

# CHRISTIAN JOURNALISM

HOW TO MULTIPLY MINISTRY AND MONEY

By Dr. Elmer Towns and Marie Chapman

Edited by Earl White

Typeset by Jan Fuller Cover

## FOREWORD

The communications explosion of the last decade has shrunk the size of our world until we are living in what has been called “a global village.”

The isolation that once gave local ministries an edge over national groups is vanishing. Relentlessly competitive organizations reach into our homes with well-prepared mailing pieces, four-color magazines, and network quality radio and television programming.

The growing local church must not fail to be sensitive to the unfavorable impressions that poor quality, locally produced printed materials frequently make.

Our populace has been conditioned by years of exposure to a competently trained public press to expect a certain format and quality of content in serious publications.

As servants of Christ we have a message of eternal consequence that we must not fail to put before our generation. The price, in terms of informed effort, is great but the rewards include a growing body of Christians that are informed and hence more capable of enlightened service for Christ.

By focusing on the basics in informative writing, Dr. Towns and Mrs. Chapman have written a comprehensible, readily adaptable summary of current journalistic practices available to the church staff member who is dedicated to excellence in using the print media in a way that assures acceptance by the widest possible audience.

Carl F. George

President, Genesis Schools

## INTRODUCTION

“I know I could write something better than that!” Perhaps that was your comment at the end of a pedantic, shallow article. Or “I’ve known that a long-time-- and now it comes out in a magazine!” You wished you had written it, but did not quite know how to go about it.

CHRISTIAN JOURNALISM is a direct approach to enable Christian “would-be” writers to know how to put together various forms of articles, and what to do with the finished product. Many magazines are interested in buying competent stories and articles. Many churches today,

as a side effect of the large-church movement, are installing their own printing plant. Someone must write the promotional and invitational materials that go out from those presses.

You will discover in these pages that writing is not a craft to be mastered through memorization of rules and formulas. It is the most demanding of do-it-yourself activities. The serious student will follow the suggestions for the various forms of writing and write to those specifications.

“Writers are born, not made,” some have claimed. Another said it better: “Writers are born--but made better.” The process is accomplished through writing.

Mrs. Marie Chapman

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## PART A

### Chapter 1

## PRESCRIPTION FOR CREATIVITY IN WRITING

Do you want to be creative? - I do. But deadlines seem to sap our creative production. However, deadlines are a necessary part of writing because many authors produce only under pressure.

So I sit at my typewriter. The machine is loaded, sitting motionless. It stares at me in defiance because I can't create. It's right.

A select group of writers have that creative ability to "turn on" words and set thoughts to mental rhythm. Others express the same words, like the tired housewife spooning up the same meatloaf every Wednesday evening.

Again, certain authors are creative in their message. Original ideas appear to flow from their pens. Yet the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, "there is nothing new under the sun." Perhaps

creativity is their association of thoughts, slant, or selection of data. Therefore, we ask, what is creativity?

Creativity has a two-fold designation. First, creativity is the emergence in action of a new relationship of materials, needs, ideas and solutions. Second, creativity is self discovery and the extension of the “self” in the act of composition.

Often writers think only of creativity in the first designation, putting new ideas or words together. To be excitingly creative, a writer must continually take a trip, an inner excursion into self discovery. Fresh material usually flows from the pen of the author who is in a constant state of learning about himself.

Can this type of creativity be “bottled” and packaged for others to share? Usually not, but there are some principles that can be indicated from creative writers that might stir some word-smiths out of lethargy.

1. Write and think for your pleasure--never let the final product be evaluated. Creativity is more effective when people work “off the record” than when they are evaluated. Watch creativity appear in a brainstorming session. The leader takes away fear by stating “everything will be accepted.” When people realize they will not be embarrassed, marked down, chewed out, or failed, they become more creative. Of course all writing can’t be in this realm, but every author needs some self indulgence.

2. Work on projects that build self esteem. Socrates said “Know thyself.” His motivation was primarily pedagogical. However, the creative person must have a position of strength (self knowledge) from which he can reach out and see the world. The person who has no self strength is usually inhibited and externally controlled. He is afraid to express himself.

Creative people are interesting to observe. El Greco, for example, may have thought as he looked at some of his early work, “good artists do not paint like this.” But somehow he trusted sufficiently in his own experience of life, the process of being himself, so he could go on expressing his own unique perceptions. The strength of creativity says to the artist, “good artists do not paint like this, but I paint like this.”

Ernest Hemingway was surely aware that “good writers do not write like this.” Carl Rogers observes, “Fortunately he (Hemingway) moved toward being himself, rather than toward someone else’s conception of a good writer.”<sup>1</sup>

One way to build ego strength in an author is reflected in the assignment given on the first day of the journalism class I teach. On that day I ask the students to write on, “How will you spend the money you will make from writing in this course?” Of course the students are dumbfounded to think they can sell anything. My intent is (1) to create a desire to write and (2) to build their ego strength, so they will see themselves as writers.

Every student in my classes has sold at least one article. The most promising pieces of material the students have written are edited until they are worthy of publication. (One rule in journalism class--everything turned in to the teacher must also be sent to an editor.) Every

student should have some success. Of course many get enough rejection slips to paper their walls.

3. Take advantage of the moment of inspiration. All of us have the time of day and “mind set” when we write best. Malcom Crowley spoke of the creative process of inspiration in his *Remembering Hart Crane*. He speaks of the Sunday afternoon party of Torrey Hill near Patterson, New York in an unpainted and unremodeled farmhouse:

Hart would be laughing twice as hard as the rest of us in the low ceilinged kitchen; he would be drinking twice as much hard cider and contributing more than his share of the crazy metaphors and worn epitaphs. Gradually he would fall silent and a little later we would find that he had disappeared. In lulls that would interrupt the laughter, while Hart was gone, we would hear a new hubub through the walls of the next room--the phonograph playing a Cuban rumba, the typewriter clicking simultaneously; then the phonograph would run down and the typewriter stop while Hart changed the record, perhaps to a torch song, perhaps to Revel's *Bolero*. Sometimes he stomped across the room, disclaiming to the four walls and the slow spring rain. An hour later, after the rain had stopped, he would appear in the kitchen or on croquet court, his face brick red, his eyes burning, his already iron grey hair bristling straight up from the skull. He would be chewing a five cent cigar which he had for-gotten to light. In his hands he would have two or three sheets of typewritten manuscript with words crossed out and new lines scratched in. “Read that,” he would say. “Isn't that the grrrrreatest poem ever written!”

But this story contains neither the real beginning or the end. I later discovered that Hart would have been meditating over that particular poem for months or even years, scribbling verses on pieces of paper that he carried in his pockets and meanwhile waiting for the moment of pure inspiration when he could put them all together.<sup>2</sup>

4. See writing projects or problems to solve. No one forced Henry Ford to see the “need” for cheaper automobiles, he made up that problem himself. Ink pens seemed fine for years until somebody said, “Why not make one you don't have to fill?” The ballpoint was invented. Telephones didn't “need to be made in colors” but the idea has sold many more telephones. Do you have an idea the world hasn't seen? Create a problem. Make the reader need to buy your idea.

5. Inspiration comes through perspiration. My two favorite authors are Carl Sandburg and Winston Churchill. The latter, was known for his hard work. During 1948 to 1954 he produced six volumes on the history of the Second World War. For this gargantuan task he assembled enough secretaries to type the endless torrent of words that he poured into recording machines. Sometimes the secretaries worked in shifts so they could keep going while Churchill slept. He often dictated 8,000 words a day. His desk, some four feet tall, enabled him to do most of his work while standing. The sorting, selection, the rejection of material, the endless winnowing and typing sometimes went on through the night. He gathered an assemblage of scholars, historians, technical experts and researchers to edit the volumes. However, he personally read and reworked

every page six times. The final production is a work of more than 1,500,000 words. The style is unmistakably Churchillian.

6. The incubation period produces insight. An uncanny aspect of creativity is your better ideas popping into your head without effort. “Inspiration” happens when you least expect it. While you are driving to work, taking a bath, or trying to go to sleep at night, suddenly the best idea you’ve ever had hits you right between the eyes and leaves you gasping. This “inspiration” sounds magical. But the truth is, the creative idea begs you to accept it because you hunted for it in the first place.

Remember the times you beat the bushes looking for a “new” reason or a unique “why?” Your search for creativity got your subconscious working. When you stopped consciously hunting for new ideas, your subconscious didn’t quit. It went right on asking, “Why?”

Very often “sleeping on it” gives your subconscious a chance to finish the hunt and hand you the idea in the middle of the night. The creative author keeps a notebook and pencil on the night table. When your mind refuses to think and your fingers struggle rather than dance over the typewriter keys, simply drop the subject. If you have worked hard and tried to create problems, relaxation may serve up new ideas. Go for a walk, listen to the hi-fi or watch TV. Rest your subconscious.

7. Moment of insight. The learning theorists sometimes call the moment of great insight the “aha” experience. Archimedes found insight when he least expected it. The king demanded to know if his crown was pure gold. Archimedes worked on the problem without results. Chemical analysis was unknown in his days. He knew how much pure gold weighed, but had no way of measuring the exact volume of the gold in the crown.

Tradition has it that he took a hot bath to relax. He wasn’t even thinking of the problem. But as he lowered himself into the water, he noticed that the water level rose. Historians tell us that he leaped out of the tub with his famous “Eureka!” Dunking the crown into the tub of water he measured the amount of water that rose. This gave him the volume. Then he weighed the crown and had his answer.

8. Creativity and the deadline. “Blessed are authors that have a deadline, for they shall produce.” But, you might ask, “How can I be creative when I have a deadline?” Suppose the article is due next Monday. First, go through your notes. Much of what you have written and copied cannot be used. That’s to be expected. Since you have gathered your facts and read through the encyclopedia you have a far better chance at creativity than meditating on a rock in the woods. Next, jot down all of your ideas that seem to be close to the answer. Concentrate on these. Ask yourself how to change them, give them a little twist here and there, dress them up, turn them around, so that they will work. Somewhere, the story nobody else thought of will “pop” into your mind.

9. Analyze your creative process. When have you been most creative? Take out some of those published manuscripts. What made you creative? Start a notebook. I have my students start a section in their notebooks where they analyze their style. First, I have them analyze and write down the principles of communication that make other authors effective. What do you like about

John Gunther? How does he use adjectives? What do you like about Sandburg? How does he use background description? What do you like about Capote? How does he use dialogue? We must train and condition ourselves to watch for style as we read. Second, I ask the students to analyze their own style. They are asked to write the principles they find most comfortable. All my students read the papers of the other students. We discuss each student, helping him construct a “style” picture of his writing. Before the course is over they are “creating” and exhibiting their own style.

10. The pride of accomplishment. Studies show the creative person is not as success oriented as the high I. Q. student; meaning he doesn't compete as much with others. (Usually his greatest competition is himself.) He wants to see the book in print. Jean Cocteau, the French author said in *The Process of Inspiration*, “To write, to conquer ink and paper, to accumulate ideas in paragraphs, divide them with periods and commas, is a different matter from carrying around the dream of a play or of a book.” Creativity is not a gift presented to God's preferred children. It is an attitude of mind that can be developed in all writers. Granted, some writers will display more creativity than others, but every writer can improve his ability to create.

## Chapter 2

### STRAIGHT NEWS LEADS

#### I. THE INVERTED TRIANGLE

Definition: The inclusion of all essential facts in the opening paragraph, with less important facts covered toward the end, or the point. The basic facts are easily recalled via Kipling's “Serving Men:”

“I keep six honest serving men --

They taught me all I know.

Their names are WHAT and WHY and WHEN And WHERE and HOW and WHO.”

#### A. Advantages to Reader

1. Provides the busy reader with a quick grasp of a great deal of news. He can glean the essence of many stories quickly.

2. Lets the hurried reader know the vital facts about a given item. Without time to read the en-tire story, this reader can know in the first paragraph what it is about.

3. Added details toward the point of the triangle give more facts for interest. This includes more facts of How and Why, and perhaps more on Who the personalities are.

#### B. Advantages to Editor

1. Makes the story easier to cut if it is too long to fit allotted space. All pertinent facts are at top; nothing essential will be omitted if it is cut. Not all cutting is done at the desk. In the composing room, makeup men may see there is no room for the whole story. They simply leave out the type that won't fit.

2. Makes reorganizing the story easier, when necessary. Having all facts lined up in clear form, the editor can quickly tell if shuffling is needed.

3. Makes headline writing easier. Facts are in the first paragraph. "The Lions Club annual Broom Sale gets under way Saturday at Quigly Shopping Center. Each year the Lions use this means to raise funds for their charitable contributions toward providing glasses for needy children and adults." The headline writer grabs: "Lions Annual Broom Sale."

## II. NEWS CLARITY INAUGURATED BY THE *NEW YORK TIMES*

### A. *New York Times* Lead

1. Prior to 1896, readers waded through columns of newspaper type to discover facts. With its announcement the year of McKinley's nomination for President, the *Times* abbreviated the lead to: "William McKinley, of Ohio, was nominated as the candidate of the Republican Party for President and Garret A. Hobart was named for Vice-President."

### B. AP Lead

The Associated Press, AP, adopted the inverted triangle formula of including the 5 W's and H, until it became known as "an AP lead." Newspaper use of the formula became almost invariable.

#### 1. Advantages

a. It gives the facts quickly (see I, A)

#### 2. Disadvantages

a. Not every item could be treated equally without becoming extremely top-heavy. In attempting to identify the Who of the story (often more than one) descriptive phrases were multiplied. Sentences got out of hand.

b. Facts are sometimes too numerous to crowd into a paragraph. If the long, involved sentences go on and on, readers may lose track of the bare outline.

## III. NEWS LEADS IN OTHER MEDIA

### A. Radio

1. Inverted Triangle too fast. Listeners lost the story if they missed a sentence.

2. Announcers discovered value of a brief introductory phrase to alert listeners: “Two apprehended on drugs charges today. Two young men living in a commune in the west end of town were found possessing and selling heroin. Arrested were. . .”

#### B. Newspapers reconsidered their leads

Public response to radio newscasts caused rethinking. Were reading and hearing unrelated?

1. The *New York Times* again pioneered. In 1954 notice was posted to its reporters: “We feel it is no longer necessary, and perhaps it never was, to wrap up in one sentence or paragraph the traditional 5 W’s.”

2. The modern newspaper lead and radio lead are similar. Giving the reader time to assimilate the facts, this scientific item runs: “A recent study by three California Institute of Technology scientists indicates that there is nearly as much toxic ozone—a primary component of smog—Inside buildings as outside.” Enough to lead the reader on to find out Who, Why, Where, and all the rest.

a. Exception: Radio occasionally gives half-stories, omitting vital facts, leaving listeners frustrated. “A large death toll is reported in a tragic fire in Tennessee. . .” no town, no cause. Newspapers cannot get away with such omissions, or they will want for readers.

### IV. THE MODERN STRAIGHT NEWS LEAD

#### A. Usually should include the What, Who and When

Whereas the AP lead included the 5 W’s and H, now the lead is broken with three essentials in the lead.

#### B. The What is given special prominence.

1. News must communicate what has happened or will happen.

2. The What helps readers decide whether story is important from their standpoint. . . C. When is of vital importance. People live in tight 24-hour compartments. If a glance at an item tells them it is too late to be concerned about that story, they look elsewhere. Or, if the item needs to be fitted into their busy schedule, they know at once.

D. A straight news lead starts with the high point of the item and works around it. “L. O. Moon received first place for his crocheted tablecloth at the State Fair in Nashville. The announcement was made Friday by the Fair’s handicrafts judges. This is the third successive year Mr. Moon has won. He is a retired postal clerk who crochets as a hobby.”

E. Straight news lead summarizes essential facts, thus expressing clearly the main ideas. Keep one idea to a sentence. (See example D.)

F. Interest-arousing words must be chosen for the lead. For example, take the following facts: The public is invited to a meeting on Friday night in the city auditorium to hear J. Fred Carnahan, of the University Extension Department, discuss the dangers of equine sleeping sickness to humans. In the following sentences the writer has the high point, the point which grabs readers: "Equine sleeping sickness threatens the population of Howell County," Dr. J. Fred Carnahan, of the University Extension Department, told the Health Department today. He will discuss this vital subject in a meeting Friday night at the city auditorium at 7:30. You are urged to be there."

G. Who should be used as the lead only when the name carries the most weight for the readers. "Paul Anderson, world champion weight lifter, will be presented at University of Tennessee gymnasium Thursday night at 8:00 p.m. in a rally for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes."

H. The lead may state the source of the news, if necessary. (see F)

I. Avoid repetition.

J. Be timely, tie in a future event with announcement made today. "Remodeling of Horton High Library will begin June 19, according to an announcement made today by Principal H. O. Jenkins."

K. Be appropriate.

If the story is serious, the lead should be, and vice versa. A tragedy: "Grave doubts are held for the recovery of Joseph Stamps, a victim of a two-car crash on Highway 241 early this morning." Anticipated fun: "Elmira's biggest hot dog roast is slated for Saturday night at Lake Juneau. According to Fred Jarvis, youth director, a total of 2,000 youth are expected to converge on Elmira First Nazarene Church for the occasion."

## V. EVALUATION

Check each item you write by the following questions:

A. Are all essential 5 W's and H included?

B. Is the high point featured?

C. Are remaining essentials in correct order?

D. Are there unnecessary details cluttering the lead?

E. Are there interest-arousing words?

F. Is the authority cited, if necessary?

G. Are persons identified?

H. If the story continues other previous news on the subject, is the relationship made clear?

I. Is the lead clearly stated?

J. Is the lead appropriate for the kind of story?

## Chapter 3

### CHANGE SENTENCE STRUCTURE TO VARY LEADS

#### I. WHY STRIVE FOR VARIETY IN LEADS?

A. To avoid monotony, where all news begins to look alike because of the sameness of beginnings. With invariable framework, even the change of basic facts fails to carry proper significance. As in the case of a picture hung in the same place for years on end, it becomes invisible.

B. To select just the right type of beginning for a particular story. A sports story, a wedding and an obituary require different treatment.

C. To add vitality to sentence structure.

#### II. POSSIBLE GRAMMATICAL FORMS

A. Summary statement.

This is a statement which summarizes the gist of the information, arranged in simple subject-verb-object order; it may be compound or complex in structure, but the basic facts are there. This form is useful in presenting the main feature clearly.

B. The “because” or “since” clause.

1. The sentence opens with a dependent clause explaining cause: “Because he broke his left wrist in the first inning of the game Wednesday afternoon, Lefty Hogue is sidelined for the rest of the season.”

2. This form presents motives: “Since the football field was mired beyond use, the annual Pepper Bowl Game had to be postponed until Friday.”

C. Conditional clause

This structure uses a dependent clause beginning with words such as provide , unless, if.

1. The highlight may be featured through speculation: “If you had walked into the Kindergarten Class at First Baptist Church last Sunday, you might have heard a rooster

crowding.” 2. Sympathy may be gained for a cause: “Unless the required number of bonds have been sold by Monday night, City Hall stands to lose. . .”

#### D. The “although” or “though” clause

This method effectively features difficulties overcome and sparks reader reaction of appreciation.

1. Overcoming problems: “Although he had suffered the loss of both left feet in a mowing machine on Thursday, Bullet, an English Shepherd belonging to John Blankenship, Salem Road, managed to get to the house.”

#### E. Noun Clause

This is a dependent clause, the whole of which is the subject of the sentence. It usually begins that, how, why, whether, what or when.

1. Useful in highlighting essence of announcements. “Who will be the next student body president will be decided Tuesday morning in a called meeting in Assembly Hall.”

2. Useful in matters of decision. “What started the blaze in the Noel Hotel Monday night may never be known, but the historic hotel was razed.”

3. Useful in stressing beliefs.

#### F. Temporal clause

A dependent clause beginning with when, while, before or since.

1. Features time elements. “Before Calvary Church can take action in relocating, the congregation must dispose of its present buildings. Possibilities will be discussed in a business session on Wednesday night at the church.

#### G. Infinitive phrase

A phrase led by an infinitive, such as to go, to stay.

1. Used to create suspense. “To save the famous Chilton Oak, citizens of Barfield stormed a meeting at the County Magistrates office on Friday night.”

2. Used to feature dramatic action. “To finance purchase of books for the library, each youth class in First Methodist Church held a car wash.”

#### H. Participial phrase

A group of words beginning with a present or past participle. This is a tricky form of beginning. Care must be exercised to be sure the participial phrase is made to refer to the proper antecedent. “Floating in the azure blue sky, God seems very near as one looks at the fleecy clouds.” Who was floating in the sky? The clouds; but the sentence makes it seem God was.

1. Used to feature action. “Pushed by a high tail wind, the jet arrived an hour ahead of schedule.”

2. Used to feature unusual circumstances. “Raising catfish has proved to be a profitable crop for county farmers. According to a survey this week, a total of fifteen farmers have converted an aggregate 200 acres for the venture.”

#### I. Prepositional phrase

A group of words beginning with a preposition, such as, in or beside.

1. Used to feature an interesting method by which a deed is accomplished. “By the ancient art of bow and arrow, Cliff Harrison killed the black bear which had been destroying his sheep.”

#### J. Gerund

This verbal noun is used as the subject. Words such as winning, singing talking and reading can be gerunds.

1. Used to feature action of interesting detail. “Lifting 2700 pounds of college boys was the eye-boggling feat performed on Thursday night by Paul Anderson. . . .”

## Chapter 4

### NOVELTY LEADS

#### I. WHY USE NOVELTY LEADS?

- A. To add life and color to the writing.
- B. To increase interest in the entire paper.
- C. To make stories as interesting as possible.
- D. To challenge a writer to stop nothing short of interest.

#### II. WHEN SHOULD A NOVELTY LEAD BE USED?

A. When the facts are not just an ordinary news item. For example:

“How many kinds of beetles can you name? Every farmer knows the potato beetle, the June bug, and that familiar hardshelled brown bug that bangs against the screen. . . .These creatures are but a very few children in the large beetle family, according to Dr. M. M. Marshall, whose collection numbers at least 10,000 different species, not just 10,000 beetles.”

B. When the facts may in themselves be dull, but enlivened when presented in an interesting, different way.

“While a good many citizens are rushing from their heated cars into snug, warm offices, James B. Davidson is one man who puts on his overcoat and headgear when he gets to his job-- winter and summer, the year round. The weather stays cold where he works in the ‘cold’ room at Jones Locker Plant.”

C. When its use seems suitable for the purpose.

Leading into a rather prosaic story of a good safe-driving record of a Greyhound bus driver, this story began:

“Have you heard about the bus passenger who stood up in the aisle and yanked on the cord to stop the bus at her destination? It seems that simultaneously a calf ran across the road in front of the bus and the driver slammed on the brakes, and the lady went scooting down the aisle toward the door on a nonstop flight. When she recovered her balance, she told the driver, ‘Next time I think I’ll let you stop it – I very nearly killed us that time’ “

D. When the purpose of the lead is to arouse reader interest, not satisfy it.

“Unsung heroes are numberless, but we wish to nominate for the list the host of oft-maligned truck drivers who brave the mountain highways with 10 or 15 tons of cargo behind the cab.”

### III. KINDS OF NOVELTY LEADS

A. A statement of punch or surprise.

This single-sentence paragraph leads into the details to follow. Used when facts are few choose the one most important fact for the opener: “Marty Hawkins is still in the record-breaking business.” (Then proceed to discuss his previous records in the next paragraph, and how he broke them.)

B. Background lead.

This lead is a brief description of the events surrounding an item and preceding the actual presentation of facts.

1. Used with accounts of events such as Halloween parties, extensive travel and music festivals. “‘What can’t be cured must be endured,’ is the American way of phrasing the Chinese characteristic which to Miss Louise Robinson, retired missionary, is one of the most outstanding memories of her many years of service.”

C. Exclamatory.

A short exclamation set off in a paragraph alone.

1. Appropriate for presenting striking information, big news. “Don’t talk to Rev. Donald Rutledge about the high cost of living!” (The story goes on to describe the very low cost of living where he was engaged in missionary photography.)

D. Direct quotation.

Using a speaker’s direct words.

1. Used when the words themselves are of more significance than the event to be described or introduced. “I give a child a love for books,” says Mrs. Jesse Smith, librarian at Crichlow School, “and he can go on from there to learn so many things for himself.”

E. Question.

Set off in a paragraph alone.

1. Appropriate when the answer to the question is the highlight of the story. “Why do the Hawaiians wear leis?” (The story answers this and other questions about Hawaii by a native-born new resident in the community.)

F. Descriptive lead.

Describes persons, places or events.

1. Best used when only a few descriptive words are needed to present the image in the reader’s mind.

“Little boys—and girls—with blackened hands often display them without embarrassment at this season of the year. They are the badge of the workman. Black walnut season is at its peak, according to Charlie Craig. . .”

G. Contrast.

Should be sharp and vivid.

1. This lead is used to contrast extremes.

“Time was when John Sumrall could outwork the best of them, but now, at 93, he is taking it a little slower. The walking stick, as tall as he is, and his top-coat are his inseparable companions. . .only now he has exchanged a black over-coat for a khaki-colored army topcoat.”

H. Literary, historical, mythological allusion. References to facts well known to readers.

1. Appropriate in cases where it exactly fits. “The old Frank Cooper home at Rockvale has qualified for the title of a real ‘home,’ according to Edgar Guest’s definition, because its had ‘a heap o’ livin’ in it.”

I. Atmosphere.

Descriptive words which set the atmosphere for the reader. 1. Use when the setting is of special interest or significance. “It’s hardly a hop, skip and jump back to the early nineteenth century from most any room in the W. H. Westbrooks’ home on Bell Street. Although her furniture shines like new, much of it dates back even more than a hundred years.”

J. Suspense.

Often presented in several sentences which build up interest.

1. Used for full-length feature stories.

“This story has been kicked around in Middle Tennessee for nearly a century. It still brings out the scoffer in many who hear, but it is here documented with irrefutable proof. Get a grip on the smelling salts and pull up a chair.”

## Chapter 5

### WRITE A NEWS STORY

#### I. GET ORGANIZED

A. Choose the high point of interest.

B. Arrange notes in order of importance.

1. Mentally. Some writers organize “in their heads” and maintain it comes out organized with-out further shuffling.

2. Make noodles. Sit down, write out all notes. Cut the writing into strips, according to content, one subject to one strip. Number two might end up as No. 10, while No. 12 might become the lead. Rearrange in logical sequence, staple or tape to typing paper and retype.

C. Keep paragraphs short, one idea to a paragraph, but avoid extremely short paragraphs.

D. Have good transition.

1. Pick up a word from the preceding paragraph, continuing the thought to the next. “When the summer sunshine beckons tourists to the lure of the open road once again, they’ll find their way by the hundreds to one of the outstanding historical places in the state, the Sam Davis Home. And chances are they’ll be met at the door and welcomed by a niece of the famous boy hero, Mrs. Media Davis Sinnott, who has been hostess for the past twelve years. Between eight and ten thousand visitors tour the house annually. . .” (Pick up the thought of tourists.)

2. Refer to previous paragraph.

“A long-needed highway construction project is underway on Highway 96 three miles out of town, where a low curve-bridge has resulted in a large number of accidents over a period of ten years.”

“According to Engineer Harry Dill, the new 60-foot concrete bridge construction will cost approximately \$15,000, and will be entirely state-financed.”

“At least four months will be required for completion of the bridge. . .”

3. Present details in logical sequence.

“Retirement has not meant complete withdrawal from activity for a grandmother whose life has been a full and interesting one. Mrs. R. C. Nutting, on the Bill Rice Ranch, finds it has meant a change in the kind of ‘work’.”

“And to her, even the years and years of employment, plus raising her own and some other people’s children, have been ‘fun,’ to use her word for it. The heavy schedule has never been used as an excuse to slide out from under responsibility to her church or to neighbors needing a helping hand.”

“Mrs. Nutting got ‘broke in’ to responsibility at the tender age of seven. . .”

4. Transitional words or phrases (i.e., then, meanwhile, soon, afterward... words with a sense of timing).

“Folks at the LaVergne Presbyterian Church find themselves squaring their shoulders and snapping out of their slump whenever they see Jefferson Davis (Jeff) Nelson marching down the aisle to his pew, shoulders straight and head held high despite his nearly 91 years.”

“His ramrod like bearing is enhanced by the mustache he has worn since man-hood and the goatee, which is a recent addition.”

Jeff Nelson still gets around well and likes to keep busy--says that’s part of his secret. He knows he’s not as spry as he used to be. . .”

E. Begin each paragraph in an interesting way.

A novelty lead may start the reader reading, but interesting paragraphs will keep him reading to the end. (See illustrations under D, number 3 and 4.)

## II. NEWS STYLE

A. Basis for other types of writing (magazine articles, fiction, books).

B. Keep it simple. The degree of simplicity varies with readership of the paper, just as simplicity in speaking varies with the age or intelligence of listeners.

C. Choice of exactly the right word is important. Do you mean a robber, a thief, or a burglar? (Robber uses threat of force; a thief does his work stealthily; a burglar breaks and enters with intent to steal.)

D. Use “tight” writing. Instead of saying “at this time,” say “now.”

E. Use colorful words. Use action verbs, not passive. Not: "We were walking very fast down the side-walk." But: "We hurried down the street," or "We rushed down the street."

F. Be objective. View the story as an onlooker, not a partaker.

G. Stay impersonal. As in F, the writer does not enter into the story, with the use of me, we" or personal opinions, known as "editorializing."

### III. THE ONE-FEATURE STORY

A. Include the feature in the lead.

B. Add details to enlarge upon the lead. (As in I, D, 4.)

### IV. THE SEVERAL-FEATURE STORY

A. Include all features in the lead in order of importance.

"Construction of a \$100,000 Sunday School wing, initiation of a weekly telecast, and the opening of a Christian grade school are long-range plans announced by First Baptist Church this week for completion within the year."

B. Explain and elaborate on each feature in the order presented in the lead.

C. Arrange further details in the order of their decreasing importance.

### V. THE ACTION STORY

A. Use an appropriate novelty lead.

B. Feature the highlights of the story.

C. Put details in chronological order or importance.

D. This form useful in sports and special events stories. (Use strong active verbs.)

### VI. WRITING UP INTERVIEWS AND SPEECHES

A. Summarize the contents in the lead. Provide background for understanding the significance of statements made by the interviewee. Who is he? What has he accomplished? Why is he other-wise worthy of note?

B. Arrange the information in order of importance.

C. Unless question-and-answer style is preferred, alternate direct quotes and summary statements.

### VII. EVALUATION OF THE WRITTEN NEWS STORY

1. Are all the facts there? (5 W's and H)
2. Are facts verified?
3. Is the spelling of names verified and persons mentioned properly identified?
4. Are dates verified?
5. Is the story arranged in order of importance of facts?
6. Is the lead written in a novelty fashion?
7. Does the lead have good transition to the next paragraph?
8. Do paragraphs follow in logical order, with good transition?
9. Does each paragraph begin in an interesting way?
10. Is editorializing eliminated?
11. Is the story concise?
12. Does your use of a direct quote or two add variety and interest to the story?
13. Is the vocabulary simple and specific?
14. Are sentences short and clear?

## Chapter 6

### INTERVIEWS: GET THEM AND WRITE THEM

#### I. WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

Definition: It is the process of obtaining facts for an article, during which the writer asks questions of the subject and records the answers. Basically, the interview is friendly question-and-answer conversation.

#### II. ARRANGING AN INTERVIEW

A. By mail. If time is not a vital consideration, the writer may correspond with the person to be interviewed.

1. He may ask permission to interview and may suggest a possible time and place.

2. If the subject lives in a different town, but is coming to the writer's town, the writer may ask the subject to suggest a convenient time during his stay in the city.

B. By telephone. While slightly more expensive, this is the most definite method of setting up a time and place for interview.

1. If the subject lives in the same city as the writer, a time and place of mutual convenience can easily be arranged.

2. If the subject is visiting the writer's town, the writer should call long distance in advance of the visit and arrange a time of interview.

3. If the writer is visiting the subject's town, a convenient time for the subject should be determined in advance.

### III. PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

A. Have a specific aim for use of the information.

1. The kind of questions will depend upon the use of the information.

2. The subject's time is valuable. Conserve it by adhering to the direction of the interview.

B. Find out something about the subject before the interview.

1. For what is he best known?

2. Does he have an unusual hobby? (Ask mutual friends.)

3. If it is an organization for which the subject is speaking, learn about the purposes and accomplishments of the organization.

4. If the subject is connected with a unique project or organization, learn something about it to be able to ask intelligent questions.

C. List definite questions to draw out needed information.

1. Use questions to find out the 5 W's and H.

2. Use questions to discover the subject's opinion on vital issues, as well as mere facts.

### IV. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

A. Be appreciative of the subject's time at the outset. Appreciation sets a warm atmosphere for the conversation.

B. Cover the questions prepared.

1. If the subject rambles, bring him back to the needed information with a comment and question.

2. If the subject gives consistently inadequate replies, get the names of his pastor and Christian friends who know him well, so information can be obtained from them.

3. Fight down the impulse to express personal opinions. The subject's time is valuable and has been granted so he may talk.

4. Listen carefully to all answers. Unsought information may contain a more vital story than the one planned.

5. Express proper appreciation of the subject's accomplishments and plans. Everyone enjoys being appreciated.

C. Ask questions which come to mind through information provided by the subject.

D. Close the interview when the ground has been covered. The subject's time is valuable. Care at this point will leave the door open for future contacts.

#### V. WRITING THE INTERVIEW

A. Write as soon as possible after the interview, while facts not written down are still in mind.

B. Decide the high point to feature.

C. Organize notes (see chapter 4).

D. Choose an appropriate novelty lead.

E. Be sure of good transition between paragraphs.

F. Include physical description of the subject, weaving in the information at various places.

G. Let the finished article lie on the desk for a few days.

1. When it is "cold," go back over it.

a. Correct all spelling and grammar.

b. Change passive verbs to active.

c. Remove unnecessary words and phrases.

d. Check names for accurate spelling.

e. Be sure persons are identified.

f. If paragraphs have dull wording, change to words of interest.

g. Ask, "If this were not my own article, would I be interested enough to read it?" If not, why not?

- h. Check organization. Is the chronology correct?
- i. Look for words and phrases frequently repeated. Substitute something else.
- j. Make sure any quoted figures are accurate.
- k. Re-type the manuscript double-spaced, allowing at least a one-inch margin on each side and at bottom.
- I. Place your name and address in upper left-hand corner, the word count in upper right.

## Chapter 7

### HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

#### I. DEFINITION

- A. A human interest story usually contains off-the-beaten-path information.
- B. It appeals to the emotions.
- C. It is not necessarily a news story.
- D. Its purpose is, as the name implies, to interest readers.
- E. It is usually under 200 words.
- F. Subject matter is limitless—whatever interests people.
- G. It has a warmer, more personal tone than a news story.

#### II. FINDING HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

- A. Look for them. Develop a habit of curiosity about people and things.
- B. Learn to recognize sources of human interest stories.
  - 1. Any incident which makes people smile or laugh.
  - 2. Any incident that calls forth sympathy.
  - 3. Any unusual incident or situation.
  - 4. A news event which has within it a human interest angle.
    - a. The news event may be the funeral of a great person; the human interest angle may be the kinds of people standing in line all night to view the body before the funeral.

b. A record established or a large project completed; human interest possibility in the people involved.

### III. HOW TO WRITE A HUMAN INTEREST STORY

A. Plan the story before writing.

B. Make an outline.

1. Build up from less important facts to a strong ending, even a surprise ending.

2. Make the story chronological.

C. Plan the emotion you wish to evoke.

D. Select details necessary for that particular emotion; omit others.

E. Present the story in the most interesting way possible.

F. Have a particular reader in mind as you write—not a blur of faces.

G. Build the story around one scene, avoiding the appearance of mere condensation of several scenes.

H. Use a minimum of details and characters.

I. Choose a novelty lead (see chapter 3).

J. Save the “point” of the story till last.

K. Try to include some dialogue, direct quotations.

L. Build suspense, if possible, toward the finish.

M. Explain just enough of the point for readers to guess the rest and put themselves in the situation.

N. Do not moralize (“Now, dear reader, this means. . .”)

O. Avoid generalization.

1. Say “maple,” not just “tree.”

P. Use active verbs; move quickly.

Q. Observe all the rules of good writing.

## Chapter 8

### STYLE

#### I. DEFINITION

“Rules of uniformity used in a printing or publishing house in matters of punctuation, capitalization, word division, spelling and other details of expression—many of which vary according to custom.” (A Manual of Style).

#### II. RULES FOR PREPARING COPY FOR PRINTER

- A. Type all copy double-spaced on 8 1/2 x 11” typing paper, one side only.
- B. Type your name and address in the upper left-hand corner; put word count in upper right. (Some publishers will return an article simply because the word count is not recorded.)
- C. Double-space twice down from the last line of your address. Type the title.
- D. Double-space twice down from the title before beginning the first paragraph.
- E. Leave a one-inch margin on each side and at bottom. On all but the first page leave a two-inch margin at top.
- F. On each page, put an abbreviated form of the title in the upper left-hand corner, together with the number of the page.

#### III. FOLLOWING A PUBLISHER’S STYLE

- A. Copy paper is furnished by some publishers, with instructions to type within a narrow column.
- B. Some publishers wish all copy typed on regular typing paper, but with a specific number of characters per line.
- C. Some publishers have house “Style books.” A regular contributor must follow this guide in all matters of style. (See definition above.)
- D. Where no Style book is furnished, most publishers and newspapers follow the precedent of the Chicago Manual of Style. Rules of English, grammar and publishing are detailed in it. It is a valuable book for a writer’s library.
- E. Writers’ Magazines

At least once a year, Writer’s Digest and The Writer have various types of brush-up courses in grammar for writers. Articles continually point up the importance, from the editor’s standpoint, of accuracy in all matters of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and word usage.

Word usage changes. A writer should be a continuing student. He should know what new trends are, what new words are being coined, and how far to go in adopting their use.

#### F. Neatness counts

The care with which a manuscript is presented indicates to an editor the type of writer who presented it. If the manuscript is sloppy, an editor may assume the writer has also been careless about the research and facts. If it is neat and accurate, an editor is more likely to give it careful reading.

University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.

## Chapter 9

### RULES FOR WRITERS

#### NOTE

It is absolutely **MANDATORY AND IMPERATIVE** that you follow these rules **IMPLICITLY** most of the time, insofar as it may seem inconvenient and practical for you to do so.

1. Take every effort necessary appropriate steps, measures and counter-measures to shun and avoid the employment or utilization of every possible, practicable waste of unnecessary, superfluous, supererogatory, excess extra words.

2. Make certain all your sentences are full and complete. If possible.

3. At all costs, avoid clichés as you would the plague.

4. Take pains to spell and, punctuate: correctly.”

V. Be consistent.

6. Don't be approximate. Always be more or less precise.

7. Sedulously eschew obfuscatory hyperverbosity, prolixity, and pedantically nycteric or sesquipedalian pseudointellectualism.

8. What we're trying to tell you, roughly, is that we have pretty nearly made up our minds that it would be kind of preferable a situation if you said what you meant and meant what you said and at least this seems to be a vaguely gathered consensus of our present thinking at the present time and we also presently believe that your writing would be more presentable if you would present it essentially as free of repetitions as it is presently possible. At present. And don't express more than one thought at a time.

9. And, finally, as a summation at the conclusion, we wish to close by saying, in all written expression, it is of the foremost qualification--if not, certainly not or less than-- at least definitely secondary then, the importance of whenever possibly trying, so than when, except where it cannot be avoided and/or further necessary development it becomes imperative to omit, yet, keep economical and remember without fail (for this must not be underestimated, underemphasized, slighted of underscorement nor, especially overlooked) of being brief and clear. This is vital.

10. And one last final point to well remember is the extreme importance of being always very neat and careful and workmanlike in everything you do.

## PART B

### Chapter 1

#### WRITE? –WHO —YOU?

“Of making many books there is no end,” said the wisest man who ever lived (Eccl. 12:12). Another proof of the veracity of the Word of God. There is still no end of books—not to mention articles and short stories. The Book of books in which Solomon’s words were recorded stands unique in its ability to speak to all men in all ages. It is the written Word of the immutable God. Because the hymn writer could accurately sigh, “Change and decay in all around I see,” the written precepts of men (and women) are included. While the “classics” are termed enduring and are retained in literature curricula, English students are not admonished to emulate their style. Content, style, need—these are the variables. And they vary with the changing perception and needs of the readers.

Each new crop of readers implies a new crop of writers—their contemporaries—similar in background and need, students of human nature with some of the answers. For writers do not become “the second Mr. Great-Great.” Each is the first and only Himself. As one such writer commented, “Your world is your mind. . . Your perception of it gives it life.” No two writers perceive an identical event alike, for each sees with his own background. When the subconscious finishes adding it up, the result has to be different.

“If you write a better book. . . the world will beat a path to your door,” to paraphrase a familiar quote. The words could only be true of the written page, for 90 percent of spoken words, unrecorded, will perish from conscious memory. Printed words can traverse the world, dispensing their aid and truth “to subjects and to kings.”

Why then confine one’s Christian ministry to a single class or congregation of ever so many hundreds--when the tens of thousands may share the message in print? Why be content to see the few lives blessed and transformed, when the same impact may go out in print and affect so many more lives? WRITE? WHO—YOU? WHO? YOU!

HOW?

Although the rest of the volume is devoted to answering how-to, briefly here is the how.

1. One word at a time. It frightens some students (classroom or independent) to contemplate the bare white page hanging out of a typewriter. The way to begin is to begin. Truer words were never spoken than “Begin it and the task is half-completed.” If you have something to say (and what servant of God has not?), start saying it. At first, forget concern over organization, sequence, finesse—just get it down on paper.

2. Getting it down is done in varying ways by different people. If typing is a skill at which even the biblical system is mastered (“seek and ye shall find”), words typed on paper are easiest to go back and work over.

3. If you do not type and you are cramped by the slowness of longhand, resort to cassette recording. Speak into the mike as to an imagined audience of one or more, whom you earnestly desire to reach with your message, letting the tape absorb the thoughts. Have it transcribed double-spaced, for editing and revising. Spoken words are not often quite as captivating when transferred to paper.

## HELPERS

Even as great a writer as Rudyard Kipling had help—from the same servants every writer must engage:

“I keep six honest Serving Men—They taught me all I know.

Their names are WHAT and WHY and WHEN. And WHERE and HOW and WHO.”  
(Kipling)

WHAT. –What shall you write? The three-word answer takes in a whole world of territory. What you know. But it does not at all confine the writer to autobiography or personal philosophy. In essence it means, Know what you are writing about.

The what also includes “about whom you have permission to write.” Much what can be learned by the grapevine, be it printed or spoken—but there must be permission for its use from the subject, and accuracy must be checked. Lawsuits remove so much from one’s savings and reputation. A national sports figure was included in a book on Christian athletes, with some inaccurate, unchecked facts in the article. Said he, “Anyone who knew the sports facts would recognize the inaccuracy. He would then wonder about the truth of my Christian testimony also.”

What the apostle Paul wrote was what his readers needed to hear. He wrote with purpose. What he wrote is still meeting needs, because the need he met was universal, and the answers were God-breathed. “I hear that there are divisions among you,” he wrote. “These things ought not so to be” (1 Cor. 11:18).

WHY. –The Christian writer will answer: Primarily, because of the power of the pen—or the type-writer, to update the cliché. Discerning readers of daily papers, even fans of regular newscasts, acknowledge that the reporting of news events is “slanted” by those doing the

reporting. Events, viewed through their eyes, are interpreted according to their background and philosophy of life. What if a Christian did the interpreting?

A quiet little preacher's wife (daughter of the minister Lyman Beecher), Harriet Beecher Stowe, sister of a great pulpiteer of his day, Henry Ward Beecher, recorded "scenes" of her personal reaction to the tragedy of slavery in her day—and moved a nation with Uncle Tom's Cabin. Charles M. Sheldon, in the immortal *In His Steps*, tossed out a question which became the criterion for Christian living for decades to come: "What would Jesus do?" His characters lived out the answer, proving it feasible.

"Saturation" is the principle upon which the great Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, was built. The formula of the pastor, Dr. Jerry Falwell, is simply: "Reaching every available person by every available means at every available time." The ministry of the printed page is one of the "available means." Multiplied millions of pieces of literature roll off the Old-Time Gospel Hour Press annually, keeping people aware of the church and the Christ for Whom it stands.

The power of influence is one side of the coin of Why. The by-products are the other. You meet the nicest people—other kinds, too, but they are the minority. Consider the privilege of knowing as friends some outstanding contemporary Christians. The writer of true-life stories has a built-in excuse to inter view and thus get personally acquainted with the men and women known to the masses only by reputation or platform appearance.

The writer makes from experience the generalization: the truly great are gracious. He finds that big-name Christians have hearts to match: to wit, the strongest man in the world, Paul Anderson, with a gentle handshake and a superlative smile, admits he writes poetry. And Tom Lester ("Eb" of Green Acres) says he deliberately sought renown in order to be heard for Jesus. Also among the great are some obscure missionaries whose heroism and faith have changed whole cultures.

WHEN. "Every available time" may not be often enough. As Margaret Culkin Banning once delineated in an article, "You do have time for that." One always has time for what to him is essential and important. James C. Hefley stays on the road and in the air in pursuit of facts for his multitudinous true-life articles and books, but he makes time to shape them into submissions to editors. His by-line graces the pages of a wide variety of publications. Likewise, Elmer Towns, nationally known large-church and Christian education authority, is an air million-miler—but he makes time to get his deductions on paper and into best-sellers.

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WHERE. Circumstances alter cases, and to each his own. The “writer’s paradise” of a tranquil isolated nook is beyond reach of all except perhaps the minority of successful writers, who probably got there via a basement-corner desk or the kitchen table. As in prayer, the Christian writer “goes into his closet” apart from the world. He may not even be bodily removed from family and distraction, yet voluntarily shuts them out of his awareness by intense concentration as he unburdens his soul on paper. Some don’t want even the ticking of a clock in the same room, while others prefer a background of continuous music.

HOW. Less fluent penmen have been heard to generalize: “Writers are born, not made.” As with any Christian gift, it is true that some are gifted to a degree which exceeds that of another. As with any gift of the Spirit, as often as not a Christian with a lesser gift than another may work so hard to develop that gift, that in the long run he excels the other. The parable of the tortoise and the hare is ever contemporary.

The gift of writing, per se, may not be the apparent talent at all. The actual gift may be teaching; yet teaching done on paper becomes writing. The gift may be comforting; again,

comforting on paper becomes writing. Therefore, to state, “I have no ability to write” may be in error. One who is an authority in any field can become a writer in that field, putting on paper his authority—with the added incentive that his income will increase proportionately.

The editorially acceptable form of putting the know-how on paper is detailed and illustrated in the ensuing chapters of this book. Techniques are essential in any art. So is perseverance.

“If you think you’re beaten, you are. If you think you dare not, you don’t.

If you’d like to win, but think you can’t, It’s almost a cinch you won’t.

WHO? YOU!

## Chapter 2

### GET STARTED

“I know what I want to say, but I don’t know how to say it.” Incredible as it often sounds, especially to the teacher who has just asked a question, the speaker may be absolutely sincere. Experts in many fields cannot pass on their expertise to others and “their works do perish with them.” If they could only have known Kipling’s *Serving Men*, they could have learned the knack of organizing their thoughts.

But even that able assistance will avail nothing, unless actual writing is begun. For this craft, James 1:22 may well be abbreviated as: “Be ye doers.” The way to learn to swim is to get into the water and start paddling. Reading ponderous dissertations on the sport will not result in mastery, without the plunge into the water. The analogy couldn’t be more apt. The best any book on writing may accomplish is to guide the one who sits down to begin the real work of writing. WORK? Yes. Writing is hard work. To have written is pleasure. And you can’t have one without the other.

“Look in thy heart and write,” admonished a sixteenth-century writer. One with heart full of the Word of God, a longing to share His love, or the purpose to inspire and challenge, will find in his heart something to write. For each, the words on paper will be different. A painful aspect of writing is the enforced heart-searching. “Know thyself” is unavoidable. “Reading maketh a full man—writing an exact one,” asserted Bacon. The demand for accuracy forces the search. Lew Wallace set about to prove Jesus Christ an imposter. When he assembled his carefully researched facts and examined his heart, Ben Hur pointed the world to the Son of God.

In writing, as in Christian education, consecrated incompetence is still incompetence. Within a single class or congregation, incompetence may get by. But an incompetent writer will never get past the editor’s desk. There are basic principles to follow to assure at least consideration.

Basic journalism—writing—usually begins with the nonfiction form. Because news writing is the most easily understood form of nonfiction, this is the point at which to latch onto the Serving Men and discover their indispensability. Newsmen describe a simple report as “an inverted triangle.” In essence this means assembling all the pertinent facts in the first sentence or two and adding any embellishments after that. The “heavy” side, the long base of the triangle, is thus on top. That is where the Serving Men are. (See part A, chapter 2).

Test the process with the following assortment of facts: Shreveport, Louisiana; Dr. Elbert Marshall, pastor of Calvary Tabernacle; he is in Memorial Hospital; he had a one-car accident; he broke only one arm; the accident happened on the way to church Sunday morning; rain was pouring and the road was wet; the accident occurred on Franklin Street.

Find the Serving Men. Underline each and give him a name. Now organize the facts into a sentence or two describing what happened. Add words where needed, or rearrange the words given. After the salient facts have been stated on the base of the triangle, continue to the next paragraph and dream up the possible cause for the accident. Then add what effect this had on the morning service. Did he start the trip early enough so that the break was set and he preached as usual? Those facts go on down to the point of the triangle.

Pick up any daily newspaper and choose a few front-page articles. Underline and identify the Serving Men. Experiment with the result of juggling the facts from one story to another: from one item write down WHO; from another choose WHAT; from the next WHERE, and so on. As in the old parlor game of “And I,” put the new assortment of facts together in the inverted triangle. Every item is constructed with a similar framework, but every item is different, because the Serving Men are different. But in news reporting, each one is important.

Within a city, even news reporting is a competitive art. For one reason or another, readers select a favorite newspaper. The sportswriter for one paper may captivate with his picturesque metaphors. The police reporter may invite readership to another with addition of human interest to crime items. All of which adds up to stating another “eternal triangle” for the writer: no matter what form his writing may take, FACTS must INTEREST the READER.

And that “fact of life” for the writer is sometimes difficult for the Christian worker to assimilate. The preacher and the Sunday School teacher have for their weekly speaking a captive audience. The listeners will be there, and they will not get up and leave (usually) until the dismissal bell. They may not come back, but they will stay. But the writer of the same information must first CAPTURE his audience and then HOLD them if they are to hear him through – on paper.

The Christian writer, say, expounds the Word of God--the Words of life, of truth, of power. Those are the facts. Unfortunately, the imparter of such truth cannot assume that his own eagerness is shared, nor that his exposition will meet with agreement. If the reader is to discover the writer’s intent, he must be lured through the first paragraph. A slow start may lose him. That opener must convince him it is worth his while to pursue the dissertation—for his own benefit.

Again, for the purpose of illustration and exercise, let us resort to the basic news story. There is nothing particularly fascinating in the statement: “The School Board will meet on

Tuesday night at the city hall.” It begins to grab Mr. Homeowner, however, if the report launches out: “The feasibility of the merger of Lincoln County High with Central City High will be determined in a meeting of the School Board on Tuesday night at City Hall, according to Chairman I. M. Bigg.”

Bring the illustration next door. If this study is being pursued in a Christian college context, the basic college paper news item might state: “James Pitts arrived on campus Saturday from Decatur, Georgia. He will be a transfer junior in the pastors course.” In the first place, the item would probably not make even page 8. There is nothing significant in the bare facts as given. Who is James Pitts? A basketball star from Tech? A former big-name-band musician? Did he walk, fly, run? Was he working, living, or fulfilling a temporary engagement in Decatur? What has he accomplished? What is his aim? Now James Pitts takes on identity. There are facts, but INTERESTING facts have been added. Certain readers, at least, will reread the item. The number of coeds in that last group will be whittled down with the addition of the sentence, “Mr. Pitts and his wife, Sandra, and their two sons will reside at Classy Hall.”

“Write about what you know.” Narrow the “know” down to “whom you know” in this college, and make a personal test of the formula. List on paper some questions which will obtain the Serving Men, K and add questions to provide answers of INTEREST. Make an appointment with the subject-person and answers to WHY, choose an interesting fact for the opening sentence. Why should the reader find the item of interest? Use that answer for your lead, or opening paragraph.

Practice with facts you already have at hand—your own. Interview yourself for the Serving Men; choose an interesting anecdote that illustrates your reason for coming to this college. Starting an article with a story of illustration is called an “anecdotal lead.” It leads the reader to pursue the rest of the article. Now write the lead and the rest of the article.

There are other ways to jump into a report of any kind, with statements which are known as NOVELTY LEADS. Such statements can take the form of a direct quotation which aptly summarizes the forthcoming information. “This is a triumphant life: to have your A-string break and to finish on three strings.” The statement introduced the life story of the poet Annie Johnson Flint, whose A-string (her piano ability) was broken by arthritis and who finished triumphantly via poetry.

The novelty lead may be a question, with the answer following: How can a mother prepare for near-normal living a son born without arms or legs? “The way my mother did,” asserts the indomitable “Little Richard” Miller.

The novelty lead may also be a highlight of the story. “Imagine a 370-pound man jumping rope—at ‘hot pepper’ speed! That’s Paul Anderson, the world’s strongest man. His great weight comes in muscle, not fat.” (God’s Strong Man,” Junior Discoveries.)

Now you are started. What did you start out to say? What is the purpose or aim of the article? In what order should the facts appear? Chapter 3 advises, “Get Organized.”

## Chapter 3

### GET ORGANIZED

Announcing the meeting of a school body, the scribbled notice to the daily paper concluded, “Come and get organized.” The place should have been packed with writers. Editors need only scan an unsolicited contribution to discover the lack of organization, which causes them to return the manuscript with at least the mental note: “Pardon—your bungling is showing.”

A disorganized article presents all the efficiency and helpfulness of a history teacher who spends five minutes of the hour on the American Indians, the next five on the feudal system of the Middle Ages, the next ten on the Civil War. His students would have little concept of chronology, unless they were inclined toward independent research. Editors do not impose such independence on their readers. They know that their publication is read by busy people who desire to learn facts they do not themselves have time to acquire first-hand. And they want those facts, preferably, in sugar-coated pills of perfection. The readers may not be able to put B after A, but they know how they wish the writer to do it—just as the man who is not a Christian can tell a Christian how he (the Christian) ought to live.

It might be an overstatement to assume that writers’ methods of organizing the content of articles are as diverse as the writers themselves, but perhaps that statement approximates the truth. Some of the possible routes to take include:

1. MENTAL ONLY.—Some authors assert, “The article comes out fully formed. I’ve already written it in my head, sometimes for years. The typing is merely writing it down.” Countless articles in *The Writer* and *Writer’s Digest* attest to the ability of one’s subconscious mind to aid in the process of organization. The writer goes to sleep thinking about the article he is struggling with. “What is the most dynamic point at which to begin? Which fact is most powerful to illustrate the thesis? Because that is true, what is the result? Then what?” Leaving the problem in his inbuilt computer, he wakes in the morning with the logical answers. But all computers depend upon what is fed into them.

2. MAKE NOODLES.—“Dumplings” more aptly describes the size. One writer sat down and wrote himself “dry” of information on his subject. After it got cold, he took up the pages and dissected them into strips, according to content. Strip No. 2 might well end up as No. 10, while No. 12 might become the lead paragraph. He rearranged all the paragraphs in what seemed to him the most logical sequence, stapled them to 8 x 11 paper and retyped.

For the writer who prefers to dictate on cassette tape, such a mode could be useful; interruptions during dictation often prevent clear sequence. This method is in essence similar to a Sunday School department’s use of the Time Line device in following the progress of biblical history. Strips of paper with various dates and facts are attached to a heavy string tied between two chairs or strung across the chalkboard.

Making notes on cards and filing them sequentially is another means to the same end.

3. MAKE AN OUTLINE. –The suggestion may be as ironic as saying, “When all else fails, read the instructions.” It is another way of stating, “Look at the road map and find out where Portland is in relation to Salt Lake City. Write down which route you prefer to take to Portland, which cities you want to visit on the way.” (If you come to Junction City, and there was no Junction City on the map or on your list of cities, you do a quick retake and find out where you got off the main road!)

Rambling is just a milder way to describe bungling. Both mean the same thing, in the final analysis. Sit down with that information, the answers to that questionnaire, the results of that interview:

a. What is the most important thing you want the article to say? What is the reason for writing it, aside from the remuneration involved? Is there a direct quotation which will present this thought with punch? Can you ask a question which would make this “important thing” the logical answer?

b. Give a good illustration to substantiate the declaration of Point No. 1.

c. Subsequent points will depend on the theme. More subdivisions will be required for treatment of some theses than for others. Essentially the principle points will say, This is true. And that assertion will be followed by an anecdote or two which declare, this proves the truth, or this illustrates that truth.

And here follows another difference in method from author to author. Some writers adhere religiously (no pun intended) to the “three points and a poem” which preachers find homiletical. “The Magic Three,” one described this formula. He not only had three main points to his outline, but three adjectives to describe each point. And three illustrations for each truth.

On the other hand, another distinguished writer, who is also an editor, follows a formula of four parts: the lead, the subject, development, and conclusion. Under the third point, of course, he could range far and wide, with numberless subdivisions.

It becomes clear that writing demands of the writer certain inescapable logic. To some writers, this means being as clear-cut as the novice pulpiteer who explained his procedure: “First I tells ‘em what I’m gonna tell ‘em; then I tells em; then I tells ‘em what I done told ‘em.” When the reader has arrived at the end of an article, however, he should know what he has been told, without a summary of it in recap. While the art of the interview is treated in chapter 6, note should be made here of its impact on organization, if any. With a clear outline for organization of the findings, the writer may approach an interview. But when he gets to question three, he may find that the interviewee is a first-class rambler. Ask him a simple question and he travels from here to yonder and actually skirts the reply. His answer has really covered question nine instead. And this hassle is repeated more than once. The resultant notes are a hodge-podge, which must be stripped, “noodle-fashion.”

The actual outline, or even the interview, must be tailored according to the plan for the completed article. The same essential facts may wind up in several different forms—just as a piece of steel may become needles, a hammer, a frying pan. The treatment depends on the desired product. For instance, in *Writer’s Yearbook ‘72* Bonnie Remsberg carried the facts on

hindrances to learning (in schools) through their use as (1) a simple news report; (2) a newspaper feature; (3) a magazine article; (4) a nonfiction book; and (5) a television documentary.

The Christian writer may set out to discover the facts for a newspaper announcement about the imminent visit of an outstanding servant of God. He learns from the pastor one body of facts. Arranging for an interview with the personage, he discovers exciting information about the visitor, which will cause more people to be interested. So he decides to write a newspaper feature story instead. Therein, he will intersperse anecdotes with the facts, making the personage come alive. But why waste all that good information on just a newspaper story? According to *Writer's Market* or the December issue (annually) of *The Writer*, such-and-such a religious magazine likes true-life stories about laymen of the stature of your subject. With a picture or two, the article could reach thousands of Christians with a challenge to go and do likewise--and increase the income from the same interview. With the subject's cooperation, if his life story has not been put into book form, he may discover the subject had a childhood that would thrill the 8-12 market. Or he may be a hero that teenagers would emulate. More facts and effective organization will extend the results into a book—which could interest TV producers.

Whatever the final form, quit when you're through. Chapter 4 will detail ways to do it.

## Chapter 4

-30-\*

As with every other facet of life—performance of music, art, even athletic contests—the most vital parts of an article are the beginning and the ending. Humorists have split sides of TV viewers over the spectacle of would-be car drivers who could start the vehicle but did not know how to stop it. Or the small-airplane pilot who kept going because he did not know how to land. Editors don't split their sides over articles which keep going because the author does not know how or where to end. The ending is no more accidental than stopping a car or landing a plane.

\*Printer's term for "the end"

A good ending does not "coast" indefinitely; it has a finish. Repetitious summarizing of content fails to reach a conclusion (i.e., "First I tell 'em what I'm gonna say, then I say it, and then I tell 'em what I said. If the message is not obvious, rehashing it won't do the job.

A good ending 100 years ago—at least a common ending—was the appended "And so, dear reader" moral. The sacrificial hard work of a poverty-stricken youth was noticed and handsomely rewarded by a wealthy philanthropist. "And so, dear reader, we see that it pays to do our best at all times. We never know who is watching." This is condescending to the reader, belittling his intelligence. If the "moral" is not inherent in the account, the ending is too late to present it.

"Three points and a poem" is an alleged sermon formula. Regardless of the number of points in an article, a poem rarely serves as an adequate ending.

In ending any procedure, the mode is determined by the vehicle in motion.

1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH. After presenting testimony and current accomplishments and witness of a subject; wind up the story with a paragraph of PROJECTION of his future plans. This type finish would also be used with a feature story concerning a church, youth group, or other organization.

Recounting in Power “The Trials and Triumphs of a Present-Day Pioneer,” I detailed the heroic and phenomenal ministry of Sophie Muller, of New Tribes Mission. The article described Sophie’s relentless onslaught on the forces of Satan among the wild Indian tribes of Colombia, where there were no Christians at all when she went out in 1945, and where there are now more than 20,000 believers. After telling of her most recent pursuit of an elusive, unevangelized tribe, the Cuivas, and their initial rebuff, I concluded the article:

“Even if those Cuivas would not respond, countless other Indians have. Within the last five years God has opened the door to Colombia and many other New Tribes missionaries have entered the field. But the battle will continue, Sophie Muller says, until the last tribe has had an opportunity to hear the glad tidings of the hope of glory and eternal life.”

“Daddy’s Tooth-Pulling Vacations” in Counselor featured Dr. Jack Fuson, of Knoxville, Tennessee, who vacationed in Guyana in missionary-dental work. Told by his two sons, the story contains their testimony as well. The projection-ending says:

“When we get to high school, we hope to go with Daddy on one of his tooth-pulling vacations as helpers. We’re glad that Daddy has already helped so many people with unhealthy teeth. We hope a lot of them will trust Jesus as Saviour.”

“Life for Lumberjacks” detailed the ministry of the Shantymen’s Christian Association in Canada, in The Sunday School Times (1959). It winds up:

“They find less antagonism today than formerly, when almost all of the European-born lumberjacks were communistic. While many of the men today are from Europe or of European parentage, the larger number have lost faith in Communism and the Utopia it held out for them. . . . Even though the thermometer may register thirty below zero, the S.C.A. missionaries will be out reaching the unreached in the frozen North.”

2. On the other hand, if the purpose of a feature story is to point up a particular phase of an organization, an outstanding accomplishment, then a CONCLUDING QUOTATION can wrap up the thrust of the article. An author may not interject his own words, but he can express his sentiments through the words of another.

Author Carol Bostrom uses this device in concluding “Circuit Team Teaching” (Teach, Summer 1970). Her advice ends with:

“Circuit team teaching—preparation—follow-up ... does it pay off? Miss Kelly points to the cooperative attitudes of the junior highs as one indication that it does. ‘They’re highly motivated,’ she says, ‘and so they’ve got to be learning more.’”

3. An ANECDOTE can highlight the major emphasis of a feature, a devotional, a travel article. It may illustrate an outstanding characteristic of the faithful, courageous, or sacrificial Christian. A children's story about composer John W. Peterson (Counselor, June 1972) ended with an anecdote about his ending of letters. "Mr. Peterson gets many letters. Men and women and boys and girls write to thank him for his songs.... He closes all his replies with 'Sing'cerely yours.'"

Closing another children's story of a famous man, I illustrated Paul Anderson's character with these words:

"Junior boys and girls know that the strongest man in the world is also one of the kindest. After he has worked hard showing his God-given strength, he often writes as fast as he can push a pencil for an hour or so afterward, autographing programs for boys who want to grow up to be God's strong men."

4. An entire devotional article might be held together by the framework of a SINGLE ANECDOTE, begun in the opening paragraphs and finished in the conclusion. In prose, this principle is illustrated by "Too Much of a Good Thing," (Young People's Delight, Sept. 1951). It opened:

"It is amazing but true--Clover is good for cows, but cows will die if they eat too much of it. They must be watched carefully in the spring, or they will be found dead from partaking too freely of something that is good for them."

The devotional meditated about the life of a Christian named Mary, who overdid her service to God. The article concluded, "When DOING crowds out BEING, it becomes 'too much of a good thing.' If you observe symptoms of overeating of clover, bring home the cows!"

In poetry, the method was framed effectively around the first and last stanzas of "Rain – Pain." The devotional opened with "is it raining, little flower? Be glad of rain. Too much sun would wither thee—"Twill shine again." Comparing the floral reaction with life, the idea of surcease from sorrow was clinched by the last stanza: "Art thou weary, tender heart? Be glad of pain. In sorrow sweetest things will grow, as flowers in rain. God watches, and thou wilt have sun when clouds their perfect work have done."

5. ONE-WORD endings can pack a punch, if that word has been planted at strategic intervals throughout the article, as a pivot for transition. Such a word could be SACRIFICE. The word could be sprinkled throughout a devotional with accounts of actual sacrifice, but also with pseudo-sacrifice—after which the closing one word SACRIFICE would be particularly pithy, perhaps satirical.

6. A BRIEF SUMMARIZING STATEMENT could end a how-to or travel piece. "Teaching Tips from an Expert" (Senior Bible Teacher) challenged teachers to follow the example of Jesus, the Master Teacher. It ended:

"Jesus commissioned the students in His three-year teacher training class, saying, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . .all things whatsoever I have commanded you' (Matt. 28:19-20). For three years they had learned. Now they were qualified teachers. What a pattern for any

local church to follow today! The original teacher training class turned the world right-side up with Christ's truths... and any adequately trained group of trained group of teachers today can do the same."

Whatever the mode of applying the brakes, when a vehicle stops, there is no doubt of it. It ceases motion. The same feeling of certainty should accompany the satisfying end of an article.

Ending and title may well tie together. When the article has been ended, it is time to choose a name. Some editors are indifferent to any name chosen, for they prefer to rename the article to conform with company style. Others respond to a catchy or concise title. Some considerations in the choice follow:

1. A summary thought from near the ending may be highlighted in the title.
2. The author, knowing in advance the truth he wishes to convey, writes the title first. When he arrives at "30," he uses the title words in the final wrap-up.
3. The article may take its name from the open words (and vice versa). "Yep, I have a dummy named Jerry," David Maxheim is quoted as saying in article about him and his dummy. The title quoted the words, without the word Yep.
4. The title may pick up a question asked near the beginning of an article, significant to the thesis.

Whatever the choice, a title should have plenty of white space above and below, in case of editorial preference for a substitute.

## Chapter 5

### GETTING IDEAS

The writer's EYE has been discussed at length, with entire books about how the writer must SEE what he looks at, to be able to interpret to the reader. But writers also have ears and the three other senses of taste, touch, and smell- and so do readers. Through all these sources, both writer and reader gain impressions which they interpret according to their previous background. A whiff of wood smoke will send the sniffer back to a childhood around an open fire. The plaintive cry of seagulls, the swish of the surf recalls the big sun-burn or the wiener roast at the beach. The stab of sharp pain brings to mind another time, another place where a similar experience took place. (A funeral summons old griefs to the surface.) Every experience in a writer's day-to-day life becomes a source of ideas.

#### EYES

SEE. Really see the objects in a room, the colors of the sunset, the expressions on faces. A simple test will reveal to you just how much registers in casual observation: Shut your eyes, then describe what is in the room where you sit. Now, open eyes and compare. Embarrassing?

For deeper chagrin, attempt to describe the facial features of a close friend. What color are the eyes? What is the tilt of the nose? Does the mouth have a definite “cupid’s bow” or is the upper lip straight across? It is cliché that “We see with what we are.” We see according to what we are. We see what we are. We see what we are looking for. An Italian visitor to the United States wrote home about his sight-seeing. His letters described Italian architecture, Italian foods, and Italian customs. He was looking for Italy in America.

“Pamela was here.” That childish scrawl on an adult classroom chalkboard inspired a book. While the learned teacher of 50 ladies discoursed from her copious notes, eyes strayed over her shoulder to the chalkboard behind her. That which may have been her ally became a distraction. “Pamela was here.” Pamela who? Why was she here? When? If the teacher had put her own message on the board, she would have assured five times as great retention of her teaching. But the class departed with Pamela’s message in mind, while 90 percent of the teacher’s speech was forgotten. The incident led the author to meditate upon the shortsighted failure of many Sunday School teachers to apply the principles of teaching to which they have been exposed. The first “shot” of training was weakening; a booster was needed. How many other boosters were needed? Consideration turned up 52 altogether, one for each week of a church year of teacher’s meetings. The resulting book was *Yelling for Help* (Moody Press, 1972). Three words on a chalkboard became a book.

One chapter in that book—one “booster shot”—was another OBSERVATION, this one in a Junior boys’ classroom in a city church large enough to have provided the best in training. Yet a dozen II-year-olds sat in a semicircle fact the glare of an east window totally bereft of any kind of drapery. “Decorate for Discipline” was born.

## EARS

LISTEN. Really listen. Conversations reveal problems, joys, triumphs. Conversations reveal character. “Speak that I may know thee,” Socrates bade his hearers. Listen to your interviewee. What does his conversation reveal of his disposition? Listen to people, even those you don’t know. In a plush Chicago restaurant a recent college graduate whiled away nearly two hours eating. She commented to her lady friend: “Mother is so worried about me. There is just simply nothing to do. I’ve read two book-length novels already this week, and it isn’t even half gone yet.” What a send-off for a devotional on the subject of “Time.”

Melodies recall former associations with the tune. Melodies also recall the words, words which may be overlooked by an instrumentalist concerned with the performance. A soft, sweet melody may be soothing background for prayer, but some hearer may recall the words. That was true the morning special prayer was requested in a Washington, D.C., church for a young mother who would undergo 8-hour cancer surgery the next day. As a deacon began the prayer, the organ background music sounded forth with the strains of “I Won’t Have to Cross Jordan Alone.” Putting the incident together with others in similar vein, the incongruity was proclaimed under the title of “Look What They’ve Done to My Song, Ma” (Church Musician, April 1972).

Television viewing need not be a waste of time, if ears are attuned for article possibilities. Charles Kurault’s newscast highlighted the annual migration of butterflies to Pacific Grove, California, one fall night. What guided these Monarch butterflies to the same place year after

year? The commentator left the impression of mystery too great to solve. Actually, the answer lay in the words of a song lisped even by four-year olds: “Our heavenly Father made the birds, He shows them what to do. It made a good Junior-age article, fictionized in the experience of a Junior boy and girl.

The sound of barking dogs led to a human-interest newspaper feature about a blind wirehair terrier. Following the sound, this reporter saw a fenced-in pen of wirehairs. In conversation with the breeder, she soon was pointed to the real story—the blind dog which recognized his owner after his return from three years overseas.

One story leads to another. Almost invariably during conversation with an interviewee, he will mention a friend who is an expert along the same line, or whose Christian testimony is even more amazing, in his estimation. During interview, too, his chance remark will often reveal that the real heart of his own story lies deeper than previous information showed. Alert listening is vital to such discovery.

#### FEET

“Have Typewriter, Will Travel” was the title of a travel article. The feet are useful to transport the eyes and the ears of the writer to the location of ideas. “No man is an island”-- certainly not a writer. Isolation may aid in concentration during the actual writing, but, overdone, it leads to “running dry.” Through association with readers, a writer feels the pulse of interest, views and hears their needs, and becomes aware of their accomplishments. Travel within the county (or even the block) will unearth facts, sights and sounds otherwise unavailable. Whether the feet be on the ground or in the air, the germ of an article may be transmitted on contact. “Feet in the air” some years ago showed the author for the first time the silver lining of clouds. A jet plane shot up through the overcast sky on the West Coast, into the bright world of sunshine above, revealing the fleecy white carpet below. The analogy became a devotional entitled “Above the Clouds.”

#### NOSE

A good reporter has a “nose for news”—literally. Riding through an industrial area, a writer, via the nose, may become aware of a nationally known manufacturing plant, making a product familiar to children. Featuring a child touring the plant, preferably with a Christian layman employed there, an article could result for a Sunday School magazine. Odors, just as songs, can be nostalgic for a writer. He can make them become so for the readers.

#### ANY PRINTED MATERIAL

“What are your favorite books?” a nationally known Christian poet was asked. “The Bible and the encyclopedia, .” was her rather astonishing reply. Certainly two of the most provocative sources of ideas—universal in scope, both mentally and geographically. Any printed article or story can be a side street to an entirely different angle stemming from the same information. A composer applied this principle. Capitalizing on the long-time barbershop quartet favorite “Heart of My Heart, I Love You So,” Ben Ryan wrote it another way. He called it “The Gang That Sang ‘Heart of My Heart’ .”

Ben Ryan did “creative thinking.” Courses in creative thinking illustrate the mind’s take-off from a given point to follow known facts to new scenes. Pursuing a how-to-article on bus ministry for instance, led the writer to the side road of Junior Church, which was an outgrowth of the overflow church crowd resulting from bus ministry. At another time, a printed article with the Christian testimony of an expert photographer led to inquiry about the photographer’s methods in producing appealing photos—a different emphasis entirely, yet about the same person.

## FRIENDS

“I sell my friends,” one writer admitted unblushingly. Acquaintance with a fellow Christian often reveals that person worthy of a written testimony. He might be an outstanding craftsman or businessman whose words about Christ could carry weight to others in his field. Nearly every person has a story—to the extent that most early compositions of writers are more or less autobiographical. All writing inevitably reveals much about the writer. Not infrequently friends (as well as interviewees) point a writer to ideas or to persons they know. Their concern may open avenues otherwise outside the writer’s scope of knowledge. Whether or not an idea thus tossed out proves useful, the writer’s expressed appreciation will retain the friendship.

How to get ideas inevitably becomes expanded into “How to win friends.” Genuine interest in the accomplishment and service of another begets appreciation. Among a writer’s best friends will logically be those about whom he has written. The writer has given that person the gift of appreciative listening.

Ideas are everywhere. Keep a purse or pocket notebook in which to jot them as they flit through your mind. Begin an expanding or card subject file. On the day you face a blank sheet of paper, asking, “What shall I write about?” the fount of ideas will gush forth fresh thoughts.

## Chapter 6 GET THE FACTS

The art of listening was alluded to in the preceding chapters. If a How-do-you-listen poll were conducted, the vast majority of people would have to reply, “I listen for a cue to interject, ‘Oh—that’s just like. . .’ so I can take off on a monologue.” A globetrotter returned from a tour of missions. Friends greeted her return with, “Oh, what a thrilling time you must have had. Tell me about it.” Five sentences later, the questioner interrupted with, “That’s like the time I. . .” and commanded the conversation from that point.

The interview is essentially not an effort to “win friends and influence people,” but by the very nature of its procedure, it often does exactly that. That effect is due to the first precept laid down by Dale Carnegie in his best-seller by that title: BE INTERESTED. In essence, the precept is in the Word of God: “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Love begets interest in that neighbor. (How else can one know the need of others?)

“Every man is my superior in some way—In that, I learn of him,” wrote Emerson. On this assumption, the Christian writer may approach each interviewee with the expectation of learning something worthy of praise and emulation. . .certainly something worthy of print, which originally prompted the interview. Breaking the ice and discovering the laudable facts requires forethought and, at first, PREPARATION.

Whether the interviewee is a bystander being queried about an accident, an eminent theologian, or a star athlete, the writer provides for him the pleasure of expressing his views and information, and the praise of paying close attention during the process. But without a minimal background of in-formation, he cannot intelligently ask questions.

For the Christian freelancer, some chance remark about the subject, a published article, or a speaker has led to an interview. The writer should find out in advance, if possible, some facts which will start the conversational ball rolling—for interview is basically conversation, and usually friendly conversation. For best results, it should be fairly one-sided, the side of the interviewee. The temptation exists to respond to imparted information, “That’s like the time. . .” and waste the subject’s time with a personal harangue. The interview has been granted for the purpose of his imparting information, not the writer. Unless questioned, the writer should not volunteer to share experiences which will in the long run hamper his own progress in conducting the interview.

Undivided attention to the replies of the interviewee will often result in much more information than required for the article planned. The extraneous answers may well lead to a completely different angle. They may combine with facts about other persons into a composite such as “Mixing Religion with Business,” which illustrated several Christian businessmen doing just that. An interview with Mrs. Pepper Moore, interpreter for deaf at First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, led to her mention of an adopted child, with plans for adopting another. Eleven years later, I went back to Mrs. Moore’s home to question her and that second adopted child for an article published in Counselor under title of “Mother Talks to the Deaf.”

The precepts of the interview are in effect basic for any kind of publication, Christian or otherwise:

The interviewer must establish rapport, maintain it through tact and interest, and leave the subject feeling that the writer cares about him. The process of eliciting information differs mainly in the questions asked, just as the content of the writing will differ according to the market and purpose. The Christian journalist should experience greater ease in establishing rapport with a fellow Christian, in expressing appreciation for whatever his gift of grace may be, and his accomplishment, under God. “In honoring preferring one another” should restrain that natural impulse to interject “I know what you mean. I . . .”

How do you get a “great-great” to grant an interview—especially if you are unknown to him? A freelancer can aim high and ask to write the subject’s testimony for a well-known Christian magazine such as Power, Today, Christian Life. (Wisdom will avoid a flub at this point. It would be futile to ask a Presbyterian leader to provide information for an article for a Pentecostal publication, for example.) Blaze the trail for personal contact with a letter or a long

distance call, if it is learned that the Christian leader is coming to your town. Set up a definite time and place for meeting during his stay, which will not conflict with his engagement.

“I don’t care for publicity,” some Christian leaders will avow. (Not so with Tom Lester—“Ebb” of Green Acres.” His aim in striving for Hollywood fame was to gain recognition which would encourage people to heed his testimony for Jesus Christ.) In event of protest, the writer may point out that it is not at all his purpose nor that of his magazine to glorify any person. It is his wish to glorify God. Therefore he wishes to write that particular testimony because it so well demonstrates the power of God in that specific situation. Such a story would help those in similar circumstances know what God did for someone else, hence be sure He can do the same for them. It changes the response when the sincerely reticent Christian understands that the writer agrees with him about self-glorification.

Occasionally the writer must contend with the unworthy publicity-seeker who is just getting started in his Christian profession or calling and wants to make a lot of contacts—an article in a popular paper, he says, would really help. (Actually, it is easy to eliminate that particular problem, for most Christian magazines rarely use stories about full-time preachers, to avoid probable demands for “puffs.”) Aside from telling the hopeful seeker point-blank you can’t waste your time, you may always take time to ask a few questions, which could conceivably turn up a story worthy of attention. The salvation testimonies of some ministers are well worth writing as brief fillers, used by some publications.

It may seem superfluous to suggest that a genuine expression of appreciation for the interviewee’s time can help to establish a feeling of good will at the outset of an interview. While the attitude should be automatic, the fact is that gratitude is somewhat of a lost art. (Try giving a gift of some kind to a large class of children—or even youth—and note the number who instantly respond with “Thank you.” They are in the minority.) A moment’s reflection will cause the writer to be overwhelmed that such a very busy person as his subject has granted to him the gift of valuable time that he really needs for work or for rest. His appreciation will be from the heart. Further appreciation can be extended with some comment about the subject’s work or ministry, which is of personal blessing to the writer. If some common ground is known, conversation may center around that—but only briefly.

Questioning may begin with some basic information needed for every article, which may be important or may be merely alluded to: date and place of birth, occupation of parents (significant if they were missionaries, night club operators, or something else unusual; one outstanding pastor grew up in a family of circus performers), education, time and place and circumstances of conversion, time of dedication (call), first kind of service rendered. Then question to discover when and how the subject began the task for which he is known currently, the extent of his outreach and accomplishments, his plans for the future.

With some persons, the writer need only ask one or two questions before he finds the subject over-flowing with information imparted too fast to record. (He may have to express special delight in a fact and ask that it be repeated, so he can be accurate in quoting it.) If the gushing is worthless for the writer’s purpose, and interruption is impossible without offense, he may pay rapt attention and jot an occasional note. At an appropriate time, as the rambling touches a point of real interest, the writer may interrupt with a definite question about that point.

The writer cannot afford to shift his brain into neutral and let the interview run away with him. His own time is worth guarding, as well as that of his subject. For that reason, at first, the writer should prepare definite questions and make a point of covering them, in order to avoid rambling replies which fail to provide needed information. Otherwise, when he gets back to his typewriter, he may discover he lacks vital facts, without which the article fails to have significance. On the other hand, the writer may be stuck with a Calvin Coolidge type of subject, who answers every question with monosyllables. If it is impossible to crack that person's shell, the article is doomed to failure. Again, this possibility underscores need for definite questions, to be sure the ground is covered. In personal interviews, the writer has great advantage over taped interviews with yes and no answers. In person, one may ask: "When and where did you accept Jesus as your Saviour?" If the reply is, "In church in 1957," the next question may cover more territory: "Tell me what showed you your need of Christ. Was this in a regular service? Was it a revival meeting? Who was the preacher?" (If the date pinpoints a childhood experience, ask if the decision came in Sunday School.)

"SLANT" is considered a devious word by uninitiated Christian writers. They know that the news media notoriously slant information politically, to suit their purposes. The fact is that Christian magazines have a "SLANT" according to denominational emphases, age-group readership, and style. The writer should know the magazine for which he would write or he may fail to ask the right questions to make the article suitable for that particular publication. The right question may be as important editorially as medically. A Nashville matron had suffered for 14 years with back pain, for which she was treated by the most eminent urologist she could find. After much medication and three major operations, she changed doctors. The new surgeon asked a question never before explored, and uncovered a congenital defect which was easily correctable by surgery. She is well and free from pain now.

An interview at times becomes a brainstorming session. Vital interest on the part of the writer quickens the responses of the interviewee. His response, in turn, triggers the writer to seek other needed facts, and his continued discussion stimulates the interviewee to uncover facets of the subject untouched by others. The article could become a "scoop" concerning that phase of the subject's testimony. A young would-be writer had cooled off in his pursuit of the craft. Questioned, he replied, "Oh, I quit trying to learn writing because I just don't like to pester people." Reporters, writers for Christian publications, learn early that most people like to be "pestered." They like to know that their life has been deemed worthy of mention in print. It pleases them to share their testimony and widen their outreach. Being gracious, they like to extend help to a fellow Christian. (It is almost axiomatic that the truly great are the most gracious. The "little man" with an overestimated hat-size is least likely to cooperate.)

A writer rubs elbows with Christians of all walks of life, and finds the ground level at Calvary. Because of his interest, he adds to his file warm letters of appreciation for his accurate articles, which in some manner blessed and extended the ministry of a Christian worker.

## Chapter 7

### WHERE TO SELL IT

A farmer would not go to J.C. Penney's to market his carton of eggs. He has been in Penney's store and knows it is not a grocery. Neither would a furniture craftsman try to peddle his wares in the A & P, which is a large grocery chain. Writers will exercise an equal amount of acumen in marketing their finished products—or they won't get them marketed. And unless they are placed somewhere for publication, the articles will profit nobody, least of all the writer who expended the time and energy to put the words on paper.

While some few nonpaying publishers may consider it a noble gesture, the writer who offers his manuscript "just to see it in print" is downgrading himself and limiting its reach to the scope of a magazine too small to offer payment. "The workman is worthy of his hire" is true of the writer as for the worker in a church-related vocation of any kind. In effect, the writer is teaching and edifying thousands of people on paper, though not from a platform. (See chapter 19.)

Study the markets. Sound advice... but what markets? How does one study them?

Taking the questions in reverse order, the how is both a before and after writing process. Both can be profitable. In the publications listed in the ensuing paragraphs, read carefully the specifications after the name and address of magazines in your interest category. These are a list of their needs, and the writer may be the answer to their prayers. Their needs vary, just as the needs of the shops downtown. One publisher prefers mostly true-life stories, while another wants only fiction. One paper uses 2500 words in an article, while another will use nothing over 1200. One disgruntled writer lamented, "The savings in postage would be quite vast, if I sent it first where I sent it last." With first-class postage (to be preferred) rates increasing biannually, the words were never true. Why waste the price of at least two stamps (since a self-addressed, stamped envelope—SASE—must also go inside) by sending a 2500-word article to a 1200-word publisher? It figures that a writer must know who uses what. Look at the detailed kinds of articles and/or stories used. Just reading the list will often open the mind to recall just the idea to fit their needs. (So this paper wants articles about missionaries? Well, there's this missionary who is a close friend—and what a miraculous thing happened to him. They'd love that!) Discover, too, whether an editor requests a query letter in advance of the completed manuscript. Some do and some don't. If he prefers the completed work, a query would simply be an unnecessary contribution to the

U.S. Postal System. Further, some publications will also specify how many words (or characters) they wish in each line of submitted manuscripts. Their layout artists must calculate the printed page from the typed one, and such margins aid them in those calculations. To submit an article which ignores this specification may simply invite an unread return—since the writer has not considered the editor's request.

WHAT MARKETS?\*

\*Markets, as here discussed, include only those which pay the writer for his work. In Writer's Market are some book publishers described as "subsidy" or "vanity" publishers. The latter word implies that in an appeal to an author's vanity, some book publishers will receive payment from the author in order to publish his book. Most writers prefer to receive the payment for the work they have done, instead of paying to have it published, just to see it in print.

I. "Mrs. Chapman's \$500 book." Writer's Market (annual, published by Writer's Digest, Cincinnati, Ohio) does not even know its nickname. A copy of it was a farewell gift to this author from an editor-friend. Studying the section entitled "Religious Magazines," she discovered a publisher previously unknown to her. After successfully submitting an article, she queried their need for curriculum writers and netted an assignment worth \$500. Thanks to Writer's Market.

Whatever a writer's particular bent, there is a section for it in WM. Fiction, nonfiction, religious or travel or trade—anything. Whatever the writer has in mind to write, he will find a market for it there, if it merits marketing. Even hasty scanning of markets will produce ideas for articles or stories. It could even turn out to be someone else's \$1000 book—or more.

2. Christian Writer's Handbook. Published by Christian Writer's Institute, this little volume lists few Christian markets not contained in the extensive volume already referred to. Its selling price is, of course, much less.

3. Publications for writers. A craftsman in any art or profession is a continuing student. Techniques and concepts change. Comparison of novels or stories of yesteryear and those of recent decades is proof sufficient for any writer. Just as medical journals keep a doctor aware of scientific developments, the writer's magazines keep a writer honed up on his craft.

a. The Writer. —One of the oldest magazines for writers, this magazine prints instructional articles for writers. Each issue contains a descriptive list of markets for one or more types of magazines. Annually in April, the list will be for Juvenile (mostly religious) markets, while in December the listing will be for Adult religious markets. Occasionally a new religious publication will be written up in the section at the back called "Market Newsletter," getting the reader in the door before the market is flooded.

b. Writer's Digest. —Along with regular monthly features of instruction for writers, this magazine also has market listings. These are often at the conclusion of articles about a certain kind of writing. An article about photojournalism, for instance, is followed by markets which use illustrated articles.

c. Writer's Yearbook. —Listed with other books on journalism in the Writer's Market, this Year-book not only has helpful reports on publishing and writing, but also includes markets of various kinds. It should be an annual purchase.

There are other good ways to discover markets not known to the preceding listers. Some magazines which find their way into churches and onto the newsstand have been overlooked in markets. When a magazine invites contributions of a specified type from readers, stating the amount they will pay but no description of article length, the writer can make a word count of that kind of article in back issues of the magazine, to come up with an estimated average length.

Study of markets of any kind should involve first-hand acquaintance with the magazine. In *Writer's Market* and other listings, editors frequently state, "Sample copies available to writers." Usually there is no charge, but occasionally postage is requested, or even a price. When an author requests copies, editors are often kind enough to send several back issues for comparison and study. For the investment of a first-class postage stamp, the writer may learn of a publication which wants exactly what he prefers to write, or writes best.

The writer should analyze the sample copies to learn: 1) What kinds of articles are most often used; 2) how many words are generally printed in that type; 3) whether pictures are used with articles. Reading the content will show whether first-person approach is most popular, the "you" approach, or third-person.

Many writers send a "cover" letter with each submitted article, while some editors have been quoted to the effect that such letters are unnecessary, particularly if the letter is an attempt to stress the importance of the writer or his qualification for writing a stated article. Some magazines do need to know that the author is an authority on his subject (such as a medical or scientific dissertation), but many editors state, "An article must stand on its own merits, not the writer's status." For the consolation of all new writers, even "big names" occasionally get rejection slips. (A rejection slip is usually a tactful printed statement to the effect that "We are sorry your article does not meet our editorial needs at this time." It covers every reason from "We are overstocked" to "Your piece stinks.") Until a writer knows the markets well, through both study and experience, a collection of rejection slips is inevitable.

They will be less frequent, and there will be fewer of them for any given manuscript, when he masters his craft. One writer had such confidence in the merits of his piece that he persevered through thirty-eight rejections. Several returns might prod one to review the article. After it gets "cold" the writing can be studied more dispassionately. A writer can even recognize the reason for its being a homing pigeon. Revision, retyping, and another mail out may result in a check.

"All writers believe in Santa Claus," declared one of them. Marketing is challenging, sometimes frustrating—and always necessary.

## Chapter 8

### QUERY LETTERS

The super-aggressive local church often features guest speakers who may range from converted dope addicts to high echelon statesmen. The whole gamut includes fascinating personalities greatly used of God—some of them laymen whose testimony is preferred by certain publications to that of ministers. The writer is fortunate who can hear such a layman give his "life story" during a service. He can tape record (or in shorthand record) the information. If lack of prior knowledge made it impossible to query the layman in advance of the service, he may approach him at the close.

“Your testimony has been of special challenge and blessing to me. I feel that it should be shared with others through the pages of a Christian magazine. I write for Power. Are you familiar with it? May I share your testimony in this publication?” (Having received an affirmative answer, continue:)

“I recorded your message tonight, so I do have much information which I will need. When you have finished talking with others here tonight, may I ask a few more questions?” (Or, if he is enroute to catch a plane:) “Where may I mail a few additional questions?” Learn, too, whether photos are available.

Now, you have the information in hand for a good story. But who wants it? This great athlete is well known. He has already been written up for many papers. That is where the query letter comes in. While it is, as the name implies, a “query,” it may be likened unto salesmanship. It will reveal to the editor whether the story would be usable to him—and whether the author is competent to tell it. Technically, anyone who can write an article can write a letter—or so it would seem. A few pointers are that “word to the wise.”

1. The address above the salutation will be a dead giveaway to the editor whether or not you know anything of his needs or did not even care to find out his name. Address the query to “Mr. John Doe, Editor, Whatever Magazine, etc. Dear Mr. Doe.”

2. The next word—the first in paragraph 1—may also reveal something else about the writer. Most automatic will be the impulse to start: “I ran across this interesting character and got a story on him.” Who gets the limelight? “I.” So? Is the magazine well known? Do similar stories appear in its pages? With a little thought, the opener may be rephrased in the editor’s favor: “Your readers may like to know the remarkable way God is using so-and-so. I have been interested to read similar testimonies in your magazine from time to time.” Or the opener could jump right into the question:

“Would (magazine name) be interested in an article about a nationally know Christian karate expert?” Then express familiarity with the magazine and its excellent outreach.

3. Perhaps the contact with said expert has revealed a sidelight not well known about him, in which case the unusual may be mentioned in the next paragraph of the query letter. State the source of your personal knowledge, to give the editor confidence in the article.

4. Suggest a reason the editor would find the article important to his readers.

5. Tell whether photos will be provided by you or whether and where they are available.

6. Express your willingness to cooperate. “In the event you decide to use this story, how many pictures would you need? What is your preferred word limit? Is there a particular phase of this person’s life you wish to highlight?”

7. Always enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for his reply.

Editors get many queries, from many kinds of people. In October, a would-be poet inquired: “I have written a book of poems. I would like to have it out by Christmas.” (Books

usually require a year to process. This inquirer did not seem to doubt for a moment that editors would jump at the chance.)

“All writing is autobiographical” is certainly true of letters. Lack of accuracy, grammar, and neatness reveals to the editor a lack of competence. While the article subject might be of interest to him, the inefficient presentation does not appeal—so he answers, “We do not have a need for this in our publishing schedule.” An efficient letter may have elicited his favor.

The query letter will also be requested by some papers which use how-to, travel, and other types of features. While a project may in itself be excellent, a travel article well researched and illustrated, the editor may have to answer, “Sorry—we just accepted a story on that subject.” His reply will save the additional postage required to mail photographs.

There is a bonus in writing a query in advance of a completed manuscript. The affirmative reply may state, “We will be glad to receive your article on speculation,” but it does provide reason to include a cover letter when the article is mailed. “Here is the article on , which you stated you would be glad to consider. If there is additional information you need, or changes you prefer to make, I will be glad to cooperate in any way.” Furthermore, the editor has seen your name in the query letter. It will not seem as “unknown” when he gets the article. Editorial protests to the contrary, authors recognize it as a fact of life that names do mean something—at least assuring a careful reading.

## Chapter 9

### THE FEATURE STORY

The colloquial definition of “feature” is given in Webster as “To give special prominence to.” And that is exactly what a writer does in a “feature story”—he “gives special prominence to” some accomplishment or trait of the organization or person being featured. But his approach is not that of an ad writer, for magazine editors do not take kindly to printing free advertisements. A feature story is not a “puff” about a particular group or person. It highlights some phase or characteristic or more-than-usual newsworthiness. Basic facts need the help of the “serving men”; however, the WHO, WHAT, WHERE are not disposed of in paragraph 1, but interspersed throughout.

While a clever title will often grab the reader’s attention (or the editor’s), the opening paragraphs must capture his interest. Devotees of public notables will read everything in print about them, but good writing brings into focus the work and/or experience of a hitherto unknown, and not infrequently paves the way for greater service.

“Mr. Penman’s article was really used of God to open doors for me,” one nationally known evangelist publicly testifies of the man who first wrote his testimony.

#### THE LEAD

Having obtained the needed facts through interviews and research, the feature writer faces the blank paper in the typewriter. What comes first? On his decision may rest the future of the article. Is there a direct quotation by the subject, which summarizes his goals? A quotation by someone else about him? An accomplishment which symbolizes the ideals of a group (if an organization is featured)?

“Dawn was just breaking,” artist Torg Thompson says, “and I couldn’t seem to make things go together. I stepped to my studio door, looked up into the gray sky and said, ‘Lord, please give me a sign.’ I had no more than uttered the words when a dove lit on a limb within a few feet of my head. It sat there and cooed—and from that moment forward there was never a question that my painting, ‘Miracle at Pentecost,’ would be finished.” (Christian Life, May 1972, page 20.)

Doesn’t this make you want to find out whether it was and whether it was something great at that time?

Consider this appealing start for a story about a deaf ministry:

“A little girl with long blond (sic) curls sat quietly in a Sunday school room, her blue eyes wide with interest, as she watched a smiling lady place gaily colored figures on a flannel board. After the teacher had positioned each figure, she turned and faced her class. With hands and fingers moving and in a voice barely above a whisper, she slowly explained the Bible story. Six pairs of eyes ranging in years from four to eleven ‘listened’ eagerly as the children participated in the discussion by answering questions about the story in the special language of the deaf.” S.S. Times and Gospel Herald, July 15, 1972, page 6.)

The first quotation above uses the words of the featured artist, while the second is an anecdote of an incident inherent in the work featured. Both approaches leave the feeling that “there’s more to come”—worth finding out. Both are highlights of the article to follow. The writer could have jumped into the art story with a scene of artist Thompson standing before a canvas in frustration. He could have pictured the crowds viewing the finished painting. But he began with the suspense that left a question to be answered. Did the painting get finished? So what?

The deaf story could have launched forth with an inverted triangle statement of bald facts, but there the magnified human interest in the class for deaf children awakens sympathy and a desire to know how they are being helped.

Or take the author’s article “to all men. . .by all means” (Moody Monthly, March 1959), about the Open Air Campaigners. It opens with a typical scene:

“The knot of Toronto people around the Open Air Campaigners’ van was growing moment by moment. Haggard-looking derelicts, fastidiously attired businessmen, reeling drunks, flip teenagers, mothers gripping the hands of their tots—all pressed closer to the three-by-five-foot platform attached to the van. Some came and went while others remained to listen to several testimonies, interspersed with group singing as well as special instrumental and vocal numbers by the campaigners, clearly amplified over their public address system.

“‘Some soap-box orator,’ was the first reaction of many who stayed to listen. Others were more critical.

“‘I’m all right!’” a belligerent voice with a thick-tongued accent bellowed out above the words of the open-air preacher. ‘I just gave a pint of blood to the Red Cross!’”

This opener leaves an urge to find out whether any of these reactors changed their minds before the OAC got through.

Sometimes the order of the opening paragraphs is reversed. A single blunt statement may be the “grabber”—a statement such as “The day of miracles is not past.” Then the statement is followed by an anecdote which backs up the thesis.

### THE BUILDUP

A few paragraphs follow the lead of the feature to further accentuate the thrust or slant they have begun. In the case of artist Thompson, three more paragraphs describe the finished masterpiece and reaction to it. Likewise the deaf ministry is further detailed in ensuing paragraphs, with statistics to point up the need. The open-air story continues to build up for six more paragraphs, through heckling, testimonies and music, to the final results of the meeting.

Following this pattern, the feature story is current up through this point. The illustrations depict what is happening now to the subject or organization. This section is a series of statements illustrated by anecdotes.

### THE FLASHBACK

Many beginning writers automatically launch into a feature story, or any other type of writing, with a chronological approach. Analyze feature stories in this year’s Christian magazines. How many are purely chronological? They are not. Probably for the reason that the old adage states: “You have to crawl before you can walk.” The crawling stage of an organization or a great personage is usually not quite so fascinating to a reader as the walking or running. Therefore, the lead is usually a “running head start.” After interest is high, the thread of beginnings is picked up, and progress is detailed more or less chronologically. That point is called the “flashback.”

Smooth transition into the flashback is achieved in various ways. Notice how the deaf story did it. Just before the author launches into detail about how deaf works were started, he precedes it with these words: “. . . They are lost souls on their way to a Christless eternity, unless someone—perhaps you or I- can reach them in time. But how do we find them to tell them the good news? Where do we begin?” Then he flashes back to original research: “To find out, I contacted a number of churches. . .”

After describing a typical Open Air Campaigners meeting and its results, that story flashed back with the logical, sequential words: “This meeting and hundreds like it every year are the results of one man’s thankfulness. At the turn of the century a Christian lawyer in Australia, E. P. Field, was miraculously healed. . .”

In the story of artist Thompson's unique masterpiece, the author followed a reaction comment by: "The painting had its inception more than 20 years ago in the heart of the artist. . . ." And the following paragraphs tell the whole story.

Flashbacks are like the people they depict. Here is an interesting person, a worthy group. What great work is being done! How you'd like to know them better! What is seen first is the present life, present activity. Later, in heart-to-heart talk, the facts of God's past dealings emerge. One sees how "we are what we have been becoming." This is the value of the flashback. It answers "What makes him tick?" Depending on word limitations, this section should be illustrated with one or more anecdotes typical of that period. Ensuing statements which bring the story back to the point where it began, should also be illuminated by anecdotes.

### PROJECTION

This point has been discussed under chapter 4. The article subject is laudable now. What advances are planned for the future? In the art story, it is clearly stated: "In the future, there may be a permanent home for Torg Thompson's dream, a building with dignity and elegance which will house additional Christian art projects. Five years won't be long to wait. The result will be worth it."

The Open Air Campaigner's anticipation is expressed: "Remembering last year's five hundred who indicated decisions for Christ at open air meetings, Open Air Campaigners are looking forward to another spring and the privilege of again going on streets and highways to win the curious, the indifferent and the scoffers."

The deaf story ends with the challenge for help in its future: "Does the Lord need you and your church to win the deaf in your community? The discouragements are great, but the rewards are greater! Will you accept the challenge?"

In effect, the feature formula fits into Jean Owen's "Threefold Magic" formula (The Writer, October 1964). There is a LEAD stressing IS, a FLASHBACK for the WAS, and a PROJECTION for WILL BE. Here is the pattern which divests feature writing of mystery.

## Chapter 10

### THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In today's "small world" the Christian writer can expect to be exposed to the lives of many servants of the Lord and many outstanding lay witnesses worthy of being written up for a Christian magazine. Jet planes can take a speaker coast-to-coast for an engagement and have him sitting in his own office the next day. Interviews once out of reach except by mail often come to the writer. Happy is the writer who knows how to "strike while the iron is hot." Editors usually take kindly to a well-done, fresh treatment of a well-known personality.

W. J. Maxheim, master photographer from Des Moines, Iowa, came to the author's (then) home town for a Christian conference. Feature writer for the Daily News Journal, Murfreesboro,

Tenn., I interviewed “Max” for a news story, highlighting his intensive study of Communism. At the same time, with his permission, I obtained the information needed for a biographical sketch for Power. No problem about pictures! Fifteen years later, passing through Des Moines, we visited Max and Velma Maxheim and interviewed son Davis, a baby when we had first met, by this time his father’s assistant in performances of Christian magic and ventriloquism.

Writers in larger cities have more frequent opportunity to meet and talk with visitors of note. In Knoxville, the daily paper announced the coming of Paul Anderson, the strongest man in the world. Contacts with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes made it possible to talk briefly on the phone with the strong man, since an interview at a public appearance would be unthinkable. It was possible to arrange a brief telephone interview for early the next morning. After his demonstration and testimony at the University of Tennessee, having heard him I knew what facts were needed and could condense the phone conversation accordingly. Pictures were obtainable from the Paul Anderson Youth Home in Vidalia, Georgia.

Overnight guests in the author’s home once included a missionary family—including four children. The oldest boy was a typical junior: lively, enthusiastic, outgoing, and at the same time a good Christian witness. It was easy to get the facts for a good biographical sketch for a children’s paper—and send the check for his work.

Getting information for the biographical sketch is described in chapter 6. Whether by long distance (typed or taped) or in person, the interview presents an opportunity to make a new friend and grow thereby. What the writer does with the information determines whether he has a salable story. Perhaps the words of the editor of a leading Christian periodical best expresses what NOT to do: “I think the chief failure of writers is inadequately portraying their story subjects as real people. Without the skillful use of anecdotes, dialogue, and detail, it is impossible to make story characters real. Too often we receive long narrative descriptions of individuals and their accomplishments.”

Seeing the story subject in action always adds a dimension not usually visible in conversation with the person. Anecdotes are also sometimes easier to get from people who know the person well—his pastor or a close friend—than from the subject.

Making him a real person will often mean revealing that he does have a trait of character less than perfect. “Some say that Margie is conceited, walking with head lowered and speaking to none she meets. . . The fact is that Margie’s ophthalmologist is unable to correct her lenses for clear distance vision. . . She avoids encounters.” Again, a whiz-bang worker is notably impatient. “He’s wonderful, but. . .

Basically, the technique of writing the biographical sketch is the same as for the feature story. Begin at a high point of interest, illustrate the lead with anecdotes, then flash back to how the person got that way. Bring up to date and end with plans.

During five years as a daily newspaper feature writer and more than 20 years of freelancing which majors on biographical sketches, my files are replete with examples. Let the following demonstrate the workability of the formula.

In “The Amazing Story of Prem Pradhan” (Power, 4-9-72), the lead states:

“Political prisoners in a Nepalese jail, determined to make their break unanimous, attempted to force Prem Pradhan at gunpoint to accompany them. . . Prem Pradhan sent up an SOS to God with eyes wide open. “Click.’ Misfire. As the enraged escapee reloaded he gave Prem a chance to change his mind. Nothing doing. That time, the bullet passed close to Prem’s ear, ricocheted off the wall, and broke the leg of the prisoner next to Prem.”

The story recounts several horrors the prisoner survived and witnessed throughout. It flashes back to: “From his conversion in 1951, through five years in seven different prisons, to his present ‘family’ of 103 and school of 350, his story is as amazing. . .” It is described, with anecdotes. The ending: “‘Proselytizing’ is still illegal, and one Christian is in jail now. If he must, Prem Pradhan would go to jail willingly as before, knowing ‘Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, today, and forever.’”

In Knoxville, the author once visited a nationally known Christian poet, the late Jane Merchant. Some years after an adult paper published the story, I did a children’s sketch, after her publication of a book of poetry for children. It began: “What if you couldn’t hear at all? How could people talk to you? Oh—there is sign language. But suppose you didn’t know sign language; Yes, others could write what they wanted to tell you. That is exactly what Jane Merchant’s visitors. . . must do.” After several paragraphs about the author’s current working methods, “Daffodils and Pumpkin Faces.” (Counselor, 5-30-71) flashes back:

“A bone-brittling disease put Jane Merchant in a wheelchair at the age when you started to ride a tricycle. By the time most boys and girls can ride a bike, she was unable to leave her bed.” After bringing her to current writing activity from her bed, projection says: “Jane doesn’t give up on problems easily,” and details determination to continue.

The Junior story on Paul Anderson took off with: “Imagine a 370-pound man jumping rope—at ‘hot pepper’ speed! That’s Paul Anderson, the world’s strongest man.” A few paragraphs enhance the picture of his strength before the story back-tracks to Paul’s boyhood. “But Paul Anderson didn’t lift weights as a boy in Toccoa, Ga. He might even have been called a sissy by other boys, because he went to Sunday School regularly, and he took music lessons and even sang solos. He started early on the right track toward championship, with a vow never to smoke or drink.” Since Paul Anderson’s chief interest currently is the Youth Home, the projection refers to its future. The actual ending is a projection for the Juniors (see chapter 4): “He often writes as fast as he can push a pencil for an hour or so afterward, autographing programs for boys who want to grow up to be God’s strong men.” “Go ye. . .make unto thyself friends. . .and do thou likewise.”

## Chapter 11

### THE WRITER’S TOOLS

Every skill employs the use of specific tools. The carpenter builds a house with saw and hammer. The artist builds a picture with brush and paint. The writer builds with WORDS. They are his tools—with nearly 500,000 to choose from.

Proverbially, “A poor workman blames his tools.” But tools depend upon the ability and training of the user. One unskilled matron drove a nail through her tongue, attempting to nail a board in a barn. Some so-called “art” resembles a canvas the artist used to clean his brushes. Words in unskilled hands (or untrained minds) can result in a finished product equally tragic or comical.

To pursue the analogy, the carpenter uses a power saw to cut off a two-by-four beam; but a jigsaw does the job on quarter-inch plywood. The artist uses a one-inch oil-paint brush to smear in a background, but a fine line brush for facial features. Tools are chosen according to the purpose. Inescapably, the writer must choose his words according to their purpose.

#### WHERE DO WE GET THE TOOLS?

The artisan, with a definite purpose in mind, goes to the store to buy just the right tool for the job. The writer, obviously, does not. Where do his tools come from?

1. **READING.**—Extensive reading is a prerequisite for the writer of fiction or nonfiction, articles or books. Almost by osmosis, the avid reader develops a feeling for the correct use of words for a given purpose. Further, read biography if you expect to write biography; read fiction if you would write fiction; read news reports if you would write news.

2. **THE DICTIONARY.**—Stop to look up the meaning of the unfamiliar words in your reading. Analyze why they were used. Why not some other word? Check the correct pronunciation, since this aids in future spelling.

3. **A THESAURUS.**—In the same way that the tools of other artisans become worn out from overuse, so may the words of a writer be worn out. Wonderful may be so overused that the word loses its impact and meaning. What else means essentially the same? A paperback copy of Roget’s Thesaurus may help to turn a repetitious, amateurish piece of writing into a salable article. (Webster’s Dictionary of Synonyms will provide shades of meaning, to assure use of the right synonym.) Terrific and inspiring may sound good the first two times, but an editor quickly detects overuse.

4. **VOCABULARY BUILDERS.**—Words—vocabulary—must be within the writer if he would wield them as tools. (Just as the Holy Spirit brings to remembrance the truths previously learned by a believer, so the writer can only recall those words which are in his mind through reading and hearing.) Some estimates credit writers with a vocabulary of 40,000 words. Dr. Wilfred Funk (of Funk & Wagnalls Company, publishers of dictionaries) has written two best-selling books on vocabulary building: *30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary* (with Norman Lewis) and *Six Weeks to Words of Power* (New York: Pocket Books). Reader’s Digest readers recognize him as the author of its regular feature “it Pays to Increase Your Word Power.” Mr. Funk maintains that success and vocabulary are as inseparable as love and marriage. Building a vocabulary does not imply that verbiage is synonymous with excellence. It does mean that if the words are in the vocabulary, the precise one can be selected. *Die Careful Writer*, Theodore Bernstein (New York: Atheneum, 1973) distinguishes shades of meaning and is valuable reference for the writer.

#### HOW DO WE CHOOSE THE TOOLS?

Choice of any tools depends upon the purpose. It depends upon the object for/upon which it will be used. It often depends upon experience.

1. “My purpose is to challenge readers to have more faith in God.” Putting the Serving Men to work, who are the readers? Children? Collegians? Career men and women? WHAT is faith? WHEN is it obtainable? WHY is faith needed? WHERE may the reader get it? HOW may it be obtained? The words chosen must answer the specific questions for the particular group of readers for whom they are written.

2. The object (reader) is often determined by the scope of the publication to which the proposed article will be submitted. What teenager would stoop to read a story with short, choppy elementary sentences? What junior boy would wade through three-syllable scientific terms of adult language? What Golden Age citizen would be fascinated with the youthful approach?

The repetition of one-syllable picture words (a la Dr. Seuss) beloved by preschoolers would not interest nor reach an adult. But even within the adult age group or any other), there are distinctive differences. Further choice by the writer will be determined on the basis of the magazine’s readership and purpose. The writer who prefers to pour out his heart on paper without reference to readers (or editors)—In essence to create a work for himself--must be prepared to search diligently and perhaps repeatedly for an editor who shares his sentiments. (See chapter 7.)

3. Experience is a good teacher. The writer may select flowery, dynamic, or descriptive words and array them in what he feels is effective form. He bares his soul on paper. Sure there is no way to improve the message, he retypes the manuscript and ships it out to an editor. After the third or fourth rejection slip, he forces himself to criticize his brainchild. “This stuff reeks!” he admits by then. “No wonder it keeps coming back.” The words got cold. He could improve them. Next time, he will be less quick to feel that his first choice is necessarily best.

With experience, too, the writer learns to use enough words to clarify his meaning. He discovers that facts well understood by himself may not come through at all to readers, the first of whom will be an editor quick to detect the lack. The fault could lie in generalizing instead of being specific. “Sandra coveted the nice things Jane got for Christmas.” What things? “George went downtown each Saturday to witness for Jesus.” How? To what did he witness? To whom?

## HOW DO WE USE THE TOOLS?

Correctly. This phase of the subject is known as grammar. Webster defines “grammar” as: “The science treating of the classes of words, their inflections, and their syntactical relations and functions.” Words are classified as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and many other terms. Correct usage is as vital as the right grip on a hammer, the right touch of the paintbrush. Straight D’s in English may not have assured efficiency. There are ways to fill in the gaps.

1. GRAMMAR TEXTS.—Tire Macmillan Handbook of English (New York: The Macmillan Co.) is used widely in senior high schools and colleges as a text. As a ready reference, it will help a writer avoid such pitfalls as: “Roaming the countryside, God’s handiwork was an inspiration.” As it reads, the sentence says that God’s handiwork roamed the countryside. “A man dug a well with a Roman nose.” Quite a feat.

2. The Chicago Manual of Style.—Called “the Bible of the publishing business,” the Manual is preferred by many publishers, even where it differs from Webster. While some Christian publishers have their own additional “style” preferences, many rely on the precedent of the Manual. The writer who has not been supplied with a publisher’s style specifications will be assured a better reception if he stays within the recommendations of the Manual.

3. MAGAZINE REFRESHER COURSES, Both The Writer and Writer’s Digest publish articles to keep writers up to date on grammar or to remind them of standard rules.

One wit developed the following anonymous “Rules for Writers”:

1. Don’t use no double negative.
2. Make each pronoun agree with their antecedent.
3. Join clauses good, like a conjunction should.
4. About them sentence fragments.
5. When dangling watch your participles.
6. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
7. Just between you and I, case is important too.
8. Don’t write run-on sentences they are hard to read.
9. Don’t use commas, which aren’t necessary.
10. Try to not ever split infinitives.
11. Its important of use your apostrophe’s correctly.
12. Proofread your writing to see if you any words out.
13. Correct spelling is esential.

Having observed the above rules punctiliously, take heed to this “Advice to Authors”:  
Boil It Down

If you’ve got a thought that’s happy Boil it down.

Make it short and crisp and snappy—Boil it down.

When your brain its coin has minted,

Down the page your pen has sprinted,

If you want your effort printed,

Boil it down.

Take out every surplus letter—Boil it down.

Fewer syllables the better—Boil it down.

Make your meaning plain—express it,

So we'll know—not merely guess it—

Then, my friend, ere you address it—Boil it down.

Skim it well—then skim the skimmings—Boil it down.

When you're sure 'twould be a sin to

Cut another sentence in two,

Send it in, and we'll begin to

Boil it down.

--Anon.

## Chapter 12

### THE EDITORIAL

Everyone has opinions, and—It is said—everyone has a right to his own, but only the writer can sell his opinions for cash. Others may find it difficult to be heard, even to give them away. The EDITORIAL is a writer's soapbox for such expression of opinion, prejudice and observation. While the writer may propagate his beliefs in any kind of printed message through the use of direct quotations, stories of illustration, or statements of fact, it is in the editorial that he most boldly lets personal opinion show. "Too editorial," an editor may red-pencil a "now-dear-reader" paragraph in an article. (See chapter 4). A biographical sketch or feature story is not the place to editorialize – an editorial is. To editoritorialize "comes naturally" to many writers.

Examples of editorials abound. Pick up any newspaper or magazine and the editorial may be easily recognized. Often it is the front-section article signed by the editor of the publication. It is unashamedly in the first person. It has a definite opinion and leads the reader to agree with that opinion. Christian publications frequently use contributed editorial articles which agree with their own stand.

Probably the two most familiar types of editorial writing are essays (within 500 words) of CRITICISM or of PRAISE. In both the news media and in Christian magazines, a third type seeks to INTERPRET current events. Let us examine these approaches.

1. **CRITICISM.**—While it is true that criticism may be either good or bad, constructive or destructive, much of it is negative. Since Dale Carnegie popularized the virtue of tact, even the “destructive” essay often begins with a paragraph recognizing positive accomplishments of the person or organization under discussion (as in Revelation 2 and 3). It continues with the opposing view, discussing the negative evidence. But it does not stop there; it also offers suggestions for correction or improvement. Most editorials employ the use of an attention-grabbing lead—an anecdote, striking statement, or direct quotation. A few paragraphs develop the emphasis, and a conclusion or summary ends the essay.

Editorial titles may pick up the conclusion. President George Sweeting, of Moody Bible Institute, followed this procedure in his July-August 1972 editorial. He closed his plea for more unashamed Christian witnessing with: “Let’s intelligently and lovingly tell the whole world about Jesus Christ.” The title reads “Let’s Tell the World.”

2. **PRAISE.**—In a daily paper, editorials may praise individuals by name, with specific reference to accomplishments and traits. Sometimes the praise is post mortem, in the same issue with the obituary. The essay of praise may also laud a country, an organization or a single brave deed. Often there is no need for a concluding or summary statement—the whole article makes the impact. The praise itself is saying in effect, “This person (or this nation) is worthy of commendation for these reasons. Similar accomplishment by readers would likewise be praiseworthy.”

3. **INTERPRETATION.**—Such a magazine as Christianity Today majors on interpretative essays. The writers view the current scene and interpret happenings in light of Scripture. Or they examine results of current events in relation to the church. They provide a basis for understanding God’s current dealings with His people.

The editorial essay is not exposition of Scripture, per se. Instead, it may clearly present the event or problem, perhaps pointing up the contrast of such a condition and the Bible teaching on the subject, to challenge, shame or enlighten.

In the national secular women’s magazine McCall’s, a two-page editorial interpreted the tragic shooting of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, advocating several measures which would minimize the possibility of similar tragedies in the future. The editorial presented timely insistence on reader support of gun control legislation and reduction of violence in television and movies.

Editorials are not written simply “off the top of the head.” Blowing off steam may be done with more heat than accuracy. If the facts are not correct, the reader may assume the stance is likewise faulty. The writer must ever bear in mind that libel suits will greatly reduce his income.

The Christian writer—unlike the preacher—cannot assume an audience for his opinions. The preacher may rant, but the faithful will return for more. Even with the blessing of an editor, the writer still must earn the interest and confidence of the readers. If he antagonizes, or if he causes problems for the magazine through fallacious (though vigorous) statements, he will not be given another hearing.

In expressing opinions and prejudices, the writer should guard against assuming the position of spokesman for an organization, unless he is the delegated spokesman. Because many editors use “we” instead of “I” in expressing opinions, an individual’s use of the plural has become known as “the editorial we.” It cannot safely be assumed by the writer without the sanction of the group for which he purports to speak. Even when organizational vote gives such authority, dissenters may arise who do not wish to place their seal of approval on the particular stand. (i.e., a major denomination, through its executive committee, took a stand against liquor by the drink. An influential moneyed layman issued a personal public statement denying his agreement with the body.)

Perhaps the editorial writer should ask regarding a proposed essay, “So what?” Why write it? What is its possible value? Is the information needed? Editorial writing may be cathartic for the soul of the writer. If the finished essay has not been written with a given magazine’s editorial requirements and needs in mind, then the writer must study the markets to find out who uses free-lance editorials. Some Christian magazines have a “Speaking Out” type of page, where such essays are a regular feature (as Eternity’s “The Last Word”).

As in the case of all good writing, let the piece get cold enough that it may be viewed dispassionately. If, then, the content still seems worthy of the writer, he may seek a home for it.

## Chapter 13

### DEVOTIONAL/INSPIRATIONAL

Market listings of the needs of Christian magazines show that the majority of them use devotional and/or inspirational articles. The beginning writer may find this kind of writing the easiest for him because: 1) It may have a first-person approach, and 2) it may be done from experience rather than research, hence be “off the top of his head” or, as one writer expressed it, “from the deep of the heart.” While the specifications for a devotional article will vary, many editors prefer that it not exceed 1,000 words in length. There is one point at which editors do agree: the devotional should not be preachy. Preachers would seem to be best suited for writing devotional/inspirational material, but their tendency to sermonize renders the article unusable. As with other kinds of articles, the “point” is inherent in the presented meditation or story, and it should not be tacked on at the end in a “moral.”

Devotional articles may take any one of a number of different forms:

1. **STORY.**—The simple telling of a true story of heroism, sacrifice, dedication may in itself shout to the reader, “You could do this, too.” One writing instructor advised his students, “If you want to get an idea across, wrap it up in a person.” Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, recognized master of inspirational writing, employs the true-experience stories of individuals to point up his theses. Guideposts magazine is filled with true-experience stories of God at work in the lives of people. (Sunshine Magazine is another which thus inspires its readers.) The stories are saying (as the song by that title), “it is No Secret What God Can Do.”

2. MEDITATION.—Using Bible verses as the basis for the article, this type devotional presents the author's meditations on their theme. Anecdotes may be used to open the devotional, to develop subsequent thoughts, and even to end the article. In some cases, the thoughts may be first presented, and Scripture be used as the clincher at the end. (This type of brief devotional is used as "filler" material, placed in the magazine at the end of an article which did not quite fill a column. Brevity is to be preferred for that use.)

3. PARABLE.—A modern-day parable is the recounting, in Bible-parable language, of an incident or an event, and then presenting its interpretation in the light of Christian truth. The author's "Parable of the Elm Tree" (Christian Youth, June 1960) described an elm which took up valuable space in the lot of an expanding church, but which was considered by some leaders too beautiful to destroy. It stood, loved and admired, until the deacons learned that the trunk was hollow and the tree was a safety hazard. The parable drew a comparison with lives of church members with stalwart outward appearance but inner emptiness.

Just as Jesus drew parables from the everyday life about Him, so the alert Christian writer will see in daily occurrences some parallels with Christian experience: 1) The truck ahead which prevented you from exceeding the speed limit--c.f. God's restraining hand. 2) The drastic results of a power failure in an all-electric home--c.f. the loss of Holy Spirit power in a Christian's life. 3) The collegewide exposure of students to a serious disease--c.f. nationwide exposure to moral decay.

4. OPEN LETTER.—A heart-to-heart letter. Over the shoulder of the addressee, the writer gets the message across to the reader. An open-letter of advice to a teen-ager, for example, reflects the advice for all teen readers.

Ideas for devotional/inspirational articles may come at any time, under any circumstances: 1) A single statement by a teacher or pastor may trigger a train of thought that will jell into a single impact. (Jot it down when it hits). 2) An incident in a true-life television show, revealing God's greatness in nature or the truth of His Word in warning. 3) Observation of people--their goodness, their faults, their triumphs. As the writer turns attention to writing the devotional, he will form the habit of comparing daily experience with spiritual.

There may be more than one "lesson" in any given incident, but the devotional writer must seek to make one strong impact. Just as the fiction writer does not introduce extraneous characters or events, so the devotional writer does not include descriptive paragraphs or anecdotes which would sidetrack the reader from the main issue. If the devotional, for example, begins with the theme of God's power in nature, resist the temptation to digress on the subject of evolution.

On the other hand, however, some writers (as some pastors) tend to view every sight and event with tinted glasses. Their meditation or interpretation comes out the same, no matter what the title or the lead may be. They ride a hobby horse, crusading for or against one theme. The problem will not be one of boring the readers with repetition, for the material will not get past the first manuscript reader.

The market for devotional/inspirational articles is not limited to Christian magazines. Many of the women's magazines use them regularly. Many of the Reader's Digest \$2500 "Drama in Everyday Life" articles are narrations with a single inspirational impact. Many reprint articles in Reader's Digest are devotional in character.

As for other types of writing, study the market for which the article is intended. What is the usual word length of their printed devotionals? Are those articles first person, second person, or third? What is the chief aim? (To inspire dedication, service, worship?) Choose the magazine most likely to publish that specific message—and send it off with a prayer—and SASE.

## Chapter 14

### THE HOW-TO ARTICLE

While devotional articles are a natural outlet for the Christian writer, some successful authors maintain that the advice or service article—the how-to—is the easiest to write and sell. Never has the thirst for knowledge been more avid, and editors lure readers with the promise of increasing their skill or stock of information. The field is as limitless as available facts, information—and pictures.

Browse through Books in Print in any city library to discover the many titles that start with "How-to." Bearing in mind that editors do not knowingly publish books that won't sell, the impressive list says that the reading public does buy such books. And they buy magazines with ADVICE articles.

Different in content from service articles, advice pieces seem more related to the devotional/inspirational field. Market listings usually type them as personal improvement articles. They feature personal improvement themes: "How to Handle Criticism," "Helpful Hospital Visitation," or "Enthusiasm Makes the Difference." Different from mere pep talks ("You oughta do it"), the articles will detail ways in which to achieve the desired improvement. An anecdote shows how the improvement has been made or the victory has been won by someone else, how someone else has effectively followed the suggestions being made.

While much information for the advice piece can be drawn from experience and memory, editors lean kindly toward articles documented by experts in their fields. For instance, if the content advises procedure for good mental health, the authority will be strengthened by: 1) DIRECT QUOTATION FROM, and illustration about, a psychiatrist's experience, or 2) the AS-TOLD-TO APPROACH, letting the expert himself tell the story, or 3) the PERSONAL-INTERVIEW APPROACH, questioning the expert and quoting his answers verbatim.

Service articles are those which describe (and picture) ways in which the reader can make something or master a new skill or sport. Religious market lists show that numbers of Sunday School magazines carry regular make-and-do features. Some take the form of puzzles and games; others are crafts and projects.

The writer may be fortunate to have a hobby in which he is an authority. He may be an American Indian archaeologist, and thus have a working knowledge of how to “dig up the past.” Illustrating from his own experience, he can write instructions for readers who want to know how to dig, where to dig, and what to do with the findings. He will have firsthand photographs to illustrate.

Again, the writer may have among his acquaintances someone who is an expert in, say, papier-mâché craft. Because the subject has been exploited in many children’s magazines, a query should be sent to the proposed market suggesting a specific angle—as perhaps at Christmas, “A Paper Nativity Scene.” With a go-ahead from the editor, step-by-step procedure should be explained within the specified word limit. Pictures of the various steps will clarify the instructions--and increase chances of a sale.

Here is where creative thinking can lead to creative writing—and sales for a specific market. One may learn of craftsmen who themselves are not Christians, and their productions may be totally unrelated to the needs of Christian educators. But, as often as not, the raw materials they use and their methods can be adapted to the needs of a Sunday School class or to an individual home project which is church-related. If the craftsman does not come up with a religious adaptation, the Christian writer may suggest and test it—and write about it. There is no competition in originality.

While most magazines prefer step-by-step “this is how to do it” directions, some use only articles showing “this is how we did it.” Featuring the hobbyist in action, they explain his procedures and usually show pictures of him in action, together with the finished product. Again, check the markets.

In summary, the HOW-TO-ARTICLE involves:

1. MEMORY. What are the skills with which you are most familiar? Are you an expert along some line? List your own abilities and talents. Are there among them some to share? Are some friends and acquaintances hobbyists or craftsmen?
2. SELECTIVITY. What phase of the skill or hobby has not been already overexposed to print? Is there a definitely new angle to present?
3. MARKET STUDY. Which magazines use the type article you propose to write? Examine several back issues and note the length, the information presented, and the number of pictures used.
4. QUERY. Describe to the editor the proposed article and the angle to be featured, and ask whether the magazine has already planned such a story. Mention the availability of pictures. If the editor sends a go-ahead letter, the groundwork has already been laid for his consideration of the finished article.
5. WRITE. If space permits, create a want-to-know-how in the reader in the opening paragraph, telling him how the skill will aid or profit him. Clearly detail each step in the project. If the article is for children, make sure the language is for them. Conform to the editor’s specifications in every regard.

6. TAKE PICTURES of each step or arrange for someone else to do so. If pictures do not provide sufficiently clear detail, clearly sketch the processes, submitting an India ink drawing.

7. SEND THE ARTICLE in the usual finished double-spaced form, complete with cardboard backing for pictures and stamped return envelope.

## Chapter 15

### HAVE TYPEWRITER – WILL TRAVEL

Vacation time—holidays, if you are Canadian—Is travel time. Caravans of campers, Winnebagos, and station wagons with luggage racks whiz over the hot prairies where covered wagons once creaked. Drivers range from teen-age boys with flowing locks to grandmothers with purple hair. California licenses invade the Smokies, while cars from Virginia head to Oregon. They will know how the other half lives—the other half of the country, that is—for some of them will have covered that much territory in a few weeks' time.

Some of them will be writers. For them, it could be a “vacation with pay,” even more pay than the salary check they got for the week(s) off. Most of them will not be shooting along from one historic or scenic landmark to another, clicking cameras focused on famous post-card views. The thousands are already making the annual pilgrimage to those crowded tourist meccas. The writer is alert for a unique place or at least a unique angle concerning the familiar.

Joe Mathewson came up with such an angle about an insignificant town on Cape Cod, which he anonymously called “Stoney.” Heightening interest through that degree of mystery, he describes the town and, through one of its elderly citizens, some of its history. But Stoney did not take kindly to a stranger with long hair and a mustache, who liked to take long walks alone. The author injects humor into the account of how he enlisted the aid of the United States Post Office in thawing their attitude. He used picture post cards of the area to send personal messages to nationally known big names. Ford Times printed the article under title of “How I Spent My Summer Vacation and Came to Love the U. S. Postal Service”—and Mr. Mathewson was thus reimbursed for part of his room rent.

Safe to say, there are unusual stories in most localities—just as there are stories in the life of nearly every person. The alert writer will discover that “something different” which has not been said too often by too many others. And he will find something in his most familiar haunts—Charles Dickens did. . . and Mark Twain. . .and John Steinbeck. Not once, but repeatedly.

To provoke ideas, poring over the Travel Section of the Writer's Market will reveal what magazines use travel pieces, what emphasis is desired, how long they want the stories and how many photos. The list includes Christian magazines. Most preferences run less than 1,000 words – and several pictures.

Without leaving his state, a Virginian could visit historical shrines of religious significance. Culpepper and the struggle for separation of Church and State; Appomattox and the surrender of a great Christian general; Lexington and the outstanding Stonewall Jackson. In Arlington National Cemetery are the monuments of great Christians, as well as great Americans. A writer's personal reactions, plus first-hand photos and available literature, may provide Christian readership with a new view of a national personage. Men and women known to students as textbook names will become to them Christians in places of God's destination.

For the juvenile market, travel stories may be personalized and fictionized, allowing the facts to filter through the story form. "Return of the Monarch" (Counselor, 1972) described events in Pacific Grove, California, when millions of Monarch butterflies arrive there each October to winter. Two fictional junior-age children experience those events. Pictures were supplied by Pacific Grove's Chamber of Commerce. Likewise, in "The FBI Takes a Trip" (My Pleasure), a make-believe class of Junior boys took a trip to the Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary in Kingsville, Ontario. Young readers saw the place through their eyes.

Better yet, with missionaries jetting back and forth from many foreign fields, the Christian writer often finds in his city a "missionary kid" with a true story of unusual experiences in a foreign culture. Such was Mark del Aguila, son of a Peruvian linguistic teacher in Yarinacocha, Peru, whose mother is American. Readers of *Adventure* (Harvest Publications) saw a boy's life in Peru through the eyes of a "Missionary Kid with Two Countries."

Missionary stories often fall under the category of travel writing, for they necessarily entail description of people and life in the missionary's new home. The article subject does not live in a vacuum, any more than fictional characters.

In addition to interviewing the missionary (chapter 6), the writer may obtain information on the work of a particular mission station by writing the mission board. Knowing that an article would provide for them favorable publicity, most boards comply. Some are also able to loan slides and/or black-and-white snapshots to illustrate the story—and increase the possibility of its acceptance. Not all missionaries are good photographers, but some boards have a staff photographer who visits the fields. Because good writers are probably among the minority of missionaries, most boards welcome the chance to cooperate with a writer in a missions article.

Sophie Muller is an exception. This "Mary Slessor of Colombia" is a gifted artist, as well as a fluent writer. Prayer letters are about Sophie, not sparing her pride, discouragement or humiliation. They are not preachments, but they accomplish what that type letter cannot. They bring the reader face to face with the rugged, dangerous life of a lone woman missionary, wading jungle trails in mud up to her neck, in order to reach unevangelized tribes of Indians in Colombian jungles. New Tribes Mission gladly supplemented available information for the writing of "The Trials and Triumphs of a Present-Day Pioneer" (see chapter 4).

The hint of a good missionary story can be spotted in less fluent letters, leading to personal contact and research which will result in a salable article.

Where do you live? Oregon or Washington? A trip to the Whitman Mission National Historic Monument near the border will provide information and pictures for a good travel story

with built-in Christian emphasis. In fact, such a side trip on an almost coast-to-coast journey did result in a juvenile travel story—a tour of the mission area and museum through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy.

Travel writing is no longer encyclopedic in approach—not if it is accepted, that is. Christian readers want to know the special reason they should consider a trip to Israel vital to their service, for instance, so they read the significant reaction of a writer who felt something deep during his own visit to the Holy Land. Surface facts are a dime a dozen. Interpretation, off-the-beaten-path views of people and customs, and travel hints are welcomed by those who couldn't go but wish they could, or those who plan to go. Those who have made the trip can empathize and wax nostalgic as the story touches upon a universal reaction to the land the Saviour trod.

Wherever the writer goes, at home or abroad, he goes with all his faculties, all his Serving Men.

## Chapter 16

### SPECIALIZE—OR NOT

Specialization is the “in” thing in the professional world: one lawyer takes only real estate problems, another only divorce cases; one doctor treats nothing below the tonsils, another only operates on the brain; one mechanic fixes only trucks, another only VW's. The dental surgeon specialist may take care of his clientele with only a few office hours daily—at something like \$50 for ten minutes' cutting.

Should the writer fall in with this trend? Is it more profitable to be an authority in one field than to “know a little about a lot?” Each writer will answer the question for himself, molded by experience and disposition.

As a daily paper feature writer in Tennessee, my first assignment was to write one farm feature a week—anything about a farmer doing a good job in his chosen phase of farming. The first turned in was called “Traveling Blacksmith.” It was the story of one of our nearest neighbors, Archie Macon, son of the renowned “Uncle Dave Macon” of the Grand Ole Opry. Archie was one of few surviving blacksmiths in the state, and he went to the customer, instead of setting up shop and putting up a shingle. Among his clients was Sam Paschal, horse trainer and showman. The second story was about a man who owned a few hundred hives of bees, “farmed out” to friends over the county. After that, the editor called me in to request hobby stories on people throughout the county—as many as one per day. The hundreds of articles printed in that paper ranged from the offbeat (as the woman who built furniture and the man who crocheted, contrasted in one article) to the heroic (Bullet, the dog who would not give up after having both left feet severed by a mowing machine), to the bizarre (the woman who swallowed a baby snake, which grew up inside her), and stories of countless hobbyists and craftsmen in between.

I learned how to hook rugs, how to raise English shepherd dogs (and had one given to me by the breeder), how to dry flowers—and a host of other fascinating activities. This was greatly

diversified writing. But a newspaper writer may also specialize, as Louis Cassels did. Known worldwide for his religious news articles during a career that has spanned several decades, Lou Cassels proved that religion is news. The name of Grantland Rice is synonymous with expert sports reporting. World War II newspaper readers will never forget Ernie Pyle. For either of those specialists, when an editor wanted a great story along the line of his expertise, he called on him. His reputation assured him of such recognition.

The Christian freelance writer may range far and wide, as wide as the diversity of Christian experience and service. Or he may specialize. There are advantages and disadvantages to either route. (At the close of the career, he may sigh, as a poet did, “if I had taken the other road—If only, if only,” and then, as did the poet, realize that “The other road may have led my feet to a cul-de-sac or a meaner street than I travel down today.”)

Jim Hefley, one of comparatively few full-time Christian writers, has a writing career as colorful as his childhood. He quit college at 15 to pursue a profitable gambling sideline, while he worked in a drugstore. Jim never wrote a line until after he was saved and studying in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. His maiden effort was script writing for radio. He later married the leading lady who had helped correct his grammar and spelling. God led him into a ministry of writing, often about people, but not exclusively. His search for facts has taken him to the Dominican Republic, Peru, Vietnam and other some-times dangerous places. Writing a book on Christian athletes, he once got breakfast for a busy football player and conducted the interview while his subject got shaved.

Elmer Towns, too, had reached his seminary years when he began to write. Author of two best sellers on the large-church theme, he is a recognized authority in that area, annually compiling the Christian Life listing of the 100 largest Sunday Schools. Hand-in-glove with this specialty is that of Christian education. The one affects the other: Churches grow, in part, through an effective Sunday School teaching program; conversely, the form of the teaching situation is often determined by size and space of classes. When an editor or a book publisher wants either field discussed with authority, he turns to this specialist.

Both of my first books (*Yelling for Help* and *Practical Methods for Sunday School Teachers*) are how-to guides for Sunday School workers. Many of my magazine articles have been in the area of Christian education methods. But that specialty allows for variety as wide as the scope of methods. My other specialty is also limitless in diversity: true-life stories of people. Further variety is expressed through fiction, devotional, and missionary articles and stories.

A writer must write about what he knows—or is it, he must know about what he writes? Either way, knowing a subject well qualifies one to express his expertise in a publication, for the benefit of posterity. Again, it may provide a writer with excellent background for fiction in a setting best known to him. Frank Slaughter was a practicing physician when he decided to become a writer. Many of his finest novels have a medical background. Paul Hutchens was a preacher stricken with tuberculosis when God led him to put his preaching on paper—in fictional form. He authored dozens of books for children and young people.

Some writers have launched into their careers on the wings of fiction, while others have served their apprenticeship in news writing or other nonfiction forms, and then “switched horses

in the middle of the stream.” So far as students of English literature learn, Charles Dickens majored in fiction. As some contemporary authors, Dickens used fiction as a vehicle to portray actual sordid conditions in society, with a view to correcting them. Erle Stanley Gardner, himself a lawyer, fathered the ever-popular Perry Mason, a lawyer. Elizabeth Elliott and Catherine Marshall wrote autobiographies at first, but later turned to fiction as a vehicle for their messages. Eugenia Price was prominent in the field of radio and written communications when she became a Christian, and her witness began there, writing the script for “Unshackled” for a period of time. She wrote heart-to-heart talks to her readers for years, before turning to fiction. Authors may not excel in every form, but each form reaches a different readership. (Only the test of time places an author on the proper rung of the ladder of fame.) It should be noted that a specialist in one field may seem “out of character” to readers when he steps into another.

The growing mind stays young—say the experts. In some ways the mind of the non-specialist is forced to grow in ways the specialist does not. He must learn new facts as he tackles new subjects. He has to know, to reduce the knowledge to paper. As in choosing any vocation, the writer is free to test his skill and aptitude in many forms of work, before he must make a hard-and-fast decision to major on any one form. (A decision NOT TO DECIDE is a decision AGAINST.) If a writer does not specialize, he will freelance the field. His personal experience will demonstrate the wisdom of either course for him.

## Chapter 17

### WRITING CURRICULUM

When a teacher begins to teach on paper, he becomes a writer. If he is writing a designated series of lessons, he is writing curriculum. And when he is writing curriculum for a national publishing house, he is teaching hundreds of thousands of pupils, as opposed to a huge class of even 100 in a local church. He is literally putting words into the mouths of untrained teachers as he does so, and through them influencing the lives of their students. Writing quarterlies for the pupils themselves to study, he is directly shaping their thinking along doctrinal lines.

Small wonder, then, that many publishers’ first requisite for a curriculum writer is thorough knowledge of the Word of God. “A teacher must know that which he would teach;” and, since he is teaching on paper, the writer must know the Bible. His doctrinal slant must be that of the publisher for whom he would write. Many publishers will not accept the services of a writer who is not affiliated with their denomination. This is not surprising, for most churches will not allow in their Sunday School a teacher who is not a member of the church. A Nazarene is not going to teach eternal security; neither will a Presbyterian stress sinless perfection. The writer of curriculum, as any good teacher, will be “a workman unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

Publishers want EXPERIENCED writers to do their teaching on paper. An experienced teacher, grounded in the Word, who seeks the wider outreach of curriculum writing, may begin

getting the feel of lessons on paper by tape-recording his lessons during actual presentation and having them transcribed (double-spaced). Viewing the words on paper, he can spot repetition, incorrect grammar, and errors in Bible references or quoted material, and can make corrections. An important part of the writer's desirable experience is the ability to use English accurately. He can study the words to be sure they express just what he meant to convey. Spoken words convey by inflection shades of meaning that words alone must make clear on paper.

A writer will not have to wonder how to teach the lesson on paper, in most cases. Unless a publisher is establishing a new age-group publication and wishes an author to exercise his own ingenuity in planning the program for the quarterlies, the author may expect to follow exact specifications in writing the lessons. He has no choice concerning what Scripture passages to use, what outline to follow, how long to make the lessons. This is spelled out for him. He will usually be supplied with copy paper, on which to type finished lessons within the narrow margins which will guide the printer. He is told to fill a certain number of lines with copy—no more, no less. The ability to follow specifications is of paramount importance in the minds of busy editors who have no time to adjust the length of lessons which do not fit their space. Writers have been dismissed for failure to comply.

The writer must know how to teach the age group for which he will present lessons on paper. He writes within their vocabulary limitations. His approach is on their level of understanding. He enters into their lives and thinking, not preaching down to them, regardless of their age. He is a TEACHER, on paper. At this point, the rules of teaching become the rules of writing. Something about the process of committing words to paper stultifies the thinking of otherwise expressive persons. They become devoid of life and enthusiasm. The imagination of the trained writer takes over in paper-teaching. He envisions his students and talks to them—on paper.

“I am a Bible student and I know how to teach. How do I get an assignment to write curriculum?” It is not as difficult as it might appear; the majority of Sunday School publishing houses do rely on free-lance writers—few have curriculum written by staff. Publishers may take the initiative to seek out writers for lessons, from among those who write for the company's other publications. If they like a writer's work, they may contact him and invite him to submit a sample lesson. The writer may take the initiative, however. Addressing a company's age-group editor, he may enclose samples of his work and indicate his interest in writing lessons, offering to contribute a sample lesson according to their specifications. To a nondenominational publisher, he usually need not stress church affiliation. To his own denominational publisher, he should refer to his membership. It is most important to a Christian publishing house to be sure a proposed writer is a born-again, Bible-believing Christian.

In any event, a heretical lesson writer for a discerning Christian publisher will not have more than one chance to put doubts and cynicism on paper for them. Lessons submitted are read carefully by Bible students and/or editors, to screen out error. (Not so the error which may be introduced into local church curriculum by a perhaps honestly mistaken writer. Often no one else will have read the lesson before it is distributed churchwide.)

Curriculum writers discover that rehashing Bible content in different words is not sufficient. Many publishers emphasize creative teaching. All expect Bible content illuminated

with anecdotes and stories. Where will the writer get them? There are some collections which may be freely used verbatim; if so, an editor's note so states. The best place to find a good story to use without fear of plagiarism is in the author's own experience or observation. Events, conversations, and problems which are contemporary will carry most weight—just as when Jesus related stories of vineyard husbandmen, shepherds, and farmers, all familiar to His hearers. Suppose you don't know such an illustration? Write one; become a fiction writer. What point do you wish to clarify? Tell a story about someone who exemplifies the solution. What do you wish to motivate pupils to do? Let someone do it—In a story. (The fact bears repeating that “IF YOU WANT TO GET AN IDEA ACROSS, WRAP IT UP IN A PERSON.”)

The curriculum writer is faced with the decision to specialize or not to specialize in a particular age-group. As with classroom teaching, the paper-teacher becomes more knowledgeable of his materials and methods and his pupils as he continues to study and plan and teach them. He acquires a library of reference books pertinent to that group. Methods and materials are not interchangeable with all groups in lesson writing, any more than in classroom teaching. The same argument may be made in favor of non-specialization, however, which was made in favor of it in any other kind of writing: Variety will cause the writer himself to stay more mentally alert and to grow through increased study and new interest. Each writer will decide according to his own experience.

If he lets down his guard and becomes careless in preparing the finished copy for lessons, he may never have to make the decision—an editor will make it for him. “Be it labor great or small—do it well, or not at all,” all editors firmly believe. Typographic errors or smudged copy have been known to transform a friendly editor into a skeptic. Neat, accurate copy begets confidence in the writer's concern as well as his ability. Particularly in handling the Word of God in paper-teaching, the writer does well to adopt the motto, “I will do the best I can, with what I have, where I am, for Jesus' sake today.”

## Chapter 18

### CO-AUTHORSHIP

Journalism is treated as an elective in too many college curriculums—with the result that many persons noted in their fields of endeavor, with the most to say on their subject, are the least able to express it. Having perfected a new technique for saving money and/or time, or a cure for a disease, or an innovation in farming, the expert is worthy of recognition, but he is unable to share his insight on paper. And so there are “ghosts” among writers. Not a deceased writer, this ghost is one who writes the actual story but puts it in first person under the expert's name. The name of the real writer may not even appear on the book or article. But the increased income atones for the loss of fame.

Ghosting can also be done under a joint byline: “By Dr. I.M. Portant and A. Writer.” In that case, the information will have been furnished by the eminent authority and put in shape by the writer—and usually the income is divided 50/50. Again, the authorship may be designated as “By Dr. M. Portant, As Told to A. Writer.” The article appears in first person, with the

impression that Dr. Portant is relating the information. In reality, it has been worded by Mr. Writer.

Considering the three forms of ghosting in reverse order, we examine possible occasions when “As Told To” is better than a third-person story by the author. One such opportunity most likely to come to the Christian writer is the testimony of a missionary on furlough, the survivor of narrow escapes, the recipient of astounding answers to prayer—none of which he knows how to put on paper himself. But they are events which he experienced, which qualifies him to tell them in first person. He can do so through a writer who listens to his story and then relates it in words that will convey the excitement and inspiration inherent in the telling. The writer enables the missionary to make the readers aware of what God has done in his life in answer to prayer. Unaided, the missionary might not be able to convince an editor that the facts were worth printing.

Children’s stories of the As-Told-To type are used by some Sunday School papers. Not many children have learned to organize their thoughts on paper and command the interest of other children. Yet they have lived through fun or excitement or danger which is worth sharing, because it illustrates God’s care of boys and girls. Gail Stamps and the other four members of her family survived a tornado which carried away most of their household possessions, while they all knelt in prayer in her little bedroom where one window had been cracked for a year. The wind did not touch that little room—the window did not even break. Counselor used the story as Gail told it—through the wording of Marie Chapman. Several children’s magazines use this approach in occasional articles, and their requirements are stated in market listings.

Editors—particularly book editors—like to use material by authors with well-known names. Some people will buy anything written by an author whose style they enjoy. If a new book appears by him (her), they rush to buy it and look at the title later. Dr. I.M. Portant may never have written before (because, the fact is, he just can’t write at all—stilted and Victorian and pedantic, and everything else that means dull); but his name is recognized by everyone who watches television. If he writes it, it must be so and it is bound to be worth reading. Even if he co-authors it, the strength of his name on the byline will assure a certain following.

His sharing the byline also assures his sharing the responsibility. If the “doctor” is an authority on a sound new educational plan he developed and tested, he will extend his ideas with concern for accuracy and soundness—because they are going out under his name. He will be sure the information is forthcoming by the promised deadline—It’s his story. He will get the necessary photos when they are due.

Some authors prefer the co-authored byline, because they have found that editors prefer the authority of a recognized leader in the area of knowledge being featured. A study of medical magazines, women’s magazines, trade magazines will reveal that many of them specify that articles must be written by an authority on the subject. The writer may have to write every line of the finished article, but it is the name of the expert which will sell the story and guarantee that it will be read. There is little glamour in being a ghost, completely unrecognized by those who read an article or a book written by you but bearing the name of someone else as the author. (Actually, editors may change your own manuscript, with your name upon it, until it hardly

resembles what you wrote—your name is there, but your style is gone. Some publications redo everything to adhere to their own approach pattern.)

Ghosting may take the form of reworking the actual writing of another person, until the story is interesting and readable. In some cases, that may include merely eliminating repetitious phrases and sentences, tightening the material, and inserting action verbs instead of past participles. You allow the story to keep the “flavor” of the author, yet enliven the entire manuscript. Or the ghost may work from notes or taped interview answers, and write the entire manuscript from scratch. It is in essence the story of another person—the one who provided the facts, who experienced the events. He is receiving proper recognition for that—and the writer is sharing the profits from a story which could not have gone out under his own byline with authority.

Many busy men in public life have regular “ghosts” to express their views for them—even to write their speeches. That is an open secret. To some extent the ghost will envision himself as an alter ego of the “writer” whose name appears on the finished product. Fulfilling a role, as it were, he approaches the writing with the constant query, “How would Dr. I. M. Portant express this? How would he react? What is his favorite exclamatory word? What superlatives would he use?” He tries to be the expression of the co-author’s thoughts and opinions.

Perhaps the words of Moody bear rephrasing to apply to co-authors who share the limelight with an authority: “There is no telling how much a writer may influence the Christian public, if he doesn’t care who gets the byline.” To him is entrusted a talent—a studied and developed skill—not possessed by some other Christians who are gifted in their own spheres. He may widen their ministry if he is willing to take less than first place in a byline. He will at the same time be using his own gift for the glory of God by enabling that leader to reach more people with his message.

A ghost may have another advantage--not discerned as such. Most authors get little criticism from those who discuss their work face to face with them. If their friends disagree with content or style, they tactfully avoid saying so. (Like the preacher who racked his brain for something kind to say at the funeral of a renegade, then came up with, “He’s the best whistler I ever heard.”) The ghost, unknown as the actual writer of a given book, may hear the work discussed frankly in his presence and may profit withal. Ghosting may also take a nonfiction specialist a step toward fiction writing. He puts himself in the shoes of another, attempting to feel as that one feels—which is what the writer of fiction does. He steps into the shoes of his “hero” and analyzes his actions and reactions.

The writer is the kind of ghost to believe in.

## Chapter 19

### ATTITUDE

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” Think about that declaration for a moment. Go back and re-read it. Those words by a truly great woman—by earthly standards—summarize a philosophy of life that defines an overcomer. Eleanor Roosevelt, who spoke those words, was, by her own admission, the “ugly duckling” of her family, especially when compared with cousins who were considered beautiful. Her mother committed the gross error of referring to Eleanor in this way in her presence. The fragile little psyches of many children in similar circumstances have been wounded and stunted for life—because they allowed it to be so. They adopted a self-image which submitted to the estimate of someone else. Not so with the one-time First Lady of the Land. The philanthropy she exhibited in her later years was an outgrowth of a lifelong attitude of thoughtfulness for others. Eleanor Roosevelt knew that happiness is a by-product, not an end to be sought and found. She achieved true happiness (and greatness; see Mark 10:43) in unselfishly giving time and money to help others. Busy thinking about others, she had no time—had she been inclined—to mope about any seeming injustice to herself or to bemoan a mistake or failure until she sank in the Slough of Despond.

Feelings of inferiority (which must have your consent) are basic to strange and irrational behavior—as a study of psychology discloses. One who really feels inferior will often behave as though he actually felt superior, trying to make himself look more important at the expense of another person. Or, at the other extreme, he will be devoid of the will to keep trying, since he is convinced he cannot achieve. What if J. C. Penney had allowed initial failures to defeat him? A national chain of quality department stores would not have been born. What if a Colonel Harlan Sanders had agreed with the business world which retired him and relegated him to the rocking chair? Kentucky Fried Chicken would not be finger lickin’ good. What if the author of *Gone with the Wind* had agreed with the several publishers who rejected Margaret Mitchell’s manuscript before it sold... and sold... and sold?

Writers are, in a sense, salesmen—how else can they make sure of readers for the important messages they have consigned to paper? Some writing careers are nipped in the bud after the first few rejection slips accompany their homing pigeons (returning manuscripts in that self-addressed envelope). Heartless editors, unappreciative of a good thing when they see it, enclose only that cold, printed statement, so rejected (dejected) authors react: “What’s the use?”

“No one can make you feel inferior.” The Christian writer has more to fight with against discouragement than, say, a contributor to *True Story*. The believer’s story or book is an effort to witness to a wider audience. It is God’s work; therefore He is concerned about it, too. If the Christian writer truly believes that his article is both important and well written, he will not stop with the first three markets which ship his work back to him. Alan Cliburn did not. This well-known contributor to Christian publications recently admitted in *High* (Harvest Pub.) that he had just sold a story which had been submitted to 38 publishers before that. He believed in what he had written and continued trying until he found an editor who agreed with him. He was saying in effect to the rejecting editors: “You can’t make me feel inferior. I have a message that needs to be heard. I shall keep trying until it is heard.”

Norman Vincent Peale, whose own positive attitude has helped to lift the sights of his fellow Christians, relates the story of “Miss Nobody” in his popular *Enthusiasm Makes the Difference*. Many writers would empathize with the young lady described by herself as “I’m a nobody.” They say, “Editors won’t even read my stuff, because I’m a nobody. They only look for big names.” Mothers have an answer for that: “You have to crawl before you can walk.” The big names were once unknowns. “Miss Nobody” lived up to her name because she consented to feel inferior. When she followed Peale’s advice to remind herself, “I am important—I am God’s child,” she became somebody. God’s Holy Spirit told us that secret in Proverbs 23:7, when He inspired the writer to state, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Pondering that truth, one writer rephrased it, “I may not be what I think I am, but what I think—I am.”

As in every other emotion in life, the temptation to discouragement gains the most momentum when it is given attention and consideration (the bird is allowed to build the proverbial nest in one’s hair). Discouragement over a manuscript’s return thrives best if the “brainchild” is an only child. The effect is like that described by the late Dr. Murray Banks in his recorded message, “What to Do Till the Psychiatrist Comes.” Dr. Banks spoke of young people in the throes of agony because they had “lost their one and only schmoe.” They had built life on one support, and the prop got knocked out from under them. He said, “That’s like a table with one leg”—and it is obvious what happens if that one leg is knocked off. Suicides were many during the Depression: men had pinned their whole lives on one thing, their business. When that single interest crashed, life for them fell apart. Dr. Banks advised everyone to avoid the catastrophe of life built on one prop.

His advice is apropos for writers. Beginners polish their one finished product, tenderly consign it to the post office, and then haunt the mailbox daily for the good news of its acceptance—In spirit, at least, like the little boy who climbed into the country-size mailbox and greeted the postman who opened it: “Did you bring my Howdy-Doody space ring?” When the postman brings that manuscript back, instead of the looked-for check, such beginners feel like a writer depicted in a cartoon: As the postman proceeds down the walk, a typewriter is seen hurtling through the window.

One cure is to follow the advice of Dr. Banks and a host of successful writers: don’t pin all your hopes on one thing. As soon as an article is finished and in the mail, get the next one on paper. Then start another while that one cools enough to work on dispassionately. Keep mailing out new articles, and keep the homing pigeons in the air. When they “bounce” back, launch them again, and again and again. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.”

Hope and willpower are not alone enough to assure success. A ballplayer once assured his coach their team was bound to be tops because they “had the will to win.” He was reminded by the coach that success also required “the will to prepare.” In the final analysis, a writer—a Christian servant of God—cannot have the confidence in his work nor hope for its success if he himself knows deep in his heart that it does not represent his best efforts. He will be nagged by the knowledge that “consecrated incompetence is still incompetence.” He will know that he is incompetent if he has done nothing to overcome that status—such as “study to show thyself approved unto God.”

A major Christian publishing house representative provided a spur to maximum effort toward writing improvement. He stated: “Years ago, we had to select the good manuscripts from among a mountain of poor ones. Now, the choice is between the better and the best.” Publishing is competitive, even as writing is. A company has a reputation to protect in choosing manuscripts. None want to acquire a name for printing mediocre books. Therefore, a writer cannot be satisfied to do less than best.

Author Helen Hull has illustrated the antithesis of positive thinking in a memorable novel called *A Tapping on the Wall*. It is actually a portrayal of the mental adventures of a husband who decided he has “had it” from his hypochondriacal wife. He begins to ponder ways and means. Without his making any definite, pinpointed contribution to it, she becomes violently ill from ptomaine poisoning—but does survive. Fellow professors on a college staff cause embarrassment to a graduate student who is his protégé—and his negative thinking takes him on side trips of plans for their elimination. After one by one they meet with tragedy and are eliminated from his path, the book ends with his starting to ponder about reasons for wishing the favored protégé out of the way. Mrs. Hull has ably dramatized the state of mind which habitually turned to morbid contemplation.

“A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways, says James 1:8. The Christian need never be “driven with the wind and tossed,” but will declare with Paul that he will “let this mind be in him” which was in Christ Jesus. Paul definitely placed the choice in the lap of every Christian when he wrote in Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren whatsoever things are true . . . honest. . .just. . .pure. . .lovely. . . of good report. . .think on these things.” The emphasis is not on the word think, as often occurs, but on AU to think. Each item named is a positive virtue. Dwell on those thoughts. Cults and isms thrive with beautiful “affirmations”—which the Christian needs not at all if he will look at the words he reads in the Bible. Scientific, psychologically sound advice is there for mental health.

Joshua says that meditating in God’s Word and doing what it says is the secret of success—which is what writers seek, if they would be heeded: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

## Chapter 20

### PHOTOJOURNALISM

Pictures are probably the oldest form of visible communication, notably the picture-writing (hieroglyphics) of ancient Egyptians and Mexicans. Artists have long conveyed volumes through the tip of a paintbrush. In a society where both parents work and one additionally moonlights, pictures are increasingly popular as a medium of communication. Cartoons are preferred humor. To a writer, photos are a means of more than doubling the impact of his article—and his income and sales.

There were no cameras in the days when the Lord Jesus Christ walked the earth He made. Those who knew Him described Him to artists. Their traditional sketches have been handed down through generations since that time, until some boys and girls believe they are looking at an accurate photograph of Jesus. One of the earliest pictures of Him is said to be a sketch on the wall of a catacomb passage, which depicted Him on the cross. Showing Him indeed at a height above ground level, the sketch verifies His statement that “Even so shall the Son of man be lifted up,” as opposed to the contention of liberal pseudo-scholars who contend He was at ground level on the cross. The picture told the story—one picture.

Some twenty years ago a young ministerial student from Rutherford County, Tenn., was increasingly impressed that God had a place for a camera in His service. He had good equipment and used it taking pictures for the college annual. But his mentors fairly patted him on the head and said, “Go sell your camera equipment—you can’t use it in the ministry.” The action was stayed when a mission board representative agreed with him that pictures could indeed put across the message of spiritual need. And Don Rutledge began Missions Pix—and traveled to Central America and neighboring islands proving it. Then it became evident to the (then) young pastor that Christian magazines alone could not absorb all the photos he could provide, and he submitted a portfolio to Black Star, a top photo agency. In ensuing years, living a double life as a pastor/photographer, credit lines to Don Rutledge began appearing with religious photos in such magazines as Life, New York Times, This Week, Parade, and others. Some of the secrets of his successful, voluble pictures are shared in this chapter.

The tips in this chapter on photojournalism, therefore, are made possible through the kindness of a long-time friend, who now often does both writing and photos for his illustrated articles. The following assumes the writer has learned how to use his camera, as far as techniques are concerned. There are three requisites for a good photojournalist: EYE, HEART, and BRAIN.

1. Just as the writer must really see the details of a scene or a person he would write about, so the photographer must see in his viewfinder just the scene which would portray the effect he desires. As the writer sifts through hundreds of words for the right one, the eye of the photographer sweeps over much landscape and many expressions for just the right one. The right one does not often occur by specification, but in the normal routine of a life. It usually requires more time to capture an un-posed, effective “candid” shot, but the extra time spells the difference between a run-of-the-mill “cheese” pose and a real picture.

2. The Christian photographer, as the Christian writer, uses techniques common to his craft, yet the end result is essentially different. The Christian’s heart makes the difference. Because his heart bids him express concern for a need, or praise for God’s mercy, or the plight of the lost, he is watching for ways to express his heart. No other photographer is as likely to record on film just the depth of feeling the Christian wishes to convey—because he won’t be looking for it. Another’s aim may be a face or scene or a structure. Heart will dictate where the camera goes. (Don Rutledge rode a boat on the Orinoco River with missionaries in South America—and fell overboard in water known to be inhabited by crocodiles.) World War II photographers took their cameras to the front lines. They went where the action was, and moved a nation to care. Some of them did not return.

3. The novice in photojournalism (as the neophyte writer) is content with his first efforts. Every experienced photographer reiterates, “Do not spare film” in words to the effect that “in the multitude of pictures there is safety.” This is where the brain comes in. Exposures from every angle, using different stops, will assure that by the law of averages there should be one or two of high quality, with good content and depth.

The photographer is no different from the writer as he begins to “compose” his photo-story. He must have an aim in mind, a theme he seeks to illustrate. This being true, he has some ideas of the shots with which to tell the story. Aimless shooting is no more resultful than aimless writing. Photo-stories can be told with pictures only, using captions under them—i.e., a short paragraph relating to the photo and helping to tie the sequence together.

One photojournalist made the pithy observation: “The difference between photography and photo-journalism is that the latter has to do with telling a story. The difference between photojournalism and professional photojournalism is that the latter has to do with making a sale.” It is wasting film, in the long run, to stop short of good, salable pictures.

The rules for “where to find pictures” are identical for “where to find stories.” Often they are summed up in the long-ago popular song, “The bird with feathers of blue is waiting for you—back in your own back yard.” Writing material is there—so are pictures.

If, on the other hand, you find opportunity to travel with the camera, it may be a good rule of thumb to steer clear of shooting pictures you can buy in any souvenir shop. In a trip to the Holy Land, for instance, some journalism students—forewarned and forearmed—detached themselves from the “herd” (tour group) and looked over a wall, and brought back fascinating shots of family life at mealtime. The Department of Tourism (as the Chamber of Commerce in U. S. cities) puts its best foot forward. This is even obvious while riding along in a tour bus, listening to the guide. “Now on your right is this-and-that new edifice,” hoping that his clients will not notice the other side of the road, bordered with shacks and ragged children.

The market guides suggested for placing the printed page will also have listings of publications which use illustrated stories. These specify how many pictures are desirable, what kind (black-and-white, transparencies, or color prints), and how large. Since it is possible to have a transparency made from a color print negative, and vice versa, the editor’s preference is easy to comply with.

The Bibliography lists helpful books on photography. The following firms do custom darkroom work, for professional finish for pictures: black-and-white: Modernage Photographic Services, 319 E. 44th St., New York, N. Y. 10017; color: K & L Color Service, K & L Bldg., 10 East 46th St., New York, N. Y. 10017.

If a writer prefers not to get into actual photography, he might obtain pictures from Ewing Galloway, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10017.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 30.

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<sup>2</sup> A. H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1954), p. 223.