latent powers of each. We talk sometimes of a great talent for conversation, as if it were a permanent property in some individuals. Conversation is an evanescent relation, — no more. A man is reputed to have thought and eloquence; he cannot, for all that, say a word to his cousin or his uncle. They accuse his silence with as much reason as they would blame the insignificance of a dial in the shade. In the sun it will mark the hour. Among those who enjoy his thought, he will regain his tongue.

Friendship requires that rare mean betwixt likeness and unlikeness, that piques each with the presence of power and of consent in the other party. Let me be alone to the end of the world, rather than that my friend should overstep, by a word or a look, his real sympathy. I am equally balked by antagonism and by compliance. Let him not cease an instant to be himself. The only joy I have in his being mine, is that the not mine is mine. I hate, where I looked for a manly furtherance, or at least a manly resistance, to find a mush of concession. Better be a nettle in the side of your friend than his echo. The condition which high friendship demands is ability to do without it. That high office requires great and sublime parts. There must be very two, before there can be very one. Let it be an alliance of two large, formidable natures, mutually beheld, mutually feared, before yet they recognize the deep identity which beneath these disparities unites them.

He only is fit for this society who is magnanimous; who is sure that greatness and goodness are always economy; who is not swift to intermeddle with his fortunes. Let him not intermeddle with this. Leave to the diamond its ages to grow, nor expect to accelerate the births of the eternal. Friendship demands a religious treatment. We talk of choosing our friends, but friends are self-elected. Reverence is a great part of it. Treat your friend as a spectacle. Of course he has merits that are not yours, and that you cannot honor, if you must needs hold him close to your person. Stand aside; give those merits room; let them mount and expand. Are you the friend of your friend's buttons, or of his thought? To a great heart he will still be a stranger in a thousand particulars, that he may come near in the holiest ground. Leave it to girls and boys to regard a friend as property, and to suck a short and all-confounding pleasure, instead of the noblest benefit.

Let us buy our entrance to this guild by a long probation. Why should we desecrate noble and beautiful souls by intruding on them? Why insist on rash personal relations with your friend? Why go to his house, or know his mother and brother and sisters? Why be visited by him at your own? Are these things material to our covenant? Leave this touching and clawing. Let him be to me a
spirit. A message, a thought, a sincerity, a glance from him, I want, but not news, nor pottage. I can get politics, and chat, and neighbourly conveniences from cheaper companions. Should not the society of my friend be to me poetic, pure, universal, and great as nature itself? Ought I to feel that our tie is profane in comparison with yonder bar of cloud that sleeps on the horizon, or that clump of waving grass that divides the brook? Let us not vilify, but raise it to that standard. That great, defying eye, that scornful beauty of his mien and action, do not pique yourself on reducing, but rather fortify and enhance. Worship his superiorities; wish him not less by a thought, but hoard and tell them all. Guard him as thy counterpart. Let him be to thee for ever a sort of beautiful enemy, untamable, devoutly revered, and not a trivial conveniency to be soon outgrown and cast aside. The hues of the opal, the light of the diamond, are not to be seen, if the eye is too near. To my friend I write a letter, and from him I receive a letter. That seems to you a little. It suffices me. It is a spiritual gift worthy of him to give, and of me to receive. It profanes nobody. In these warm lines the heart will trust itself, as it will not to the tongue, and pour out the prophecy of a godlier existence than all the annals of heroism have yet made good.

Respect so far the holy laws of this fellowship as not to prejudice its perfect flower by your impatience for its opening. We must be our own before we can be another's. There is at least this satisfaction in crime, according to the Latin proverb; — you can speak to your accomplice on even terms. *Crimen quos inquinat, aequat.* To those whom we admire and love, at first we cannot. Yet the least defect of self-possession vitiates, in my judgment, the entire relation. There can never be deep peace between two spirits, never mutual respect, until, in their dialogue, each stands for the whole world.

What is so great as friendship, let us carry with what grandeur of spirit we can. Let us be silent, — so we may hear the whisper of the gods. Let us not interfere. Who set you to cast about what you should say to the select souls, or how to say any thing to such? No matter how ingenious, no matter how graceful and bland. There are innumerable degrees of folly and wisdom, and for you to say aught is to be frivolous. Wait, and thy heart shall speak. Wait until the necessary and everlasting overpowers you, until day and night avail themselves of your lips. The only reward of virtue is virtue; the only way to have a friend is to be one. You shall not come nearer a man by getting into his house. If unlike, his soul only flees the faster from you, and you shall never catch a true glance of his eye. We see the noble afar off, and they repel us; why should we intrude? Late, — very late, — we perceive that no arrangements, no introductions, no consuetudes or habits of society, would be of any avail to establish us in such relations with them as we desire, — but solely the uprise of
nature in us to the same degree it is in them; then shall we meet as
water with water; and if we should not meet them then, we shall not
want them, for we are already they. In the last analysis, love is only
the reflection of a man's own worthiness from other men. Men have
sometimes exchanged names with their friends, as if they would
signify that in their friend each loved his own soul.

The higher the style we demand of friendship, of course the less easy
to establish it with flesh and blood. We walk alone in the world.
Friends, such as we desire, are dreams and fables. But a sublime
hope cheers ever the faithful heart, that elsewhere, in other regions
of the universal power, souls are now acting, enduring, and daring,
which can love us, and which we can love. We may congratulate
ourselves that the period of nonage, of follies, of blunders, and of
shame, is passed in solitude, and when we are finished men, we
shall grasp heroic hands in heroic hands. Only be admonished by
what you already see, not to strike leagues of friendship with cheap
persons, where no friendship can be. Our impatience betrays us into
rash and foolish alliances which no God attends. By persisting in
your path, though you forfeit the little you gain the great. You
demonstrate yourself, so as to put yourself out of the reach of false
relations, and you draw to you the first-born of the world, — those
rare pilgrims whereof only one or two wander in nature at once, and
before whom the vulgar great show as spectres and shadows merely.

It is foolish to be afraid of making our ties too spiritual, as if so we
could lose any genuine love. Whatever correction of our popular
views we make from insight, nature will be sure to bear us out in,
and though it seem to rob us of some joy, will repay us with a
greater. Let us feel, if we will, the absolute insulation of man. We are
sure that we have all in us. We go to Europe, or we pursue persons,
or we read books, in the instinctive faith that these will call it out and
reveal us to ourselves. Beggars all. The persons are such as we; the
European old faded garment of dead persons; the books their
ghosts. Let us drop this idolatry. Let us give over this mendicancy.
Let us even bid our dearest friends farewell, and defy them, saying,
'Who are you? Unhand me: I will be dependent no more.' Ah! seest
thou not, O brother, that thus we part only to meet again on a higher
platform, and only be more each other's, because we are more our
own? A friend is Janus-faced: he looks to the past and the future. He
is the child of all my foregoing hours, the prophet of those to come,
and the harbinger of a greater friend.

I do then with my friends as I do with my books. I would have them
where I can find them, but I seldom use them. We must have society
on our own terms, and admit or exclude it on the slightest cause. I
cannot afford to speak much with my friend. If he is great, he makes
me so great that I cannot descend to converse. In the great days, 
presentiments hover before me in the firmament. I ought then to 
dedicate myself to them. I go in that I may seize them, I go out that I 
may seize them. I fear only that I may lose them receding into the 
sky in which now they are only a patch of brighter light. Then, 
though I prize my friends, I cannot afford to talk with them and 
study their visions, lest I lose my own. It would indeed give me a 
certain household joy to quit this lofty seeking, this spiritual 
astronomy, or search of stars, and come down to warm sympathies 
with you; but then I know well I shall mourn always the vanishing of 
my mighty gods. It is true, next week I shall have languid moods, 
when I can well afford to occupy myself with foreign objects; then I 
shall regret the lost literature of your mind, and wish you were by 
my side again. But if you come, perhaps you will fill my mind only 
with new visions, not with yourself but with your lustres, and I shall 
not be able any more than now to converse with you. So I will owe to 
my friends this evanescent intercourse. I will receive from them, not 
what they have, but what they are. They shall give me that which 
properly they cannot give, but which emanates from them. But they 
shall not hold me by any relations less subtile and pure. We will 
meet as though we met not, and part as though we parted not.

It has seemed to me lately more possible than I knew, to carry a 
friendship greatly, on one side, without due correspondence on the 
other. Why should I cumber myself with regrets that the receiver is 
not capacious? It never troubles the sun that some of his rays fall 
wide and vain into ungrateful space, and only a small part on the 
reflecting planet. Let your greatness educate the crude and cold 
companion. If he is unequal, he will presently pass away; but thou 
art enlarged by thy own shining, and, no longer a mate for frogs and 
worms, dost soar and burn with the gods of the empyrean. It is 
thought a disgrace to love unrequited. But the great will see that true 
love cannot be unrequited. True love transcends the unworthy 
object, and dwells and broods on the eternal, and when the poor 
terposed mask crumbles, it is not sad, but feels rid of so much 
earth, and feels its independency the surer. Yet these things may 
hardly be said without a sort of treachery to the relation. The essence 
of friendship is entireness, a total magnanimity and trust. It must 
not surmise or provide for infirmity. It treats its object as a god, that 
it may deify both.
Once More to the Lake

E.B. White
Once More to the Lake (1941)

One summer, along about 1904, my father rented a camp on a lake in Maine and took us all there for the month of August. We all got ringworm from some kittens and had to rub Pond's Extract on our arms and legs night and morning, and my father rolled over in a canoe with all his clothes on; but outside of that the vacation was a success and from then on none of us ever thought there was any place in the world like that lake in Maine. We returned summer after summer--always on August 1st for one month. I have since become a salt-water man, but sometimes in summer there are days when the restlessness of the tides and the fearful cold of the sea water and the incessant wind which blows across the afternoon and into the evening make me wish for the placidity of a lake in the woods. A few weeks ago this feeling got so strong I bought myself a couple of bass hooks and a spinner and returned to the lake where we used to go, for a week's fishing and to revisit old haunts.

I took along my son, who had never had any fresh water up his nose and who had seen lily pads only from train windows. On the journey over to the lake I began to wonder what it would be like. I wondered how time would have marred this unique, this holy spot--the coves and streams, the hills that the sun set behind, the camps and the paths behind the camps. I was sure that the tarred road would have found it out and I wondered in what other ways it would be desolated. It is strange how much you can remember about places like that once you allow your mind to return into the grooves which lead back.

You remember one thing, and that suddenly reminds you of another thing. I guess I remembered clearest of all the early mornings, when the lake was cool and motionless, remembered how the bedroom smelled of the lumber it was made of and of the wet woods whose scent entered through the screen. The partitions in the camp were thin and did not extend clear to the top of the rooms, and as I was always the first up I would dress softly so as not to wake the others, and sneak out into the sweet outdoors and start out in the canoe, keeping close along the shore in the long shadows of the pines. I remembered being very careful never to rub my paddle against the gunwale for fear of disturbing the stillness of the cathedral.

The lake had never been what you would call a wild lake. There were cottages sprinkled around the shores, and it was in farming although the shores of the lake were quite heavily wooded. Some of the cottages were owned by nearby farmers, and you would live at the shore and eat your meals at the farmhouse. That's what our family did. But although it wasn't wild, it was a fairly large and undisturbed lake and there were places in it which, to a child at least, seemed infinitely remote and primeval.

I was right about the tar: it led to within half a mile of the shore. But when I got back there, with my boy, and we settled into a camp near a farmhouse and into the kind of summertime I had known, I could tell that it was going to be pretty much the same as it had been before--I knew it, lying in bed the first morning, smelling the bedroom, and hearing the boy sneak quietly out and go off along the shore in a boat. I began to sustain the illusion that he was I, and therefore, by simple transposition, that I was my father. This sensation persisted, kept cropping up all the time we were there. It was not an entirely new feeling, but in this setting it grew much stronger. I seemed to be living a dual existence. I would be in the middle of some simple act, I would be picking up a bait box or laying down a table fork, or I would be saying something, and suddenly it would be not I but my father who was saying the words or making the gesture. It gave me a creepy sensation.

We went fishing the first morning. I felt the same damp moss covering the worms in the bait can, and saw the dragonfly alight on the tip of my rod as it hovered a few inches from the surface of the water. It was the arrival of this fly that convinced me beyond any doubt that everything was as it always had been, that the years were a mirage and there had been no years. The small waves were the same, chucking the rowboat under the chin as we fished at anchor, and the boat was the same boat, the same color green and the ribs broken in the same places, and under the floor-boards the same freshwater leavings and debris--the dead helgramite, the wisps of moss, the rusty discarded fishhook, the dried blood from yesterday's catch. We stared silently at the tips of our rods, at the dragonflies that came and
Cnce More to the Lake

wells. I lowered the tip of mine into the water, tentatively, pensively dislodging the fly, which darted two feet away, poised, darted two feet back, and came to rest again a little farther up the rod. There had been no years between the ducking of this dragonfly and the other one--the one that was part of memory. I looked at the boy, who was silently watching his fly, and it was my hands that held his rod, my eyes watching. I felt dizzy and didn't know which rod I was at the end of.

We caught two bass, hauling them in briskly as though they were mackerel, pulling them over the side of the boat in a businesslike manner without any landing net, and stunning them with a blow on the back of the head. When we got back for a swim before lunch, the lake was exactly where we had left it, the same number of inches from the dock, and there was only the merest suggestion of a breeze. This seemed an utterly enchanted sea, this lake you could leave to its own devices for a few hours and come back to, and find that it had not stirred, this constant and trustworthy body of water. In the shallows, the dark, water-soaked sticks and twigs, smooth and old, were undulating in clusters on the bottom against the clean ribbed sand, and the track of the mussel was plain. A school of minnows swam by, each minnow with its small, individual shadow, doubling the attendance, so clear and sharp in the sunlight. Some of the other campers were in swimming, along the shore, one of them with a cake of soap, and the water felt thin and clear and insubstantial. Over the years there had been this person with the cake of soap, this cultist, and here he was. There had been no years.

Up to the farmhouse to dinner through the teeming, dusty field, the road under our sneakers was only a two-track road. The middle track was missing, the one with the marks of the hooves and the splotches of dried, flaky manure. There had always been three tracks to choose from in choosing which track to walk in; now the choice was narrowed down to two. For a moment I missed terribly the middle alternative. But the way led past the tennis court, and something about the way it lay there in the sun reassured me; the tape had loosened along the backline, the alleys were green with plantains and other weeds, and the net (installed in June and removed in September) sagged in the dry noon, and the whole place steamed with midday heat and hunger and emptiness. There was a choice of pie for dessert, and one was blueberry and one was apple, and the waitresses were the same country girls, there having been no passage of time, only the illusion of it as in a dropped curtain--the waitresses were still fifteen; their hair had been washed, that was the only difference--they had been to the movies and seen the pretty girls with the clean hair.

Summertime, oh summertime, pattern of life indelible, the fade proof lake, the woods unshatterable, the pasture with the sweet fern and the juniper forever and ever, summer without end; this was the background, and the life along the shore was the design, the cottages with their innocent and tranquil design, their tiny docks with the flagpole and the American flag floating against the white clouds in the blue sky, the little paths over the roots of the trees leading from camp to camp and the paths leading back to the outhouses and the can of lime for sprinkling, and at the souvenir counters at the store the miniature birch-bark canoes and the post cards that showed things looking a little better than they looked. This was the American family at play, escaping the city heat, wondering whether the newcomers at the camp at the head of the cove were "common" or "nice," wondering whether it was true that the people who drove up for Sunday dinner at the farmhouse were turned away because there wasn't enough chicken.

It seemed to me, as I kept remembering all this, that those times and those summers had been infinitely precious and worth saving. There had been jollity and peace and goodness. The arriving (at the beginning of August) had been so big a business in itself, at the railway station the farm wagon drawn up, the first smell of the pine-laden air, the first glimpse of the smiling farmer, and the great importance of the trunks and your father's enormous authority in such matters, and the feel of the wagon under you for the long ten-mile haul, and at the top of the last long hill catching the first view of the lake after eleven months of not seeing this cherished body of water. The shouts and cries of the other campers when they saw you, and the trunks to be unpacked, to give up their rich burden. (Arriving was less exciting nowadays, when you sneaked up in your car and parked it under a tree near the camp and took out the bags and in five minutes it was all over, no fuss, no loud wonderful fuss about trunks.)
Peace and goodness and jollity. The only thing that was wrong now, really, was the sound of the place, 
an unfamiliar nervous sound of the outboard motors. This was the note that jarred, the one thing that 
would sometimes break the illusion and set the years moving. In those other summertimes, all motors 
were inboard; and when they were at a little distance, the noise they made was a sedative, an ingredient 
of summer sleep. They were one-cylinder and two-cylinder engines, and some were make-and-break 
and some were jump-spark, but they all made a sleepy sound across the lake. The one-lungers throbbed 
and fluttered, and the twin-cylinder ones purred and purred, and that was a quiet sound too. But now the 
campers all had outboards. In the daytime, in the hot mornings, these motors made a petulant, irritable 
sound; at night, in the still evening when the afterglow lit the water, they whined about one's ears like 
mosquitoes. My boy loved our rented outboard, and his great desire was to achieve single-handed 
mastery over it, and authority, and he soon learned the trick of choking it a little (but not too much), and 
the adjustment of the needle valve. Watching him I would remember the things you could do with the 
old one-cylinder engine with the heavy flywheel, how you could have it eating out of your hand if you 
got really close to it spiritually. Motor boats in those days didn't have clutches, and you would make a 
landing by shutting off the motor at the proper time and coasting in with a dead rudder. But there was 
a way of reversing them, if you learned the trick, by cutting the switch and putting it on again exactly on 
the final dying revolution of the flywheel, so that it would kick back against compression and begin 
reversing. Approaching a dock in a strong following breeze, it was difficult to slow up sufficiently by 
the ordinary coasting method, and if a boy felt he had complete mastery over his motor, he was tempted 
to keep it running beyond its time and then reverse it a few feet from the dock. It took a cool nerve, 
because if you threw the switch a twentieth of a second too soon you would catch the flywheel when it 
still had speed enough to go up past center, and the boat would leap ahead, charging bull-fashion at the 
dock.

We had a good week at the camp. The bass were biting well and the sun shone endlessly, day after day. 
We would be tired at night and lie down in the accumulated heat of the little bedrooms after the long hot 
day and the breeze would stir almost imperceptibly outside and the smell of the swamp drift in through 
the rusty screens. Sleep would come easily and in the morning the red squirrel would be on the roof, 
tapping out his gay routine. I kept remembering everything, lying in bed in the mornings--the small 
steamboat that had a long rounded stem like the lip of a Ubangi, and how quietly she ran on the 
moonlight sails, when the older boys played their mandolins and the girls sang and we ate doughnuts 
dipped in sugar, and how sweet the music was on the water in the shining night, and what it had felt like 
to think about girls then. After breakfast we would go up to the store and the things were in the same 
place--the minnows in a bottle, the plugs and spinners disarranged and pawed over by the youngsters 
from the boys' camp, the fig newtons and the Beeman's gum. Outside, the road was tarred and cars 
stood in front of the store. Inside, all was just as it had always been, except there was more Coca Cola 
and not so much Moxie and root beer and birch beer and sarsaparilla. We would walk out with a bottle 
of pop apiece and sometimes the pop would backfire up our noses and hurt. We explored the streams, 
quietly, where the turtles slid off the sunny logs and dug their way into the soft bottom; and we lay on 
the town wharf and fed worms to the tame bass. Everywhere we went I had trouble making out which 
was I, the one walking at my side, the one walking in my pants.

One afternoon while we were there at that lake a thunderstorm came up. It was like the revival of an old 
melodrama that I had seen long ago with childish awe. The second-act climax of the drama of the 
electrical disturbance over a lake in America had not changed in any important respect. This was the big 
scene, still the big scene. The whole thing was so familiar, the first feeling of oppression and heat and a 
general air around camp of not wanting to go very far away. In mid-afternoon (it was all the same) a 
curious darkening of the sky, and a lull in everything that had made life tick; and then the way the boats 
suddenly swung the other way at their moorings with the coming of a breeze out of the new quarter, and 
the premonitory rumble. Then the kettle drum, then the snare, then the bass drum and cymbals, then 
crackling light against the dark, and the gods grinning and licking their chops in the hills. Afterward the 
calm, the rain steadily rustling in the calm lake, the return of light and hope and spirits, and the campers 
running out in joy and relief to go swimming in the rain, their bright cries perpetuating the deathless joke 
about how they were getting simply drenched, and the children screaming with delight at the new 
sensation of bathing in the rain, and the joke about getting drenched linking the generations in a strong
indestructible chain. And the comedian who waded in carrying an umbrella.

When the others went swimming my son said he was going in too. He pulled his dripping trunks from the line where they had hung all through the shower, and wrung them out. Languidly, and with no thought of going in, I watched him, his hard little body, skinny and bare, saw him wince slightly as he pulled up around his vitals the small, soggy, icy garment. As he buckled the swollen belt suddenly my groin felt the chill of death.
EVEN SINCE I MOVED TO NEW YORK CITY IN 1991 AFTER GRADUATING FROM college, the word "summer" lost all of its verve. Manhattan is many things—vibrant, thrilling, propulsive—but it most certainly is not a summer paradise. It isn’t all New York’s fault: Most adults have to come to terms with the fact that summer is no longer an extended vacation. But the city rubs it in your face. The giant skyscrapers lean over you, daring you to just try to get a glimpse of nature. The only oasis is Central Park, but as you squeeze in on weekends to claim a little patch of lawn, the buildings still loom around the edges like sentries; you and your fellow parkgoers are the prisoners who have been given a couple hours out in the “yard.” Just try to swim in a pond and you’ll be shot on sight. I resented everyone’s forced exuberance as they trekked from their tiny apartments to con­vene in the Park. It wasn’t a real summer; we were just playing summer, the way you played doctor or post office as a kid.

Through eleven years of working in the city in television production and then in magazines, each summer I devoted at least fifteen minutes a day to closing my eyes and drifting into a reverie about the place that best idealized what a summer should be: Camp Eastwind. From 1980 to 1988, as a camper and counselor, I attended this all-boys camp on Maine’s
Sebago Lake. (Judging by the number of camps that ringed its 105-mile shoreline, I assumed that “Sebago" was an Indian word for “land of friendship bracelets and wedgies.”) The more I thought about camp, the more it seemed insane that I would choose to be in New York. At camp, I spent every day standing on a dock, a fleet of sailboats available for a post-dinner jaunt, surrounded by my closest friends. In New York, I sat under an air-conditioning vent, attempting to store up as much chill as possible to hold me for the muggy trek home. At camp I was never more than forty yards away from a refreshing dip in a lake. In New York I debarked from the subway smelling like I had been soaking in a marinade of my co-commuters’ sweat. When I really wanted to torture myself, I would recall that in one of the camp bathrooms, you could pee while watching a glorious sunset through the window above the urinal. Just try to find a urinal with a view in New York.

Eastwind was the repository of approximately 87 percent of my greatest memories. I had thrived as a camper there; during those summers I replenished all the self-confidence that was lost during the previous year spent in the ego-shooting gallery that was public school. Eastwind is a noncompetitive camp, which isn’t the coddlefest it sounds like. It concentrates on one-man sports like boating, archery, and rock climbing, so you are able to better yourself without worrying about being crushed by others. The us-versus-them bloodlust of other camps’ Color Wars is anathema to Eastwind. I was an extraordinarily tall kid (“extraordinarily” being a euphemism for “freakishly”), six feet tall by age thirteen, and six-seven by eighteen. When you’re growing that fast, you have to give up all dreams of excelling at team sports. You concentrate on smaller goals, such as bending over to tie your shoes without tumbling into a ditch. But without the scrutiny of a scorekeeper, I threw myself into activities like archery and canoeing until I became quite good. At camp I was recognized for what I could do, as contrasted with school, where on a daily basis I was angrily confronted with why I couldn’t dunk a basketball. I even had my first kiss at a dance with a neighboring girls’ camp. Everything I couldn’t get during the school year, I got at Eastwind.

At seventeen I became a counselor, hired by the director and assistant head counselor to help out at the camp office. I was responsible for ensuring that all the campers had towels and were well-fed. Campers would often ask me to be the person they could come to with their problems. At the end of one week, I was on the homeward-bound train sitting across from a boy I had mentored, a boy who had come from a very rich family. He explained that he had begged his parents to let him come here, despite their protests of the expense. I told him what I had thought: that “Sebago" was an Indian word for “land of friendship bracelets and wedgies.” He shook his head and said, “No, it’s a word from the Algonquin language for ‘land of friendship.’"
revered for the past six years. I was finally the one whom the campers looked to for guidance, even idolized. And as it was my first "real" job with a regular salary, I embraced the image of myself as a working man. When I'd hang out at the Staff Lounge after the kids went to bed, getting drunk with my friends, we saw ourselves as dads who relaxed after work with a drink. Granted, those dads weren't playing Quarters with Milwaukee's Best—the cheapest case we could buy—and then stumbling home at two A.M. over an obstacle course of tree roots, mumbling unsubtly about how that bastard Tom cheated by taking too-small sips when his quarter missed. And yet, hungover and damned, we'd still—incomprehensibly—be able to get up at seven A.M. and ably deal with the next fourteen hours of screaming kids. These truly were the salad days.

The summer of 1989, after my sophomore year at Tufts University, I decided to seek out more adult jobs and internships. I could sense the dreaded "real life" crouching in wait for me in just two years, and it would require a résumé with entries that involved more than greased-watermelon races. Nonetheless, I was certain that I would eventually be back. Nobody ever left Eastwind for good. Long-gone counselors were constantly reappearing, taking one last Eastwind summer before or after attending graduate school. A couple of alumni in their fifties had actually returned to work for a session alongside their second-generation-Eastwind-counselor sons. While they might have been a little out of place, no one begrudged their intentions, because no one wanted bad karma out there in case years later he wanted to do the same thing. If and when I did go back, I was confident I wouldn't be alone. In '88 I was a counselor alongside guys who had been campers with me at age eleven, of course, but I also had coworkers who had been my counselor when I was eleven. With that kind of constancy, I could always count on camp to be exactly as I remembered it.

Years passed, and I never found the opportunity to return for an entire summer. I visited regularly for the first couple of years, and then only sporadically for special reunions. These occasional gatherings, attended by dozens of familiar faces who would travel any distance to breathe their
childhood air, always hit the “restart” button on my urge to return for a whole summer. But there was never a realistic time; either my career severely lacked momentum and I was too panicky to take two months off from obsessing about it, or professionally I was gaining momentum and I didn’t want to risk derailing myself. Besides, I thought, as another June came and went, camp will always be there, and I’ll try again next year. If it never changed, and I never changed, what was the hurry?

Then, in the summer of 2002, I got engaged to Christine and we set a date for September 2003. It was an exhilarating time, an enormous life landmark. And suddenly everything that was once in the hypothetical realm of “someday we’ll have hovercars and live on the moon”—a house, kids, family vacations—was now becoming real. At thirty-three, I had long considered myself an adult, but as I prepared to cross the line of marriage, I realized that this was real adulthood. Everything before was just the Epcot Center version: It simulated all of the trappings (independence, career progress) but had none of the real ramifications. Now I was entering a phase not only rife with exciting possibilities, but also riddled with weighty responsibilities.

I come from a family with a proud tradition of worrying, so while other grooms-to-be might busy themselves, say, obsessing over the end of their promiscuity or time lost with their male friends, my hand wringing was more big-picture. I figured that after marriage, everything needed to be thought of in terms of a thirty-year plan, not a three-month plan. This was a time when money should be saved for something more than a big-screen TV. Mortgages. 401(k)s. IRAs. day care. preshools. college funds... it would all soon be a part of my daily consciousness, and the many colors of my fret palette. The staples of my life up until now were screwing around, acting immature, and having ample time to watch TV or just stare off into space; they were the key elements of the innocent frivolity of childhood, and I was about to lose them. My silver hair would no
CHAPTER TWO

I AM AN EXTREME NOSTALGIST. AFTER I SEE, OWN, HEAR, OR EXPERIENCE something, it entrenches itself into a special place in my memory, and I can be sure that within a few years just the mention of it will make me sigh and slip into a wistful reverie. It could be anything from an old TV show to a pair of shoes. You could show me the sadistic orthodontic headgear that terrorized my jaw for far too many childhood years and I’d gaze at it as if I were Charles Foster Kane and you’d handed me Rosebud.

This overwhelming affection for old touchstones has resulted in an unfortunate penchant for anthropomorphism. I assume that everything feels the same way about me as I do about it. For example, when it’s time for a triannual closet cleaning, I find it nearly impossible to throw out old clothes. And when I do, I need to bring them to Goodwill immediately, because otherwise, when I go to sleep, I imagine a soft, frightened voice emanating from the shopping bag of discards, an old flannel shirt calling my name in panic. I once put an old, ratty armchair that was never comfortable to begin with out on the street, and I couldn’t leave the apartment until either the trash truck or a garbage picker scooped it up, because I couldn’t bear to see it abandoned, betrayed and alone.

Returning to camp, where every single activity, cabin, tree root, or toi-
let is tied to a fond childhood memory was like injecting me with nostal­
gia heroin. As I drove up Interstate 95 toward New England, my brain
constantly shuffled through a playlist of disparate experiences, showcas­
ing all the different and wonderful pleasures I’d be reexperiencing. My
counselor days were many things—silly, wild, emotional, soul-searching,
tender, outrageous, and maturing—so driving toward Eastwind I felt a
delirious sense of anticipation, as if heading to a tropical island where
there would be pizza, DVDs, massages, my high-school crush waiting in a
bikini to confess her lust, and a chorus of my childhood idols, including
but not limited to Steve Martin, Larry Bird, and the Who, all waiting to
sing “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow” upon my arrival. Oh, and the ghost
of my grandmother would be there to give me a hug, tell me she was
proud of me, and bake me her cherished stuffed potatoes. And she
wouldn’t be sitting near the bikini’d crush so I wouldn’t even have to feel
awkward.

I’ve always had a horrific sense of direction. When I was a Cub Scout,
the badge I had the hardest time earning was not for fire starting or knot
tying, but rather for memorizing how to get to my local police and fire sta­
tions. As intently as I had studied my town map, whenever quizzed my di­
rections would land a driver straight into the ocean. And we didn’t even
live in a coastal town. Yet driving up to camp from my childhood home, I
felt entirely confident in where I was going.

Once I hit Maine and my route slowly devolved from interstate to local
highway to rural road, the landmarks became more potently evocative,
climaxing as I sped into the familiar desolate rotary on the edge of town.
On it sat a gas station/grocery mart. When we successfully begged legal
counselors to buy us beer, this is where they came. I could practically taste
the low-priced ale we’d happily settled for. It tasted like freedom! And
piss. But mostly freedom. Say, 83 percent freedom, 17 percent piss. But
that was good enough.

The sun was dimming, and I drove a few miles more along an unremarkable
strip of rural road, then made the turn by another, dingier gas
tation, still in the exact state of arrested decomposition that it had always
been. Cutting down that side street, Eastwind’s large green-and-white
sign appeared, nailed to a tree and pointing down the camp road. This was
We’ve all had the experience and dreaded it as much as doing our taxes. We welcome it as much as root canal. That’s right, I mean being stuck sitting next to that most reviled of all species: the compulsive talker. As much as we want to tell them that we don’t care about their Aunt Betty or how she was cheated out of the Blue Ribbon at the county fair for her chocolate chip cookies, the bumpy plane ride and the fasten seatbelt light spells our doom.

Mother Jones magazine co­founder and writer-about-the­world Adam Hochschild wasn’t at the annual Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism to teach us how not to listen to such people, nor how to block out their disturbing noise Zen-style. No, he was there to tell a crowded session how to not be like those people. In short, how to win readers and influence editors.

Let’s start with the basic assumption that anyone attending his session has a healthy self­ego and is chock full o’stories to tell. The problem is how to turn personal experiences into compelling narrative that would make not only the person seated next to us on the plane listen in rapt awe, but also touch the emotions of everyone within earshot. A good storyteller can not only make a listener care about Aunt Betty, but embolden...
Robin Sloan

Novelist George Orwell could do that. His personal experiences were told to make a larger point. For example, in his Spanish Civil War book of essays, “Homage to Catalonia,” he uses experiences to show the larger picture. (Note: The good writing was his, the cliches are mine.) A passage about getting shot explains not only what it feels like but also allows him to step back and examine himself and what he’s doing there. Few other people could turn a bullet wound into a political treatise.

Orwell also uses that same wound to explore social issues. Going to another hospital on a troop train, he and his battered comrades pass a fresh division going up to the front. Amid the cheers, Orwell uses his experience to raise a larger point for him: That, in the end, “War is glorious after all.” We don’t have to agree with the point, Hochschild said, but we can marvel at how Orwell could focus on the larger part of a personal experience.

So that means all narrative journalism has to be about gloom, despair and misery, right? Hardly, Hochschild said. The subject can be sad or glad, the point is to make it meaningful to the reader.

“Examine things carefully and determine what are the larger implications,” Hochschild said.

Also, when you realize that such an experience could be made more interesting, treat it respectfully. Whip out your pen and paper and write it down. Take careful notes that look at everything. Use your senses to see and feel the event or moment.

“When I’m out on an assignment I usually keep two notebooks,” Hochschild said. “One notebook is for the story I’m working on and the other is for the other stuff that I find, even if I don’t know how or when it will be used.”

What also helps is to create some distance from the raw material. Let some tempus fugit before you try to write about it because you may need that time to absorb the experience or moment to figure out fully what it all means. That could also mean talk about it with your friends and see if their reactions are the same as yours.

Two notebooks may be too many and a reporter could feel intimidated by the material. Cheer up, Hochschild has a solution. Early on in the process he looks to get an idea of the “containers into which I’m trying to fit this experience.” In other words, figure out the form and see what to pluck from the file before or after the first draft.

Do all that and your stories will be the literary equivalent of Aunt Betty’s soon-to-be award-winning cookies. Speaking of which, pass the plate this way, please.
their lives that would make good foundations for personal experience articles. One enterprising college student writer jumped out of an airplane (with a parachute) to write a feature about skydiving for her biweekly campus newspaper. Without that frightening experience, she might not have had the right mood, the touch of drama and fear, and the right words for her first-person feature article about skydiving.

Photojournalist David Handschuh (2002) was getting ready to go to work in Lower Manhattan on the morning of September 11, 2001, when he first saw smoke coming from the World Trade Center. He grabbed his camera gear and headed to the scene. In the next several hours the drama that occurred during the collapse of the two towers nearly took his life as he took photographs to document the moment. He survived the smoke and dark cloud of debris that covered him on the street by ducking into a delicatessen and gasping for breath.

He later wrote about the experience for the International Press Institute's Global Journalist publication. It was a moving and emotional story to tell and to preserve. There’s no doubt many journalists and emergency workers that day had similar close-call experiences. After setting up his story for a chronological approach to the events of that morning and the rest of the day, he outlines in detail his experiences. Here is a brief passage from early into the narrative about his realization of the serious nature of the event, before and during the instant that the second airplane struck the second tower:

As I turned my camera lens on the flaming tower, I realized that not all the debris falling to the street was glass and metal. I can’t begin to describe the picture as some chose to jump to their deaths rather than be burned alive. Many photographers recorded images that morning worse than any nightmare we can have.

West Street was littered with debris—office papers, broken glass and body parts. These are sights that I never want to see and photographs I will never show anyone again. I walked south to the corner of Liberty Street to take pictures of people exiting the towers. There were few, yet the smoke and flames continued to spread and grow.

People were fleeing the Marriott hotel, carrying their high heels so they could run faster and covering their heads with serving trays as they fled. Others were helping others avoid the blizzard.

New York’s financial district resembled World War II scenes. Cars and vans were burning. Long, shiny limos had three-foot long pieces of airplane parts through their hoods.

And then came the noise, a loud high-pitched roar that seemed to come from everywhere but nowhere. The second tower had exploded. In just seconds, it became amazingly obvious that what originally had appeared to be accidental was really an overt act of intentional hostility.

I didn’t see the second plane although I was looking at the tower at the time it hit. I have no recollection of taking the picture—a photograph taken milliseconds after the plane hit the second tower—that appeared on page two of the Daily News the next day. . . (Handschuh, 2002, p. 23)

TWO BASIC APPROACHES

Generally, there are two basic approaches to personal experience articles:

1. Personal experiences of others about which you write—These articles detail the unusual and appealing experiences of individuals in a highly personal approach but are not written in first person. These are your descriptions as a writer who uses the experiences of another person for the basis of the article. These articles are often stories of medical problems, trips, true incidents, life or death accident situations, human relationships, family experiences, and countless other similar events. You are the reporter, storyteller, and the central source—or one of the major sources—in the article. These can be everyday occurrences, but the articles that receive the most attention are unusual, adventurous, frustrating, or dramatic.

   * * *

   **Journalism** senior editor Shana Aborn (1995) asks four questions about possible personal experience stories before she decides they are marketable. First, she wants to know if the experience is dramatic. Second, she asks if it is unusual. Third, she checks to see how involved the author is in the action. And fourth, she checks to see if there was an ending or resolution to the experience. She also strongly advises new personal experience writers to stick to the facts, get quotations in the storytelling, develop the people involved as you would do characters, avoid too much detail and personal emotion, and keep an eye on the tone of the piece.
Feature writer and teacher Nancy Kelton (1988) said personal experience articles should look at the world as honestly as possible, "seeing the truths—both the dark and the light—within our experiences so that we can share them with other people who will nod and say, 'Yes, that's how it is. I've been there, too."

There are times when magazines will publish personal experience features written by well-known individuals. Many magazine readers would know the name Heather Mills. She's a British model, television star, public speaker, and activist. She runs a charitable trust. When she met and eventually married former Beatle Paul McCartney, her life story and interests became worldwide news. Vanity Fair magazine editors worked out an arrangement with the publisher of Mills's new autobiography, A Single Step, to run an excerpt. The book tells her own story of her modeling and television careers, a serious motorcycle accident in London that cost the lower half of one of her legs, the work of charities, and how she came to be the bride of one of the world’s best known musicians. Vanity Fair published a portion of Mills's (2002) own story that described how she met McCartney:

Since 1995, with my TV career and charity work for the Heather Mills Health Trust, which supported refugees and land-mine survivors, running flat out, my personal life had been more or less on hold. I'd had a couple of relationships, but ended up being quite badly hurt in both of them. So when, on May 20, 1999, I attended the Daily Mirror Pride of Britain awards ceremony, meeting the love of my life was not remotely on my agenda. Fate, however, had her own plans.

My job that afternoon was to present a bravery award to Helen Smith, a young Ph.D. student who had recently lost both legs, an arm, and a hand to meningitis. She'd been studying to be a biochemist and had also been a very good pianist, so her whole life had been devastated. Helen had had trouble getting the right treatment because of the National Health Service's funding crises, so I had encouraged her to make a nuisance of herself to the authorities who were treating her as if she didn't deserve anything better. It didn't win either of us any Brownie points from the N.H.S., but the publicity did pay off. Today, Helen has state-of-the-art, natural-looking arms that respond to pulses sent when she flexes her remaining upper arm muscles. Her new fingers open and close so well that she can even apply her own makeup. Not only that: she has a flourishing career as a presenter for Anglia Television.

Helen Smith's story was well known in Britain, and when she came onto the stage in her wheelchair to give her acceptance speech, many people were crying. What happened next was so typical of what disabled people have to put up with that it might have been planned. The microphone was fixed at head height for a standing person, so when Helen started to speak, no one could hear a word. I was so cross, I just yanked the microphone out of the lectern and pulled it down to her. She gave a lovely speech, and I glanced down at the front row V.I.P. guests to see Virgin tycoon Richard Branson, Piers Morgan, the editor of the Mirror, Queen Noor of Jordan, and Sir Paul McCartney... (Mills, 2002, p. 328)
with motherhood, which she eventually wrote about, were her reasons for thinking about and trying to understand these new emotions she felt.

3. Don't write a personal experience article to vent anger, indignation, or other negative emotions—Sometimes you experience things that make you angry. It might be bad service at a garage or an annoying neighbor's lifestyle. Personal experience articles should not be used to vent these feelings.

4. Have the courage to reveal yourself honestly—You must convey feelings by opening yourself to others, perhaps thousands of others. That takes nerve. Kelton (1998) said, and is not for everyone. These feelings are not always positive and bright. "You must be courageous enough to reveal yourself honestly," Kelton said (p. 22).

5. Don't tell what you went through—show it—To show it means to dramatize it. Reset the scene and put yourself and the reader there together. Often this means telling the story in chronological fashion. This is a simple step-by-step process that takes readers from beginning to end.

6. Don't show everything—don't write about the mundane details of the experience—Much of the time, too many details drag the story down. The drama can get in your way. Is the detail relevant to the story? If so, include it. If not, forget it.

IDENTIFYING INTERESTING EXPERIENCES

What have you done that makes interesting reading for others? From some of the examples done so far, you are aware of successful personal experience articles. Much of it is simple good or bad luck—depending on the nature of the event. Massachusetts-based freelance writer Howard Scott believes features writers often overlook their own experiences. "In the search for subjects, many writers ignore an obvious possibility: their own personal experiences," he said (1992, p. 359). "Although these events do need some drama, tension, and a resolution (or solution), they don't have to be earth-shattering or catastrophic. Most of us have such experiences, and writers can make them come alive on paper." (Scott, 1992, p. 359).

A writer may find himself or herself in a place to develop a story by sheer coincidence. Your sound news sense is often a good guide. The elements that make a good feature become even stronger if you are personally involved in that topic or event. So, instead of a routine story about the problems that people have settling with insurance companies after a break-in, an automobile accident, or natural disaster, the story takes on more meaning if you have had the misfortune to experience such an event yourself and can write about it. Scott (1992), who has written personal experience features for magazines and newspapers, feels you should consider several things when thinking about your own experiences as potential material for features:

- Don't show everything—don't write about the mundane details of the experience—Much of the time, too many details drag the story down.
- Don't tell what you went through—show it—To show it means to dramatize it. Reset the scene and put yourself and the reader there together. Often this means telling the story in chronological fashion.
- Make a good feature become even stronger if you are personally involved in the topic or event.
- Don't write a personal experience article to vent anger, indignation, or other negative emotions—Sometimes you experience things that make you angry. It might be bad service at a garage or an annoying neighbor's lifestyle. Personal experience articles should not be used to vent these feelings.
- Have the courage to reveal yourself honestly—You must convey feelings by opening yourself to others, perhaps thousands of others. That takes nerve. Kelton (1998) said, and is not for everyone. These feelings are not always positive and bright. "You must be courageous enough to reveal yourself honestly," Kelton said (p. 22).
- Don't tell what you went through—show it—To show it means to dramatize it. Reset the scene and put yourself and the reader there together. Often this means telling the story in chronological fashion.
- Make a good feature become even stronger if you are personally involved in the topic or event.
Professor Myrick E. Land (1993) wrote that success in writing requires intelligence, imagination, talent, and persistence. This volume gives you the basic tools for writing feature stories for newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and online publications. What really motivates you to be a writer? If you can answer that question by the time you finish this book, you might have the foundation for becoming a successful professional feature writer.

**WRITING NONFICTION**

You write because you want to pass along facts and other information to others. You write to share what you have learned. You write to tell stories. Readers learn from you. They are entertained. They are thrilled. They are saddened. They become informed. People react to what you have to say in print. At the same time, you have a tremendous responsibility to be accurate, concise, timely, and responsible. You also have to know how to express yourself. This basic communication skill is your starting point in feature writing for the news media. You have to have the interest and you have to have writing ability. At some point in your life, you began to think of yourself as a writing-oriented person. And you wound up with this book, opened to the first few pages of the first chapter, perhaps wondering if you can write features well enough to make a living (or well enough to pass a college writing class).

But knowing you have basic writing interest and ability is not enough, according to Scott Meredith (1987), who managed a New York literary agency:

> To have basic writing ability and no technical knowledge, and to try to earn a living as a writer, is equivalent to finding yourself suddenly endowed with a large amount of steel, lumber, and bricks and, without any knowledge of architecture or building, setting out to earn your living building and selling houses. (p. 3)

**DEFINING FEATURE WRITING**

If you take the term literally, a **feature** is a special part of something. Feature articles are often special portions of the periodicals that publish them. They do take many different approaches and forms, of course. Most persons familiar with nonfiction writing for the news media think of the conventional straight news or hard news topics and approaches—police and courts, sports, local government, or business—written to give the who, what, when, where, why, and how. These stories emphasize the important persons, the activities, current events, local and regional orientation, explanation of importance, and nature of the event.

Feature stories go beyond this level to be special. Feature writers often employ some "license" or flexibility and emphasize the unconventional or the different. Feature writers look for the story about someone who is not necessarily a newsmaker. Instead, the story is about something or someone offbeat and entertaining. Feature stories are emotional, and they involve readers. They demand reader reaction because these articles can be serious or light, timely or timeless, funny or sad, joyful or joyless. These articles tell us much about the human condition. All you have to do is pick up a recent copy of your local newspaper or favorite magazine to see the variety of subjects and approaches that are a part of feature article writing.

One professional writer defines feature writing as **creative, subjective** article writing that is designed to inform and entertain readers. Daniel Williamson's (1975) interpretation emphasizes the four words italicized. These points help to show features are different from straight news or information writing, First, features certainly contain more creative energy than routine nonfiction. Writers and editors take a bit more freedom in their writing style or approaches, selection of sources, and packaging of articles. Second, these articles are often less objective than conventional news writing, offering a particular point of view or the author's personal impressions, perceptions, and opinions (in addition to those of sources). Third, the articles remain informative even if they are more creative and personalized by the writer. The level of reader utility of a story often determines its success with readers. Fourth, the article must entertain the reader while accomplishing all three other goals. The article makes readers satisfied they chose to spend 5 minutes or even an hour reading the article instead of pursuing some other activity. A feature is also less perishable than conventional nonfiction or news writing. Stories often are held for appropriate seasons or for slow news periods at newspapers. And simply because of their less frequent publication schedules, magazines often hold stories for considerable lengths of time prior to publication.

Other professionals compare feature writing to fiction, specifically short stories. The major difference, of course, is that feature writers deal with reality. However, some of the best feature writers incorporate the styles and techniques of fiction writers into their work. Benton Rain Patterson (1986), who has written for newspapers and magazines across the United States, stated the following:

A feature writer deliberately puts people (characters) into what he writes. He describes them and shows them (description) doing and saying (action, expressed through narrative and quotes) whatever it is that makes the characters worth writing—and reading—about. When he puts those elements into his piece, a writer is ipso facto featurizing his subject, handling his material and writing his piece as a feature. (p. 21)

Patterson's (1986) three basic rules for features are straightforward:
TAKING THE RIGHT STEPS TO IDEA SUCCESS

Nonfiction and fiction writing have a lot of similarities, and many of them are discussed throughout this book. One similarity is the formation of ideas. Successful mystery novelist Elizabeth Peters (1992) says ideas are quite different from the plots she uses in her books. She wrote the following:

It [the idea] begins with a "one-liner"—a single sentence or visual image, characterized by brevity and vividness. Since an idea is not an avocado, you can't simply go out and get one. In fact, the technique of finding a usable idea is more akin to bird watching than to chasing butterflies: There are ideas all over the place; the trick is to recognize one of the elusive creatures when it flits past. I'm not being whimsical. It is certainly possible to search actively for an idea, but unless you know one when you see one, there is no point in looking. (p. 88)

SHAPING YOUR STORY IDEAS

Freelance writer Lorene Hanley Duquin (1987) has a four-step plan of attack for shaping story ideas before actually writing the article. She says these steps require "simple brainstorming" by asking yourself the questions and writing down the answers. "It's that information that I mold and shape into a proposal that captures an editor's interest and imagination" (p. 38). Her steps are as follows:

1. Capture the idea—Build an idea file because writers cannot always use ideas when they come along. You can do this with notebooks, file cards, file folders, shoeboxes, and even your word processor. At times, ideas have to wait until a market prospect presents itself, too.
2. Develop the idea—Do some preliminary research to develop that idea into a proposal. Not all ideas are easy to develop, of course, so be prepared to do some work. Think about the idea. Is it too broad or too narrow? Does it have wide enough appeal to your potential readers?
3. Tailor the idea—Shaping the idea to the readers you wish to reach is very important to a successful feature story. Ask yourself questions: What readers will be interested in your article? What has already been done on the subject? What publication will want to publish the article?
4. Test the idea—Duquin says you should be able to answer these questions: Do you really want to write the article? Are you capable of doing the article? How much will the article cost you (in money and time)? What else can you do with the material if an editor does not want it? Are there markets for reprints? Can you do spinoff articles?

For another approach to turning an idea into a workable story, Wisconsin writer Marshall Cook (1986) suggested seven steps:

1. Feed the mind—Try new experiences. Relive old ones through journals and diaries. Read extensively. Talk to people. Do stimulating things.
2. Nurture the idea—Ideas come with a flash of lightning or with the graduate speed of a sunrise. Be ready for an idea to come to you and give it your attention by examining it from all angles.
3. Ignore the idea—After pampering the idea, forget about it for a while. This incubation period helps divert you from pressure of creation on demand. Decide to come back to the idea at an appointed date and time a few days later.
4. Welcome the idea back—When you return to the idea at the appointed hour, be fresh and alert. Be at your most productive period of the day. Write in your regular, yet special, writing place. Be comfortable.
5. Create!—Concentrate on your idea, organize, and get going. Let the ideas flow and worry about style and clarity later. Get something on paper now.
6. Sustain the flow—Regular writing momentum makes a big difference. Successfully developing your idea into an article will depend on continuation of the work.
7. Revise—This involves polishing the original draft into a final product.

LOOKING AT THE WORLD

You can do stories on an endless list of topics. Start by thinking about your own personal experiences and lifestyle. Stop reading for a moment. Take a piece of paper from your notebook and make a list of possible story ideas. It can be very general. You can refine it later. Compile your list before you read the next paragraph.

Done? Compare your list to the idea categories that follow. If you are a typical college student, it might include such things as cars, music, movies, dancing, clothing styles, housing, food, relationships, dating, classes, grades, fitness and exercise, travel, credit cards and bank accounts, friends, roommates, church, clubs and social groups, part-time jobs, parents—grandparents, and hometowns. Your list probably includes something like those and perhaps more. Your list might be more specific. Not bad for just a few minutes of "brainstorming."

Every one of those categories can be divided into story prospects. You just need to get more specific, that is, give each one a little more focus. You might not realize it, but you are an expert on subjects already and can write about them. If you are interested in fitness and exercise, for instance, do you like to jog? Do you take an aerobics class? If you do, you know more about jogging or aerobics than those persons who do not jog or do aerobics. You've experienced
Local Coffeehouse Owner Reaches Young Adults through Faith and Service

He didn’t grow up singing, playing a musical instrument, or participating in school musicals. In fact, he says he has no musical talent at all. He also admits that he has no touch for interior design. He doesn’t have a degree in business and absolutely hates the taste of coffee. Despite these trivial qualities that you may expect from a coffeehouse entrepreneur, David Smith has built a coffeehouse that is founded on his passions – loving people and helping them grow in their faith in God.

An avid runner throughout high school, Smith participated in both track and cross-country. His running ability carried him to Taylor University, where he was an athlete for four years. In his time at Taylor, he majored in biblical literature or in his terms “the study of the Bible.” After graduating from Taylor, he worked as an intern for a juvenile detention center. In working with the teenagers, he developed a greater passion for helping and serving others. Shortly after his internship, the First Church of God in Muncie hired him to be a youth pastor. Through the vision and effort of this church and Smith, the Living Room was born.

As the college and young adults’ pastor of the church, Smith desired to provide young adults with a non-traditional worship service, which would be relaxing and inviting. Smith took action and started having youth services in an airplane hanger at the Delaware County Airport in the fall of 1999. According to Smith, the employees would move the planes out of one hanger to another in order to provide space for Smith’s bands. By January 2000, Smith decided to stop having services in the airplane hanger because of the doors would actually freeze in the winter months.
A few months later, there was a space available in downtown Muncie, and Smith took advantage of it. He and about 50 volunteers from various area colleges and churches took on the task of transforming what had once been a ballet center into a coffeehouse. Smith hired an interior designer to create the atmosphere. He was greatly surprised when she told him that she thought he should paint the walls orange. Taking her advice, Smith began shaping what is now the Living Room. “It was an evolution. I just surrounded myself with smart people. I really was just the facilitator of it,” said Smith.

On March 17, 2000, Smith and his volunteers opened the Living Room. According to Smith, he knew that college students needed a place to go on the weekends that was an alternative to going to parties. “Young adults just need a place to hang out,” said Smith. He built this non-profit organization on the practical idea that young adults love music, coffee and snacks. For the past five years, college students and young adults have come on Friday nights to socialize, drink coffee and enjoy live bands. For $2.50, students can enjoy spending time with their friends and many times listening to people they know perform. “I love how half the people there are my friends. I know a lot of the bands because some of them are people I actually hang out with,” said Brad Kottkamp. Smith managed a concert every Friday night, even during the holidays, for the first four years. “I gave my life to this place on Friday nights, “said Smith.

The evolution of the Living Room is a sign of effort and dedication. Smith’s determination to hurdle over various obstacles the past five years has led the Living Room to where it is today. “I don’t like to quit. A healthy dose of determination goes a long way,” said Smith. From building the stage and doing the electrical work to managing the finances, Smith has worked to making the Living Room a possibility. He used outside sources to furnish the rooms. Ball State University donated the tables and chairs. “Up here we have an eclectic and
wacko setup, and somehow it works,” said Smith. The First Church of God has donated a large amount of money to the entire project. According to Smith, between the church’s liberal donations and his wise management of money, the Living Room exists. “It’s a hard gig,” said Smith. He admits that he may have gained his mind for business through his father, who served for many years as Taylor’s vice president of finance.

Although Smith will talk “business” if he has to, he prefers to let others know about his deep passion for people and his faith. “I love people. I want to see [them] learn and grow,” said Smith. Besides managing the Living Room, he continues to serve in various capacities at his church. He places much value on his relationships with those he meets. “He cares more about the fellowship than making money, which is incredible,” said Kottkamp. John Hainstock, who has performed five times at the Living Room, has been affected by Smith’s friendship. “David is a really warm and compassionate guy who loves Jesus. He’s just really easy to work with,” said Hainstock. Happily married to Christina, he will be taking on the role of a father in the near future. He believes that within the next five to ten years, he will resign his position at the Living Room to fulfill other positions in the church.

Until that time comes, Smith plans to continue to make the Living Room as accessible and enjoyable as can be for young adults. He already has a packed schedule lined up for the month of April. A Ball State favorite, Josh Garrels, will be performing on April 8, 2005. The biggest concert of the year is coming up on April 22, 2005. This concert will feature Autovaughn and John McLaughlin. The following week will be a special week in which all of the proceeds will go to help the tsunami relief cause. “Every Friday night between now and the end of school, we’re open,” said Smith. According to Hainstock, the Living Room is personable and inviting. “It’s like a big family get together,” said Hainstock.
1.) There are characters hidden in those interview subjects! (A useful technique to find them.)

2.) Notebooks are cheap. (So use a lot of them.)

3.) Remember the Renaissance masters. (News writing as a layering process.)

4.) Literature is your friend. (Round vs. flat characters.)

5.) You don’t have to wait for someone to die. (The lesson in “Portraits of Grief.”)

6.) Give ‘em a glimpse. (They’ll thank you for it.)

7.) Readers aren’t kids, and they don’t have to eat their vegetables. (Being your own ambassador.)

8.) Be present so your reader can be. (Pinning down the perfect detail, even after the fact.)

9.) Beware the cheese. Play fair. (A few cautionary notes.)
Example 1: From *The Indianapolis Star*
Thursday, February 28, 2002

John Lee Allen, Sr., 61, Indianapolis, died Feb. 26. He was a self-employed truck driver. Previously, he was a truck driver 21 years for SMI Recycling, retiring in 1990. Services: 2 p.m. March 2 in Williams and Bluitt Funeral Home, with calling from 1 p.m. Burial: Washington Park North Cemetery. Survivors: son John Allen Jr.; stepchildren Carlos Thresher, Paula Brasher; mother Charlie Mae Harvey Allen; brother Don Louis "Eastside" Allen; sisters Vernell James, Vickey Long, Barbara Barnes, Beverly Gordon, Carolyn Richardson, Lorraine Allen; 11 grandchildren.

Example 2: From *The New York Times*
Sunday, March 3, 2002 - “Portraits of Grief”

“Sean Gordon Corbett O’Neill: Married for Only 3 Months”

The audience: sisters, husbands, kids, friends, grandparents.

The players: Holly Devine, who chimes in while the star, her fiancé, Sean Gordon Corbett O’Neill, an equities trader at Cantor Fitzgerald, bellows, dances, spices, clatters and tastes, ultimately producing a savory, crowd-pleasing dish.

“Santa Fe chicken!” shout Holly and Sean. “It’s a’ finger-lickin’! Whatcha got itchin’?“

The charming, exuberantly silly little brother of three sisters, Mr. O’Neill, 34, was happily stepping into his life. For years a Northeast nomad, he had finally settled in Rye, N.Y., bought and fixed up a cabin in Vermont for skiing and family holidays, and on June 2, the wedding anniversary of his parents, James and Rosaleen, married Ms. Devine.

He still had that time problem — didn’t 7 o’clock mean 10 o’clock? — and organization wasn’t his strongest point. But a Labrador-like loyalty to friends and family certainly was. So was that un-self-conscious enthusiasm: who else but Uncle Sean would grab a wave skimmer, race into the water after the 11-year-olds, crack his head, sit up laughing, and cajole the other grown-ups to try it, too?

With his newfound mix of adulthood and youthfulness, Mr. O’Neill was even getting ready for fatherhood. His and Holly’s daughter is due this month: Mr. O’Neill referred to the baby as the Devine Intervention.
From The New York Times  
Sunday, March 3, 2002 - “Portraits of Grief”

“Joseph D. Farrelly: Love Notes to His Queen”

Joseph D. Farrelly met Stacey Goldberg when she was 17 years old. It was love at first sight for Captain Farrelly, then 21. But he waited nearly a month before he asked her out on a date.

“He wouldn’t ask me out until after my birthday” when she would turn 18, said Mrs. Farrelly, who married Captain Farrelly two and a half years later. “That’s the kind of guy he was.”

Captain Farrelly turned out to be the kind of chivalrous husband who always opened doors, washed the dishes after dinner and started his wife’s car to make sure it was warm when she got inside. A 22-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department, Captain Farrelly, of Engine Company 4, also left Mrs. Farrelly love notes nearly every day, on her pillow or in her car.

“Joe made it a point to make her happy,” said Marge Neefus, a longtime friend of the couple. “I used to tease her all the time and call her the queen. He treated her that way. He dedicated his life to making her happy.”

Though the couple would eventually have a family of their own, for 10 years they served as foster parents to crack-addicted babies. Captain Farrelly, who was 47 when he died, always took the night shift.
Solution for homeless: 2,100 more dwellings

The Blueprint to End Homelessness has proposed providing more than 2,100 homes for Indianapolis' homeless in the next five years, and doubling that within the decade.

The homes, many in structures that already exist, would potentially be located citywide, said Bill Moreau, who chairs Blueprint, a subcommittee of the Housing Task Force that was created by former Mayor Stephen Goldsmith.

Providing affordable shelter, the most basic need of the homeless, will go far toward the goal some view as unreachable — ending homelessness, Moreau said Wednesday when the first draft of the committee's report was released.

"There is a serious shortfall of housing that the poorest Indianapolis residents can afford," said the draft report, which will be presented to the Housing Task Force in April. "This shortfall directly contributes to homelessness."

A study by the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention estimates that on any given night, Indianapolis has more than 3,500 homeless people.

And while the report is short on specifics, it takes a "housing first" approach over other issues that exacerbate the homelessness problem, including substance abuse, unemployment and mental illness.

"Research indicates that providing housing, with case management, mental health and other appropriate supports, is the most effective strategy to prevent homelessness," the report said.

Moreau said the supply of housing in Indianapolis is not the problem, but the affordability of that housing is.

While the committee is far from calculating a final tab for its comprehensive plan that pools federal, state and local resources as well as private funding, the initial phases could cost as much as $10 million, said Dan Shepley, director of the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention.

Missing from the calculation of cost, said Joe Fahy, planning director for the coalition, are the substantial cost savings from not having to pay for costly "fixes" for problems, including crimes resulting from drug abuse, and expensive social services.

"Indianapolis is currently spending millions of tax dollars annually to assist homeless people," the report says, "but is not achieving the needed result of reducing or ending homelessness."

Moreau, a lawyer with Barnes & Thornburg and chief of staff to former Gov. Evan Bayh, leads the 30-member committee, formed in 1998 to suggest more options for affordable housing.

Moreau and other members of the committee said they were heartened by the high profile Mayor Bart Peterson gave to the problem of homelessness, "our national shame."

Being "homeless" is hard for Celeste and Phill JeantreUe's two children, ages 14 and 12, to swallow. The family moved from North Carolina to Indiana, where they thought jobs would be plentiful.

Celeste said they quickly ran out of funds while living in hotels.

Then they looked in a telephone book and found Holy Family Shelter on the Near Southside, where they have been for two weeks.

Phill recently was hired as an apprentice ironworker, and Celeste said she is using the assistance of a local social service agency to find work.

"My kids and I and my husband have never gone through anything like homelessness before," Celeste said.

Traci Freeze, a social worker at the shelter, said the committee's work is commendable.

"But the plan has to be something that addresses all of the issues," she added.

Shepley and Moreau said the plan, almost a year in the making, has addressed the issues.

"Now we have to look at how we engage the entire community," Moreau said. "If this study is just left sitting on the shelf, I will be very unhappy."
lost and fulfilled but always
"But She Trembling in her
asked the unaskable question a second
time. And this time the white man
behind the desk showed her where to
begin to flow.

"He made it possible to get a student
loan," she says, and then the tears
didn't go home. She went to
another bank. Shaking even harder, she
asked the unaskable question a second
time. And this time the white man
behind the desk showed her where to
sign.

"But here's my point," she says. "But
here's my point." And telling the story,
the tears glisten and her voice rises.
She didn't go home. She went to
another bank. Shaking even harder, she
asked the unaskable question a second
time. And this time the white man
behind the desk showed her where to
sign.

"He made it possible to get a student
loan," she says, and then the tears
begin to flow. "I'll never forget that
man's name."

If the destiny of this Jacksonville fami-
ly, five living generations of women at
its heart, ever hinged on a single
moment, it was this one. That day the
dreams of Mary's mother, Corether
Christie, now 86, found fruition in her
granddaughter, Zelma Dickerson, now
50, who went to school and became
the nurse her grandmother always
wanted to be. On that day, too, the
dreams of Zelma's own granddaughter,
3-year-old India Wells, were made pos-
sible, whatever they might turn out to
be.

An iron-fisted faith in God, a bond
forged in terrible poverty and dreams
— lost and fulfilled but always
yearned for — got this family through
the last 100 years. This is the differ-
ence that century made.

The matriarch
Corether Christie was born in 1913 to
the son of a slave. Her grandfather had
walked off a South Carolina plantation
when emancipation was declared,
sleeping in ditches alongside the road
to Jacksonville and work. Her father
couldn't write his own name but raised
eight children alone after his wife died
in childbirth. Corether was only 3 then.
She lives in the same Lem Turner-area
neighborhood where her bereft father
refused to farm his young children out
to more capable relatives.

"Oh, he was a huge man. He was an
Indian-looking man. He wouldn't let
anybody have any of us," she says,
laying hands on her listeners' knees.

They've heard these stories many
times, Corether's children, grandchil-
dren, great-grandchildren and greata
grandchildren. There are more
than 130 of them in all, but Corether,
hersight not what it once was,
knows most of their telephone numbers
by heart. When she gets on the phone
and declares a family get-together, as
she often does, cars line both sides of
the street in front of the house and the
walls reverberate with voices.

All of it centers on her, a small
woman, almost toothless, the lines on
her face a record of the long, hard
years, and most of them were hard.
She is the moral center and living
memory of her family.

"If you never had nothing, you couldn't
miss nothing," she says. That's how
she sums up a childhood without elec-
tricity, indoor plumbing or anything
else remotely resembling a luxury.
Growing up, she had one large meal a
day, usually consisting of navy beans;
a single pair of shoes a year, which she
sometimes wore on opposite feet to
even out the wear; and at
Christmas time one orange and one
apple. She and her four sisters slept in
a single bed, her three brothers in
another.

"But you know, we were happy," she
says. "Those were good old days."

That area of Northside Jacksonville
was then just a scattering of houses in
thick woods, and grandparents, cousins
and friends lived in many of them. The
first man she would marry tended hogs
just over the creek from her house.
Corether remembers going for visits in
a wagon pulled by a horse named Dan,
and going to school with the other
black children in a Baptist church ruled
by a strict teacher. She loved school
but had to quit after the eighth grade.

"I wanted so bad to go on," she says.
"I wanted to be a nurse. I had seen a
picture of a nurse in a long, white
dress. She just looked so professional
and so . . ."
second time in the late 1950s and took on four more children from the previous marriage of her new husband, who died in 1979. The informal adoption of two more children in need brought the number of Corether's dependents to 12.

"Momma had to work all the time," says 66-year-old Mary McRoy, Corether's oldest daughter. She worked for 35 years in the home of a kind white family that owned a five-and-dime store and refused to be blind to the needs of its domestic help. Many was the day the wife of the family turned up at Corether's door with a pile of blankets in winter, or a sack of groceries, or clothes for the children.

But hard times continued for Corether, who cooked, cleaned, chauffeured and did whatever else was asked, whenever it was wanted, for just dollars a week. She is proud to say she never took government aid. "I'd rather have my own 50 cents than somebody else's $5," she says. But every morning, she could only pray over her children before she had to leave them alone in the house all day. Many nights, she brought home food she scavenged from the garbage bin behind the local grocery store, or even the neighborhood dump.

The second generation

Like her mother, Mary grew up knowing poverty, but it was nothing unusual among her friends and neighbors. The family's white neighbors were more prosperous — Mary remembers them having electricity — but only marginally so. The two races lived close to one another and sat on one another's porches in the evening, talking.

But there were differences, and even as a little girl Mary was aware of them. She remembers having to sit in the back of the bus and having to give up her seat to a white person and stand in the aisle if it was crowded. She remembers not being allowed to enter a restaurant through the front door. She remembers at the grocery store having to wait until all the white people had been waited on, even if she got there first. She remembers not being allowed to go inside the luncheon at the local J.C. Penney's. She didn't have any money anyway.

"That's what you accepted," she says. "That's how it was."

But even then she wondered why she had to walk miles to school when there was a school for white children within blocks of her house. She wondered why she wasn't allowed to enter a nearby park where white children played and swung on new swings. She remembers herself and her siblings watching them through the fence.

"We just wished we had what they had," she says.

Mary would not stop at mere wishing, even after marrying and divorcing two no-help husbands, raising six children alone and working a difficult job in a hot laundry where once, when she had been injured, she had to bring her children in to help her finish her work.

Later, a longtime job as a nurse's assistant paid her only $12 every two weeks.

Poverty may have continued into her generation, but she would see that it went no further. That's when she put her Sunday clothes and begged for a loan so her oldest daughter could go to college and become a nurse. And she did.

"It makes me cry every time I tell it," Mary says. "I tell you, God has been good to me. God has brought us out every time."

The third generation

The childhood of Mary's oldest daughter, Zelma Dickerson, was a happily crowded one. Corether's children and her children's children did not wander far from home, and Zelma never slept in an empty bed, never sat at a quiet dinner table.

"I remember us being very poor," she says, especially after a fire burned down their house in the 1950s. "We did what we had to do to survive."

They fished for their suppers, got their water from a pump in the yard and their light from kerosene lamps. They bathed outdoors after dark in a metal tub — Zelma would be an adult before she enjoyed hot water indoors. But there was always family to turn to. What couldn't be found inside one larder was cheerfully offered from another if it could be found there. Encouragement was always close by.

So when Zelma was accepted to Florida A&M University and, through her mother's courage and a changing time, became the first member of her family to have the chance at a college education, it was considered a triumph for all of them. Several uncles got together and put together a car — another family first — from junkyard remnants to drive her there. When she graduated with a degree in nursing in 1971, dozens of relatives came to the ceremonies in a rented school bus.

"My dream, what I wanted to be, was fulfilled in the children," Corether says.

Zelma went on to a master's degree and a career as a hospital executive. She is a project coordinator with First Coast Faith in Action and a pastor with Perez Ministries International, which she founded.

"I had to fight a lot. I had to be very strong," she says. "But you had aspirations. You wanted the family to be proud."

Something to be thankful for

Most of Corether's offspring live within voice's distance of her house, in the same Northside environs where their ancestors eked out a meager living, but that is not to say they have not traveled very far.

The four children of Zelma and her high school sweetheart, married 29 years now, did not have to grow up eating out of the neighborhood dump. They still confront racism, a form that has grown more adept at disguising itself — as Corether says, "They took the signs down but it didn't do nothing to people's hearts." But they are quick to point out the many exceptions in their lives, including the several white people they have welcomed into their own family.

When it came to be her time, Zelma's
oldest daughter, 25-year-old Tamara Wells, got to choose a career that suited her instead of what necessity dictated. She is a cosmetologist, with dreams of her own small daughter, India, becoming a model or a dancer — though she is quick to add she will be happy with whatever India chooses someday.

For the first time in Tamara’s family history, choice is possible. Dreams are within realistic reach. And memories of her own childhood are unmarred by the kind of hardship her great-grandmother knew.

“It’s been a lot of fun,” she says. “We grew up with a lot of cousins. It was just a lot of fun.”

When Tamara was a girl, Corether took care of all the young children while their parents worked, just like she still does. She rose hours before dawn to cook them all a hardy breakfast on a wood stove before school. She still does that, too. She also still leads most of the family in song and prayer at Victory in Christ Bible Church.

A few years ago, Corether decided she was too old for so much carrying on, that she should finally retire from the work she started when she was almost a child herself. She handed the children back to their parents and took to sleeping late in her newly quiet house. But not much time passed before she called them all back.

“If you keep living you keep moving,” she says. “If you want to see people die real quick you retire them.”

Telephone Corether on any weekday afternoon and there is the sound of many small feet pounding in the background, many small mouths jabbering, the front door slamming, and a steady line of great-great-grandchildren being welcomed into her lap with a low, “Come here, baby.”

Children, present and former, fill her house all day, her mind at night. Sometimes, to help her sleep, she recites their names in chronological order, all 130-some.

They are her living record of the years, the belated fulfillment of her many dreams. They and the things they have become — the things they can become — are a reward from God for her patience, she says. For nearly a century of change through which she prevailed.

“When I lay down and think about it, sometimes I shiver,” she says. “We have something to be really thankful for.”

This story can be found on Jacksonville.com at http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/122699/met_1630723.html.
In my recent essay about the Feature Writing category of the Pulitzer Prizes, I argued that weighty narrative series may have elbowed the traditional stand-alone feature out of contention. As a champion and practitioner of the serial narrative, I mean no disrespect for the work of my journalism heroes such as Isabel Wilkerson, Tom French, Tom Hallman, Anne Hull, Jacqui Banaszynski, and many others.

But the future of the feature story is important. (The Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing is important only because it declares a standard of excellence to which other journalists aspire.) Readers like stories, even news stories, written in “feature style,” according to the Readership Institute. And since the invention of the human-interest story, the feature has had the beneficial effect of expanding the universe of newspaper readers while enriching our definition of news.

Feature stories offer news of the emotions is the way Jon Franklin, twice a Pulitzer winner, has described it to me.

What, then, does a real feature story look like?

Consider these as possible characteristics:

1. You can read it, if you want to, in a single sitting on the day the story was published.
2. You can read a short one in five minutes and a long one in 15 minutes.
3. It is NOT a news story but can be inspired by the news.
4. It has, at its heart, human interest.
5. It illuminates lives lived in our time.
6. It takes advantage of an expanded set of language and narrative strategies.
7. It can be written and reported within the normal timeframe of journalistic enterprise.

Each one of those characteristics deserves its own essay. But for now, I’ll offer a couple of recent examples of the noble feature story from my hometown newspaper, the St. Petersburg Times.

Lane DeGregory wrote “Fight, Fight, FIGHT,” the story of a male high school cheerleader, kicked off the squad for drinking. His assertive mother seems ready to go to the ends of the earth to clear her son’s name. I happened to like this story very much, but it's not necessary for
you to like it in order to recognize it as an exemplar of the newspaper feature genre.

Applying my standards:

- It took me about 15 minutes to read the story, which was about 60 inches long, at the far end of my standard, but still in range. (Lane says she drafted a version that was twice as long, cut it herself, and then cut it again with the help of her editor.)
- It is not a news story, although the mother's legal suit against the school board had been reported as news.
- The human characters are fascinating, a teenager who becomes the only boy on the cheerleading squad, only to lose his position for allegations of drinking; a mother unwilling to let this stand, whose efforts to rescue her son may have backfired.
- The story is "about" so many of the issues of our time: gender politics, sexual orientation, discrimination, litigious parents, inflexible school boards, mother and child reunions, and much, much more.
- The story is written in a compelling and non-judgmental voice that lets readers enter the world of this family, experience the turmoil, and draw their own conclusions. Here's the lead:

Johnathan's mom drove him to cheerleading camp that Wednesday.

She helped carry his bags to his dorm room at the University of South Florida, where he was going to spend three days with his teammates from Pasco High. She hung his Tommy Hilfiger shirts in the closet. She made his bed.

Then she drained the melted ice from his cooler. She had packed it with nectarines and peaches, whole milk and Zephyrhills water, two bottles of Gatorade and a six-pack of Sierra Mist. She knew these details because she went back to Wal-Mart months later and got a copy of the receipt.

She needed it for evidence.

These details foreshadow the mother's more controlling impulses, and the mini-cliffhanger drives the reader forward to answer the question: "evidence for what?"

Lane says she reported and wrote the story from March through May, a period during which she worked on another half-dozen or so feature stories.

I can make a similar case for "Sean's Echo," a story written by Kelley
Benham. Here we learn of a young boy who dies suddenly of natural causes, leaving behind a special hearing device that helped him overcome his serious speech impediment.

Former Poynter boss, Jim Naughton, told me that he cried during the poignant scenes in which another young boy becomes the beneficiary of this expensive mechanical device, which cures his stuttering.

At first the story looks like the familiar one in which a person benefits from a transplanted organ. What makes this case special is that the "organ" is a mechanical device.

Kelley's story was about a 10-minute read (2,000 words) and fit into many of the standard feature writing categories I described above.

To show her range and versatility, that same week Kelley wrote a story about a homeowner who loves his lawn and his $17,000 lawnmower just a little too much. "One day she made me cry," testified Naughton, "another day she made me laugh."

"Feature Writing" will always be an imprecise mode of expression, with an imprecise history. The book "Best News Stories of 1924" compiled stories in several categories, including Feature Stories, Human Interest Stories, Interviews, and Personality Stories. Most of these stories, from the vantage point of our time, look like features.

One additional complicating factor: In the last 30 years, my time frame, news stories have been written with more feature elements, and many features are written right off the news. So the lines between news and features have blurred.

In that same time period, many newspapers have dropped their Sunday magazines and converted their general feature sections to cover special topics, everything from food to health to technology. As a result, the habitat for the traditional stand-alone feature has shrunk, and, with it, the habit of reading good stories that used to draw many of us to the newspaper in the first place.

[ Please join this conversation. Where are you seeing good feature writing these days? Give us some links to your favorite examples. What makes great feature writing great? ]

http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=67829
Copyright © 1995-2008 The Poynter Institute
A good observer will use the senses to the fullest and convey this to the reader. Consider colors, sounds, and smells. Notice textures and tastes. All of these, if written with the right adjectives and adverbs in your story, will take the reader to that special place that you write about each time. Veteran Washington Post travel writer L. Peat O'Neil has written freelance travel features for major magazines in addition to her own newspaper. She has also authored a book, Travel Writing: A Guide to Research, Writing and Selling. O'Neil (1996) argued that the best tool of a travel writer is a journal kept during a trip:

Whether you call it a diary, log, notebook or journal, the written record of immediate impressions is the travel writer's most valuable tool. Sentences and phrases reported as they happen or a few hours later are vigorous with the energy of the experience, full of fresh detail. With his or her senses alert to surroundings, the observant writer jots down colors, sounds, smells, word sketches of people and scenes. At this notebook stage, the writer's eye is like a magpie collecting elements that shine, cramming the journal page with description. (p. 30)

O'Neil uses a small spiral notebook. However, writers can use a wide range of devices—such as pocket-size notepads, hand-held tape recorders, and even small computers. To keep a journal is to be a disciplined traveler. However, professional traveler writers have this discipline because their livelihood often depends on it. The point is to record the reactions and observations while the memories and moment are still in the mind with all the rich detail you want in your story when you write it days or even weeks later.

Another word about writing: Avoid clichés in travel articles. Most editors detest them and they can be the kiss of death for an otherwise sound manuscript. There is special temptation to use them to convey impressions. Do not use them because clichés often turn off readers. Work a bit harder to find the words you need to describe what you saw, heard, or felt. It will pay off. A similar warning can be issued about perpetuating stereotypes. This is especially a problem when you are writing about foreign countries and their cultures and peoples. Strive to find fresh and innovative ways to describe the areas you visit and the anecdotes you include in your articles. It is quite possible to write about national or regional customs, beliefs, and other traditions without feeding on stereotypes. It might require some work beyond the surface, but it will pay off in the form of more appealing travel features.

Using your observation skills means you can also have fun with an article. Backpacker magazine writer Michael Lanza (2002) compiled a series of short descriptive pieces that created an entertaining feature about outdoor toilets or privies with some of the best views in North America. The article listed his and a handful of other writers' descriptions of 10 of the most scenic outhouses available in the great outdoors for readers of Backpacker. This is how he began the article:

Let's see, how can we broach this subject delicately? Well, there are moments on any backcountry trip that stir feelings deep inside us of . . . no, no, bad choice of words. The magic of the wilderness is capable of moving us in ways . . . hmmm, better try again. Sometimes the beauty of the mountain or canyon view inspires us to gush forth with . . . uhhh, that might not be the most appealing eye image, either.

Okay, let's face it, there's no polite way to lift the lid on the topic of wilderness privies. This is a story about outhouses. Honey huts. Mud shacks. In the following pages, we'll introduce you to 10 of the most scenically situated seats in North America. These wooden thrones sit upon Mother Nature's most majestic altars, inviting deep thinkers to puzzle—sometimes at great length—over life's great riddles. (Riddle #1: Why is there never paper in these stalls?)

All of the seats lie deep in the backcountry, reached by way of very worthwhile hikes. We're confident your next visit will leave you flush with awe, and feeling lighter and less burdened. Just don't forget to bring a fresh roll . . . of film.

Now scar:

1. Boulder Pass campsite, Glacier National Park, Montana. We'd spent the dry hiking beneath the crest of the Continental Divide, across hanging valleys populated by mountain goats, and later hoofed up Boulder Peak for an expansive view of the park's jagged mountains. At sunset, I mounted this open-air seat overlooking Kintla and Kinney Peaks and the Agassiz Glacier, and watched vivid bands of yellow, orange, and red stack up on the horizon as the sun disappeared. Camp at Boulder Pass on a 5-day, 36.6-mile traverse from the Bowman Lake trailhead to the Kintla Lake trailhead. . . . (Lanza, 2002, p. 64)
story is designed to tell your reader about the place, whether it is an exotic location such as Honolulu or Singapore, or a more traditional vacation destination such as Niagara Falls or the Smoky Mountains.

These stories focus on cities or specific attractions. They must be crammed with facts. The reader is seeking the best information about these locations as possible destinations for a meeting, vacation, or other purpose. Tell the reader what he or she should see. Tell what should be avoided and why. Tell your reader about the major parks and other public facilities. List the historic sites. Give details of hours of service, costs, and other necessary information. Where does the reader write for additional information? You should know this and tell the reader.

Destination articles should be rich in detail and offer direct quotations from local authorities to back up generalizations about places of which you have written. Quote residents and experts. Talk to historians and visit historic sites. Talk to food critics about the best restaurants. Ask other travelers to comment about the same things you experience. Then summarize the most important facts in a special abstracted form known as the facts box. This helps your reader by providing a fast-reference list while he or she is in the car or plane. An interesting and unusual place is often the subject of a strong destination feature. TravelAmerica magazine writer Ellen Clark (2002) found such an unusual place when she wrote about Glacier National Park in the mountains of Montana. This is how she began her article, describing the stunning landscape:

If I had to pick a single word to describe Glacier National Park, it would be "dramatic." From its towering rock formations, with undulating striations in arresting shades of brown and red, to the lush mountain foliage and astounding variety of wildlife, the park seems to give rise to the oohs and ahhs usually reserved for dazzling fireworks displays on the Fourth of July.

Sheer rock faces are mirrored in 27,000 acres of lakes and ponds. Wildlife runs the gamut from squirrels and weasels to mountain goats and bears. Named for its glacially carved topography, Glacier National Park is a natural wonderland that assails the senses.

No trip to Glacier would be complete without a ride along Going-to-the-Sun Road. A spectacular ribbon of two-lane, steep and winding roadway, it snakes its way for 50 miles from the park's west entrance near the community of West Glacier to the east entrance of the park at St. Mary.

The road was completed in 1930, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and designated a National Landmark in 1996. It passes over the Continental Divide at 6,646-foot Logan Pass. Besides vistas of looming rock walls, plunging gorges, pine forests, lakes, and waterfalls, there's a good chance of seeing mountain goats, deer, and even an occasional bear.

While Going-to-the-Sun Road is a good way to get an overall view of the park, the best way to enjoy it up-close and personal is to get out of the car and hit one of the 151 hiking trails. There are trails for every ability . . . (E. Clark, 2002)
GOING MY WAY?

Practicing the odd, misleading, and almost always imprecise art of giving and receiving—
by Akiko Busch
WHEN TO GO
Plan to visit from late fall through early spring, when the weather is the most comfortable; from June through September, Guangzhou is quite hot.

GETTING THERE
More than a half-dozen major airlines fly into Hong Kong. From there, you can travel by either ferry or train to Guangzhou. For visa information, contact the Chinese embassy or consulate nearest you. www.china-embassy.org.

WHERE TO STAY

THE GARDEN HOTEL
A 1,028-room tower, with a soaring marble lobby and great restaurants. 368 Huanshi Dong Rd.; 86-20/8333-8983; www.thegardenhotel.com.cn; doubles from $160.

WHERE TO SHOP

JIANGNAN MARKET
To get to this “wedding dress street,” head south from Haizhu Circle on Jiangnan Road.

WHERE TO EAT

PEACH BLOSSOM RESTAURANT
The Garden Hotel (see Where to Stay); dim sum for two $40.

HAIZHU MARKET
In Haizhu Circle, off Yanjiang Road.

WHERE TO SHOP

HAIZHU MARKET
In Haizhu Circle, off Yanjiang Road.

YUMIN RESTAURANT
559-567 Yingbin Rd., Dashi Town, Panyu; 86-20/2287-8811; dinner for two $25.

JADE MARKET
On Changshou Road.

WHITE SWAN HOTEL
A city classic, on Shamian Island, overlooking the river. Shamian Island; 86-20/8188-6968; www.whiteswanhotel.com; doubles from $101.

WHAT TO DO

YUYIN MOUNTAIN HOUSE
Also called Yuyin Garden, this is one of four major Qing dynasty gardens in the province. Nancun Town, Panyu; 86-20/3882-8309.

QINGPING MARKET
Take an afternoon to explore the maze of stalls and shops across from Shamian Island.

WHERE TO SHOP

HAIYIN MARKET
Silks and wools; next to Haiyin Bridge.

WHERE TO SHOP

HAIZHU MARKET
Silks and wools; next to Haiyin Bridge.

JIANGNAN MARKET
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My friend Barbara Flanagan, a writer, was thrown off by cultural differences when she took a trip to Japan. Of the time she and a friend spent in Kyoto, she recalls, “We knew we had to be careful about asking for directions. People are so polite there. And they feel duty-bound to get you all the way to where you’re going. It’s almost a sacred obligation, even if they don’t really have any idea. Which can lead to your getting even more lost.”

An excess of good manners isn’t the only motive for inventing information. Brenda Cullerton is a fiction writer in New York City who also feels an obligation to help tourists. “I love giving directions,” she says, “especially if I know where a place is. It makes me feel as if I’m in control. I know something, I’m a local. And besides, once I’ve told them, people always look so relieved, so grateful.” Her greatest directorial feat, reflecting her professional skills, may have been her devilish response to a “hopelessly jet-lagged and disoriented tourist” who asked her in downtown Manhattan, “Do you know how to get to Pennsylvania Avenue?” Cullerton couldn’t help herself. “No problem,” she said, leaning in to look at his map. “Take a left at the next corner, walk three blocks north, pass the post office, and just keep going. You can’t miss it.”

No contemplation on the topic of giving and receiving directions would be complete without some mention of the amnesiacs in our midst. Asking someone how to locate cherished community places can elicit the blank looks, quizzical expressions, and claims of utter ignorance my sons and I once received when we were on vacation in a small town in Vermont searching out a swimming hole that the locals were loath to share with outsiders. Near where I live now is a geological formation called the Stone Church, a small cathedral of rock with a stream and waterfall running through it. Owned privately for decades, it was recently purchased by a land trust and made accessible to the public—if you could figure out where it was. The first time I went looking for it, no one would say they had ever heard of it. Sometimes landscape is an object of such fierce love and affection that you can’t imagine sharing it.

Whether we are guarding the right information or giving the wrong information without compunction, the trickster, I am certain, is working through us. Possibly it is a universal law of human communication that we will create mystery where there is none. Even with “good” counsel, there is rarely clarity in our journeys, a direct route or straight line, a fast way to get there. You may as well take the advice you get. Or at least listen to it. In the end, inexact directions are shorthand for all the ways in which one can be waylaid, beset, lost, before finally arriving.

In the course of my own travels I have been sent down the wrong road too many times to count. I have been misguided, led astray, and outright lied to. But oddly enough, all this misinformation gives me hope, because it reminds me that although the landscape is for the most part fixed, our perceptions of it are not; that being on the receiving end of directions is a testament to the idiosyncratic ways in which we experience place.

We all love to be asked for our opinions and, even more, for our stories. Giving directions is a form of storytelling. When people advise you to take the longest, most complicated route, it is their way of prolonging the pleasure of the journey. Or, if you are hearing about a shortcut, you are also being let in on a secret. It doesn’t matter if you are traveling in the dead of night and you are bound to miss the turn by the railroad track and fail to see the lake; a confidence is being passed along. It is not often that we ask complete strangers for advice, but when we do, as with so many other pleas for help, we invite a certain intimacy.

To point out that we all travel down the road of life alone is a cliché, I know; nonetheless, offering directions to a stranger is a way of picking up a companion for one brief leg of the trip. On the receiving end of instructions, the traveler becomes a temporary compatriot, sharing that bit of the trip and possibly even its joys and sorrows. But these cannot be fully exchanged at a car window. So instead, you are sent off, and if it’s not on your way exactly, then their way may be worth the adventure."
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puts pepper on her strawberries

prefers hiking boots to high heels

always wakes up early to watch the sun rise when staying at

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Giving directions is a form of storytelling. When people advise you to take the longest, most complicated route, it is their way of prolonging the pleasure of the journey.

shortcut through an alley, and crossing two bridges. But as I left the store, a twentysomething customer followed me out to suggest a much simpler, quicker, and more direct route that involved reversing course, going straight, and making a single turn. The difference in these two offerings illustrates that how one gives directions tends to be a highly individual, personal, and sometimes even poetic enterprise.

The more I ask friends about this, the more I realize that virtually everyone has had a similar experience. The unpredictable alliances of memory and landscape can be especially perplexing when driving directions are based on the assumption that things are as they once were when all was right in this world. Architect James Biber tells me of the time he was in a small Connecticut town and asked for directions from an "old codger," and received the intriguing, if useless advice to "turn left where the old schoolhouse used to be." I know, though, that I have given such impractical advice myself, not out of malice but from pure sentiment. I live in what was once a farming community in the Hudson River Valley. Now it is exurban, its silos and barns falling into ever-greater disrepair; long after one silo with a dangerous but captivating tilt had given way to the elements, there were times when, in spite of myself, I cited it as a landmark.

The sense of displacement that a lost traveler feels is sometimes shared by the locals—which is what the actor David Strathairn found some years ago when he was on location in Nebraska for a television production of Willa Cather's O Pioneers! Road names were being changed from family surnames to numbers, and the work was still in progress. "East of downtown Lincoln, the landscape rolls and rolls like a gigantic quilt with wind underneath it," he told me. "The roads cut at right angles heading off north and south, like seams between the huge sections of corn, soybeans, and fallow fields. The assistant director had listed the location as 256E, and I knew from the travel time allotted that it wasn't far from my motel. After what was obviously too much driving, we asked a gentleman riding a tractor alongside the road if he knew where 256E was. He said, 'Yes sir, it's the first road on your right back at the bottom of the second swale. You can't miss it. Used to be a sign telling whose road it is but they're changing all of them to numbers now and taking their time putting up the new posts. And now nobody knows where they live anymore.'"

Landmarks more permanent than road names and numbers can be cause for confusion, too—as often as not because the significance of the landmark resides in the teller's mind alone. A helpful local may tell you of the village store, the cemetery, and the stone wall but fail to mention the competing large red barn, pond with the swans, and crossroad, making for an incomplete catalogue of visual aids. This, too, conforms to its own logic. If landmarks help us to derive meaning in a place, then, as with all the other guideposts we use to order our lives, we are discriminating in our choices.

Consider, too, the authoritative directive that tells you where you should go rather than where you want to go. While visiting Dublin a number of years ago, I stopped to ask for the quickest route to the Brazen Head, a centuries-old pub where I was meeting a friend. "But lambie," I was reprimanded in a lilting brogue, "surely you wouldn't want to be going there," whereupon my affable adviser, exemplifying the celebrated congeniality of all his countrymen, made every effort to escort me personally to his brother-in-law's pub instead, on the other, wrong side of the Liffey."
INTO THE WOODS

A cottage modeled on a beaver lodge? A helicopter turned luxury suite?

SARA CORBETT heads to Connecticut to check into Winvian, the little resort that's making a big noise in bucolic New England.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKI DUISTERHOF
phants, the trust raises and nurtures them until they can be
dually released back into the wilds of Tsavo within any of a
lives. The Black-footed Koppa, as they are called, care for

At Anna Trzebinski's
workshop, East
African-inspired

the workshop you will want to see—and
shop in. Tables are covered with hand-
bags and other wares. Next to them are
The afternoon my husband and I drove down the oak-lined road that leads to the bold, quirky new Winvian resort in Morris, Connecticut, I will admit, I was skeptical. New Englanders don't do quirky. I'm sorry, but I'm a native. I know these things. What's bred into us is an unreasonable passion for old stone walls and clapboard houses and anything, really, that calls to mind the Revolutionary War or the biggest regional hero of all time, not counting Tom Brady: Paul Revere. As travelers, we swoon for seaside inns and woody cabins. We'll take the traditional over the experimental any day, and that's that.

Litchfield County, the bucolic countryside in the northwestern part of the state, is, in essence, a traditionalist's paradise. It is famously both pastoral and genteel, the realm of horse farms, cluttered antiques shops and quaint vegetable stands. The village of Litchfield itself is anchored by a picture-book 1829 Congregational church and a town green where—be still my Yankee heart!—George Washington had dinner and stayed overnight in 1780 with Oliver Wolcott Sr., a Litchfield resident and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The surrounding meadows are rolling, the woods are largely pristine, and the area is dotted with clean lakes for swimming. Known as a quiet haven, a sort of anti-Hamptons for intellectual New Yorkers (Henry Kissinger, Meryl Streep and Philip Roth all own property here), Litchfield
A view across the trout pond at the Winvian resort, in Litchfield County, Connecticut. OPPOSITE: From left, Charter Oak, Helicopter and Connecticut Yankee cottages.
Secrets of the Bazaar

The advice that guidebooks are likely to dispense about visiting Kapalıçarşı, Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar—“Learn to haggle” or, perhaps, “Guard against pickpockets”—reduces the world’s oldest covered market to an Orientalist’s relic that is no place for real shopping. But spend enough time inside it, as I have over the course of many visits, and you’ll notice an interesting phenomenon: designer-clad local women, their manicured hands clutching Gucci and Fendi bags (which, I regret to say, inspire some of the less than authentic merchandise in the bazaar), stride purposefully through its snaking streets. They ignore the calls from vendors (“Lady! Let me show you how to spend your money!”) and dart through certain shops’ anonymous portals.

Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar is bursting at the seams with jewelry, caftans and other high-end bargains, but you have to know where to look. Olivia Wells tracks down the best values—no haggling required.

They’re not buying brass lamps. As Istanbul’s most fashionable citizens will tell you, the Grand Bazaar delivers its best values on the high end. Anyone who’s here with some regularity has a list of allies, and on my most recent trip, I aimed to add to mine.

Of the more than 4,000 shops in this 546-year-old rabbit warren, a handful have anchored the luxury scene for years, occupying the secret rosters kept by fashion designers, buyers, locals and, apparently, Sean Connery (whose autographed eighty-by-ten glossies seem to pop up everywhere). The trouble is finding them. No one goes by street addresses; just as the Istanbullus do, regular visitors feel their way through the labyrinth by landmarks, righting themselves at Kalpakçılar Caddesi, the long, wide thoroughfare known as the gold street, when they get lost. The confusing posted signs won’t help much either, but a good map will. Pick one up at Havuzlu (3 Gani Çelebi Sokak; 011-90-212-527-3346), the half-century-old traditional Ottoman restaurant just off the gold street, near the entrance called Beyazit (walk about fifty yards from the fountain on Kalpakçılar Caddesi; Havuzlu is on the street behind the coffeehouse). Or you can dispense with the wandering and hire a local shopping guide. (Contact Aysegul Cavas at 011-90-532-612-5124; her rates start at $300 a day.)

I start my tour where most people start: on Kalpakçılar. I go where I know I’ll uncover some of the rarest stones, which is
The Cultivated Shopper

how I find myself gasping at a twelve-carat, radiant-cut yellow diamond on my finger at the jewel box that is Kafkas (4–6 Kalpakçilar Cad.; 011-90-212-522-0326). Conveniently, it fits; inconveniently, it costs more than a quarter of a million dollars. Owner Fuat Kirgiz presides in a corner as one of his salesmen, Serkan, a fast-talking boy in a good suit who spent four years in New York's Diamond District, pulls out tray after tray of mind-bogglingly large stones. From the outside, Kafkas looks much like the hundred or so other jewelry stores lining the street, though I'm keenly aware of the suited men (alertly) loitering outside the closed door as Serkan pulls out a necklace of Kafkas's own design: forty-one carats of rose-cut diamonds scattered around the neck of its black velvet display form. The jewelry is a bargain, he explains: because labor costs for the expertly worked pieces are low, the combined-seven-carat diamond earrings ($75,000) I suddenly really need cost roughly a third of what they would in New York. And as with other stores that have outposts in both the Grand Bazaar and Nişantaşı, an on-the-rise luxury-shopping neighborhood, buyers are likely to capture better prices in the bazaar. Another plus here is anonymity. A serious shopper will have a private audience in the store's cramped quarters, while Kirgiz's shop in Nişantaşı sits amid a celebrity-retail gauntlet that includes Roberto Cavalli, Tod's and Ermenegildo Zegna. On my way out the door, Serkan points nonchalantly to ropes of tassled, lanyard-style necklaces.

“As the owner peels necklaces from the walls, I wonder if there are several hundred more square feet in the room concealed by its pearl insulation.”

Kafkas may be where stars shop, but Sait Koç (94–96 Kalpakçilar Cad.; 011-90-212-526-6847), pronounced "side coach," is where local families buy their jewelry. Koç has been here nearly four decades; he also has stores in Nişantaşı and Akmerkez, the elegant shopping center in Istanbul's Etiler neighborhood. I'm drawn to a trio of rings that resembles Pomellato's Nudo line, but I'm not convinced I love the colors. "Name the stones," says Koç's manager, Michel. "We can make the rings for you in only a couple of days." Besides locals, he says, the shop's most frequent customers are those who call from Philadelphia, Boca Raton and New York with requests. I need instant gratification, so I snap up an emerald-cut amethyst set high on a band of twisted eighteen-karat-gold ropes.

EVERYWHERE IN THE BAZAAR YOU CAN BUY CAFTANS, OF (GREATLY) varying quality, from elongated tunics (hirkas) you might take to the beach to what Grand Bazaar merchants offer when you ask for a caftan: a long robe that typically fastens down the front with buttons. I'm after modern ones, from Orhan Degirmenci (85 Halicilar Cad.; 011-90-212-528-5318); hanging on the exposed pipes outside the store are hand-embroidered caftans Degirmenci purchases from Kashmirian craftsmen. The shorter jackets, made from the finest-gauge pashmina wool and silk, start at about $325 and likely have the same provenance as the gorgeous pieces I've seen selling for $1,500 on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

Past this store, at the end of Takkeciler Caddesi, in the textile district, is one of the bazaar's most beautiful and most imposing outposts. The doors of Muhlis Günbatti (48 Perdahçilar Cad.; 011-90-212-511-6562) are usually closed, possibly because the relationships Günbatti, a bazaar fixture for fifty-two years, has with collectors in Bahrain and Kuwait are more profitable than those he has with gaping tourists. Behind his desk, a wild 19th-century purple, yellow and green ikat robe from Uzbekistan ($875) fights for space with a pristine eggshell blue Ottoman caftan ($1,500) whose scalloped edges are sewn with silver threads. He smiles indulgently, calls a nearby shop to deliver tea for us and sends his daughter, Nurdan, and Anjela, a seamstress who restores the antique garments, scurrying to try some on. The young women parade for me in a bloodred Ottoman bride's costume woven on royal looms and worn at the ceremony known as "henna night," the evening before a wedding, and a cerulean caftan the bride might wear the day after. During the impromptu
cozy dining room with tables for two, plus an old-school pantry with a fully stocked open bar. There are piles of board games and backgammon and, our instant favorite, a playfully decorated game room offering shuffleboard and Foosball along with a blazing fire set on a stone hearth and yet another help-yourself bar. The place is dressed down but dignified, and entirely traditional.

Perhaps the neighbors wouldn’t have objected if the Smiths had decided to do something typical, like turn the farmhouse into a comfortable bed and breakfast. But Win Smith had bigger plans. One of Winvian’s original owners (he later ceded the project to his then wife, Maggie, and Heather), he was encouraged by the success of another hotel he’d owned, the Pitcher Inn, in Warren, Vermont, each of whose rooms and suites has its own theme. The Smiths asked a group of New England architects and designers to propose plans for cottages. The defining rule: there had to be at least a loose thematic tie to Connecticut. The fifteen people the family ultimately chose—the biggest names among them were Kimo Griggs, of the Yale School of Architecture, and David Sellers, considered something of a pioneer in the design-build movement and known for his kooky, no-holds-barred work—were given carte blanche.

Though the Smiths eventually won over the local zoning board, it’s easy to imagine why a staid community that prides itself on conformity would find the blueprint for Winvian downright scary. Guests could book themselves into a tree house or even a cottage modeled on a beaver lodge. One accommodation, recalling Mark Twain’s comic novel A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, would have a miniature version of Stonehenge in its bathroom. A giant oak tree would be planted in the middle of another cottage. The oddball standout would have a helicopter parked inside it: an actual 17,000-pound Sikorsky Coast Guard Sea King, blinking lights, altimeters and all, retrofitted to serve as a living room.

According to Sellers, who was the chief architect of the Pitcher Inn and had a hand in choosing the designs for the seventeen cottages he himself didn’t create, the point (continued on page 121)
merges the venerable with the sophisticated, as you can tell from the BMWs that glide through the sleepy local gas station on weekends and the high-end restaurants and shops tucked inside renovated barns and Colonial-era buildings.

Thanks to a communal zeal for historic preservation, the marriage of old and new in Litchfield County appeared to be virtually seamless—at least until plans for the Winvian resort surfaced. Early in 2000, former Merrill Lynch chairman Win Smith Jr.'s daughter Heather proposed converting "Grandma's house"—which for two generations had been the family's 113-acre estate in the town of Morris—into an unusual upscale resort with uniquely styled, individually themed cottages. With rates starting at $1,450 a night, Winvian seemed likely to draw curious city dwellers to the area. The neighbors immediately protested, fearing that a new resort would congest their somnolent hills. A battle over zoning ensued.

Yet as Mike and I checked in at Winvian's main building, a restored white clapboard farmhouse constructed by a doctor in 1775 and occupied by the Smith family for more than half a century, it was hard to understand what the ruckus had been about. The Colonial parlors are papered in period prints, the chestnut floors have been buffed to their original gloss, and several large stone fireplaces give the structure a snug splendor. One common room rambles into the next, and as Alejandra Grupp, a young assistant from Brazil, explained as she walked us through the old house, guests are welcome to laze, lounge and otherwise take over every corner (with the exception of one guest suite upstairs). There are low-ceilinged formal sitting rooms, a cigar and brandy nook and a
MEXICAN EVOLUTION

(continued from page 93) two giving an interview are two of the hottest young fashion designers in the city. Over there, she’s curating a show on contemporary Mexican art in Salzburg.” And so on and so forth, table by table: Enrique Rubio, a founder of the four-year-old MACO, which has made contemporary art accessible to a new generation of Mexicans and further fanned the desire of international collectors. Ricardo Pandial O., the cultural promoter and entrepreneur who recently opened a music club and gallery on a reinvigorated block of the Centro Histórico (currently undergoing a renewal, thanks to investments by local billionaire Carlos Slim Helú, the second-richest man in the world). And I’ve just missed Diego Luna, the Mexican heartthrob who starred with Gael García Bernal in Y Tu Mamá También.

Shortly after my plane landed, I made a beeline to meet Mirvali at Fundación/Colección Jumex, the largest private collection of contemporary art in Latin America, its 1,700-and-counting pieces amassed by Eugenio López Alonso, the forty-year-old heir to the Jumex juice fortune. A keystone of the thriving contemporary scene, it’s a favorite of insiders and is little known to anyone else—largely because it’s hidden in a juice factory forty-five minutes from the Condesa and is open to the public by appointment only (the collection is scheduled to move to a larger, more accessible museum in Polanco in 2008 or 2009). Alonso, who is on the board of trustees at both the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and New York’s New Museum of Contemporary Art, doles out $2 million a year through his foundation to support Mexico City’s contemporary-art spaces and has helped nurture the careers of many Mexican artists, including Gabriel Orozco, by displaying their early work alongside that of more established, international artists.

“Eugenio was one of the first people to put an Orozco on the same level as a Damien Hirst; he felt art should be valued solely on the quality of the work, not on where the artist comes from,” Mirvali told me as we walked through the cavernous, naturally lit gallery. “He challenged people to look more closely at what was coming out of Mexico.” Today, biannual shows by a changing roster of curators draw from the eclectic collection. Exhibition themes vary, but the one constant is the democratic display: pieces by up-and-coming locals (“tattooed” photographs by Dr. Lakra, a light installation by Ifáni Bonillas) next to work by international stars, like Francis Alÿs, a Belgian who has worked in Mexico City for the past twenty years, and the late American minimalist and conceptual artist Sol LeWitt. French curator Michel Blancsûbè designed the show I saw, transforming the gallery into an artwork labyrinth, complete with dead ends and movable walls and secret rooms. I had the electrifying sense that there could be something extraordinary just around the corner—much as I would later in the city outside that white cube.

Mirvali accompanied me back to the city. As we passed from the industrial outskirts to the heart of Polanco, potholed roads and auto-body shops gave way to sun-dappled streets lined with filigreed mansions and heavily guarded jewelry stores. Impeccably dressed women slipped out of chauffeured cars and into Chanel and Louis Vuitton boutiques, and model types in big sunglasses and stilettos catwalked down the uneven sidewalks. Mirvali deposited me at the gallery of her friend Enrique Guerrero, a dapper man in a chartreuse polo shirt and with a trim mustache who, she told me, could provide the long view on the art scene, having been entrenched in it for seventeen years. Like most galleries in the D.F., his was discreet—no sign, just a buzzer—save for its bright orange façade (the hue changes for each exhibition, according to the artist’s preference). Workers were mounting a new show, Rubén Gutiérrez’s colored-pencil drawings of stills from American movies.

In his office, Guerrero explained the particular challenges facing the local art market. First, until recently there were few Mexican collectors, a situation that forced artists and galleries to rely on international buyers. Second, as is often the case in Europe, the government controls most of the museums (“like the French model but without the funding,” as one museum director bitterly joked). And because the previous administration “cared more about control and power than culture,” Guerrero told me, “the past six years have been a challenge for contemporary art. Everything good that happened with the scene happened in spite of the government.”

To better understand the evolution of the art boom, I track down Miguel Calderón, an enfant terrible of the early contemporary scene, known for his experimental films and envelope-pushing artworks (such as the stolen-radio installation in New York). In the early 1990s, he was among a group of artists who began opening nonprofit alternative spaces in which to show their work. At the time, the local art landscape was stagnant, and, as Calderón tells me, “if you wanted something—nightlife, a place to show your work—you had to create it. And if you wanted to get attention, you had to be subversive.” La Panadería, named for the former bakery he and Yoshua Okon took over in 1994, gained renown for provocative exhibitions, film screenings and impromptu rock concerts (it closed in 2002, as artists were decamping to build their careers at more mainstream galleries).

Also pushing things forward was Gabriel Orozco, who in 1999 opened a gallery, Kurimanzutto, with his friends José Kuri and Monica Manzutto. “There was no other commercial gallery ready to commit to the new generation of artists,” Manzutto recalls, speaking in her light-flooded office in the Condesa, where she brokers sales ranging from $9,000 newspaper collages by rising star Jonathan Hernández to a $1.5 million Orozco sculpture—to collectors including Charles Saatchi and Craig Robbins. “But we had no money. So we decided to open without a space.” The nomadic gallery has since become one of Mexico City’s most respected, but for now it continues to debut in a new location with each exhibition. (Manzutto and Kuri recently bought a compound in San Miguel Chapultepec, just west of the Condesa, and are planning to turn the existing buildings there into permanent exhibition spaces next year.)

I stop by the current space, a concrete-block warehouse the size of an airplane
(continued from page 108) is for guests to experience as much surprise as they do luxury. "It's creating a fantasy," he says. "I don't think you'd normally have a whole house built around any one of these ideas. It forces the guests to expand their thinking."

I couldn't help but wonder, as Alejandra loaded us into a staff Saab and drove us through a grassy meadow toward our cottage, if this was the next frontier in elite travel: the superluxe experimental overnight. Or would it feel more like a wacky homespun theme park? There was, of course, only one way to know.

**WE PARKED OUR BAGS IN INDUSTRY, A TWO-ROOM COTTAGE OF ABOUT A THOUSAND SQUARE FEET, WITH AN AIRY, URBAN SENSIBILITY, DESIGNED AS A TRIBUTE TO CONNECTICUT'S MODERNIZATION THROUGH TEXTILE MILLS. IT HAD LOFTY MAHOGANY CEILINGS, ENORMOUS WINDOWS AND A GLASS-FRONT FIREPLACE THAT OPENED ON TWO SIDES.** In the bedroom, antique cast-iron tools—a balance, a plane—rested on open shelves. Italian-made robes hung next to the steam shower, a wooden bowl of hand-blended bath salts was set out by the tub, splits of Pop Champagne were stashed in the mini fridge. The fire had been lit ahead of our arrival.

As appealing and old-fashioned as Winvian's main house was, this modern little hideaway made me confident that I could plant myself there indefinitely. Because the resort's capacity is limited to forty guests, a churchy silence reigns on the wooded property. It would be hours before we caught sight of another guest; we were giddily peaking out the window of our cottage when Alejandra zipped past in her Saab, mired Greenhouse, whose glass walls and ceilings, lit up against a dusky sky, made it look every bit the garden conservatory.

We walked around Charter Oak, basically a spiffier rendition of a farm's outbuilding; it even had an attached silo.

Between the sumptuous seasonal meals—such as organic roast chicken and ravioli stuffed with bits of hake and drizzled with eggplant puree, prepared by chef Chris Eddy in Winvian's farmhouse—and several hikes in the 4,000-acre nature preserve that borders the property, we stepped inside nearly every cottage, squired by Heather Smith, the managing director. She and the other staffers are accustomed to parading inquisitive guests from place to place, unlocking the doors of those cottages not inhabited. Smith told us she'd given up predicting which one will appeal to which guests; she's often surprised by people she'd pegged as conservative suddenly clamoring for a more innovative cottage. That's why Winvian allows guests to switch dwellings if the one they've chosen is not to their liking.

"We wanted there to be something for everybody's tastes," Smith said as we followed her up the steps of Treehouse, a playful building suspended thirty-five feet in the air in a stand of maples. Designed and furnished to evoke a boyhood fantasyland, Treehouse has a plush bedroom that looks out on the foliage; toy trains line a shelf beside the fireplace. I happened to love it, but obviously this is not for everyone.

I had to reckon with my own limits when we arrived at Helicopter. The cottage is hangarlike, with stark walls and soaring ceilings. It's distinctively industrial, if only because there's an imposing thirty-five-foot helicopter in the middle of its single, immense room. My husband and I climbed aboard, fiddled with the joystick and a few instruments and noted that it would be a great setting for a cocktail party. We peered at the beautifully dressed king-size bed sitting to one side of the massive copter. "Would you pay $1,700 a night to sleep here?" Mike asked me. I shrugged.

**IN THE END, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO ADMIRE THE SMITHS FOR TAKING A CREATIVE, AND EXPENSIVE, GAME ON WINVIAN. DAVID SELLERS BELIEVES THE RESORT'S POPULARITY WILL GROW BY WORD OF MOUTH. IT'S TRUE THAT IT'S MORE FUN TO TALK TO FRIENDS ABOUT WINVIAN THAN ABOUT ALMOST ANY OTHER HOTEL.** And that's before you even mention everything available besides the interesting design.

We had massages in front of a private fireplace at the 5,000-square-foot spa, a light-filled minimalist barn on the site of the farm's former pigpen. Back at the cottages, Winvian delivered on its promise to conjure whatever we wanted whenever we wanted it. There were hot-air balloons to fly in, horses to ride and bikes to be borrowed. For variety's sake, Mike and I moved from Industry to divinely rustic Beaver Lodge on our second day. As a light afternoon rain began to fall, we phoned the main building from where we lounged, reading the newspaper on the couch in front of the crackling fire. As there was no room-service menu to speak of, we invented our order. Hot chocolate? Maybe some cookies? No problem: a pitcher of creamy cocoa and a plate of home-baked treats arrived in what felt like an instant.

For every square inch of quirkiness at Winvian, there are another two inches of more traditional luxury to be found. The place adds a dash of eclecticism to what a discerning traveler would normally experience on a romantic New England getaway. The funny thing is that the Smiths and Sellers feel they were relatively conservative in their choices, having nixed, among others, a proposal for a circus cottage as "too themey." And if anyone believes there are limits to a high-end traveler's imagination, Sellers is, in fact, still seeking the family's approval for another cottage idea: a crashed flying saucer he wants to put deep in the woods, complete with burn marks on the side and a Close Encounters-style ramp. "Wouldn't it be cool if we knocked down some trees and had it up at a rakish angle?" he asks with a child's glee. The New Englander in me doesn't leap to agree, but having experienced Winvian, I'd love to see him try it—if only so I can take a peek before returning to the aesthetic safety of a more mainstream dwelling. Sellers is eternally hopeful. "If this resort is a success," he says almost wistfully, "maybe they'll spring for the spaceship."
A Day in the Life Of Columbus

by Rick Reilly

Marcus Freeman, a star linebacker for Ohio State, wakes up in his princely room at the Blackwell Inn in Columbus, one of the best in the city. Nothing is too plush for a Buckeye. The athletic department at Ohio State leads the nation in spending, at $109 million, more than the GNI of Burundi. Must work. No team has won more games in the last two seasons than the Buckeyes.

Charles Murphy, unemployed carpenter, wakes up by the Scioto River in Columbus on a folded cardboard box with blankets he traded for two packs of cigarettes. Times are tough. Per capita, the state of Ohio led the nation last year in foreclosures and delinquent mortgages. He heads to Faith Mission to get a shower before the other 100 or so men who will be looking to do the same thing. "If you don't get there early," explains Murphy, "you got a very long line." His shiny days as a linebacker at Columbus's East High seem a long way off.

Monday through Friday, Freeman, 21, drives his Ford Expedition to his morning classes. If he's having any trouble, he can walk over to the Younkin Success Center and take advantage of the free tutoring. Then it's off to change in the Buckeyes' massive locker room (15 plasma screens), ahead of practice at one of three full-sized outdoor practice fields or the 120-yard indoor one, none of which are to be confused with the marching band's own, lit practice field. Afterward, if he's feeling stiff, a training staff can direct him to the 20-man hot tub, the cold plunge or the massage table. But this is game day, so he'll probably just watch a movie in his room. The night before games, there's a first-run film that coach Jim Tressel picks. Freeman's scholarship pays him $1,408 a month for expenses, but the movie's free.

Monday through Friday, Murphy, 49, waits out front at the Mission and hopes the temporary-work van shows up. He usually gets jobs twice a week, often sorting garbage for a recycling company. But this is Saturday, so he'll go to church to pray "for others that ain't got nothin' to eat," then to the library to read the free newspapers. He hopes to be a psychiatrist someday. But with no success center to visit, he's on his own.

For lunch, Freeman joins his teammates for the usual game-day meal: lasagna, steak, chicken and a piece of pie.

For lunch, Murphy goes to the Open Shelter, which feeds 5,000 people annually despite a cash budget of only $250,000—that would barely pay the annual cost of three Buckeyes basketball players—and stands in line for a bologna sandwich, chips and a drink.

For fun, Freeman can play on the team's private basketball or racquetball courts, or head up to the players-only lounge and choose from two Foosball, one Ping-Pong or two pool tables, three video game setups, eight flat screens or the team juice bar.

For fun, Murphy can go to the community rec center and play hoops. "I'm pretty fast," he says. "I can run 22 miles an hour. I know 'cause a policeman chasin' me told me. He said, 'I clocked you in the car at 22!' He said, 'Lord almighty! I thought you was Jesse Owens! Don't you run so fast like that again or I'm a have to shoot you!'"

For most away games, Freeman and his teammates fly in a chartered jet. But this is a home game, so he busses over to legendary Ohio Stadium—a federally protected national landmark—and gets ready. The university has provided him with every possible tool to win, and it's essential he does. Last year football turned a $36 million profit, and that helps pay for many of Ohio State's 35 other varsity sports, the highest count in the nation. There's a lot of pressure, but Freeman thinks what he gets back is a fair trade-off. "Man, when you come running out of that tunnel and 102,000 people are screaming for you, it's an adrenaline rush you'll never forget."

Away game or home game, Murphy gets to the Mission an hour early in order to get his lucky chair in front of the TV. He hasn't missed an Ohio State football game in so long he can't remember. He lives for it.

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After a victory, Freeman comes out of the locker room and is greeted by hundreds of fans. He signs as many autographs as he can, then heads out to meet his girlfriend. Later they might go to a party. "You know, celebrate a little," he says.

After a victory, Murphy leaves the Mission and heads to the liquor store, then back to the park to bed down with his box, his blankets and his two 40-ounce beers. You know, to celebrate.

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A map of the writing process can help focus your story.

In 1983, Donald Murray wrote on a chalkboard a little diagram that changed my writing and teaching forever. It was a modest blueprint of the writing process as he understood it, five words that describe the steps toward creating a story. As I remember them now, the words were: Idea. Collect. Focus. Draft. Clarify. In other words, the writer conceives a story idea, collects things to support it, discovers what the story is really about, tempts a first draft, and revises in the quest for greater clarity.

How did this simple diagram change my life?

Until then, I thought great writing was the work of magicians. Like most readers, I encountered work perfected and published. I’d hold a book in my hand, flip through its pages, feel its weight, admire its design, and be awestruck by its seeming perfection. This was magic, the work of wizards, people different from you and me.

Murray’s model of the writing process revealed a new path. Finished writing may seem magical to the reader, but it is the product of an invisible process, a series of rational steps, a set of tools. Writing teachers at The Poynter Institute have been playing with Murray’s model for more than 20 years now, revising it, expanding it, adapting it to various writing and editing tasks. Here’s my annotated version.

Sniff around: I got this from Don Fry. Before you get a story idea, you get a whiff of something. Journalists call this a “nose for news,” but all good writers express a form of curiosity, a sense that something is going on out there, something in the air.

Explore ideas: The writers I admire most are the ones who see their world as a storehouse of story ideas. They are explorers, traveling through their communities with a special alertness, connecting seemingly unrelated details into story patterns. Only two kinds of writers exist in the world: the ones with ideas, and the ones with assignments.

Collect evidence: I love the wisdom that journalists write not with their hands, but with their legs. The great Francis X. Clines of The New York Times says he can always find a story if he can just get out of the office. Writers collect words, images, details, facts, quotes, dialogue, documents, scenes, expert testimony, eyewitness accounts, statistics, the brand of the beer, the color and make of the sports car, and, of course, the name of the dog.

Find a focus: For Chip Scanlan, who was with me when Murray unveiled his model, the process is all about focus. Finding what the story is really about requires careful reporting, sifting through evidence, experimentation, and critical thinking. The focus of a story can be expressed in a lead sentence, a summary paragraph, a headline or title, a theme statement, a thesis, a question the story will answer for the reader, three little words.

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Click here to receive Writer’s Toolbox each week by e-mail. Select the best stuff: There’s one great difference between new writers and experienced ones. New writers often dump the contents of their notebook into a story. By God, I wrote it down, so it’s going in. Veterans use a fraction, sometimes half, sometimes one-tenth of what they’ve gathered. But how do you decide what to include and, more difficult, what to leave out? A sharp focus is like a laser. It helps the writer slice material that might be tempting, but does not contribute to the central meaning of the story.

Recognize an order: Are you writing a sonnet or an epic? As Strunk & White ask, are you erecting a pup tent or a cathedral? What is the scope of your story? What shape...
is emerging? Working from a plan, the writer benefits from a vision of the global structure of the story. This does not require a formal outline. But it helps to have a sense of beginning, middle and ending.

Write a draft: Some writers write fast and free, accepting the inevitable imperfection of early drafts, moving toward multiple revisions. Other writers -- my friend David Finkel comes to mind -- work with meticulous precision, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, combining drafting and revising steps. One way is not better than another. But here's the key: I once believed that writing began with drafting, the moment my butt hit the chair and my hands hit the keyboard. I now recognize that step as deep in the process, a step that is more fluid when I have taken other steps first.

Revise and clarify: Murray once gave me a precious gift, a book of manuscript pages titled “Authors At Work.” In it you see the poet Shelley crossing out by hand the title “To the Skylark,” revising it to “To a Skylark.” You see the novelist Balzac writing dozens upon dozens of revisions in the margins of a corrected proof. You can watch Henry James cross out 20 lines of a 25-line manuscript page. For these artists, writing is re-writing. And while word processors now make such revisions harder to track, they also eliminate the donkey work of re-copying, and help us improve our work with the speed of light.


Don’t think of these as tools. Think of them as tool shelves or toolbox-ess. A well-organized garage has the gardening tools in one corner, the paint cans and brushes in another, the car repair equipment in another, the laundry helpers in another. In the same way, each of my process words describes a mode of writing and thinking that contains its own tool set.

So in my focus box I keep a set of questions the reader may ask about the story. In my order box, I have story shapes such as the chronological narrative and the gold coins. In my revision box I keep my tools for cutting useless words.

A simple blueprint for the writing process will have many uses over time. Not only will it give you confidence by demystifying the act of writing. Not only will it provide you with big boxes in which to store your tool collection. It will also help you diagnose problems in individual stories. It will help you account for your strengths and weaknesses over time. And it will build your critical vocabulary for talking about your craft, a language about language that will lead you to the next level.

Workbench:

1. With some friends, take a big piece of chart paper, and with colored markers draw a diagram of your writing process. Use words, arrows, images, anything that helps open a window on your mind and method.

2. Find one of your stories that did not work. Using either of the writing models described above, can you identify the part of the process that broke down? Did you fail to collect enough information? Did you have a problem selecting the best material?

3. Using the steps of my writing process, create for yourself a scoring grid. Reviewing a portfolio of your writing, grade yourself on each of the categories. Do you generate enough story ideas? Is your work well-ordered?

4. Using some of the categories above, interview another writer about her writing process. Turn it into a conversation in which you describe your own methods.

Should Writing Tools Become A Book?

Thanks for sticking with me during this last year, working your way through my Writing Tools. I am so glad that many of you have found them useful. Now I could use your help. I am in the process of creating a proposal to turn the Writing Tools into a book. An agent who is advising me thinks it would be helpful to have some testimonials. In other words, if these tools have been useful to you, I would love to hear from you in the form of a personal e-mail message. A simple paragraph describing the value of the Writing Tools might influence potential publishers. And, of course, if you can think of ways to sharpen these tools, I’d gladly receive such feedback as well. These messages will not be posted in a public forum without your permission. You can reach me at rclark@poynter.org.

Thanks for reading. Who knows? There may be more tools to come.

-- Roy Peter Clark
Every good story has a well-set scene, says Adam Hochschild, and writing should be no different from telling. A child's eyes will widen in horror if your ghost story includes creaking floorboards and the howling wind, the boiling darkness and the pale, sinister form hovering in the cobwebbed attic.

"You wouldn't say that studies show that ghosts sometimes haunt houses," he told us.

Hochschild, an award-winning nonfiction author and co-founder of Mother Jones magazine, joined Nieman Writer-in-Residence Mark Kramer for a primer on scene-setting. Here's some of what I learned:

With a little digging, you can bring readers to another continent and show them something that happened centuries ago. For an upcoming book, Hochschild wanted to re-create a May 1787 meeting among British abolitionists that happened in a Quaker print shop in London. A single page of handwritten minutes he found in an archive told him why the pow-wow mattered, but little else. And the store itself was demolished years ago. To describe the surrounding area, he found a pub across the street that was standing the day of the bookstore. A newspaper from that day advertised someone who gave fencing and dancing lessons next door. The minutes said the meeting took place at 5 p.m. -- the exact time that across the street at the central post office, a bevy of horse-drawn mail coaches would have been coming and going. So he could say, with some degree of certainty, that the men in the print shop heard clips and clops outside. With more research on how printers of that day operated, Hochschild was even able to put smell in the scene. Residual ink on old flatbed presses needed regular cleaning, and a particular solvent was prized for its high ammonia content and easy availability: human urine. "So that tells you a little about what the place smelled like," he said with a wry grin.

Describe, but not too much. A few key objects and dimensions bring the scene to life, but every reader has a saturation point. "You do not need to give instructions for a diorama," Kramer said. "You don't have to draw every shingle."

Find witnesses, if they're still alive, and enlist them as assistants. Compare the stories of people who saw what you're writing about. If they're the same, good -- that probably means they're reliable. If not, says Kramer, that's okay too. Noting the dispute in your narrative can be intriguing. During an interview, get the witness to remember as many details as possible -- what they were wearing, what color the sky was, how they felt about what they saw. But, Kramer says, first warn them that the questions are about to get more probing. Ask them to serve as a "carpenter's assistant."

Be careful. It's possible to make assumptions based on your research, but the balance is delicate. For example, Kramer said, it's possible to write that a man's arm hair rippled in the wind -- even if you didn't see it happen. But only if you've seen a picture showing his hairy arms and weather service data from that day that tells you it was blustery. Even though it sometimes snags the flow, Hochschild says, occasional attribution can keep the reader believing you. Unless you're telling a ghost story.
It's part-journal, part-journalism. Perhaps there is no one for whom the title "journalist" is more appropriate than the blogger.

College students spend 15 hours a week online, according to a recent study by Student Monitor. The same study found that 22 percent of students spend the bulk of their online time writing or updating their blogs.

Not everybody you know is doing it...yet. But blogging is becoming a more mainstream expressive outlet. Still, those who are doing it may not be doing it as effectively as they can.

22% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS SPEND THE BULK OF THEIR ONLINE TIME WRITING OR UPDATING THEIR BLOGS.

BE INTERESTING
A blog allows you to be a lot of things – expert, gossip, reporter, philosopher. But the one thing it doesn't allow you to be is boring. Make sure that people are actually going to want to read what you write about. Not every entry has to examine the existence of the soul or rally support behind some issue that has you irked. But your readers probably don't care about the mundane details of your day (“...on my way home from Intro to Biz, I stopped at the union to get a soda...”) any more than you'd want to read about theirs. You can tell the story of Saturday's party or recap your run to the intramural floor hockey championship – just make it interesting.

BE ORGANIC
There are two ways to distinguish yourself from the anonymous masses in the blogosphere – write about the things you care about and express yourself in a way that is uniquely and naturally you. There may be millions of blogs addressing the same topic (failed relationships, movie reviews, etc.), but none of them will express your perspective in your words. Make this your blog.

HAVE AN OPINION
Who cares what you think? Well, if you don't think anyone might, then why are you blogging? Don't let them down. Know your opinion and express it clearly. It doesn't matter if people don't agree with you. If you evoke a reaction of any kind, that's time well-spent for both blogger and reader. And if you do some research to support your opinions, all the better (always attribute your sources!).

EXPOSE YOUR READERS
Most bloggers go beyond merely reporting about their everyday lives. They react to stories or photographs they've seen online. Link your readers to the articles and blogs you find interesting, but don't always go back to the same well – especially the ones every other blogger is routing their readers to. The more unique the sites you link to, the more value it delivers your readers.

KNOW THY AUDIENCE
You don't talk to your relatives the same way you talk to your friends (unless, wow, your parents are pretty cool), and you talk to professors, strangers and potential business contacts differently, as well. Be aware of who you want to be reading your blog and choose your language and subject matter accordingly.

WRITE IT RIGHT
You don't have to adhere to the same rules about spelling, grammar and punctuation that you would if you were being graded on your blog. But keep your posts as clean as possible for reader-friendliness reasons. The more abbreviations, acronyms or IM shorthand you use, the more people might not get what you're trying to say.

DON'T FORGET THE FUTURE
As mentioned above, a blog is a journal at its core. Use the opportunity to comment on important milestones in your life, influential people you encounter and momentous world and cultural events. You'll be glad years from now that you posted and archived your reactions to Hurricane Katrina, the way "Lost" ended last season or your first Jimmy Buffett concert this summer.
all internships are not created equal

STUDENT: Amanda Taylor
AGE: 22
COLLEGE: Central Connecticut State University
SCHOOL YEAR: Senior
MAJOR: Marketing
CAREER GOAL: Marketing and Photography
INTERNSHIP: Dell Campus Rep Program

U-TURN: How did you hear about the Dell Campus Rep internship?

AMANDA TAYLOR: I searched my college internship website and found the position. The application process was pretty easy. I filled out some paperwork and had a phone interview.

U-TURN: I'm sure there were other campus positions available to you. What made you choose this job?

AT: I knew I wanted an internship that focused on marketing. As a commuter student, the flexibility to build my own schedule was perfect for me. The fact that it was a paid internship and that I got to use a Dell notebook for the entire year made the decision even easier.

U-TURN: What was your main responsibility as a Dell CR?

AT: To get the word out about Dell student discounts! I wanted every CCS student to know why I loved my Dell notebook. I also wanted to promote the benefits of buying a laptop over a desktop.

U-TURN: What were some of your activities as a Dell CR?

AT: Most of my activities were tabling events. I set up a display table with Dell products, flyers, and freebies. I was able to participate in freshman orientation events, set up at the bookstore, and even at football games! I met tons of incoming students and got to know many faculty members and deans. Everyone loved that I was sharing information about Dell products and discounts without trying to sell them something.

he Dell CR program also encourages you to create your own ways to market Dell. I secured an opportunity to promote Dell on our bookstore bags and had a great MP3 player raffle event.

U-TURN: Wow! That's impressive. What kind of training did you receive or did you already know all about Dell?

AT: I actually didn't know much about Dell at all before becoming a Dell CR. We attend monthly online meetings and conference calls that provide all the basics about Dell products and student discounts. The calls also provide marketing ideas and recognize outstanding reps. We also learn about the products from many of Dell's partners including Microsoft, Intel, and LoJack.

Dell's also created an online portal just for campus reps. We can email each other, report our hours, and create blog topics. Blogging with other reps across the country allowed us to get to know one another and share ideas.

U-TURN: What do you do when you're not working as a Dell CR?

AT: To help pay for school, I also work as an assistant manager at a retail store and run my own photography business (www.ATayloredPicture.com). In fact, I've applied some of my marketing strategies I learned from Dell to help grow my own business!

U-TURN: Seems like you learned a lot and had fun doing it. Would you recommend this position to other college students?

AT: Definitely! I gained real-life marketing experience, learned to manage my marcom budget and expense account, and witnessed the power of networking. I've already received several job offers from people I met while working as a campus rep!

The Dell Campus Rep program is active at over 250 colleges nationwide. If you'd like to apply for a Dell internship, email Dell at Rep_Manager@dell.com with your contact info and name of your school.

Use your Dell student discount online at www.dell.com/bookstore
Freelance Writing and Marketing

Ready to write freelance feature articles for pay? Many freelance feature writers, especially those just starting out, write part-time while they also do something else for a living. Some become successful enough that they build a lucrative full-time career as freelance feature writers. To be realistic, it is not a safe bet that you will find your full-time career in freelance feature writing—at least, not in the beginning. It takes time. If you follow the path of most feature writers, especially those writing for magazines, you become a part-time writer who has a full-time career in another, perhaps related, field. This is frequently the case for magazines and newsletters, which usually maintain small writing staffs.

An increasing number of daily and weekly newspapers are using freelance writers for feature and other news material as well. Numerous new online markets have opened for writers in recent years as well. Writers will find opportunities writing for online publications such as newspapers and magazines.

Work as a freelance feature writer is tough and demanding. You are your own boss. This puts you in charge of generating ideas, preparing the articles, marketing and selling them, and, of course, submitting the work. No one does any of this for you. Some people thrive in this sort of environment—they are attracted to the freedom and flexibility. Others cannot handle it well and prefer less independent staff positions. You have to decide what is best for you.

Some professional writers feel there is no better time than today to be a freelance feature writer. There are more magazines, therefore more markets, than ever before. There is greater specialization than the magazine industry has ever known. Although there may be fewer newspapers, there are more editions of the major dailies caused by zoning, or segmentation, of neighborhood coverage. Online feature writing opportunities are available that did not exist a decade ago. Yet, other writers say full-time freelance writing has never been tougher. Pay rates are consumed by inflation, some larger fee magazines have closed, and larger numbers of writers make the work more competitive. Are you ready for that? Freelancing is not an easy endeavor for beginners, especially younger writers who may lack savvy business skills.

Whether freelance writing becomes a good or bad experience, a full-time or part-time career, or a short-term or long-term commitment, is up to you. Now that you know the basics of writing features, this chapter focuses on how to get your work published. This is where you turn to a professional writing life. This chapter discusses the basics of marketing and selling—to be your own agent. You learn about query letters and article proposals, preparation of manuscripts, letters, photographs and other graphics, and developing multiple articles into a single research effort.

MARKETING YOUR WORK

As a freelance writer, you must be aggressive about marketing your ideas and ideas. This means identifying the right market for your work. It means researching markets. It means knowing where to find the opportunities to sell your work. Effective freelance writers use all forms of mass media—newspapers, magazines, newsletters, online publications—to market their work. Writers must find locations, from local to international, also. Marketing requires knowing the guidelines for submission, how to communicate with editors about your ideas, and how to complete a professional quality submission. You must sell yourself on an individual level to people you know and to strangers. You must promote yourself in the same manner a public relations specialist serves a client.

Some freelance writers today, for example, even take advantage of the World Wide Web and use Web sites to promote their work (Outing, 2000).

FINDING THE RIGHT MARKET

The ultimate freelance writing problem is matching the right subject with the right writer and the right publication. How do you do that? In recent years, a number of freelance writing market directories and listings have been published to assist writers in finding the best markets for their work. Some have gone online and are available on the World Wide Web. It is up to you to find the right market. Any freelancer should look at one or more of these market directories.

At the top of the list is the annual Writer's Market (Brogan, 2002), the number one source for nonfiction freelance writers. This 1,000-plus page volume is published each fall and lists more than 3,800 publication markets for articles and publishers for books. The company's Web site (http://writersmarket.com) includes another 1,400 listings.

The Writer's Handbook (Abbe, 2002), published by The Writer magazine and The Writer, Inc., notes more than 3,000 markets for manuscripts in its 1,056 pages. Another popular resource is Gale's Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media. Listings of magazines and newspapers also are published annually by Editor and Publisher. Special issues of these two publications, and others such as Writer's Digest, ByLine, and The Writer, list syndicates, new markets, and other reference books.
Addicted to CNN coverage
Posted by Matt Peyton

You know how Coca-Cola supposedly used to have traces of cocaine in its recipe to hook consumers? I'm convinced CNN has somehow developed a way of similarly addicting people to coverage of the primaries.

I spent hours sitting on my couch the night of the New Hampshire primary watching the tag-team coverage and eating an unhealthy amount of chips and dip. All the while I was trying to remember what the heck the capital of New Hampshire was.

I know exactly what it was that hooked me — the graphics. There were pie charts everywhere with nice shades of red and blue and up-to-the-minute calculations. There was the running ticker at the bottom of the screen constantly updating the number of votes for each candidate.

Finally, after a few head-spinning hours, I had two epiphanies. The first was that there was nothing I could do to change the outcome of the night's tally. The second was that I could watch the same people say the same things over and over again for three more hours, or I could read about it all in the paper the next morning.

The crazy thing is that even after I made these realizations, I still stared at the TV for another hour.

• User comments (1)

Retail from the inside
Posted by Jennifer Strempka

Over holiday break, I applied to work as a seasonal associate at a retailer in a Northwest Indiana shopping mall I'd always wanted to try working in retail, and figured the holidays would be both challenging and exciting. After attending a public relations conference in October, one surprising piece of advice I left with was, "If you want to learn how consumers make purchasing decisions, work in retail." I applied at one of my favorite stores, was offered the job and seized the opportunity.

I left that experience much more knowledgeable about how to run a business. I never realized how hard managers and associates work to maintain a store, manage employees and sell merchandise. Every day was different and every customer had different needs. From working during regular hours to doing floor sets before the store opened, there was never a dull moment. The culture and atmosphere were completely different from my job at school working in an office environment, and I was grateful for the temporary change of pace.

Take the time to participate in learning experiences out of your routine. No matter how brief or out of the ordinary, take a chance. Whether it turns out positively or negatively, at least you can say you tried.
Using safety habits during summer activities prevents unexpected emergency room visits

Summer is full of activities. Each activity requires you to practice good safety habits. By taking the time to take such precautions, many accidents can be eliminated.

According to Carol Terheide, clinical director of the emergency room at Community Hospital East, biking accidents are the most common cause for patients to come into the ER during the summertime. The number of motorcycle accidents also increases during this season. Here are a few other summertime accidents that you can beware of and some advice on how you can avoid being a part of them:

- **Falls** – “We often get adults falling from ladders or roofs and children falling off skateboards or from trees during this time of year,” says Terheide. According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS), properly placing the ladder can greatly reduce your risks of falling when doing chores such as cleaning the gutters, painting the house or trimming the bushes. Here are a few tips from the American Ladder Institute to help reduce falling: use a ladder of proper length for the task; place the ladder on firm and stable ground; face the ladder when climbing; and don’t lean to one side when working.

- **Firework accidents** – Fireworks can be enjoyable for the entire family, but they can also be very dangerous. “We see an increase in the number of people coming in to the ER because of minor burns during the Fourth of July season,” says Terheide. Because most firework accidents happen out of misuse instead of malfunction, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) suggests that you follow these general rules when lighting fireworks: read and follow all the directions listed on the fireworks; store all fireworks in a dry, cool place; light fireworks outside on a flat surface; keep all fireworks away from flammable material; and always keep a bucket of water nearby.

- **Yard work accidents** – Mowing, trimming and planting – all are necessary to keep your yard looking its best during the growing season. As you are working vigorously in your yard, however, you should remember to set your health and safety as priorities. According to HealthDayNews, approximately 75,000 Americans are injured in lawn mowing accidents each year. By wearing proper shoes, safety goggles and long pants, you can reduce your chances of being hurt. When working in your yard, you also must pace yourself with the strenuous work. Drink plenty of fluids before, after and during your work to keep yourself hydrated. Because of the summer heat, it is crucial that you take breaks during your work, especially in the late afternoon. Try to manage your time so that you can work in the yard during the morning or the evening to avoid the hottest times of the day.

  “People don’t realize how physical yard work is and they become dehydrated. This causes them to suffer from heat exhaustion,” says Terheide.

  Remember, in a medical emergency, dial 911 or get to the emergency room.
Commentary

Red-blue divide? Hardly
This election, the country looks more purple

Steve Chapman
February 10, 2008

In his speech at the 2004 Democratic convention, Barack Obama rejected the notion that Americans were entrenched in hostile camps of red states and blue states, insisting that we are "the United States of America." But in the ensuing presidential election, the country was a picture of polarization, with the South and the heartland voting Republican as usual and the West Coast and Northeast remaining Democratic. So Obama was obviously living in a fool's paradise.

Or maybe not. In this election, the country looks eerily like a game between the Minnesota Vikings and the Baltimore Ravens -- a riot of purple. Instead of turning to candidates like George W. Bush and John Kerry, who had limited appeal beyond their party faithful, both Democrats and Republicans have shown an openness to leaders whose appeal blurs the usual lines of ideology.

On the one side you have Obama, who has gotten gentle treatment from some conservative thinkers despite his embrace by Ted Kennedy and MoveOn.org.

Columnist and TV commentator George Will describes him as "an adult aiming to reform the real world rather than an adolescent fantasizing mock-heroic 'fights' against fictitious villains in a left-wing cartoon version of this country." New York Times columnist David Brooks says, "Obama is changing the tone of American liberalism."

On the other side you have John McCain, the staunchest supporter of Bush's unpopular war, who nonetheless manages to be what conservatives call the "darling of the liberal media." His appeal is broad enough that in 2004, Kerry considered asking him to be his running mate. Slate.com editor Jacob Weisberg hails McCain as "a Teddy Roosevelt progressive -- militant, crusading, reformist and hostile to concentrated power."

McCain may alienate disciples of Rush Limbaugh, and Obama stirs tepid enthusiasm among liberals who would prefer a rabid pit bull. But the two confirm that Americans have never really been all that divided. Most Americans are not red or blue but a bit of both.
In his 2006 book "Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America," Morris Fiorina of the Hoover Institution and Stanford University noted that on the bulk of issues, there is substantial agreement across the country. In 2000, 44 percent of voters in red states said the government is almost always inefficient — but so did 39 percent of those in blue states. Fully 70 percent of blue staters said we should "do whatever it takes to protect the environment," a view shared by 64 percent of red staters.

Majorities in both red and blue states were very glad that Bill Clinton was not eligible for a third term, and majorities opposed higher defense spending. In red areas, oddly, most people have a favorable opinion of the Democratic Party — just as in blue locales, most take a positive view of the GOP. In both, the largest ideological category consists of moderates.

In recent decades, though, the two parties have moved away from each other, defining themselves more and more in strictly ideological terms. As a result, the electorate appears polarized when it isn't. "Elections are close, but voters are not deeply or bitterly divided," writes Fiorina. "In both red and blue states, a solid majority of voters see themselves as positioned between two relatively extreme parties."

It's not surprising that so many Democrats and independents prefer Obama to Hillary Clinton, who brags about the scars she carries from the partisan fights of the 1990s — neglecting to mention that she inflicted as many bite wounds as she suffered. That's why 42 percent of Americans view her unfavorably, compared to just 30 percent for Obama and 31 percent for McCain. While Clinton seems to relish stoking partisan fires, Obama comes across like Smokey Bear.

McCain's GOP supporters hope to persuade conservatives he is one of them. But part of his electoral appeal is that conservatives dislike him, suggesting he will not refight all the trench battles of the last 16 years.

One reason he attracts moderates and independents, as with Obama, is that he strikes a comparatively temperate tone. McCain's voting record is nearly as conservative as Obama's is liberal. But as Fiorina told me, both convey that they don't find compromise villainous and hateful.

"It's not just the positions you hold," he says, that are important to voters, "but the positions you can accept." After eight years of obstinacy in the Oval Office, a little flexibility doesn't sound too bad.
Who we are

The Writers' Center of Indiana community is made up of students and instructors of more than 80 classes each year, a 15-member board of directors, an administrative staff, a number of generous contributors, and more than 345 Writers' Center members.

Students bring all levels of writing and life experience to WCI classes. They are writers and readers, parents and children, professionals in many fields, high school and university students, men and women, and you. Their energy and passion for writing are at the heart of the Writers' Center.

Writers' Center instructors are working writers of all stripes. Their expertise, experience, and faith in their students' capacity for success make the WCI's wide range of classes unique and valuable.

The Writers' Center Board of Directors is made up of fifteen Indiana professionals and philanthropists who share a love of good writing and a commitment to the WCI community. They set policy and oversee the administrative operations of the center, keeping the organization running smoothly, professionally, and efficiently. Their hard-working, hands-on approach ensures quality programs at Writers' Center of Indiana throughout the year.

The center is administered by Executive Director Joanna H. Woś. Barb Shoup serves as Program Director.

Jim Powell was our Founding Director and served the organization for 20 years.

Writers' Center programs are generously supported by Arts Council of Indianapolis supported by the Arts Council and the City of Indianapolis, The Indiana Retirement Home Fund a CICF fund, The Efroymson Fund a CICF fund, The Glick Foundation, The Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation and the W.C. Griffith Foundation.

Members of the Writers' Center of Indiana make the center's programs and events possible. Their support, engagement, and participation are WCI's engine and its purpose. As the core of our writing community, the readers and writers who join WCI keep literature alive in Indiana.
Joanna H. Woś

Executive Director

Joanna H. Woś has worked in museums, libraries, and literary organizations for over thirty years. Her experience includes managing small non-profit organizations and development. In addition, for the last eight years she has taught fiction writing. A short story writer, she is the author of A House of Butter, which won the 4th Indiana Fiction Award. Her work has appeared in over twenty-five literary magazines, as well as textbooks on creative writing and anthologies including Flash Fiction. She is the recipient of an artist grant from the Indiana Arts Commission and a creative renewal grant from the Arts Council in Indianapolis.

Barbara Shoup

Program Director

Barbara Shoup is the author of five novels and co-author of two non-fiction books about the creative process. A creative writing instructor for high school, college and adult students for more than 30 years, she is the recipient of four artists grants from the Indiana Arts Commission and a creative renewal grant from the Arts Council of Indianapolis. Her books were twice named Best Books for Young Adults by the American Library Association. In 2006 she was the recipient of the Phyllis Naylor Working Writer Fellowship awarded by the PEN American Center.
Welcome to the Writers' Center of Indiana on the Web

The Writers' Center of Indiana is the home for writing classes, conversation, and community for writers and readers in Indiana.

The Writers' Center of Indiana is located in the Cultural Complex of the Indianapolis Art Center at 812 East 67th Street in Indianapolis. Our facility includes two welcoming classrooms, available meeting, reading, and congregating space for WCI members, and administrative offices. Please feel welcome to visit the Center during open office hours: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to learn more about WCI programs, classes, and membership.