

IN THIS ISSUE. . .

1/July Meeting

2/President's Message

3/June Recap

E-Mail Updates Needed

Website Update

Members-Only Passwords

4/Profiles of Success

IWOCFest Reminder

Calendar

JULY MEETING

What Sells? Chicago's Major Print Editors to Tip Freelancers

BY MARY BETH HUFFMAN

If you've ever yearned to get a byline in a major publication – and who hasn't? – you'll want to attend IWOC's July monthly program. For independent writers, it will be the hottest ticket in town on Tuesday, July 9. Representatives from Chicago's top print media – including *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago* magazine, *Crain's Chicago Business*, and *Chicago Reader* – will give attendees the lowdown on what freelancers need to do to make themselves known and sell their stories. Our speakers are the editors and staffers who work directly with independents.

Jeff Borden is assistant managing editor for the Small Business and Special Sections of *Crain's Chicago Business*. After joining *Crain's* in 1989, Borden covered a variety of beats, including entertainment, sports, nonprofit organizations, media, and tourism before assuming his present position in 2000. He has won three Peter Lisagor awards from the Chicago chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

Before he came to *Crain's*, Borden was a radio/television critic, first at the *Columbus Dispatch* in Ohio and later at the *Charlotte Observer* in North Carolina.

There he won several awards for critical commentary from the North Carolina Press Association. He was also named a Knight Fellow at the University of Maryland in 1999.

Jan Parr is Special Projects editor at *Chicago* magazine. Previously, Parr was founding editor of *Online Investor*, a national print magazine. She was a long-time senior editor at *Chicago*; a news editor at *Electronic Media*; managing editor of *Connect-Time*, a magazine for Internet neophytes; and a staff reporter for *Forbes*. As a freelancer, Parr has written and edited for *Crain's Chicago Business*, *Advertising Age*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Midwest Living*, and *Vegetarian Times*. She teaches magazine editing at Northwestern University.

Maureen Melvin Hart is Special Sections editor at *Chicago Tribune*. She is a graduate of Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, with bachelor's and master's degrees. She began her career at *Suburban Trib* as a full-time copy editor, then worked part-time after the birth of her first child. About 10 years ago, she became editor of the Tempo Southwest section, one of the four zoned Tempo sections published by the *Chicago Tribune*.

When those gave way to the Health & Family section, she became assistant editor, before becoming Special Sections editor in 2000. Hart oversees three editors and works with them on various regional and theme sections, such as Prime Time and Education Today. She is a mother of three and lives on the South Side.

Just at press time, we got word that seasoned editors Holly Greenhagen and Mike Miner from *Chicago Reader* will also be joining the panel.

This promises to be a stellar meeting that you won't want to miss. You'll get tips on how to pitch your ideas, where to send queries, what editors look for in the pieces they buy, and more. Even nonjournalists can learn from getting the client-side perspective. And in these unsettled economic times, wouldn't we all like a few extra skills in our writer's bag of tricks?

Join IWOC members for networking from 5 PM to 6 PM. The program follows at 6 PM on Tuesday, July 9 at the Downtown Marriott, 540 North Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Afterward, socialize with fellow writers at a buy-your-own dinner. The program is free for professional members, \$5 for associates, and \$15 for nonmembers. ♦♦

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE/BRENT BROTINE

Year-End Housekeeping

While summer is a traditionally slow period for many of us, your Board and some dedicated members have been putting in extra hours on many important IWOC matters – and I want to thank everyone who's pitched in. We're hard at work transitioning to a digital-age IWOC, from a more robust Website to a rejuvenated Writers (on)Line, to a colorful new online *Stet* (soon with photos and who knows what else). You can already see the results with this first issue.

That said, we're eager to bring more people, with new ideas, into the mix. Next month, we'll announce our slate of Board officers for 2002-3, and I think you'll be delighted to see how many energetic and experienced members are willing to commit their time. Yet we still have room for more, and I'd like to again make the case for getting involved.

LIKE VISIBILITY? LIKE MAKING CONTACTS? YOU COULD BE OUR NEXT PROGRAM CHAIR.

Great case studies, savvy guest experts, well-known editors and recruiters. This past IWOC season has been a stellar showcase of talent and topics, and the thanks go to outgoing program chair Mary Beth Huffman. Talk about dedication: last year Mary Beth left the freelance fold to work in the public sector, and for those of you who don't know, she's continued to honor her commitment to IWOC even though her new position requires her to personally attend meetings every second Tuesday. She deserves a loud round of applause for her work this year, and my hope is that we can find another Mary Beth to honcho our 2002-3 program schedule.

While there are many altruistic reasons to volunteer for the job – helping out your fellow members, doing a good deed for IWOC and all that – I'd be remiss if I didn't stress the personal benefits. Simply put, when you identify yourself on the phone as the IWOC program chair, you have instant access to people who might otherwise be "tied up in a meeting." That's because you have something important to offer them: the opportunity to speak to a large group of people who are either prospects for their own services or potential suppliers who can make their jobs easier. Whether you're contacting an editor who might like to find new freelance sources, or a motivational speaker who's happy to appear in exchange for the publicity, you'll find a receptive ear – and equally important for yourself, you'll find you've added another name to your Rolodex.

Although I don't want to imply that becoming program chair is a ticket to getting more jobs, it will definitely enlarge your circle of contacts. Those of us who have become successful independents know the benefit of reaching what I call "critical mass" – where enough people know your name and pass it on to others so that most of your jobs come from word of mouth. It takes time, but it does happen, and working on programs can jump-start the process.

Please call or e-mail me if you're interested in either the program chair position, or working on the programming committee. The Board is ready to help support our next program chair, so you won't be working without a safety net. But if you want to think about it, don't think too

long – our goal, quite naturally, is to have the new chair and committee in place by August.

THE SPACE QUEST CONTINUES

My thanks to so many of you for your great suggestions for new meeting places. We've checked out all the leads you've provided, and we're still sifting through various alternatives. Unfortunately, we haven't found one "best" location – some very appealing places happen to already be taken on the second Tuesday of the month, and some places that are available fall short on such attributes as: no lobby or other area to gather before the meeting, no nearby public transportation, or no beverage service for the meeting/pre-meeting.

Some of you have suggested we have a moveable feast: different locations every month. While some organizations do experience success with this type of format, that approach works best with restaurant venues. Our post-meeting dinners are too small to be attractive to most banquet managers. Also, we probably don't want to require RSVPs and payment prior to attendance.

What we'd most like to know are members' feelings about possibly changing our meeting night. If – and this is only "if" right now – we find a great facility that isn't available ever second Tuesday, but perhaps is available another evening, is it worth further consideration? Is there a good reason other than "we've always done it then" to keep our meetings on the second Tuesday? Please share your feedback with me or another Board member. We certainly want to have a sense of where the membership is before making any major change. ♦♦

“The Pricing Game” Stumps IWOC Members

BY BRENT BROTTINE

There’s a “going rate” for a 500-word press release. There’s a “going rate” for a two-sided sales letter. But some projects don’t appear neatly in the *Writer’s Market* or *Creative Business* rate listings. Three such projects were selected for the June meeting, where IWOC members described their projects in detail and challenged fellow members to guess their final asking price.

Cindy Mehallow began the meeting by showing a project for Zurich Life Insurance: a series of three brochures selling variable annuities. The initial guesses from the floor were all over the place; once Cindy volunteered that her total time on the project was just under 40 hours, our first winner correctly guessed in \$3,000 range.

Next up was John Reynolds, who writes a topical weekly column targeted for Catholic churches to include in their own mailed bulletins. John solicits churches to purchase a 52-week subscription to his columns (distributed electronically). At first, members guessed far more than his actual price, but as John

explained, he has to make his money on volume. He has better-known competition who undercuts his price, and whatever he receives is 100 percent more than any local church has likely budgeted for bulletin content. As John revealed, while every \$100 to \$200 he receives from a church may seem small, he has to think of himself as a syndicator and charge accordingly, irrespective of the hours he devotes to writing each column.

Last was Harry Karabel, who with his musician partner, created a package of customized motivational songs/anthems for a Brown & Williamson sales meeting. This turned out to be the big stumper of the evening. As Harry explained, it was an encore performance – he’s written song lyrics for this client in the past – and so there’s an established price range. While the \$5,000-range package price Harry and his partner receive may not exactly reflect the hours it takes Harry to write the lyrics (he’s fast), Harry does follow through on the music production and makes needed client revisions. ♦

E-MAIL UPDATES NEEDED

Because *Stet* will henceforth be delivered to you via e-mail, as will other notices, it’s very important that you notify the office (847/855-6670) if your e-mail address changes. Currently, we’ve gotten bounce-backs on e-mails to **Michelle Fellman, David Hammond, Matthew Ignoffo, Marla Kruglik, and Lee Mitchell**. If you’re on this list, you’ll get a print copy, as will those without e-mail, until we get a new address. Prohibitive printing costs have made it impossible for us to continue producing the newsletter as we knew it, so print copies will be made at the office on ordinary paper. We regret the step-down for those without e-mail, but we hope the new all-color electronic *Stet* will be another incentive to get on the Internet bandwagon.

Refreshing News: A Brief Website Update

BY CHRISTINA FOSTER

Bit by bit – yikes! that’s two bad jokes in a row! – IWOC.org is taking new shape. Stop by and take a look.

We’ve recently created a password-protected Members-Only section, where today you’ll find the new net-based version of Writers’ Line (and yes, there are a couple of jobs up!). We’ll also begin archiving copies of *Stet* here, and over the coming weeks you’ll be able to find speaker’s notes from monthly programs, copies of the current Rate Survey, and much more. See the accompanying box for the user name and password you’ll need, and check back often for additional information.

We’ve also set up a special page for clients, where, beginning early next week, you’ll be able to find the new IWOC e-SourceBook, in a much-expanded format that more closely mimics its print sibling. (If you chose to be included here, please check your own personal links, and drop me a line at cfwrites@aol.com if anything’s amiss.) As always,

we’ll accept changes or additions to your category listings at any time, for a nominal fee, and we’ll be updating the directory on a roughly monthly basis.

Special recognition and huge thanks belong to Ed Bouchard and Tom Kepler for their extraordinary commitment of time and effort to develop these new site functions. A long-distance nod also should go to Rick Quatro, of Carmen Publishing in upstate New York, whose programming assistance has been invaluable. Finally, thanks, too, to Dianne Rowland and Joen Kinnan – for everything you’ve done, and everything you’re going to do!

And speaking of that — there’s much more to come. Check us out often. We’ll roll out the full plan in *Stet*’s next issue and keep you posted via e-mail as new features are added.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome, so don’t hold back, folks! Your input will only make IWOC.org a better resource for all of us. ♦

IMPORTANT NOTICE

We’re evaluating maintenance issues behind supporting member-defined passwords. For now, here are the current keys you’ll need to access the member area of IWOC.org.

Username	IWOC
Password	CHGOWRTR

Please don’t share these with anyone but other IWOC members. They’re your entry to the job listings on Writers’ Line, among other things, and they’re strictly for members only.

Profiles of Success

BY LYNN SANDERS

Meet Larry Cohen:

President, Brandshee™, "Creating Brand Names That Scream."

Length of IWOC Membership: "Three years."

Why Are You An IWOC Member? "It's my belief if you're going to freelance, it's best to join a group that promotes its members."

Background: "Consumer advertising. Worked at Burnett, DDB/Needham, and what is now Euro-McConnaughy, RSCG/Tatham. Executive creative director with the second largest B2B ad agency in Ohio...owned my own integrated marketing firm. Experience in copywriting, publicity, sales promotion, direct marketing, trade shows, and retail advertising."

Expertise: "I'm a marketing consultant with more than 25 years experience creating sales-generating strategies and writing award-winning creative executions and campaigns. I'm also a nomenclaturist, and you won't find that word in the dictionary. I made it up. As a nomenclaturist, I make up lots of words, mostly brand names."

Why Freelance? "To avoid being pigeon-holed on the creative side, I went freelance to gain work as a branding and marketing specialist."

Projects Most Proud Of: "Food Service. I developed damage-control advertising for Kellogg's. For Dow Styrofoam, one of my ads won in Adweek as one of the Five Best Business-Business Ads of the Year."

Other Interests? "I love writing humorous articles. I'm also working on a book or two. I like sailing, going to plays, films and art museums. I'm also a fan of Klezmer music."

Best Advice? "Learn how to collect overdue bills from your clients."

Greatest Satisfaction? "Winning a Cannes Film Festival Lion Award for one of my commercials and having my work featured on the CBS special, "The World's Funniest, Most Creative Commercials." Brainstorming gives me the greatest creative satisfaction. In fact, I have a framed poster on my wall of a man on a boat in the middle of a lake. The headline is, "Gone Thinking." I also enjoy teaching students at Roosevelt University in my integrated marketing communications class."

Your Heroes? "William Bernbach, founder of Doyle, Dane & Bernbach; Ed McCabe (the world's best copywriter ever!), founder of Scally, McCabe & Sloves; and Albert Einstein, because he believed that imagination was so important."

How Would You Like To Be Remembered? "The Einstein of branding!" ♦♦

Don't forget to mail in the attached flyer to make your reservation for IWOCFest. Great food — including appetizers — good company, libations, and a chance to win the coveted Maltese Falcon!

Calendar

July 9

"Meet Editors from Chicago's Major Print Media."

IWOC monthly meeting. Speakers include editors from *Chicago Tribune*, *Crain's Chicago Business*, *Chicago Reader*, and *Chicago* magazine. Chicago Marriott Downtown, 540 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Ample parking nearby. Buy-your-own dinner follows at a nearby restaurant. Networking at 5 PM, program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

August 13

"It's IWOCFest!" IWOC's annual summer frolic — no regular meeting this month. Once again we'll be living it up on the rooftop of Pegasus Restaurant and Taverna at 130 S. Halsted in Greektown. A splendid buffet (including vegetarian food), drink, comraderie, and a great Greek band. Fill out and mail in the accompanying flyer. You won't want to miss it.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below usually meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but it's best to call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. Anyone willing to coordinate a far-south meeting, call Brent Brotine.

July 16 (3rd Tuesday)

Far North Suburban breakfast. Writers from all over meet at 9 AM at the Egg Harbor Restaurant, 300 Village Green (Old Half Day Road and Route 21), Lincolnshire. Call Carrie Suarez at 847/855-0401 for information.

July 23 (4th Tuesday)

IWOOP monthly lunch. Join near-west suburbanites at noon for an outdoor lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park (summer location). For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

August 1 (1st Thursday)

IWORP monthly breakfast. Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

Note: The Streeterville-Near North Group is reviewing days, times, and venues. Until the group sets a permanent place and time, call Christina Foster at 312/274-0597 or e-mail cfwrites@aol.com for information.

For details about IWOC monthly meetings or seminars, call the IWOC office at 847/676-3784 or check out www.iwoc.org.