership currently full. Contact: JmuHall@aol.com

### Novel Crafters is Full right now, but welcomes a Waiting List

Meets every other Thursday on the second floor of the Georgetown Library in a private room. Contact is Mary Stafford at marylynn@mstafford.net

**Quixotic Quills** critique group represents varied interests. Our group writes historical novels, short stories and memoirs. Meetings are usually on the second and fourth Thursday of each month unless we reschedule because of holidays. We meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Monument Café. Contact is Sharon Lyle, 512-639-1162, iwritecozies@gmail.com. Currently, we are closed to new members.

### Bard Masters Critique Group

We meet at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays at the Georgetown library. We have 6 members and we feel that 6 manuscripts is all that we can handle and do the process justice. Until further notice Ross Carnes is the contact: graphicsrex@hotmail.com

### If you are interested in joining a critique

**group**, contact Joan Upton Hall (jmuhall@aol.com) or Sylvia Dickey Smith (sds@suddenlink.com)

## Who "said" Answer ... Bill Vaughn ...

**William E. ("Bill") Vaughn** (October 8, 1915 – February 25, 1977) was an American columnist and author. Born in Saint Louis, Missouri, he wrote a syndicated column for the *Kansas City Star* from 1946 until his death in 1977. He was published in *Reader's Digest* and *Better Homes and Gardens*

under the pseudonym Burton Hillis.<sup>[1]</sup> He attended Washington University in St. Louis.

His folksy aphorisms (published in his "Starbeams" feature) are often collected in books and on Internet sites. Bill Vaughn died at age 61 of lung cancer.

Having been a fan of Frank Lloyd Wright (you know, the architect who designed and built Falling Water among hundreds of other marvelously marvelous buildings) for as long as I can remember but never having delved into his personal life—'cuz that was his personal business, I surprised myself by choosing to read *Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan. This is the fictional story of Frank and Mamah Cheney (pronounced Maymah) and their time together.



and her two children as well as several other members of their building crew were murdered. Instead, Horan relied on newspaper articles, memoirs from people who knew them, and various other authorized biographies of FLW, and anything else factual she could find.

Always vilified, even today, for their "affair" – each of them leaving their families for the other, this story allows one to see behind the headlines. To come to understand why they did what they did. And, I must say, to marvel at the courage to do what they did in the time period in which they lived. Remarkable people—Frank and Mamah. It took/takes courage to 'dare' to BE.

Wanting to put as much fact into her story as she could, author Horan went to great lengths to find any little tidbit she could relating to this period in the lives of these two people. Any letters each of them might have kept were lost, when their home, the original Taliesin burned and Mamah

And self or someone else's 'daring to be' becomes then fodder for a writer who runs with it and imagination to create what we love to read.

A large, smiling yellow emoji with blue eyes and a wide grin. Several green dollar bills are falling around it, some to the left and some to the right.

**Dues are due !**  
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Columns are 3 and 1/4 inches wide.  
If you have illustration, send it and I will try to use it

Send to SGWL Submission  
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## Demystifying Writers' Demons One at a Time by Joan Upton Hall

Do demons bedevil your writing? Similar, confusing words? Grammar, punctuation, or capitalization rules? "The Demystifier" will clear up the mystery (primary reference unless otherwise noted: Garner, Bryan A. *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press). Address questions and comments to freelance editor, **Joan Upton Hall, PO Box 179, Hutto, TX 78634**, or email: [jmuHall@aol.com](mailto:jmuHall@aol.com). More problems like the one above are demystified in the booklet, *50 Writers' Tips*. Find a few of them at "books, etc." on website: [www.JoanUptonHall.com](http://www.JoanUptonHall.com).

Demystifying Writers' Demons©

Affect/ effect

The "always...except" rules with these two words are enough to give you a headache. I hope the following explanation clears up the confusion:

(pronounced alike)

o Affect (verb) to influence or have an effect on

o Effect (noun) meaning: "a result or a consequence."

Exception: (verb) meaning: "to bring about; to produce" especially when the word "change" is its direct object.

EXAMPLES: "Global warming affects weather patterns."

"Greenhouse gasses have an effect on weather patterns."

"Global warming effects changes in weather patterns."

"Reading well-written books affects a learner's writing positively."

"Reading well-written books has a positive effect on a learner's



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## The Gabriel Writer



181 Young Ranch Road  
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the  
January 6  
SGWL meeting  
is at the  
Georgetown Public Library  
N Rock St  
between  
7th and 8th  
gather at 6:30  
meeting  
at 7:00 p.m.

*The Write place for the writer in you!*

**Happy New Year Y'all**