

Stet

AUGUST 2008
VOLUME 27 NUMBER 8

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

IWOCFEST

ROOFTOP FOOD, FUN & FROLIC

BY JOEN KINNAN

IT'S IWOCFEST TIME AGAIN, OUR LAST HURRAH TO THE DELIGHTS OF SUMMER. Before we know it, fall will be here, but for now, partying on the Pegasus rooftop at sunset will be delightful. The company promises to be pretty entertaining too. Who knows, there may even be a David Sedaris-like moment that you wouldn't want to miss (unless you happen to be involved in the action).

The more the merrier. Bring guests if you like. This is a great opportunity to pay back those neighbors who've invited you to umpteen barbecues and found your lost dog. Or, if you have a taste for sado-masochism—you must, you're a writer, aren't you?—you could bring your teenaged kid. We all like a bit of eye-rolling every now and then, and what fun to hear the dear child recite "This is lame" with the perfect cadence of a metronome. On second thought, you might prefer to ask a would-be-writer friend to come and meet the charming, witty, and knowledgeable members of our little coterie. It will give the novice something to strive for.



While you're ducking all the flying *bon mots*, you'd no doubt like a refreshing preprandial drink. Not to worry: there's a cash bar just a step away. With dinner, there will be free wine—IWOC is springing for that—but soft drinks, coffee, and tea will be available too.

The food, oh the food, course after course of delectables served family style. There'll be no FHB (family hold back) either. If you're a vegetarian, no need to whimper in a pitiful voice, "Will there be anything for me?" Yes, yes, yes.

We'll top off the evening with another of our spiffy door prizes. Is this a deal, or what? Surely you'll be there with bells on.

The paper registration form is attached to the last page of *Stet*. Just fill it out and send in your check, but it's faster, easier, and more fun to register via PayPal. If you're reading this online, just click on [IWOC Events](#) to go to the party description on the website where you can click on the PayPal link. We'll see you at the party, and don't forget those bells. 🦄

What: Fun, Food, Free Wine, Door Prize

**Where: Pegasus Restaurant & Taverna
130 South Halsted, Chicago**

When: August 12, 6 PM until ???

\$\$\$\$: \$30 by August 8; \$35 at door

Who: You, Friends, Family, Clients

How: CTA, Valet Parking

Why: You Need a Break!!!

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Joan Kimman

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Joan Kinnan, Cynthia Mikal, Roger Rueff, Karen Schwartz

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

Final Words

My son and I drove out to Denver, recently. More estate business. The house is fixed up and ready for sale, so we went out to conduct a half-hearted FSBO open house and to interview real estate agents. Also, the guy who brought the sprinkler system up to snuff has his eye on the house, and since there was a slight leak in the system while I was there, it gave me a chance to talk to him and see if he's still interested. As of this writing, the decision hangs on the opinion of his girlfriend, who has spent the last several months in Texas taking care of an ailing father and will finally get a chance to see the house this weekend. I'm keeping my cosmic fingers crossed that she'll like it as much as he does... that would greatly facilitate bringing estate matters to a close.

The drive to and from Denver is a long one—about 14 hours door to door from Naperville. And years of taking summer and winter road trips to visit my dad have made my son and me efficient denizens of the interstate highway system. For the trip to Denver, we drop down I-55 and catch I-80, then put it on cruise control for the next 11 hours until we come to I-76, which angles across northeastern Colorado on a beeline toward Denver. We do stop for gas, of course, and McDonald's drive-thru (that's the way they spell it on their signs), but other than that, we just let the day and the scenery roll on around us. (There's not

much scenery on the ground in Nebraska, to be honest, but sometimes the sky puts on quite a show.) We've made the trip so often over the last several years that it feels very much like driving across town... a very big town.

In any case, the drives there and back give me time to think... which is part of what I've always liked about highway driving. A hidden consequence of the current energy crisis, in fact, is that it will reduce or curtail thinking time for people like me who like to do it behind the wheel of a fast-moving car.

And maybe because we were on business for my late father's estate, my thoughts on this trip turned toward final words—the last words one utters before one dies. Each of us will have them, of course—although not all of us will be afforded the dramatic touch of being able to say them right before closing our eyes for the last time... and even fewer will have strings and french horns rising to a thrilling crescendo as they take their last breath... but that's my plan.

So as I guided our rented Hyundai Sonata across the plains of northern Colorado on the trip back to Naperville this time—my son fast asleep in the passenger seat with a pillow over his face to block out the predawn light—I began to wonder what my last words will actually be. And almost immediately, for some reason, my mind turned to what I don't want them to be—for example: "Hon? What kind of spider is this?" or "Watch



me take this curve," or "Is this the one they call the 'third rail'?"

Once I got on that track, it was hard to get off.

"You're just the cutest little snake. Yes, you are—"

"When did you say your husband was getting home?"

"Boy, that's a long way down."

It's not exactly gallows humor—or it is, I suppose, in the sense that everything is, since we all will face some kind of demise.

"So. Was prison life as bad as they say?"

"See there? Nothing to it."

"I can't quite make it out. It looks like some kind of warning."

Often, if an idea or thought worth saving comes to me while I'm driving, I'll repeat it out loud several times to 'lock it in.' Sometimes that works, and sometimes it doesn't. These started coming so quickly, I needed a better plan, so I reached behind my seat and dug around in one of my briefcase pockets for my PDA—which I rely on absolutely to keep my calendar, contact, and appointment reminder data but which also has a one-touch voice-recorder function that I hardly ever use.

Bingo.

"See? I told you they don't use this old missile range, anymore."

"Anybody got a lighter?"

"It says here they do that whenever they're about to strike."

I had to refamiliarize myself with its operation—pressed the button, looked

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Blogging for Fun and Profit: How to Do It & Where to Go for Help

BY CYNTHIA MIKAL

June brought us a dynamic and energetic speaker, Blagica Bottigliero, who for the last 10 years has been a Chicago based consultant, entrepreneur and blogger. Blagica gave a lively and informative presentation on Blogging and other Web 2.0 topics. She warned the audience that she often speaks quickly when she is excited and she is very excited about this topic!

Bottigliero started her presentation with some basics: First you should have your own home on internet and to do that you need a domain name which is like your own "flag" on the internet. Go to an internet domain registrar such as Go Daddy or others to set up a domain name. She suggested that – if you have a name you want to buy – buy it now! (And any derivatives you think you might also want.) Some parents are buying their children's names before the child is born! If an individual has already purchased a name that you might want, you can check with a domain name broker for assistance in buying it from that person. Besides the usual and most expensive .com; look for the domain name you want with other extensions such as .net, .me (newer), .org, .biz, .edu, .name. We all found out that most of the IWOCers present in the audience already have domain names.

Now that you have picked and gotten a domain name and a website, should you host it or get help? If your web-site is fairly simple, you

want to be able to access customer service, or you do not plan to change the content often, have someone else host or manage your site. If you want a lot of control, you already know code, and you are using your site for e-commerce, then you are probably better off hosting and managing it yourself.

There are many companies and much software available to help with your blog or website. Six apart is the largest, paid blogging service in the world. Go-Daddy is another web-hosting company. Wordpress.com is free but cannot be used to make money; however, with Wordpress.net you can make money from your site. Blogger, a Google product, is free. Whether you use any of these will depend on your interests and needs.

Bottigliero recommended that anyone with a website get Goggle Analytics. It is a free program that lets you analyze your site and find out who is visiting. It looks at many things including: whether they are using DSL or cable, what country they are from, how long they are on your site, what keywords are used to get there, what the bounce-back rate is, and more. You can use this information to improve your site.

You can use Google AdSense to make money on your blog on the side if you get a lot of hits on it. There are different types of ads, and they work differently. There are cost-per-click and

impression ads. You can also use ad words. That is, you can buy keywords so people will be prompted to go to your site. You should always use search engine optimization (SEO) so your site can be easily found. You will need to write a bit differently for blogs than for regular articles. There are search robots looking for new content. But do not repeat terms in your site to get more hits; this can lead to your being blacklisted. However, do update site/blog often to make your site more interesting and increase ranking. Links to friends and others also increases ranking. Do utilize 'excerpt' ability so you can have many articles on your homepage. This creates more links to the page and increases ranking. Bloggers produce great PR and can be good for links also. You can be paid per post.com review on your blog, but just be sure to let people know that you are getting paid for some of your information.

If you are finding that there is too much information in your news and blog bin try an RSS feed. RSS stands for "really simple syndication" and is one stop shopping for all kinds of websites that you want information from. An RSS feed such as My Yahoo Reader or Goggle Reader allows you to get your news and blogs in a routinely updated, standardized, condensed form; you will still get advertising. Check our feedburner.com for more information too.

If you want to listen rather than read, try podcasting, which is technologically compressed radio or TV in xml format that you listen to by downloading to your computer or MP3 player. You can also create your own podcasts. If you have Apple products, you can learn how at an Apple store. Two people, using Skype to talk to each other, can create their own radio program from home. Or if you want to listen to a book try Audible.com. It lets you download books to your computer or MP3 player. They have different membership plans for different types of listeners and their needs.

The most popular social networking sites are Facebook and MySpace. NING is a good site for those that have limited technical skills or want to create a social network around a specific interest. An example of a topic-specific site is baristaexchange.com.

Now, what should you blog about? Blogging about your passion can be good, as well as having a focus. You can go to mybloglog.com for ideas. You can add pictures and video with a digital camera. If you have videos, you should put videos on YouTube or Blip.tv. TubeMogul can put videos on multiple video websites at once and can track and trend video viewers. If you want to blog anonymously, you can do that too. You can sign up for private registration of your

Continued on page 4.

August Question of the Month

When talking with a potential client, how do you approach the issue of payment? Do you bring up the subject first, or do you wait for the client to bring up the issue? What might you say during a typical conversation on this subject?

BY KAREN SCHWARTZ

Betsy Storm: It works both ways, and I find the subject naturally arises after an initial discussion of the assignment. Of course, if the client doesn't bring it up, I feel free to do so!



During a typical conversation, I might explain that I have an hourly fee based on my years of experience, expertise in a subject, etc. I find that many clients really do want to know what your fee is based on, and they're willing to pay it if they understand the value of good work. At times, my fee is negotiable, and while I do not say that upfront, I will work with clients on fees – particularly if it's an assignment I really want to take on (usually for a non-profit organization). Another important question is the issue of partial payment at the start of the assignment;

I often request this if I am dealing with a client with whom I don't already have an established relationship.

Barbara Goodheart: If a potential client calls or e-mails me about a project, and I sense that the fee won't amount to much,



I ask about the fee right away. My intuition is almost always correct: it's not much. So I turn down the assignment. In other situations, the potential client and I are usually well into a discussion of the project when the subject of a fee comes up, in a natural way. Sometimes I bring it up; more often, the client does. Usually I quote my hourly fee, at the client's request. If necessary, I substantiate my fee by citing rate surveys from the

American Medical Writers Association and our local group of medical writers.

Eve Bradshaw: When I'm discussing a project with a prospective client, I always bring up the issue of compensation by offering to provide a project quote. I tell a prospect that I primarily work for a project rate, but that I'd consider working on an hourly basis



if she prefers. New clients frequently ask my hourly rate, and I'm happy to tell them.

When I develop a quote, I estimate the number of hours that the project will take—including research, literature/existing material review, interviews, first and subsequent drafts, incorporating client edits, and any other services that the client wants included

in the project. If the client doesn't like the initial quote, I'll reduce it, but not without taking something off the table, such as reducing the number of drafts or limiting the amount of telephone consultation.✍

If you have a question you'd like answered in Question of the Month, please send your suggestions either to Karen Schwartz at writerks@sbcglobal.net or Joen Kinnan at jpkinnan@comcast.net. We welcome all suggestions whether work-related or not.

privacy has a centuries-old tradition. Think Addison and Steele in England, who listened to gossip and printed it as news. Bottigliero did admit, though that she sometimes refrains from posting really sensitive items.

On a personal note, I didn't know much about blogging before hearing Bottigliero speak and that really piqued my interest, so I went to the library and found more information in: "Clear Blogging", "How People are changing the world and how you can join them" by Bob Walsh (Apress). There are other books, but I really liked this one. Then I did a bunch of web surfing, too. If a conference is more your style, check out blogHer.com; they are holding a major conference in San Francisco, the week of the 14th of August. Have fun blogging it up!✍

Blogging

Continued from page 3.

domain name and leave your name you're your blog. If you want to see how this works, check out a funny, anonymous blog called waiterrant.net.

Bottigliero maintains a number of blogs on topical issues. She makes money from advertisers on her site who sell related products or services. How does she keep up her frenetic blogging pace? She says Chicago is very wireless and has many free hot spots. When

she goes out, Bottigliero is always prepared to find something she can blog about. She takes her PowerBook or i-mac, i-phone with camera, and a Flip mini video camera. She will often take a picture, email it to herself, write an article about it, and post it on her blog in one fell swoop. She also gets photos from Flickr or other sources. If you do this, remember to give accreditation to the source.

She has very few qualms

about what she photographs or posts, reasoning that a person out in public has little privacy anyway. For example, she photographed a woman being mugged and then posted it and an article about how women can protect themselves on one of her her blogs. Some in the audience thought this example raised privacy issues – Bottigliero says she draws the line at locker-room photos – but she pointed out that journalistic invasion of

for the microphone, held it close and uttered the timeless, "Testing, testing, 1-2-3" hoping that doing so wouldn't wake my son. It didn't.

"That's just legalese."

"Do you hear something?"

"I think it's asleep."

I released the button and tapped the 'Play' icon on the PDA screen. It spit out my voice like something from Thomas Edison's first successful attempt at making a talkie... "Testing, testing, 1-2-3." Scratchy, lots of background noise... but it worked.

"Expiration dates are just estimates."

"Wouldn't it be wild if it erupted right now?"

"Toxic schmoxic."

Then, for the next couple of hours, I sat back and let my mind wander while the Sonata's XM radio played hits from the 1940s. And now, my attention split onto two different tracks, and one of them took me back to my youth—watching my dad at his over wagon,



to my youth—watching my dad basement workbench or leaning the grill of our 1956 Ford station listening to a transistor radio play songs from the era of his young adulthood... "Bésame Mucho," "Little Brown Jug," "You Go to My Head"... and the artists... Helen O'Connell, Glenn Miller, Dick Jurgens, Dinah Shore.

Meanwhile, in the back of my mind, the final-word generator hummed along like a Windows utility running in the background.

"They wouldn't sell it if it weren't safe."

"You're authorized to use what kind of force?"

"Oh, wait. I forgot Step Two!"

Another reason I drove on this trip—aside from saving the cost of two airfares—is so that I could retrieve a few items from the storage unit that were too large to bring back on a plane. A Bell and Howell projector from the 1950s, still in its original packaging. A box of home movies, also from the 1950s, each housed in its own metal can. A fold-out film screen. Some books... a set of record albums...

"They just say that to cover their asses."

"I think I worked out the last bug."

"So much for packing my own parachute."

As the XM station played on and the miles slipped by, it struck me that I was, in some sense, melancholy for an era that came and went before I was born—the 1940s... not only because of the amazing political and scientific upheavals of that decade, but because it produced the music I associate with my childhood... the music I listened to at my father's elbow while he worked.

"Watch what happens when it gets really mad."

"Try pressing that button."

"Oh, cool! Icebergs!"

Which led me to theorize that there is no universal "music of our era"—by which I mean the music we associate with our youth or some other time in our lives. That we each create our own era-defining playlist... or rather, that it is created for us by a combination of circumstance and attention but might have nothing at all to do with what's popular at the time.

"Here goes nothin'!"

"Look at you, Mr. I'm-So-Tough."

"Do these taste 'off' to you?"

The rest of the day was more of the same, and I say that without the slightest bit of complaint. My son woke up and got out his iPod. The songs of the 1940s gave way to those of the 1980s, then 1970s—almost every one invoking a different thought, a different memory,... a different era. The Nebraska cornfields slipped quietly past and into the rearview mirror, yielding to the rolling landscape of central Iowa, which in turn gave way to that of Illinois. The sky became filled with the kinds of clouds that inspired the Impressionists—and their edges glowed with the orange and gold of sunset as we neared home.

"That's just an urban legend."

"Whaddya mean, 'heads up'?"

"This is my favorite part of the ride."

When we pulled into the driveway, it struck me that I hadn't really answered the question that got me going in the morning—what would be my last words. I'd generated a fair number of things I didn't want them to be, but nothing I'd want etched into my gravestone or quoted by whoever gives my eulogy.

Then I remembered something that came to me that morning on I-76 just outside Sterling, Colorado. It's not profound, and don't hold me to it if you happen to be by my side as I take my last breath. But maybe—just maybe...

"Hey! I remember where I hid that ten million!"

It's Happening on the Web!

[Check Out Writers' Line](#)

[Browse Resources](#)

[See What's Doing in IWOC Events](#)

WWW.IWOC.ORG

IWOC Welcomes New Member

Kimberly Watley

IWOC Announces Slate of Officers to Be Elected in September

Preceding the September program, IWOC will hold its one and only annual business meeting and election of officers. We are pleased to present the following fine slate of candidates:

President: Roger Rueff

Vice President: Catherine Rategan

Secretary: Jennifer Lyng

Treasurer: Barbara Dillard

Parliamentarian: Harry Karabel

Board Members: Charles Coffin, Noreen Kelly, Joen Kinnan.

Notes

IWOCER WINS FICTION AWARD

We have belatedly learned that IWOCer Carol Stover won an IPPY award for southern fiction in 2006 for her first novel *Current River Redemption*. Congratulations to Carol!

PLAYWRIGHT'S CONTEST

If you're a playwright or would-be playwright, you may be interested in the following notice: Thirteen Pocket Productions, a performance company dedicated to new works, is currently accepting submissions for its National Playwright/New Works Contest. You send us your script - finished, first draft, one act you want to be full length, ANYTHING - and we will look it over and choose what show we want to put on. The reason it can be unfinished is because a large part of what we do is collaborate with the artist to make the work live and breathe for the moment. This doesn't mean we are going to rewrite your play. It means that if you are willing to collaborate we will help in any aspect we can. Please visit [Thirteen Pockets](#) to download the New Works Submission form, as well as get additional information on the contest and the company. Please be advised that there is a \$20 submission fee. Information on payment as well as where to submit is available at the above website link. Deadline August 15th. Please forward any questions to Caitlin McGlone at cmcglone@thirteenpocket.com.

Calendar

August 12

IWOCFest. Join IWOCers and friends for our annual summer party on the roof of Pegasus Restaurant and Taverna, 130 South Halsted in Chicago. Visitors are welcome. There will be free wine with dinner, a cash bar, delicious food served family style, a door prize, and lots of great conversation. Cost is \$30 if reserved by August 8 and \$35 at the door. Fill out the reservation form attached to *Stet* or visit www.iwoc.org/iwoc_events.html to sign up using PayPal. You don't need a PayPal account, and you can pay by credit card through PayPal. See you there!

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org.

August 28 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Near-west suburbanites meet at noon on the 4th Thursday of the month for lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. This group doesn't always meet, so be sure to check to see if there is to be a lunch meeting this month before you show up.

August 7 (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 info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

NOT TOO LATE TO RENEW YOUR IWOC MEMBERSHIP, BUT TIME IS RUNNING OUT

We've had a wonderful response to our early-bird campaign, but if *you're* not yet in the fold, we're not happy. We have a terrific year of activities and benefits planned that you won't want to miss. And think of the advertising deal: dues cost you about 30 cents a day to advertise to the whole online world and in the print directory for an entire year. One job and you've more than paid for it. Why not sign up right now from the [member login](#) page? We want you!

IWOCFEST

AUGUST 12



\$30 by
August 8

\$35 at
the door



Pegasus Restaurant, 6 pm-? 130 S. Halsted, Chicago

Name _____

Amount \$ _____

Guests _____

Amount \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Send check payable to IWOC to IWOC, PMB 119, 1800 Nations Drive, Suite 117, Gurnee, IL 60031. Please mail early enough for receipt on or before August 8. In case of rain, the party will be held inside the restaurant.