

The Writers Network News, April 2015

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Follow my Write In Style creative-writing blog at <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for local meeting notices today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Note: I have shortened some links in this newsletter with the help of www.tinyurl.com, a free service that takes long web addresses and converts them to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"A poet's work is to name the unnamable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world, and stop it going to sleep." -- Salman Rushdie (born in 1947)

Rushdie's latest book, Joseph Anton, a Memoir, tells of his life after he learned he had been sentenced to death by the Ayatollah Khomeini. His crime was to have written a novel called The Satanic Verses, which was accused of being "against Islam, the Prophet and the Quran." Salman Rushdie is the author of many novel, including Grimus; Midnight's Children, which was awarded the Booker Prize in 1981 and 1993 and was judged to be the "Booker of Bookers," the best novel to have won that prize in its first twenty-five years.

Rushdie has also said "'Respect for religion' has become a code phrase meaning 'fear of religion.' Religions, like all other ideas, deserve criticism, satire, and, yes, our fearless disrespect."

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One: From the editor's desk: Going in Feeling Fine

Dear Fellow Writers:

I'm fortunate that I've rarely have had to undergo surgery, but I hate the surgeries that mean that I go in feeling great, come out feeling awful, and have to recuperate. While I am writing this note, I face the knife again in a few days. By the time you read this newsletter, though, I will probably be healed and back to normal. I am undergoing a gum graft, because a portion of my gum receded so far that if left alone, one or more of my teeth could become loose.

I had several options. The oral surgeon could take gum tissue from another part of my mouth to use, but ouch! I would then have two wounds, instead of one. My other options included using donated human tissue or tissue from a pig. A big fan of ribs dripping with barbecue sauce, I thought how cool it would be to be part porker. [In the end, the doctor used human tissue.]

For my recovery I was told to keep plenty of soft foods on hand, so I've stocked up on soups, yogurt, canned fruit, cottage cheese, and tuna, which I can make into tuna salad. Last time I went in for surgery I was not allowed to eat any solid food the day before, so I stocked up on popsicles, forgetting that I don't like them. Two years later I was still finding uneaten and deteriorating popsicles in my freezer. I won't make that mistake again.

The surgery scheduled for March 18 was previously scheduled more than a month earlier, but on that day Atlanta had winter storm warnings out, and I postponed my appointment gleefully. The ice did not form on the streets as predicted, but I was willing to use any excuse to put off the inevitable operation.

With the temperatures touching the 80s and the cherry trees and Bradford pear trees in bloom, I can't hide behind a winter storm warning anymore. I have to face reality, walk into my oral surgeon's office feeling great and come out feeling awful. For that reason I'm preparing this issue of The Writers Network News a little early, but I won't send it out until its usual time, toward the end of the month. By that time all my readers can say, "If I'd known she was going to have surgery, I would have sent a get-well card, but I didn't know, so I'm off the hook. She's probably fine now."

I will probably be all better by the end of the month. I'm sure I'll have a quick recovery. I hate to think of recovery, though, when I'm going in feeling fine.

[Postscript: The surgery went fine, and I'm slowly healing. Life will be back to normal soon, I'm sure.]

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com)
Author of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service.

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to www.zebraeditor.com, click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Creating and Submitting to Anthologies

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: My writing organization is preparing an anthology. Would standard manuscript format apply? We are unsure of individual submission formats at this point. Please advise.

A: Standard manuscript format applies when submitting a manuscript to an agent or a publisher. If you are going to self-publish the anthology, you may set the format any way you would like, but if an editor is going to edit the submissions, which I strongly advise, you would do well to ask for submissions in standard manuscript format, which does several things. It gets writers in the habit of using standard manuscript format; it is easy to read; and it gives an editor room to work. If unfamiliar with standard manuscript format, go to www.zebraeditor.com and click on Tools for Writers. There you will find many free reports, including one that explains standard manuscript format.

Q: I often notice ads from people who are assembling anecdotes from a specific group of people to be published as a nonfiction book (dog lovers, cat fanciers, fathers, knitters, inspirational tales from those who lost loved ones, etc.). When submitting a nonfiction book proposal, the writer's credentials, background, and experience play a more important role than for a work of fiction. How do publishers assess a writer's credentials for an anthology of nonfiction anecdotes, as opposed to books on shamanism (you are a shaman) or on How to Mend a Broken Heart (you are a psychologist)?

A: When someone writes a proposal for such an anthology, the publishers evaluate the subject matter for profitability and assess the writer's publishing history, editing abilities, and organizing skills, because the writer of the proposal does not write the entries; he or she simply compiles stories, selects the best ones, organizes them, and edits them.

Q: I have been working on a book that lays out like Chicken Soup for the Soul, wherein other people tell about their experiences. My book is similar but on a different type of topic.

I know I need to have a contract drawn up so I can ask people to send me their experience on my topic and to ask them for their permission for me to use their story in my book. Two of the people I need to contact and ask the same question are songwriters. I would like to ask them if I could use their lyrics at the beginning and end of the book.

My question is what type of lawyer would I contact? Is it safe to maybe have a paralegal draw up a contract?

A: You probably need an entertainment attorney familiar with anthology contracts. He or she will explain what you must do to protect yourself while you obtain the rights to use the work. I would not use a paralegal. Go to the Internet and search for an organization called Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts to find an entertainment attorney near you. Sometimes one visit will take care of it.

Obtaining the rights to use lyrics is another story, and it can be complicated, time-consuming, and sometimes expensive. Contact BMI and ASCAP to find out who owns the rights to the songs. Follow up to ask for permission to use.

Q: My poem has been chosen as a finalist for the annual contest by [name deleted]. Keep your fingers crossed for me; I can use the ten grand. Have you ever heard of this organization?

A: Yes, and I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it has a terrible reputation. The same organization has used many names, all of which have the reputation of telling everyone who enters that they are finalists. To receive your reward, some of these scams make "finalists" attend an expensive conference. In one news story about [name deleted], 4,000 alleged finalists paid more than \$500 to attend a conference and were not given workshops or meetings with publishers or editors as promised and instead were forced to judge the poems themselves.

Almost all competitions will sell books in which your poem or short story appears, but the less legitimate competitions sell books are at highly inflated prices, and the contents are not necessarily of high quality. The worst ones (in my opinion) charge a fee to make your poem look better or bigger than others and still charge a large price for the book, if you want one.

Before entering any contest or anthology competition, always research the organization. Many competitions and anthology collections, especially those run by nonprofit organizations, are legitimate and offer a small honorarium plus publication. When a competition tempts writers with huge prizes, such as \$10,000, though, consider it a warning sign and steer clear.

Bobbie Christmas, book editor and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com. Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at www.zebraeditor.com.

The Small Publishers and Writers Network (SPAWN) website graciously hosts dozens of past "Ask the Book Doctor" columns. To catch up on many writing and editing tips, go to <http://www.spawn.org/editing/index.htm#bookdoctor>.

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Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Formats

Lately more than ever, I receive questions regarding formats for manuscripts. Here I will reiterate a few of the formatting issues that have arisen over the past few months.

Always double space manuscripts, not 1.5, but choose 2 on the Line and Paragraph Spacing menu.

Do not add extra space between paragraphs (which is the default mode on many computers; you must change it to zero under Paragraph and then Spacing, in Word 2010). The only time to add space between paragraphs is to show a scene shift or time passage.

To show a long time passage or major scene shift, use three asterisks--no more, no less--with an extra line above and below the asterisks.

To quote a letter or other long passage of five or more lines within the manuscript, indent the quote five spaces on both sides. The first line in each quote paragraph is also indented, so it will be ten spaces in. No quotation marks are required when using indents to indicate a long quotation.

Do not count the words on the title page as part of the entire manuscript. This information is most important when paying for editing by the word.

For visual information on formatting a title page and a manuscript, go to http://ZebraEditor.com/free_reports.shtml and click on #104, Standard Manuscript Format.

For more editing and creative writing tips, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems* here: <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Four: Subjects of interest to writers

Unique Two-Day Convention for Writers Scheduled near Atlanta

Publish15 is a first-of-its-kind annual publishing convention that brings together a variety of experts and providers in the industry with writers. I'll be one of the speakers, and we'll be launching the second edition of my award-winning book on creative writing, *Write In Style*, at the convention. Be there! <http://www.publish15.com/>

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If you write for magazines (or want to start), here's a blog that keeps up with media launches and editorial changes, so you can keep up too: <https://woodenhorsepub.wordpress.com/>.

#### ~~~~~ I'd Rather Be Writing

I have to cook, but my apron says "I'd Rather Be Writing." Find it and other gifts for yourself and friends at <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.

#### ~~~~~ Will I see you at the annual Florida Writers Association Conference in October?

Plan now to be at the 14th Annual Florida Writers Association Conference, October 15 - 18, 2015. The theme is "Changing Times," and the event takes place at the Hilton Orlando in Altamonte Springs, Florida. FWA always gives smooth-running and highly informative conferences, and I'm honored to be one of the speakers again this year. I hope to see you there. For details and registration, see the FWA website at [www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net).

#### ~~~~~ Terminology Writers Should Know: Epigram

An epigram is a short, witty saying, often in verse.

Here is an epigram that Benjamin Franklin wrote:

Little strokes  
Fell great oaks.

Edward Young wrote the following epigram about epigrams:

The qualities all in a bee that we meet  
In an epigram never should fail;  
The body should always be little and sweet,  
And a sting should be felt in its tail.

Probably the best-known writer of epigrams is Ogden Nash, who wrote hundreds of epigrams, including the following:

Candy is dandy,  
but liquor is quicker.

Professional men, they have no cares;  
whatever happens, they get theirs.

Some debts are fun when you are acquiring them, but none are fun when you set about retiring them.

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Fourth Annual Writer's Nest Mini-Conference
April 25, 2015
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs
Cost: \$79 member/\$99 nonmember
Details & Registration at www.FloridaWriters.net

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When your computer acts up, do you feel panic? Calm your fears by ensuring your work is regularly backed up. I use Carbonite to back up my files automatically. I don't have to do a thing. On more than three occasions, now, Carbonite has saved me from major rework or near disaster. Files I thought were corrupted or gone forever, I accessed again through Carbonite. If you follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/k9mb8r9> and sign up for Carbonite, you and I both get a \$20 gift card, but even if you don't choose to use Carbonite, please be sure your computer is always backed up to a safe location separate from your computer, and preferably not even in your house. I sadly know of at least one author who lost his life's work when his house burned down.

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Are you a small publisher trying to expand your e-book business? Here's a company that puts e-books into retail stores. I don't know the cost or the process, but it might be worth looking into. <http://www.enthrill.com/solutions/retail-sales>.

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Purge Your Prose of Problems  
A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

This book sold out at the October FWA writers conference, but you can still order a copy.

Save thousands of dollars and edit your own book! Order my proprietary book-doctor desk reference book online at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

In alphabetical order and in easy-to-understand language, Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction books, including grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder lets the book lie flat in front of your computer, for easy use. Available printed or as a PDF e-book that allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

The PDF e-book is the best deal. You get it immediately and pay no shipping. After you download the searchable PDF, it resides on your computer for the speediest reference, whenever you need it.

To save thousands of dollars by editing your own book, order Purge Your Prose of Problems today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Cat Fancy and Dog Fancy, print magazines that have been staples in the industry for years, have ceased publication and have been replaced by print versions of the websites Catster and Dogster. The publisher, 1-5 Publishing, will treat pet ownership as a lifestyle, rather than a hobby and hopes to attract a younger audience with its new format and titles.

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Do your writing friends a favor, at no charge! Tell them to subscribe to The Writers Network News by going to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on the yellow box at the top. To view back issues of this newsletter, go to <http://tinyurl.com/psnmp6p>.

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10 Quick Tips to Improve Your Writing

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Good information here: <http://tinyurl.com/kpewr6q>

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Free Tools for Writers from Bobbie Christmas and Zebra Communications

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What's the difference between Chicago style, the style of punctuation and capitalization preferred by book publishers, and the style you may have learned in school or seen in magazines and newspapers? How can you pick the right editor for your manuscript? (Surprise! It may not be me.) For answers to these questions and many other reports related to creative writing, go to [http://zebraeditor.com/free\\_reports.shtml](http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml).

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Should you become a writer? Take the brief quiz here: <http://tinyurl.com/mul97ja>

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Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing answers many of the questions you wish you could ask an editing expert. Whether you write books, short stories, articles, reports, or anything else, learn more about how to write, edit, and sell your work. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US) E-book: \$8.95, no S & H, with almost instant delivery. You will save almost \$10 by buying the e-book. To order either, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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Writing a good book title can be almost as tough as writing the book itself. Here are a few tips that can help, whether you write fiction, how-to, memoir, or something else. <http://tinyurl.com/k45d3ub>

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Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>. I have a separate Facebook page specifically for writers. Like and follow my Zebra Communications for writers here: <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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AUTHORS

"AUTHORS is a team of professionals dedicated to increasing the connectivity of writers, agents and publishers. Several of us are writers, so we understand the challenges and are working hard to help."

I cannot speak for the merit of the new site called AUTHORS, which is another one that claims to connect authors with agents and publishers. At least it is free for the first two years, if I understand the information correctly. It may be worth checking out, since it is free, so far. See www.authors.me/.

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Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Florida Writers Association (FWA), a nonprofit organization, has three big competitions open for submissions through May 15. To submit

you must be a member, but to be a member, you do not have to live in Florida, and membership has many benefits. Accepting submissions for the following:

- Revisions; Stories of Starting Over: Florida Writers Collection, Volume 7.
- FWA's Youth Writers Collection #2 - Revisions: Starting Over
- Royal Palm Literary Awards competition

For details, see <https://floridawriters.net/>.

Vending Machine Press  
<http://vendingmachinepress.com>

Vending Machine Press is an independent journal aimed at giving writers an avenue for their writing to reach a wider audience. It accepts flash fiction and poetry. Submit through the website.

Call for Submissions  
How the Internet Saved My Life (when it didn't nearly kill me)

What are the rewards of our online engagement? What are the costs? How do we tell the difference? We are looking to both new and established bloggers to take on these questions and contribute to this anthology of full-length, creative nonfiction essays, drawing on their own stories about and experiences of the ways in which the boundaries blur between life on and off-line. For full details on submissions, see <http://www.schmutzie.com/call-for-submissions>

Phree Write Magazine  
<http://www.phreewritemagazine.com/>

Phree Write Magazine features writing that is daring, unique, relatable and, most importantly, understood by its readers. We publish work that is powerful and extraordinary; literature and art that leaves an impression. Though there is much to appreciate in complex language and an immense vocabulary, Phree Write Magazine appreciates the beauty in simplicity. Our definition of "high quality fiction" is fiction that grabs readers by the shirt and doesn't let go. Our mission is to publish work that has substance, creativity, and originality. We do not and will not ever charge a submission fee to have your work considered for general submissions.

We do not offer payment to our contributors at this time but hope to in the near future. Submit work to [phreewritemagazine@gmail.com](mailto:phreewritemagazine@gmail.com). The subject line should contain the category of your submission (i.e. poetry, flash fiction) and your name. Ex: Poetry Submission, Jane Doe

If you are submitting to multiple categories, send separate emails. Please send all work as an attachment. In the body of the email and include a brief biography (50-100 words). If your work is accepted, your bio will be published in our contributors page.

Call for Submissions: So Glad They Told Me  
<http://www.herstoriesproject.com/call-submissions-glad-told/>

The HerStories Project is now accepting submissions for our next anthology, So Glad They Told Me: Women On Getting Real About Motherhood. The transition to motherhood is not always a smooth one, often complicated by the sometimes competitive, judgmental climate of modern motherhood. Women who do not glide easily into motherhood can feel inadequate, ashamed, and unprepared after they expected that parenthood would come more naturally to them.

Through the #SoGladTheyToldMe social media movement, hundreds of women all over the world shared the real, supportive advice they received when they became mothers... or the advice they wish they'd received. Our next essay collection is all about this type of parenting truth—the real, the hard, and the ugly—and the support and solidarity that are essential to moms.

Mood Travel Guides  
Looking for Travel Writers

For complete information see <http://moon.com/acquisitions/>

Your Pet Space Needs Articles  
<http://www.yourpetspace.info/submission-guidelines/>

Your Pet Space needs content from many writers in the categories of causes, who/what is, book and product reviews, and personal/speculative subjects, to be able to give a wide range of perspectives on a variety of pets and pet subjects

Many of our submissions come from loving pet owners who simply share their stories with us, so don't be shy! Your idea for an article or review or your pet video could be just what we're looking for!

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Six: Got Muse? Got Mews?

Most readers enjoy animal stories, and several publications feature stories with animals as a main theme. Think of a time an animal touched your life or your heart, whether it was a domestic kitty or a wild lion, a caged panda or a new puppy. To entertain readers, the animal-based story should involve and evoke emotions or any kind, from love to fear.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).  
Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Be sure to research all information and study every stipulation before you accept assignments, spend money, or sell your work.

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