

LPwordsolutions

a newsletter for anyone who writes for profit or publication

June/ July 2006

Name this baby
and win an
editing / writing
package
worth \$150.00 +

This as-yet unnamed newsletter

is published monthly by

LPwordsolutions

~ Writing ~ Editing ~

~ Consulting ~ Workshops~

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Send us your short articles, book reviews, recommended websites, and market, contest & event listings, responses to anything you read here.

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Writing on the Road

Hot off the Press!
*New Market
for Surrey Writers*

Beginning in September, the Arts Council of Surrey newsletter **Spotlight** will include two pages of work by local writers.

We'll be looking for prose and poetry (and expanded listings of local literary events) to help promote literary arts in our community. There will be a small honorarium for all contributors, and writers' guidelines will be posted on the LPwordsolutions website as soon as they're available.



Editor's Notes

Would you let a child of yours go unnamed?

I'm searching for a name for this newsletter that's short, sweet and manages to convey its main thrust – *to provide information for anyone who writes for profit or pleasure.*

(It also has to fit in the masthead without requiring too much of a design change).

If the name you submit is selected to grace future issues of this newsletter, you will receive:

- A copy of *101 Writing Exercises to Get You Started & Keep You Going.*
- A \$150.00 editing package. (10-15 pages of your double-spaced fiction or nonfiction edited, plus 1-2 pages of notes.)
- \$10.00 off the next writing course or workshop (value \$69 or more) presented by Lois Peterson.

All other entrants will have their name entered in a draw for a copy of *101 Writing Exercises to Get You Started & Keep You Going.*

Submit your ideas to lpwordsolutions@hotmail.com with 'newsletter' in the subject line **by June 30.**

New from
Metta Publications
in early July

**101 - and more - Writing Exercises
to Get You Started & Keep You Going**
includes articles, writing tips, resources by Lois J. Peterson
The Broken Islands by Douglas H. Brunt

\$19.99 per copy plus postage. (Order online at www.mettapublications.com.)

Contests

- ▶ **Deadline June 30.** Name this newsletter for a chance to win a writing/editing package worth \$150. See cover page for details.
- ▶ **Deadline August 1.** Federation of BC Writers Literary Writes Contest – poetry. For details contact bcwriters@shaw.ca.
- ▶ **Deadline August 17**
Surrey Public Library Young Adult Writing Contest for 10-18 year-olds. Categories: Short stories, Poems & Comics in two age groups. Prizes \$100 / \$75 / \$50 in each category.
- ▶ **Deadline August 31**
Travel & Transitions travel story contest. Enter 500-2,000 words for a chance to win a **two-week sailing trip** through Greece.
<http://www.travelandtransitions.com/contests.htm>
- ▶ **September 2-4.** Write a novel in three3 days for a chance at publication. www.3daynovel.com/

Events Calendar

- ▶ **Monday June 26, 7:30 pm**
World Poetry presented bilingually. Sean Arthur Joyce, Victoria Pascha, Robin Susanto, Dr. Lucia Gorea, Deborah Kelly, and musicians Pancho and Sal Pace. Central Library, 350 West Georgia Street. Vancouver. **Free.**
- ▶ **Wednesday June 28, 7:30 pm**
Paul William Roberts: Journey of the Magi. A talk by the author of a new, completely revised edition of his book. Central Library, 350 West Georgia Street. Vancouver. **Free.**
- ▶ **Thurs. & Fri. July 6 & 7,**
10 a.m. – 6 p.m. **VPL Summer Book Sale.** Prices from 55 cents to \$2.25. Central Library 350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver.

Langley writer **Max Plater** died suddenly in mid-June. Known for a quirky sense of humour, his love of rhododendrons, and his poignant poetry, he'll be sadly missed.

A good way to remember Max would be by picking up a copy of his book *Winter Fires*, published by Exile editions.

Essay ~ Unnecessary Words

by Valerie Parks

The key to good writing is not finding the words. If you have an interesting subject and something to say about it, the words will come. A few minutes spent with a thesaurus will give you just the right word; add variety and a little spice to your writing. The key to good writing is eliminating the unnecessary words.

Got is one word that should be struck from the English language. It is used many different ways and only one of them is correct. Even with the correct usage, there is always a better word. 'I got a new dress for the party', tells your reader very little. 'I bought a new dress', is much better. Even, 'I made a new dress', 'I borrowed', 'I was given,' 'I stole', adds more interest. Use 'got' sparingly.

That is an over used word. Go back through your writing and I guarantee (that) at least half of the times (that) you have used the word, it should be eliminated. It will not distract from your writing, but strengthen it. Using 'that' more than once in any sentence merely clutters it.

Very is also over used. It often distracts from the adjective or adverb you're trying to enhancing. Think of a better word. To say a woman is very beautiful is weak. To say she is a striking brunette really makes a statement and give the reader a picture.

Try to avoid vague words. **Perhaps, about, approximately, somewhat, maybe,** only serve to make your work feeble and insipid. Be positive whenever possible. Your reader will appreciate it. He will not appreciate being left wondering what is going on. If your character is unsure about a situation, all right, say so, but your text should positive.

Do not use phrases such as, 'A young girl of about six years old.' If the girl in six years old, your reader will be aware she is young. And why 'about'? You are the writer, it is your prerogative to set her age. Now we have, 'a six year old girl'.

Do not use more than two adjectives or adverbs to describe an object, person or action. Too many adverbs and adjectives will only add confusion. Introduce your character with no more than two adjectives. Add a little more each time he appears until the reader has a full description. Keep it tidy and concise.

Lastly, do not use multi-syllable words when a common word will do. It does not sound sophisticated, it sounds pretentious. Say 'chew', not 'masticate'. Say 'spit', not 'expectorate'.

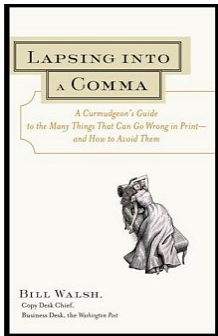
So chew your words before you spit them out.

Don't try to make every sentence perfect as you go along. Write quickly, getting down every word and thought. Then go back and slash the deadwood. Most authors will advise you to write, write, write. Writing is just the first step. This author advises you to write, re-write, re-write.

*New Westminster resident **Valerie Parks** has been writing since she was 15, and writes mostly poetry. She's self-published a chapbook of poems and been published in Ticked by Thunder and Pioneer News.*

Send **your** essays on any writing-related topic to lpwordssolutions@hotmail.com.





Lapsing Into a Comma by Bill Walsh
Pub. Contemporary Books, Chicago
ISBN 0-8092-2535-2. \$21.95

Talking about punctuation, style, and grammar in a straightforward, no-nonsense way can be almost as enticing as an August afternoon in Palm Springs. Dry. *Very dry.* But Bill Walsh, copy desk chief for *The Washington Post's* business section and author of this month's selection, *Lapsing Into a Comma*, has graciously poured 246 pages of thirst aid to get us

through the canyons and crevices known as the English language.

Before taking on this book, spend a few quiet, introspective moments and question your belief system. What *do* you believe in, i.e., what *style guidelines* do you worship in your own writing and editing pursuits? Walsh, on occasion, willfully deviates from AP (Associated Press) style—a daring endeavor considering it is *the* most popular style guide used in mainstream newspaper and magazine publishing. However, he presents his case for deviation intelligently and succinctly, slicing with a razor's edge, prompting the conscientious copy editor (that would be you!) to do the same. Purists, be on the ready. Some of Walsh's maxims might be a tough tablet to choke down. (Hey, it says right on the cover: *A Curmudgeon's Guide...consider yourself warned.*)

Comparatively speaking, *Lapsing Into a Comma* didn't leap off the pages in a 'ha-ha-funny' sort of way. Yes, Walsh is a witty, charismatic writer; however, I would be scared out of my khakis to have my copy slide under his red pen. Perhaps for the sake of brevity, some of his arguments were stunted. The guy is used to writing for newspapers where space is at a premium. But this is a book; a few more pages wouldn't have hurt. Although I appreciate his brief, to-the-point explanations, I found myself scratching around a bit when a point wasn't adequately addressed. Or maybe that's just me.

The most important lesson to take into *any* copy editing or substantive editing effort: Make sure to follow the prescribed style guide (house style, AP, Chicago, whatever) for the job you are working on. If you're working on your *own* project, adopt a popular style (AP for newspaper, trade, or magazine publications; Chicago for more academic or professional documents) and stick to it. And be ready to make modifications if/when your piece is picked up for publication. Every publisher is different.

Style guides and personal taste aside, Walsh covers a number of absolutes—rules of usage that *never* change. And he has these nifty call-out/sidebar sections in the book that tackle specific issues with extra oomph. Walsh does a fine job debunking some common myths that permeate the language like a week-old salmon left in an abandoned, sun-drenched kitchen. Walsh says:

- *Infinitives...Split away!* ...[G]rammar experts will testify that there is no rule—and never has been a rule—against splitting infinitives. Somebody somewhere made up this “rule” because infinitives were never split in Latin. Of course they weren't: In Latin, infinitives are single words.
- *Dirty Mind, Clean Copy: Why Every Copy Desk Could Use a 13-Year-Old Boy...* A puerile sense of humor can be a big asset in the word business.

...This means you should know why *Court Deals Blow to Homosexuals* is a bad headline.

And did you know that when talking about one of those long couches (I think they called them fainting couches “back in the day...”) are actually spelled *chaise longue*, (en français = “long chair”). All these years I've been calling it a *chaise lounge*. Maybe you're a smarty pants and knew this difference, but I can guarantee that every writer who pays attention to their words in print and in spoken form will find *something* in Walsh's book that will inspire an “Ah-ha!” moment (or two). I'm grateful to announce that my Ellipsis Conundrum has now come to a peaceful, satisfactory resolution. Thank you, O Great Curmudgeon.

Walsh brings his 20-year-plus history as a journalist to the desk and shares his endless copy editing wisdom in this book. It's a reference book, not a satirical essay, so unless you're a tireless “word nerd,” it will be best kept handy as a copy bible. Walsh penned this book with the intention that it would be used and abused. Make him proud. And if you find yourself in vehement disagreement with the author's position on serial commas, check out his Web site at www.theslot.com and send him an e-mail. Just be ready for a duel. He's a feisty one.

For clarity's sake: a copy editor receives an author's work after it has gone through the first filter, the editor. The copy editor is not in a role to make substantive editing decisions; his or her primary focus should be on grammar, punctuation, syntax, etc. Therefore, a good copy editor understands the English language and all its weirdness better than the back of his or her own hand. (Just a side note: a proofreader, in contrast, concentrates on looking for errors between the editing and typesetting to produce an error-free piece of work.) .

JSY

Resources & markets for travel writers

► **BC Association of Travel Writers**
www.bcatw.ca

► **Far Flung Magazine**
<http://www.farflungmagazine.com/>

► **Transitions Abroad** – Travel writing portal
<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/>

► **Travel-Wise** – connecting travellers, suppliers and writers
<http://www.travel-wise.com/>

► **How to Take Travel Pictures Like a Pro** from Fodors, the travel guide people. <http://www.fodors.com/focus/>

► **Photo Secrets – the travel photography homepage.** Access to an encyclopaedic lists of links.
<http://www.photosecrets.com/>

► **Lonely Planet's Guide to Travel Writing** by Don George, Janet Austin and Charlotte Hindle. Pub. Lonely Planet; ISBN: 0864427425

► **The Travel Writer's Handbook: How to Write and Sell Your Own Travel Experiences** by Louise Purwin Zobel. Pub. Surrey Books; ISBN: 1572840447

► **Travel writers.com**
Lots of useful info. for professionals and other travel writers.
<http://main.travelwriters.com/>

► **Journeywoman** – a site for independent female travellers. Welcomes submissions.
<http://www.journeywoman.com/contact.htm>



Writing Tips

Writing on the Road

by Lois J. Peterson

If you're off on a trip soon, now's the time to plan how you might write about it when you get back.

- 1. Plan ahead** – Do what you can to find out about your destination before you go. Check out a couple of different travel guides from the library. Do an online search of the various travel websites.
- 2. Find out what's in the news** – check the online databases at your local library and see what local newspapers in the area you're visiting are talking about - a new sight, a museum exhibition, an upcoming festival....
- 3. Take a tour** – When you get there, pick up a tour to give you an overview of what's to see and do. Tour guides often provide tidbits of information that you won't find in travel guides – and their information may be more current, too.
- 4. Talk to locals** – local cab drivers, store clerks, hotel staff all know more about the place you're visiting than you'll find in books. Talk to other visitors to find out what they've discovered.
- 5. Use your senses** – in your notes, every day record a list of things you experienced through each of your senses. This will help bring the place back to you more vividly when you're home, and will provide important sensory details for your writing.
- 6. Take photos** – place are fine, people doing things in places you visit are even better, but be sure to extend them the basic courtesy of asking first. Include street signs, storefronts, etc. to include context; look for the more unusual angle or shot (often whatever your back is turned to!). Keep notes of your shots, where they were taken, when, etc. (even make a note on a map to help you remember which way you were facing, etc.).
- 7. Take something along with you to read** that's set in the place you're visiting. It will help provide context and add depth to your experiences.



St. Paul's and the Millennium Bridge, London
Photo L. Peterson

And if you can't get away, join us for....

Words of Summer

A moderated critique group combining informal instruction with peer critiques of works in progress.

Tuesdays 7-9 p.m. Alternate weeks: July 4, 18, Aug 1, 15, 29.

Whalley Library, 10347-135 St. Surrey, BC.

Drop-in, no registration required.

\$5 per session covers room rental and refreshments.

For more information contact Lois Peterson 604.596.1601 / lpwordssolutions@hotmail.com