

Newsletter of the North American School of Outdoor Writing,
April 15 2006

Salt Spring Island, British Columbia.

Spring is in high gear. Two-by-two, Canada geese trade back and forth between **the flats in the harbour and the golf course where they feed each day.**

I see in the latest Gray's Sporting Journal there is an article by George Calef. I knew George in the NWT 30 years ago when we were putting radio collars on wolves north of Wood Buffalo Park. Does anybody have an e-mail address for George? I know he lives in the Yukon.

There were several responses to my question about the first line in the new (#6) Harry Potter book. Here they are:

Roger: Regarding the Harry Potter line: If I had to edit this sentence, I would break it into two. I'm not saying either way is right or wrong...just my preference.

Original - "It was nearing midnight and the Prime Minister was sitting alone in his office, reading a long memo that was slipping through his brain without leaving the slightest trace of meaning behind."

My version - "It was nearing midnight. The Prime Minister was sitting alone in his office, reading a long memo that was slipping through his brain without leaving the slightest trace of meaning behind."

One other thing that "gets" me is beginning a sentence, story, etc. with "it." Not very exciting is it? What's wrong with this: "*Near midnight the Prime Minister...*"

One of the great things about writing is each of us can say the same thing in many different ways. Gary Martin – Editor, Wishigan Outdoors

Chris Madson with Wyoming Fish and Game writes: "I wonder if the word "behind" is even necessary."

David Pierce, President of Silver Bullet Industries writes:

I would never start the sentence with "It." Even if the author of the children's book series is wealthy and widely read she is not and probably will never be a Charles Dickens. "It was the best of times...". I am entirely unimpressed by the quality of her prose.

As far as I am concerned, however much time she spent in sentence construction was not enough. Someone should send her a copy of

Scribner's Handbook of English. There is a lot in this sentence that is "not quite right" beyond the order of the words.

"reading a long memo that was slipping through his brain" I shudder at the thought of a lump of paper passing through a human brain as it is being read. I wonder if there was hemorrhaging? Did he use a mirror?

Ah, but when you are being paid by the word it does so pay to be quite abundantly wordy and clever with your use of words, I should think, does it not? David

John Messineo in Colorado writes:

I'd leave it alone. J.K. Rowling's words paint a better picture. Her placement of words conveys emptiness. You know without a doubt that the Prime Minister's brain was left blank.

With your placement of "behind," a person is left to ponder if the Prime Minister's brain retained the words, but he just didn't understand them or if his brain didn't retain anything.

John Messineo

Photographer/Writer

Ft. Collins, CO

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CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Alberta student Michelle Wiebe and Graduate student Brian Bildson (also in Alberta) who have joined Outdoor Writers of Canada. As a way of introduction, Michelle had a Craft Improvement piece in the Jan./Feb. OWC newsletter. Way to go, Michelle. Also congratulations to Montana student Hobie Hare who just joined Northwest Outdoor Writers. Hobie has been the featured photographer in the Outdoor Writers Association of America newsletter. His beautiful photographs can be seen on his website: www.wildharephotos.com

DREAM JOB in the OUTDOORS INDUSTRY

Ontario Graduate student Chris Hockley sent along this notice of a Dream Job where Chris himself has worked.

CANADA IN THE ROUGH

CANADA'S COAST TO COAST HUNTING ADVENTURE TV SHOW

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

Canada in the Rough, Canada's fastest growing and most viewed national hunting adventure show, is looking for a Sales Manager. The job entails new business development and key account management.

If you have experience in television broadcast advertising and sponsorship sales, an interest in the outdoors, a passion for hunting and fishing, and a willingness to travel, this could be the job for you. Strong communication skills, a team player

attitude, and a highly motivated personality will help you succeed in this energetic environment.

Computer proficiency in WORD and EXCEL are mandatory. Bilingualism is an asset. Please send your resume in confidence to:

Thomas Pigeon

Executive Producer

tpigeon@dancingbuffaloproductions.com

Fax 905-338-0812

www.canadaintherough.com

Digital Images Specifications

Outdoor Writers of Canada's Don Meredith (author of the book The Search for Grizzly One) provided the link www.disc-info.org/specifications/. This site gives the accepted specifications for digital images in publications. "Of course," writes Don, "your obligation is to check with any specific publication before submitting images, but most often when you are taking a picture, you're not sure where that image will go for publication. ...Using these standards, I can shoot high res.jpg format for most situations...Thanks to Duane Rutherford for providing the link, writes Don.

EDITOR WILL WORK WITH NEW WRITERS

This note is from Editor Gary Martin, whose web address lists him as a Freelance Human being, Writer and Listener. He is also editor of Wishigan Outdoors.

He writes:

Right now what Wishigan Outdoors needs is subscribers, but my partner and I are always willing to help new writers break into the outdoor writing field. We pay occasional contributors with subscriptions or copies of the issue in which their work appears.

Wishigan Outdoors Magazine is about the outdoors. "Outdoors" includes the traditional outdoor activities, Hunting, Fishing, Shooting, Trapping, and more. Camping, cooking wild game or fish, Tall Tales, Wild Food Gathering, Humor, Techniques, Outdoor Photography, Profiles of outdoor people, and more. Just about anything fun and consumptive in the outdoors. "Wishigan" means Wisconsin and Michigan.

We have no web site right now, but do maintain a discussion group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wishigan_outdoors/

Our current address is: Wishigan Outdoors 985 Aldrin St. De Pere, WI 54115
920-336-6053

Subscription rates are for continental U.S. mailings. I've never had a request by anyone in Canada or elsewhere and would probably have to adjust rates according to the additional postage. Contributors may contact me at tiki@athenet.net.

Gary

WRITERS' WEBSITE

Wish you could get the inside scoop on becoming a Travel Writer? With Well Traveled Tours, you can. The Florida-based tourism company offers packages created—and sometimes led by—travel writers. Writer and editor Anita Draycott, for example, hosts a trip to Thailand May 6-19. Other destinations include Mexico and Hawaii. Check out the site at www.welltraveltours.com

MORE WRITING WEBSITES

WWW.SKIWRITER.COM

WWW.ALBERTAROMANCEWRITERS.COM

WWW.MYSTERYWRITERSINK.COM

WWW.CANAUTHORS.ORG

Freelance Writers Union

HELP TURN THE TIDE: JOIN THE CANADIAN FREELANCE UNION

Don Meredith provided the following by Noelle Boughton:

Former Professional Writers Association of Canada president, Mike O'Reilly, was in Toronto recently encouraging PWAC members and other independent creators to join the new Canadian Freelance Union (CFU) so they can turn the tide on "crappy rates, ridiculous rights demands, and unfair work terms."

"We'd like to have 600 members by the fall conference, and 2,000 in the long-term," he said, noting the CFU plans to host a conference in Toronto this fall to start a public discussion about the state of Canadian journalism. Its founding general meeting will be held at the same time.

"We need a critical mass to make a difference," said Peter Murdoch, Vice President Media of The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), which is organizing the CFU. Both men were speaking to about 20 writers and editors who attended the union's information meeting at the Northern District Library on March 2.

The CEP has 150,000 members and is Canada's largest media union with 25,000 members in print, radio, television, film, design, and new media. It includes reporters, editors, columnists, pressmen, printers, clerical workers, photographers, designers,

cartoonists, and others.

The CFU is asking all freelance journalists, graphic artists, IT and communications professionals to join so it can take freelance issues to the collective bargaining table and improve rates and rights for freelancers across the country. These could include negotiating copyright provisions and decent minimum rates, plus establishing benefit plans.

O'Reilly told the interested crowd that PWAC has tried to win concessions in some of these areas for years, but the media corporations are large and the freelancers' power is small.

"The union will improve our clout at the table," he said, noting he discovered that in London, Ontario, when he organized freelancers to discuss their issues with the local newspaper.

O'Reilly, a long-time freelancer, is now president of the CFU and hopes freelancers will work together to stem the tide which has seen Canadian freelance writers' income drop from an average of \$25,000 in 1979. A new PWAC survey shows 61% of freelancers now make less than \$25,000, and nearly 40% earn less than \$10,000. Meanwhile, most newspapers and magazines are demanding writers' rights with little or no compensation.

During the question and answer period, Murdoch said he used to be a reporter, so knows some people are skittish about joining a union, but it wants to get them union rates--first with newspapers, then with magazines. O'Reilly added that is critical since freelance writers' "real income" has dropped 160% since 1979. This means, when inflation is factored in, that an item that cost \$1 in 1979 now costs \$2.59, yet freelancers still earn \$1. "The only way to relate to these big businesses is to be big ourselves," he said. "If we want to change this situation, then we have to band together and make it happen."

Recent trends have sparked the union's interest in freelancers because more Canadian media are moving to decreasing staff and hiring freelancers. A recent study by the European Federation of Journalists showed that one-third of European journalists now are freelancers.

For more information on the CFU, visit www.cepmedia.ca and click on "Freelance Campaign." A charter membership costs \$25, and allows you to attend the CFU's founding conference. Mike O'Reilly is also at freelance@cep.ca if you have questions before you join.

DECISION TIME

It's decision time with many of the outdoor organizations holding their annual get together in the next few months. To attend or not to attend is the question.

First of all, what can you expect? Here's a question from a student that many of us are asking—this one about the Outdoor Writers of Canada conference in Edmonton in June.

Dear Roger,

I was planning to go to the conference in Edmonton - that was actually a spurring factor to join the OWC. I just received the program and I am not so sure anymore. I was assuming that it would be like our professional Nursing conferences with many guest speakers and a kind of trade show. I see it is mainly accompanied travel or shooting with only an afternoon of speakers -each only talking for 30 minutes.

I've only fired a gun on a biathlon range on one occasion. I'm just not sure what benefit I'd get from going on a bus tour.

I would appreciate your opinion.

Cheers,

Michelle

My Reply:

Hi Michelle--the value of these AGM's for me (I don't want to shoot at anybody either) is the networking that goes on with other writers and editors that attend. If you feel you have already carved out a niche for yourself this might not be so important--in that case, your efforts, time and money might be better spent elsewhere--OWC (like all the other groups) is a bit of an Old Boy's club--everybody seems to get a big charge out of reassuring each other how great we all are--I'm not big on that myself--my only reason for attending would be to meet students I have not meet before...

If it works out, I will attend but, as yet, can't say for sure.

Being a writer, as you well know, can be an isolating experience--for some writers, these get-togethers are an only chance to, well--get together--we shouldn't underestimate the value of this, whether we feel we need it for ourselves or not....

there's another dynamic too--for many beginning writers, just being in the same room as some of the big-name Canadian outdoor writers is a VERY BIG DEAL--this counts for a lot too--

best,

Roger

And this advice to Michelle from OWC's Brad Fenson one of the conference organizers.

Michelle,

We expect a good turn out at the OWC conference this June. There are usually a number of editors and publishers in attendance but I cannot recall having "Explore" Magazine present.

It is important to note that there is a broad spectrum of writers and

communicators in attendance. Everything from Ecotourism to the hunting and fishing crowd. Some of the writers at cooking experts, while others are more focused on photography. There will be Tourism people from the NWT, Yukon and BC at the conference. I have found that making good contacts at the conference has always been worthwhile for me.

Our corporate break-out day may appear to be focused on hunting and fishing but there is everything from GPS navigation to product manufacturers and representatives from a large cross-section of our industry.

We hope that our guest speakers may entice some members to branch out in their communication skills. We will look at the Internet, radio, TV and video and even using your talents to guest lecture on cruise ships.

Many of the post conference trips are geared towards outdoor adventure and include everything from golfing to canoeing. There is much more than just hunting and fishing.

I hope this answers your questions. The decision to attend the conference is yours and if you would like to make contact with other communicators that are not just hunting and fishing I would be glad to put you in touch. Both Shirley Teasdale and Sue Kane will be there again and I am hopeful that Tina Portman will attend. It may be a good idea to ask these ladies what they derive from OWC with membership and attending conference.

Best regards,

Brad Fenson

Email: bfenson@shaw.ca

Outdoor Writers of America Conference

Here are a couple of items from the OWAA newsletter that may provide a preview of what's to come at this year's conference in Louisiana:

More than 20 Acquisitions Editors Expected to Attend

Thanks to the following editors who have agreed to participate in the June 17 One-on-One with Editors event scheduled for the opening day of OWAA's conference. Here's the lineup so far: Jill Adler, Sports Guide; Stuart Bourdon, Camping Life; Eric Chaney, Game & Fish/Primedia (Arkansas Sportsman, Iowa Game and Fish, Louisiana Game and Fish, Missouri Game and Fish); Jay Clark, Outdoor America; David Hawkins, Mississippi Outdoors; Kevin Michalowski, F&W Publications (Krause); Glenn Sapir, The Range Report; Bill Schneider, Lyons Press and FalconGuides; Todd Smith, Outdoor Life; Jeff Williams, Arkansas Wildlife; Risa Weinreb Wyatt, Specialty Travel; Mary Nickum, Hatchery International and Northern Aquaculture. More participants announced next month!

Mentors Needed; First-time Attendees Welcome

Members are needed to help make fellow members' first conference a success! That includes contacting the person before the conference to answer questions, describing the conference experience and introducing him or her to other members. Mentorship can significantly impact a first-timer's conference experience. The Mentor Committee will match up mentors with first-timers. OWAA's conference is one of the greatest benefits of membership. The information disseminated, networking opportunities and money-making possibilities are incredible. If you would like an experienced attendee to help ease you into and through your first conference – to offer tips, introduce you and provide a familiar face – contact Jay Cassell at 45 Sunny Ridge Rd., Katonah, NY 10536, 914-232-2933, jhcassell@aol.com.

And here are comments from student Rich Creason in Indiana:

To be quite honest, I, personally, have not found a lot of use out of the writer's groups as far as new markets. OWAA has a lot of available contacts for markets in their newsletters; they just are not the type of magazines I usually write for. As you have probably noted in my writing assignments, I seldom write hunting and fishing stories. That is the large majority of offerings in most writers' groups' newsletters. Also, OWAA and AGLOW (I don't know about SEOPA yet) offer a "Meet the Editors" at conference. Once again, they are mostly from magazines that do not use my type of material. I find it hard to agree with many publications that say they are "outdoor" magazines, but only cover hunting and fishing, with maybe a conservation or trapping article thrown in occasionally. There's a lot more to the outdoors than just that (even though I have hunted and fished for five decades.)

What I do benefit from is the personal contact with other writers who I learn from then, and in future endeavors. I meet many of my tourism contacts at conferences where I schedule most of my travels. Manufacturer reps are also very helpful when needing products to do a story about.

I guess each organization has a lot to offer. It's just up to each individual to decide for himself how much of it is useful. Those are some of my random thoughts bouncing around in all the empty space available.
Rich.

GETTING PAID FOR YOUR WRITING

If you are having trouble getting paid for your articles, or finding out when they will be published, you may take heart in this excerpt about William Shawn, past editor of the New Yorker (recently portrayed by Bob Balaban in the movie Capote).

From the National Post:

"...Even before the movie, Shawn's posthumous reputation was troubled. Renata Adler, in her memoir, GONE: THE LAST DAYS OF THE NEW YORKER,

displays extremely ambivalent feelings about him. She loved his quiet grace and his devotion to excellence but found his silences and refusal to make up his mind infuriating. Writers didn't know when (or even if) an accepted piece of writing would appear in print and sometimes didn't know how much they were to be paid...." **Gee, that sounds awfully familiar!**

Book author, magazine and column writer, Dennis Reid in Victoria, B.C. sends along this advice for those who are having difficulty getting paid for their work.

I wanted to respond to the issue of difficulty of receiving payment for written work expressed in your newsletter. Perhaps you can pass it on to students of yours who may find my comments useful.

My approach in solving any problem is this:

State what the problem is from your perspective.

Figure out in concrete terms what you want for the problem to be finished, over, resolved.

Don't get angry.

If you don't get success, ask for the next person up the chain.

I use this process from the local corner store all the way to the Royal Bank CEO.

It works. Your statement of the problem has to have some sort of logic to it, including, as a customer, I am not happy. And before contacting anyone, make sure you are clear on what outcome you will accept, for the problem to be resolved. Finally, if you get angry, you lose, because you look like a jerk, so never lose your temper. Even more finally, going up the ladder of a corporation will get you to someone who has the authority to grant your request (the first levels never have authority) and also doesn't want to waste any time on the problem, and wants good relations and thus gives you your reasonable request. Then it's your turn to say thank you loud and clear.

Now, I'll give you a couple of magazine/newspaper payment issues I have had, without, of course, who the editors were.

I had an editor who told me after querying that the books were at the accountant, I waited then got back, politely, and was told it was tax time, so I waited and got back, politely, and was told the papers were in the archives and would take time, so I waited and got back, politely, and was told it was an old issue, and was over, I should have got there sooner. I pondered my next move,

and then a cheque arrived. To annoy me, the editor had made it out for \$50 less than the agreed price before I wrote the article.

Now, I have never told anyone who this is, and probably will not ever, because of the issue of self respect and the respect from others. However, I once worked for a deputy minister who told me, "Dennis, revenge is good." So try not to nurse grudges (a bad thing to do, because it drains your brain and you can't move on) but from time to time I savour the possibility of embarrassing the person.

On another problem (and a much simplified version of the story), I had difficulty raising an editor for six requests in about eight months. When I started adding up the articles sent and requested, the potential exceeded \$5000 and I was pretty choked. I did a little checking around to find out what the editor was like, and then, decided my process. I asked for the editor to respond by a particular date, and noted that I would then move further. My next step was to contact the publisher, and said I would like a response by a particular date, and noted that I would then move to a further specified stage.

Because I carried through with what I said I would do, didn't get mad and they were good people, a settlement I felt was both fair and generous was struck (flexibility required on both sides). Previously I had decided that if things didn't work out my next move was to tell the story to the OWC listserve, but this proved unnecessary, and was not a step I relished in any event. But it was part of an escalating process I decided prior to doing anything. And, of course, there was two other steps, and specified dates: contacting many other writers' organizations; and, then, sending the account to a lawyer (a pyrrhic victory at best). I didn't have to use these nor did I even mention them.

The point is that a writer has lots of influence on the situation. The way you deal with a problem affects its outcome. I am happy to continue writing articles in the second instance and, more importantly, I have more respect for the people than before.

Hope this may help your students.

D.C. Reid

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Student News

Congratulations to B.C. Graduate Jim Bailey for another feature article in B.C. Outdoor Sportfishing. Jim has really found a niche for himself writing about fishing opportunities in the Kootenay region of the province. He writes:

Roger:

Just thought I would keep you up-to-date on what is happening. I have another article in the spring issue of BC Outdoors on Kokanee Glacier and Kootenay Lakes. I also contributed the Kootenay Lakes section for the BC Lakes insert of BC Outdoors. That one came out of the blue as the editor (Ryan Pohl) called me at the last minute and asked if I could do editorials for all the lakes - due date one week. So that was a bit of a stretch as I had only been to six of the 12 lakes on his list. Anyway a little research and a few phone calls and I was able to complete it.

I also attended the Calgary Fly Fishing exposition where I was able to make some contacts and meet some of the editors and people involved in the trade.
Jim.

Student Scott Frost in New Mexico reports that the 300-word Destination piece he submitted to a Colorado magazine so the editor could test his writing ability met with such enthusiastic approval that the editor requested it be expanded to include a lot more detail. Scott writes:

Roger;

Re: the 300-word piece. I sent in the revision as per our last discussion. I guess it was pretty good...the editor wrote back saying, "Scott: this piece will work with some tweaking, just don't worry about the 300-word limit, let's make this a really good travel piece." Then he proceeded to give me a list of additional information he wants me to include—it seems to have turned into my first Travel/Destination article. I am also working on a spring Turkey piece for hunting and fishing news, and an ATV article for Bugle. Both were presented by editors to me as ideas I should work on. Not quite assignments, but on the other hand I didn't query them out either, *they* contacted *me*--kinda cool... wish I had more time. Thanks, as always--Scott.

White Fox, Saskatchewan graduate student Gerald Peterson writes, "I am still having great results with my articles for The Varmint Hunter magazine. I had another handloading article on the .270 Winchester cartridge as a varmint published in the January '06 issue." Way to go Gerald.

Ontario Graduate Don Sangster writes, "I have just finished an article titled the Etiquette of Opening day for Just Fishing magazine. I am also finishing up a piece for Western Sportsmen. They also published two other articles of mine recently, one on fishing and one on hunting. In addition, I've just received the go-ahead from Big Buck magazine. Finally, Sports Afield published that small piece they'd accepted quite a while back on field judging moose.

TJ Quesnel's E-zine the Ontario Fishing Network always provides a home for graduate student's work. The April issue is no exception, with feature articles by Tim Allard, Don Sangster and Peter Wood, all from Ontario. Way to go, guys.

Kentucky graduate Chuck Smick writes: "While I was home a few days ago, I picked up one of our smaller local papers. I sent the editor an e-mail to see if she would be interested outdoor article about the local area. She sent back a quick reply YES, but would have to check with the publisher. She asked if I expected to get paid for the articles, and if so, how much. I quoted her a price, and sent her two articles to preview. ANOTHER POTENTIAL MARKET for my work! They had no outdoor writer. I hope to get regular work from them." Since signing up for his course, Chuck has had numerous articles published in Mid-West Outdoors, Heartland Outdoors magazine, River Country Outdoors, The Heartland Sportsman Journal and Professional Bowhunter. Chuck has also been named one of the Kentucky editors of Mid-West Outdoors. Mighty impressive, Chuck!

This note from student Jamie Vasa in Garland, Utah.

One of your newsletters paid off for me with the Sportsman's Channel's request for an image. Ms. Scheuermann bought one of the images I presented to her. I know I haven't completed the course, but what I have learned has landed me a staff writer position with the Fishing and Hunting News magazine and now I am the Sports Editor and staff writer at the local newspaper The Leader. MY weekly column is called The Outdoor Lead. My only regret about becoming an outdoor writer is that I seem to spend more time on the computer and telephone doing interviews than actually working in the outdoors.

I have learned more about fishing and hunting than I ever thought I could...

Once again thanks for all your help.

Jamie (www.vasaphoto.com)

And finally, as I have said many times, good writing is where you find it.

One of my favorite mystery writers is Sue Grafton. In her book "**A**" is for Alibi she begins Chapter 14 with this beautiful bit of prose:

"In the morning I felt whole again. I ate a big breakfast in a little diner across the road from the motel, washing down bacon, scrambled eggs, and rye toast with fresh orange juice and three cups of coffee. I had the car filled up with gas, the oil checked, and then hit the road again. After Las Vegas, the desert drive was a pleasure. The land was spare, the colours subdued: a mild very pale lavender overlaid with fine dust. The sky was stark, cloudless blue, the mountain ridges like crushed velvet, wrinkled dark gray along the face. There was something appealing about all that country unconquered yet, miles and miles of terrain without neon signs. The population was reduced to kangaroo rats and ground squirrels, the rocky canyons inhabited by kit fox and desert lynx. At fifty-five miles per hour, no wildlife was visible but I heard the cry of tree frogs even in my sleep and I pictured now, from my speeding car, the clay and gravel washes filled

with buff-coloured lizards and millipedes, creatures whose adaptation to their environment include the husbanding of moisture and an aversion to hot sun. There are parasol ants in the desert that cut off leaves and carry them as sunshades over their backs, storing them later like beach umbrellas in their subterranean chambers where they live. The idea made me smile...

The North American School of Outdoor Writing

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