

DISPATCHES

Monthly Magazine

MILITARY
WRITERS
SOCIETY
OF AMERICA

March 2011

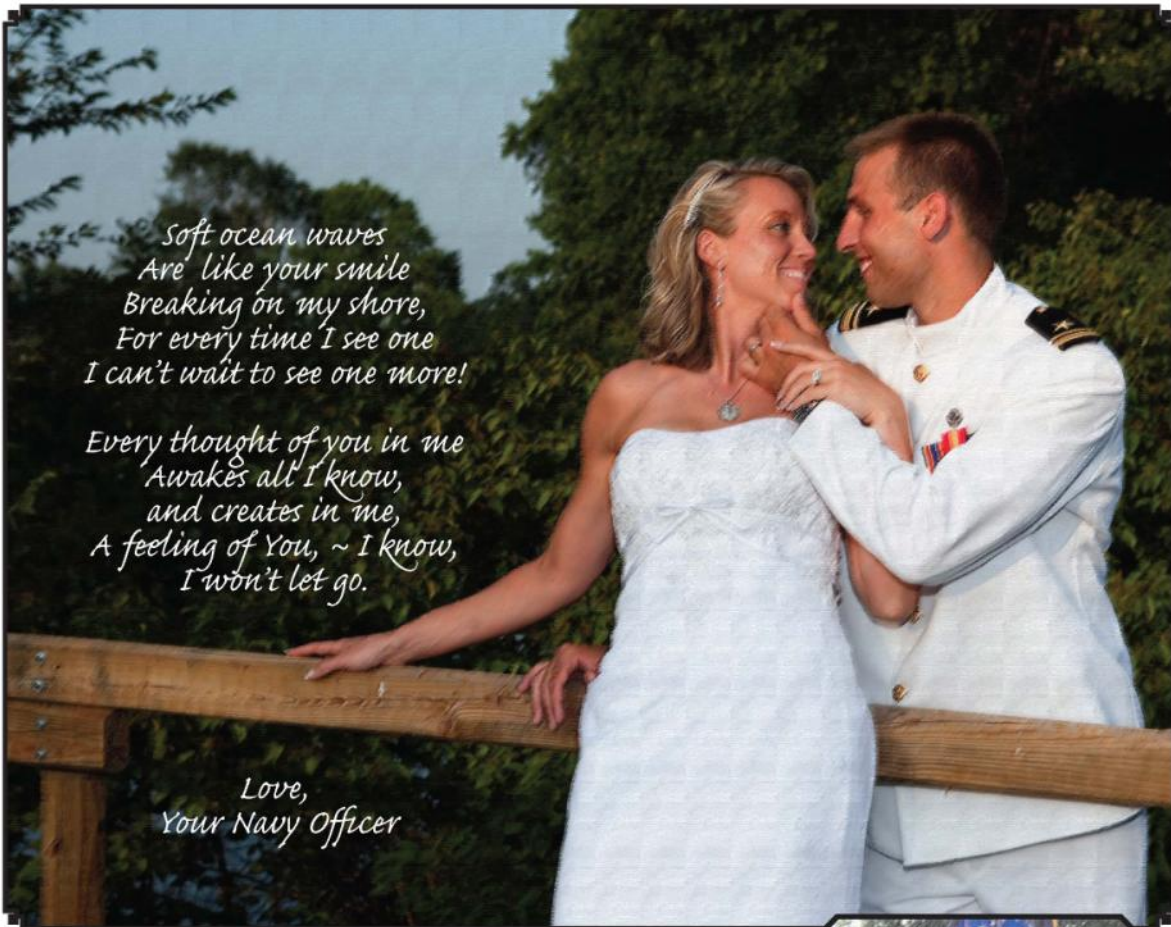


WEM: False Honor



Dwight J. Zimmerman and John D. Gresham
with
Major Michael Baka

*Bonnie Bartel Latino takes February WEM Award.
“Gated Grief” by Leila Levinson is Book of the Month
Shannon Maxwell is Author of Month for “Our Daddy is Invincible”
Fighter Pilot Lessons for Life
Paul Bruno is The History Czar
Call for submissions for 2011 Anthology*



*Soft ocean waves
Are like your smile
Breaking on my shore,
For every time I see one
I can't wait to see one more!*

*Every thought of you in me
Awakes all I know,
and creates in me,
A feeling of You, ~ I know,
I won't let go.*

*Love,
Your Navy Officer*

Introducing a unique series of original artwork by Kate Dunn of The Creative Cabin, an award-winning graphic designer and fine artist.

life
of many colors™

The "Photo Paint" Process

Kate Dunn's beautiful images are multi-media in nature, and her technique demands raw talent as well as a multiplicity of advanced technical skills. She begins by using her trained eye to capture exciting original images using a state-of-the-art digital camera. Next, she transfers the image to her computer, where she uses a combination of software packages to artistically enhance the images. Finally, she produces an original print on the finest quality Strathmore acid-free cotton fiber paper, or Canvas. The result is a stunning original piece of art, some of which are sold in numbered series and others of which are available as originals only.

Commissioned Pieces

While Dunn typically uses her own photography for her work, she will accept commissions using your own treasured family photographs or photograph a subject of your choosing. Also available are originally designed Invitations, Holiday Cards, Announcements, etc all personalized with your images.



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Expose yourself to a truly creative process producing visual images of highest quality and originality.

the**CreativeCabin.com**

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From the Editor...

Hi everyone,

Our founder, Bill McDonald, spent more time in the hospital this month. He said that he will have a lot of rehab ahead of him. Although he doesn't have the energy to answer his emails, he does like seeing them or your comments on Facebook.

Note MWSA webmaster John Cathcart's article about our Paypal system for collecting dues. Frank Evans' essay, *Lost Love*, broke my heart and I'm sure it will yours too.

In addition to our normal columnists, we have some new writers submitting their work to *Dispatches* this month. Note Marcia Sargent's new column, *Fighter Pilot Lessons for Life*. Cyndee Schaffer writes about *Pillars of Honor*. William Peterson writes about a glass sculpture depicting a *Hot LZ* in Vietnam that he and James R. Burritt created. Paul Bruno, The History Czar, talks about his radio show and invites MWSA members to appear to discuss their books.

Please note page 4 where we have posted more information about this year's conference in Pittsburgh.

Remember the Korean War Book Awards this year. MWSA is partnering with the Center for the Study of Korean War, Our History Project, and Positively Pittsburgh Live to encourage veterans and historians to focus on the Korean War. Information about this contest is on page 13.

Congratulations to Shannon Maxwell, author of *Our Daddy is Invincible*. She is this month's Author of the Month. Also, congratulations to Leila Levinson who's book *Gated Grief* is Book of the Month for March.

Also, congratulations to Bonnie Bartel Latino, who's essay, *Christmas Whistles: A Swiss Duet*, is the winner of February's William E. Mayer award and is a finalist for the annual award.

Joyce Faulkner, President of MWSA

Dispatches Staff

Joyce Faulkner — Editor
Mike Mullins — Columnist
Pat Avery — Columnist
Joyce Gilmour—Columnist
Marcia Sargent—Columnist
Dwight Jon Zimmerman—Columnist
Jim Greenwald—Columnist
Frank Evans—Feature
Paul Bruno—Feature
Cyndee Schaffer—Feature

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This publication includes works of perspective, reflection, fiction, and poetry.

MWSA 2011 Conference Information

Soon our annual conference will be here and I'm looking forward to seeing all of you again. As we have announced previously, the Conference will be September 29 through October 2, 2011, at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott Hotel. It's a much bigger venue than last year and we will have all of our workshops and meetings on the same floor...right next to each other. One of the big advantages to this arrangement is that the Airport Marriot offers free shuttle from the airport. Also, all of our Conference programming will take place at the hotel...so this will eliminate the "running around" that we did last year and reduce some of our costs.

NOTE: Due to circumstances beyond our control, we will not be doing the play this year. We plan to produce scenes from the books that were selected last year during our 2012 conference!

This year, we will be announcing nominated books before the conference on the Veterans Radio Network as usual. However, the winners won't be announced until the banquet. There are several reasons for this—aside from making the banquet a lot more fun. First, this will give the judges more time to make their selections. Second, we'll have more time to publicize the nominations—and all of our pre-conference and during conference publicity will be national and will give your local press time to contact you and us to discuss your book. Hopefully, the announcements at the banquet will help us encourage the press local to the conference to come to the banquet.

We will kick off the event on Thursday afternoon with a buffet luncheon and a hands-on writing Work Shop starting at 2pm. Friday, September 30 will be Oral History Day, and Friday evening, we'll have our our traditional Open Mic. Come prepared to share a story, a song, an excerpt from your book. Saturday will be seminars and work-

shops all day long. We'll announce programming in a future Dispatches. The Awards Banquet and Ceremony will be Saturday night. Sunday morning will be our State of the Organization Meeting and we'll close with the Buckaroo Auction.

We will have a registration desk in the Main Lobby. You must register to get the materials that you will need to get into MWSA events. If you have an unpaid balance at that time, you will be able to pay with either a check or a credit card. When you register you will receive the following:

- A bag with any handouts, program and anthology.
- Your Name Tag/Pouch. Please wear it at all times. It will contain your:
 - Buckaroos
 - Seminar tickets
 - Buffet Luncheon ticket (attached)
 - Banquet invitation with your table and seat assignment (attached)
 - Raffle tickets for drawings on Fri & Sat. Morning and Sat. afternoon
 - And If you are a reviewer or volunteer, your Saturday morning breakfast invitation.

Note: You will be required to present your tickets/invitations for all events. That's how we will keep track of which programs matter to you and which we can eliminate.

Contact the Marriott Hotel for your room reservation @ (412-788-8800) ask for the MWSA Rate for Sept. 29 – Oct. 2nd—the first block of rooms is \$109.00 and will be available until April 30. The Hotel will set aside a second block at \$119.00 which will be good until August 31. Market rates apply after that. These rates include internet access and free parking.

MWSA BUSINESS

Military Writer's Society of America 2011 Conference Registration Form September 29, 30, October 1 and 2

Amount (\$)

Name:		
MWSA Member #:		
Conference Fees:	3 Day (\$235) 2 Day (\$160) 1 Day (\$80)	A)
Non-Member:	3 Day (\$265) 2 Day (\$190) 1 Day (\$110)	B)
Conference Guests:	(# Guests X \$80.00)	C)
Lunch Buffet Guests:	(# Guests X \$25.00)	D)
Banquet Guests:	(# Guests X \$45.00)	E)
Book Table:	# days _____ X \$5.00	F)
Additional Anthologies	# _____ X \$20	G)
Total Conference Fees:	A+B+C+D+E+F+G =?	
Member Dinner Choice:		Beef/Salmon/Vegetarian
Guest Name & Meal:		Beef/Salmon/Vegetarian
Guest Name & Meal:		Beef/Salmon/Vegetarian
Guest Name & Meal:		Beef/Salmon/Vegetarian
Title & Price of Book:		

- All Conference Fees must be paid in full to register for the Conference
Member Fee covers All Functions & the Anthology, does not cover cost of book table.
- If you want to have your Anthology shipped, please contact Jim Greenwald and mail a check to MWSA for \$6.00 to cover shipping costs. If you asking for it to be shipped and or ordering extra copies please do so before July 30th so we can order enough copies.
- Award Winners will receive their Medal, Certificate & Seals at the Banquet. If you do not attend, mail a check to MWSA for \$5.00 to cover shipping costs, no medals certificates or seals will be mailed until payment is received.
- Mail Check to: MWSA, P.O. Box 264, Bridgeville, PA 15017, or email to leanstofar@aol.com and Jim Greenwald will email you a .doc form to fill out and return to him. Then he'll send you a Paypal Invoice.

**MWSA
PO Box 264
Bridgeville, PA 15017**

MWSA BUSINESS

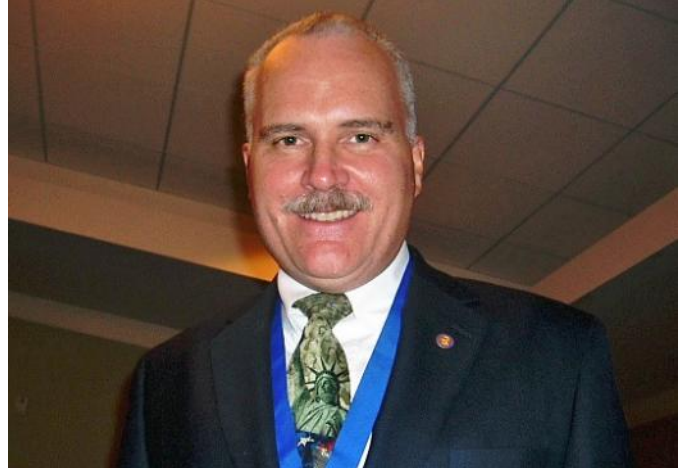
About a year ago, it came to our attention that the dues paying option we created using the PayPal service involved an automatic billing system. In other words, at the end of a member's selected membership length option (one-, two-, or three-year membership), their PayPal accounts would be AUTOMATICALLY billed. At the time this membership dues payment option was created, we did not realize that we were committing our members to automatic payments in the future, and that we had little or no control over the billing process.

Furthermore, in April of 2010, we instituted a change (increase) in our dues structure, which did not carry over into the existing dues subscription methodology used by PayPal for those members who started paying under the old dues structure. Because of this problem, in the middle of last year, we updated our website to reflect our new dues structure and to make MWSA membership options more clear. At that time, we changed the MWSA website's membership subscription pages to allow our members to choose either a one-time dues *payment*, OR an automatically-renewing (and *automatically billed*) dues *subscription*.

If you signed up under the old PayPal dues billing system (roughly before the middle of last year), please be aware that you may have signed up for an automatic billing cycle without realizing it.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience or misunderstanding this has caused our members. If you'd like to check the status of your account, change your membership option, or have any other membership-related issues or concerns, please contact Terry Gould, our membership secretary by...

- using the link: http://militarywriters.com/membership_actions.html#Question to submit a question,



*John Cathcart,
2009 Winner of MWSA President's Award,
Author of "Delta-7" and MWSA Webmaster*

- This form may be accessed by hovering your mouse over "About Us" (at the top of each website page), then hover on the "Membership" sub-option, and finally clicking on "Join/Renew/Recommend"
- Once you've arrived at our "MWSA Membership Actions" page, use the yellow drop down box that says "I'd like to..." and select "...ask a general membership question."
- or by clicking on the "Contact Us" option on the top of every page in the website and then clicking on the Terry Gould's link (which will open up a form that will allow you to communicate directly with Terry).

FIGHTER PILOT LESSONS FOR LIFE



I'm a fighter pilot's wife. My guy hasn't flown a high performance aircraft in the service of Uncle Sam and the Marine Corps for almost 30 years, but he still has the mindset of a jet jockey. There are certain mantras every fighter pilot lives by, mantras aviators rely on to help them look good at the field—the airfield of life. Aviators would "rather be dead" than look bad at the field.

#1: Keep your S/A--Situational Awareness

Fighter pilots have to be aware at all times of many different things. They not only have to keep an eye on their instruments, but also have a sense of where their wingman is and watch out for their adversary. They need to know which way is up and keep above the hard deck—the designated Above Ground Level. AGL is usually set at 10,000 ft above the ground to give aviators an opportunity to recover from a spin or a plane otherwise departing from normal flight that wants to obey the law of gravity and auger toward the center of the earth. At the same time, the fighter pilot has to fly his plane, communicate on the radio, plan and react to the bogey's maneuvers. A moment of tunnel vision can be disastrous when flying at supersonic or even subsonic speeds with other fighters in the sky.

Just like fighter pilots, we need to know where we are and know where we are in relation to others and other things around us. Take it all in. Be aware. If we only look at the artificial horizon, we won't see the altimeter. We may be in level flight



J Sargent
Author of "Wing Wife: How To Be Married To A Marine Fighter Pilot,"
Chair of MWSA Blog,
MWSAMembertalk.blogspot.com

but heading straight toward a mountain.

It is also important that we need to know who we are. We all have our strengths and weaknesses. I'd make a terrible aviator of any kind. I wear contacts that are always getting dust under them. I drift off into other worlds. I write fantasy well, but dislike strict parameters of behavior.

And once we know the where, the when and the who that we are, we must use that awareness in THIS

moment—not be distracted by the fight with the spouse, the problems with the teenagers, that the grass has to be cut, the boss wants the report written, or a parent is sick. Each moment has its own imperative for focus. Multitasking in our lives

takes focus away from what we need to understand and do right NOW.

We need someone who is comfortable with web work to help the Webmaster maintain the bookstore and upload the reviews as they are completed by our reviewers. We estimate this at about two hours a week. You will receive MWSA buckaroos for your help.
Contact mwsawebmaster@gmail.com

Pillars of Honor

By Cyndee Schaffer

WWII veterans, who are unable to travel to Washington DC to see the WWII memorial, have the unique opportunity to experience the memorial through PILLARS OF HONOR. This all volunteer organization has one mission: Take the WWII Memorial to the veterans of WWII to give honor and thanks to these veterans who served our country during one of the most critical events in our nation's history. These veterans were willing to die for freedom more than sixty five years ago. The WWII memorial in Washington DC opened to the public on April 29, 2004 and was dedicated one month later on May 29, 2004. The youngest WWII veterans are now in their mid 80's. Many are fragile and too infirm to travel to see their memorial. So PILLARS OF HONOR, a group of dedicated volunteers, was formed. Many of these volunteers had worked with HONOR FLIGHT, who take WWII veterans to Washington DC to see the actual memorial. These volunteers witnessed the disappointment on the faces of the veterans when they could not get clearance to fly. The volunteers who became PILLARS OF HONOR con-



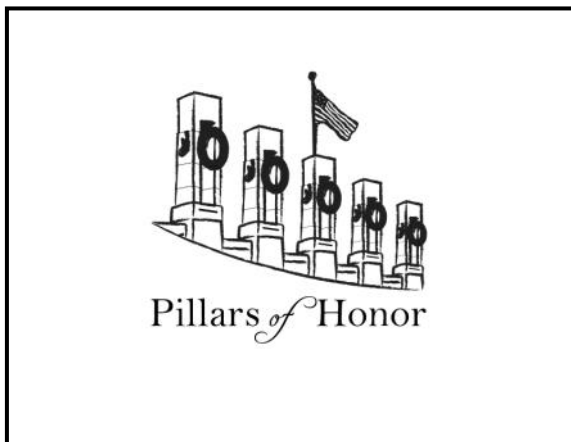
Cyndee Schaffer with model of WWII Memorial

tacted the architect, Friedrich St. Florian, of the WWII memorial and secured the original 8 foot by 8 foot scale model of the National World War II Memorial. This model was used for the presentation of the concept to Congress and President Bill Clinton for what is now a prestigious memorial to permanently provide respect and remembrance to our WWII veterans. Eventually, the model will have a permanent place in the Smithsonian Institute when it is returned to the architect.

PILLARS OF HONOR brings the traveling memorial to these WWII veterans. They have developed a program to recognize them and their extraordinary service to the United States. The program includes a formal presentation of the colors, music, a review of the history of the WWII Memorial, guest speakers, members of the military and representatives from American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts and a formal unveiling of the original model. The goal is to bring



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the model to as many locations as quickly as possible. Currently the model has been traveling to venues in Illinois but there are plans to bring it to other parts of the country as well. There is no charge for WWII Veterans and their spouses attending these special presentations. Advance reservations are required for all programs.



PILLARS OF HONOR, Inc., Des Plaines, Illinois has applied for 501c(3) status and expects approval in the near future. The program is supported by local organizations and private individual contributions. We operate with a team of volunteers and rely solely on contributions and donations which cover printing, office equipment, forms, insurance, upkeep and transportation of the model and items intended for the enjoyment of the veterans.

There are many ways to get involved with PILLARS OF HONOR. It is a 100% volunteer organization and always in need of volunteers and donations, too. For more information or to make donations, please contact MEDIA@PILLARSOFHONOR.ORG or fax your request to 888-588-4301. If you would like to schedule a presentation of PILLARS OF HONOR or receive any additional information, please visit the website at www.pillarsofhonor.org.

HOT LZ

By William Peterson



1st place in category and Best of Show for the 2011 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition

The North Vietnamese soldiers lie in wait, when the early morning wildlife sounds give way to the thumping rotor blade sounds approaching over the mountains. A combat assault has been ordered in this enemy-infested area. The gunships and door gunners open fire to “soften” the LZ in case of any enemy presence. Now within range, the NVA soldiers open fire on the flight, arriving in the “HOT LZ”. Even before touch down, the men from Co. C, 1st BN, 2nd Infantry of the 1st Infantry Division are jumping from the birds and rapidly dispersing into the brush to form a protective perimeter. Among the troops is an 81mm mortar man, Spec.4 James R. Burritt. Departing over the tree tops, the choppers continue to draw automatic weapons and RPG fire from the wicked hornets nest they have disturbed. The 1st Air Cav quickly return with an additional infantry assault and again draw plenty of enemy fire. Crew Chief/gunner Spec.5 William E. Peterson continues to return fire with his M60. His bullet-ridden ship belongs to C/227th Assault Helicopter BN. An afternoon or evening re-supply mission will later be flown. Sadly, following the delivery, wounded soldiers will be flown to the nearest field hospital, while American dead lie along the edge of the LZ, silently awaiting their final flight out of the Vietnamese jungle.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7QDt7a7B3s>

LOVE LOST



Franklin Evans
2009 Founder's Award

Minute particles of silvery-gray ash floated in the cool evening breeze and trailed in the dimming sunlight. They called out softly to me. They bid me a hesitant farewell and continued to float on the breeze just out of my reach. Part of her final wishes had been fulfilled. I left part of her in a place she had come to love. Tears blurred my eyes and I felt very alone once again as, finally,

reluctantly, vestiges of my life seemingly drifted away into the wake left by the ship. Time passed as slowly as the gloomy clouds overhead. It was without meaning and I was unwilling to let go of the railing. If I turned away, I would be letting go of a part of myself. I thought to myself, *if only I could recapture those ashes and recapture our life together.* The harshness of certainty whispered, "Death comes to all of us one day. Be strong."

The lights of Juneau blinked in the distance and the ship's wake rushed away into the darkness signaling that everything must move on. Lights behind me shone from the decks above where couples laughed and closely held to each other as they too watched the distant lights fade. I had been clinging to the polished wooden deck rail for a seeming eternity and I didn't feel the drop in the temperature as the sun disappeared into the horizon. I felt numb. We had been married nearly forty years. We had built a life together, traveled halfway around the world and back, and looked forward to a long, leisurely retirement filled with sightseeing. My career had taken us to exotic places and we both loved the Orient. We had talked about visiting China—before that, we

wanted to take our first cruise. Her illness compelled us to hurry. This previous summer we had cruised the Hawaiian Islands and Alaska. Now I was repeating our Alaskan cruise without her by my side.

Peering into the darkening mist, I felt the emptiness of her touch next to me. I reached out to wrap my arm around her even as I knew that she was gone.

No, she wasn't gone. She was there whenever I wanted. I could see her in the smiles, gestures, and innate mannerisms of my children. I could recall my laughter at the goofy little dance she performed each time a favorite song with an upbeat tempo played on the radio. Neither of us danced well, but who cared? In her classroom the young students laughed gleefully as she danced and sang out of tune with them. She made us all laugh and there were many times of much happiness.

My children joined me on this trip to fulfill one of her final wishes. "After I'm gone, I want you to take our children to Alaska to see the beautiful sights we shared."

This cruise was painful and bittersweet although I was consoled by the company of our children and my wife's brother, her favorite aunt and uncle, and my oldest son's longtime girlfriend. The scenery was as magnificent as our earlier visit to Alaska and my wife would have enjoyed sharing their company in this beautiful setting. Memories of happy times of discovery and the joy of sharing our life filled my thoughts and peacefulness overcame me. I felt reassured that all would be fine knowing that love keeps memories alive. Shared laughter over mutual pleasures and private jokes brought a small smile to my face as they floated to the surface of my thoughts and washed over the sadness that had seized me moments ago. The joys that we shared with our chil-

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10) *Evans*

dren through the years added to the happy memories and reminded me that there were still memories to be made. Each of our children possessed traits of their mother that would keep her memory alive.

The scenery on this voyage was as magnificent as our earlier visit to Alaska. Yes, I missed her spontaneous laughter and childlike pleasure in our wondrous visual discoveries along the way as we cruised the wilderness shoreline overflowing with surprises every mile. She had delighted in pointing out the harbor seals basking in the warming sunlight and the bald eagles that soared in abundance above the fir trees and icy waters. The bountiful wildlife was still there, but they seemed just a little less playful...a little quieter this trip.

Upon departing the picturesque town of Ketchikan, I glimpsed a group of harbor seals lazily enjoying the energizing sunlight among the grey rocks scattered along the shore. Surrounded by her pups and perched atop a large rock, a large mother seal's melancholic bark seemed to say, "I know your pain. Keep your family around you." Graceful bald eagles glided and soared above the cold waves. Perhaps they too sensed and shared my loss. The overwhelming beauty of this wilderness caused me to realize that there will always be beauty in this world. Happiness would return and cheerful memories would soften the emptiness.

I know that there will always be an ache inside that will occasionally surface unexpectedly. Love lost does that. But just as surely that ache will be followed by a smile as I recall the happiness and good times that filled our life together. Our family would keep those memories alive and love would continue to bind us together. Love remembered does that.

As I write this I must pause often because, even though months have passed since her death, grief still seizes me without warning. A friend helping me through my loss referred to them as "grief attacks". A more fitting description can't be found.

ATTENTION: The Arkansas Chapter of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association invitation for MWSA members!

Any MWSA member who would like to have a book posted on the AR MVPA website, please send a photo of your book cover and copyright date, an overview, link to purchase the book, and recommendation to read to Evelyn Harless at plheh38@hughes.net.

See MVPA website book page at:
http://www.armvpa.com/recommended_reads.htm



Veterans or Military Retiree Benefits Advisor

Do you have questions regarding your Veterans' eligibility or military retiree benefits?

We can help answer those questions.

**To make an appointment, contact the Branson Veterans Task Force
417-337-8387**

Paul Bruno IS The History Czar



The History Czar®
All History, All the Time

The mission of the MWSA is to help military writers receive recognition for their efforts and labor of love. MWSA believes that books are sold only because of the direct efforts of the author, not the publisher, and if the author is going to sell any books they will have to be the ones driving their marketing efforts. The author has to do the book events, book signings, public talks, speeches, appearances and drum up media coverage.

The History Czar® internet radio program is an educational service dedicated to providing information about history in an engaging and lively format hosted by individuals who love the subject. The History Czar® interviews the leading experts in the history field and is the place to relive and learn more about history. All issues related to the world of history are fodder for the History Czar®.

The goals of the MWSA to provide advice and guidance on how military authors can market their works matches well with the History Czar's® objective to provide an outlet for those interested in history to tell their story. On the History Czar® the guest is the star and we encourage our guests to take as long as they need to tell their story and not to worry about sound bites within our format of four ten minute segments. I and Producer Millian are there to guide the show as needed and add commentary as appropriate. Numerous MWSA members have appeared on our program and all MWSA member shows have been well received by our audience.

You can find the show at www.historyczar.com, blog www.historyczar.wordpress.com, Facebook® page History Czar® Internet Radio program and Twitter® www.twitter.com/historyczar.

If you would like to appear on the History Czar® to discuss your work, e-mail me at thehistoryczar@cs.com and we'll find a place for you on our schedule.

Some MWSA members who have appeared on The History Czar:

- Richard Lowry
- Norman Fulkerson
- Dwight Zimmerman
- Carmen Stenholm
- Louis Intres
- Franklin Evans
- Jerry Yellin
- Del Staecker
- Joyce Faulkner
- Don Farinacci
- Gail Chatfield
- Marc Yablonka



Announcing a Special Contest for 2011

Sponsored by MWSA, The Center for the Study of the Korean War, Our History Project, & Positively Pittsburgh Live

Korean War Book Awards Cash Award \$150 for First Prize

Rules

- Books must be primarily about the Korean War.
- There is no time limit on when the book was published but it must be in print currently.
- Books can be either fiction or non-fiction—memoirs, histories, or novels. If fiction, it must be clearly stated either on the book itself or in the submission query.
- Books can be published by traditional, subsidy, or self-publishers.
- Existing MWSA standards of excellence will be used in judging.
- MWSA members may submit books on Korean War for free. Non-members may submit for \$30 and they then become members for one year.
- Because this contest is separate from usual MWSA awards, books that have received MWSA awards in the past may be submitted for this competition as well.
- MWSA officers and board members may not submit books for this award.
- Books being submitted for Korean War Book Award must follow existing MWSA book query procedures—sending a query to the lead reviewer but noting in the comments section that this is a submission for the Korean War Book Award.
- Entries must be submitted by July 15, 2011.
- Winner will be announced September 1, 2011.
- Award will be presented in a ceremony in Pittsburgh, PA during the MWSA Conference — September 29-October 2.





YOU'VE EARNED YOUR STRIPES.
NOW GET THE BADGE.

70% of Americans prefer to purchase from a veteran-owned business vs. one not owned by a veteran, so simply letting consumers know you're a military veteran can help your small business grow.

The Veteran Owned Business "Badge" tells consumers that you're part of this elite group. Join your fellow 3 million veterans who own a small business. Get registered.

Get your badge at www.BuyVeteran.com

Membership costs only \$3.99 per month. MWSA members receive a 25% discount. Use promo code: MWSA

"Buy Veteran" and the "Veteran-Owned Business" Badge are part of a nationwide awareness campaign run by NaVOBA, the National Veteran Owned Business Association. Survey conducted by a third party for NaVOBA in December 2009 of over 500 American consumers of diversified backgrounds.



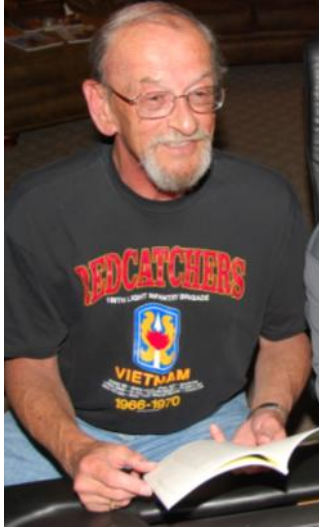
MOON'S MUTTERINGS

We writers are fortunate. We have an outlet for our feelings. Every event can be a stimulant. We see a bird or a cloud...an old man or woman...a child...a tree...a flower in bloom or even wilting...and we can write something about it. History is fertile ground for us. The news may make our fingers itch or our noses twitch. Everywhere we look there is a story walking beside us, begging to be written. We can embellish it or we can tell it like it is, for truth is mostly wilder than our imaginations. We can use any of those factors to create a story and control any aspect of it, managing the outcome as we will it. What glorious power we wield!

That last line looks good on paper. When I sit down to write, I control the beginning of my story, its content and characters, but then somewhere in the process the story takes over and I lose control. At times an interested reader has asked me, "How do you do that?" My reply has sometimes been "I don't know. I am a conduit. Somewhere in the Great Unknown, the words funnel through me to the paper and at the end I don't even know how it happened." I am swept away by an outpouring of emotion and creativity that seems to come from a place apart from my consciousness. Is that control?

I have burdened *Dispatch* readers with many of the recent events in my life. It occurs to me that I should apologize for that. I have taken advantage of a captive audience, yet I also realize you don't have to read my meanderings. Having been once again "stimulated" by the events in my life I will abuse a few of you a bit more.

Last month, I mentioned my mother-in-law's rapid decline in health. As some of you know, we lost her just before Valentine's Day. She passed on her mother's birthday, quietly in her sleep. We had at



Mike Mullins

last placed her in professional care but her stay was short. The call came to get to the facility quickly but it was a seventy mile drive. By the time we got there, she was gone. There was peace in her face—all fear was gone. I wrote a poem for her once entitled "Bubbles." For her, every moment had been one of trepidation. Everything that happened startled her. I likened her life to having bubbles pop in her face, each containing something that scared her. All the days in her life were filled with things that brought fear to her and rarely any pleasure. Those bubbles were no longer popping in her face.

As the days after her death accumulated, I did what we all do. For some reason just before we took her on the long drive to the home, I repeatedly told her I loved her. I was filled with guilt at giving up—of saying that caring for her was more than I could do any longer. No matter how convinced I was that it was the only choice left to us, remorse was armpit-high in my soul. We humans always wonder if we said or did the right things the last time we saw a loved one.

There are things worse than death. Since the second day there she was comatose. I am not going to be a geranium in the garden center at the local Lowes. Let me go. Life like that is not even that good. A geranium has a chance to bloom. It is more akin to being an artificial plant.

During the days she was confined I wrote instructions for my family. It is amazing how everyone freaks when it comes to things like that. I have taken some decisions from them. When I sent my instructions to my wife and sons, I sent it to my siblings too. In the "re" section of the e-mail I included the appropriate warning note about content. Apparently I lost my alleged skill as a writer. I

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15) **Mullins**

even failed in my attempted levity. I got my point across. It will be done as I wish or an ugly-assed ghost will be back to haunt them.

In truth, Evelyn's passing was a blessing. God was good to her. Passing gently and quietly is all anyone can ask. Her face showed it. She was cradled in His hands and held against His bosom as she crossed the proverbial river.

I began to notify friends on line in the days that followed her funeral. My writing inspiration has been at low tide. Work on my book has been sporadic for months as one family explosion after another blasted in my face. A few days before her death, we learned that our older son and daughter-in-law had lost a newly discovered pregnancy. We delayed the funeral long enough for her to recover and make the trip. They are troopers and all went well. Most things balance in God's universe and there are reasons in His plan. We have our pains but blessings out-weigh them on the whole.

However, I was still trying to write. I was even still trying to cry. One morning I managed to squeeze out a few tears in the shower. That is my favorite place. That is where I went for dad. My mind went to various support groups, as it had during the entire time we cared for Evelyn. There are times I am all about that sort of thing. They are great. Then there are times I think they exist so we have a place to find excuses for our behavior. Back to the shower. I am wont to look into the shower as the water cascades into my face and let loose the salty tears so I can ignore them as they flow down my body into the drain as though they never existed and I never gave into them. The shower head is also my old-time telephone to God. You know—the kind of old crank phone the small town operator used on the fifties and sixties television shows we loved? I imagine I have a direct line to God and he can hear only me for just a minute or two. It is not a party line like in the TV show—it is Mike's line to God and nobody else on the block can hear us. He tells me that it is going to be okay.

It was a week or two before I wrote my "Kings of the Green Jelly Moon" partners about things.

James the Hula-man, in his most "preacherish" tones, counseled me well. I think I finally wrote something back to him that mattered to me. Perhaps it means I can write again soon. I told him that I did cry at last, that as I did it was "one tear of longing and the next of joy."

We writers are fortunate. We can find things to write about in lots of places. It is March. Hmmm. The Ides of March cometh, as does Saint Patrick's Day and there is surely something in one of those two days that can excite me.

The Ides of March is an expression that people hear and have heard for years. "Beware the Ides of March." I studied Shakespeare for two semesters. You talk about memories! My prof had to hold a gun to my head. In spite of myself I enjoyed his work, although I have not revisited that or any of the classics in years. In my professional life, I found myself reading journals and such. Even in college I usually preferred the captions under the pictures in *Playboy* and *Penthouse*.

For years I would slip into the dusty old boxes in my attic and read some e e cummings. I loved his material although I could never write like that. I have never done much lovey-dovey stuff. I remember writing some mystic piece of tripe, wadding it up and tossing it before anyone saw it. Back in the day, when anger whelmed me I wrote while I was withdrawn from all and that too joined my errant philosophic musings. I could never admit weakness let alone understand its source.

Julius Caesar died there, body punctured twenty three times, looking on his three "trusted" companions, surrounded by sixty others of his court, at the foot of a statue of Pompey, I believe. His arrogance, his pretense to not want exactly what he sought, got him slaughtered. A holiday of celebration, a day of military parades before he left on his next planned conquest, saw a prophecy fulfilled. Yet his killers had no plan for what was to happen next and his heir followed him in leadership. He was never king but he still ruled. How he ruled was the bone of contention. Was it going to be in the Roman tradition or was it going to be as a dictator defined by him?

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16) **Mullins**

The Ides of March was the 15th of March, May, July, and October. It was the 13th of the month in the rest of the months in their calendar. I did a little Wikipedia research and dusted off those lost facts. I forgot how many were in his kill party and must credit that other tidbit to the net. I did not find myself inspired, but I did reminisce.

The other date, Saint Patrick's Day, is a lot more laughs in today's society. People wear green, pinch one another, and drink a little (or a lot) nasty green beer. I prefer a sip or two of Irish coffee. The common story is Saint Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland and is revered for that act.

I did research here, but I am supposed to be writing about inspiration and the search thereof. He was not Irish and there were no snakes there according to real historians. The snakes are allegedly a symbol of his successful delivery of Christianity to the island and the conversion of thousands of pagan Irish people to Catholicism. He used a shamrock to teach the Holy Trinity. Saint Patrick was so beloved that when the Revolution of 1798 was fought, the Irish Army wore green in an attempt to capture his spirit. He died on March 17th, 461 after almost 30 years of evangelism on the island. Today there are parades held in many metropolitan areas and the memory is one of joy. I am not sure he would be that pleased with it. The church commemorates him in a different way...more in tune with his accomplishments. Thinking about him however, led me to Ireland, thence to my college years once again.

We spent an entire semester studying James Joyce and most of that in *Ulysses*. It has been a struggle to remember why but along came monotony and at last "stream of consciousness." Joyce was an Irishman, brilliant, broke, drunk much of the time, and both worshipped and despised by other writers. My professor was an erstwhile philosopher. At the time, I thought he was a major league narcissist. Before the end of my senior year he proved me right. I had some anger issues during college. I returned home from Nam in March of 1969 and enrolled in Au-

gust. I took my Joyce course during in Jan-May semester, 1973 and had adjusted by then...I believed. Reading his work was an excursion into writing of a totally different style from the classics, from the poets, from the 19th century American writers, and from smattering of Europeans I encountered along the way. Many professors seem to wander into the philosophy of writers just as writers wander into that discipline as they write. The two are melded at many points. I wondered how page after page of writing with absolutely no punctuation said anything to me. I appreciate it now more than ever. It was a symbol of the monotony of life in Dublin, the sameness of days. It was also a slap in the face of traditionalists. Joyce could not break through the censorship barriers for years either. He was another symbol of the inspired, misunderstood Irish artist exiled to live off the largesse of others. And here I am writing about him, yet I remain uninspired.

We writers have it made when it comes to inspirational sources, but this is one time I have failed. I simply cannot find anything about which to write. I am mired in this "give-up" mode. I will stop thinking about it for now. If I do think of something before *Dispatches* goes to print I will let someone know.

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The William E. Mayer Prize for Literary and Artistic Excellence phrase for March is "FALSE HONOR."

MWSA's Winter 2011 Recommended Reading List

By Bob Doerr

Chairman of Reading List Committee

We are excited about starting 2011 off with something new. Starting with this issue and with each subsequent season, we hope to be able to release our Society's recommended reading list compiled from the works of our own writers. The works listed in each list will be drawn from reviews done by our own reviewers during the prior quarter. While this is an effort that will evolve and be refined, it is our goal to expose the works of more of our members to a wider audience. In addition to carrying it in *Dispatches*, putting it on our website and on our Facebook page are just a few of the steps we will be taking to disseminate the list to the general public.

MWSA Winter Reading List

Title	Author	Genre/Subcategory
Sgt. Rock - The Lost Battalion	Billy Tucci	Fiction – Historical/Graphic
In Their Honor	Linda D. Swink	Non-Fiction - Historical
Lost Eagles	Blaine L. Pardoe	Non-Fiction - Historical
Eisenhower & Montgomery	William Weidner	Non-Fiction - Historical
Breastfeeding in Combat Boots	Robyn Roche-Paul	Non-Fiction - How-To
Klinger: A Story of Honor and Hope	Betsy Beard	Children - Ages 12 & Under
The Men Who Killed the Luftwaffe	Jay A. Stout	Non-Fiction - Military
I Want To Be The Fat Pretty One	Kathleen Cline	Non-Fiction - Spiritual/Religious
The Scottish Thistle	Cindy Vallar	Fiction – Romance
Once a Knight	Walt Shiel	Fiction – Historical
Keeping the Promise	Donna Elliott	Non-Fiction – Memoir
For Love of Country	William C. Hammond	Fiction – Historical

If you're feeling like curling up with a blanket, a cup of hot chocolate and are looking for a good read – might we suggest one of the books mentioned above?



Ramblings on Connectedness

Pat McGrath Avery



Three years ago this May, I met Frank Buckles in Kansas City. I had been invited to attend the Memorial Day Celebration at the newly renovated National World War I Liberty Memorial. A special reception honored him.

After I introduced myself I had a short conversation with Mr. Buckles and watched as he answered a few questions and greeted people. It was an honor to meet him and to join Kansas City veterans in celebrating the day. I thought of all the years he received little recognition for his service and how the simple act of living longer than his fellow veterans attracted the attention of the world.

Mr. Buckles joined dignitaries on the stage for the event. Each speaker recognized him and all WWI veterans.

That evening, a celebration included a patriotic concert by the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra and an impressive fireworks display. Mr. Buckles attended the festivity where thousands of Americans applauded him. Veterans from WWII, Korea and Vietnam paid tribute to him and all WWI veterans. Mr. Buckles was 107 at the time.

His kindness, patience and willingness to meet people impressed me. The response of the American public pleased me. It was heartwarming to witness the respect shown to someone who represented our history.

Mr. Buckles died last month, leaving the United States with no living WWI veterans. With him, our final piece of living history is gone.



Frank Buckles, the last remaining World War I Veteran, died last month at age 110. Buckles enlisted in the Army at 16 after lying about his age. Born in Missouri in 1901 and raised in Oklahoma, he was repeatedly rejected by recruiters before convincing an Army captain he was 18. Buckles served two years overseas in England and France. He worked as an ambulance driver, and after Armistice Day he was assigned to a prisoner-of-war escort company to help return prisoners back to Germany.

Years later, he was captured at the beginning of World War II, when he was working as a civilian for a shipping company in the Philippines. He spent more than three years in Japanese prison camps.

CONNECTIONS

This month I would like to introduce you to award-winning author, Rosalie T. Turner, who has been writing for over 28 years. Rosalie was a service wife during the Vietnam War; her husband, Frank Kile, was a USMC Captain. Rosalie and Frank Kile currently divide their time between Angel Fire, New Mexico and Birmingham, Alabama. Her book, *Sisters of Valor*, won the MWSA 2010 bronze medal for historical fiction. Check out the review written by Claudia Pemberton on the MWSA website and go to www.sistersofvalor.com to learn more about Rosalie and *Sisters of Valor*.

I had the good fortune of being able to have lunch with Rosalie at the 2010 MWSA conference. She has a quiet spirit but her background tells me that she is a very strong woman. I think



Rosalie Turner, Award-winning Author



**Joyce Gilmour,
Columnist & Book Reviewer**

the reason that we really connected is that Rosalie's greatest interests in life are children and reading.

Being a military wife and post-military, her husband worked for the railroad industry, they have moved 17 times in their 47 years of marriage. No matter where she is located, Rosalie volunteers her time; she's

worked with the Navy Relief Society, the Headstart program, church youth groups, jail ministries, Habitat for Humanity, after-school tutoring programs, volunteered with the homeless and other various church activities. Her hobbies are reading, grandkids, water aerobics, and learning to play the harp.

My heart went out to Rosalie when she shared the story of her oldest son, Terry, who became ill with a rare leukemia. He was treated through St. Jude Children's Hospital and lived with the disease for fifteen months before he died at age ten. She states, "Somehow life went on for us and we were blessed with another son, Joel, in 1978." She also has a son, Kile. She and her husband have five grandchildren to share her love of reading with, too.

Rosalie's favorite volunteer efforts have been setting up reading programs in inner city areas of places they have lived. She was honored to have been nominated for the JC Penney award for literacy programs in Jackson, MS, and again (where she won it) in Jacksonville, FL. She also has worked as a teacher for adult literacy and ESL programs.

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(Continued from page 20) *Gilmour*

Her writing career started in the Christian market when she wrote a book that explains the Lord's Prayer for children. Next she wrote *Going to the Mountain: Lessons for Life's Journey*. She used excerpts from her journal dealing with her son's illness and death as a basis for this book, which also served as an important therapy for her. This book is still used as a resource book by Stephen Ministries in Texas.

Rosalie switched to historical fiction after learning of the amazing life of Anna Kingsley. She was born in 1793 in Senegal of royal blood, captured at the age of thirteen in a tribal raid, and brought as a slave to Spanish East Florida. It wasn't long before she was running the master's plantation. Rosalie writes Anna's story in *Freedom Bound* which has won an award in Florida. It also is used as required reading for a history course at Texas Tech University.

Rosalie's motivation for writing *Sisters of Valor* was to give voice to the service wife. She states "at that time with all the books about Vietnam there was nothing from the point of view of the service wife." *Sisters of Valor* tells the story of four very different women whose husbands are serving in Vietnam at the same time. They come together and support and nurture each other. The action goes from the women at home to the husbands in Vietnam. She states that she "brings the story up to today for a very specific reason. The women look at what the war meant to them as individuals, families, and as a country. I think it's important for all of us to have that conversation, if not with others, at least within ourselves."

Here is some of the feedback that Rosalie shared with me that she has received about *Sisters of Valor*: "Young wives of today say that it expresses their feelings and emotions, even though circumstances are different. I had one veteran tell me that he had been married for 42 years and he had never said a word to his wife about what happened in Vietnam, and she had never asked, and he finally had to go for psychological help. He told me, 'If we had read your book before, it would have started a dialogue for us that would

have made all the difference.' Another vet told me it helped him so much to understand what the life back home was like for his wife."

I am very thankful for the time that I got to spend with Rosalie Turner and hope that you will take the time to check out her books. Just look at some of the amazing people you can meet by attending the MWSA conference. Hey, that reminds me...I need to reserve my hotel room and get my payment sent in for the conference. Have you taken care of that yet?



Korean War Memorial in DC



NOTE: I have published this article before, however, as we get new members, it makes sense to share this information again since this is one of the items used in judging.

Word 2007 and Up Readability Stats

I don't understand this right brain/left brain controversy. Perhaps that's because I'm either an engineer who writes, or a writer who engineers. No matter how you slice it, creativity is a technical endeavor. Great prose doesn't 'just happen'—it is created during the editing process.

Today helpful editing tools are built right into Microsoft Word, a commonly used computer program available for both PCs and Macs. Most people rely on the spell checker and the ability to easily reformat text. Many are familiar with the "cut and paste" function. However, few writers use the SPELLING AND GRAMMAR routine.

Found under the REVIEW tab on the main menu ribbon, SPELLING AND GRAMMAR runs like spell checker. It points out potential grammatical errors and gives you the opportunity to make corrections as the program scans your text. In the end of the scan, "Readability Statistics" are calculated and published.

The statistics consist of three main categories--counts, averages and readability. Counts give you the number of words, characters, paragraphs and sentences in your file. Averages give sentences per paragraph, words per sentence and characters per word. Readability gives you the percentage of passive sentences, Flesch reading ease score and the Flesch-Kincaid grade level.

The first handy tool in the 'Readability Statistics' triad is the percentage of passive sentences. Editors have long implored writers to minimize their

passive sentences. They slow down the read, create distance between the reader and the composition, and mark you as an amateur. Overuse of passive sentences is one of the items MWSA looks for while reviewing and judging your work. However, what is the proper percentage? It depends. I like to keep passive sentences in the 1% percent range for action passages in novels. I don't mind going up to 2-4% for short stories and articles, but more than 6% makes me a little insane. However, you can use a higher percentage in dialogue. People in technical fields, victims, and military personnel tend to use passive voice when they speak more often than others.

It's a good idea to evaluate your audience when choosing a percentage of passive sentences for a given piece. When I first wrote this article and ran the readability statistics, it came out 8% passive sentences—not acceptable for an audience of educated authors, editors, and publishers. I went back and transformed several passive sentences into active ones. When I finished, the number was 4%—this made the sentences shorter and simpler—and the whole piece easier to read.

Rudolph Flesch developed the Flesch reading ease score in the 1940s based on the physiology of human comprehension. It works like this: Your brain makes tentative decisions about what words mean as your eye scans the passage. When you get to a conclusive punctuation mark, you pause and assess what you have absorbed so far before arriving at a final meaning of all the words put together.

The longer the sentence, the more ideas your mind has to collect, store, and evaluate. That means you have to concentrate more. Longer words send more signals to your brain. 'Love' is short and sweet—and easy to understand. 'Affectionate' has

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more letters and more syllables to absorb and interpret. Thus, longer words in longer sentences make you work harder than shorter words in shorter sentences.

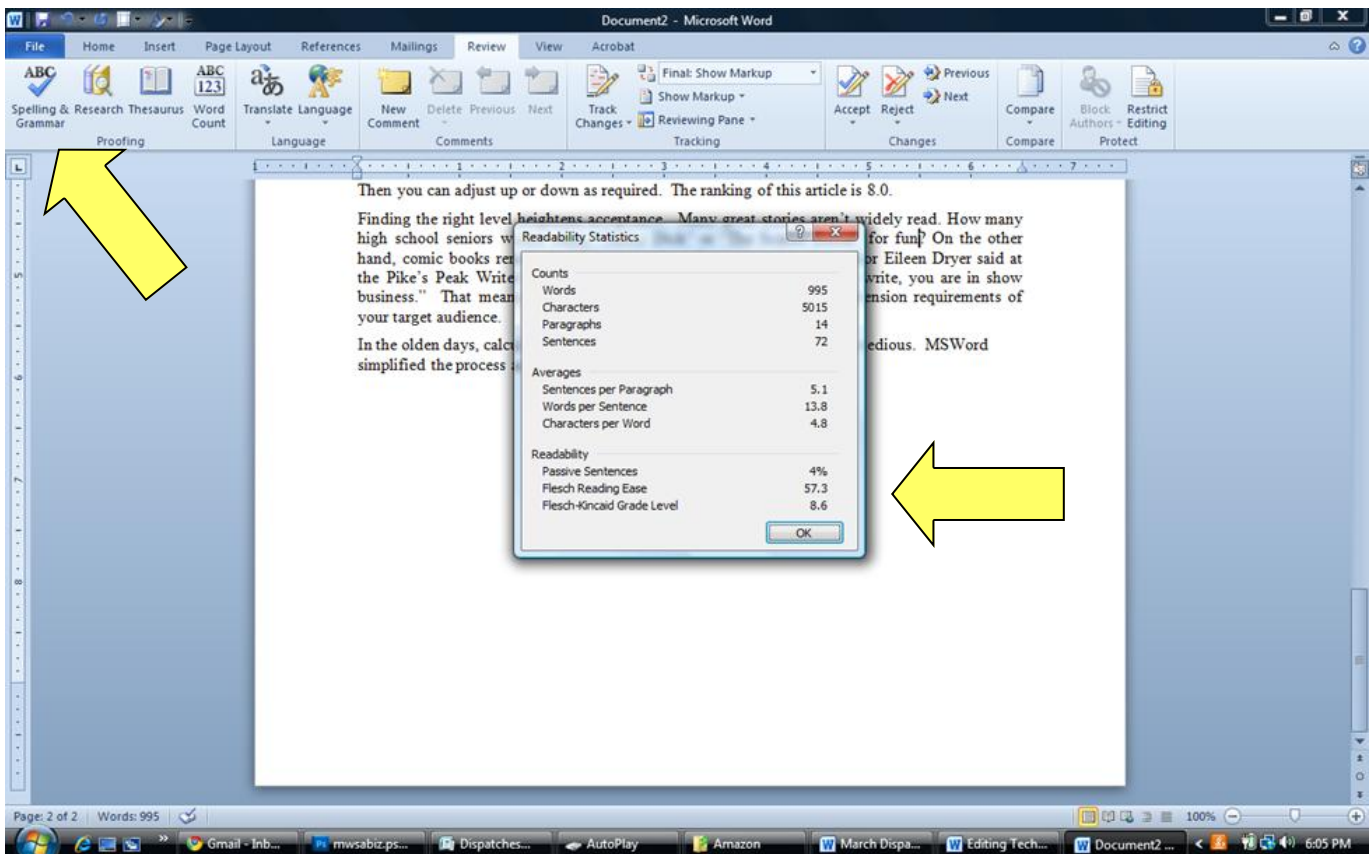
The Flesch reading ease score rates text on a 100-point scale. Measuring the average sentence length and the average word length, it puts the results into a formula. The higher the score, the easier it is to read your work. According to Rudolph Flesch, plain English has a score between 60 and 70. Below 40 is considered difficult to read. Comics rank above 90. 'Reader's Digest' comes in around 65. The 'Wall Street Journal' rates a 43. The Internal Revenue Code is minus six. This article came out 57.3.

To establish a meaningful guideline for selecting a readability target, assess the reading level the editors of a given publication require by reviewing past issues or simply asking. If you are working on a book, the more general the audience you are targeting, the higher the readability score you should use—the more specific, the lower. Example, if you are writing a thriller aimed at a broad

audience, set your goal at around 75%. If you are writing a technical article on sophisticated weaponry, you can set it down around 50% because of the specialized vocabulary in that field. To monitor the level of your manuscript, run the SPELLING AND GRAMMAR algorithm as you write. If your score is lower than the goal, break long sentences into shorter ones. Replace complex words with simple ones. If your score is higher than the goal, use a thesaurus to find alternate expressions. Add subordinate clauses to your sentences. After making your edits, re-check your Flesch score and adjust again as necessary.

Another way to control manuscript readability is by using the Flesch-Kincaid algorithm. It rates text at the U.S. school grade levels. For example, a score of 4.0 means that a fourth grader can understand the passage.

The 1992 Adult Literacy Survey indicated almost half of American adults read at or below the eighth grade level. Therefore, a rating of 8.0 is a reasonable starting point for general audiences. Then you can adjust up or down as required. The ranking of this article is 8.6.



OUR DADDY IS INVINCIBLE

By Shannon Maxwell

Shannon Maxwell’s experience is the experience of thousands, for war by its very nature is traumatic. Injuries to the mind are inherently more difficult to deal with no matter the form they present themselves in.

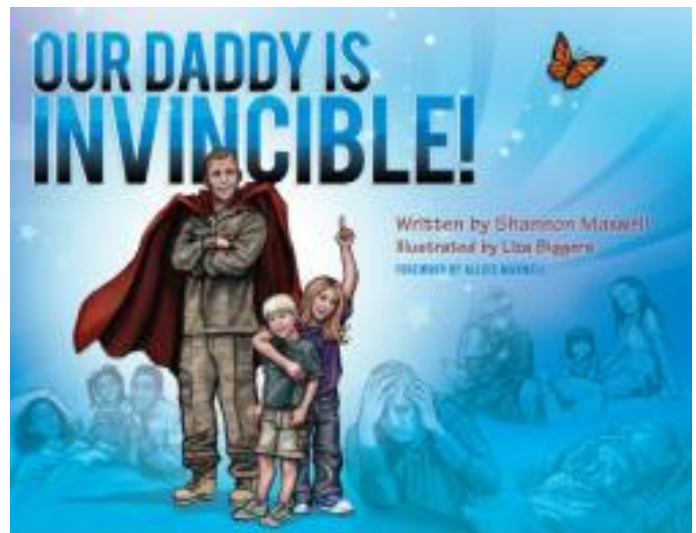
This is not a story of a loved one’s injuries but rather the journey the family faced together. When Alexis and Eric were reunited with their father after his return from war they faced a new reality, their Dad was not “Invincible.” His injuries had changed him. The family literally embarked on a journey of discovery, not one of choice, but love. The excellent illustrations add to the power of the words and engage children on a level they easily identify with. I would state here that adults (parents) would gain from reading this book as well.

It is extremely difficult for a husband or wife to deal with the results of traumatic injuries, yet much has been written about it and treatments, therapy etc. have been created to bridge the gap

created as a result. For too long children were left pretty much a footnote in the struggle to regain “normalcy” in their daily lives. This book is a great step toward including children on a level they can identify with.

Review by jim greenwald, MWSA

Lead Reviewer



Author of the Month
Shannon Maxwell

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Editing TLC
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Does your literature need "Hawkeyes"?

GATED GRIEF

By Leila Levinson

Gated Grief by Leila Levinson is a well written, gripping and important book about the horror of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, and how the liberation of the camps by American GIs impacted their lives and the lives of their families. Gated Grief is a cautionary tale of the evil in men's hearts and the evil they may do through their government officials.

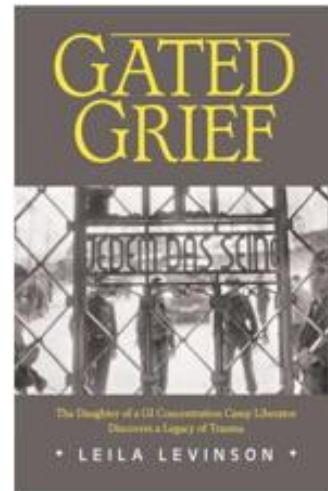
Gated Grief is at heart a quest by the author to exorcise the demons of her past by seeking understanding of the parents who had caused her to be the way she was. The book operates on many levels, which the author skillfully integrates into the story of her mother's mental instability and her father's remoteness, which never allowed him to exhibit the affection that Leila so obviously craved, or to deal with his wife's problems. Then, there is the Holocaust, a horrific evil inflicted by Nazi Germany on the Jewish people. One of the revelations in the book is that the concentration camps were widely dispersed throughout Germany; the German people had to know of the horrors within the camps as the ash from crematoriums covered the trees and the stench of death permeated the area.

This then, is Leila's personal quest to uncover the source of her father's remoteness, initiated by finding pictures in his personal effects of the horrors he found when he entered the gates of hell. As a physician he treated the walking dead who were so far gone they were beyond his powers of healing. The sights of what he saw and experienced scarred him for life. Leila interviewed others who had witnessed what her father witnessed, and found that they also could only deal with the horror by burying it deep within their psyches. And so the silent suffering of the GIs was transferred to their families.

Leila's quest led her, as a Jew, to make an uncomfortable visit to Germany. And of course the German people must live with their shame, not only for plunging the world into war, but for the en-

slavement and murder of perhaps six million people. At the end of the book Leila uncovers her father's special horror. The reader will be shocked along with her, and hope that that her experience allows her to finally move on from her past. The things of which she writes should never be forgotten.

Review by Weymouth Symmes, MWSA Reviewer



Book of the Month Gated Grief

March Notes By jim greenwald

We are still seeking six volunteers to be judges for the awards process this year. Sadly, few have stepped forward and volunteered! So, if you have not submitted a book for award consideration, and are not presently a reviewer, officer or board member, you are just the volunteer I need. Past winners I would think would jump at the opportunity as they above all should appreciate all the hard work and time others invested in their award process.

I'm also looking for donations to our buckaroo auction for this year. Services and electronics go over real well, as do gift cards to national chains. Remember you get buckaroos for the value of your donation and in addition you earn the difference between the value and the selling price.

Looking forward to Pittsburgh this year, it will not be as hectic. There will still plenty to do but there will be additional travel around town. Our hotel is larger and all the meeting rooms are on the same floor in the same area. We will have a hospitality suite available to us where we can spend quality time with each other while not in the formal meetings or workshops. Make certain to book your rooms early as they will go quickly and we are hoping everyone will be at the one location this year.

A light at the end of the tunnel (I think). Three months and my home is almost back to normal, well, my normal. One bedroom to paint and the mess created by the flood will be gone, not forgotten of course as when it rains hard the threat of it all happening again looms greatly in my mind. Now Mother Nature has placed what seems like a permanent blanket of white not so fluffy stuff over all the junk I will have to clean up in the spring, but that is outside, it can wait and will.

Perhaps, when it happens again, I may move into some high rise condo, probably not. For I love the quiet, the solitude, the ability to think and the elbow room. Born and raised in cities, I find being a "hermit" of sorts, has many advantages. So it is not the worry about flooding, if I really worried at all. No! It is clearly about peace and quiet. No stores, no traffic lights, the most noise is the sound of the creek running when high. I think folks worry about too many things. Reality is that if you cannot change it, live with it, worrying gets you nothing but an UN-balanced internal clock and life is after

all limited to just so many ticks of that clock. Adversity is opportunity in disguise.

Well, not so fast! Today is the last day of February and along with all the snow we have we are having way to much rain, total over the last four days with snow melt around 4.5-5 inches. The ground is totally saturated, every step you take outside you sink, that wet. Vietnam without the jungle!

So, I spent two evenings awake watching the water rise and wondering what time Noah and the ark would appear. The streams reached just a hair over their banks and the rain stopped, temperature plummeted and now, I sink no more, but, all are welcome to my new ice skating ponds. With some luck and tons of prayers all may recede and I can go back to being just casually concerned. I could sure use the sleep. After all, it is almost spring (two weeks) and I want to till the garden and get stuff in the ground and yes, clean up the debris from the flood, something to not look forward to—now where are those volunteering grandchildren?

NOTE:

Unfortunately, jim's luck didn't hold and he spent much of last week bailing water out of his home.



**William E. Mayer word for March is
"FALSE HONOR"**

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NOTE: For issues concerning:

- Book Reviews, Dues, & Conference Invoices, contact Jim Greenwald**
- Web site, contact John Cathcart**
- Membership records &/or dues, contact Terry Gould**
- Book signing schedules, contact Dwight Zimmerman**
- Programming, contact Joyce Faulkner or Mike Mullins**
- Anthology, contact Mike Mullins**
- All other issues, contact Joyce Faulkner or Mike Mullins**



Poetry from the Kings of the Green Jelly Moon

Our new book, a follow-up to our CD released last year will shortly be released. The project, a two year endeavor of the four, greatly expanded from the CD and the title changed dramatically from “Kings of the Green Jelly Moon” to “Kings of the Green Jelly Moon The Book vol. 1.5.” We wanted everyone to know that we do not write poetry about Vietnam or war exclusively. So please enjoy a selection from each poets other writings.

An Improbable Dream...!

By [Kings] Lloyd A. King

The date was set, as were both the time and the place
Finally, we would meet at a restaurant, face-to-face
A local eatery frequented that was owned by a friend
I sensed the excitement, as neither of us had to pretend
The years were too many since we had seen each other
This meeting was pivotal before the passing of another
As times past overflowed with so many things to say
And waiting was more difficult with each passing day

Yet, more difficult was what I should bring with me
To explain my years of absence so everyone could see
That I was sincere when given an opportunity to say
“I’ve missed you and I love you!” in my special way

The New Year arrived...it was Nineteen ninety-three
January 23rd the day before my wedding anniversary
With plans for dinner by candlelight, wine, and roses
And maybe intimate love, kissing, and rubbing noses

I took a shower and thought about most everything
Then, while I was drying off, I heard the phone ring
I didn’t give the phone ringing much thought at all
Because my wife hadn’t come to tell me I had a call

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28) *King*

I walked into our bedroom...still drying off my hair
And to my surprise my neighbor was standing there
Scaring me, at first, and I didn't know what to say
Then I saw his face and asked, is everything okay?

Charlie stared then said he didn't know how to say
What had to be said and was praying for an easy way
Of letting me know so it would ease my pain instead
That my son, Jeff, was critically shot and was dead

That can't be, Charlie, because we were going to meet
I cried out, we thought it was going to be really neat
You know, I sobbed, like your boys and you having fun
Jeff and I planned to be together, too, as father and son!

senseless ends

By [Green] jim greenwald

my head is filled with silence
a silence I am unable to contain

the eeriness of the silence weaves its insidious words
through my mind like a cruel joke

how can anyone not feel the torrent of pain
as it rips to shreds our humanity

shrouded in darkness hatred trods streets of blood

whispers become screeching...unbearable shouts
words erupting like volcanic ash burning the psyche

callous actions proceeding each step to the grave

just crumbs on the plate of fate

The One

By [Jelly] James Jellerson

To anticipate her presence
Is to experience the dawn's bloom
Of a new flower

To see her smile
Is to know sunshine
As it first awakes the day

To hear her voice
Is to be touched by
The soft whisper of a cloud

To be embraced
By her laughter
Is to realize the fullness of joy

To look into her eyes
Is to understand
The peace that waits in Paradise

To breathe her beauty
Is to be born
Wrapped in the pedal of a rose
And to live
Within the fragrance of love.

Lost Moments

By [Moon] Mike Mullins

The radio plays old rock quietly.
My mind drifts uncontrollably.
Images drift endlessly.
My purpose dissolves foolishly.
Other words intrude ruthlessly.
My fingers prance to their demands instantly.

Good memories enter as the sun shines in the window.
Perhaps they are good memories.
That remains to be seen.
Soft lips and eyes...
Warm hands, gentle voices...
Wondering...
Thoughts about "what if"...
Poems unwritten...
Movements not completed...
Songs not sung, dances not danced...

I am the poet you did not know I was.
Neither did I back then.
It would have changed nothing.
I was an awkward kid.
You sought something different than I.
Did you find it?
The search continues.
I hope so...

For in the search there is unending pleasure.
As in learning, the search holds hope.
In the finding we may learn that which we may wish to have not known.

Moments lost...
Moments found...
Yesterday, today, tomorrow...
Each is equal.
Each has its own rose.
In ten thousand tomorrows
We will still look back...
Thinking about the moments lost.

A...ten...shun!

By Frank Evans, Committee Chair

Thank you, members! We received some very good entrants for February's WEM Award. There is much talent out there awaiting recognition. We're still hoping to be overwhelmed and flooded by the immense numbers of talented members submitting candidates for the award. We know there are many more artists out there just waiting for the right moment to submit their works. Guess what? NOW is the time! All entries this month were poems or essays. Writers, please keep them coming, but we would also like to see more variety as well. Send in your artwork, photographs, or lyrics. We challenge you to inundate us with your works. We are continuously impressed by the talents of our membership. Share your talent. As that popular song says, "Hit me with your best shot! Fire awaaaayyy!"

Congratulations to February's winning submission about "Death" — Bonnie Bartel Latino's "Christmas Whistles: A Swiss Duet"

The theme for March is: "False Honor"



5th Division Marines at Camp Tarawa, HI 1944

Named for the late William E. Mayer, the award is presented annually from a list of nominees selected from the monthly entries submitted by our members. As you know, each month a topic is selected to "... stimulate the imagination and encourage our members to create." The presentation of this award is made during the annual MWSA Writers' Conference. Your opportunity to receive national (yes, national) recognition or to enhance your already impressive list of accomplishments is awaiting your entry of a poem, a short short story (sometimes referred to as flash fiction), lyrics, drama, sketches, paintings, digital art, photography and audio pieces. Monthly, a topic is selected and announced in Dispatches. To enter your candidate, send your submission to MWSAPresident@gmail.com.

Entries are logged, numbered, and then judged by members of the award committee who are unaware of the identity of the artist who submitted the entry.

A reminder, written works may not exceed 1000 words so be sure to do a word count on your submission before submission. Titles are not included in the word count. Audio pieces must be submitted as mp3 files and last five minutes or less. We also ask that you try to get your entry in as early in the month as possible in order to give your judges sufficient time to devote to your entry. Last minute entries will be accepted if time allows for the judges to read, listen, or visually absorb the content.

February William E. Mayer Winner

Theme: DEATH

Christmas Whistles: A Swiss Duet

Bonnie Bartel Latino

“Ma’am, you don’t always have to be a steel magnolia.” The military psychologist, a smart young Air Force captain, punctuated his comment by looking into my eyes. “Sometimes it’s okay to be a weeping willow.”

My Daddy had recently died of cancer. It had been shortly before Christmas of 1992. The next day Olive, his fiancée, who was my mother figure, died in a terrible car wreck. I soon learned all about the compounding effects of grief.

Emotional healing only began a year later on a holiday vacation. My husband and I spent the week before Christmas in Gsteig, a tiny picturesque village in Switzerland. Built in 1756, the rustic Hotel Bären had only seven rooms. Seasonal evergreen and pine cone-filled window boxes lined the front facade of the massive wooden chalet. Inside the windows hung crisp red and white checkered curtains. The bells of the village church greeted every quarter hour. Muffled echoes of each deep gong boomeranged off snow covered mountains surrounding the village.

In a nearby cemetery, black wrought iron crosses, which were trimmed with holiday flowers and fresh evergreens, indicated graves of those remembered by loved ones. The area looked nothing like an American burial ground. Gsteig’s cemetery seemed . . . festive. Many graves were adorned with exquisitely decorated Christmas trees or enormous pine and fir wreaths. The cemetery proclaimed a dual celebration of the birth of Christ and the souls of those beneath the snow.

Each night at dusk, visitors illuminated their loved ones’ plots by placing candles under glass globes of various shapes and sizes. Mourners buried their glass wind chimneys in the snow to prevent the candles’ light from being extinguished.

With many plots bathed in candlelight, I could almost hear “Oh, Holy Night” singing in my heart. Almost.

Inside the warmth of Hotel Baren, the mingled scents of smoldering firewood, smoky cheese, and roasting potatoes drifted from the simple restaurant into our second floor bedroom. Every morning my wondering eyes found a new surprise. The gifts bore no cards. Inevitably, my husband grinned and said, “Father Christmas left you a surprise!” As I opened each gift, I discovered a treasured book about angels, a tiny piece of jewelry, a bottle of perfume, a warm pair of socks. The presents were my husband’s attempt to say what his heart could not find words to express. Neither of us acknowledged that December marked the first anniversary of Daddy’s death. We talked around the subject as we pretended it was just another Christmas - as if there were any such thing.

Christmas Eve morning arrived clear and cold. Still, not an utterance of the man who had so loved his “Baby Girl.” Bigger than life, Daddy, with his unconditional love and affectionate teasing, had been as dependable as the dawn.

After breakfast my husband and I drove to the station in Gstaad where we would board a glass-domed train for a day trip through iconic Swiss winter scenery. In anticipation of our excursion, we stood on the crowded station platform. Dozens of travelers waited for arriving and departing trains. Though people stood shoulder-to-shoulder loaded with luggage, bulky skis and poles, no one pushed or shoved. It was as if everyone were dressed in their finest Christmas Eve manners.

As a train arrived with Swiss precision, the expanding crowd surged to accommodate even

(Continued on page 34)

(Continued from page 33) **Bartel Latino**

more travelers coming and going. Some blissfully kissed sweethearts hello. Others tearfully hugged their good-byes.

From the far right of the expanse of humanity, came a distinctive whistle. Unlike a train's warning, this was a human sound. The first music note was slowly blown out, then quickly sucked back in. Seconds later, the identical trill echoed from the crowd's far left.

On tip-toe, I scanned the busy scene, unable to identify the pair of whistlers. Like a bird's warble, again came the sound. This time, more quickly, more urgent . . . then, the identical answering refrain. Each couplet drew the sounds closer. Around me, all other sound ceased. As I surveyed the platform, the crowd appeared to move *en masse* in slow motion.

There it was. Again came the answering echo!

As I stood in the cold, I imagined a pair of lovers romantically using their own audible shorthand to locate the tenderness of the other's caress. Their cryptic whistles had obviously helped them locate each other before. My reverie was interrupted as I spotted the pair of whistlers surging toward one another. Mesmerized by the scene, it was as if I watched an impromptu, exquisitely choreographed drama unfold.

The pair had yet to make eye contact. Each frantically pushed through the crowd toward the sound of the other's whistle. The man was jovial faced, perhaps in his sixties. A rugged individual with a startling shock of white hair, he wore the clothes of a gentleman Swiss farmer: fine leather boots beneath dark trousers, a green jacket over a crimson sweater. The other whistler, a college student perhaps, wore jeans with a down-jacket over her turtleneck. Their entire bodies reflected the other's joy as they drew closer.

The man began a final whistle. The vivacious young woman's ebony pony tail bounced as she threw herself into the welcoming shelter of his open arms crying, "Papa! Papa! Papa!"

Stunned, I stumbled backwards against my husband's chest. His hands cupped my shoulders,

steadying me. Blotting out the unspeakable tenderness, I turned to bury my face into my husband's shoulder.

It had taken me a whole year to understand. I had grieved for Olive, but my grief for Daddy had been *micro-wave grief, a quick fix*. He had cancer. His death had not been unexpected. He was nearly eighty. I buried my grief for Daddy beneath my grief for Olive as surely as Swiss mourners bury their wind chimneys in graveyard snow.

With the help of a Swiss duet, I began my triumph over death's dark sting.

Reflections on the Faded Flag

2011 MWSA Anthology

**Call for submissions with an American
Flag theme including:
Essays and/or Articles**

Poetry

Short Fiction

Photography

Artwork

Short Plays

*** Limited to 3500 words ***

**Submit electronically
to Mike Mullins at
mullins.m.1@comcast.net**

**before
July 15, 2011**

Dwight Zimmerman—Late again. Oh, lord, late again.

Last month I got so backed up with things that I had to tell Joyce I couldn't do the February column. That turned out okay as she had an article that could fill the space. And, this month, here I am late again. Combination of work (at least it's there!) and life (guests, yard work, and taxes—oh my!).

I do have an assortment of things I could/should write about, and I'm going to lead with something I saw in this morning's New York Times. It's an article about HarperCollins setting up a new program for e-book use by libraries. Basically, they're placing an expiration limit on them. The article also summarizes the library e-book market and how other publishers are responding to HarperCollins's action. The url for the article is: www.nytimes.com/2011/03/15/business/media/15libraries.html?_r=1&hp.

Early last year MWSA past president Tony Lazarini sent out a notice soliciting books from the members for the Petaluma Museum Association's exhibition "The Vietnam Experience, a Soldier's Story." The request was for two copies, one for display and the other to be contributed to the museum. I sent off a couple of copies of my *The Vietnam War: A Graphic History* and, basically, then forgot about it. At the end of January, I got a package from the museum that contained a couple of DVDs and a very nice thank you letter. The event ran from September 16 – November 28, 2010, and turned out to be an exhibition that exceeded the museum's expectations. I talked with Joe Noriel, the museum's president, and he said that attendance to the exhibition was initially small and then kept growing and growing—he said they could have kept the exhibition open for at least another month. Not only did it exceed their expectations, he added that the event is being considered for a national award of merit. The DVDs contained clips of the opening night



ceremonies and special Welcome Home Day ceremonies that occurred on September 25. A lot of Vietnam War veterans from the area attended and there were workshops, discussions, and a wide range of events. They are already making plans for another similar event later this year. You can

visit the museum at www.petalumamuseum.com.

Earlier this month my *Uncommon Valor* co-author John D. Gresham and I had the privilege of visiting the Naval War College and participating in their 8 Bells Lecture program. We were particularly excited about this because it gave us an opportunity to meet Major Michael Baka. Major Baka was Specialist Ross McGinnis's commanding officer and wrote up McGinnis's recommendation for the Medal of Honor. The museum, where the lecture was held, is a great place and if you are ever in the Newport, Rhode Island, area try and make plans to visit—they've got some incredible displays. We had a great turnout and in the audience was Major Baka. His presence greatly enriched our lecture, turning it into a discussion where he provided invaluable additional information about Specialist McGinnis, the action for which he would ultimately receive his posthumous Medal of Honor, and what he went through during the decoration review process. The audience—and John and I—greatly benefited from his input. Afterwards we had an opportunity to talk, and that conversation turned into a fun "mutual admiration society" meeting. I've included with this month's column a photo of John and I with Major Baka, who's standing in the middle.

I probably have more things I could write about, but this time I'm not on a subway or bus, and I'm way overdue handing this column in. I hope to be a better little boy next month, Joyce.

Seeking Volunteers

MWSA is a volunteer-based organization. The more resources at our disposal, the more and better the services we can provide. With our MWSA buckaroo program, you have a measure of the value of your participation. (Buckaroos are MWSA currency. The more you volunteer, the more you earn. Every year at the Conference, we have a buckaroo auction where you can use your buckaroos to bid on cameras, computers, services, etc.)More importantly, the more that you put into MWSA, the more you will take away from it.

- We need someone to help our beleaguered Webmaster, John Cathcart, with our website.
- We need someone to convert *Dispatches* to a format which will support our Social Networking Strategy.
- All of the committees listed on page 38 need volunteers.
- We need someone to help us find sponsors and to sell ads for our 2011 Conference Program, *Dispatches*, and our 2011 Anthology book.
- We need volunteers to help with the 2011 Conference activities.

If you are willing to help out, contact MWSAPresident@gmail.com for details.



Vietnam War Memorial in DC



World War I Memorial in Kansas City