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VOLUME IV, ISSUE 1
 January 2006

Words of Writing Wisdom from Johnny D. Boggs

By Charles Rush



The 2006 Pikes Peak Writers Conference is honored to have Johnny D. Boggs as the Friday night featured speaker and as a faculty member during the conference. Johnny Boggs is one of the few Western writers to have won both the prestigious Spur Award from the Western Writers of America, and the Western Heritage Award from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum for his fiction. He is the author of 27 published novels. Charles Rush, PPW vice president, conducted the following interview with Johnny Boggs.

PPW: How did you start your writing career?

BOGGS: Well, if you don't count selling stories to my classmates in third grade, my background is in newspaper journalism. I worked in newspaper sports departments as a reporter and editor. I was also dabbling in writing short fiction and nonfiction for various magazines, eventually tried my hand at novels, and left the newspaper world in 1998 to make a living writing on my own.

PPW: When did you first develop an interest in writing Westerns and novels of the West?

BOGGS: I always had an interest in the West, which first came from TV shows and movies—I skipped school to watch 'Fort Apache' on TV—and first tried writing Western stories in junior high and high school. I've also always been interested in history, so I knew early that I wanted to write Western novels solidly grounded in history.

PPW: Did you have certain authors or mentors that influenced you? How did they?

BOGGS: Mark Twain, Alexander Dumas and Charles Dickens are among my favorites, Twain and Dickens for their voice, their dialogue, Dumas for the thrill of the adventure.

Jack Schaefer and Dorothy M. Johnson were a big influence for their Western short stories, a far cry from the predominantly pulp fiction of their day. I have several friends in the business. David Marion Wilkinson. Mike Blakely. Ol' Max Evans. I'm always impressed by their work. I read a lot, from Jack London to John Jakes and Russell Banks to Les Savage Jr. Reading everything, and

reading with a critical, constructive eye. Why did this phrase work? What's wrong with this dialogue? How would I have structured this sentence? Why didn't I think of this story? Look at how this transition flows.

PPW: I was impressed with your voice in your new novel, *Camp Ford*. How did you develop your style, or voice?

BOGGS: A lot of experimentation. I took several theater classes in college, so I often approach a character the same way I would as an actor. It's a cliché, WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVATION?, but it works for me. Also, I probably had 15 published short stories before I seriously tackled my first novel. One thing I've learned is that it's harder, much harder, to write a good short story than to write a good novel, so that is great training. I don't want to write the same story again. I vary settings, time period, characters, viewpoints, structure, plot. Part of that is to keep me fresh, and to keep, I hope, readers guessing.

PPW: How important is your research for a book like *Camp Ford*? How much did you do?

BOGGS: A ton. I'm a history buff. I travel when I can, read microfilm copies until my eyes are blurry. I love old newspapers for not only facts but a sense of place and language. Yet this is something I can't stress enough: At some point your imagination MUST

“These are not books, lumps of lifeless paper, but minds alive on the shelves.”

—Gilbert Highet

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From the Editor



I'm the Queen of Procrastination. Sure, I have a lot going on in my life. And, sure, I can always make excuses I have more important things to do than whatever

task it is I really need to accomplish. But to be honest, my procrastination is directly related to my drive for perfection.

Can any of you relate?

Let's take, for instance, this column. Every time my deadline rolls around, my head says, "Let's sit down and pump this puppy out. You know it won't take you all that long. It never really does. People have

given you positive feedback on your former columns. You know you can do this."

Boosted with confidence, I turn on my computer, open up my word processing program and stare at the blank page. I type a line or two. I finish the first paragraph. I think to myself, yeah, that's interesting. And then I'm interrupted. Not by my cats or my husband, but by the Perfection Monster.

"Are you crazy?" he yells at me. "What kind of crap are you feeding these folks? Do you think they really want to listen to you dribble and drabble on and on about this? No one can relate to this junk."

What do I do? I cringe. I close my eyes and take a deep breath. I rewrite one line. Then another. The breathing didn't help with the Monster. I delete every word I've typed and start over with a new topic. Sometimes I turn off my computer and go take on some utterly more important task

like vacuuming dust bunnies from under my bed—a task that will distract the Monster at least for the moment. If I'm smart, I'll sneak back to my computer and type out 500 words as fast as I can.

Last issue we started the "Write Now" column (see page 7) here in the *PPW NewsMagazine*. The point of freewriting exercises is to help all of us slay the Perfection Monster and realize some of our best writing comes from somewhere deep inside, way far away from any critics. I encourage you all to give freewriting a try, whether it's through the exercises presented in each issue, or at events such as our February Write Brain (see page 3).

If I can keep my own suggestions in mind more often, perhaps (someday) I'll have a new title, the Queen of Productivity.

In peace,

Bimonthly NewsMagazine of the Pikes Peak writing community

PIKES PEAK
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Words of Writing Wisdom from Johnny Boggs

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take over. Research is great, but don't get bogged down in minutia.

PPW: I noticed a change from your earlier Western novels to your latest, a novel of the West. Do you believe this reflects a general change in Western writing by other authors?

BOGGS: Well, some readers definitely want their traditional Westerns. If they didn't, you wouldn't still see Zane Grey, Max Brand and Louis L'Amour in print. But I think the future of the West is in new stories, new ideas, getting our product beyond that stereotypical Western reader. You see that with other writers today, but you also see publishers and writers unwilling to take that leap, to try to tell a different Western story.

PPW: In your opinion, what does the future hold for Western writing?

BOGGS: Readership is declining for many categories, which concerns everyone, and the first line a publisher will typically drop is its Western line. The challenge for us today is to get children interested in the West, in our history, and keep them interested from childhood to the young adult level and eventually as adults.

PPW: Tell me about your typical writing day.

BOGGS: It's my job. I shower, read the newspapers over breakfast, and go to work. Knock off for lunch. Go back to work. Quit around five. I work Monday through Friday,

eight hours a day, longer when I'm on deadline.

PPW: What advice would you give to our readers who hope to get that first novel published?

BOGGS: Develop a thick skin, and never give up. Rewrite, revise, and rewrite. Also, publishers fear the "one-shot" writer, so as soon as the first novel is done, immediately start on the next one.

PPW: Once published, what is the greatest challenge for continuing to be published?

BOGGS: Sales talk. There's no question about that. I don't mean you have to be a bestseller, but you have to work, and produce. Market yourself. Consider yourself as a marketable commodity. It's a crappie job, but if you're a midlist writer, or beginning writer, it's a key part of the writing game. It's a key to survival, but there are no guarantees. This is one hard way to make a living.

Bio: Charles Rush has been associated with the Pikes Peak Writers Conference for eight years. He was the 2004 Conference Director and Deputy Director the two years previous. Instrumental in organizing the Pikes Peak Writers as a nonprofit group, he served as the first vice president. He remains on the board of directors. Recognized several times in the Paul Gillette Writing Contest, Charlie has had three short stories published and his historical novel, The Devil's Chessboard, was published in 2004.

Focus on the Details

By Bret Wright

The two instructors addressed a quiet but enthusiastic crowd on November 5th, 2005. Each of the nearly 50 attendees paid rapt attention to what Chris Mandeville and Deb Courtney were telling them about the day's scheduled events. Some jotted down notes, while others stared in postures of complete engagement.

They were all there on a heady mission: To Build Worlds. Creation involved everything from laying down geological structures and determining laws of physics to molding societies, cultures, individual mores, and . . . fashion statements.

To an outside observer the mission might be reminiscent of a sort of training ground for Slartibartfast apprentices (the creator of Norway's fjords, according to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*). But the attendees were there on serious business. They were there to learn how to build the backdrops for their novels. Just as nothing in the world occurs in a vacuum, nothing in a novel occurs without an author first conceiving it. Characters move through these worlds. They act and react to their surroundings based on what authors determine to be the rules. Clothes brush across skin, rocks stub toes, colors and light interact, and the literal and metaphorical fight for existence plays out in an organic orchestra of minute detail.

That's a lot of detail.

In order to write convincingly, an author must weave the world of her characters into the narrative of her story. On this day in November, Pikes Peak Writers, in partnership with Sigma Tau Delta (the UCCS English Honor Society), brought local authors, students, and subject matter experts together to help writers build their own worlds. A wide array of disciplines were represented including geology, botany, astronomy, physics, textiles, fine art, and yoga. There was even a druid and a poker expert. All of these experts, many with PhDs, gave presentations about how their subjects work in the world, and how to write about them in a way that is believable to the reader.

To tie it all together in a context with meaning for writers, authors Giles Carwyn and Todd Fahnstock, (authors of the newly released *Heir of Autumn*), spoke



between each presentation. These two novelists related what the experts said to how they incorporated the concepts into their own novels.

Creating a new world may sound easy. If an author does the job properly, it will certainly seem that way to readers. But authors must know their worlds intimately in order to write about them in their narratives convincingly. Think about a typical walk downtown or around your neighborhood. Most people are so familiar with the world that surrounds them that they'd have no problem writing about a simple walk to the corner store. The narrative would include the smell of the lilacs in somebody's backyard and the feel of hot asphalt through thin-soled shoes. This works fine for novels based in an author's everyday, real world, but what about the world that lives completely in

the mind of a writer? That is where the World Building workshop came in.

World Building focused on the details: the flora and fauna as well as the social and physical constructions that make a story really come alive. In addition to the presentations, workshop-goers were treated to a catered working lunch where they had the opportunity to build worlds of their own in areas that interested them. From children's books to science fiction, experts provided hands-on instruction on how to write about worlds believably and seamlessly while following the "rules" of each genre.

To further add to the abundant information available to the writers, the guest speakers were given the opportunity to set up displays reminiscent of science fair booths to encourage attendees to explore topics further. Many people took advantage of these booths, taking in the artifacts, tools, and products each expert had to offer. There were a lot of questions, and each was addressed enthusiastically by specialists who were obviously passionate about their subject matter.

In all, the day-long event proved to be exciting, informative, and well worth setting aside an entire day to attend. Before the end of the day rolled around, several writers were already asking when the next World Building workshop will be held—a sure sign of success!

Write Brain 2006—February

Except for February, Write Brain Sessions will continue to be held on the second Tuesday of each month. These informative meetings are always free to Pikes Peak Writers members, and frequently include guest speakers, interactive exercises, insider information about the Pikes Peak Writers Conference, and opportunities to network with other writers. Plan to join us today!

What: Write Brain Session "Improvational Writing" with Deb Courtney

When: Tuesday, February 21, 2006, 6:30 p.m. (The third Tuesday, not the second)

Where: Cottonwood Artists School, 25 Cimino Drive, Colorado Springs

Cost: Open and free to PPW Members

RSVP: If you would like to participate in this Write Brain session, PLEASE RSVP by writing to rspv@ppwc.net AND INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. Note that this does not commit you to attending, but does enable us to prepare enough materials for expected attendees, and importantly, it gives us a way to contact you if we have an emergency change to the Write Brain session, such as a postponement due to weather. We will make every attempt to post changes to the PPW Yahoo loop and this Web site, but to be ensured of notification you must RSVP.

Details: What does your main character's perfume smell like? Does food hold a memory association for someone in your latest fiction project? Does a character have texture issues, perhaps always wanting to avoid the gritty dry feeling of sand in his shoes? Knowing the answers to these types of questions, and even better, including the answers in some form in your fiction will create writing that stirs all the senses, allowing the reader to experience the sights, sounds, tastes and textures of a fictional world. It can be difficult to remember as a writer to include sensory details beyond the visual. This Write Brain Improv session will use multi-sensory prompts to encourage writers to include such sensory detail. Deb Courtney will facilitate this fun twist on Improv. Come prepared to write!

The Business of Writing: Strategic Goal Setting

by Linda Rohrbough



I feel an obligation to adhere to the tradition of goal setting at this time of year. But being a no-nonsense kind of gal, I want to put a new spin on this topic by tackling strategic goal setting.

I'm sure you don't need to hear another lecture on what you should be doing. We've all heard about creating realistic, achievable objectives because those are the kind that encourage you and will actually take you someplace. And we all know how to divide the task of writing our novel into chunks and divide the chunks down into daily tasks. But what I'm talking about is strategic goal setting which is doing more than one thing at once, killing two birds with one stone, so to speak.

Basically, most of the advice on setting objectives for yourself assumes you know yourself and your writing habits. Strategic goal setting gets you into reality about what you're actually doing as opposed to what you think you're doing. This involves the simple but challenging task of measuring.

At the advice of writer friend Jodi Thomas, I got myself a cheap stopwatch at Wal-Mart. It's only clicked on when I am actually writing. Not when I do all the other stuff I'm tempted by like e-mail, browsing the iTunes store, or Googling something from an infomercial. Jodi said I'd find I spend surprisingly little time writing. She was right.

By tracking my actual minutes and seconds writing, it was on my mind more when I wasn't writing. I also noticed I got a significant quantity done in that small amount of time, which I found very encouraging. I don't live with the stopwatch now, but it's still on my desk in plain sight.

Another tool I adopted is the weekly goal sheet. It's a combination of one my

writing buddy uses and ideas I got from www.MargieLawson.com. I keep mine electronically (no hard copy). At the top, I have reminders of the important tasks to accomplish that week. Next is a table with four columns and seven rows. The first row has the headings. Column one contains the six days of the week I work, the second has my "winner" goals, the third column my "super star" goals, and the last column is my "maybe" goals.

I write in the goal and estimate when I'll start and finish the work. I record what I did and the actual time spent at the day's end. Here's an example taken from a Monday:

DAY	WINNER <small>(I do these every day, no matter what. Like my Yoga. Just do it.)</small>	SUPER STAR <small>(I fit these in once the WINNER goals are complete.)</small>	MAYBE <small>(I may get to these or not.)</small>
MONDAY 11-14	Edits band book proposal, Answer e-mail Projected: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Actual: edits 2-5 p.m., e-mail 5:30-7 p.m., goals set 7:30 -8 p.m.	Start edits band book proposal Projected: 1-2 p.m. Actual: 8-10 p.m.	Talk to Lizzie, Review FOD research Projected: 2-5 p.m. Actual: Not done

As you can see from the sample, I learn a lot about myself doing this exercise. And it forces me to evaluate what goals will keep me headed the direction I want to go. My objective is to fill out the goal sheet on the Saturday before the coming week and record what I did each day.

What really happens is some weeks I accomplish filling out the goal sheet on Saturday for the next week. Others I don't get to it until Tuesday or Wednesday. And I may look at it two or three times a week, instead of at the end of every day. There have been times I didn't do a goal sheet at all.

Now you can imagine that if I don't do the goal sheet perfectly, I don't do the goals perfectly either. And you'd be right. But since starting these sheets six months ago, despite what I can only call failures, I've been more than twice as productive as I was before.

Measuring is strategic because it gets you to know yourself better, helps you set realistic goals, and therefore, makes you

more productive. I feel better about my missed objectives because I now I count failure as part of succeeding, as odd as that sounds. It makes me take a look at what I'm doing and moves me toward my writing goals.

I encourage you to make measuring part of your strategic goal setting. I'm willing to share a blank version of the Microsoft Word document that I created for this purpose. Just e-mail me and ask for it.

Bio: Linda Rohrbough has been writing about the computer industry since 1989 and has more than 5,000 articles and five books to her credit. Her work has been honored three times by the Computer Press Association. She has an agent for a nonfiction book she's writing with her doctor, has finished her first techno-thriller novel, and is working on a second novel.

Visit her Web site www.PCbios.com.

Strategic Goal Setting Involves Measuring

1. Get a stop watch and only start it when you're writing

2. Set goals weekly for each day's work. Track what you plan compared to what you actually do. (You may e-mail Linda@PCbios.com and ask for a complimentary blank Microsoft Word 2003 version of the goal sheet.)

3. Remember, failure is part of succeeding.

Before You Begin Your Novel . . . In Three Parts

By Dawn Smit Miller

Part One: Using the Logline to Focus Your Story

What is a logline?

A logline is a brief description (generally 25 words or fewer) of a plotline. It is the kernel of the story, stripped of everything unessential. Screenwriters used it first to pitch their works, and it's proved so effective that fiction writers have borrowed the concept.

Bestselling novelist John Saul calls the logline, "The 25 Most Important Words You'll Ever Write," in his workshop of the same name. He asserts that if a writer can't write a logline for a story, the story may be unwritable.

What does a logline contain?

First, it describes the protagonist.

"A farm-boy, a princess, and a smuggler..."

"A judge on the take..."

"A miserly employer..."

The description should include a noun that concisely portrays that aspect of the protagonist's personality that moves the story forward. It may also contain an adjective or short phrase that gives further characterization, often revealing a flaw in the protagonist that plays into the conflict. It does not contain the protagonist's name, since "John Smith" wouldn't mean anything to the reader at this point.

Second, it contains the protagonist's goal.

"...to return home.

"...must save her family from..."

Third, it contains the obstacle that stands between the protagonist and the goal.

"...must learn to work together..."

"...struggles to escape..."

Fourth, it will hint at what the protagonist will lose if s/he fails to reach the goal. In revealing the goal, the obstacle, and the cost of failure, the logline may imply what the resolution will be, but it does not have to state it. If the main character must risk her life, then the implied cost of failure is death.

The logline will contain information about the genre, either implicitly or explicitly.

It may also give a sense of time, whether past, present or future, and a sense of place if the place is important to the kernel of the story.

"In the Old West, a cowardly sheriff..."

"Two teenage refugees crash land on a planet..."

If a logline is silent on these topics, the reader may assume that the genre is mainstream and the place and time are here and now.

And all of this in 25 words or fewer.

To put everything together, let's take the example of *Dolores Claiborne* by Stephen King. It's the story of an islander woman in Maine who works as a housekeeper and paid companion of an elderly widow. When the widow falls down a flight of stairs and dies, Dolores is suspected of killing her for her money. Already under suspicion for her husband's death 30 years before, Dolores must come clean and hope that the authorities believe her. The story is a monologue and is formatted as one chapter with no breaks from beginning to end.

With the basics in hand, it's time to create the logline. The monologue and one-chapter aspects are interesting but not relevant. "Housekeeper" and "paid companion" are redundant, so I choose the first as more concise. The money aspect doesn't show up until the end of the book, and I don't have to give that away. Here's my result:

A taciturn housekeeper (protagonist) must try to clear herself of her employer's death (goal) by confessing to the murder of her husband 30 years before (obstacle).

Now it's your turn.

Internet resources

Play with a random logline generator:

<http://www.lifeformz.com/cgi-bin/idea/idea.cgi>

Read two good articles on loglines:

<http://www.twoadverbs.com/loglinearticle.htm>
<http://www.screenwriting-on-the-net.com/log-line.html>

Bio: Dawn Smit Miller is a freelance editor and the author of Through Spiral Eyes (a novel) and Rainbow Editing™: A Colorful New Take on the Editing Experience. She is also the coordinator for the Paul Gillette Writing Contest. Visit www.dawnsmit.com for more information.

Write Brain 2006—March

What: Write Brain Session "How to Turn Ideas into Plots" with Carol Caverly

When: Tuesday, March 14, 2006, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Cottonwood Artists School, 25 Cimino Drive (street name recently changed from 101 Conejos), Colorado Springs

Cost: Open and free to PPW Members

RSVP: If you would like to participate in this Write Brain session, PLEASE RSVP by writing to rsvp@ppwc.net AND INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. Note that this does not commit you to attending, but does enable us to prepare enough materials for expected attendees, and importantly, it gives us a way to contact you if we have an emergency change to the Write Brain session, such as a postponement due to weather. We will make every attempt to post changes to the PPW Yahoo loop and this Web site, but to be ensured of notification you must RSVP.

Details: In this workshop, we'll brainstorm our own backgrounds to produce unexpected characters, settings, and plot points. In the second half we'll twist our ideas through a series of exercises involving story lines to come up with a creative, well-motivated plot and characters for your next novel.

Bio: Carol Caverly is the author of the Thea Barlow Wyoming mystery series, All the Old Lions, Frogskin and Muttonfat, and Dead In Hog Heaven. The books also appeared as selections of the Detective Book Club. Her latest short story was included in the anthology, Homicide Host Presents. Though now living in Colorado Springs, Carol used her extensive background of Wyoming ranch living for the settings of her mysteries.

Spotlight On . . . Rupert Holmes If You Like a Good Mystery

By Bret Wright

The note on the short story assignment for English class read, “You are a mover and a shaker. Continue to write.” Doctor Sarah Roody’s note gave Rupert Holmes all the permission he needed to fill his life with written word and song. He wrote for pleasure in his teens and twenties while pursuing a career in music that has spanned decades.

So, what do you do with your life after you’ve been labeled an “American treasure” by the *Los Angeles Times*? If you’re Rupert Holmes, you write and supervise the production of musicals on two continents, winning multiple Tony awards in the process. You create and write a hit sitcom. You write chart-topping songs for pop bands. You win “Edgars” for your stage productions, and you write a mystery novel called *Where the Truth Lies*, which gets optioned by Hollywood and made into a movie starring Kevin Bacon.

That’s what you do when you’re Rupert Holmes.

“I’ve always written,” says Holmes. Indeed, he has. A prolific writer, Holmes always seems to have something going on both the front and back burners. *Swing*, his second novel for Random House, blends his passion for music with his love of mystery fiction in a unique sort of way. Although the book is wonderfully written, tight, and self-contained, the publisher requested one last revision of the sort that most authors will never hear: Random House wanted a full musical score to go with the book. Not only that, but they wanted the music to have additional clues that weren’t in the novel and—“Oh yeah, they wanted it in about six months. No pressure or anything.”

Holmes managed the task with aplomb, writing and recording seven original songs, most with full *Swing* band accompaniment. The CD is smooth, and adds a depth to the storyline of the book that is quite striking and unlike anything else out there. Although the book stands very well on its own merits, the deluxe edition that includes the CD is worth the extra couple of dollars.

Holmes is quite philosophical about his success in the mystery world. A name, he says, will only take you so far. After that, talent and hard work are all that stand between you and success. “Ninety percent of the work in a manuscript goes into the first half. The second half requires the other ninety percent.”

Underneath the entertaining personality is a soul that is driven to plumb the depths of human emotion every way it can. When he writes, he writes with passion, exploring every aspect of a character. In fact, he has a tendency to overwrite the first drafts of his books. “The first third of my novels are almost always over-written,” he says. “I like to get to know my characters . . . set them in motion and just run after them. I have a hard time getting to the crisis because I’m enjoying the characters and their lives so much.”



“Ninety percent of the work in a manuscript goes into the first half. The second half requires the other ninety percent.”

His lead character in *Swing* is especially real to him. Not that Ray Sherwood is a paper alter-ego, but “He’s all the things that haunt me. The humor. The music. Where there is good in me, I’ve tried to put that into Ray. So I guess that he’s the closest thing to me that I’ve ever written.”

Part of the affinity for a character comes in the way a writer presents him or her to the world. Holmes says that point of view is particularly important in a mystery novel. For him, a good mystery means that the narrator is somewhat in the dark about what’s going on. Writing in third person doesn’t appeal to him for that exact reason.

“You wind up wondering ‘who is this god telling the story?’ But if A and B are conspiring against C, and if C is telling the story, then there’s no fog in the story telling . . . it just naturally gravitates toward first person.”

He uses a classic pop tune to drive home the idea of choosing the correct narrative point of view. “I’m a huge Beatles fan, but *She Loves You* is the strangest song they ever wrote. Here’s this person—we don’t know who it is—and he’s saying, ‘I’m sounding happy because she’s in love with you. You should be glad! Yeah, yeah, yeah.’ Who’s this being sung to?”

Of course, there’s more to a story than point of view. Actual story-telling that must occur and it must draw readers in and keep them there. “The story is finished when it’s told. That sounds a little trite, but it’s true. The bigger question in my mind is always ‘When does the story begin?’” This is where Holmes feels he excels. As a song writer he’s practiced at the art of telling a story quickly. Think of a song as a piece of very short fiction set to music. “As a ‘story songwriter’ most of my 104 songs are fiction. I mean, if you think about it, all songs are stories, and most fall under the category of fiction. Eleanor Rigby probably didn’t exist. She wasn’t a real person. Right?”

His foray into the printed word has been met with commercial success and a warm reception from the writing world. The writing community, in his opinion, is much more welcoming than others he’s familiar with. “There are probably more overtly crazy people in music” than in writing he says. But the best thing about being a writer, when a person looks at it pragmatically, is the low startup cost. “You can start with a pencil and a pad of paper,” and then you can change the world. Or at least entertain somebody for a few hours.

When the vision of a book is fully realized, both the author and the reader leave the experience with a sense of loss. The author has to say goodbye to a cast of characters that he has lived with and grown attached to. The reader puts the book down with a sigh, knowing that the characters live on, but the reader will no longer be witness to their private moments and inner thoughts. A kind of disappointment, a certain air of mourning, sticks with a reader until there is a sequel, if there is one.

On the other hand, novels are often turned into movies. The best of these allow a reader to see the characters come to life,

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Spotlight on . . . Rupert Holmes

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and to fully experience the world as the author wrote it. In the case of *Where the Truth Lies*, Holmes had the unique experience of seeing his own vision portrayed masterfully. "I had a private screening, which was unbelievable," he says. It wasn't a little room with noisy equipment running in the background, but a full theater with his own private phone to the projectionist's booth to start and stop the movie. Directed by Atom Egoyan, Holmes says the film version of his book is a "remarkable and creative representation" of his novel. "Most of the scenes look like what I had in my mind when I wrote them in the book."

Fiction coming to life. Whether it's in the reader's mind or interpreted to the big screen, there's a magic to writing that Holmes believes he was born to create. With the release of his new movie, a box set of his songs coming out soon, a murder-mystery-musical play called *Curtains* opening next summer with a score written by Kander and Ebb (*Cabaret*), what's left to do?

"Well, I'm working on a couple of new novels and developing some series characters. One is contemporary, and the other is extremely period."

Paul and Linda McCartney once told Holmes that they were huge fans of his. This floored the young Rupert Holmes. But it doesn't come as any great surprise to the rest of us, because Doctor Sarah Roody was right: Holmes really is a "mover and a shaker."

What will he do when he finally sets his keyboard aside?

"I'm not sure," he says. "But I won't sit around drinking Pina Colodas. I hate those things!"

Bio: Bret Wright is a writer and editor from Colorado. His interviews regularly appear in Informart Magazine and Futures Mysterious Anthology Magazine. He writes short fiction as well as novel length fiction, and is the publisher/editor of Apollo's Lyre Ezine a recipient of Writer's Digest's Top 101 Sites for Writers in 2005 and 2006 (www.apollos-lyre.com).

Write Now

December welcomed PPW's first Write Now Contest. Our winner was Rebecca Davis. Rebecca owns a graphic design and advertising business with her husband, John. She has an extensive background in copywriting and marketing. Currently, she's working on expanding her creative expression to include young adult fiction and creative nonfiction. Congratulations!

Her entry:

Morning arrives earlier every day. Especially since Mom moved in with us. Dementia, pre-Alzheimer's. Experts say "keep a sense of humor." Is "funny" finding dentures grinning from a glass in the refrigerator? Biting cold! Sometimes Mom's here, laughing and making small talk. Sometimes, in her place, someone bitter, confused and unhappy to be living with us. We wonder who are you? What did you do to Mom? Night—time to recharge, reflect, regroup. Lately, sleep isn't interrupted by Mom letting someone in, a phantom visitor or hearing eerie moans.

Still, morning arrives earlier every day...

Inspired? Here we go again. Grab your favorite writing utensil and paper and set a timer for five minutes. Think (briefly) about the following:

Trouble calls me on the phone each day at 10 p.m.

Now hit that timer button and write! Don't think about punctuation or grammar. Don't edit. Just let the thoughts flow through your pen—and have fun.

Okay, finished a piece you love (or will love with a little editing)?

Once your timer has beeped, edit a little (if it needs it). Then submit your entry to editor@ppwc.net no later than March 1st, 2006. We can't offer money or prizes, but we'll pick our favorite to highlight in an upcoming issue of the *PPW NewsMagazine* and run it with your bio.

Here are the rules:

Judging criteria are inventiveness and creativity. Only one entry per person. Please include your full name with your entry. All entries will receive an e-mail confirmation. Entries become the property of PPW and the decisions of its judges are final. Entries must be 100 words or less. Titles are recommended but not necessary.

Questions? E-mail editor@ppwc.net. Happy writing!

All-Day Workshop—March

What:	Taxes for the Creative with Dave Moja		
When:	Saturday, March 11, 2006		
Morning Session:	9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Afternoon Session:	1:30 - 4:00 p.m.
Where:	Cottonwood Artists School, 25 Cimino Drive, Colorado Springs		
Cost:	RSVP now! Participation is limited to 50 attendees per session.		
Morning Session:	Afternoon Session:		
PPW Members: \$20	PPW Members: \$20		
Cottonwood Members: \$25	Cottonwood Members: \$25		
General Admission: \$30	General Admission: \$30		

(You can pay online via PayPal at <http://www.ppwc.net/workshops.html>.)

Join The Cottonwood Artists School and Pikes Peak Writers on Saturday, March 11, at a jointly-sponsored, dynamic full-day workshop on taxes. Yes, dynamic. Accountant Dave Moja has spoken at Pikes Peak Writers Conference on this subject for the last several years, and we guarantee it will be as dynamic a presentation on taxes as you've ever experienced.

The workshop is split in two sessions. Participants can elect to attend one or both; the cost for the workshop is per session. The morning session will consist of an overview of tax considerations for people in arts-related professions, from freelance writing to fiction writing to painting and sculpting—if it's creative, it'll be covered. Learn what is deductible, what is not, what raises red flags with the IRS, how to keep your records and more.

Following a one-and-a-half hour break for an on-your-own lunch, the afternoon will be a bit more hands-on as Dave prepares a mock Schedule C. Participants are encouraged to bring their receipts and records and follow along, asking questions that pertain to specific situations. At the end of the afternoon, attendees will have a good start on 2005 returns.

Bio: Dave Moja is a CPA and has a BS in Accounting. He's worked for three national accounting firms and managed his own CPA firm for seven years. He specializes in mission organizations, planned giving and church consulting. He is a member of the American Institute of CPAs and is a CPA in Colorado and Georgia.

Hot Topics

Register for Conference Now!

For PPW members, registration is open now for the Pikes Peak Writers Conference, April 21-23, 2006. Don't miss:

- Three days of workshops covering the craft and the business of writing—over 40 to choose from with offerings for the experienced writer, the newbie and everyone in between
- Ten-minute personal pitch appointments with editors and agents—which you request from a list of more than a dozen names—at no additional cost
- A beautiful conference setting at the foot of Pikes Peak in a luxury hotel
- Conference registration fee includes six meals, with sit-down meals at tables hosted by PPWC faculty
- New offerings each year—recent examples are the on-site micro fiction contest and the “Reality Track” activities which included the participatory “Surveillance” workshop

Members of PPW may register

January 1-31, 2006, for \$260. Open registration begins February 1 and nonmembers will pay \$285. Registrations postmarked after April 1 will be \$325 (members) and \$350 (nonmembers). Forms available online at www.ppwc.net.

Come to PPWC 2006 to see first hand why we have earned a reputation as one of the best deals going in commercial fiction conferences, as well as the “friendliest” conference, not to mention being ranked as one of the “Top Ten” writer’s conferences in the nation by *Writers Digest Magazine*.

Conference Scholarships

Pikes Peak Writers will offer a limited number of scholarships to aspiring writers who couldn't otherwise afford to attend the 2006 Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Awarded scholarships will include full registration fee. In return for the full registration fee, scholarship recipients will help out as needed on site during the conference and will be asked to submit a piece for the *PPW NewsMagazine*. The scholarships are possible through the generous contributions by many friends and participants of the Pikes Peak Writers Conference since 1993.

Send your name and address, the

financial circumstances that prevent you from attending, and your writing aspirations. Please limit this to one page, but you may attach a short (limit 500 words) sample of your writing. The postmark deadline for this application is Friday, March 17, 2006.

Applicants should address submissions to:

PPWC Scholarships
4164 Austin Bluffs Parkway Suite 246
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Open Critique

January's Write Brain focused on the process of group critiques. Our next open critique meeting will be held Wednesday, March 22. Mark your calendar now! Details can be found on the PPW Web site at www.ppwc.net.