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## IWOC'S SEPTEMBER MEETING

# Freelancer-turned-mystery writer to disclose secrets of success

BY JAMES J. HODL

One of the clichés of our trade is that inside every serious freelance writer is a novel waiting to get out. Well, it is true, isn't it? The situation we writers face is getting that novel outside our brains and onto paper. And then getting that novel published.

One such writer recently did just that. And in her presentation "From Freelance to Novelist," Jennie Spallone, author of the mystery novel *Deadly Choices* (© 2005, Treble Heart Books), will tell you how she did it during the IWOC meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 13.


A past president of the 250-member Winnetka-based Off-Campus Writers Workshop, Spallone worked 13 years as a freelance journalist, authoring more than 100 profiles and feature stories for local and national publications. Spallone, who also lectures on the fine art of writing, has authored two books on the topic – *Write Me Up!*, on written expression for special needs students, and *Grasping Grammar!*, explaining the multi-sensory approach to writing.

Her work of fiction, *Deadly Choices*, is a gripping tale of paramedic trainee Beth Reilly, who, after making a split-second medical decision at an accident scene, finds her life turned upside-down, with old friendships tested, and her decision questioned by both a religious zealot and an ambitious prosecutor. And when one of her tormentors turns up dead, Reilly has to find out the truth to save herself from a murder rap.

Spallone will explain how she thought up the plot, fleshed out the characters, and researched the various topics touched in the story to assure authenticity. And if that seems like a chore, Spallone will then tell how she nursed the book along the road to publication.

Spallone will sign copies of her novel, which can be purchased following her presentation.

"From Freelance to Novelist" will follow the election of officers at IWOC's meeting on Tuesday, September 13 at the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 South Michigan Avenue, 7th Floor. Come at 5 p.m. to network with other professional freelance writers over coffee and cookies. The main program begins at 6 p.m. Admission is free for IWOC professional members, and costs \$5 for associate members and \$15 for nonmembers.

Following the meeting, attendees are invited to a buy-your-own dinner to further discuss the information presented during the meeting, or to continue networking. 

### "From Freelance to Novelist"

Jennie Spallone

Tuesday

September 13

Chicago Athletic Association

12 South Michigan Avenue,

7th Floor, Lakeshore Room

Networking 5:00 PM

Program 6:00 PM

Professional members free

Associate members \$5

Nonmembers \$15

IWOC meets for programs and  
networking the second Tuesday of  
every month.

# iWOC

Independent Writers of Chicago

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*Stet* is published 11 times per year by the **Independent Writers of Chicago**, PMB 19, 5465 W. Grand Ave, Ste 100, Gurnee, IL 60031, 847/855-6670.

Internet address: [www.iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org). Copy submission and advertising materials are due by the 15th of the month preceding publication. All submissions and ideas will be considered. Copyright ©2005 by Independent Writers of Chicago.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# More than a reunion

BY HARRY J. KARABEL

The football team was not huddled in one corner, nursing stiff drinks and past glories. There were no cliques of homecoming queens and cheerleaders, or geeks and gangsters, contemplating the folly of others' lives. There was no uncomfortable sadness about those Missing in Action, although many were sorely missed. This was a 25<sup>th</sup> Reunion unlike any I had ever attended. I was able to celebrate 25 years even though I did not yet have 25 years to celebrate. History and circumstances simply put me in this place at this time. The history was IWOC's. The circumstance was IWOCFest, August 9, 2005, on the roof at Pegasus in Greektown.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM HIGH SCHOOL REUNION

I attended my own 25<sup>th</sup> High School Reunion, and it gave me the feeling that I think archeologists must get when they stumble across some long-lost civilization. There is an overwhelming sense of bemused detachment, wondering if the remnants of a once-dominant culture will still fit together the way they once did, or in ways you think they might. Will the rigid class lines of high school culture still keep people apart? Will the Football Players talk to anybody but the Cheerleaders? Will the Geeks keep to themselves? Will the Stoners still head for the parking lot? Will the Brainiacs sip white wine and observe the rabble with aloof dread? Or will there be, at long last, a crushing blow dealt to these senseless class and culture barriers that should have been erased by the years when they are doused by alcohol and set fire by music that makes everyone want to raise their hands up and Shout?

The short answer is, No.

I spent most of that evening talking to



a few old friends that I was genuinely happy to be seeing again. We got caught up on the lives of those we used to know who declined to drive to some random Holiday Inn and wear their yearbook picture as a nametag. Our bored spouses left early. We stayed up late, drank, and only spoke politely to those classmates we would rarely speak to at all when we all

walked the grimy halls of Gurdon S. Hubbard High. As I drove back home the next day, I came to realize that I had little in common with these people when we were teenagers and for 25 years we did nothing to improve that situation. What then could we possibly share to celebrate other than staying alive after high school?

## MUCH TO CELEBRATE AT IWOC PARTY

The IWOC 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick-Off Party (ITFAKOP for the acronym-minded) was another matter entirely. There I found much to celebrate, even though this is only my fifth year with the organization. Once a month, on a roof or in a room of like-minded people, I can reassemble the courage, gather the wisdom, uncover the secrets, get the information I need to continue to pursue this life we have chosen for another 30 days until the next meeting, when I get my next fix of encouragement and camaraderie. As IWOC President, I play a role (albeit a small one) in helping to make those monthly meetings meaningful and valuable. But I realized for the first time on that balmy summer evening that I was part of a legacy of past presidents and compatriots who had been doing that same thing for their partners-in-arms for a quarter of a century. This is not just a reunion. This is a community. This is a family, with stronger and more valuable ties than I had ever imagined. This is worth celebrating.

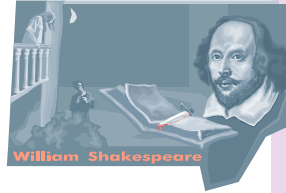
*(Continued on page 4)*

# Novelist shares tips for nurturing creativity

BY JENNIFER OATFIELD

Conrad Lawrence, whose published works include imaginative short stories, plays and novels, presented an interactive program at the June meeting

**W**hen you find the wells of inspiration have run dry and the muse has skipped out without a forwarding address, do you find yourself day-dreaming about a magical incantation to summon her back? Daydreaming may be one of the keys to finding not only the incantation, but creative inspiration itself, according to novelist Conrad Lawrence.



## For writers, communication between right brain and left brain is path to creativity

To put yourself on the path to enhanced creativity, Lawrence advised first abolishing the notion that you must work from the right (or is it left?) side of the brain. As writers, he maintains, what we really need

is better communication between the two hemispheres of the brain, one of which controls language while the other is the realm of imagination.

## MAYBE (S)HE'S BORN WITH IT, MAYBE IT'S NURTURING

Yes, you say, but creativity is something you either have from birth or you don't, right? Well, no. Creativity, it turns out, is largely a learned skill and one that needs to be developed and exercised regularly. To that end, Lawrence introduced the audience to several methods of igniting the creative spark:

### Creativity is a skill that can be developed with techniques that connect imagination and language

- **Daydreaming.** Intended to develop the mind's ability to wander without purpose, this technique's most difficult task is avoiding goal-setting.

- **Free Association.** A more active form of daydreaming, free association also requires a degree of "letting go," so that associations are not forced or edited, but come through spontaneously.
- **Self-hypnosis.** This technique consists of setting the stage with some suggestions for focus and then inducing a trance. (A note of caution: pre-trance suggestions should include a method for coming out of the trance, such as, "When I touch the door, I'll come out of the trance.")
- **Visualization.** For a discussion of this technique, Lawrence suggested Adelaide Bry's book, *Visualization: Directing the Movies of Your Mind*.

## INTERACTIVE FORMAT LET PARTICIPANTS LEARN BY DOING

To teach techniques of connecting imagination and language, Lawrence began by asking the group to talk about creative aspects of their work and the source of that creativity. Participants identified the kind of writing they do and the blocks or fears that inhibit their writing. Using a lively "hitchhiking" theater game, Lawrence helped the group overcome some of those fears by applying techniques such as free association.

Lawrence enlivened the presentation by leading the group in creating a homemade story. Participants took turns adding to the story, and ended the discussion with a reading of their opus. (Please see sidebar.)

Thank you, Conrad, for a refreshing and lively approach to the work of writing. 

## Creativity-building exercise produces collective opus

June meeting attendees followed these instructions to create their collective opus:

- First person, write two sentences, then fold the first sentence under so that it cannot be seen.
- Each following participant, read the sentence that is visible and add two more, folding the first sentence under so that it cannot be seen.

## June IWOC Meeting Collective Opus

There were strange lights shining just ahead.  
Franklin slowed his cycle and smiled—

"What would you know about that?" he asked.

"Plenty! But I'll be darned if I share any of the information with you!" she replied.

"But if you know how the fire burns so hot in my loins, you'd release me from my promise to keep this information secret."

What makes you think your information is so damned important?

It is no more important than the dead machines languishing in the swimming pool.

And yet critical to your peace of mind, right to pleasure, need to breathe.

This meandering in the woods of Aristotelian logic needs a smidge of Lewis Carroll.

A little Alice in Wonderland and Mad Hatter works wonders!

However, the toad had no interest in going down that path.

He was looking for some nice, juicy flies, or at least a few gnats.

He looked high and low, but when you are looking for flies, high is better.

He saw one on the ceiling under the light fixture.

He drew back the flyswatter to snuff out the fly.

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## JULY RECAP

# Seek [the religious market], and ye shall find [work]

BY SHERREE GEYER

**T**im Unsworth, Esther L. Manewith and John B. Reynolds shared anecdotes and fielded questions about faith-based writing during a panel discussion at the July IWOC meeting, "Serving the Religious Market."

Unsworth, a freelance writer for *The National Catholic Reporter* and author of five books, says, "I'm finding a growing interest in religious publishing." He attributes the rise in opportunities to write for and about the Catholic audience to events such as the death of Pope John Paul II. Unsworth says, "If you are interested, it's a great field, and there is no better time to be a religious writer."

Manewith, owner of the Chicago-based ELM Enterprises, provides public relations services to Jewish, Catholic and

Christian Arab organizations. She says, "Mainstream papers are interested in religious issues. It's easier and easier to place a story in the mainstream press."



## KNOCK, AND THE [EDITOR'S] DOOR SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU

Reynolds, who writes a nationally syndicated column for Catholic Church bulletins, says, "You've got to knock on doors" to break into religious writing. He related that, when he was starting out, he "[considered] hiring a publicist on a contract basis to knock on doors, but [found that] the cost was too high."

*(Continued on page 6)*

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## MORE THAN A REUNION

*(Continued from page 2)*

I am IWOC's 23rd President. Sixteen of the other 22 were gracious enough to join us at Pegasus. For the most part, I had only time to introduce myself and welcome them, many of whom I did not know. Like any family gathering, people were most interested in getting reacquainted with those family members with whom they shared the most history.

I did get to see Beth Bradfish, an old friend, who, along with Catherine Rategan, founded IWOC. I got terrific hugs from Catherine and Joen Kinnan. I thanked Brent Brotine for asking me to be on the Board four years ago when I was ready to leave IWOC because I simply did not understand what it was worth. I thanked Jim Ardito for the client he sent my way, and then didn't get a chance to buy him a gin and tonic. I looked at Jim Kepler's memorabilia. I ate with Bob Elliot and his wife. Jim Leman and I always have plenty to talk about. I got acquainted with Colin Canright, who grew up where I live now. But for the most part, I did what writers do: I watched and listened and tried to come away with enough experience and insight to make the evening matter and to write the story.

I thought about and was grateful for the current Board members who helped make the evening happen. I thought about and was grateful for all the IWOC members past and present who provide value to this organization. It is always a great irony that in any volunteer organization, you can never find enough volunteers to make the organization work as well as it can and should. When I mentioned that dilemma, I received a knowing smile from every past president. Maybe, I thought, everybody doesn't see what we see. Maybe too many people are looking at what's in it for them, instead of what's in it for all of us. Maybe they're thinking "high school reunion" instead of "community and family."

Maybe we can change those minds.

Maybe we will one day be able to look back on the next quarter century and say "the second 25 years was even better than the first!" I hope so. This community, this family, deserves nothing less. ✍️

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## *Slate of IWOC officers, directors and committee chairs for 2005–2006*

### **OFFICERS 2005-2006**

**President:** Harry Karabel  
**Vice President:**  
**Secretary:** Ellen Krupp  
**Treasurer:** Dixie Watterson  
**Parliamentarian:** Jim Leman

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

Roger Rueff  
Paula Shevick

### **COMMITTEES**

**Public Relations:**

**Marketing:**

**Membership:**

**Programs:** Sherree Geyer, Jim Hodl  
and Richard Eastline

**Seminars:** Jenny Hamby and Kim MacGregor

**Directory:** Open

**Web site:** Joen Kinnan

### **IWOC needs you!**

**C**an you fill one of the vacancies on the board or committees? You would be helping to continue the networking, professional development, job leads and advertising that make IWOC such a valuable organization. In the process, you'd increase your contacts, showcase your skills and perhaps develop new ones.

For example, the PR Committee is in need of a new chair or co-chairs. Main responsibilities include writing and sending out calendar listings and news releases as well as classified ads announcing the monthly IWOC meetings. What a great opportunity for a PR guru!

So pitch in, get involved. Contact Harry Karabel at 219-921-0877 or [ironyrules@niiia.net](mailto:ironyrules@niiia.net).

### **You've been asking . . . Now IWOC's rate survey is up to YOU!**

**C**heck out the members-only section of the IWOC Web site for the new IWOC rate survey or watch for it as a PDF in your e-mail. Then print it off, complete it and mail or fax it back immediately. (Return by the September 13 deadline for your important input to be included.)

Return the completed questionnaire by mail or fax to:

**Mail:** Diana Schneidman  
1064 Ridgewood Drive  
Bolingbrook, IL 60440  
**Fax:** 206-203-3138



This survey is tremendously important in helping all of us understand the current freelance market. However, the results don't mean much if each of us does not make the effort to respond. Not only is our membership limited in size, but the questionnaire specifies rates for various types of projects. Since none of us does each type of work listed, the impact of each number reported is magnified.

Our last rate survey was conducted in 2000. Its findings were covered in the *Tribune* and the *Sun Times*, and we hope to generate at least that much attention again. But our survey isn't newsworthy if we do not get sufficient input.

Every response counts, so we're counting on you!



# Calendar

## RELIGIOUS MARKET continued from page 4

Manewith agrees. "Hiring a publicist is a pricey thing," she says. Manewith advises would-be religious writers to formulate an action plan that includes cold and follow-up editorial calls. She says, "You know best what your strengths are."

Manewith had more advice, revealing that she believes billing religious clients on a project basis is the way to go. "Once you've got a story placed," she says, "that's how your business grows."

## A SOFT WORD [TO THE SECRETARY] TURNETH AWAY [YOUR QUERY FROM THE TRASH CAN]

Unsworth advises against sending query letters to clergy members via bulk mail, noting that, "Most secretaries are in love with their pastors and defend them fiercely." Indeed, says Reynolds, "I sent a query letter to a pastor and it got thrown out."

Reynolds says that editors want "straight news" stories and that "the *Christian Science Monitor* uses freelancers all the time." He recommends the resource *Writer's Market* and says that self-help books, a category no longer grouped with religious books, don't resell very much.

Manewith says, "I've done a lot of work with book authors," and warns that getting a review in a top-market newspaper, such as the *Chicago Tribune*, can be difficult. She believes, however, that publicity in small newspapers can sell many faith-based books.

Unsworth's experience supports the opinion. He reports that a book on adult retardation got good reviews in small papers, adding, "The *Tribune* would dismiss it." ✍️

## New IWOC meeting location features room with a view

**B**eginning with the meeting on September 13th, IWOC will meet in a new location—the Lakeshore Room on the 7th floor of the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 South Michigan Avenue. The new meeting room has a view of Millennium Park and Michigan Avenue. The time remains the same: 5 p.m. for networking and 6 p.m. for the program.



The Chicago Athletic Association is situated conveniently for public transportation, with the El just around the corner at the Madison stop and parking nearby.

We plan to eat after the meeting in the Cherry Circle Bar and Grill, the CAA's own casual dining room. As always, this is a buy-your-own meal.

## September 13 (2nd Tuesday)

**IWOC monthly meeting:** "From Freelance to Novelist" with Jennie Spallone. Discussion of how one successful writer created her novel and got it published. At the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 South Michigan Avenue, 7th Floor, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

*The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted. The groups welcome nonmembers.*

## October 6 (1st Thursday)

**IWORP monthly breakfast:** Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more information, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

## September 22 (4th Thursday)

**IWOOP monthly lunch:** The West Suburban group meets at noon at Poor Phil's at 139 So. Marion, Oak Park. Contact Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065 for more information.

Check out  
IWOC's Web site at  
[www.iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org)