

The INKSLINGER

Sail On

High Desert Branch CWC
INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS
February 2024



A Word From Our President

By Mike Apodaca



What Our Characters Know

The philosophy of knowledge (epistemology) is important when developing our fictional characters. Philosophers have traditionally seen three parts to knowledge: belief, evidence, and truth. As writers, we can use these different aspects of knowledge to develop the characters we create.

Belief can be defined as what our characters think is real. We all believe many things and they may be true or they may not. If a character has belief alone (without facts to justify the belief), then they can be fully mistaken about the reality of the situations you put them in. It can be fun to have a character who is out of touch, drowning in their fantasies or delusions—especially about themselves or a situation they are in. Conspiracies, baseless rumors, and misconceptions can also make this kind of character come alive. Oftentimes, they will ardently defend their false beliefs against overwhelming evidence.

This is also the basis for comedy (when the reader knows the truth and the character does not). Many television and movie scripts are based on watching a character who is in the dark while others are trying to keep up a charade—consider the movie *Move Over Darling*.

This can be seen in many story twists. The reader as well as the characters think they understand what is happening and then discover in a sudden flash that their preconceptions about a character, an organization, or the entire world were incorrect. Think *The Matrix*.

We also see this in manipulative situations. Consider the movie *Gaslight*.

Philosophers add to belief the element of evidence. Most people, when they hold to a belief, want to justify it with some kind of proof. The problem is that the “proof” can be insufficient or bogus. Again, it will delight your readers when they see a character who justifies what they believe by evidence that doesn’t really hold up. For example, you may have someone in your story who believes that famous people always die in threes. When two famous people die, they scour the news to find out who the third person will be. Although famous people die all the time, it is easy to cluster them in threes (providing false evidence) to justify this mistaken belief.

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Finally, for something to really register as knowledge, it has to have the last element—it must in fact be true. This truth element justifies all knowledge. It is the basis for all detective stories. It is the brilliant detective who sees through all the false evidence (the lies and false appearances) to come to the truth of the situation. S/he deduces from all the clues what has really happened. S/he alone has true knowledge.

Meeting these three levels of knowledge also requires we research our characters and understand what they believe and why, and if it is really justified.

We also need to understand where our characters are getting their information, the basis for their beliefs. Are they depending on hearsay? Are they listening to conspiracy theories on the internet? Are they basing their understandings on their own limited life experience? Or tradition? Or their culture? Understanding our characters' knowledge sources will help us understand why they believe what they believe.

The key to story is the protagonist's transformation. Sometimes the best stories are where the character realizes that s/he has been living their lives on the basis of a false belief. Watching a character get new information, come to the realization that they have been wrong, and change their thinking and life is the basis of many great stories.

I have found this especially enlightening as I am beginning my memoir. I am beginning to understand how I have had to adjust my thinking throughout my life, casting off misconceptions and attempting to live according to realities I wasn't seeing. I am sure this process is far from over.



Defining our character's character

A Word From Our Vice President

Joan Rudder-Ward



All I Needed to Learn About Business, I Learned from Children Books. (Well, almost)

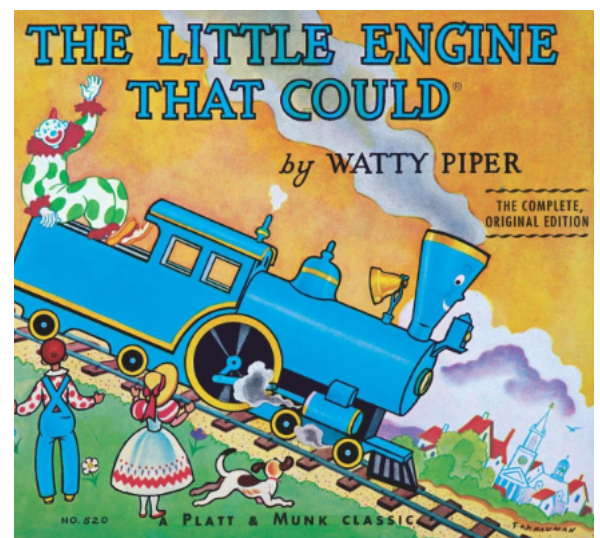
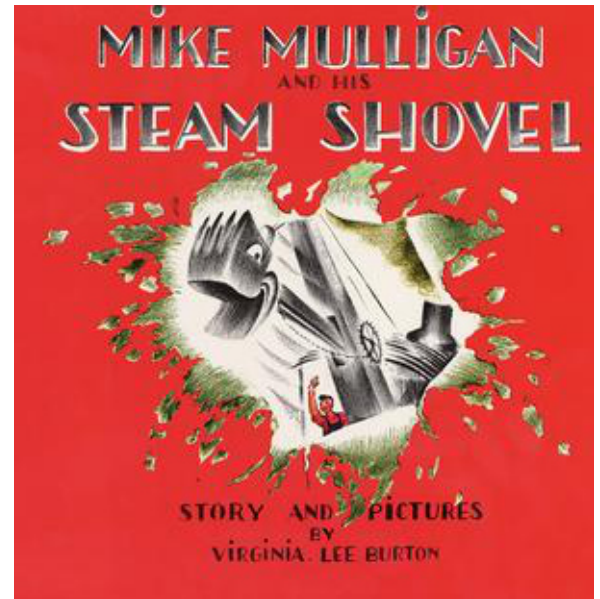
Hosting entrepreneurial workshops for women over the years, one of my favorite things to do is share principles we can learn from simple books for children. Profound insights into business principles are present in timeless classics like *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Engine That Could*.

"The Velveteen Rabbit" shows the transformative power of passion and love in the pursuit of one's goals. Just like the Velveteen Rabbit becomes real through the love bestowed upon it, genuine passion infuses life into our endeavors. Whether in business or personal pursuits, it's the fervor and commitment that makes us truly come alive.

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel provides a unique perspective on turning apparent setbacks into advantages. Mike's steam shovel, Mary Anne, faced obsolescence with the advent of newer, more efficient machines. Yet rather than succumbing to defeat, Mike found a way to repurpose Mary Anne, showcasing the art of adapting to change and turning what seems like a negative situation into an opportunity. This resilience is a key trait in navigating the dynamic landscape of business, where the ability to pivot and innovate is often the key to success.

The Little Engine That Could instills the importance of a positive mindset and perseverance. The little blue engine's mantra of "I think I can, I think I can" can be a guiding principle in an entrepreneurial journey. The unwavering belief in one's ability to overcome challenges, coupled with persistent effort, can propel one forward even when faced with daunting tasks. This timeless tale reinforces the idea that success often hinges on maintaining a positive attitude and pushing through adversity.

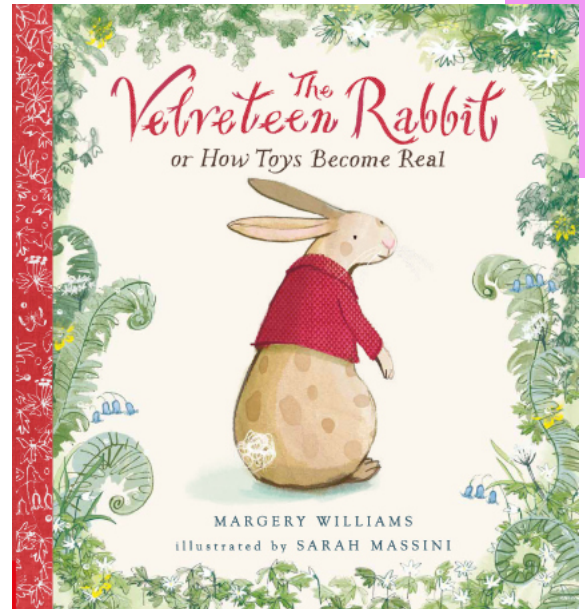
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In reflection, these childhood stories are not only entertaining, they also lay the foundation for understanding fundamental business principles. *The Velveteen Rabbit* emphasizes the vitality of passion, *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* highlights adaptability, and *The Little Engine That Could* underscores the significance of a positive mindset and perseverance.

The wisdom embedded in these tales can guide and inspire, proving that sometimes, the most profound lessons come from the simplest stories.



I Bought a Book of Short stories at IKEA



From an Editors Desk

By Jenny Mangotta



FORMATTING UNSPOKEN DISCOURSE

Unspoken discourse—a character’s internal thoughts and observations—are common in writing. And as with most things in writing, there are preferred rules for properly presenting those thoughts. Most of us have been told that such internal thoughts should be put in italics.

Surprisingly, *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) doesn’t cover italics. CMOS 13.43 [17th edition] reads, in part: “Thought, imagined dialogue, and other internal discourse (also called interior discourse) may be enclosed in quotation marks or not, according to the context or the writer’s preference.”

But if CMOS doesn’t mention italics for unspoken discourse, why is the style so often employed? I turned to one of my favorite research sites—www.masterclass.com—for answers. The site has yet to disappoint me when I’m looking for answers and explanations, and once again, it did not fail. I found a lengthy article titled “How to Write Characters’ Thoughts: 6 Ways to Format Internal Dialogue,” posted on August 23, 2021. Following are the highlights (some paraphrased, some quoted). [See <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-characters-thoughts> for the complete article.]

Revealing a character’s innermost thoughts and feelings adds an extra dimension to a story. By knowing what a POV character is thinking, a reader has access to information no other character does. As a writer, you may share these thoughts in order to:

1. Reveal a character’s true feelings: A character might say one thing but think another. A reader needs to know both.
2. Help character development: Thoughts reveal backstory or secrets that no other character knows.
3. Set the mood: Writers can create or support the mood of a scene by conveying a character’s internal emotions.
4. Increase the tension: Think of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart.” It is the main character’s inner monologue that drives the suspense and increases the tension, ultimately forcing him to confess.
5. Reveal motivation: When a writer shares what a character thinks, readers can learn what is driving their quest in the storyline.
6. Uncover an inner conflict: When people face an internal conflict, they often weigh the pros and cons in their head before deciding what actions they’ll take. A writer can take readers into the middle of that internal storm and use it for deeper character development and greater tension.

If you’re writing fiction and want to include your character’s internal thoughts, you need to find a way to differentiate them from the rest of the text so the reader knows they’re reading a character’s thoughts. There’s no universal style for how to handle inner thoughts. There are, however, suggestions from experts on how it should be done. Whichever method a writer chooses, however, should be consistently employed throughout the story.

1. Use dialogue tags without quotation marks. One of the most straightforward ways to write the interior monologue of your main character is to use dialogue tags. For example: Sarah pushed on the throttle and the spaceship began to lift off the ground. Lives were at stake and time was running out. I hope this works, she thought. Note: This is straight text, not italics.

2. Use dialogue tags use quotation marks. This method is less advisable, since the use of quotation marks can be confusing as it's identical to the way most writers designate spoken dialogue. "I hope this works," she thought.

3. Use Italics. The use of italics makes a clear distinction between thoughts and the surrounding text. For example: Sarah pushed on the throttle and the spaceship began to lift off the ground. Lives were at stake and time was running out. *I hope this works.* Note that the italicized thoughts are not followed by a tag.

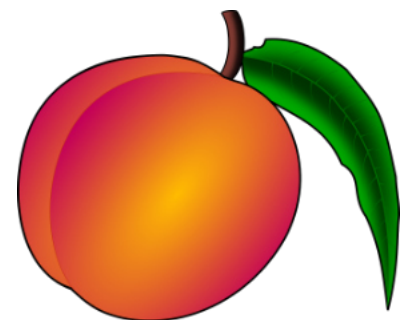
4. Start a new line. For a lengthy internal monologue or longer stream of consciousness or thoughts, start a new paragraph. This is a visual cue that we're no longer in the external world but in the character's head. Most often, when this method is used, such internal monologue is in italics.

5. Use Deep POV. Writing in third-person-limited or first-person point of view gives a reader full access to a character inside and out. This is called a deep point of view. Deep POV allows a writer to incorporate a character's thoughts seamlessly into the text without interrupting the flow with punctuation or a change in font. Sarah pushed on the throttle, hoping it would work. She was mentally exhausted, but lives were at stake, and time was running out. The spaceship began to lift off the ground.

So, to recap, while there's no absolute rule for presenting unspoken discourse, there are preferred formats. The forerunners at this point seem to be using straight running text, no quotation marks, but with a "thought" tag or using italics—either embedded in the paragraph or in a paragraph by itself—with no tag. Many books I have read seem to use a combination of the two, depending on the length or significance of the unspoken text.

DID YOU KNOW

All the electricity powering the internet weighs the same as an apricot.



Writers Are Readers - Book Reviews

By Mary Langer Thompson



The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin

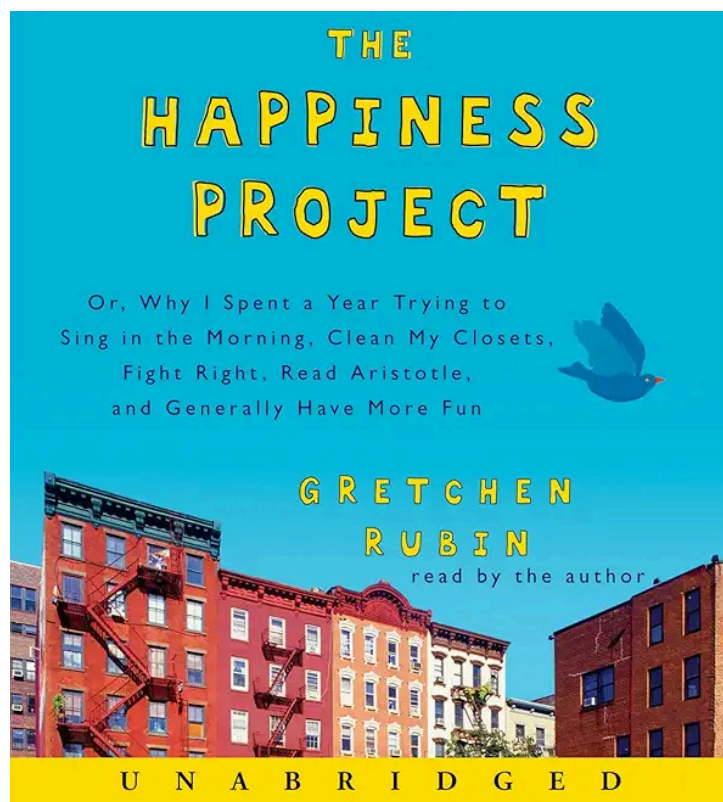
I've been a fan of Gretchen Rubin's for a number of years now, but as a goal setter, especially at the beginning of a new year, I decided to reread her #1 *New York Times* Best Seller, *The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun*. This is more than a self-help book. It's a memoir by a writer, formerly lawyer, even Alan Watt would love because it is a thoughtfully researched guide with personal examples as

the author honestly and often humorously analyses her progress. And it may even make you want to start your own Happiness Project. How did Rubin's project start? She had an epiphany one day on a city bus. She realized that with the passing of time, she wasn't focusing on what matters. She might be wasting her life.

Rubin researches the wisdom of the ages, quoting authors like Robert Louis Stevenson: "There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy." Before you read her book, you might want to investigate her blog and some of the charts and handouts you can download, such as "My '24 for 24' List," which allows you to write down 24 goals for 2024.

When the author embarked on her Happiness Project, she decided to expect more of herself. There were paradoxes. She wanted to take herself both less seriously and more seriously. She wanted to use her time well but also play. She wanted to let anxiety go but keep her energy. She also wanted to "Be Gretchen," meaning keep to her interests (an avid reader) and her inborn disposition.

But what is happiness? She quotes A.E. Housman, Blaise Pascal, Ben Franklin, and other great minds who have dealt with the topic. Franklin kept charts, so Rubin invented her own version of his scoring chart: a daily calendar to give herself good and bad checkmarks for her resolutions. She wanted to focus on a different subject each month: "Marriage," "Parenthood," and "Friends." She added "Eternity" and "Attitude." She came up with twelve commandments such as "Let it go," "Do it now," and "Lighten up." She loves lists and also came up with "Secrets of Adulthood" such as "You don't have to be



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good at everything” and “If you’re not failing, you’re not trying hard enough” (Remember a former speaker, Jia Jiang?)

Rubin decided she was happy but not as happy as she could be. She wanted to appreciate life more and to live it better. After questioning whether or not she was being self-centered, she decided happiness was a worthy goal because “happy people are more altruistic, more productive, more helpful, more likable, more creative, more resilient, more interested in others, friendlier, and healthier.” By working on her own happiness, she could boost others’ happiness. Another goal was to “prepare for adversity” and not wait for a crisis to remake her life.

The author takes us through her year from January resolutions (“Boost Energy”) to February (“Remember Love”); March (“Aim Higher”); April (“Lighten Up”); May (“Be Serious About Play,”); June (“Make Time for Friends,”); July (“Buy Some Happiness,”); August (“Contemplate the Heavens”); September (“Pursue a Passion,” –hers is books); October (“Pay Attention,”); November (“Keep a Contented Heart,”); and December (“Boot Camp Perfect”). Was Rubin happier at the end of a year? You’ll have to read her analysis of her time spent pursuing happiness. The Afterword gives tips on pursuing your own happiness and “The Happiness Project Manifesto.” There is a reading group guide at the back of the book for groups who want to work on their projects.

This is no pie-in-the-sky, Hallmark book. The author has a family, and there is sometimes tension. She fails in her project sometimes. You’ll have to decide for yourself whether you want to pursue your own Happiness Project. But if you do, her book is an excellent guide.

“I would advise anyone who aspires to a writing career that before developing his talent he would be wise to develop a thick hide.”

– Harper Lee, *WD*

The Most Famous Authors of All Time

By Michael Raff



Alex Haley

Born in Ithaca, New York, in August 1921, Alex Haley was the oldest of three sons. His father was an agriculture professor at Alabama University. Haley attended Alcorn State University, a black college in Mississippi, and later, Elizabeth City State College in North Carolina, also an all-black school. Before graduating, however, his father convinced him to enlist, and he began a twenty-year career in the United States Coast Guard. During WW II, he learned a unique method to hone his skills as a writer: composing love letters for other sailors. After the war, the Coast Guard transferred him to their journalism field. He advanced to chief petty officer; a rating created just for him. He received numerous medals including the Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal.

After he retired from the Coast Guard in 1959, Haley became a senior editor for *Reader's Digest* magazine. He also created *Playboy* magazine's first interview with musician Miles Davis in 1962. Enormously successful, countless interviews followed, including ones with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, Muhammad Ali, Sammy Davis Jr, football star Jim Brown, music producer Quincy Jones, and TV host Johnny Carson.

Haley's first book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, a novel he ghost wrote, was published in 1965. It consisted of over fifty interviews. He ended up writing the book's epilogue, describing Malcolm X's assassination.

In 1973, Haley wrote *Super Fly*, *T.N.T.* his only screenplay. Around this time, he began writing a book that took twelve-years of research. *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* was based on Haley's family's history going back to the days of slavery. Starting with the story of his ancestor, Kunta Kinte, it described how he was kidnapped in 1767, transported on the ship *The Lord Ligonier*, taken to the Province of Maryland, and sold as a slave. It was published in thirty-seven languages and won a special Pulitzer Prize in 1977.

Also in 1977, ABC released *Roots*, a hugely popular miniseries. The serial broke all records, logging in 130 million viewers. It also initiated a keen interest in genealogy.

In 1979, ABC launched the sequel, *Roots: The Next Generation*, a chronicle of Kunta Kinte's descendants.



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Also, in the late seventies, Haley worked on a novel about another branch of his family but never finished it. He purchased a small farm in Tennessee, where he lived for the rest of his life. Haley was married three times and had four children, one son and three daughters. He died of a heart attack in Seattle, Washington, in February 1992 at age seventy..

Haley's unfinished book was completed by David Stevens and published in 1993 as *Alex Haley's Queen*.

Fun Facts About Alex Haley:

In the 1960s, Haley interviewed George Lincoln Rockwell, the leader of the American Nazi Party for *Playboy* magazine—only after assurance that Haley wasn't Jewish. This was a particularly difficult interview, especially since Rockwell kept a handgun in sight.

Haley had problems interviewing Malcom X as well, who kept talking about the leader of the Islam Nation instead of himself. To get the man back on track, Haley would ask him about his mother. The completed book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, sold six million copies. *Time* magazine rated it as one of the ten most influential nonfiction books of the 20th century.

Haley worked with the Walt Disney Company to develop an African pavilion for its Epcot Center. The project was never completed.

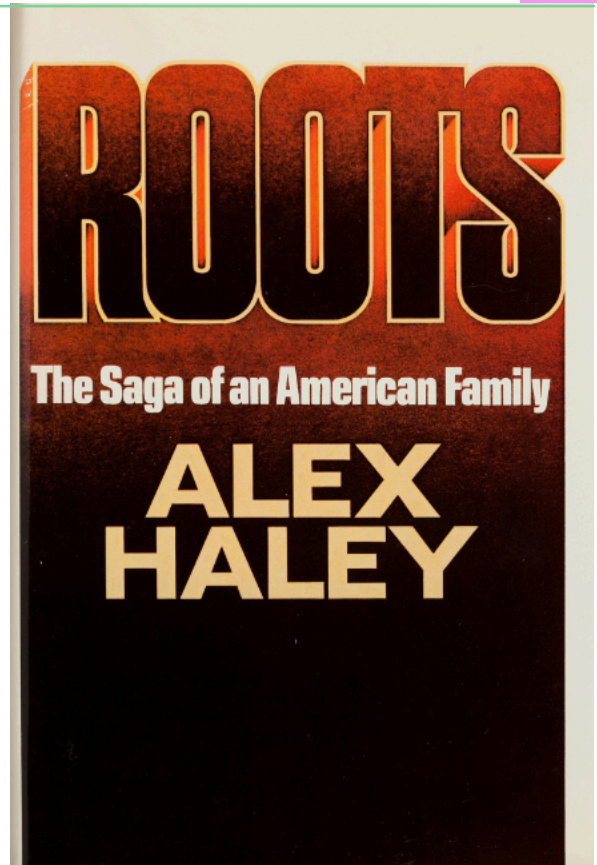
In 1977, Haley won the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP.

Also in 1977, Haley won the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement.

In 1999, in his honor, the Coast Guard christened one of its cutters as the USCGC *Alex Haley*.

The University of Tennessee in Knoxville, stores a collection of Haley's works, including outlines, notes, bibliographies, research, and legal papers.

Until next month, keep reading, writing, and check out *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.



Haley during his service in the U.S. Coast Guard

The January Club Meeting: Setting Vision

By Mike Apodaca



“There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.”

--Burt Nanus

On January 9th we met to create a shared vision for 2024 with some tangible goals. The goals were . . .

1. Publishing: 15 members publishing with professional journals, newspapers, and book publishers

We will also publish the *Literary Review* for the CWC



2. Membership: Our membership will grow to 125 members

3. Structure: We will have four Publishing Specific Subgroups

4. Growth: We will have ten functioning critique groups

We will expand, creating a satellite group in the mountains.

So where are we starting from? By my count, we have five or six authors being published. Our membership stands at 99. We have just started our second Publishing Specific Subgroup (the Christian one). We have five critique groups and just added three more at the Christian subgroup.

And why is our branch doing so well? It is our terrific, helpful members who pitch in. It is every time a writer makes a new friend in the club. It is everyone who critiques, edits, and beta reads for others. It is for all who have responsibilities, some big, some small, who keep our programs running. It is our speakers and teachers who share their expertise. It is every member who shows kindness and grace to others. You are this club. You are what makes it great.

It is a pleasure to work alongside you. Let's make 2024 our best year ever.

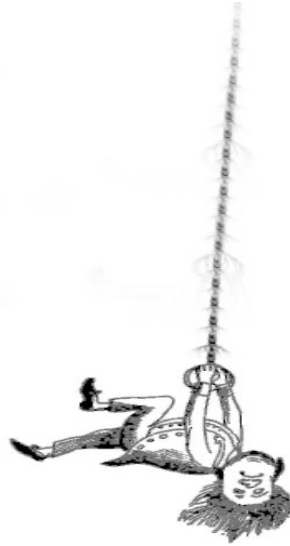
Sail on!

*A goal is a dream
with a deadline*

— Napoleon Hill

Michael Raff shows us How to Put Suspense in our Writing

By Mike Apodaca



On January 3rd at 5:00 we had a special meeting featuring our On-Topic Speakers at the Apple Valley Library. We've been holding these meetings on the first Wednesday of the month to give our speakers an opportunity to practice their speeches and to help educate our writers.

According to Michael Raff, every genre can use suspense to get the reader so engaged that they will read all the way to the last period. Having read several of Mike's stories and books, I can say he's a true expert at suspense.

I took copious notes as Mike elaborated on the history of suspense and the masters of suspense and then meticulously explained the different techniques for putting suspense in our writing.

As he spoke, I had the sense I was receiving the hidden secrets of writing, the tricks of the trade that happen in the background, the secret sauce of the craft.

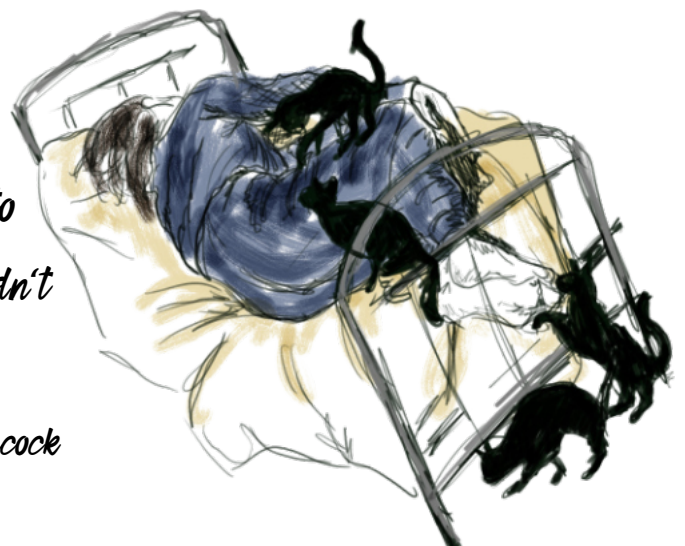
One of our seasoned writers who was there thanked Mike for his wonderful insights and suggested that he turn his presentation into a workshop for writers. I concur.

Thank you, Mike, for giving those of us who attended a deep look into this wonderful aspect of writing. I hope to see you all at our February meeting on February 7. 🍷

Luck is everything...

My good luck in life was to be a really frightened person. I'm fortunate to be a coward, to have a low threshold of fear, because a hero couldn't make a good suspense film.

-Alfred Hitchcock



Targeted For Publishing: Launching the Christian Subgroup

By Mike Apodaca

On January 4th, at 6:00 pm, seven of our members came together to launch the Christian Publishing Specific Subgroup. The meeting started with a sharing of the vision for this group—to get each member published. The biweekly meetings will start with a time of sharing publishing opportunities and ways we are building our brands. To illustrate this, I shared my article that was published in the *Bible Advocate* for January/February this year and my process for getting this article published.

In the second part of our meetings, we will split up into critique groups. We birthed two new critique groups in this first meeting. We will submit our writing one week and critique it together the next.

We decided that we will submit our writing every other week, beginning on January 12th, and meet every other Friday, beginning on January 19th. There has also been some interest in making these meetings available on Zoom, so I am working to make that

happen. Bob Isbill has graciously offered to host our in-person meetings in his home on these Fridays at 2:00 pm.

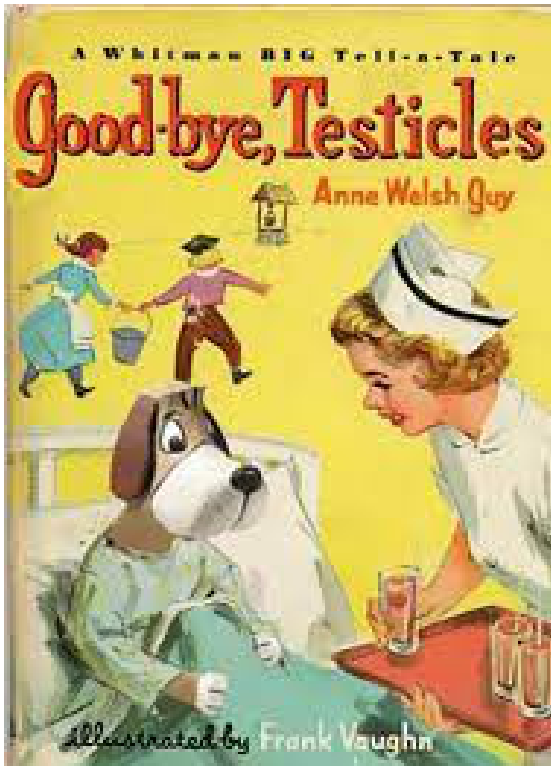
What impressed me about the meeting was the willingness of each person attending to share their feelings and expectations from this new venture. There was an instant comradery and desire to see the best for everyone there.

I'm excited about this venture. Those who want to participate can contact me for more information. I'm hopeful that this subgroup model will be picked up by other sectors within our branch, for instance, those who publish in Spanish, write short stories, screenplays, romance novels, children's books, science fiction, etc. The publishing world (agents, publishing houses, magazines, etc.) is not monolithic, covering all genres. In most cases they focus on one genre or type of writing. It seems natural that we would do the same. We are aiming at the target. 🎯



February Salon!

Judging a Book by Its Cover



To be held on February 20th
at 3:00 p.m. at Richard Zone's home.

Salon will be led by John Garner and
everyone will have the opportunity to
participate.

Come learn and share insights into
what makes or breaks a book cover.

Please contact Richard Zone

at: retiredzone@gmail.com

or call at 909-222-8812

**Space is limited so
don't delay**

Sub-Group Forming!

Another fun sub-group is forming for the science-fiction, paranormal and fantasy genres. The focus will include the variety of publishing sources and opportunities for promotion. If you'd like to get in on the ground floor and help with its formation, please contact Freddi Gold at:
freddiegold3@gmail.com

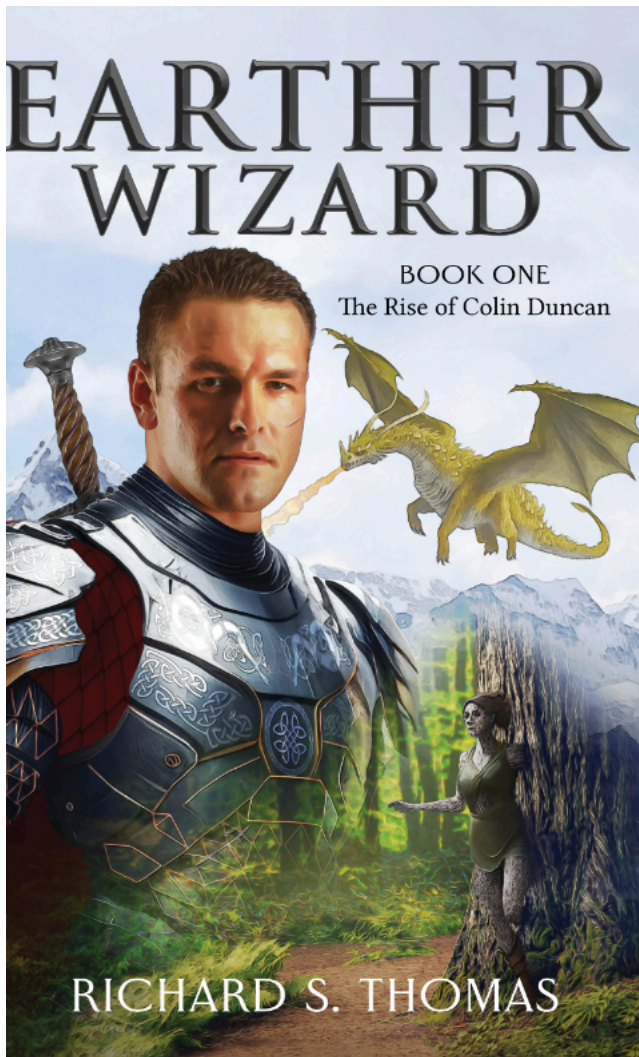


Richard Spencer's Latest

By Mike Apodaca



He's done it again. Last month I announced that Richard Spencer (writing as Richard S. Thomas) had been named a finalist in the American Writers Award in the fantasy category. This month, I get to announce his book, *Earther Wizard: The Rise of Colin Duncan*, has won the Pinnacle Book Achievement Award for the Fall of 2023 (science-fantasy category). If you visit his website at www.richardsthoas.com you can see both badges proudly displayed. Richard is well on his way to being a respected writer. Congratulations, Richard!



My Connection To The Mob

By Michael Raff



It's been nearly a year since Joyce, my brother Eddie and I toured the Mob Museum in Las Vegas. We thought it would be a good idea to go on Valentine's Day, as the museum offered a discount for the 94th anniversary of the massacre. It was pouring rain and practically everyone in Vegas had the same idea. But I didn't let the downpour or the crowd dampen my enthusiasm.

My brother and I grew up in Chicago and we knew a lot about mobsters, especially the local ones. All three of us were impressed with the museum, with countless exhibits ranging from photos of Al Capone, (the dirty rat), FBI agents, and the wall that seven men had been mowed down against. The garage in which the massacre occurred had long since been demolished, but an investor had meticulously reassembled it brick by brick, which the museum later purchased.

After the tour, I thought about my connection to the mob. It's just a slight one, mind you, but a connection nevertheless. My paternal grandfather and namesake, Michael Raff, died before my cousins, brother, and I were born. None of our elders wanted to talk about him. What we did know was he had at least one connection to the mob. We also knew that one of Capone's henchmen was "Mike the Pike," —also a dirty rat who ran the brothels for Capone. (It's a nasty business, but someone had to do it.) Because our family didn't want to talk about Grandpa Mike, my cousins, Eddie, and I were suspicious.

It took many years and a lot of questioning, but we finally dug up the truth. Our grandparents lived in the same apartment building as "Mike the Pike." He and Grandpa were friendly and often played cards together. (It's a good thing Grandpa didn't get whacked for cheating because then I wouldn't have been able to join the writers club). The reason why no one wanted to talk about Grandpa was that Grandma caught him in bed with another woman, (*another* dirty rat, there's a lot of them in this sordid, little tale), and that's the reason why they were divorced.

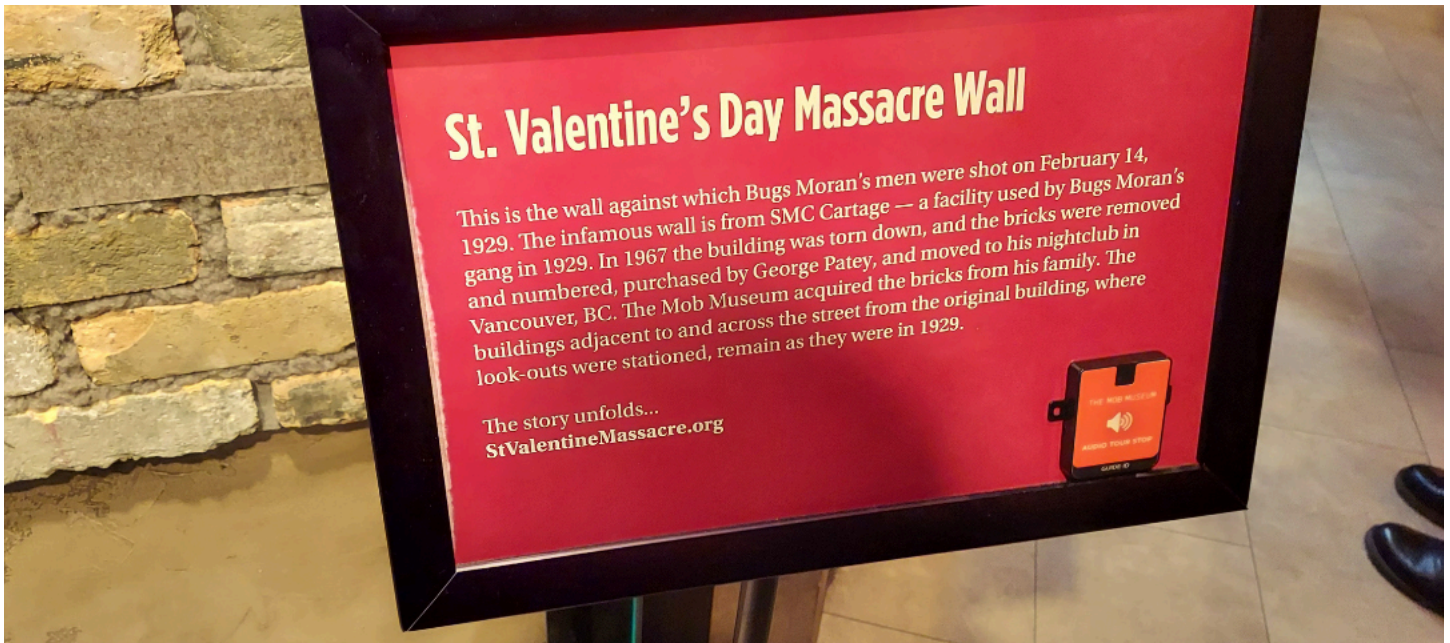
This information was helpful, but we still didn't know the identity of "Mike the Pike." What ever happened to him? Did the police nail him? Did he fall overboard wearing cement shoes? Or did he get drafted? Back then, we didn't have the internet to help. Eddie, a fan of the underworld, found a book about gangsters. "Mike the Pike" was a nickname for *Mike Heitler*. Disenchanted with not being promoted, he wrote a letter to the DA's office, turning his boss in. Well-connected, Capone intercepted the letter, and Heitler's body was discovered in a burning car. (Glad it wasn't my grandfather's; otherwise I wouldn't be writing this article.)

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While visiting Chicago, Eddie and I have found the site of the massacre and the grave of Al Capone. But what about my grandfather? Where was he buried? By 2010, no one was left alive to ask. Before leaving for Chicago, I contacted Cook County's Record Department and requested my grandfather's death certificate, which had the name of the cemetery. Joyce and I traveled to Chicago and the cemetery looked familiar. A memory returned to me—my father had taken Eddie and me there when we were very young. Joyce and I took photos. It was rather creepy seeing "Michael O. Raff" engraved on the headstone, especially since I'm Michael P. Raff. It's amazing what a difference one letter can make.



HDCWC Presents “Write Your Story Scene by Scene”

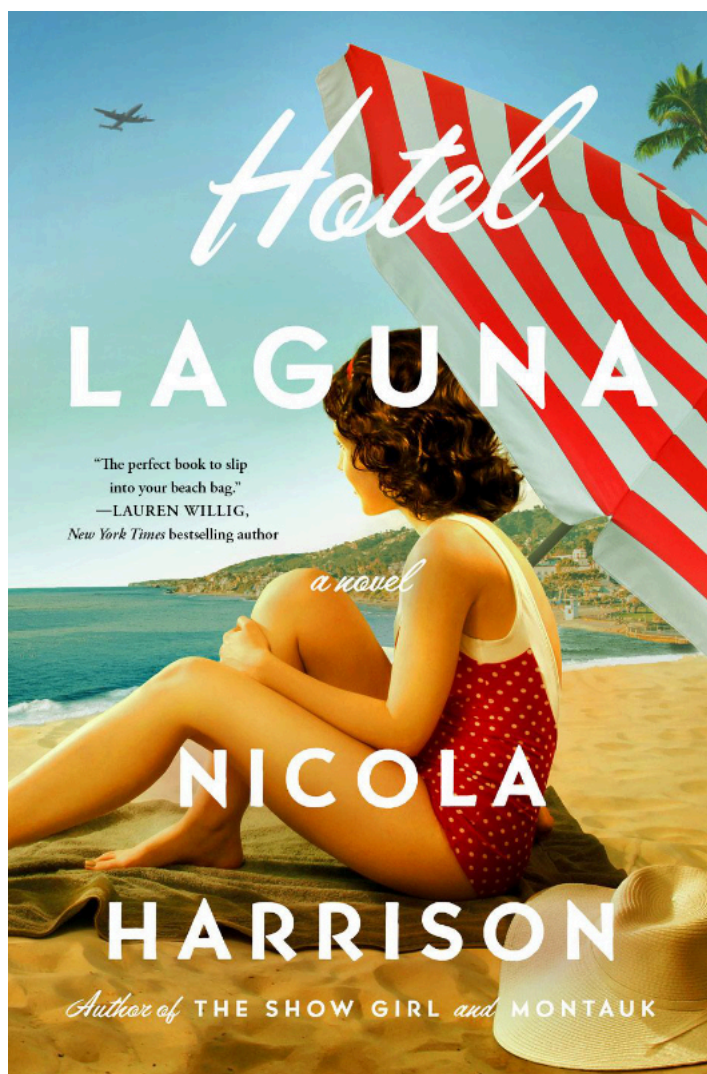
By Bob Isbill



The HDCWC is proud to bring an outstanding author to our February 10 meeting. Join us in person or on Zoom at 10 a.m. to hear Nicola Harrison talk about writing scenes.

Nicola Harrison is the author of three historical fiction novels, *Montauk*, *The Show Girl* and *Hotel Laguna*. Born and raised in England, she moved with her family to Southern California when she was 14. She is a graduate of UCLA and received her MFA from Stony Brook University. Prior to writing novels, she worked as a fashion journalist in New York City, where she lived for 17 years. Now she resides in Manhattan Beach, California, with her husband and her two sons.

Don't miss this outstanding presentation!



HDCWC Members Participate in March for Peace

By Mary Langer Thompson

I love it when Bob Isbill asks me, “What does that have to do with writing?” because it challenges me to think of the interconnections between writing and our programs and events. In the case of the Martin Luther King Jr. March, HDCWC honored a writer, speechwriter, and speaker when we honored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On January 15, 2024. The placards President Mike Apodaca brought for us to hold had our branch’s CWC logo and said, “Giving Voice.” Isn’t that what we do when we write, either alone or with our group? We might not start a movement, but we can be inspired by a man who was interested in not only writing content but “the content of our characters.”

Several HDCWC club members met at the corner of Seneca and Civic Drive in Victorville and signed in to the 16th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Peace March presented by the High Desert Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

In Attendance from our club were Mike Apodaca, Therese Moore, Sheryl Thomas-Perkins, Mary Langer Thompson, Samuel T. Lujan and Diana Davidson-Del Toro. We met friends Rene de la Cruz, Marcy Taylor of the Mohahve Historical Society, Mike Apodaca’s previous

vice-principal at the school where he taught, Francis Lewis, and Mike talked to a man who is writing his memoir and is interested in the writing club.

The march began at 10:00 a.m. with a line up at Seneca and Civic Drive and ended at the Civil Rights Memorial near city hall on Civic Drive. As we arrived, we heard a broadcast of King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and saw memorial plaques from 2015 honoring the winners of the annual essay contest. The Mistress of Ceremonies, Carla Hamilton-Yates, began the program: “Living the Dream: It Starts with Me—Spreading Hope, Courage and Unity,” and introduced Rabbi Robert Block, who gave the opening prayer. Victor Valley H.S. Air Force Jr. ROTC gave the Presentation of Colors, and attendees were led in the flag salute and sang the National Anthem. There was music by the Burning Bush Baptist Church T & T Youth Choir and the program ended with the Black National Anthem, “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing.”

Guest speaker Phyllis Morris-Green, Esq. (retired San Bernardino County public defender) talked about the importance of voting and gave statistics showing that more Blacks from various areas need to get out and vote. She discussed service and everyone’s responsibility to do

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something for the larger community. The winner of the Civil Rights Memorial Essay, Sophia Burciaga, came from Discovery School of the Arts and was introduced by the Victorville Elementary superintendent of schools. Sophia quoted from her essay about the legendary mathematician Katherine Johnson who worked for NASA. Johnson was one of the women in the film *Hidden Figures*. She passed in 2020 at the age of 101.

The closing prayer was given by Imam Yousef Farha, the co-founder and religious and social affairs coordinator of the High Desert Islamic Society in Victorville. This year there was the largest number in attendance than in all previous years. Groups in attendance were acknowledged, including the HDCWC.

“It ain't whatcha write, it's the way atcha write it.”

—Jack Kerouac, *WD*

See You Later, Good Friend

By John Garner



On the Thursday that we gathered at Corky's to wish Barbara Badger well in her new life, I was reminded of times that, for the person departing, leaving was less an ending than it was a beginning. That was the sense I got from Barbara when we talked about what she'll do now that she's downsized from a large house up the hill to a smaller one down below. She said she'd travel, and the first of the many destinations, she has planned for this year is a trip to Hawaii to visit her niece, who is a middle school science teacher.

When she said, "Middle school," I instantly remembered her comment earlier that, "I didn't do well [as a] middle school [teacher] because they should really have an adult in the room." I laughed because Barbara sounded like a teacher we'd all have enjoyed. She was definitely someone, I could see, who brought joy to many in our club.

The Roundtable this particular Thursday was about more than good food or good writing; it was about good friends and good stories. Remembering times past and envisioning times to come. When I asked what she'd miss most about her time in the High Desert, she surprised me when she said Wrightwood. "It's such a beautiful community," she explained.

In particular, she will miss working with the Snowline Players, the community's theater group. She recalled playing Aunt Eller in *Guys and Dolls*, but she was especially proud of her work assembling the props for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Creating settings in places not Biblical, like a bistro in Paris, was a challenge, she said, but one she thoroughly enjoyed.

Her plan for the immediate future, however, is to "take it as it comes." Besides visiting family in Minnesota in the spring and dashing off to Costa Rica for a third time—a country which she's particularly fond because, "They have no military and the money they would have spent on that they spend on making their country lovely and inviting."

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Happy Birthday to Members born in February

February 17 Michael Raff

February 23 Steve Marin

(Continued from previous page)



When back in Fontana, she plans to spend as much time as possible at the city’s library, which according to Barbara, “... is huge. I will read, write, and spend time in their coffee shop. I will try some things and see what sticks.” She may also “get into the memoir project,” she added. The problem with being away so much, though, is her two cats. “It’s hard to find good pet sitters.”

It was my first time to talk with Barbara. I wished it had not been my last. There was a glint in her eyes that suggested she could be mischievous, so I could easily imagine what kind of middle school teacher she had been and what kind of friend she was to so many in the club. We do not say goodbye to such friends. We say, “See you later,” especially since, gosh darn it, she just lives down the hill.

“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.”

– Thomas Jefferson

A Chat About What to Do Before You Die

By Ann Miner



As I write this, it is a beautiful sunny day with only a light breeze that gently nudges the trees. I want the experience of reading my short stories to be positive. However, today it occurs to me that some advice might be appropriate, and it's for anyone and everyone, not just people touched by Parkinson's Disease.

Someday, we will all leave this earth. If you are the first to exit, it's important for your loved ones left behind to know a few important things. Too often I have seen that one person in the family oversees all the business, all the finances, all the dealings with various companies. When that person leaves, the one left behind is often baffled and confused. In addition to the grief, they must take over all these details.

Therefore, IN ADVANCE, TODAY! make a list of things they will need.

MOST IMPORTANT!

Are the cars in both names?

Is the house in both names? If not, the one left behind will have to go through probate.

Where is the gas meter, the electric meter, the water meter? What about property lines, if applicable?

Where to locate the marriage certificate if that applies.

Where are the life insurance policies?

Where's the checking account and what is the number? Where is the checkbook? How do you balance a checkbook?

What about a savings account?

What is your Social Security Number, and theirs?

Is there a will or a trust? Where is it?

Where's the key to the safe deposit box, at which bank, or the combination to the home safe?

Is there a funeral plan or policy? Which funeral home?

Will you have a service at a church or chapel, at the funeral home, or graveside only?

What about a reception afterward? (If you have it after mealtime, you can only serve desserts and beverages.) Do you even want a reception? Where will you have it?

Who do you want to officiate; the local pastor, a friend, a priest?

Music for the service, recorded or live? (I had a flute at the church service and a violin at graveside.)

Food and lodging for out-of-town family members and friends. What will be out-of-pocket expenses, and will there be money for that?



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Who should they notify of your passing? I have a list on my computer, and I must remember to give it to my gang! Suggest they get one or two friends to help with phone calls or emails.

And oh yeah. Your phone and computer passwords.

Whew! This is a lot. But how about printing out this page and keeping the list handy. Then discuss these things long before anyone needs to know. My children have all this information, but sometimes they don't want to talk about it. But talk anyway. It will save so much stress in the future.

Meanwhile, have a happy day, knowing you have done what you could to leave your survivors in the best shape possible.

And keep looking up!



*“Write while the heat is in you.
The writer who postpones the
recording of his thoughts uses an
iron which has cooled to burn a
hole with.”*

– Henry David Thoreau

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Quote of the Month

By Michael Raff

War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.

John F. Kennedy, 35th US president (1917-1963)

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