

the iwosc independent

Monthly Newsletter of the Independent Writers of Southern California

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DILEMMA: MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS?

by Kathleen Doheny

For independent writers, the dilemma is a familiar one. You've got a blockbuster idea or a dynamite article just published that you'd like to sell on a reprint rights basis. Of course, you want the idea or reprint to sell ASAP. Do you submit the idea or offer reprint rights to several editors at once?

While some independent writers do this regularly, others believe that offering ideas or reprint rights to several publications at once is a no-no. Editors are also divided on this topic, as a random survey of editors shows:

"Because we're a monthly, it's fine. But it's preferable to indicate it's a multiple submission." -- Nancie Clare, editorial associate, Los Angeles Magazine.

"I don't mind multiple submissions. But once a deal is made, [writers] better not go back on it." -- Kim Upton, editor, Health and Fitness News Service, Food-Style Feature Service, Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

"I really prefer they send ideas to me exclusively. If someone sends me a letter and says she's sending it [the idea] to others, I would refuse it." -- Mary McHugh, articles editor, Woman's World.

As the comments show, the rule for writers seems to be: Know thy editor.

Even that savvy, however, doesn't always guarantee an absence of snafus. Recently, one IWOSC member (whose editors said they did not mind multiple submissions) sent an article to two syndicates, offering reprint rights. One editor bought her article and distributed it -- but forgot to send her a contract. The other editor then offered her a contract, which she signed. You guessed it. The first editor then contacted her about the forgotten contract.

It got hairier. Both syndicates sold to the same newspaper.

Maybe the rule is -- Know thy editor...and cross your fingers. Ω

FERRETING OUT HIDDEN INFORMATION

Did you ever wish that you could check out a copy of the Examiner from 1870 to find that missing link?

Did you ever dream that you could gain access to Federal records? Do you know how to trace records regarding births, deaths, marriages, bankruptcies?

Almost anything might be a matter of public record.

"Prying Into Public Records" is to be the topic of the December Saturday seminar sponsored by IWOSC's Investigative Writers Caucus. Speakers confirmed thus far include: Don Ray, producer KCBS investigative news team; Armand Grant, private detective; Hynda Rudd, records management officer, City of Los Angeles; Lana Beckett, former curator, special col-

lections, USC library; Barbara Quint, special projects librarian, Rand Corp.; and Gordon Brook, supervisor, Southern California Answer Network (SCAN). Other speakers are being lined up to cover the health, photography and legal fields.

Almost any type of writing can benefit from investigative research, so plan now to attend (and bring your lunch) on Saturday, December 5, from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., at Mercury Savings and Loan, 10435 Santa Monica Boulevard. Fee: \$20 for IWOSCans (\$25 at the door) and \$30 for non-members (\$35 at the door).

Make your check payable to Investigative Caucus and mail to: 2584 Amherst, Los Angeles, CA 90064. Ω

ORANGE COUNTY SECTION FIELD TRIP

The Orange County Register in Santa Ana opened its doors to a group of IWOSC members last month, offering a tour of the modern newspaper plant as well as information about freelance writing opportunities.

Hosted by the Register's special events coordinator, Joanne Peterson, and educational services representative Heather Herckt, 32 members attended the tour through the editorial offices, past the photolab, into the graphics department and the library, past the production rooms and finally down to the massive printing presses which, unfortunately, weren't running.

Stop the presses

It was an interesting and informative experience for IWOSC members who hadn't seen the inside workings of a newspaper before. Those of us with a background in newspaper journalism suffered twinges of nostalgia.

The highlight of the tour was the newsroom. Large and elegant, it is neatly subdivided into cubicles, each a personalized enclave of clutter. We met with Blair Charnley, special sections editor, who

heads the Food, Travel, Image, By Design and Homescape sections of the Register.

According to Charnley, the Register's travel section buys the most freelance work. Travel articles, preferably accompanied by high-quality photography, may be submitted to Travel Editor Laura Bly. Editors of other sections also prefer to see finished articles rather than queries.

Syndication for success

Charnley said the paper frequently buys articles from three freelance syndicates: Creators, Words by Wire, and News America. He recommended these as a good way for independent writers to sell to the Register and other newspapers.

The bad news is that the Register, like most newspapers, "pays as low as we can possibly get away with." A good travel article with pictures, for example, could earn the writer \$250.

Other section editors are Joe Crea, Food; Katina Alexander, Image; Gary Krino, By Design; and Nick Harder, Homescape.

Call early in the week, mornings are best, 714-835-1234. Ω

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FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

The Independent has just learned that Anne Mosbergen will be our new networking chairperson, effective immediately. This is particularly timely, not only because IWOSC's "networking" program has been suffering from lack of a chairperson lately, but because the next IWOSC Board Meeting (tentatively scheduled for November 4th) will devote a substantial amount of time to this very subject. If you have any ideas or thoughts regarding IWOSC networking, please call Anne Mosbergen, Laura Meyers or Marv Wolf.

If you have already forgotten the content of the previous sentence, go back and read it again. Because IWOSC is a volunteer organization, the accomplishments IWOSC is able to achieve are usually the result of major efforts from a small number of people and sometimes there is not enough person-power to go around. A case in point is the networking leads column that is supposed to be a mainstay in the newsletter. The Board spent three months looking for a volunteer to fill the Networking Chairperson slot and the Independent ran a notice regarding the opening in the last two issues. Should members blame the organization or the Board for the relative lack of networking leads, or should the blame be laid on the general apathy of a volunteer organization?

Another case in point might be the guest speaker presentations at the General Meetings. While I, myself, have found some of these presentations to be less than scintillating, I was nevertheless dismayed to see the number of IWOSCans who were rude enough to get up and leave in the middle of a speaker's presentation. These actions not only exhibit a lack of consideration for the guest who is donating his or her time, but they also serve to distract both the speaker and the audience, all the while conveying a message to those members who have volunteered their time to put these events together. Not a very supportive message at that.

Volunteer associations need ACTIVE, SUPPORTIVE and COMMITTED members, and it would do well to remember that there are different ways of being active, of participating. Webster's II defines participation as "a taking part or sharing" and lists synonyms such as "involvement". While attendance at events and assuming roles of leadership are obvious ways to participate, a few hours of time volunteered for committee work can also make a very big difference. At the very very least, understand that an expression of your thoughts or ideas, even if only by phone, is important.

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IWOSC is a professional association for independent writers in Southern California and is proudly affiliated with the Council of Writers Organizations.

For Professional, Associate or Student membership information write to the above address or call (213) 731-2652.

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TWIST & PUNCH: COMEDY WRITERS TELL HOW

by Stef Donev and Mary Kaiser Donev

You don't have to have a warped mind to write jokes, a typewriter works better.

Now if you didn't think that was funny, turn to the truss ad on Page 11.

But if you did think it was funny... Why?

We don't know either, but after writing jokes for TV, Bob Hope, Lamb Chop (and Shari Lewis) and a crop of other U.S. and Canadian comics that we've never heard of either, we do have a few suggestions. And if you like our suggestions, you might even like our advice on how to become a joke writer.

If not... that truss ad is still on Page 11.

Anyhow, a joke is basically a short story -- with a beginning, a middle and an end. And like all stories, it contains conflict. What makes the story funny is how the conflict is resolved. It must make a sudden twist in a way that isn't expected and take the audience by surprise. The tension, instead of being relieved with dramatic tears, is alleviated by comedic laughter.

After all, sometimes the only difference between generating a laugh and a cry is a single movement or syllable. Everyone has been in situations -- terribly rotten and embarrassing situations -- made worse by the fact that everyone else thought they were funny, uproariously so.

"...the tension, instead of being relieved with dramatic tears, is alleviated by comedic laughter."

To develop your ability to take the elements of a joke or story and to resolve it in an unexpected way, try this exercise. Choose a topic at random, say from today's newspaper. Force yourself to sit down and write at least 20 gags about it. They can be good or bad, but write them. Do that every day and you can develop the skill to write better and better one liners.

One small hint our first comic client gave us -- always end the joke on the punch. Reword it if you have to, but don't have anything after, because the audience will stifle their laugh to hear what else you're saying and then feel "cheated" because they missed the real laugh.

Here, for example, is a Johnny Carson joke: "Tammy Bakker cries so much and wears so much makeup to bed, that Jim wakes up every morning in blackface." Now try: "Tammy Bakker cries so much and wears so much makeup to bed, that Jim is in blackface

every morning when he wakes up." See the difference?

If you can't come up with any "twists" for the punchlines, try free association. Choose your topic -- freeway shootings, for instance. Write down what the topic brings to mind -- guns, driving, bullets, new cars, whatever. Now, find a "logical" way to connect them, with a twist.

When the L.A. freeway shootings were in the news, so were these jokes we wrote for Bob Hope.

- Did you see the new bumper sticker? I brake for bullets.
- Buy a new car today and you can choose between an automatic or a semi-automatic.
- The Highway Patrol changed all No Passing zones into reloading lanes.

Like all other types of writing, joke writing requires practice. We find the best joke is a tight joke. Over the years, the word count of our jokes has shortened. We make an effort to cut out the extraneous, so anything that doesn't advance the "plotline" of the gag gets dumped.

So much for that.

"So what do I do with my jokes once I've written them?" you may ask.

What did you do with your first articles or short stories? You sent them out -- ON SPEC! Writer's Market lists markets for gag writers; comics, cartoonists who buy ideas, and joke sheets which are subscribed to by public speakers and disc jockeys. Go to comedy clubs and find someone whose comedy you appreciate and try writing material for him or her. Call up your favorite morning radio personality and offer some jokes on current events. Pay ranges from a few dollars to \$50 a gag or higher. (Joan Rivers, for instance, uses a lot of writers, but pays poorly -- \$10 a gag.) A few comedians will even pay a retainer. DJ's and "new" comics don't pay much -- if anything. But if they use your material, their name can go on your resume. Eventually you'll have enough names and experience to help you find someone who will pay.

You can also sell gags to companies that sell greeting cards, buttons, bumper stickers and the ubiquitous little yellow signs that fit in your car's back window. Our favorite so far is "Baby on board carries no cash."

One warning: most comedians hate puns. For most audiences, they just don't work.

If you really make it big, you can write obscene Chinese fortune cookie fortunes. And then you'll really be in the dough.

(See what we mean?) Ω

AT PRESS TIME

The ratification of the IWOSC budget is just around the corner. A complete breakdown of the 1987-88 budget, after ratification, will be presented in the December issue of the IWOSC Independent.

Coming up sooner than you think is the

Annual IWOSC Holiday Party, featuring opportunities to socialize and network, lots of food and the infamous door prizes. The specifics have not yet been finalized, so keep your mailboxes open for details.

On October 12th, the following members were elected to the Board of the Orange County Section: Jo-Anne Ely, Regional Vice-President; Gisela Meier, Secretary; Barbara Taylor, Treasurer;

Joyce Jones, Director of Member Services; Gail Finlayson, Director of Professional Development; and Beth Crawford Vincent, Director of Professional Services. This Board will serve a term from November 1 through August 31st, bringing them in conformity with the IWOSC Board of Directors' term. A report on the meeting and guest speakers will be published in the December issue of the Independent. Ω

BULLETIN BOARD

The Writers & Artists Institute is a good resource to know about when you're in need of professional support and understanding. The Institute is a place where anger, frustration, writer's block, cold spells, compromises, doubts, fears and growth can be explored and expressed with psychotherapists who are themselves working writers and artists. The Institute offers individual attention, groups, workshops and lectures, nutrition and health counseling and special events. For more information, or an appointment, contact them at 12750 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 102, Studio City, CA 91604, (818) 760-4146.

The Independent Feature Project West in association with the Writers Guild of America has begun its special six-part lecture series featuring prominent screenwriters. The series, which began on October 20th, will be examining screenwriting as a craft, the screenplay and the writer as commodities in the marketplace, and the role of the writer in production. Special attention will be focused on the difference between writing for studio and independent productions. Tickets may be purchased, space permitting, for \$45 per lecture (\$25 for IFP/West and WGA members) by contacting IFP/West, 309 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 422, Santa Monica, CA 90401, (213) 451-8075. The remaining sessions are as follows:

NOVEMBER 3 -- "The Writing Crew"

will focus on the development of the studio screenplay, examining the process of writing and rewriting with many writers, and with input from the producer, director and studio. Writers Carl Gottlieb and Daniel Petrie Jr., director Sydney Pollack and studio executive Gareth Wigan are on the panel, Former UA Classics head Sam Kitt moderates.

NOVEMBER 10 -- "Translations" will examine the artistic and pragmatic process of adapting material from life or from other media for the screen. Panelists include Fionnula Flanagan, Charles Fuller, Tom Rickman and Leonard Schrader, Buck Henry moderating.

NOVEMBER 17 -- "The Price of Control" will feature writer/directors and writer/producers discussing the means and conditions for achieving creative control. Panelists include Richard Brooks, Cheech Marin and Anna Hamilton Phelan, moderated by David Burton Morris.

NOVEMBER 24 -- "The Rules of the Game" will focus on the practical realities of writing for movies today. Moderated by Fay Kanin, the panelists include Julius Epstein, Dale Launer, John Patrick Shanley, Sandra Sharp and Victoria Wozniak.

UCLA Extension continues to offer interesting courses, workshops and lectures for writers. Among one of the most exciting series currently in progress is the Conversations with Distinguished Journalists series, sponsored by the Extension's Journalism & Broadcast Department, featuring

speakers such as Walter Cronkite and Judy Woodruff. For more information on this series and other programs you can call: the Journalism & Broadcast Department at (213) 825-0641, or the Writer's Program at (213) 825-9415. You might also consider asking them to send you the complete catalogue so you can plan ahead.

Do you write children's books? The Society of Children's Book Writers says they are the only national organization for those with an interest in children's literature. For more information write to: P.O. Box 296, Mar Vista Station, Los Angeles, CA 90066.

The Association of Jewish Libraries is conducting the Sydney Taylor Manuscript competition for the best fiction manuscript appropriate for readers 8-12. Only unpublished authors are eligible. The story must have a positive Jewish focus. A prize of \$1,000 will be awarded. For entry form and rules, send SASE to Ms. Lillian Schwartz, Secretary of the Association of Jewish Libraries, 15 Goldsmith Street, Providence, RI 02906. The deadline is December 10, 1987.

Send submissions for Bulletin Board to: Devra Hall, 2641 Lake View Terrace West, Los Angeles, CA 90039 (213) 668-ARTS.

"Editor" continued from page 2

Many members don't have the time or the desire to be members of the Board or to chair committees, but I, for one, don't believe that anyone is too busy to spare an hour or two a month. With approximately 500 members, a contribution of only 1 hour a month translates into over three months of one person working full-time.

IWOSC is only as good as its members, so let IWOSC hear from you. ☺

MISSING SOMETHING?

MEMBERS ONLY receive pages 5 & 6 containing special information, such as networking leads and market warnings. To receive this information, come to the next meeting and join us! We look forward to welcoming you.

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NETWORKING LEADS

- **SOUTH BAY LIVING** is a new regional magazine (will debut in February) serving all the coastal cities from Playa Del Rey to San Pedro in a style patterned after such regionals as Orange Coast Magazine. Editor Bob Pickard is looking for freelancers with ideas and articles on all types of subjects...sports, business, lifestyle, fashion, real estate, profiles, entertainment, politics, humor, etc. Fees run about \$100-200 for columns, and \$200-300 for articles up to 2,000 words maximum. All fees, however, are negotiable and vary with assignment and experience. Editor will accept phone calls, but will request written queries with clips and SASE. Address/phone: 8055 West Manchester Avenue, Suite 735, Playa Del Rey, CA 90293 (213) 306-2113.
- **WISE WARE**, a company that produces time management software, is looking for promotional copy writers. Contact Jack Waller (714) 556-6523.
- **COMPUTER CURRENTS** is looking for a reporter/writer to cover computer events in Southern California. Journalism background and knowledge of personal computers required. Assignments will range from company and people profiles to news reporting and in-depth feature writing. Must be willing and able to work independently and be self-motivated. Flexible terms. Please send resume, cover letter and writing samples to David Needle, Editor, Computer Currents, Dept. E, 5720 Hollis Street, Emeryville, CA 94608

SUMMARY OF BOARD RETREAT

by Carol Starr Schneider

Those hard-driving board folks, so dedicated to making IWOSC a happening kinda group, got together for some heavy-duty brain-storming and major noshing at the annual September retreat, held once again at the lovely Eastlake Inn near Echo Park. First came 'ritas and chips and other such Mexican fare at Barragan's Friday night, and the next morning brought some serious thinking and coffee drinking.

Highlights from the day: Mini-discussions of such topics as what IWOSC's role should be in influencing public opinion yielded numerous suggestions that were both practical and creative. For instance, we agreed on the formation of an editorial committee, to be set up under director Pam Leven, that will focus on writer-related issues and how to best confront the, via letters-to-the-editor and special events (co-sponsored with other writers groups). We also delved into how to get members more involved with committees--flattering them shamelessly was one method--and how to go about resurrecting the Mentor Program.

In between bites of cheddar cheese and freshly-baked muffins, we explored each board member's goals for his or her office, and conjured up a list of 18, count 'em 18, objectives for the organization during the coming year:

- to guarantee the survival of the organization
- to increase the value of membership
- to gain more impact and clout for our members through the organization
- to more fully represent the diverse professional writing community of Southern California
- to improve IWOSC's geographic penetration
- seek to attract the most professional writers as members
- raise our standards of professional conduct within the membership
- increase and enhance the awareness of IWOSC and its members in the professional writing community, the public and the marketplace
- to insure the organization's financial security
- to retain current members
- to better serve the business, professional and creative needs of our members
- to exert a positive influence on regional and national writers' issues
- to increase the financial well-being of our members
- to enhance the professionalism of our members
- to enhance the professionalism of writers
- to increase IWOSC's organizational efficiency
- to increase member participation in the organization
- to establish an ongoing dialogue with membership regarding goals and satisfaction with activities. ♪

MARKET NEWS

The **LOS ANGELES TIMES** has started a new Ventura County Section which will carry local news, sports, calendar of events and features. The Ventura Bureau Chief is Steve Chawkins, 5200 Valentine Road, Ventura, CA 93003, (805) 658 5522.

Well-researched and lively articles with a focus on the people, cities and towns of the Buckeye State are of interest to **OHIO MAGAZINE**. Managing Editor Ellen Stein Burbach is in the market for features (2,000 - 8,000 words) and column pieces (1,200 - 2,500 words) on country life, city life, sports, dining, finance, arts, gardening, etc.; and shorter pieces (from 50 words) for sections of the magazine: upcoming events, little-known spots, newsmakers, etc. Writers should query first, with published clips and SASE. Payment varies, on publication. Address: 40 South Third Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Queries for freelance articles on lifestyles, arts, science and history, as well as profiles, are being considered for the Sunday magazine of the **ST. LOUIS POST DISPATCH**. Payment for pieces in the 1,500 - 2,000 word range is \$150, maximum, on publication. Editor Robert Duffy, 900 North Tucker Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63101.

NOTICE: IWOSC is seeking to establish an "Automated Research Center" to train members in online database searches and to provide experts who can perform searches for nominal fees. If you would be interested in training, teaching, performing your own searches, or performing searches for other IWOSC members for a fee, please contact Robert Moskowitz, 4741 Larkwood Avenue, Woodland Hills, CA 91364, 818-992-4657.

LAST MINUTE NETWORKING LEAD

IMAGINE THAT seeks someone to write a user manual for its new Macintosh product for business, scientific, and engineering simulation. Send resumes to Bob Diamond, Imagine That, Inc., 7109 Via Carmelia, San Jose, CA 95139. You can also contact Diamond by phone at (408) 365-0305, by MCI Mail at 281-6760, by Genie at BOBDIAMOND, and by Compuserve at 70255,773.

IWOSC INK

by Ellen Malino James

- IWOSC INK welcomes ten new members: Marge Bitetti, Betty G. Daniels, Laurie Dechery, Alex Dixon, Judy Jones, Harry T. Larson, Elizabeth Nachman, Kathryn Phillips, Ruth Prins, Cheryl Thom.
- Jan Ruckert says of her new book, "The Four-Footed Therapist": "When you do a book, even if you hire a publicist, as I did, you end up doing nearly everything yourself!" Come to her wine and cheese reception at Duttons Books, 11975 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood, on November 7, Saturday, from 3 to 6 p.m. (By the way, Duttons Books has expanded. Now nearly double in size with 2500 more square feet, you can expect to find more readings and speakers taking the floor in the future.)
- For singles, help is on the way from Mary Schnack (alias Mary "Schwack" in summer's INK -- sorry for that typo, Mary). Schnack wrote "The Secrets of Flirting," a booklet included in Delza Productions' home video, "The Natural Way to Meet the Right Person."
- Hayden Books has just published Vincent Alfieri's "The Best Book of Word-Star."
- If you want to investigate investigator Don Ray before he joins the panel of guests at the December 5 IWOSC seminar about researching public records, you should get a hold of the June 25 LA TIMES. Ray was profiled by Idelle Davidson in the Valley edition's View section. (Yes, Ray was also the guest speaker at the investigative writers caucus meeting last September.)
- Leonard Weingarten's work in sports PR landed him smack in the middle of

Dodger Stadium on September 16 as production coordinator for, who else, the Pope? "I was maybe the only Jewish person there," said Len. "I tried to give the Pope an IWOSC T-shirt."

- IWOSCan Vincent R. Ducette, owner of the Film/Publishing Group, says: "A growing number of agencies seem to have little interest in new (to them) writers unless the writer has an uncle at a studio, or has a bank account reflecting \$50,000 earned last year with a typewriter or word processor. We do not share that attitude. We are a young literary agency looking for a few good writers...We specialize in novels and screenplays."
- Congratulations to Stephanie Culp, whose popular book, "How To Get Organized When You Don't Have The Time," is now in its third printing. The book seems to be a consistent attraction for readers who want to get organized, but just don't have the time. One might wonder where these people find the time to get to the bookstore, let alone to read it, but it must be worth it, ... its still selling.

Submissions to Devra Hall, 2641 Lake View Terrace West, Los Angeles, CA 90039 (213) 668-ARTS.

THE LOST WORD

by Phil Hopkins

Love. Without using this word, tell people you feel great affection for what, indeed, it is that you feel towards them.

After accepting a contract from the Computer Press Association to edit that group's computer stylebook for reporters, I've been actively eliminating words from the language. It sounds highly illegal and very Orwellian, but technical writers and editors require a specific, accurate lexicon of terms and phrases to describe sometimes intentionally vague concepts. A stylebook, by its nature, is proscriptive while a dictionary is descriptive. Hence, I have become judge, jury and executioner regarding some of my colleagues' favorite phrases.

Many formerly good-natured journalists now send me insulting electronic mail messages because I've scrapped a comfortable buzzword or two. I've been thinking of getting an unlisted phone number for when I reach the "floppy disk" entry. A lot of my friends use that description, and "diskette" is so much more concise and accurate....

That's why I've recently been thinking of the missing words in our language. For instance, it's just as impossible to find al-

ternative words for "love" as it is for "artificial intelligence," strange as that comparison may seem. This is obviously not a new problem, as one justice of the Supreme Court discovered when he was asked to define "pornography." "I know it when I see it" was the response.

Where do we stand in line for new descriptive words? Why hasn't anybody ever planted a flag and created a sovereign expression to articulate the difference between "liking" and "loving," for example? And is "love" as far as it goes on the affection spectrum, language-wise?

The bottom line is: If there is no word for it, it may still exist but you'll have a devil of a time writing about it. We, as professional writers, are like language physicians trying to diagnose a disease that doesn't have describable symptoms. There are certain useful tools, like metaphor, at our disposal, but how many of us have had the affrontery to invent a really new word?

Take it from me, it's a thankless task. As each word is proudly unveiled, there will be some smart-ass stylebook editor itching to expel, eliminate, purge, flush, exclude, remove, banish and thwart it...mainly because he loves the work. Ω

CAUCUS CAPSULE

by Ann Bailey

The ORANGE COUNTY SECTION met on Monday, October 12 to discuss newsletters. Featured speakers were Bob Spidell of Bob Spidell Publishing and independent graphic designer Lucy V. Parker.

The SCRIPTWRITERS met on Monday, October 12 to hear Steve Jacobsen, writer's agent at the Ann Waugh Agency of North Hollywood. The executive committee also met to map out the group's activities for the next six months.

Rumor has it that the recently disbanded ENTERTAINMENT caucus may be reorganizing to become the ENTERTAINMENT/LIFESTYLE writers caucus. Watch the Independent for more info.

The PUBLIC RELATIONS caucus met on Monday, October 26. PR agency execs Sunny Bernstein of Sunny Bernstein Public Relations and Frank Pollare of Pollare/Fischer Communications talked about planning for growth and expansion. Ω

THE IRS VS. WRITERS GROUPS

by Jim Kepler

Ed. note: The following article documents what may be in IWOSC's future. As the Internal Revenue Service clamps down on supposed "profit-making" professional associations, we will undoubtedly have our own turn at bat.

It happened one bright and crisp March afternoon. The treasurer of the Independent Writers of Chicago opened her mail to find a notice from IWOC's bank. Without warning, the IRS had entered IWOC's checking account and removed \$1,574.01 - the amount due, the IRS folks claimed, for back taxes owed from three years before. The bank just wished to inform IWOC of the \$50 fee it was assessing for complying with the IRS seizure.

Who? Us?

How could this happen? Wasn't IWOC

"the IRS, if nothing else, is inventive."

a not-for-profit corporation that had been living from hand to mouth throughout its entire five year existence? Hadn't all the tax forms been filed each year, clearly indicating the organization's state of genteel poverty? What possible justification could the IRS have for invading such meager assets?

IWOC's board of directors learned quickly enough that the IRS, if nothing else, is inventive. It was the IRS' contention that because IWOC (1) had accepted a couple of newsletter advertisements from members offering specialty services, (2) published a directory listing individual members and their professional qualifications and (3) begun to operate a telephone job referral program, the organization was providing services that "inured to the benefit of individual members" -- dastardly deeds all,

and strictly forbidden by IRS regulations governing nonprofit organizations.

So, what's the recourse? Simply stated, there is none.

There is no appeal to a higher authority because there IS no higher authority. There is no point in arguing with an IRS representative because (1) it is well-nigh impossible to reach the same representative twice (they refuse to put you through to the same person you've talked with before, saying, instead, that any representative can handle the contact -- which means starting over each time with a full and labored explanation of the situation), (2) there is an immediate presumption of guilt until proven innocent ("You can file a claim for a refund after the matter is resolved." "We need the money now." "Too bad.") and (3) saying that every professional association in the country does the very same things IWOC does simply won't cut it ("We just haven't caught them... yet.").

How they coped

This is how IWOC coped. The board of directors immediately informed the membership about the raid on the exchequer. Amid cries of "outrageous!" "to arms!" and "death to the tormentors!" the members were told there were four options to consider:

- IWOC could reapply for tax-exempt status. Costly and futile.
- Let 'em have the money. Costly and futile -- they'll be back for more every year.
- Discontinue the directory and job referral service. There go two of the association's most attractive benefits.
- Spin off a for-profit subsidiary organization to handle all activities that have any remote possibility of ever making a dime. Costly, but maybe IWOC will get its money back -- and not get into trouble again.

The fourth protocol

The membership voted to pursue option number four. Since that decision, IWOC has

Besides, I keep hoping someone will figure a way to start a northern chapter (IWONSC?). So, even though I get frustrated reading about networking, meetings, classes and opportunities beyond my zipcode, you offer the kind of hope I don't enjoy from associating with any remotely similar organization up here in the land of

spent nearly the amount of the seizure on attorney fees. IWOCorp. has come into existence and has been duly chartered by the

"...there IS no higher authority."

State of Illinois as a for-profit subsidiary of IWOC. It has its own board of directors and bylaws and is now operating completely independently of its parent organization. (It has the same address because it uses the same association management firm as IWOC, but it must have its own bank account, letterhead and telephone number.)

IWOC has purchased \$1,000 worth of stock in IWOCorp. and has loaned it additional funds, at interest, until it is able to support itself. IWOCorp. can make all the money it wants to and can donate its profits or pay dividends to IWOC (now a tax-exempt organization) and, thus, avoid paying any taxes. Notice the "can donate." IWOCorp. is under no obligation, except that IWOC members will beat them up if they refuse to cooperate, to pay any of its profits to IWOC -- the attorney stressed that such a condition could not be written into the IWOCorp. bylaws or the IRS would assume there was no corporate separation.

Hard lessons

What's the lesson to be learned here? First, check with a competent lawyer or tax adviser (don't rely on the advice of a member who "knows all about these things") to make certain your organization does not run afoul of our friendly public servants at the IRS. Second, maintain scrupulously accurate records. Third, keep looking over your shoulder. They may be gaining on you, too. Ω

Reprinted from WORD WRAP, courtesy of the Council of Writers Organizations.

THANK YOU

Dear IWOSC:

I've allowed my membership to lapse because I'd moved so far away. However, there are months when the Independent is the only voice of sanity in this strange place.

the titanic egos.

What I'm trying to say is, I want to re-up. Please send the appropriate forms.

Thank you for your articles and your help and your leads.

Barbara Firger, Berkeley, CA.

TALK YOUR WAY TO HIGHER EARNINGS

by Sheryl Silver

Looking to increase your earning power? Consider using your expertise in some complementary media contexts. If, you are an expert on a particular subject, why not lecture on your topic as well as writing about it? University and community college extension programs, and private organizations, like "The Learning Network," are always looking for those interested in teaching new courses. Whether you write about nutrition and health, the new tax law, real estate investment, travel or management trends, there's usually a way to package your knowledge to create an entertaining and informative program.

If you don't mind adding to your writing

"how much can you earn from seminars?"

competition, you can even give writing-related workshops.

The key is defining what you know that others might want to know, and then designing a persuasive course outline for presentation to program directors.

How much can you earn from seminar work? Anywhere from \$20 to \$40 per hour up to \$5000 for a half day or one day program. The lower figures are typically paid by community colleges, and the upper range by private corporations for well established management consultants. Best selling authors like Ken Blanchard ("The One Minute Manager") or Tom Peters ("In Search of Excellence") charge, and receive, \$10,000 per day for their workshops. Not bad huh?

Keynote lectures on your chosen subject can also be extremely lucrative. Established speakers earn anywhere from \$300-\$3000 for a one-hour speech. Most speakers, however, admit to starting out with free speeches to trade associations, rotary clubs, women's organizations, etc. Sometimes a small honorarium of \$50-\$100 is available from these groups. Fees generally increase commensurate with one's reputation in print or at the podium. Booking agents say authors and syndicated columnists are "bookable" more frequently and for more money per appearance than those without writing credentials.

These days, most successful public speakers eventually put their remarks on audiocassette, again to augment their earn-

ing power. Top professional speakers say they can double or triple their earning power by offering cassettes at their programs; for some people that represents an additional \$200,000 per year. That's right, some folks are earning multi-six figure incomes as public speakers, seminar leaders, and authors, even without a best-selling book. Many of these successful speakers, in fact, have self-published their books. Major publishers apparently aren't always a prerequisite for major earning power.

How do you get launched on this multi-media track? Where can you get practice in public speaking if it's not currently one of your strengths?

If you're a novice speaker, consider taking a public speaking course through a private school or university, or join a local Toastmasters chapter. Toastmasters is a nationwide voluntary organization with several chapters here in Los Angeles. Participants are usually inexperienced speakers wanting to hone their speaking skills in front of non-threatening audiences. At Toastmasters meetings, following a friendly lunch or dinner, attendees have an opportunity to give short speeches on assigned or elected topics and receive constructive critique from the audience.

Once you're confident enough for a professional appearance, start with the

"freebies." Call on organizations in your community that might be interested in a luncheon or dinner speech on your topic. Chambers of commerce have lists of groups in their areas. The Encyclopedia of Associations in the library lists over 18,000

"major publishers aren't a prerequisite for major earning power"

organizations. Most of these groups welcome those with relevant or unique information willing to donate their expertise and time.

To expand your marketing knowledge, consider joining the National Speakers' Association, an organization for professional speakers. The group is geared to those fairly serious about speaking as a profession. Monthly meetings deal with such topics as marketing techniques and the development of successful cassette and video tape albums. NSA also publishes a monthly newsletter highlighting trends and techniques for speakers, as well as a national directory of speaking agents nationally. For more information, contact N.S.A.'s Greater Los Angeles Chapter membership chairperson, Lynn Banker, at (714) 556-4522. Ω

CALL OR WRITE!

IWOSC wants to hear from you. What topics and speakers do you want for the general meetings and Saturday seminars? Martha Heassler, the new Professional Development board member, is looking for your suggestions. (Her telephone number can be found on page 2.)

Desktop Publishing Books From the Experts at Micro Publishing

Inside Xerox Ventura Publisher, \$19.95: This 336-page guidebook to Ventura Publisher will give

you advanced tips and techniques for putting this program to work.

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FINE PRINT CAN SPELL TROUBLE

by Richard Sherer

Sometimes, in our haste to find new sources of daily bread, we are so eager that we fail to take even rudimentary precautions. The result, as the following will show, can be pretty harrowing and not always profitable.

A Newport Beach-based consulting company has been recruiting writers -- including, they claim, some IWOSC members -- as "specialists" to go into clients' offices and handle certain tasks.

Jo-Anne Ely, a member of the Orange County section responded to this company's recruiting pitch and went in for an interview. Happily, Jo-Anne is very cautious and carefully reads contracts before she signs them. If she hadn't, she'd have found herself in virtually bonded indenture for the next 15 months.

"...virtually bonded indenture..."

"I went in for an interview...", Jo-Anne wrote in a letter to IWOSC grievance chair Rick McGuire, "and returned home with this agreement to sign before even knowing what or where the job was. I was given a sales pitch to sign up before they would even consider me."

You have to admire the efficiency of this procedure. Why waste time with details when you can proceed directly to jail, *sans* \$200?

The agreement Jo-Anne was given to sign runs three pages, with an additional four pages of attachments that are presumed to be part of the contract. In the first paragraph, it states that the "specialist" will become an employee of the agency; any thoughts of being an independent consultant vanish immediately.

One employee privilege is made quite clear in paragraph two: "Specialist agrees (upon acceptance of benefits or other insurance protection) to pay his or her share of the premiums of said general policy as provided herein under Insurance Protection. Specialist agrees that said payments may be deducted from Specialist's compensation."

So far, it appears that anyone who has signed this agreement without reading it needs insurance protection and should be

grateful for the opportunity to buy it, even if they don't know what job they are signing up for, what the insurance protection provides, and how much it costs.

Once the out-of-pocket preliminaries are out of the way, the contract goes on to spell out some fairly standard noncompetition and nondisclosure policies. It then offers a remarkable lesson in issue confusion, which should be noted by all students; it will appear on the final exam:

"Specialist agrees to submit bi-weekly time sheets....Specialist shall render biweekly invoices [Note: I hope the editor left in the inconsistency in "biweekly and bi-weekly"] on Specialist's business letterhead...." A few paragraphs back, the Specialist was an employee; now he or she is required to bill like an independent contractor.

Reimbursement is based on two factors: an hourly billing rate for work performed and a bonus (which does not go into effect until the agency says so, after at least 6 weeks on the job) for "Image Incentive." If the Specialist maintains the image the agency wants, it will add the image incentive to the hourly rate. However, the agency can terminate the image incentive any time it wants.

The hourly rate, by the way, is handwritten into attachment B. In this instance, the rate is \$20 an hour, with a \$5-an hour "image incentive."

To make the contract more palatable, there is an attractive educational reimbursement program outlined. The company agrees to pay the Specialist's expenses involved in attending and participating in professional seminars (no mention of paying for the Specialist's time). There are only four catches:

1. The Specialist agrees to deliver a copy of all materials from the seminar to the agency within 30 days.

2. The Specialist attempts to provide the agency with a list of the names, home addresses, phone numbers, business addresses, business phone numbers, and occupational titles of everyone attending the seminar.

3. The Specialist conducts a seminar containing the same information for agency employees.

4. The Specialist agrees to remain under

contract to the agency for a minimum of 180 days after seminar.

Other gems:

The Specialist agrees to provide notice in writing if he or she quits, however the company can terminate the Specialist with verbal notice.

The Specialist can be terminated for "disruptive or unprofessional behavior" as determined by the client or the agency. There is no provision for appeal.

This contract reminds me of one I signed many years ago. The Herald-Examiner had gone on strike and I went to an employment agency to find a new job. The counselor stuck a memo pad covered with fine print in front of me and asked me to sign. I did.

Later, for reasons too complicated to explain here, I was involved in a hearing before the National Labor Relations Board as a result of one of the job interviews the agency sent me on. The NLRB attorney handling the case read the agreement I signed and commented, "Boy, you must have been desperate to get a job."

We are conditioned from high school on to accept what we are told, and to sign documents without reading the fine print. We sometimes forget that, regardless of what the salesperson, interviewer, or counselor tells us, it is the terms of the contract we sign that apply. There is no assurance of any resemblance between what we have been told and what the contract itself specifies.

In this case, Jo-Anne was wise enough to read the contract and refused to sign. I don't know if anyone else has signed the contract without reading, but I suspect they have since acquired a great deal of wisdom -- the hard way.

Publishers and editors regularly send out contracts that assign to the magazine all rights to what we write. If they're challenged, they frequently will produce a different contract specifying that they are buying only first-time rights.

Book contracts often call for the writer to assume all liability for what is published, even if he or she does not have final approval over the way the material is edited.

The lesson is clear: Read first, and write (your name) only when you're satisfied with what you've read. Ω

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

November 4 Wednesday	BOARD MEETING Time: 7:30 PM	November 21 Saturday	SATURDAY SEMINAR Topic: TRADE TRICKS FOR EFFECTIVE QUERIES & PITCH LETTERS -- PRESENTATIONS THAT WORK (call Jane Harrington for time and place)
November 5 Thursday	INVESTIGATIVE WRITERS CAUCUS (Call Jim Crogan)		
November 9 Monday	ORANGE COUNTY SECTION 101 N. Center St., Orange, CA Time: 7:30 PM (call Arline Kaplan 714/963-7839)	November 23 Monday	PUBLIC RELATIONS CAUCUS Hollywood Palm Hotel 2005 N. Highland Avenue Topic: How to Pitch the Media Time: 7:00 PM
November 9 Monday	SCRIPTWRITERS CAUCUS (call Gerald Jones for information)	December 3 Thursday	HEALTH WRITERS CAUCUS Meeting/Party at Rick McGuire's 10039 Collett, Sepulveda, CA Topic: Getting Paid Time: 7:30 PM
November 16 Monday	IWOSC GENERAL MEETING Topic: LIBEL & OTHER FIRST AMENDMENT ISSUES Speaker: William A. Masterson, Atty. Variety Arts Club, 940 S. Figueroa (between Olympic & 9th) 7:30 PM		

Note: If you missed the October 31 Tax Workshop, with its sneak preview of the new schedule C and walk-thru of basic year-end tax planning for self-employed writers, tapes are available. Call 213-731-2652.

IWOSC

Independent Writers of
Southern California
P.O. Box 19745
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MOVING?

Don't miss your IWOSC Independent--call
Jane Harrington at (213) 731-2652 with your
new address and phone number.