

The Gabriel Writer

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

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The Art of "Oral Presentation" with Martin Shelton

As authors, sooner or later, we'll be required to speak to audiences to promote our book and ourselves. It's imperative that if our oral presentations are to be successful, we must project professionalism, speak clearly and with coherence, and leave the audience wanting more.

I earned the Master of Arts degree from University of Southern California in Cinema—and focused on the psychology of film as a communication tool.

Served 40 years in the U. S. Navy, as a Ready Reservist off and on active duty. I served as a combat motion-picture photographer with the First Marine Division in Korea. Later, I continued my career as an Intelligence Officer. I retired with the rank of Captain.

In between my active duty tours, I worked in the information-film industry: documentary, industrial, scientific, training, and public relations type films. Over the 40 years I was in this profession I garnered over forty awards in national and international film festivals and competitions.

I was elected and served as President of the Information Film Producers of America.

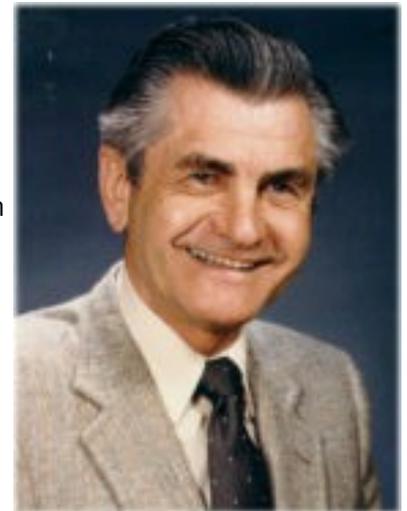
My peers elected me a Fellow of the Information Film Producers of America, and of the Society of the Society for Technical Communications.

Fifty-five of my photographs of Nevada Ghost Towns and Mining Camps were exhibited in the Nevada State Library, Carson City.

Over the years, I've published extensively on my film profession: peer-reviewed papers, trade-magazine articles, book reviews, columns, etc.

My book, *Communicating Ideas with Film, Video, and Multimedia* won the **Best of Show Award** in the Society for Technical Communication, Southern California *Spotlight Award Publishing Competition*.

Currently, I'm trying to snag an agent to represent my action/adventure novel, *St. Catherine's Crown*. I'm working on another novel and writing short stories, mostly the flash-fiction type.



Editor's note: Read Marty's latest contribution to *TGW* on page 4



May 2012 Minutes

The **May 3, 2012** Meeting of the San Gabriel Writers' League was called to order by **Vice-President Dave Ciabrone** at 7:00 p.m.

Dave welcomed attendees and visitors Bobby Post, May Aiello, Dale Vargo, and Ann Drake.

Minutes for the April 1, 2012 meeting were accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report was postponed.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS and VISITORS

OLD BUSINESS:

No old business

NEW BUSINESS:

Upcoming Events: **Ann Bell** will be at the Book Spot on Saturday, May 19, for a talk and signing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SUCCESSES:

Lester Morris is just back from Las Vegas and the Book Pitch-

fest. He got a literary publicist for *The Violets Are Mine* and a video deal.

Joy Nord will have a signing at the Williamson County Museum on June 1.

Joan Hall received the Sage Award for mentoring from Sisters in Crime. She is one of four recipients of that award.

Ann Bell reminded us The Hill Country Book Store is having a moving sale with 40% off stock.

Program:

The scheduled speaker, Ann Seamon, cancelled.

Joan Hall and **Dave Ciabrone** came to the rescue with a very informative talk on critique groups, one of the topics requested by several people in the recent member survey.

Dave Ciabrone adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Kilgore, Secretary

Upcoming Meetings

July	Louis Fairchild on writing oral histories
August	Linda Lipscomb on writing children's books
September	Workshop
October	Mike Kearby on westerns for young adults
November	To be decided
December	Party

News

Lester Morris has a new email address: lester_morris@att.net

Jeanell Bolton says: "Ring the bells and sound the trumpets! Jeanell has a literary agent—Liza Dawson out of New York! This is the big step forward."



The President's Perspective—Research by D.J.Heinrich

In Greek mythology, Icarus was the son of the master craftsman Daedalus. Icarus attempted to escape Crete using wings that his father had constructed from feathers glued in place with wax. But he ignored his father's warnings not to fly too close to the sun or too close to the sea. The sun's heat melted the wax, causing him to plummet to his death. Another account holds that Icarus flew too low over the water where the feathers became so wet from the ocean spray that he was no longer able to fly due to the additional weight.

During World War I, the Dutch aircraft manufacturer Anthony Fokker was credited with developing what was at the time the "holy grail" of aerial combat, the synchronization device which enabled pilots to fire their machine guns through the spinning aircraft propeller. He also developed the Fokker *Ein-decker* (1916), the Fokker *Trimotor* (1924), and the Fokker *DRI Triplane* (1917), made famous by WWI's greatest ace, Manfred von Richthofen (The Red Baron).

Unfortunately, the new Fokker triplanes began having problems shortly after entering service at the German Front. On October 30th, 1917, *Staffelführer* (Squadron Commander) Heinrich Gontermann of *Jasta 15* (Fighter Squadron 15), flying DRI 115/17, was injured and died later that day following aircraft wing and aileron problems. An observer, *Leutnant* (Second Lieutenant) Arntzen, noted that the outer ends of the upper wing were "flapping"—the aerodynamic phenomenon of *flutter* was neither recognized nor understood at the time—as the aircraft was intentionally slipped to the left, then the left aileron (control surface for roll commands) separated, accompanied by the wing ribs, right aileron, wingtips, and fabric completely detaching in the air.

That same day, Manfred and his brother, Lothar, flying their triplanes, led a flight of *Jasta 11* aircraft on an early morning patrol. First Lothar and then Manfred experienced engine failure and were forced to land. After covering his brother's glide down from enemy fire, Manfred lost his engine and crash-landed, catching the left wheel in a rut. He was able to climb out unharmed, but to his amazement, the triplane was totally destroyed, literally collapsing around him. The next day, *Leutnant* Gunther Pastor of *Jasta 11* was killed in his triplane DRI 114/17 when he experienced wing problems similar to *Leutnant* Gontermann's.

On November 2nd, all Fokker triplanes were grounded for modifications. Subsequent tests demonstrated that the aileron detachment was caused by weak attachment points collapsing under the loading imposed by steep side-slips or bank angles. They also found evidence that **glue points** in the topmost of the three wings were weakened by a build-up of **condensation** within the structure.

Is it just me, or does this all sound familiar? Sure, the above comparison is not a fair one. The first story is not even factual. Still, my point is that we should strive to be more precise with our research, development, and "flight within the operational envelope"—which obviously wasn't the case in Germany's rush to get the virtually unproven triplanes to the Front in 1917!

Unfortunately, I missed—or more precisely, *will miss*, since I am writing this in advance—Ann Seaman's no-doubt excellent presentation at the May SGWL Meeting entitled *Research: More is More*. I will be on a trip delivering a series of talks of my own. However, her interesting topic got my own cognitive wheels turning, especially since my background was in the tech-

nical domain of aviation and I typically lean towards writing non-fiction. So I'll jot down just a few thoughts.

First of all, *formal* research is a systematic process used to collect and analyze *information*—i.e., gather and interpret *data*—to gain knowledge and enhance the understanding of the topic of interest, and then to share it with the larger scientific community. For our purposes, however, the word "research" covers a broad spectrum of meanings in the context of self-enlightenment, information gathering, or transferal of information. Simple enough, right? As authors, this isn't rocket science! Well, there's a problem! How do we know when we have all the information we need for our particular project?

Ann's presentation title includes the phrase, "more is more!" I agree with her argument, especially using a non-fiction perspective. When I was working on my doctoral dissertation, the only way to determine if "enough is enough" was to do sufficient *formal* or *academic* research until the same authors, experts, and scientists began to turn up time and time again—in other words, to "exhaust the literature." In research for writing manuscripts, we refer to this as becoming a subject matter expert (SME). This is important, especially if we wish to send our book proposals to prospective publishers. Essentially, we must do an in-depth analysis of what's already been published so that we can document effectively how our manuscripts are unique *and* marketable.

As far as fiction-writing research is concerned, the sky is cloudier. If we wish to write a science fiction novel, we might be limited only by the depth of our imagination and creativity—in other words, anything goes! In such cases, perhaps research is not so critical. However, many readers not only want to be entertained but also to learn. Further, if we wish to establish credibility with our readers, especially if we are not already on the best-seller list, then we most likely want to conduct sufficient discovery to supplement our narrative—even though we may wish to make such research indiscernible to our readers. Additionally, even if our topic is bizarre science fiction, we may need to seek out the literature, journals, and internet to help us generate ideas for story content and characters. Regardless, we should obviously continue our research until we have all the elements for our narrative, including any needed non-fictional background.

Another option is to simply play "Bubba golf!" Heck, "Bubba" Watson just won the PGA Master's Golf Tournament didn't he, all without ever having a formal golf lesson in his entire life! I mention this only to remind you not to let yourself get into a position that you are constantly telling yourself that you need more and more research before you can finally sit down at your computer to write your book. Do your homework and then get to work being creative and following your instincts! Take that unlikely shot that sends the ball off of the pine straw, causes it to swerve through some 40 yards of hook—slice if you're right-handed—climb once it leaves the tree canopy, and, traveling some 164 yards, ultimately land next to the pin on the green! Draw from your natural ability and skill set, but apply your experience and intuitive capacity! Then, just "grip it and rip it!" Now that's fun!

But don't take my word for any of this. Check it out for yourself! Besides, I'm one of those rare individuals convinced that both Jimmy Hoffa and Elvis are still alive! Which reminds me, maybe I'll do a little more research on that ...

My pal Jesse survived that cat attack—but, just barely. Mind you, this cat was not an ordinary household pussy cat, but a 220-pound cougar—panther, puma, mountain lion—powerful, cunning, and aggressive. With a full-speed bound that cat hit Jesse solidly—knocking him catawampus off the trail and into the gulch, some 20 feet below. His camera and tripod sailed into the forest.

Gingerly, I approached with my Colt 45 drawn. The cougar with its blood-stained mouth stared at me—challenging me to come closer. I froze. Get Jesse was the goal, not kill the cougar. I fired three rounds into the air. The cougar was not fazed by my shots—continued his stare even more intently, I imagined. If it charged, the next shots were for the cougar. For an eternity, it seemed, we stared at each other in the classic “Mexican standoff.” In a minute or so the cougar vanished into the forest. And, that’s the way it happened.

Here’s the background: last October we were near the summit of the Toiyabe Range in Nye County. Photographing Ophir—one of the most richly-preserved ghost towns in Nevada. As we are wont, we were on our annual ghost-town photographic tour. Great fun. Lots of fabulous ruins to photograph. The sky was crystal clear—at this altitude it’s almost purple. Leaves were gold, scarlet, and topaz. Stringy altocumulus clouds broke up the solid purple and told us that snow was approaching.

Jesse was hurt seriously—gashes on his head, neck, and flesh hanging from his shoulder. Blood everywhere. I wrapped his wounds with gauze from our First Aid kit—best I could. With lots of effort I got him into our truck and started the drive down the mountain—a 50-minute, bouncing four-wheel drive, and across two fast-running creeks. Jesse was awake. Not saying much. Obviously in serious pain.

A couple of hours later we got to Austin via Highway # 50 (the loneliest highway in America, boast Nevadans). Damn! This burg has three casinos, two service stations, three bordellos, but no doctor, no medical center, and no EMS folks. Speed limit be damned. In another hour Jesse was in the Emergency Room at the Fallon Hospital. Fifty stitches later, and with a tetanus shot, antibiotic shot, and a hearty dose of morphine, Jesse was dreaming of better days in his hospital room.

I talked with the sheriff, and the game warden. They wanted to go after that cat and capture or kill it. I argued, no. The puma was defending his territory. The natural thing to do. We were the trespassers. We should have been more watchful.

After three days Jesse and I were headed home. He’ll need several weeks of rest and months of therapy. Scared something awful. But he’ll be OK.

I didn’t want to waste a day of this gorgeous autumn. Accordingly, a couple of weeks later I was ghost-towning again. With me was Rick—a long-time pal from my USC Cinema days. We were photographing the ruins at Hamilton in White Pine

County. An outstanding ghost town, with dozens of structures scattered over a square mile or so. In the late 1880s Hamilton was the second largest town in Nevada—second only to Reno. Hamilton died quickly after the silver lode played out in the early 1900s.

I was setting up to photograph the one remaining brick wall of the Masonic Hall. Rick was about a half-mile down the trail photographing the fallen-down Opera House. I was framing the scene when it occurred to me that I was hearing a faint, doleful cry. Spotting nothing this side of the wall, I walked around.

Immediately I spotted the source. A puma kit was trapped in the rubble—a timber across its front leg. Probably chasing a rabbit or an opossum. In her zeal she must have hit a cross timber knocking it loose. Now, I may be dumb but I’m not stupid. I left that scene as fast as possible. Climbed into our truck and shut the windows. Mama puma must be close by and en route post haste to rescue her kit. I recalled all too clearly what happened to Jesse a few weeks ago. I wanted no part of the upcoming scenario. That mama puma really is going to be in a tizzy trying to free her kit. And, she’ll be irascible at me for messing around.

Five minutes later, no mama puma. Ten minutes later— same. Twenty minutes late—ditto. Only two possibilities: she is hurt or she is having a tryst across the mountain. Eventually my compassion and curiosity overwhelmed my good sense. With some serious trepidation, I pulled off the timber off the kit as it yelped repeatedly. It could not move—leg broken. Using my Eagle Boy Scout training, I fashioned a splint out of wood splinters and tied it off with strips of my handkerchief. None too soon, I might add. Bounding down the mountains at full speed was mama. No doubt she spotted me handling her kit. Retreating to the truck I watched mama pick up the kit by the nape of its neck. She walked to the truck, put her front legs at the base of the window and stared at me. I have to tell you those slit green-eyes of her was terrifying. Shortly, she trotted toward the mountains. As you might suspect, I’d left my camera by the wall and I didn’t get a photograph of any part of this scenario. *C’est la vie.*

Nonetheless, I continued to explore and photograph the ruins. In a small box canyon across the creek, I spotted a nearly complete wood cabin. Perhaps an opportunity to photo some paraphernalia left inside—chair, table, boots, who knows. I peeked inside. Dark as Hades. Scanned the floor inside with my flashlight before entering, on guard for rattlesnakes—a favorite place for them to linger. None spotted. Faint light filtered in from two partially boarded windows. To the rear was a dresser draw with the middle drawer open and tattered coveralls hanging out. I set my camera on the tripod, framed the shot, set the flash, and fired. The light bounced off the walls illuminating the interior for an instant. Great shot.

The earsplitting roar was startling and terrifying. Swirling ‘round I spotted mama puma and her kit just inside the front

continued



Continued

door. I was in her den. Trapped! No other way out. I froze—in deep trouble. She stared at me with those steel-green eyes, taking my mettle. Ever so slowly, I move my right arm to my left shoulder to draw my 45. I didn't make it. She advanced with a deliberate slow pace—something in her mouth. If I were to move anymore—well, I reckon you know that outcome. My right arm is suspended in mid air. Sweat is trickling into my eyes. Time stood still. She moved closer.

A couple of feet away, she stopped. Looked into my eyes. Dropped a dead rabbit at my feet. What the? Licked her whiskers. I might have prayed. Don't recall. Nearly fainted though. Amazingly, she started rubbing her back against my legs. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. Don't recall how long. A minute or two, for sure. Is she warming her dinner? Did manage to get my right arm relaxed by my side. Then more amaz-

ingly, she started nuzzling my hand with her nose.

It took me several seconds to recover and understand. With great care I slowly knelt. With my fingers extended, I started scratching her head and back—ever so gingerly. She purred—much as a household pussy cat. Her kit, with the splint, approached. Watched intensely. Still super frightened, I continued to scratch. Adrenaline surging. Question above all others: how do I escape this scenario with all my fingers and my overall well-being? She answered. Licked my face, grabbed her kit, and bounded out of the cabin.

Rick didn't believe me. My friends didn't either. Wife thought I was liquored up. And, I reckon you don't either. Never mind. Next time I'm at Hamilton, I'm going to get that puma to sign an affidavit.

Special Offer to Members of the San Gabriel Writers' League

The Writers' League of Texas is gearing up for its annual Agents Conference June 22-24 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Austin.

This event draws hundreds of authors and aspiring writers each year and 2012 promises to be one of the best conferences yet. Attendees will have access to 13 agents, four editors and three experts in book promotion and film production.

Included will be more than 24 panels on writing and the ever-changing publishing industry. A total of 15 published authors will be on hand to lend their expertise.

As a special promotion, the Writers' League of Texas is offering members of the San Gabriel Writers' League the WLT member registration rate for the conference. This discounted rate will

be honored through June 10.

Registration is at <http://www.writersleague.org/75/Registration-Information>

Special note: SGWL members will need to register as a non-member, then email WLT Program Director Jennifer Ziegler Jennifer@writersleague.org and ask for the discounted rate. She will credit your account. Be sure to mention that you are an SGWL member.

You may also call 499-8914 and ask for the discounted rate. The WLT office will refund the difference. Be sure to tell the office staff that you are a member of SGWL.

See you in June!

GTE Magazine <http://www.texasfunandevents.com> is an online ezine magazine published by JD Bradford. As a part of his offering for the community, reviewer Kathy Luse reviews books by local authors.

He is offering an opportunity for you to have one of your published books submitted for book review. These reviews are not forced, and are not always complimentary. But they are an honest review according to the reviewer. (and of course, as the saying goes, there is no such thing as a bad review).

DJ and I have submitted a book of ours to this reviewer to get the ball rolling.

If you are interested in a review of your book in this online social media site, get a copy of the book to me and I will pass the book along to JD Bradford.

I encourage you to take opportunity of this gesture on behalf of JD, who is really wanting to help the local art community.

My address is: 30 Wildwood Drive, #13 Georgetown, Texas 78633

You can either drop the book off at my house, or mail me a copy. The book will not be returned to you. If you have any questions about this, please email me at sds@suddenlink.net



Who "said"

"If the weak hand, that has recorded this tale, has, by its scenes, beguiled the mourner of one hour of sorrow, or, by its moral, taught him to sustain it - the effort, however humble, has not been vain, nor is the writer unrewarded."

Answer on page 6

The Chronicles of Samantha Bucket by

Maria K. Hood, honorary member

Author's note: Welcome to the wacky, crazy world of Samantha Anna Bucket, a twelve-year-old girl living in 21 century. I hope you enjoy her silly adventures as she makes new ones.

Episode 1: Finding the Time Machine

Samantha Bucket wiped the sweat from her brow. It was a hot summer day in Round Rock, TX. Her family had just gotten back from Church and she was still in her favorite dress. It was a blue-checked 1930s styled dress with old-fashioned buttons, it had been her great-grandmother's best dress. She cared for it a great deal. It was right after lunch that day when her older brother Roger whispered into her ear.

"Meet me in the attic, make sure that Lucy or Lily doesn't follow you."

He was gone as soon as he had whispered the last word. Lucy and Lily were Samantha's younger twin sisters. Samantha was puzzled. What did Roger have to show her that even her nosy little sisters couldn't see? Though she hated her twin sisters tattle-telling on her and Roger, how secret was this? When Roger was still at home, he and Samantha had a clubhouse in the attic where they would create "inventions" and just have plain fun. But after Roger left to go to college, they hadn't hanged out in the attic for months. Roger was now living in home during the summer, working at the local smoothie shop that seemed like he was always too busy to hang out with the family and when he wasn't working, he was always somewhere else. Samantha sighed with relief. Maybe Roger was going to tell her what he was finally doing all this time.

"Hello?" Samantha whispered as she climbed up the attic ladder. She had finally gotten her sisters to play with some neighborhood kids.

The attic was stuffy and hot, but much more than usual. What was even more unusual was that none of the fans were on in the attic. Roger would have turned them on if they were having a meeting. She walked further into the attic but did not see her brother. Samantha tripped and bumped into an attic wall; without meaning too, she triggered a secret entrance! She found herself moving, scared out of her mind, she didn't open her

eyes until she stopped moving. She found herself staring at a laboratory. How long had that been in their attic? Still, there were no signs of her brother in the laboratory as far as she could see. Samantha wandered around until she found what looked like a telephone booth to her. There, on the door was a note.

Dear Samantha,

Like my time-machine? I have tested it with Pebbles before and found out that it works! If you are reading this, I have entered the time machine. I didn't want the twins going in, that was why I asked you to go alone (or try your best), I found something very interesting about the time machine. I need you to enter and try to find me. When you enter the time machine, enter 'The Depression' and press the red button.

*Signed,
Roger Henry Bucket.*



Samantha groaned. Maybe that was why Pebbles, their dog, was acting strangely. She just wasn't herself after Roger supposedly played with her. Now she knew that her brother was "playing" her as a test guinea pig for him. Well, she couldn't do anything but go into the time machine to find her

brother. Why did he have to be so mysterious with the letter? Probably because he knew she wouldn't enter otherwise.

Knees shaking, she warily stepped into the time machine booth and found a mini computer inside. The door creaked as it shut closed, by itself and what looked like a passenger car seat rising from the floor, the lighting in the time machine was dim. "Preparing for time travel, please get seated and buckled up." A computer told her.

This was it, Samantha sat down and buckled herself. She entered what Roger had told her to enter into the computer and then pressed the big red button. Before she could think, the time machine started shaking, she saw grey mist all around her, she saw the year, 2012, going back until it hit the date, 1932. Then, the shaking and rocking stopped and she found herself at the doorstep of a building. On the sign above the door was "Main Street Orphanage"

To be continued!

Who "said" Answer ... Ann Radcliffe (9 July 1764 – 7 February 1823) was an English author, and a pioneer of the Gothic novel. Her style is romantic in its vivid descriptions of landscapes, and long travel scenes, yet the Gothic element is obvious through her use of the supernatural. It was her technique of explained Gothicism, the final revelation of inexplicable phenomena, that helped the Gothic novel achieve respectability in the 1790s.

Radcliffe published 6 novels in all. These are (listed alphabetically) *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, *Gaston de Blondville*, *The Italian*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Romance of the Forest* and *A Sicilian Romance*. She also published a book of poetry, but her talent for prose far exceeded her poetic ability. She also authored a work, based on her sole excursion to the Continent *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany... To Which Are Added Observations of a Tour to the Lakes* (1795).



Pete's Planes By Jane Thompson

When I was in my 30s my uncle Peter, who was in his 60s, used to visit his big sister, my mother, a couple of times a year in Oklahoma City. He'd stop on his way up from Houston to pick me up to have company on the drive. We'd talk companionably on the long drive about all kinds of subjects, but Peter had one habit that puzzled me. The north Texas and central Oklahoma skies are enormous; Pete would glance up and idly say, "Plane at three o'clock," then go right back to the conversation. Sometimes I could see a plane; other times I thought I could see a tiny speck; occasionally I couldn't see anything. Finally I asked him about the obsession with the planes. They certainly weren't bothering us.

My uncle explained that during World War II, he was a navigator on a bomber based in Italy; on his first mission he had finished his navigating duties and was just hanging out-when a piece of shrapnel burst through the side of fuselage, tore through his parachute pack, and went out the opposite side of the plane. For the first time that young man really realized that death was only inches away from him at all times. From then on, he made it his mission to help the pilot out by, whenever he was not actually navigating, watching for planes and reporting their positions. He took this so seriously that forty years later he was unable to stop watching for planes and noting their positions.

I asked him then what he thought when he learned of the Ultra secret; he replied that he was absolutely astounded to learn that there was actual intelligence behind the death and destruction he visited on the people below him. He said that he understood what he was fighting for and why it is necessary, but he also knew that the people whose property he was destroying and whose lives he was taking or ruining had as little to do with the actual war as he did. He hated his job in the war and did not know that he had ever essentially had any real effect on winning the war.

That was all he ever told me about the war. I couldn't get any more stories or, certainly, any details out of him.

Sitting between us was another story that I knew but did not ever have the nerve to ask him about. World War II was the biggest thing that ever happened, but it was made up of a whole bunch of little things.

Every single person's life in that generation was changed in some way by the war, from my friend Jack who started life as a Polish peasant child but who died in Dallas a millionaire, coming here by way of Auschwitz, to the parish priest who fled Hitler in Austria to teach in my grammar school in Oklahoma City, to every American who would not have had an opportunity for an education if it hadn't been for the GI Bill. If you talk to people in their seventies and eighties about World War II, they all have an interesting story to tell. Except Pete; he wouldn't have told you his story. He told his older sister, who eventually told me. But it was a big family secret. Still is. It's just a tiny little bump in the American road to victory, just another human interest story in the biggest thing to ever happen in human history. Tell that to Pete.



Shortly after Pete graduated from college and just before he went into the Army Air Force, he married his college sweetheart, Wanda, a lovely girl whom his enormous family very much approved of. After his months of training, he shipped out to Europe. Nine months after he left the country, Wanda gave birth to their son, whom she named for Pete. Pete's big sister was thrilled with her nephew and visited Wanda often. The whole family helped her out since Pete was gone for almost three years.

My mother was grateful at the end of the war. Unlike so many others, all of her many brothers and brothers-in-law returned safely, maybe a little worse for wear, but essentially in one piece. Pete, however, seemed bitter and reacted strangely. For one thing, instead of going on with his life, he insisted on divorcing Wanda immediately. He paid his child support and visited his son regularly, but he wasn't on really good terms with Wanda. None of the family could understand it. Everyone loved Wanda and adored Petey. They chalked it up to things that happen to a man during wartime and tried to understand. It was thirty years before Peter remarried.

It was during the unhappy period after his second divorce that my mother asked Peter why he ever divorced Wanda, and Pete, his defenses down, told her, "Midge, they were so desperate for aircrew in Italy when we graduated from flight school that we didn't get a leave after training. We shipped out right after graduation.

I didn't see Wanda from the time I went into training until I was mustered out in '45." Well, my mother was a math major in college and figured out the problem pretty fast. She really couldn't think of much of say.

That must have happened fairly often during the war, with birth control rather chancy and people being separated for such very long periods of time. I always wanted to ask Pete if he was celibate during those three years in Italy, but, as I said, I just couldn't work up the nerve. WWII was the biggest and sometimes the most noble undertaking of man, but it could be rough on the individual. Ask Pete about that.

If I could fly
where would I?
Would a mile
be too high?

If I could glide
in clouds and slide
their raindrop forms
is infinity implied?

When I fly
higher than the sky
and lose this form
I shall call "Goodbye!"



Carol Menchu

Questions With The Editor - "Book Doctor" from Brooklyn James' Blog (with permission)

My editor, Janet Kilgore (affectionately, J.K.) is so gracious to stop by my blog for a Guest Interview. J.K. edited my novels, *The Boots My Mother Gave Me*, *Vigilare* and *Vigilare: Hell Hound*. A feat that has happened over the past two years. Three books in two years is nothing to sneeze at, considering we will be on to book #4 directly.

I was fortunate to find her through my affiliation with the San Gabriel Writers' League of Georgetown, Texas via fellow Author/Editor, Joan Upton Hall.

After completing the first draft of the manuscript to *The Boots My Mother Gave Me*, I began looking into publishing options. Thankfully, most of the information I read about first-time authors led me to value the importance of an editor. Nearly every informative I read outlining the steps of book publishing, concurred.

Step 1: Find A Good Editor! Which leads me to my first question:

1. How does one find a good Editor?

J.K.: I tend to trust referrals by other editors and/or from past clients. I say this because I know a lot of people with all the right degrees who can't edit worth a flip. It requires not only knowledge of grammar, spelling, syntax, etc., but also a knowledge of writing. We have to be able to recognize good writing when we see it, and when we see poor writing, we have to have some idea how to fix it.

Brooklyn James: Referrals (word of mouth) still work. Rely on them, especially when searching for someone who shares your vision for your voice as a writer. I would also recommend finding someone you can meet face-to-face. See if your personalities mesh. I know of many editors one can find online. Although they may be great editors, they do everything electronically, which can be viable. However, if your book is your baby...your editor is your Pediatrician. Would you be comfortable diagnosing your child's illnesses exclusively online? May sound a bit extreme, but that's what a good editor does for a writer...they identify what "ails" your writing and offer prescriptions to mend it. I knew J.K. was right for me after meeting with her. The three things I identified about her upon our initial face-to-face meeting that sealed the deal for me:

- She was on-time, signifying my time was as important as hers...very respectful quality.
 - She is funny, which means she probably has great timing. Comedic people always have great timing. Timing is essential to writing. I thought her cadence would keep me honest in my delivery. In other words, she wouldn't allow me to ramble on and on when I should get to a point.
- J.K. is a stickler! This told me she cares about English in its most basic form. Grammar, punctuation, syntax...it's truly important to her. I am not a perfectionist, however, I am a rightest. I do not know the rules as she does, therefore, I find comfort in being able to trust J.K. to keep my writing right!

2. What are some pet-peeves the average Editor may have about Writers? Essentially, what can we do as Writers to avoid being 'that writer' among the Editor round-table?

J.K.: When editors get deep in their cups, which I like to imagine happening more often than it does, we talk about people who can't seem to look up some of the simple things: dialogue formatting, replacing 'to be' verbs and passive voices with action words and active voice, and not even bothering to run spell-check, which doesn't catch contextual errors, but it's a start.

Brooklyn James: It may seem overwhelming as a first-time author. I knew none of these rules with my first draft of *The Boots My Mother Gave Me*. But, you learn. Research it, and most importantly, be open to heeding advice. Care about your writing. As J.K. mentioned, the simple concept of going through your manuscript and highlighting 'to be' verbs (am, is, are, were, was, be, being, been), is a great place to start. After receiving my first edited chapter from J.K., it became apparent to me, my writing was not as active as it could be. She informed me of the 'to be' verb issue, challenging me to come up with action verbs in place of the majority of my 'to be' verbs. Happy to have her direction, I took her advice and starting noting how often I used 'to be' verbs, which slowed my action. I didn't use 'to be' verbs by choice, I used them by habit...a bad habit I hadn't been informed of otherwise. Adapting and applying that one little golden nugget, allowed my writing to become much more active. Action verbs leap off pages, 'to be' verbs linger. I haven't quite mastered the concept, however, each new manuscript gets better because I am aware of the issue and actively attempt to render it. I listen to my editor.

3. When submitting work to an Editor for consideration of publishing, are there any tools/secrets of the trade an Author can implement in giving herself an advantage?

J.K.: You can look up manuscript formatting on the web or buy a book on the subject. I recommend, and sometimes give as gifts, *Rx for Your Writing Ills*, by Joan Upton Hall. Google her and check out her website. I DON'T recommend textbooks, which, if they were any good, you would have remembered this stuff when you were taught it years ago. ALWAYS double-space the manuscript, no exceptions. ALWAYS use one of the industry-acceptable fonts, like New Times Roman. All this info is available online or neatly corralled in Joan's book. Also, always pay strict attention to formatting and mailing requirements listed by the editor/publisher. If they want a Foreword written in lime Jell-o, do it. They'll have one less excuse to toss your manuscript in a corner

Brooklyn James: I can attest to Joan Upton Hall's book, *Rx for Your Writing Ills*. J.K. gave me a copy when first starting our editor/writer relationship. I still reference the book for hard to grasp concepts, such as *lay, lies, lie, laid, etc.*

4. How did you get into Editing? What is your most favorite part about editing? And of course, your least favorite part about editing?

J.K.: Printed errors have always jumped out at me, grabbed me by the throat, and wrestled me to the ground. I don't know which gene is responsible for this, but it's definitely a blessing and a curse. I got into editing when a longtime friend-super-writer and super-editor Joan Upton Hall-recommended me to someone who came to her and whom she couldn't accommodate. My favorite part of editing is when the author can see how

continued

... Continued

much better their book is after editing. My least favorite part is when an author refuses to correct book-wide errors, preferring just to let me make the same correction time after time. I love a writer who is willing and eager to LEARN and not make the same mistake repeatedly.

5. As an Editor, I would assume you enjoy employing your red pen :) Tell me true: Which manuscripts do Editors most enjoy? The ones that require your red pen to fly off the pages? Or ones that require only marginal tweaking?

J.K.: Tweakables, hands down! Speaking for myself, it's very distracting to have to mark up a page until it looks like I sacrificed a chicken on it. If I'm preoccupied with marking minor but ubiquitous stuff, I might miss that the main female character had a sex-change operation and is now the main male character. But I always tell my clients not to be embarrassed by their lack of knowledge of grammar, etc. Most of them can spin a far better tale than I could. We all have our places in the Cosmic Cocoon.

Brooklyn James: Oh, the dreaded 'sacrificed chicken page!' I have seen some of those in my short writing career. A point to reiterate here, J.K., as all good editors should be, is very understanding of my plight as a writer. I am a writer, not an English guru. I write well, however my grammar does not always reflect such. Frankly, I was nervous sending my list of blog questions to J.K. for this guest post...lol. I thought, "Oh, I hope she doesn't have to edit my questions!" J.K. is very understanding and encouraging, graciously assuring me it's her job as my editor to identify and implement grammar errors and corrections. This type of supportive exchange allows me to maintain my confidence as a writer, and hopefully pick up better grammar habits along the way. A good editor always constructively criticizes, but refrains from berating.

6. Can one learn editing? By taking certain courses, or obtaining certain employment platforms? Or is it a calling, or something innate, such as a Writer's voice?

J.K.: Yes, you can learn editing. They actually teach courses in it on certain degree tracks in college. But I don't think you can

learn that special eye that trips over mistakes like a bicyclist going over a speed bump. It has been suggested that I love editing because I tend to be a bit critical by nature, and this way I actually get paid for it. The more you learn to do yourself, the less your final editor will have to deal with minor errors. Then he/she can concentrate on the really important stuff, like continuity, character development, plot integrity, etc.

7. Do you edit all genres and writing formats, such as Fiction, Non-Fiction, short-stories, newspaper articles, etc.? Or do you have a preferred medium?

J.K.: I will edit most genres, although I find it difficult to edit a genre I wouldn't choose to read. Thankfully, there aren't many of those. Also, I'm not a fact-checker, so non-fiction books, which I love, will only be edited for the same types of errors as anything else.

8. What is in your E-reader currently? Or on your bookshelf? What do Editors read?

J.K.: My E-reader consists of a book app on my smart phone. It contains mostly classics, especially Jane Austen. I find it comforting to escape to a more civil time when waiting for my new tires to be mounted. Again, speaking just for myself, I read what I like, and that encompasses a lot of history, trivia, biographies, and scandal books about the generations of Royals before the one currently occupying the headlines. Reading scandal about them is like shooting fish in a barrel. The older generations were far more interesting. Back then, the words for what they were doing were whispered; now they're key words for search engines.

9. How does one contact Janet Kilgore, *Dreamcatcher Writing and Editing*, to inquire of your services?

Please email me at <http://www.blogger.com/mc/compose?to=janet-kilgore@austin.rr.com> The number of projects I can take on at one time is very limited, but we can talk.

Thank you for stopping by J.K.! Really appreciate your insights.

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Ask the Book Doctor: Avoiding Sexist Language by Joan Upton Hall

Dear Doc

Years ago if we wrote, "Anyone may park his car here," nobody accused us of sexist language. Can you explain why it's more politically correct to say, "her car"?

– Trying not to be a sexist pig



Dear Trying,

Your point is well taken, but maybe it's catch-up time for women who were lumped into the unisex masculine pronoun for so many years. Whichever pronoun you use, however, "he" or "she" is likely to distract some of your audience from the idea you are trying to convey. And saying something like, "He or she may park his or her car," is just plain awkward. Therefore, let's look at some smoother ways of avoiding the issue of sexist language in the first place.

1. Delete the pronoun reference whenever possible. Example: "The writer should jot down ideas as soon as they occur *to him/her*." (delete "*to him/her*")

2. Change the pronoun to an article (*the*). Example: "An author should ask someone else to proofread *his/her* manuscript before submitting it." (change "*his/her*" to "*the*")

3. Pluralize. Example: "*A writer* should always check *his* facts." [change to "*Writers* should always check *their* facts."]

4. Use the relative pronoun *who* instead of an "if...he/she" expression. Example: "*If* a writer's vocabulary is small, *s/he* has fewer ways to express *herself*." (change to "A *writer who* has a small vocabulary suffers a dearth of expressive choices.")

5. Repeat the noun or use a synonym instead of a pronoun. "An author must view the criticism of peers objectively. In this way, *he* can improve clarity." (change "*he*" to "*the author*" or "*the writer*")

No sexist pigs here – Joan Hall

Have a question to share in this column? Email me at: jmu-hall@aol.com with "Ask the Book Doctor" as your subject line. If you want to remain anonymous, I'll address you by whatever pseudonym you sign.

Joan Hall thanks GW readers for their interest in "Ask the Book Doctor." She says, "Because some of you have asked where you can look up previous issues, I have posted a few of them at "books, etc." on website: www.JoanUptonHall.com. Scroll past the book covers and click "Ask Doc" Q&A's .

Writers Digest is now on YouTube Check it out

http://www.youtube.com/user/WritersDigest?et_mid=551890&rid=2679721

Special Interest Groups

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, 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 **full**.

Openings Bard Masters Critique Group The focus of the critique group is historical fiction and fantasy. Meeting Tuesdays, 6:00 PM at the Georgetown Library. Currently open to a new member with a serious work in progress. Contact: RossCarnes.graphicrex@hotmail.com

Openings Tale Spinners, return with us to the days of yesteryear where we put some novel twists on old stories. Historical fiction's the name, publication's the fame. Join us now with your work in progress. We have an opening for one new member. We meet on alternate Mondays at 2:30 in the Georgetown Library. Contact Randall Best at R_best@yahoo.com

Openings The Coroners, is open to 2 new members. They meet Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. in the stacks at the Georgetown Library. Contact Dave Ciabrone, mystery-writer5@msn.com

If you are interested in joining/forming a critique group, contact Joan Upton Hall (jmuhall@aol.com) or Sylvia Dickey Smith (sds@suddenlink.com)

SGWL Board

President

Durwood Heinrich
512-966-9954
dj@redbaronconcepts.com

Vice President

Dave Ciambrone
512-864-9373
mysterywriter5@msn.com

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Janet Kilgore,
512-3317204
janet-kilgore@austin.rr.com

Treasurer

Kayla Marnach
512-608-2289
kjmwtellsw@austin.rr.com

Program Coordinator

Sylvia Dickey Smith
512-240-5505
sds@suddenlink.com

Membership dues \$25.00

Carol Menchu
181 Young Ranch Rd
Georgetown TX 78628

Writers' Liaison

Joan Hall
512-869-1833
JMUHall@aol.com

Member at Large

Dave Ciambrone
512-864-9373

Resident Agent

Roger Busfield, Jr
512-930-1396
busfield@suddenlink.net

Newsletter

Carol Menchu, editor
181 Young Ranch Rd
Georgetown TX 78628
254-493-6224
thirdgate@aol.com

Publicity / Member @ Large

Sam Holland
512-868-5322
samholland@austinfoam.com

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 Ciambrone

www.davidciambrone.com

Gary Clark

www.clarkliterary.com

Mary Fenoglio

www.eggsinmypocket.com

Sidney W. Frost

<http://sidneywfrost.com/> <http://christianbookmobile.blogspot.com/>

Joan Hall:

www.JoanUptonHall.com

Durwood J (DJ) Heinrich:

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Sam Holland:

www.samholland.com

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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. 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.

Demystifying Writers' Demons©

CONFUSING WORDS—Whose / who's & who / whom

- **whose** (possessive pronoun for "something belonging to *whom*")
"Whose book is this?" "The man *whose* novel won the award lives nearby."
- **who's** (contraction of "who is")
"Who's coming to the show?" "Who's there?" "Jane is the person *who's* absent."
- **who** [nominative [naming] case pronoun - means it is the subject of a verb]
"Who, shall I say, is calling?" (often mistaken when subject is separated from verb by an interrupting clause or phrase; think "*Who is calling?*")
"Tell me *who* in the world did this." (often mistaken when it is the subject of a clause in which the entire clause is an object; think "*who did this?*")
"Who can win? Clyde is *who*." (often mistaken when used as a predicate nominative renaming the subject after a linking verb. Therefore, it's not an object.)
- **whom** (objective case pronoun - means it is the object receiving action)
"To *whom* shall I give this?" "Give it to *whomever* you wish." (object of preposition)
"She's a candidate *whom* we can trust." (direct object, inverted adjective clause; think "we can trust *whom*.")

Memory tip:

If substituting the word "he or she" for it sounds right, you need "who."
If substituting the word "him or her" for it sounds right, you need "whom."

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