



Penwheels

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

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR:

*"Put it before them briefly so they will read it,
clearly so they will appreciate it,
picturesquely so they will remember it and,
above all,
accurately so they will be guided by its light."
~ Joseph Pulitzer*

The last Newsletter (Winter, 2008) came to you with the help of many Volunteer Members (as well as all you who contributed) – Thanks, all. We were on the road for that last edition and are still on the road for this one and sometimes we just don't have access to the Internet.

The last three months have taken us in many different directions – some new and some familiar – and many *Blank Pages*. I seemed to have so much on my plate and had a tough time stepping back and just trying to do one step at a time. Okay, fall back and regroup – I started on a 100 word piece on *facing the blank page* and I got a better handle on what was going on with me. My stab at the 100 words on *facing the blank page* is in the *100 Word Submissions Section*.

Quartzsite was just filled with *Escapees* and saw many *get-togethers* including the *Boomers – Writing Group*. A few of us were able to take advantage of the *Authors Fair* at the *Reader's Oasis Books* with Paul Winer (the book store's owner who is famous for only wearing a *thong*) and I did managed to do a *Book Reading* and *Signing* at the Quartzsite Library.

I'm out of ideas for themes for the Newsletter – ANY suggestions would be much appreciated. We will continue with the 100 word submissions and, of course, the *Bragging Rights*; *BLOG List*; *New Members and profiles*; *Resources*; and *Book Reviews* – BUT – do we want a theme?

This issue:

- PENWHEELS BoF - Financial Statement for 2008
- 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
- Book Review

"100 Word Submission" for Next Issue:

"The Weather" – suggested by Helen Taylor
100 words or less

How does the weather affect your writing?

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: June 1, 2009

Lynne Benjamin

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

Announcement from our Membership Volunteer – Joanne Alexakis

The Penwheels BOF newsletter is being offered on-line - paperless! 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. The cost is \$8.00 for either method of delivery.

To join the Penwheels bulletin board (PWBB) and get daily (almost) digests and access to the on-line PW newsletter, send a blank e-mail to: penwheels-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Also please send an e-mail to our PWBB moderator, Alice Zyetz, (youshoulda@aol.com) letting her know that you have subscribed, so she can inform Yahoo to accept your request. Please include your name and SKP# in this email.

PENWHEELS BoF - Financial statement for 2008

Balance January 1, 2008	\$430.96
Income Jan 1 - Dec 31	\$300.00
Expenses Jan 1 - Dec 31	(\$279.19)
(photocopying newsletters, postage)	

Balance December 31, 2008	\$451.77

Number of members on Jan. 1, 2008 = 84

Number of members on Dec. 31, 2008 = 71

Submitted by Joanne Alexakis, SKP #19367

Penwheels BoF membership coordinator

Submitted - January 1, 2009

What's Gone on between Then and Now

Writers' Groups News

Search for Penwheelers in Quartzsite (edited) - by Darlene Miller

Although there wasn't a particular spot where Penwheelers camped many of us met in Quartzsite, AZ during the last two weeks of January, 2009. Some of us were at Reader's Oasis Books Author's Fair – Darlene Miller, selling *More RV Chuckles and Chuckholes- More Confessions of Happy Campers*; Lynne Benjamin - *Jacob's Tails. . .(Back-to-the-Land)*; Alice Zyetz and Jamie Hall Bruzenak selling their books - *Support Your RV Lifestyle, RV Traveling Tales* and *You Shoulda Listened to Your Mother* and Patty Lonsbary came to visit.

Rollie and Sharon Vander Zyl, Terry and I walked the trails in Celia's Garden.

Myrna Courtney, who is one of the founders of Penwheels, was at Happy Hour in Broomerville. She told about the "Joy Book" that her husband, Gerry Courtney, wrote while he was so ill. Gerry found something everyday that held joy even though times were difficult during his last illness. Myrna purchased one of my books that was auctioned off with the proceeds going to CARE.



Boomers' Writing Group – Contributed by Darlene Miller

We discussed our writing and marketing during the writer's meeting in Boomerville. Tom Doyle told us about "*Writing Down the Bones*" by Natalie Goldberg before George and Jaimie Bruzenak, Lee Pease, Tom Doyle, Jo Ann and Doug Dubrouillet, Else McKibben, George Keefe, Vicki King and I wrote on the topic "Saguaros."

On Tuesday, January 27, another writer's meeting was held. Alice Zyetz read to us from Natalie Goldberg's new book, "*Old Friend from Far Away*" before Tom Doyle, Alice Zyetz, Jack Dohallow, Doug Dubrouillet, and Jamie Bruzenak and I wrote and shared our writing on the topics of "Nightmares" and "What I Didn't Do."



Contributions - "100 Word Submissions"

'Facing the Blank Page'

**Is this a challenge for you?
How do you overcome this challenge?
Share the resources you have found?**

"The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamouring to become visible." ~ Vladimir Nabakov

Contributed by Jackie Barker, the wanderer

I found some time, now there is the dreaded blank page. What to write? Work on my book that has not gotten past chapter 5 for two years? Write an essay about recycling or population control? Or maybe write to my sister who loves to write and receive letters?

My hardest task is to get my mind to settle on one train of thought. I have so many "irons in the fire" in my brain that I usually cop-out and do nothing. Another procrastination accomplished. I am good at that. That is why you don't hear much from me.

Contributed by Lynne Benjamin

I face the blank page

Fireworks go off in my head – the sparks splatter in every which direction

Which spark do I follow first?

I can't decide so I click on a computer game and start to play.

The sparks vanish.

Contributed by Barbara Bowers

Vast, empty, stark.... How could something so plain be so frightening? The openness of it intimidates me. Like a huge house, with lots of empty rooms, the blank page offers so much

opportunity, but also asks so much from me. I am required to fill it with thoughts, but I am not always sure that they are worthy of the immortality of being recorded.

I guess that is one of the reasons I enjoy living in an RV—not so much empty space. Like my writings, I try to surround myself with only that which is valuable to the heart.

Eighty-eight word – contributed by Janet Carter

1. Never expect to start writing when you sit down to the blank page. That's your last step, not your first.
2. Decide what you want to write about, i.e., a story about your pet.
3. Decide whom you want to write it for, i.e., Cats Magazine.
4. In a library read the past 6 months of Cats and make notes, i.e., article length, tone of voice, opening, hook paragraphs, structure, side boxes, photos.
5. On a scrap of paper scribble random general notes and sentence ideas for your story.
6. Now sit down.

Writer's Block by Robin Merrill

A mood, a dam, a maelstrom of conflict and anxiety—writer's block knows many faces. My most recent episode arose from an excess of creative ideas, and the equally creative ideas of what would happen once written.

If I wrote one story, my life would continue in a known marketing and promotional reality. If I wrote the other story, it would of necessity veer in another direction. As a novelist, the required commitment of several years is not taken lightly.

My resolution? Bow to the new vision and start afresh. Decision made, block gone, I write.

Contributed by Joan Pomeroy #75145

A blank page is a matter of perspective: is it just staring at you, waiting to be filled, or is it sitting there staring back at you and needing nothing? What I do with a blank page is start by filling it with whatever subject I am writing about. Not that the first draft is ever perfect, but it does get a blank page to stop staring at me and become a page wanting to be filled.

Memoirs by Doris Hutchins

Facing a blank page is not a challenge for me, since I have started writing short stories with my two brothers and two sisters. We are in the midst of compiling our autobiographies from childhood to present day. When we come across an old photo we decide which author would like to use it to enhance their story. We are enjoying the camaraderie with each other. At completion, we will present the Memoirs to our children, grandchildren and others, so each will be able to travel throughout their relatives lives in future days to come.

Facing the blank page – Contributed by Beth Ramos

Subject, verb,
Occasional predicate,
Describe the wonder
With which I dedicate
This piece to Br. Francis

He asked for a reflection a week on our class discussion. "If you can't say it shortly, you haven't reflected well." If he knew the pressure he'd put on us to change our prayer life, he didn't let on. A Franciscan for twenty years, a graduate student for ten, we were his dissertation subjects because we wanted to know what he did. Did he know his wisdom would haunt me every time I faced an empty page?

Contributed by Alice Zyetz

Facing the blank page. Aaaarrgh! I hate it. I'm a writer. Why can't I write? Is it 100 words yet? What only 20? Well at least I've finished 20%. Let's do another word count. Oooh. 34 words. Made it through one-third. So what can I say? Follow the master, Natalie Goldberg. "Keep writing no matter what." Aha. At 55 words I am finally at the message: When you face the blank page, keep writing the most ridiculous stuff that comes to mind. Eventually you will find your voice. Your message will be clear. (And it only took 93 words to get there. Ooops 105 now)

Contributions that are too long or don't fit the Newsletter can be uploaded as files to the Penwheels Bulletin Board by Alice. If you want a copy of something via snail mail send a SASE to Alice at: 45120 Hwy 79 S, #426 Aguanga, CA 92536 and she will send it to you.

Contributors to this issue of the Penwheels Newsletter:

Jackie Barker
Lynne Benjamin
Jaimie Bruzenak
Barbara A. Bowers
Janet Carter
Doris Hutchins
Sandy Johnson
Patty Lonsbary

Robin Merrill
Darlene Miller
Marianna Nelson
Joan Pomeroy
Betty Prange
Beth Ramos
Helen Taylor
Alice Zyetz

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, Viewfinder-Snowed In, Escapees Magazine, January/February 2009 (page 20)

California—Here We Come, RV West E-Mag - www.rvwest.com/journeys/index_benjamin.php

Barbara Bowers, SKP #77439, Iowans Have Memory Problems, Iowa Wild Roses Newsletter, February 2009, (page 3)

Jaimie Bruzenak: One of the 53 stories for inspiration and encouragement that were selected for this year's edition of Bylines: 2009 Writer's Desk Calendar – a weekly planner for writers (see Resources section).

Sandy Johnson: *Desert Stillness*, Escapee Magazine, September/October 2008

Patty Lonsbary: *"Off the Beaten Path"*, FMCA website, February 1st, stories about our experiences of life on the road and my story on Winslow, Arkansas

Betty Mulcahy: I just had an article published in Legacy Magazine about the steamboat exhibit at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Marianna Nelson for Fun N Sun Writers Group

Fun N Sun Then N Now, published by the Writers Group at Fun N Sun, is filled with fascinating facts, stories, and poems to interest any RVer Winter Texan, or visitor to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. I'm happy to say that here at Fun N Sun we're sold out of this wonderful book, but don't despair--you can still order your copy online at: www.lulu.com/content/4932781. This fun-to-read book traces the deep South Texas roots of this friendly RV resort from its beginnings in 1967 to the exciting, popular destination it continues to be today.

Helen Taylor for North Ranch Writers' Group: *Mystery at North Ranch*, Certificate from the Writers Digest Self-Published Contest

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

New Members

Bernie Fuller SKP# 32

Eva Martha Knapp

BLOG List

Lynne Benjamin

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

Jaimie Bruzenak & Alice Zyetz

<http://blog.rvlifeandstyleexperts.com/>

Carolyn Harris.

- <http://travelingnewzealand.blogspot.com/>
- <http://wednesdaywoman.livejournal.com/>

Kay Kennedy

- <http://boomersrememberhistory.blogspot.com>
- <http://portablewritingnewsletter.blogspot.com>
- <http://freelancewriter.booklocker.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

Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak

Bylines: 2009 Writer's Desk Calendar is a weekly planner for writers and includes 53 stories for inspiration and encouragement. It includes many pages to keep writers on track with their writing goals.

You can purchase a copy at www.bylinescalendar.com Also, read the guidelines for submissions for next year. Submissions are due by February 1, 2009. Pay is \$5, a copy of the calendar, and discounts on additional copies.

ONE IDEA FROM THE BYLINES CALENDAR:

This could be a good way to spur writing- Deborah Lee Luskin's brother knew she wanted to write fiction, even though she was getting a lot of nonfiction assignments. He said, "Pay yourself to write. Send me a check for \$300 and I'll send it back when you meet your deadline with a short story."

She asked, "And, if I default?"

"I'll contribute it to some heinous cause."

It worked. She wrote a short story and got it in by the deadline.

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life

Anne Lamott, Pantheon Books, 1994

Contributed by Beth Ramos

"This is what separates (writers) from ordinary people: the belief, deep in our hearts, that if we build our (sand) castles well enough, somehow the ocean won't wash them away. I think this is a wonderful kind of person to be." Anne Lamott.

If you too want to sit by the ocean and build "sand castles" with words, you can find no better companion than Anne Lamott. She believes our purpose in writing is to tell the truth and she uses frank and funny anecdotes from her own life to open us to the truth of ours. In addition, she gives us practical advice because she's as much a teacher as she is a wise and witty companion.

Start with short assignments: When Anne's brother was a child he was to write a report about birds. Surrounded by books and file cards he was overwhelmed until his dad put his arm around his shoulder and said "Its bird by bird, buddy." That's all we really need to know about writing, although this little book gives us much, much more.

Commit to yourself: If you choose to put words to paper, you have a truth to tell. To discover the truth in your plot, your characters, your experience she suggests writing 300 words a day, others say a notebook a month or two hours at a desk. The choice is yours, but commit to something!

Deal with Writers Block: She says, "Writers Block suggests that you are constipated or stuck when the truth is you are empty." Her advice? Write something on anything, and then go out and live to fill yourself up.

Call a Friend: Writing is a solitary profession, but one ought not do it alone. Join a writers group to talk about what works, what doesn't, what might make your piece stronger. A group will help you explore your style, direction and whether what you're writing rings true. Having a group makes it easier to make a commitment to yourself to get a certain amount done.

In addition, have a couple of people you can trust with your drafts to be frankly honest without being brutal – people who will love your baby as much as you do and will have the courage to say you're a lousy parent. These are the people you turn to when your draft is finished and you think you're ready to publish. These are the people you can trust to say you are not ready in such a way that you'll want to keep on writing.

Book Reviews

Contributed by Jaimie Hall Bruzenak

A Writer's Book of Days: a Spiritual Companion & Lively Muse for the Writing Life

by Judy Reeves

Are you having trouble getting started writing? I highly recommend Judy Reeves' book, *A Writer's Book of Days*. Not only does she have a topic for each day, but hundreds of other tips and ideas. Today's topic, February 4 for example, is "Write about a black and white photograph."

Here are a few intriguing ideas and thoughts:

You might picture your writing heroes as sitting down and writing a brilliant first draft. Some had quirks and idiosyncrasies. Others had favorite writing position. Do you always write sitting in a chair? Reeves mentions six positions plus several writers each who wrote that way. Here they are with one writer as an example:

Standers - Ernest Hemingway

Lie-ers down - Dame Edith Sitwell (who wrote in an open coffin!)

Bathtub soakers - Benjamin Franklin

Writes in the nude - D. H. Lawrence

Cigar smoker - Mark Twain (40/day)

After a long walk-ers - Charles Dickens (20-30 miles/day)

Some are more practical like explaining the difference between writing practice and journal writing. She gives the reader ways to start their own writing group or silence the inner critic.

This is a book you can read straight through or, open it when you need an idea or inspiration. Read the page, then follow through on an idea. Such a variety. You'll find something that resonates.

One thing she said is, "As for the idea that 'practice makes perfect,' it's a lie. There is no perfect, only better and sometimes very, very good."

Every writer should have a copy. ISBN: 1-57731-100-0

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.

Editorial submissions are best submitted via e-mail to: 2firststep@gmail.com

Or snail mail to:
Lynne Benjamin
c/o Joanne Alexakis
140 Rainbow Drive #4093
Livingston TX 77399-1040

Writers-in-Residence

* Jojoba Hills Writers Group
SKP Jojoba Hills RV Resort
Aguanga, CA 92536
Alice Zyetz

* North Ranch Writers Group
SKP North Ranch RV Resort
Congress, AZ 85332-0039
Norma Scheall 928-685-3552

Penwheels Volunteers

Editor: Lynne Benjamin

Membership:

Joanne Alexakis
140 Rainbow Drive #4093
Livingston TX 77399-1040
joannealex@earthlink.net

Yahoo E-Forum: Alice Zyetz

Travelling Library: Jaimie Bruzenak

Printing & Mailing: Beth Ramos

Historian: Doris Hutchins

PENWHEELS

Beth Ramos
900 Spring Park Street #303
Celebration, FL 34747

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE