



Penwheels

For Escapees Writers . . . Published or Not
Fall, 2009

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR:

"Be yourself.

*Above all, let who you are, what you are, what you believe,
shine through every sentence you write, every piece you finish."*

~ John Jakes

We are an incredibly diverse lot, aren't we?

Again, I am so impressed with what we all do and how we are all able to tell others about it – *What I Did Last Summer* – in a 100 words. Some of us wrote about dramatic changes; others about terrific adventures and new challenges; and still others about revisiting timeless beliefs.

As RVers we travel – I've highlighted a couple of our members' tours for you to enjoy – one to Alaska and another, a train trip to LA.

Through the Forum (Bulletin Board), we share and are encouraged to explore new paths and ideas – like how Twittering can help our efforts as writers. Some ideas are included in the Resource section of the Newsletter.

Enjoy and Learn!

Announcement from our Membership Volunteer – Joanne Alexakis

The Penwheels BOF newsletter is offered on-line – paperless as well as hardcopy!

You need to be registered on the Penwheels electronic bulletin board (PWBB) in order to receive this feature. The "on-line only" newsletter subscribers receive 6 issues of this newsletter (1 1/2 year's worth) as compared to only 4 issues (one year's worth) of the hard copy that is sent to you via snail mail.

Renewing your Penwheels BoF newsletter subscription is easy!

Hard-copies - Expiration date is noted on your mailing label – Please send an \$8.00 check made out to **Penwheels** to: Joanne Alexakis, 140 Rainbow Dr. #4093, Livingston TX 77399.

On-line subscribers - receive on-line notification of their subscription expiration (if their email addresses are up-to-date).

The cost is \$8.00 for either method of delivery.

Lynne Benjamin

PS-Sometimes the way I spell things may not be the same as you, but I am Canadian, eh?!

This issue:

- What's gone on between then and now
 - Writers' Groups News
 - "100 Word Submissions"
 - Contributions and Contributors
 - *I've been published* – Bragging Rights!
- New Members and profiles
- BLOG List
- Resources
-

"100 Word Submission"
for Winter Issue:

Why Are You Not Writing

Suggested by Joan Pomeroy

Send hard-copy Submissions to:

Lynne Benjamin
c/o Joanne Alexakis
140 Rainbow Drive #4093
Livingston TX 77399-1040

Soft-copies to: 2firststep@gmail.com

Submission due date: December 1, 2009

What's Gone on between Then and Now

Writers' Groups News

The Writers' Group by Helen Taylor SKP# 295

The North Ranch Writers' Group meets weekly, with a suggested topic to write a short essay on, or we can share a different topic. Mostly mine are life experiences, but some do darn good fiction. Some write science fiction even while staying "on topic" and others have really strange imaginations! We take turns being what we call the facilitator each week. Even in the summer, we have a good group, and get campground visitors along with lot owners.

Did I share with you some of the "presentations" we've done? Karen Cox comes up with the scenario and characters. Then, from written characters slips of paper, each writer draws a name, then an activity.

"The Wedding" with the characters of bride, groom, parents of each, siblings, etc. was our first try. Writing and reading is in the voice of the character, not a narrator.

Next was "The Baby", different family, and all, conception, baby shower, birth, etc. Then we did a "Family Reunion", and instead of an activity, each Writer put a "secret" in the basket to draw from. No one knew what anyone's secret would be until the presentation.

All the performances were done in the Clubhouse for anyone who showed up.

The North Ranch Newsletter, the Hoot is history - discontinued after Summer 09 issue.

Writers Group News by Marianna Nelson SKP# 45711

I bring you news, not about the Writers Group at Fun N Sun but about the fiction-writing group my 16-year-old granddaughter in Connecticut started with her friend. At one of the sessions, each kid wrote a biographic profile of a character they had in mind. The fun began when the writers paired up and described how their characters would react when they met each other. I'm waiting for Abby to send me one of these scenarios, but in the meantime, I pass this idea on to you as a fun way to develop characters.

Contributions

What I Did This Summer - "100 Word Submissions"

The Rushing Word-Stream of May 1 to August 31, 2009 – Contributed by Barbara A. Bowers, SKP #77439

Conference: Women of Faith: Awesome

Rally: Computer: Learned, Taught

Celebrate: Birthdays (3), Mother's Day, Graduation (niece)

Rally: Escapade: Friends, Learning, Laughing, Rain, Volunteering, Eating, Sharing

June: Gone in a flash: Anniversaries (2), Birthdays (2), Doctor, Play, Concert, Sunburn

Rally: Allison: John Deere, WPA, Mourn Coach Thomas

Clean: Machine shed: Lots to sell, Raccoon poop, Memories, Freedom

Independence Day: Rain, Family, Gratitude

Church: Drive van, Stay with homeless families, Liturgist, VBS, Sing, Study, Praise

Work: Phones, Accounting, Intercom Bingo, Read blogs, Discussion forums

Everett's Cousins' Family Reunion: Living History Farms

State Fair: Family (mine)

Rally: Okoboji: Elected president, Great friends, Family

What I did this summer – Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak SKP# 19361

Begin May 11 - Pine, Arizona.

Enter Alberta, Canada at Sweetgrass, MT, visit Lynne & Fred Benjamin

Canadian Rockies with hot springs, black bear, mountain goats

Alaska Highway to Whitehorse - wood buffalo, stone sheep, more bears, caribou

Reunion with Skagway - town and a friend

North on the Klondike Highway to Dawson City, Yukon - gold-rush history, sternwheeler graveyard

Top of the World to Chicken - funky town

Tok to Fairbanks and the Arctic Circle - permafrost, 24-hour daylight, Chena Hot springs

Denali- wow! hunting fox, grizzly, moose

Anchorage - stock up, Hank the Moose, baby moose

July 25 - exploring the Kenai

Back to Pine? Open ended. Taking our time

What We did on Our Summer Vacation – Contributed by Pete Gray SKP #80765

We parked for FREE!

We left our winter home in Texas' Rio Grande Valley on April 24th and parked for free in Texas, New Mexico, and Southern California. Then we visited a couple of National Parks and went north to park free in Northern California, Oregon and Washington. After that we went across the border and parked free in British Columbia and Alberta. Then we moved south to park for free in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan. Finally we got home to Ontario on August 23rd.

All this free parking has me exhausted.

Contributed by Sandy Johnson SKP #86982

We're at the hospital now. June 2, 5 am, and the paperwork is done. And so we wait. This is the second rotator cuff surgery, so we know what we're facing for the next four months. I am relieved he doesn't have more than two shoulders. They say aging is not for sissies. It is not for sissies' wives either. Coming to Colorado Springs was once a cool summer respite from the Texas and Arizona heat. This year, it is a blue-sky, soul-lifting recovery room.

Contributed by Kay Kennedy SKP# 23282

While most of you were probably busy being creative, we decided to make a major change in our lifestyle by moving into a house. Yes, a solid adobe home that doesn't rock and roll when the winds howl! Being slightly out of shape, we took two months to get moved and settled. And no, we have not abandoned the traveling lifestyle. The motorhome waits ready for our next RV adventure.

Still, we miss not being able to tell strangers that we're homeless. Envy? Pity? Confusion? No more questioning looks . . .

What Did I Do This Summer? – Contributed by Eva Knapp SKP# 102696

Summers days were mothers telling children "Go out and play." One day we would wish that was all we had to do.

Working as a teacher meant time off, but not free time. Now there were children at home to tell "Go out and play."

Pack up, drive, and camp. Hardly a vacation.

Now retirement, widowhood, and time to play. So much to do and too little time.

Recently, I have learned to snorkel, cross country ski, snow mobile, and drive a dog sled – been to South Seas, Peru and Germany.

What did I do this summer? Which summer?

Contributed by Darlene Miller SKP #50781

Our dream is to see all of North America. In twelve years of full-timing, we have seen all the states and provinces except for Newfoundland and Labrador. July 4, we left Prince Edward Island, entered the eastern tip of New Brunswick and headed into Nova Scotia. We will go to the Tattoo in Halifax and board the ferry for Newfoundland this week. To see our adventures go to <http://rvchuckles.blogspot.com>

And what did you do this summer? – twitter: WasATimeWhen - Contributed by Sam Penny SKP ##41036

What I did this summer is commit myself to a really long project, but one that should be very interesting. It will also be interesting to see how the readership responds to this approach to telling a long tale. I started playing with twitter and set up an account at www.twitter.com/prudentrver.

It has proved to be an interesting exercise in writing, trying to say something meaningful in 160 characters; sort of like writing short poetic snippets. I find that the process acts as a filter on what you start to put in and what comes out. Fun!

(More information in the Resource section of the Newsletter)

Contributed by Joan Pomeroy - SKP# 75145

As Jerry and I stood on the driveway of our new home, the night of July 4th, we could easily see the fireworks display in downtown Waxahachie, Texas. Patriotic songs played in the back ground, and I thought about the freedoms we have as a Nation, the privileges we have and the

people who fight for us to maintain these freedoms. Just then "God Bless America" started to play. And I could truly say thank you God, from above, for the blessings we in America sometimes take for granted.

Contributed by Helen Taylor SKP# 295

I went to a High School reunion, meeting up with old friends, including an old boyfriend and his wife, my best friend since junior high! We visited with our "Round Robin" group of ten classmates still communicating after 55 years.

The "Robins" have put together a cookbook of not only recipes, but memories and stories of life in Iowa in the 40s and 50s, and we're now working on getting it published. The recipes include Grandma's Oatmeal Cookies, and two versions of White Chicken Chili, about 50 recipes total. Stories in the book include "How We Became the Famous North Nine" (plus an original poem), "Scoopin' the Loop", and "The Summer of '55". Most stories lead to recipes.

Summer Adventures

Inspiration in Dawson City, Yukon – Narrative by Jaimie/photos by George (Bruzenak) SKP# 19361

When we RV travel we enjoy stopping at independent bookstores along the way and reading books by local authors. In Dawson City, we had a different literary experience. Three well known authors lived in Dawson for a time and you can visit their homes. All are on 8th Street several blocks up a hill from downtown.



"Jack London wrote 1000 words a day for more than 17 years. This turns out to be 365,000 words a year for a grand total of 6.25 million words. He was resolute about his habit and seldom missed writing the required number of words no matter where he was or what he was doing. London was gregarious and friendly and answered every letter written to him by aspiring writers. His influence is readily seen in the works of Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac, Henry Miller, Eugene O'Neill, John Dos Pasos, ad infinitum." Dick North

Jack London is probably the most widely known of the three. Born in Oakland, California, he came to the area on the Klondike gold rush in 1898. He spent most of the time on a claim in the goldfields outside Dawson City. London was only in the Dawson area for about 13 months. He found no gold and developed scurvy but his arduous experiences getting to the Dawson and his life there would be the basis for his most well known books like *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*.

In 1936, trappers discovered London's cabin with his signature on the back wall. In 1965, the cabin was found again, dismantled and the logs divided up and shipped to Dawson City and Oakland. His cabin was reconstructed in both places, each using some of the original materials. In Dawson City, it sits next to an interpretive cabin containing numerous photos, documents, articles and memorabilia about his writing and adventurous life. Besides the gold rush, it included covering the Russo-Japanese war and the Mexican Revolution for Hearst papers and sailing around the world in the 50-foot "Snark."

Just down the street is the cabin of another author, well known if you've ever come to western Canada. You may have heard a recitation of "The Cremation of Sam McGee." Robert Service, who became a millionaire as a result of his poems, lived in Dawson City for a few years in the early 1900s. He worked in Whitehorse as a bank clerk, was transferred to Dawson City where he began sending out poems. His income from his wonderful rhyming, story-telling poems soon exceeded his income as a bank clerk and he quit.



This sign is in Robert Service's cabin: "Rebuffs are only rungs on the ladder of success."

Parks Canada presents a daily program at his cabin and opens the grounds for viewing each afternoon. Our interpreter was ironically named Sam McGee and entertained us with a few of Service's lesser known poems and the fascinating story of his life. In his cabin, a tiny typewriter sat on his small writing desk in one of the two rooms. His porch, at one time, probably overlooked the town and the Yukon River in the distance before houses and trees blocked the view.

The third author is Pierre Berton, probably not well known outside of Canada. He was a historian and worked in the newspaper and television industries. I first heard of him when I was hired to be an interpretive ranger at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park in Skagway in 1998. His book, *Klondike*, was required reading. Berton popularized narrative history; he made the gold rush come alive. Berton was also the narrator for "City of Gold," the movie shown at the park several times a day introducing the gold rush. His childhood home in Dawson City is now a writer's retreat. Canadian writers can apply for a three-month stay.

To be on 8th Street, where the vibrations of their writings still linger in this well-preserved gold rush town, felt like we stepped back in time. Grass was growing on the Service cabin roof, the sun shown through the trees. George and I could imagine sitting out on the porch in this peaceful setting, having time to relax, the words flowing. Three authors, three very different styles. By following their talent and their calling, they each left their mark on the literary world. Very inspiring!

Summer's High Point—Los Angeles By Train –

Contributed by Marianna Nelson

Bruce and I haven't hung up our RV keys yet but we're close to it. This is the first year since 1994 we haven't vacationed (or lived) in our motor home.

At 4:30 a.m. on July 30, we walked the deserted streets between our hotel and San Antonio's Union Station, rolling our suitcases behind us. At the station (which is open between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.)



we checked our bags and climbed aboard Amtrak's Sunset Limited. It didn't take long to get into the rhythm of the train. With Bruce riding backwards, we sat in convertible seats (chairs in the daytime, bunk beds at night) in our 6' x 3 1/2' roomette while we read books and watched barren mountains and scrubby ranchland roll by. After at least nine hours in Texas, gradually the landscape changed to lush groves of pecan trees and later in California to wind farms with their lazily revolving blades.

In the dining car, the steward seated passengers with people they'd never met before, a policy that makes train riding a friendly way to travel. At breakfast on day 1, a retired firefighter/ rescue worker, got me psyched up about the train trips he's taken. At lunch a retired technical writer from Hughes Aircraft, mentioned she's editing a book a former H.A. president is writing, *Hughes After Howard*. We were especially interested because the son we were on our way to visit worked for Hughes Aircraft.

At dinner, the steward seated us across from a young man with a tattoo on his neck. He and his 10-year-old son were going to California for the week. We didn't learn their names, nor they ours, but as we talked we got the impression that the young man and the boy's mother lived apart and that the boy and his father hardly knew each other. (A more imaginative writer than I would have had fun creating a story about them.) At breakfast on day 2, one of our tablemates was on her way to meet the birth mother for whom she'd been searching the last 30 years. The other, a Vietnam War veteran, was trying to sort out his experiences and write about them. Shortly after breakfast, we arrived at Los Angeles's Union Station 1 1/2 hours early (28 1/2 hrs. total time), a little tired but for that I blame the 2-hour time change.

Riding the train to and from LA allowed us to view places we'd seen before from a different perspective. I recommend it as another fun way to travel.

To join the **Penwheels** bulletin board and get daily (almost) digests, send a blank e-mail to: penwheels-subscribe@yahoogroups.com Please send an e-mail to me, Alice (youshoulda@aol.com), as well, letting me know that you have subscribed, so as Moderator I can inform Yahoo to accept your request. Include your name, **SKP #**, and when you joined **Penwheels BOF**. Make sure you sign up for the daily digest once you have been accepted. If you don't start receiving your digests, please contact me. Welcome and many hugs, **Alice Zyetz**, Moderator and **Jaimie Bruzenak**, co-Moderator

Contributors to this issue of the Penwheels Newsletter:

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Kay Kennedy
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Darlene Miller
Marianna Nelson
Sam Penny
Joan Pomeroy
Helen Taylor

I've Been Published – Bragging Rights!

Let Us Know About Your Current Publications

- Your Name and SKP #
- Title of Piece
- Magazine or Book and Date

Lynne Benjamin, SKP# 86190, *Snowbird Connections*, RV West, September, 2009.

- RV West E-Mag - <http://www.rvwest.com/journeys/rvtales/snowbirdconnections.php>

George and Jaimie Bruzenak, SKP # 676, *Two Thousand Miles of Wonderful: A Road Trip through Scenic Western Canada* - featured on the Front Page of Road Trip America (<http://www.roadtripamerica.com/rv/Western-Canada-RV-Trip.htm>)

Terry Hager, SKP # 48315, - *How about more than two dozen rejections from agents for my first mystery? Some authors I know said they queried a hundred or more before they found one. My wife, Ruth, congratulates me on every one. I'm not discouraged and I'm having fun with the revision process for my second in the series*

(Editor's note – Terry you deserve a Hero's Button in addition to Bragging Rights)

Carolyn Harris, SKP # - I did a guest post last week:

<http://cheapoair.wordpress.com/2009/08/07/hauraki-gulf-islands-new-zealand/>

Betty Mulcahy, SKP# 76334, *Your Pet's Afterlife* (page 83); *Store No More* (page 50), Escapee Magazine, July/August, 2009

BLOG List

Lynne Benjamin

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

Jaimie Bruzenak & Alice Zyetz

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

Carolyn Harris

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

Kay Kennedy

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

Barbara Kaufmann

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

Patty Lonsbary

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

Bess McBride

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

Darlene Miller

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

Marianna and Bruce Nelson

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

Betty Prange

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

Elaine Seavey

- <http://www.elaineseavey.wordpress.com>

Resources

How to Get Yourself to Use Fewer Words by Jon Greer

(<http://blogs.bnet.com/pr/?p=370>)

Do you use too many words when you write? Who doesn't? If so, perhaps you should heed the timeless words of William Strunk Jr., author of the #1 book about writing, [The Elements of Style](#). **Omit needless words:** Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

But how to get yourself to use fewer words?

[Joan Stewart, The Publicity Hound](#), has a simple technique: pay yourself.

Stewart suggests that you tell yourself you will give yourself \$1 for every word you omit from your press release, blog post, pitch, or any other important written communication. "I've had people 'pay' themselves \$60 or \$70," Stewart says.

Give it a try!

Twitter (tweeting) – As a Way to Write Fewer Words by Sam Penny

A couple of years ago I joined the Write a Novel in November Project to start on a new novel, but ran out of steam after 40,000 words in three weeks. I have pushed the story around and updated parts and thought about finishing it, but just never got around to doing anything really. It occurred to me to put my half-finished novel through that same filter, and I started www.twitter.com/WasATimeWhen. I will publish my novel 160 characters at a time.

I figure the novel will shrink to about 45,000 words by being forced to use brevity and staying on focus, so at 20 words per tweet, it will take 2,250 tweets to post the whole story. I need to keep the readers (called followers) hooked and waiting for more, so I plan about 7 tweets a day,

or 320 days to publish my novel on twitter.com, plus or minus 100 days. Maybe by November, 2010, it will be done. I will also set up a webpage on one of my websites where I collect what has been published so people who come in late can catch up. In the end I will do more traditional publishing, definitely as an e-book and possibly as a hardcopy.

FYI about twitter: go to www.twitter.com to sign-in (or register) and get to the Update Page where you can send a tweet. When you register you will choose a unique name ("yourname"), and later you can go to www.twitter.com/yourname to see your latest posts. There are links to other things you can do. It is really pretty simple. Try it.

EzineArticles had a good article on *How Twitter Can Make YOU a Better Writer*

(recommended by Jaimie Bruzenak) but they do not allow reprinting. The article talks about:

- **Keeping things simple** – they point out that "*Hemingway was a master at boiling things down to their essence and writing simply - but profoundly.*"
- **Focussing on one thing at a time** – "*98% of writing is knowing what to leave out. Twitter helps you to sort out the "nice to know" from the "need to know."*"
- **Noticing the little things** – bringing interest to mundane topics
- **Finishing your thought** – twittering forces you to finish your thought

PENWHEELS

An Escapees RV Club Birds-of-a-feather (BOF) group for RVers interested in writing of all kinds. Some are published and some are not. The purpose of Penwheels is to establish a support network of RVing writers for sharing information, discussion, critiques, and socializing in person, snail and electronic mail.

Penwheels is published four times a year. Subscription is \$8 (USD) per year. In order to belong to any SKP BOF group, you must be a member in good standing of the **Escapees RV Club**. You may contact the Club at 1-888-757-2582.

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