

DISPATCHES

SUMMER 2024



DISPATCHES

Saving History One Story at a Time

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Contents

• Editor’s Message By Dane Zeller	4	• Writing Men in the US Military and American Government: One Female Novelist’s Historical Fiction Journey Into the Male Mind	25
• President’s Message By Valerie Ormond	5	• Firefighting and Courage By Robin Bartlett	29
• June 6: D-Day, Eighty Years On By Jack Woodville London	7	• My War Story By Oliver Pierce (a pen name)	33
• Member Spotlight— Annette Langlois Grunseth By Valerie Ormond and Annette Grunseth	13	• The 2024 MWSA General Membership Conference: By Bob Doerr	36
• The Bridge at Frisco By Jerry Wilson	17	• Word Web By Michael Lund	37
• Writers Education By Jim Tritten	20	• Beeping the Beeping Beep By Dane Zeller	40
• A Goodreads Primer By Jim Tritten	22		

EVENT NOTICE

On September 26, 2024, MWSA members will host a Write Your Story (WYS) event for local military, veterans, and their families while we are in San Diego from 9:00 AM—3:00 PM. The location for the event is the Admiral Kidd Catering and Conference Center, Bldg. A-3, Nimitz Room, on Naval Base Point Loma, Harbor Drive Annex. Please let San Diego friends and family know, and if interested reach out to writemyourstory@mwsa.co. Registration is required and is limited to 40 attendees.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

By Dane Zeller

Hello all!

I'm writing this from my cool basement office, located in the town of Westwood, on the east coast of Kansas. Present are my writing tools: Grammarly, an imperfect spell checker, and Foster, my muse. I hope this finds you alert, curious, attentive, and awake.

We have a new MWSA President, Valerie Ormond. In her message below, she succinctly describes our organization—our purpose, member benefits, and member opportunities. She is continuing on with jim greenwood's fine work.

Jack London, our member and writer extraordinaire has written an account of his speaking engagement in Normandy, France, on the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Jack writes with a keen eye and heart.

We have a full issue that follows our goal of showing and telling about good writing.

Be sure to read Robin Bartlett, former platoon leader in South Vietnam, tell about fire and courage. Warning: his description of combat is not for the faint of heart.

Read on.



Editor, in action. ■

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Valerie Ormond

The summer issue of *Dispatches* brings with it more changes than warmer weather for MWSA. The submission window for the 2024 MWSA Book Awards has closed with a total of 102 books submitted this year; we know Finalists must be happy. Best of luck to all! Planning for our Annual Membership Conference is complete, and we're happy to see people registering. (Please see Past President Bob Doerr's column on the conference later in this issue.)

This season we also hold our elections for the next Board of Directors. I thank all those who have agreed to run for the board, including three first-time at-large board member nominees, Annette Grunseth, James Rosone, and Rob Lofthouse. I want to personally thank all our current and outgoing board members for volunteering their valuable time to help make MWSA the top-notch organization it is.

We received positive feedback on our last issue of *Dispatches* and look forward to continuing to improve our members' magazine. Editor-in-Chief Dane Zeller and his team are doing a tremendous job, and we thank our members for their variety of submissions. Keep them coming and grow your publication portfolio—it's a membership benefit.

MWSA is a 501(c)3 with a mission to help military service members, veterans, their families, supporters, and historians record history and the complexities of military life, and to encourage writing as therapy. Many of our members help others with their writing, editing, and publishing throughout the year. Our MWSA Ambassadors have held and continue to hold regional programs which you may have read about in this magazine. To get an idea, please see Michael Lund's article in this issue about an MWSA Ambassador program in Virginia.

continued



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *continued*

One of our annual highlights is MWSA's Write Your Story (WYS) workshop we've held since 2015 in conjunction with our conference, primarily to encourage new writers to tell their stories. A 2022 workshop attendee in New Orleans wrote to me this April and said he read something that prompted him to write more about his experiences in Vietnam in 1970, and he attributed that prompting from our workshop. I say this because sometimes we don't know the impact we can have on others by reaching out and sharing what we know with others.

I wish everyone a summer like a vacation from school and hope to see you in San Diego! ■

JUNE 6: D-DAY, EIGHTY YEARS ON

By Jack Woodville London

I was honored to be a part of the memorial services and celebrations in Normandy, France, on the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings of June 6, 1944. My role was to speak at the Brittany American Cemetery in Montjoie-Saint-Martin / Saint-James, to speak at the Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, to be an invited guest of Mayor Emmanuelle Lejeune of Saint-Lô, for that city's service of remembrance, and to be a part of the festivities and events in Sainte-Mère-Église, on June 8, 2024.

To prepare, I spent an enormous amount of time studying the two cemeteries and learning something about who is buried in them. The United States suffered more deaths on D-Day than in the attack on Pearl Harbor. By the end of the liberations of Normandy and Brittany some 90 days later, more than 29,000 American soldiers, airmen, sailors, and nurses had been killed in northwestern France and its adjacent seas and skies. Four thousand four hundred ten men

and women are buried in Brittany American Cemetery, with another five hundred missing who are remembered on a terraced wall between the chapel steps and the graves. There are 9,388 buried in, and another 1,557 remembered on The Wall of the Missing in the Normandy American cemetery—the best known and most visited of our American cemeteries in Europe.

To begin my preparations I used the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) site and database to browse names in each cemetery. I searched by date of death, by unit number, by state or country where the hero entered service, and of course, by name. I studied the landings themselves, of course, and the principal battles of the two liberation campaigns. I avoided the most notable burials, the Medal of Honor recipients, and the names of the famous, then began to parse my way through the heroes about whom no one writes or makes movies. I eventually created a spreadsheet of dozens of names, supplemented by names

continued

JUNE 6: D-DAY, EIGHTY YEARS ON *continued*

on a plaque from the wall of the rebuilt church of Graignes where, I knew, 17 American doctors, medics, and wounded who had surrendered were executed by the Waffen-SS on June 11, along with the village priests and all the other adults over age 12. I learned where the men and women I chose came from, what they did in service, and where they were killed. Then I began to prepare my remarks.

On June 4, Alice and I flew into Rennes, France, and drove to the B&B farm cottage we had rented. It was located between the two cemeteries. It was in the hedgerows of Normandy and every path we drove or walked was part of the battleground of the war. On June 5, we drove to

the Brittany American Cemetery, just to study it, to get a feel for the tranquil and graceful setting, and to find the graves and names of many of the people in whom I had become interested. The towns, villages, and many American groups had already laid wreaths in the chapel and workmen were putting out American and French flags, but otherwise the cemetery was empty on the 5th. We had the luxury of wandering unhindered for as long as we wished. We experienced what I expect is felt in American military cemeteries—an overwhelming sense of grief and loss at the endless rows of crosses and stars. After several hours we drove back to the B&B and tried to come to grips with the



Jack London speaking in Franc. Photo credit Alice London

JUNE 6: D-DAY, EIGHTY YEARS ON *continued*

overwhelming sense of place and time. Then I began to panic.

The remarks I had prepared were heavy on how hellish it was, what heroes the soldiers were, duty, honor, country, don't forget them—things one hears at any patriotic event. In other words, they were boring and sounded like me giving a lecture. I threw my notes away.

The next day, June 6, at the cemetery, I was preceded by the playing of *Amazing Grace* by a band composed of American high school students from across the country. Just before me, a choir of retired

Chicago police officers sang a hymn to the fallen. My talk was not long.

I spoke about the realization that every single grave cradled someone who, before dying for our country, had been unique, with their own story of the special things in that person's life that had made them who they were. I spoke specifically about a boy who had played third base in high school, about an accounting clerk, and then a college professor. I mentioned a bit actor in the *Blondie* movies of the late 30s and 40s. I then compared our being in the cemetery to walking through a



Photo credit Alice London

continued

JUNE 6: D-DAY, EIGHTY YEARS ON *continued*

library with 4,910 books, each a remarkable story, but in which the last chapter of the book was ripped out.

Their average age was just under 20 years.

I spoke briefly about the enormous suffering our French allies experienced, not just the Resistance but the farm wives, the bakers, the village priests and postal workers. Indeed, those would be like the ones who had welcomed us and helped with shelter, information, and directions on this day. I ended by asking everyone present to do three things: (1) to find one name in that cemetery and learn that person's story; to adopt them and remember them; (2) to not think of D-Day as a relic of a heroic age but to remember how easy it is for an autocrat to seize the reins of power and bring us to the edge of destruction; and, (3) to practice democracy so that each time you vote, thank that hero who is buried in that cemetery for their sacrifice so that you could vote.

It took a while to get myself back together after that. We stayed for hours visiting with participants while we recovered our composure, then drove to Saint-Lô. Saint-Lô's June 6 celebration is hard to grasp: the US, with some help from Germany, completely destroyed it in the war. At least 3,000 citizens died in the American assault, most from bombing. But Saint-Lô wanted American liberation more than

it wanted Nazi occupation. Eighty years later, its event was truly patriotic: children's choirs sang the national anthems and other patriotic songs. Those young people took part in the wreath laying at the foot of the cliff where the city was demolished. The mayor read the names of the city's martyrs to German executions and gave a speech that emphasized peace and reconciliation. Then we joined in a cocktail reception on the banks of the Vire. We were happy to be there and happy that, once more, France welcomes Americans. You probably know what happened next: Presidents Biden and Macron changed their plans, and ours. They decided to meet again on June 7 at the Normandy American Military Cemetery, thereby co-opting our public ceremony, of which my second speech would have been a part. The French military, police, and security sent about 16,000 people to close the roads (and the beaches) and to secure other areas, then attend the rushed-up service in the Normandy American cemetery. No one was allowed to travel within twenty miles of the sites. We stayed put. One bus of visitors had accidentally gotten down to the beach near Vierville; it was quarantined by the security service and all the people on it spent the day on the detained bus.

Finally, on June 8, we were part of the public celebration of Sainte-Mère-Église.

JUNE 6: D-DAY, EIGHTY YEARS ON *continued*



Photo credit Alice London

The town is located just inland from Utah Beach. It was the first city liberated in France. You may remember it from the story of the American paratrooper who was snagged on the church tower and swung back and forth during the invasion, watching the battle. Sainte-Mère-Église is the most patriotic American town I've ever seen. Its population of 2,000 swelled to about 15,000 between June 5 and June 9. The United States Army erected a World War II army camp on the edge of town and installed tents, tanks, jeeps, half-tracks, AA guns—a fully replicated camp. All 15,000 French and European visitors walked through the army camp, studying everything in it and chatting relentlessly

with the American soldiers chosen to man it. There were parachute drops from C-47s and a tank circuit in a nearby field. The town center was overwhelmed with cafes, bars, and pop-up beer stands to serve everyone. I estimate that 14,000 of the visitors waved American flags and about half of them wore some piece of American military clothing. American bands played on a stage in the town square, in front of the church where Sergeant Steele swung in his parachute. There was a parade, and I was given a jeep!

The crowd was the most enthusiastic in my experience and memory. It lined the parade route of about one and a half miles, applauded endlessly, took countless

continued

JUNE 6: D-DAY, EIGHTY YEARS ON *continued*



Photo credit Alice London

pictures, and welcomed we Americans who had come to pay our respects and join in what is now their festival. One woman even ran out into the street and gave me a kiss (okay, it was Alice, but the crowd didn't know that). I have never before been a part of anything like it.

It was one of the greatest honors of my life to be a part of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in France. I have nothing but gratitude for the opportunity I was given. It would not have been possible for me but for my having been a part of MWSA and for the support and encouragement you have given me. My express thanks go back many years, and include past presidents Bob Doerr, Joyce Faulkner, and

Dwight Zimmerman, current president Val Ormond, and founder Bill McDonald. If I continue in that vein, I will eventually name all of you, so let me pause there and thank all of you. I believe almost all of you know me personally. I am grateful for your friendship and support, and I thank you for letting me represent you on this occasion. Let me finish with this: if you wonder how I was chosen to be a part of the 80th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, let me be honest: I was lucky. But the harder I worked, the luckier I got. You can do it, too.

See you in San Diego. ■

Jack

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT— ANNETTE LANGLOIS GRUNSETH

By Valerie Ormond and Annette Grunseth

Met MWSA member Annette Langlois Grunseth, a member since February 2020, and currently a candidate to serve on the MWSA Board of Directors.



Annette Grunseth

Q: Why did you choose to run for a position on the Board of Directors?

A: I am running for a board position at the invitation of Bob Doerr (Chair of the 2024 Nominating Committee).

Since meeting Ruth Crocker in 2020, who encouraged me to join, I have connected with talented writers and editors through MWSA's educational programs on Zoom and met gifted writers in person at last year's conference. I was warmly welcomed into this group who soon felt like "family." For the past three years I have been a book reviewer for the awards program and have become more informed with the workings of MWSA.

Q: How does your role as a family member and a military writer bring unique contributions to the MWSA leadership team?

A: I have been a poet for 35 years and surprised myself as a military writer. I believed in my brother's let-

ters from Vietnam, and after years of writing and editing, published a book chronicling his war experiences and my concurrent college life during a turbulent time. While I did not serve in the military, both my parents and brother served our country. I hope to bring new perspectives to the organization, increase awareness of MWSA for future members, and encourage writers to publish their stories that preserve important history.

Q: You had a forty-year career in marketing and public relations in the healthcare industry. Can you share top

continued

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT—ANNETTE LANGLOIS GRUNSETH *continued*



Annette Grunseth (Center), in a panel during the 2023 MWSA Conference in New London, CT, on “How to Research, Write, Publish, and Distribute an Award-winning Book.” (Left—Ruth W. Crocker, who introduced her to MWSA, and Right—Lisa Hall Brownell, author of *Gallows Road*.)

Image courtesy of Kathleen M. Rodgers

marketing tips to help our members get their work noticed?

A:

- Marketing begins with writing, (rewriting/editing) your best story.
- Marketing is about “Who is your audience?”
- Write plans to communicate with your audience: Make a spreadsheet: targeted emails, social media, presentations, bookstores, libraries, ([add your list here](#)). Include Actions: Who does what, and when?
- Study MWSA resources on our website—workshops on

marketing, editing, Tips and Tricks, and more.

- Read marketing books, for example, *Guerilla Marketing for Writers*, or do a search. Network with MWSA members.
- Timing: Is there a commemoration or historical remembrance that pairs with the topic of your book? 80th Anniversary of D-Day, 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, Memorial Day, Veteran’s Day.
- Seek targeted groups in your genre—do you write history, thrillers, memoir, poetry? Communicate with your “niche”

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT—ANNETTE LANGLOIS GRUNSETH *continued*

audiences. For example, I located veterans who were in my brothers' unit. They were eager to read a book about them after 50 years post-war. A friend of mine writes military action thrillers and has a following from readers of that genre.

- Books are sold one at a time. Bring up your work in conversation—when someone asks you “what’s new”? talk about your writing, AND your book. Share your passion.
- Ask book clubs to choose your book; find them through local bookstores and public libraries. Book clubs have been some of my most rewarding events, including book sales.
- Clubs and church groups are looking for programs —offer to do a presentation. Books sales often follow.
- Submit your book to award programs, like MWSA’s annual book awards, which also provides valuable feedback on your work. Plus, an award seal on your book can boost sales.

Q: You took advantage of one of our member benefits in 2021, and completed an MWSA author interview which

resides on the MWSA [website](#) and then was published in Winter 2022 edition of *Dispatches*. Do you have any updates since then to share?

A: In 2022, I received a Gold Medal from MWSA for my book, *Combat and Campus: Writing Through War*. I also earned the Hal Gruetzmacher Poetry prize in Door County, Wisconsin, and took second place in a contest with the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets.

Two of my poems and an essay will appear in a 2025 anthology edited by James Crews, a notable poet and publisher of anthologies about kindness and wonder. I recently published in “Poetry of Presence (Vol. 2),” “Amethyst Review,” “Silver Birch Press,” and regularly in “Moss Piglet,” a monthly anthology. My book, *Becoming Trans-Parent: One Family’s Journey of Gender Transition*, remains in demand, and I also provide educational presentations.

I have begun working on my uncle’s WWII history in the U.S. Air Force as a reconnaissance photographer and gunner flying B-29 missions over Japan. His plane and crew of 13 disappeared on Valentine’s Day 1945 and were never found. Along with his personal effects and letters, I discovered his story involves two Bibles, a written code, and secret missions. Will this be a book, essay, or a series of poems? I am letting the muse direct me.

continued

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT—ANNETTE LANGLOIS GRUNSETH *continued*

Q: Could you please tell us about your writing practices and process?

A: I write whenever an idea strikes.

I read daily e-newsletters of poetry that often inspire a memory or idea. I use my iPhone notepad to capture creative lines, themes, and even full poems. I move those notes into my computer to continue writing and editing, preferring rainy days to dig in and write. By the way, long Wisconsin winters are good for writing.

Q: And finally, what is one thing people may not know about you?

A: When the weather is good, I love everything outdoors. Living in Wisconsin,

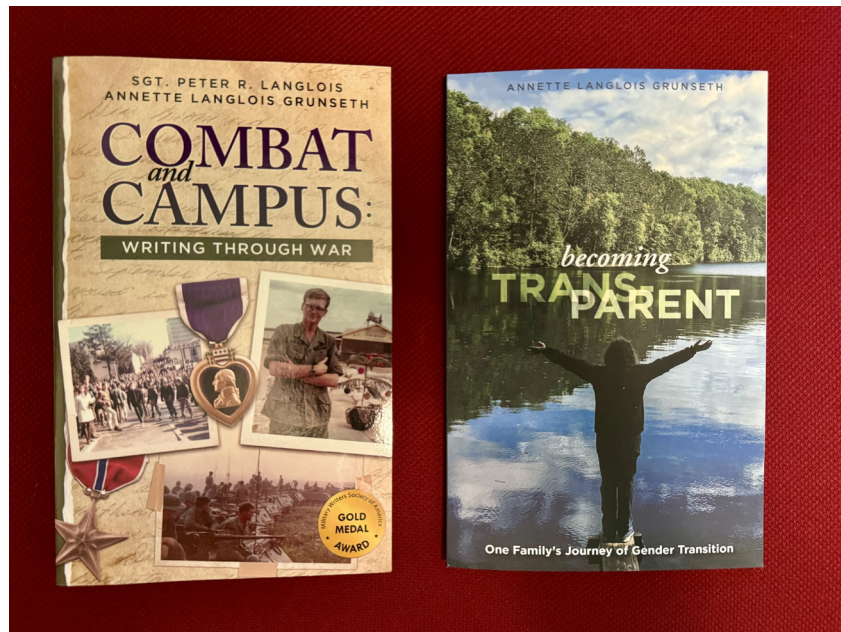
I'm an avid inland and Great Lakes kayaker. I also enjoy riding an "analog" bicycle (not an e-bike) along a riverside trail. Nature time sparks my creativity, often making me stop to capture an idea or poem before it evaporates into the clouds.

Thank you for your time, Annette! If you would like to learn more about Annette and her writing, please visit: www.annette-grunseth.com or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/annette.grunseth>.

For members interested in being featured in the Member Spotlight in the future, please reach out to dispatches@mwsa.co. ■



Valerie Ormond



THE BRIDGE AT FRISCO

“I’ve Been Two Years Gone”

By Jerry Wilson



Jerry Wilson and Robert Dow

On the left is me, armed with a guitar. On the right, Bob Dow, fitted with a fine singing voice. Between 1965 and 1967, Bob and I were stationed at Danang Air Base in South Vietnam. Although we had formed a singing duo, we did our serious work as crypto-linguists, flying reconnaissance missions in C-130 aircraft.

Between missions, Dow and I performed our folk music at Officers/NCO/Airmen’s clubs and hospitals wherever our missions took us. We wrote songs back then describing our experiences in

the war, and the one that resonated most with our audiences was “Bridge at Frisco.” It was a song I wrote about going back to the states at the end of our tour.

In one memorable performance, we played at the Clark Airbase Hospital in the Philippines. That was a rear-area medical facility for men wounded in Vietnam. We went from room to room to do our act, and at one point we noticed a patient following us around just to hear “Bridge at Frisco” over and over. He was stitched from navel to neck and all across his chest due to his wounds. He was barely able to walk, but he managed to keep up with us just to hear that song. He had a big, shit-eating grin on his face. He was going home the next day.

During that same show, we were asked by one of the doctors to do a “quiet set” in a room that housed four severely wounded men. It was a darkened room, and the four guys were strapped to gurneys, with multiple tubes and monitors

continued

THE BRIDGE AT FRISCO *continued*

attached. Two full-time nurses were assigned to their care. We sang two or three quiet songs, one of which was “Bridge at Frisco.” As we left, the nurses were in tears. They told us that at least one of those guys wasn’t going home. Not alive anyway.

Bridge at Frisco

I started back on the midnight flight
Stopover at Hickam, and on through the
 night
Then I saw it below me, that golden span
Oh, the bridge at Frisco, I’m home again.
The bridge at Frisco, I’m home again.

Four minutes to touchdown
I’ve been two years gone.
One year at Yokota
One more at Da Nang
Four years in the service
The time went slow.
Three minutes to touchdown, and the
 States below
Three minutes to touchdown, and the
 States below.

Tighten up your seatbelt
No smoking please.
Oh, world I’m back, yes I’m back
From overseas.

I had some hard times
And I fought the war
Now it’s good to be back to the Frisco
 shore (and that’s for sure)
It’s good to be back to the Frisco shore

Oh, I survived
The best I could
And now I’ve landed
Don’t the ground feel good.
Don’t know where I’m going
But I know where I’ve been
And the bridge at Frisco looks good
 again
And the bridge at Frisco looks good
 again

G.W. Wilson—1967

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=sN2jmhPsax8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sN2jmhPsax8)

Dow and I remained close friends after we left the service in 1967. Dow died of leukemia at age 67. The photo on page 17 was taken on grounds where we were billeted. Agent Orange had cleared it. Bob didn’t live long enough to gain proof of disability from the VA.

My good friend, Steve Senderling recently died of multiple systemic cancers which the VA did presume to be

THE BRIDGE AT FRISCO *continued*

caused by exposure to Agent Orange. In fact, almost all of the guys I flew with, including myself, have come down with conditions that are on the VA's list of conditions that are related to Agent Orange. Several of my buddies, besides Dow and Senderling, have passed on.

So, we had casualties in that war, and none of us will have our names inscribed on the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C.

But those of us who flew together, we know... ■



WRITERS EDUCATION

By Jim Tritten

Did you know a wealth of wisdom is posted on the MWSA website? Recordings of writer education webinars and presentations made by specialists willing to share their knowledge, all with information on how to draft your story in various genres—from memoirs to short stories to screenplays—provide plenty of food for thought. Let's review where you can find these nuggets and how you can learn about upcoming virtual events sponsored by our organization.

First, recordings of previous events can be accessed on the MWSA website, usually within one day of the live event. On your computer or smartphone, navigate to <https://www.mwsadispatches.com/writers-education>, where all is revealed. A link to this URL is also posted on the Facebook MWSA Public Page and in all announcements or invitations.

Currently, on the MWSA website, you can find five presentations by Greg Elliot,



screenwriter/author/editor, that address story structure, emotion, and writing for big and small screens. Next is a four-part series by Dawn Brotherton, where she outlines the steps we all should take before drafting a book that we intend to submit to an agent, a

publisher, or even to our reviewers. Dawn covers character traits, backstory, point of view, and punctuation (just in case you were not paying attention in High School English). Next, Ruth Crocker addresses Navigating Nonfiction, Jim Tritten has a presentation on Writing Short Stories, and Wendy Meyerhoff walks us through making websites winners.

Clicking the above link will take you to the library of past presentations. What about where to see the next live presentation? If you are a member of MWSA or follow the Facebook MWSA Public Page: <https://www.facebook.com/MWSA.MembersPublic/>, you should get an eBlast via the email we have in our database, or you

WRITERS EDUCATION *continued*

should receive a Facebook Notification or invitation to the event. Here is an example of a Facebook posting for our last Writer Education event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1852762208497164/>, on Saturday, June 15th, which was also *Valdemarsdag*—Danish Flag Day. Events are also posted on the MWSA website. Here is a link to this same event: <https://www.mwsadispatches.com/events/2024/4/writing-for-screens-big-and-small-part-3>

To attend a live event, click on the URL in any announcement or invitation. Please check the most current notification to make sure it did not change. Once you click the link, your participation will be like any Zoom meeting. The moderator will mute everyone while the speaker

is making the presentation. Questions or comments are best handled by putting them in chat, and they will be dealt with at the end of the presentation by the speaker or the moderator. Once the live event is completed, a link to watch it will be posted to the library, as explained above. Generally, all the slides or other materials used in the presentation are also posted.

Please take advantage of these informative events put on by your organization. Writers Education is a great resource. If you have any suggestions about additional speakers (including yourself) or new topics, contact anyone on the board or, if you like, directly to me at jtritten121@comcast.net. ■



A GOODREADS PRIMER

By Jim Tritten

<http://www.goodreads.com/>

Goodreads, often referred to as the Facebook or Internet Movie Data Base (IMDb) for readers and authors, is more than just a platform. It's a vibrant community boasting an impressive user base. With over 150 million members, 200,000 registered authors, and a staggering 3.5 billion books on file, it's clear that Goodreads is the go-to platform for readers and book recommendations. Let's delve into why you should consider joining this thriving community.

Goodreads offers a unique opportunity for authors to connect with their readers on a deeper level. Imagine your book, like the 2024's most popular book, *The Women*, being reviewed by a whopping 361,609 readers, who have collectively posted 44,801 reviews, giving it an impressive overall score of 4.66 out of 5.0. These reviews are not just numbers; they are your readers' voices, shaping your work's perception.¹



This should signal to us that a large audience of users of this database routinely access book listings and express their opinions. Participation is also a straightforward way to keep track of what you have read in the past, much like you can do with movies on IMDb.

The more books you enter that you want to, are, or have read, the better the software can recommend books for you to read based on your preferences. Amazon.com does the same thing based on your purchases and browsing history.

As an author, you can post an author profile with links to any work for sale on Amazon.com and attract fans and followers for you and your books. Goodreads will automatically import any book from Amazon.com that lists you as a contributor. A posting of your books affords you the prospect of adding an enticing description that might convince someone to purchase your work (helpful links

A GOODREADS PRIMER *continued*

to sites are included). It also allows you to introduce searchable metadata on your book by readers looking for various subjects and keywords. When readers have read one of your books, they click on a link to your author page and follow you. You can see what friends are reading and how they rank any book. Private messaging and group discussions are allowed between members of groups and friends.

As a publisher, and anyone that is an indie or self-publisher this means *you*, you will undoubtedly want to take advantage of a highly robust and *free* author page available to anyone Goodreads qualifies as a Goodreads Author. Generally, this is anyone with a published book who is listed as a contributor—thus including chapter authors for anthologies. As a Goodreads Author, you can post your photo, a bio, answers to questions the site or you provide, a video of perhaps you reading a portion of your work, a list with links to your books, a blog, lists of books you are reading, quotes by you, quotes by others that you like, results of polls, and authors that you like. This is in addition to groups you can join, friends you can collect, and announcements of events sent automatically to your friends, like on Facebook. There is a separate page for giveaways. You can enter some data initially, go back, and fill in the rest later.

The author's page alone should be sufficient reason to get involved.

Goodreads, like Amazon.com, now require separate author pages for each name under which you are published.² Amazon.com owns Goodreads, and books listed on Amazon should routinely appear in it. A librarian group helps fix metadata problems. A Goodreads app is available on most smartphones, permitting access from your mobile device.

MWSA has an active Goodreads profile, where we post reviews of books submitted by members for our annual writing contest.³ Each awards season, we add books to a “shelf” for that season's year. For example, here's a link to our 2024 season page.⁴ As of now, we have posted over eight hundred of our MWSA authors' books. We have forty-nine friends and sixty-two followers. In other words, creating your own author page and having MWSA post your book on our awards season page will help generate sales for your book.

Join your fellow members and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by this excellent and free program designed to support writers like you. Visit our page today... and don't forget to become a friend and follower of MWSA's Goodreads page! ■

continued

Endnotes

- 1 https://www.goodreads.com/book/popular_by_date/2024 and <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/127305853-the-women>
- 2 For example, <https://www.goodreads.com/jimtritten> contains my more recent publications where I used the pen name Jim Tritten while <https://www.goodreads.com/jamestritten> generally contains my older and academic publications. There is overlap just as there are on both of my Amazon.com author pages.
- 3 <https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/69843339-military-writers-society-of-america-mwsa>
- 4 <https://www.goodreads.com/review/list/69843339?shelf=2024>



WRITING MEN IN THE US MILITARY AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: ONE FEMALE NOVELIST'S HISTORICAL FICTION JOURNEY INTO THE MALE MIND

By **Miranda Armstadt**

I have a confession to make—I love writing men.

Especially military and government men.

Have I ever worked in either capacity myself? I have not.

But my father was in the U.S. State Department in Cold War Yugoslavia, Austria, and Germany. (I've been told it's *outré* to pimp my upcoming historical fiction novel—a geopolitical thriller—based on that true story, and due out next year. So, of course, I won't.)

I've been knee-deep in WWII and Cold War historical research and writing for five years now. Pretty sure I've read



more declassified Agency memos than anyone currently at Langley ever has. Just sayin.'

But back to men.

Layers. It's all about layers when writing men.

Men seem simple—and in some, cough, ways they are—but looks can be deceiving. Guys are a bit more complex, especially to write, than meets the eye.

Breaking It Down

Let's break down the pieces and parts of writing men. There are many aspects to consider, among them:

continued

WRITING MEN IN THE US MILITARY AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENT *continued*

—**Their age** (and how they change with it). On this front, consider facets such as names common to certain generations. No one was named “Skye” in 1926.

—**Their era** (be sure to research phrases). My editor pointed out a few, such as “having game,” that were not in use in the 1940s). This also includes how they speak to women. There was no internet back in the day, and men were—at least, when not total cads—far more careful about their courtship language than they are, cough, now.

This includes the whole “cussing” thing (as one who swears like a sailor since my teens, I always find the word “cussing” to be rather adorable). Make sure you know who would swear and in front of whom they would do it. Men did f-bomb in the 1940s and 50s, just a bit more selectively, situationally speaking.

—**Their socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds**, with plenty of room for nuance, because there is not one block that represents any one group in every area. This also includes their country, of course. I have been very careful to differentiate between how a peer of the realm during WWII speaks vs. a Jewish American from Astoria during the same era. (Again, not a plug for my WIP, I would never be so gauche).

Just be careful when dealing with tropes in this arena. If you’re not sure, find someone who knows the specific world you are writing about and ask. I used an older British socialite as a resource for my WWII viscount (which the AI reader on Word calls “VIZ-count, making me stabby every time, but I digress). Lemme tell ya what: the ways you can address a peer are multifarious, and it’s a treacherous road, filled with landmines for the uninitiated, like us Colonists.

—**Their mothers** (it’s a fact, a man’s relationship with his mother has a lot to do with how he views women).

—**Their culture** (again, allowing for individual outliers, some cultures revere women in some ways, some discourage sexuality, others promote it, and all these things play in to how your male characters will view and interact with women, both professionally and personally).

—**The larger culture they move in.** This can vary greatly from country to country. In America, we have many cultures under the American flag. But we are all influenced by other cultures we interact with, as well as the whole “Founding Fathers” mindset. This allows for some very interesting character development, in my opinion.

—**Their relationship with their fathers.** That includes how emotion was

handled in their nuclear, and more extensive, families.

—**For military men, are they commissioned or enlisted?** How far did they rise and how long did they serve? What wars were they deployed in? (Or were they always stateside?)

—**How did warfighting impact them,** in terms of personal growth, PTSD, secrecy with almost everyone they know from holding high clearances (if they did)? The brotherhood bond is something many of my male retired military friends speak of, and I think that's important to build in as well.

—**Were they heroic on the battlefield?** Even if awarded for their actions, how do they themselves feel about their time as warfighters? War is never a totally clean business—by nature. Regardless of what side you are on or how righteous your cause.

And once wars end, the priorities in government almost always shift dramatically, which is why Japan and Germany are now our allies of many decades. And Russia and China are not.

—**In government and intelligence, what's their motivation for entering the field?** Power, patriotism, naivete about how government really works, wanting to change the world or stand up for what they believe is right? Do they

turn, or are they ever tempted to?

Finally, if, like me, you are neither a man nor have done military or government service yourself, get an editor who knows this stuff from the inside. In my case, I have been blessed to have a retired E9 Marine with a great love of military history and decades of warfare experience under his belt editing my story for anything that might be off.

An example: no matter how much research you do, you will never know how men talk in the field on an op or in battle if you have never been in either, like myself.

Something I have made great use of in my current WIP for all my characters are thought clouds, which I present in italics. This works especially well in military and government/intel scenarios, because so often, what is said and what is thought are two entirely different things, and it adds a lot of dimension, humanity, and even humor to my characters.

And in the very hierarchical worlds of male-dominated military and government service, it works very well. It's a look inside a man's head, where we can see his silent vulnerability, his imagined vengeance, his lust, frustration (often connected to unrealized lust, but also to people telling him what to do when he knows better) and determination.

continued

You will also need to be a bit of a forensics profiler. In government, the Pathological Narcissist is omnipresent. Since dead men can't sue me, let's take the Agency's Allen Dulles as a prime example. Like many in the spy game—and being a master at it himself—his moral compass was neither clear nor sharp. If you have ever known a pathological narcissist, you know that nothing is ever their fault.

In the military, personality types are more varied, perhaps because there are so many jobs and branches of the Armed Forces. Very specific skill sets are required to do a job well.

Thus, a man could be a daring warfighter, at his best when the adrenaline is flowing, and he can make split-second decisions to kill. But he might be a less capable husband and father (and deployments obviously make parenthood extremely difficult to do well from the get-go).

Spies are great fun to write, just remember: there are many subdivisions among them. The ones who crave danger and carry pistols are very different

than the ones who can amass and analyze political and economic data. Be sure you are knowledgeable enough on your spies' areas of expertise to write about them like an insider.

Pro Tip: CIA memos about spies from the Cold War truly do read like a novel at times. Of course, we all know the US government is never involved in assassinations, so these memos must have been fantastical scribbles on lunch napkins that got mistakenly thrown into a file drawer.

The extreme secrecy required in intelligence (for both military and government) also breeds its own camaraderie—even if they can't all share their ops, they know the other guy has one (or five) of their own. And in theory, at least, they are all on the same side.

Bros before foes, or something like that. (Unless you're a Kim Philby, Robert Hanssen, or Benedict Arnold type. Ouch.)

In summation, writing men is a hella good time. Kind of like men themselves.

As you were. ■

FIREFIGHTS AND COURAGE

By Robin Bartlett

John Wayne, who never served in the military but is revered by all branches of the service, may have said it best: *Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.*

Courage under fire is something all grunts (infantrymen) thought about in Vietnam. My firefights, as a combat infantry platoon leader, came in a variety of forms: a skirmish with one or two enemy soldiers walking down a trail; or a short but ferocious ambush initiated by our own soldiers or the enemy often resulting in immediate death of those ambushed. There were times when I was engaged in a firefight during helicopter combat assault into a hot LZ. My worst firefights were those that occurred at night. This may have been an attack against our dug-in company's NDP (night defensive perimeter) by an



enemy using mortars and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs). Night fights meant fear, chaos and confusion because of the darkness and uncertainty of enemy movement. The enemy were the masters of night fighting and on at least one occasion we defended our fire base against an North Vietnamese Army (NVA) force. In

this battle “Sappers” would try to penetrate the perimeter wire and throw satchel charges into command bunkers.

A firefight of any type was horrific with men often wounded or killed. It was my worst nightmare. On patrol in deep jungle, encountering an enemy force with bullets flying overhead, I found myself pressed to the ground and unable to see more than 5-10 meters in any direction. The experience could be paralyzing and traumatic. My first instinct was to give orders to attack the enemy, but equally

continued

FIREFIGHTS AND COURAGE *continued*

important was to secure my position placing men in defensive positions to the front, flanks, and rear to guard against being overrun. The next challenge was calling our Forward Observer (FO) and requesting artillery support when I was not exactly sure of where I was on the ground. The FO had preplanned artillery concentrations that were marked on my map, but exactly how close I was to those concentrations was always a big question in my mind. I asked that the first shot be a smoke round and listened to where it landed, praying it was not on top of me. Then I gave adjustment instructions to the FO based on where I heard the round land, always adding extra distance to be on the safe side.

When an ambush resulted in wounded soldiers, I knew my men wondered what my priorities would be. Would I give orders to continue aggressively attack, or would I call for a medevac and make saving lives my top priority? These decisions were critical as my men were also asking themselves “what if I was the next one to be wounded?”

For me, tunnel vision, adrenalin pumping through my body, intense sweating, and the need to make fast decisions while facing the terror of the moment all happened at once. I prayed that the orders I gave would not put my men in harm’s way, get them killed or



further complicate an already perilous situation. Then, suddenly, my training kicked in and I gave orders, directing my men to move and provide covering fire while my medic and I pulled a wounded man to safety. I called the FO and dropped rounds on the target with devastating explosions while screaming at my men to take cover and keep their heads down.

In deep jungle, Cobra helicopter gunship support was of no help. They could not find or see us on the ground. Popping smoke would only get hung up in the canopy. So, I told my medic to start working on the wounded man while I called for a medevac giving coordinates for the best estimate of where I was. For me, sometimes contrary to how platoon leaders were taught, the first priority was always taking care of severely wounded men in danger of bleeding out.

We chopped down trees to open a hole in the canopy. When we heard the

FIREFIGHTS AND COURAGE *continued*

medevac circling the area, I spoke with the pilot on the radio and fired a star cluster, like a Roman Candle, through the hole in the canopy praying the pilot or door gunners would spot us. We tied a smoke grenade to the end of a long pole, popped it, and held it high over the hole in hopes the chopper would spot the colored smoke and come in to hover.

The medevac came in fast, dropped a jungle penetrator (steel cable with a seat at the bottom). The wounded man would sit on the seat and be hauled up. If the man was too gravely wounded, the helicopter would drop a stretcher and we tied the man into it. Again, the helicopter would swoop in, drop the hook, and haul the man to safety. “Only then could we breathe easier as it was a short flight to the battalion aid station and lifesaving attention.

The dead were dead. They weren’t going anywhere. After the fight was over everyone needed to recover from the adrenaline coursing through our bodies, leaving us drained and utterly exhausted. Eventually, I would wrap each of the dead in a poncho, attach a death card to his boot along with one dog tag. I wrote the man’s name, rank, and serial number on



the card and gave the map coordinates where he had died. Sometimes we had to carry the dead for miles before we could reach open ground where a helicopter could land. The incoming helicopter brought water, ammunition, C-rations, and we loaded the dead onboard for their long trip home. This was the hardest job I had to do as a platoon leader: going through the man’s pockets securing personal effects, wrapping him in a poncho, and tying cord around his body so that it would not come loose in the rotor wash. But this was my job and mine alone.

What I learned about courage in a firefight was to use all the weapons at my disposal and to aggressively attack the

continued

FIREFIGHTS AND COURAGE *continued*

enemy position with as much firepower as I could bring to bear. This included our own weapons: M16s, machine guns, and grenade launchers, and calling for added support from artillery and Cobra helicopter gunships. I tried not to take unnecessary risks with my men and gave them what I hoped were orders that were the best I could make. And I gave priority to getting my severely wounded soldiers medevaced from the battlefield as quickly as possible.

There was never a minute that I wasn't afraid in a firefight, but I reached deep

down inside, trusted my training, and found the grit to do what had to be done. Firefights were the worst experiences of my life, and some have stayed with me to this day. I look back on those moments and take comfort in the fact that I did not freeze; I directed my men to attack and kill the enemy without unreasonable risk; and I was usually successful in evacuating my severely wounded men.

In The Duke's own words: I was scared to death but saddled up anyway! ■



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MY WAR STORY

By Oliver Pierce (a pen name)

As told to Nancy Panko

PART 2

*Vietnam June 15, 1970 -
May 21, 1971*

My name is Oliver Pierce, Ollie for short.

When I returned to Cu Chi, I found someone had broken into my footlocker. It was empty. After putting in my requisition for replacement gear, I got orders to head out into the jungle again. We still didn't have any dozers, so I'd be taking the motor grader. This time, there was no flatbed trailer to haul it on. I'd have to drive the grader in the convoy, slowing the convoy and making it a target. The guys were pissed. We uneventfully arrived at Base Camp Jones, an old, abandoned camp consisting of a dirt berm.

My orders: Clear out the elephant grass for one hundred yards around the entire camp. The infantry guys were busy stringing razor wire, setting up machine gun



positions, and placing Claymore mines to secure our position for the night. I told the lieutenant in charge that I didn't know if the grader would be able to cut through the grass to achieve the one hundred yards perimeter they needed. He said, "Do your

best—our lives may depend on it."

I started making circles around the camp, with my blade four to five inches off of the ground. I had my gears set midway, and then a little bit higher after a while to gain more speed so I wouldn't bog down going through such thick brush. I noticed that some of the grunts were sitting on top of the berm, pointing at me, and laughing. They took bets on whether I could take down all the elephant grass but watched in awe as I accomplished the assigned task. That day, my nickname/call sign was "Degraderman." Once I got back to the motor pool in Cu Chi, I wrote "Degraderman" on the front of my machine.

continued

MY WAR STORY *continued*

Back in Cu Chi, I ran into a short timer grunt fixing to go home. He had an M79 grenade launcher that he wanted someone to take over. I readily volunteered to take it and all the ammo he had. Now, my grader was armed with my M16 and an M79 grenade launcher.

I never was in Cu Chi for very long. My next outing in the jungle came before I could get comfortable. This time I was at another base camp so close to a village that if we walked out of the gate, we were at a villager's hut. There was jungle only on two sides of this camp. After a couple of days of maintenance work on the two roads beside the base camp, I was asked to be the NCO in charge of a bunker and on guard duty that night. Around midnight, one of the guys reported seeing movement in the brush. I got out the night vision scope. After about five minutes, I could see a definite movement. I laid the night scope down, picked up my M16, and ordered one of the grunts to man the M60 machine gun. I then had a third guy pop off a flare. Once it was high in the sky and on its way down, I gave the order to fire. We opened up with a barrage of automatic weapons fire. The entire base camp went on red alert. An officer came in shortly and wanted to know what we were shooting at. I reported we had movement a little over fifty yards to our left. Nothing happened the rest of the

night. I took a patrol out the next morning to investigate and found a bullet-ridden water buffalo.

A couple of nights later, I was dozing on my bunk when the sound of mortars exploding brought me to my feet. Every man was ready for an enemy attack, but there was no attack. The two rounds during the night fell short of the base, landing inside the village. One of the rounds hit a building that housed about a dozen orphan children. Two of the children were wounded, and one was killed. One section of the wall and the roof at the orphanage was destroyed, leaving an opening that exposed the children. Some of us GIs took ammo boxes and sandbags, filled them with dirt, and did a makeshift wall rebuilding. We also took a couple of tarps and draped them over the roof and onto the outside wall we had just repaired. The children once again had a usable shelter. It was a feel-good moment for us GI's. There were not many of those in Vietnam.

Back to Cu Chi I went again. Before the next assignment, I stocked up on chili con carne, two water cans, a shower head, film for my camera, and a 9mm grease gun. I bought the World War II relic grease gun from another soldier for \$20 in Military Payment Certificates (MPCs).

By this time, I had learned that I could put two 5-gallon water cans beside

MY WAR STORY *continued*

the engine of my grader, and the water would heat up while I was operating the machine during the day. With that, I had warm water to shower each night. At this time, Vietnam was hot and dry. I stirred up a lot of dirt when operating equipment, and by the time I got back to camp, I was covered with red dust. It only took two to three gallons for me to shower, using the water sparingly. I could then trade the other seven or eight gallons of water for beer, cigarettes, or food.

In this timeframe, I was sent back to Base Camp Jones. The 65th Engineers had gotten a couple of bulldozers. One of the other dozer operators had been out to clear land around the base. I was here this time to shape up a road that ran through a rubber tree plantation to the entrance of base camp. I had become friends with a sniper in the same tent as I was. He had to pull guard duty one night but didn't want to take his sniper rifle out for it. He asked to borrow my M16 for guard duty, and I said, "Sure, no problem."

It was a calm, moonless night. We were all alert to a NVA company in the area. I jumped out of my bunk when I heard gunfire, Claymores, and machine gun fire. Someone hollered, "We're being hit, man the berm!" I grabbed the only M16 rifle left available in the tent. There was a lot of fire and tracer bullets going in every direction. Flares lighting up the night sky

left shadows on the ground. I looked over the berm and saw several dark figures in the trees. I switched my M16 to automatic, pointed it in their direction, and fired. Only one round went off. I pulled my head down, ejected another round into the chamber, and raised up to fire again. This time a couple of Claymores in front of me went off. They threw debris back in my face, hitting and stinging me. I could feel bullets zinging through the air and kicking up dirt all around me. Claymores were going off all around the base camp, and the tracer bullets were steady as rain. Only able to fire one bullet at a time, I managed to empty my clip, and have another one started before all the firing ceased. No one hollered, "All clear." Everyone stayed ready in case they came at us again. The only sounds were the constant zip-pop of a flare going up. I lay in the dirt all night, ready for the enemy to come at us, shaking from the adrenaline rush. I looked my body over to see if I had been hit. I'd heard of soldiers getting shot and not realizing it till later. At one point, I got pissed. How could I loan out my M16 and end up with a gun that only shot one bullet at a time? I could have been overrun by the "gooks!" I didn't like the feeling and never loaned my weapon out again. ■

To Be Continued: War mentality

THE 2024 MWSA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP CONFERENCE:

By Bob Doerr

What's in it for Me?

I've been attending the MWSA general membership conferences since 2010. The conferences have been held all over the country. This September we will holding our annual conference in San Diego, CA.

Why did we choose San Diego? A big reason is that our latest membership polling had San Diego as our members' first choice for a future conference site. It's a big vacation destination, and having our conference there gives our members an opportunity to turn the trip into a family vacation. San Diego has the famous Zoo, the beaches, the military history and museums, sports teams, and so on.

So, what if I don't plan on leaving the hotel. "What's in it for me?" you ask.

The "in it" you're asking about are many. As a writer, you can do extensive networking, have access to experienced authors for mentoring, get new ideas, attend presentations and seminars that

are focused on making you a better writer, market your books, and more. Most significant if you have a book that has made it as an awards finalist, you can have photos of yourself winning a medal that can be put on your webpage, Facebook page, or wherever. The advertising/marketing benefit of that alone makes the conference worthwhile.

For some, like myself, it's an opportunity to get to know what's going on in MWSA and to make suggestions to improve MWSA. It's a chance to get involved. While there is no expectation that a member needs to get involved, the conference gives one the opportunity to consider doing so. Information below:

MWSA General Membership Conference & Awards Banquet—Military Writers Society of America (<https://www.mwsadispatches.com/events/2024-conference>)

I hope to see you there!—Bob Doerr,

MWSA Past President ■

WORD WEB

By Michael Lund

I've never met *Richmond Times-Dispatch* columnist Bill Lohmann face to face. But the well-known Virginia correspondent took an interest in a 2015 story in the *Blackstone Courier-Journal* about Home and Abroad, the free writing program I direct for military, veterans, and family. In a workshop, veteran Thomas Bragg, a native of South Hill, Virginia, composed an account of his 37-year effort to connect with the family of his fallen comrade, Eddie Lama, of Mundelein, Illinois. Impressed with Thomas' determination, Bill wrote a column in 2016 that spread the story nationwide.

I've not met Valerie Toombs Hamilton in person, but this Virginia resident saw Bill's article and, according to her friend in the Northeast, Jamie Boss, she added it to her "tireless" effort to get him to "put his Vietnam memories to paper." The result was "Crazy in Rocket City: Moments from my Year in Vietnam," a 2020 project supported by the Home and

Abroad program.

A short story inspired by my own experience in Southeast Asia, "Turtles," appeared in *Snapshots*, the 2023 Anthology of the Military Writers Society of America (MWSA). The short story later reappeared in *Bridge*, the first of the Per-simmon Rivers Novels, a series set in the Tidewater region of North Carolina that highlights the contributions of veterans from different eras.

Also in the *Snapshots* volume was a remembrance by Captain Valerie Ormond, U.S. Navy (retired), "Sea Stories." Since she and I were writing about water creatures, I contacted her to share other common interests. As the Vice President of the MWSA, she continued our correspondence by suggesting I link Home and Abroad to MWSA's programs by becoming an MWSA Ambassador, which I did. We have never met in person.

Early this year, "Gravity," another of my short stories, was published in *The Cuddy Family Foundation for Veterans*

continued

WORD WEB *continued*

Poetry & Short Story Journal Volume Seven, as was “No Need to Talk” by Jaime Boss. Jamie described, “During my ninth month in Vietnam, my unit had flown me by helicopter to work on a First Engineers bulldozer tank broken down on a fire support base near Cambodia.” Although Jamie and I had still never been in the same place at the same time—unless you count the pages of this journal—this coincidence led to more correspondence.

Jamie wrote:

I am beginning a writing program for veterans and it would be wonderful if I could connect interested students to your program. I know you got me off on a great start, and since then I have published a book, taken three veterans writing courses, attended the Yale summer course on memoir writing, and have an ongoing website on Substack where I provide writing tips and share many of my short stories on my website.

I responded, “I would love to work with you, also, as the work means so much, especially as we’re all aging! . . . The past feels over until a voice from that land revives the present.”

Earlier correspondence with Sally Stiles, the author of *Like a Mask Dancing*:

A Tanzanian Story, directed me to the Muse Writers Center in Norfolk, Virginia, directed by Michael Khandelwal

that includes an outreach program to military installations throughout Hampton Roads, Virginia. I will be partnering with the Muse Writers Center in the fall.

Some might think that we —Bill Lohmann (Richmond, Virginia), Thomas Bragg (South Hill, Virginia), Jamie Boss (Hamden, Connecticut,) Michael Lund (Farmville, Virginia), Valerie Toombs Hamilton (Seaford, Virginia), Valerie Ormond (Bowie, Maryland), The Cuddy Family Foundation for Veterans (Shreveport, Louisiana), Sally Stiles (Williamsburg, Virginia), and Michael Khandelwal (Norfolk, Virginia)—created this network, this web of connections. But I like to think it was there already, and we just highlighted it by our correspondence. We are all veterans or friends of veterans. We have common experience despite our being in different locations now and having different backgrounds and occupations. But recognizing that this network exists and adding to it by spreading the word about veterans writing is a goal for many of us who write and a possible gift to those who read.

A literary model for this process is provided by perhaps the author most famous for “creating” characters, novelist Charles Dickens. Beginning writers can be intimidated by the sheer number and distinctive identity of his 1500 characters,

WORD WEB *continued*

wondering how he could dream up so many unforgettable figures. But in *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1991), Audrey Jaffe argues that there is always at least one original real

or historical model for every fictional character. In other words, we can say the writer discovers them rather than makes them up. They already exist, and the author finds them and brings them out of the background for us to see and to value. It is a worthwhile endeavor. ■

**“WE ARE ALL VETERANS
OR FRIENDS OF VETERANS.”**

**“...spreading the
word about
veterans writing is
a goal for many of
us....”**



A web of connections in Richmond, Spring Hill, Farmville, Seaford, Williamsburg, and Norfolk, Virginia along with Maryland, Connecticut, and Louisiana discovered through correspondence



BEEPING THE BEEPING BEEP

By Dane Zeller

I use Strunk and White’s little book, *The Elements of Style*, in my writing. It is so concise and complete; I recommend it to any aspiring writer.

It only has one small omission, and I hesitate to mention it. Here it is: Strunk and White avoid any advice on the use of curse words.

I would give you an example of a curse word, but our style guide prevents me from doing so.

(Google “George Carlin”.)

I’m going to suggest to the publisher of the little book that they put in a paragraph on the subject.

Therefore, I am opening up *Dispatches* for a competitive event:

Write a small paragraph describing your rule for the use of curse words in creative writing.

Send it to dispatches@MWSA.com. The best paragraphs will be awarded huge sums of accolades. Anonymous judges will judge the entries. Entries will be published in the next *Dispatches*. The use of actual curse words in your paragraph will be obliterated by asterisks. Guided by the advice of our attorney, I will not send the winner to the publisher of *The Elements of Style*. ■

