

Working Writer

We all need to recognize that old cliche': "One man's meat is another man's poison."

Willma Willis Gore is a much published writer of fiction, "how-to" nonfiction, a memoir, children's books, articles, essays, and short stories in both regional and national journals, including the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.

[What's good for the goose . . . -- Ed.]

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Pen Pals

Friends Who Write

by Margaret McCaffrey

In 2020 my writing group published an anthology entitled *Every Second Tuesday*. Elwood Writers is four in number. The anthology features poems, fiction, and memoir either previously published or newly minted.

We oversaw the publishing process ourselves, launching via Zoom with a popular Melbourne bookshop, and had copies avail-

11

able in retail stores and online. To follow up the publication, one member wrote a guest post for an Australian writer's blog. Barry noted that while our group work together successfully and with *bon ami*, our prime connection is through a love of writing. That's as it should be. He explained: "With (our) disparate histories and interests outside writing it's unlikely we'd have otherwise met."

This put me in mind of one of my four brothers announcing years ago that were we five children not in the same family, "we might not be friends." (The jury is still out on that one.)

Barry's statement got me thinking. What constitutes a friendship?

One definition from Irish poet David Whyte is that a true friend is one who shows "tolerance and mercy" and who sees the "essence" of who you are. A friend, he says, is the person who accompanies you on the journey that is "impossible to accomplish alone."

Before I joined Elwood Writers in 2013, I was of the opinion that friends were people with whom you had one important thing in common, like school, for example, or a significant trip away, a shared place of work. When I began my studies in creative writing, I barely knew a soul who wrote. I still don't know many. But I understand that by sharing my work and workshopping with the others, I'm engaging in the generous and privileged act of giving and receiving.

Jul/Aug 22

David Whyte says the main "touchstone" of a real friendship is to bear "witness." As writing can be the place where we humans reveal the deepest part of ourselves—particularly in memoir—having a person or people we trust to witness our process along the way is a precious gift.

Many writers prefer to work alone. But even the greatest—Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ezra Pound—attended Gertrude Stein's Saturday soirées, or met in Parisian cafés at the close of day. Surely they discussed their work.

Three of my group are "mature-aged" writers. Barry says that our differences are our strength. We meet once a fortnight in a member's apartment or online, we send work around beforehand, prepare an agenda, and keep minutes of the meeting.

This may sound over-zealous, but it is particularly helpful in recording our forays into submitting and getting work published. While we have catch-up time for fifteen minutes at the beginning of each session, the formalities depersonalize things, and keep us on track.

If my theory on friendship is correct—that it relies on having at least one significant event or interest in common with another—then I'm happy to have my new professional relationship bound by an abiding passion for writing. Without the other three as my companions, I doubt I would have

accomplished alone as much of the writing journey as I have.

Margaret McCaffrey is an Australian-based writer who completed her MA in Creative Writing in 2015. Her memoir pieces have appeared in American Writers Review and The Door is Ajar. Other stories can be heard on Vision Australia Radio and be read in the anthology Every Second Tuesday.

[I've never met most of my writer friends! -- Ed.]

*"A hedge between keeps friendship green."
~~German proverb~~*

The Gallery of Language Pitfalls

by Ulla de Stricker

Is it all over the map, or have payments been made?

WRONG: The funds have been *dispersed*. The family has members *disbursed* all over the world.

CORRECT: The funds have been *disbursed*. The family has members *dispersed* . . .

Trick: *Disburse* means "remove from the place where the money is" (from French *bourse* meaning pouch or purse). If the idea is "spread far and wide," then use *disperse*. Of course, disbursements can be dispersed to far-away places!

More on request from ulla@destricker.com.

I mean "Dear Editor," of course.

Do you really have to stamp the first few pages of my manuscript with a "date received" stamp?

If you render it not acceptable for your wonderful publication, guess what? I can't resubmit it elsewhere, without having to reprint it.

Really glad I sent the postage on the return envelope.

Multiply that by 200 of my latest submissions, and you can see how unnecessary that stamping "date received" practice really is.

And, do you really want to send the message out to writers, that the manuscript you are returning in April, was submitted in November?

Also, if you have that one minute to explain that you receive many many manuscripts, so you won't

be commenting on my work, do you think perhaps you could put that one minute to better use and explain what you did or did not like? Just saying, that in place of the rambling about your busy-ness, you could be of real help to me.

And Madam/ Sir, I know an editor's salary might not compare to a doctor's, but heck, did you really have to steal, I mean, *keep* that beautiful large pink-colored paperclip I used to attach my cover letter to my manuscript?

I mean, I bought the beautiful expressive clips for presentation purposes. Competition is stiff out there. But I did not buy them as a gift.

And I am certain you could have fit it into my very large SASE.

Just saying.

Cheryl Struzer has been writing books and monologues and poetry for years. She has a lot of experience with rejection letters.

[OK. OK. I'll give you the pink paperclip back! -- Ed.]

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See you in September '22!