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## IWOC'S APRIL MEETING

### *How the aging of America is creating opportunities for medical/science writers*

BY SHERREE GEYER

**S**cottie Kersta-Wilson, program manager for Environmental Health Consulting (EHC), will talk about careers in medical/science writing when she takes the podium at the April IWOC program.


EHC, a woman-owned business based in Oak Park, IL, specializes in human health risk assessment for public and environmental health organizations including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Washington, D.C. Kirsta-Wilson, who joined EHC in 2003, serves as point person for EPA projects, submitting proposals, and creating and maintaining databases and Web sites for the government organization.

Kersta-Wilson, who holds a master's degree in the fine arts from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Houston, brings a uniquely non-technical background to EHC, a firm composed of bench scientists, risk assessors, teachers and professors. She entered the profession after realizing her aging Baby-Boomer cohorts would need accurate medical/science information and earning a certificate in medical writing/editing from the University of Chicago in 2002.

"I had eight majors over the course of my higher education and at least as many careers. I had settled on writing papers and Web-based training for the manufacturing industry when it occurred to me that as my Boomer colleagues and I got older, the medical/science field would grow to meet our needs and thus be a career from which I would never have to retire," she explains.

Kirsta-Wilson says science writers should possess solid writing and editing skills and such tools of the trade as the *Chicago Manual of Style*, *American Medical Association Manual of Style* and *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. A member of the American Medical Writers Association, she advises would-be science/medical writers to "find a mentor who believes in you" and "network, network, network."

"The Growing Demand for Medical/Science Writers" will be the centerpiece of the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, April 11 at the Chicago Athletic Club's 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Lakeshore Room, 12 S. Michigan Ave. Come at 5 p.m. to network with other professional freelance writers over gourmet cookies and coffee. The main program begins at 6 p.m. Admission is free to IWOC professional members; \$5 to associate members, and \$15 to nonmembers.

Following the meeting, attendees are invited to a nearby restaurant for a late-evening buy-your-own dinner to further discuss the night's topic or to continue networking. 

**"The Growing Demand for  
Medical/Science Writers"  
Scottie Kersta-Wilson**

**Tuesday,  
April 11th**

**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.**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Are You Skitching?

BY HARRY J. KARABEL

It was the scourge and the scandal of my 7th and 8th grade winters. The PTA called a special meeting to address the issue. School-wide assemblies were held and our principal (the late and always debonair Mr. James Morley) talked about it in that particular tone of voice he had, that "if you force me to protect you from yourself you will be sorry" tone of voice that they must all learn at principal's school. Teachers padded class periods in those few minutes before bells with lectures about danger and evil and lack of consideration for others. (The latter, which was usually their final point, was the wrong way to impress 13-year-olds). Students were suspended. Parents had to take half days off from work to meet with Mr. Morley and the Guidance Counselor in the desperate hope that guidance might still save a life.

## SKITCHERS LOOKING FOR FAST, FREE WAY TO TRAVEL

If it snowed but stayed cold, even if you had a well-connected precinct captain and the streets were plowed, the side streets would stay icy—a critical condition for skitching. In my neighborhood, everybody walked to school and walked back and forth to home for lunch. Ten minute walks, tops, for anybody. But skitching was a faster way to travel.

You waited for a car to slow down to turn, or hid behind a parked car at the corner. You stayed low. When a car went by slow enough, you crouched, grabbed onto the bumper, and slid along on your heels. When the car got near your street or your house, you let go and coasted to a stop.

In theory.

In practice, of course, conditions were not always optimum. Sometimes you hit a dry patch and found yourself eating that nasty gray slush winter leaves behind. Or your ride took a turn too fast for you to hang on and you went sailing into a curb, or tumbling end over end. Sometimes the street scraped the heels right off your shoes, and the knees out of your pants, which would inevitably create even more trouble at home. Sometimes the driver knew exactly who you were and called your parents and the school.

No one to my knowledge got sucked under the wheels of the skitched car. No one was ever crushed by the wheels of the car behind the skitched car. No fatalities. No concussions. No stitches. No one even rode in an ambulance.

## LESSON LEARNED FROM SKITCHING: "FREE RIDE" CAN HAVE HIGH PRICE

Skitching was a free ride, but not a great one. My one and only successful ride ended when the car stopped, a neighbor got out, chased me away, and later called my parents. The unendurable lecture that followed was punishment enough. I would have rather drawn blood.

But I do like to think that the metaphorical lesson from the experience stayed with me. There is something wholly unsatisfying about a free ride. You have to go where the other driver takes you, hope that you don't hit any rough patches and that you coast safely someplace close to home. If you get someplace faster, but it's not where you want to go, does speed matter? Walking may take a little longer but at least you're setting the course, doing all the steering and exercising some control over your destination.



Today's skitchers use updated equipment

(Continued on page 3)

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## MARCH PROGRAM RECAP

# The birth of late-night TV

BY BARBARA HUGHETT

Younger IWOCers may not recall that late-night television did not begin with Jay Leno and David Letterman—or even Johnny Carson. The inception of this popular genre can be traced to the 1940s when a 20-something young broadcaster began his broadcasting career at radio station KOY in Phoenix at the magnificent salary of first \$50 and then \$100 a week! By the 1950s his medium had changed to television and his base had changed from Phoenix to Los Angeles to New York.

Ben Alba, author of *Inventing Late Night: Steve Allen and the Original Tonight Show* (Prometheus Books, 2005) addressed the March meeting of IWOC. A native Chicagoan, Alba is a graduate of Archbishop Weber High School and Loyola University. After earning a law degree in 1983 and spending nearly twenty years in private practice, he joined the



**Author Ben Alba regaled IWOCers with anecdotes from early late-night TV**

faculty of DePaul University Law School, where he teaches legal writing and co-directs the bar passage program.

Alba is also a musician and a student of television history. As a result of these interests, he became acquainted with Steve Allen in the 1990s and began research for his book. Allen had planned to coauthor the book, but the writing had not yet begun at the time of his death on October 30, 2000. As he set out to write *Inventing Late Night*, Alba had the full cooperation of Steve Allen's widow, Jayne Meadows, and their son Bill. He interviewed many television icons, past and present, including Sid Caesar, Don Knotts, Skitch Henderson, Doc Severinson, Steve Lawrence, Edye Gorme, Andy Williams, and Jay Leno.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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## SKITCHING

*(Continued from page 2)*

### IWOC OFFERS YOU WAYS TO MOVE TO DRIVER'S SEAT

So, how's your freelance career going? Are you skitching? If you are, or if you think you are, IWOC has plenty of upcoming opportunities designed to move you from crouching near the tailpipe to sitting in the driver's seat.

On Saturday, May 13, we're sponsoring a one-half day seminar "guaranteed to help you make more money – real money – as a freelance writer!" One half of a Saturday and \$65 is all it will cost you. (More about it in this issue of Stet!) Jim Leman put this seminar together because the guy giving the seminar changed Jim's perspective, career and life. (By the way, Jim likes cars way too much to even consider skitching. The "behind the wheel" perspective is the only one he likes).


You know you would get more out of your IWOC membership if you increased your participation. Now you have even more incentive. Sign up for a committee, or volunteer to be on the Board, demonstrate that commitment and you can get three free extra online category listings on the website. You'll make more contacts, talk more business and help to stir that primordial pot out of which all freelance work comes.

Another way to stir that pot is to come to the monthly meetings. I know, I know, some of you are thinking, "well, I already know all about that (next speaker's) subject." Or, "that doesn't really pertain to my work." Or, "Tuesday night is Boston Legal. I hate to miss that show."

You're skitching, and you're missing the point. Once a month, it's a good idea to practice your networking skills. It's a good idea to stay in touch with what your colleagues are doing. It's a good idea to look for ways to expand your business. It's a good idea to learn about subjects you know nothing about. And it's a great idea to stop staring at the screen, get out of the house and be around other writers. The camaraderie alone is worth the effort.

### NOW'S THE TIME TO STEER YOUR OWN COURSE

I don't know if skitching stopped when we graduated. No one skitched in high school. But I suspect it continued. Somebody will always be looking for a free ride regardless of the danger, metaphorical or otherwise.

Maybe you like the taste of those gray slush-puppies. Maybe you don't care about coasting into an unknown destination. Maybe you don't think you'll get hurt. But listen: it's spring. The streets are dry. Even if you have the itch to skitch, you're going to have to wait. Take advantage of one or all of these opportunities to steer your own course and stay out of the principal's office. 

## MEMBERSHIP

# It's IWOC membership renewal time

BY JOEN KINNAN

With the advent of spring comes another soon-to-be tradition. I'm talking about IWOC membership renewal. Since we held our renewal period at this time last year, we decided to do it at the same time again this year. So you'll have until April 30 to renew. (Those who joined after January 1 this year are already paid up, so they can ignore any exhortations they may receive via e-mail or snail mail.) Yes, we are going to send renewal forms through the mail for those who like to renew the old-fashioned way, or you can download the paper forms from the website. However, the fast, slick way to renew is through PayPal online.

The online form will already be populated with your current listing (except for the profile and education sections). All you have to do is fill those in, check new categories that you want, uncheck those that you don't want, and voila! You're finished. The form totals what you owe – no more agonizing over that tricky bit of math – and you



can even go back and make changes before you submit. I renewed as a test, and it took about five minutes.

## THREE BONUS CATEGORIES FOR IWOC VOLUNTEERS

We've also added a benefit for those willing to work on committees or serve on the board. A few people work really hard for IWOC, and we'd like to get more people involved, so no one will have to do too much. So if you work on a committee, you'll get three additional listings free. Here's how it works: check a committee on the

renewal form, contact the committee chair to tell him/her you're willing to work, and when you get your first committee duty, contact the webmaster at [webmaster@iwoc.org](mailto:webmaster@iwoc.org). You'll get a \$30 rebate check in the mail for three of the categories you selected.

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## NEW MEMBERS

### Welcome to IWOC

IWOC's membership continues to grow, with the addition of three new members. Cathy Dusberger, Richard Gregory and Peggy O'Connor joined us in March.

Welcome, Cathy, Richard and Peggy. We're delighted to have you, and we hope to see you at our monthly meetings.



## LATE-NIGHT TV

(Continued from page 3)

### THE START OF SOMETHING BIG


When the *Tonight* show made its debut on September 27, 1954, it was—to use the title of one of Steve Allen's many musical compositions—"the start of something big." The loose, non-scripted talk-variety format worked well and the Nielson ratings soared. He successfully resisted network efforts to make major changes. Talk, music, and some crazy stunts became the template for those who followed Allen's lead.

### TRIBUTES TO STEVE ALLEN

Alba's talk was enhanced by a compelling video and slide show recounting some of Allen's earlier shows, both *Tonight* and his subsequent prime-time program. One charming segment featured a

skit performed by Allen and his mother, Belle Montrose, whom Milton Berle called "one of the funniest ladies in vaudeville." Another clip showed singer Eydie Gorme singing as she leaned into Niagara Falls.

All of Allen's successors in late-night television—from his immediate *Tonight* show successor (in 1957) Jack Paar to *The Daily Show's* Jon Stewart—have been generous in their praise for him and in giving him credit for starting the genre. Jay Leno wrote the Foreword to *Inventing Late Night*.

David Letterman, whom Alba calls Allen's "most devoted follower," told his audience on the night of Allen's death, "His work is really the foundation for what late-night shows have become." On an earlier Letterman show on which Steve Allen was a guest, Dave told his hero, "You started the whole thing. You're the reason we have a desk here. You're the reason talk shows are what they are today." 

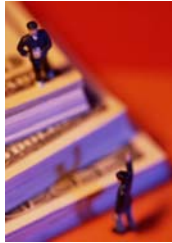
SPECIAL EVENT

Learn how to make more money as a freelance writer at IWOC seminar

BY MARY MADIGAN

On Saturday, May 13, at the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Avenue, IWOC will offer an exclusive, half-day seminar that is guaranteed to help you make more money—real money—as a freelance writer.

John Martin of Total Selling Solutions will present an interactive workshop where you will learn techniques that will help you develop a larger client base and perhaps double or even triple your income. John will teach you how to approach prospects more confidently, uncover the prospect’s buying “system,” spend less time on unproductive proposals and generally be more successful.



behaviors he has adopted during the six months he has been attending Martin’s classes have taken him to the top. “I asked John Martin to present this half-day workshop for IWOC because I firmly believe this is something of value to anybody who needs to develop a client base. People will walk away with techniques they haven’t seen before and that will definitely make them more successful.”

DON’T MISS OUT—RSVP BY MAY 7!

At just \$65 for IWOC members, \$75 for non-members, this half-day workshop is a terrific value, so we expect seats to fill quickly. To guarantee your seat, print out and complete the form that appears below, and mail it with your check to Jim Leman, 100 S. Atkinson Rd., Suite 116-210, Grayslake, IL 60030.

FORMER IWOC PRESIDENT ENDORSES SEMINAR’S VALUE

Past President Jim Leman has had a successful freelance writing business for many years, but the skills he has acquired and the

If you have questions, call Jim Leman at 847-543-1090.

**Yes, reserve me a seat at IWOC’s MAKE REAL MONEY AS A FREELANCE WRITER! Seminar.**

Seats are limited and WILL fill quickly. Deadline for reservations is May 7, 2006.

**Where:** Chicago Athletic Association, 12 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

**When:** Saturday, May 13, 9 a.m. sharp until 1 p.m.

Make check (\$65 for IWOC members; \$75 for non-members) payable to IWOC and mail to: Jim Leman, 100 S. Atkinson Rd, Suite 116-210, Grayslake, IL 60030. RSVP and payment by May 7. NO REFUNDS for no-shows.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Are you an IWOC member? Y N (Circle correct choice)

Box lunch will be served. Please choose: \_\_\_ turkey sandwich or \_\_\_ veggie sandwich.

Questions? Call Jim Leman at 847-543-1090

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

(Continued from page 4)

ADVERTISING INCREASES VALUE OF IWOC MEMBERSHIP

More exciting news to make your membership even more valuable: IWOC has just signed a contract with WBBM web radio to advertise IWOC’s services over the internet airwaves for an entire year! This should really boost our website hits from potential employers. Our Writers’ Line ads are already picking up, and we’ve gotten requests from all over the country and even abroad. As our

finances permit, we plan to do even more to put IWOC on the map.

Though you have until April 30 to renew, please do it now, so it won’t slip your mind. And, if you don’t join by April 30, you won’t be in the new print directory. Do try PayPal – you don’t have to have an account; you can pay by credit card – and it’s sooo easy.

One last word: IWOC membership is the cheapest form of advertising you can do, regardless of how much you pay. Where else could you get your name, your specialties, and even your samples out to a worldwide, targeted audience for a full year for what your membership costs?

## JUST FOR FUN

### "Dark and stormy night" contest winners

Contributed by Richard L. Eastline

This year's ten winners of the Bulwer-Lytton contest (AKA "Dark and Stormy Night Contest") run by the English Dept. of San Jose State University, wherein one writes only the first line of a bad novel:



10) "As a scientist, Throckmorton knew that if he were ever to break wind in the echo chamber, he would never hear the end of it."

9) "Just beyond the Narrows, the river widens."

8) "With a curvaceous figure that Venus would have envied, a tanned, unblemished oval face framed with lustrous thick brown hair, deep azure-blue eyes fringed with long black lashes, perfect teeth that vied for competition, and a small straight nose, Marilee had a beauty that defied description."

7) "Andre, a simple peasant, had only one thing on his mind as he crept along the East wall: 'Andre creep... Andre creep... Andre creep.'"

6) "Stanislaus Smedley, a man always on the cutting edge of narcissism, was about to give his body and soul to a back alley sex-change surgeon to become the woman he loved."


5) "Although Sarah had an abnormal fear of mice, it did not keep her from eking out a living at a local pet store."

4) "Stanley looked quite bored and somewhat detached, but then penguins often do."

3) "Like an over-ripe beefsteak tomato rimmed with cottage cheese, the corpulent remains of Santa Claus lay dead on the hotel floor."

2) "Mike Hardware was the kind of private eye who didn't know the meaning of the word 'fear'; a man who could laugh in the face of danger and spit in the eye of death -- in short, a moron with suicidal tendencies."

### AND THE WINNER IS...

1) "The sun oozed over the horizon, shoved aside darkness, crept along the greensward, and, with sickly fingers, pushed through the castle window, revealing the pillaged princess, hand at throat, crown asunder, gaping in frenzied horror at the sated, sodden amphibian lying beside her, disbelieving the magnitude of the frog's deception, screaming madly, 'You lied!' 

## Calendar

April 11 (2nd Tuesday)

### IWOC Monthly Meeting:

"The Growing Demand for Medical/Science Writers" with Scottie Kersta-Wilson. 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.*

April 6th (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.

April 27th (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)