

SEPTEMBER MEETING

*Marrying Words with Visual Content:
Learn How to Make It a Happy Union*

BY JIM HODL

Before the September program begins, IWOC will hold its annual business meeting and election of officers. See the article on page 9 for the slate of officers and board candidates. Be sure to come and vote. This is the team that will lead us in the coming year. — Editor

Sometimes it takes more than words to complete a freelance assignment. The client wants a complete package with words and visual content. In such cases, a writer may find it advantageous to work with a graphic designer — or even do all the work him/herself.

“There is nothing worse than staring at a blank page wondering what to do,” says Pat Noonan-Hastings, owner of Evolution Communications Design, Oak Park. To avoid this situation, Noonan-Hastings will offer tips on the process of page design during her presentation, “The Collaboration between Writing and Visual Content,” at the next IWOC meeting on Tuesday, September 12.

“The goal in composing a page is to meld both message and image so that each complements the other to present a point of view to the audience,” says Noonan-Hastings, who has more than 20 years graphic design experience. In the past, she has tackled projects from cookbooks to corporate informational pieces for clients ranging from

Highland Park Hospital to Random House.

During her presentation, Noonan-Hastings will explain to writers how a graphic designer works and how writers can communicate effectively with designers to get what they need for the finished work.

She also will explain how — when the budget doesn't allow hiring a designer — writers can design the project themselves. Noonan-Hastings will describe the challenges involved and offer possible solutions. This information, based on her personal experience, will include how to arrange elements on a printed page to achieve an aesthetic design that avoids those boringly gray blocks of type and invites people to read it.

“The Collaboration between Writing and Visual Content,” will be the centerpiece of the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, September 12 at the Chicago Athletic Association's 7th Floor Lakeshore Room, 12 S. Michigan Ave. Come at 5 p.m. to network with other professional freelance writers over gourmet cookies and coffee. The main program begins at 6 p.m.

Admission is free to all IWOC members and \$15 to nonmembers.

Afterwards, attendees are invited to convene at a nearby restaurant to continue discussing the presentation or simply network over a buy-your-own dinner. ♦♦

The Social Scene

IWOCers partied hearty in August, many attending both IWOCFest and the get-together with SPJ freelancers at the Billy Goat.

It couldn't have been a more gorgeous evening for IWOCFest, and a huge crowd turned out to gorge on Greek delicacies, drink wine, and savor good company. Everyone agreed it was a smashing evening.

The IWOC crowd was smaller, but the SPJ event was just as festive. Their people were out in force, so we made lots of new friends.

The Headline Club — the local chapter of SPJ — generously picked up the tab for the entire event. In keeping with Billy Goat tradition, cheeseburgers seemed to be the gastronomic choice. Our thanks to the Headline Club for giving such a great party. We loved it! ♦♦

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN BY HARRY J. KARABEL

Back to School



My children have no sense of neighborhood. They grew up in an area that their city-born father can only call "rural." We have a little over an acre, trees, squirrels, bunnies, chipmunks, hundreds of birds, the occasional deer and, since we are not in a subdivision, no covenants. So my lawn does not look like a golf course and it won't any time soon. It is, after all, just grass.

For their entire lives, my children had to be taken somewhere to interact with other children: to school or Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts or Little League or sleepovers or dance classes or play dates or parties. Sometimes children would come to my house for those same reasons. But my children never experienced the freedom of spontaneously going outside and running into friends. Everything had to be planned. There were phone calls and driving and schedules and "can we pick you up after we grocery shop and get the car washed?"

This lack of neighborhood was brought to mind when the first crisp rush of fall air reminded me that school was, once again, just around the corner. Going back to school was always a big deal for my kids because — even with the tremendous trauma and drudgery of mathematics, geekazoid teachers, and who sat with whom in the lunchroom — they got to see all their friends on a regular basis without help or interference from the P's.

Even though I grew up with the freedom of a neighborhood, I know exactly how they felt.

My neighborhood was called West Elsdon, named long ago for a Grand Trunk railroad stop that ceased operation before I was born. It was roughly the space between 51st and 55th streets and between St. Louis and Kedzie avenues.

All the kids in that area who went to public school, and a few more in blocks as far east as Albany and Whipple, went to Sawyer Elementary School at 53rd and Sawyer.

As far as the great City of Chicago was concerned, that was my neighborhood. But in the summer, my neighborhood got smaller. The guys I hung out with all summer lived within a one-block radius of my house. I think, from my parents' perspective, the neighborhood extended only as far as you could hear them yell. So all summer Joey, Dave, Johnny, and I would re-enact the Adventures of Sergeant Nick Fury and his Howling Commandos (our favorite comic book characters) play Mumbly Peg for hours (a game played with a pocket knife. Try <http://members.tripod.com/gtsurber/games-mumblypeg.htm> for more info), swap comic books, play softball and Kick the Can. My best friend (and fellow brainiac who also became a writer) Wayne lived about five blocks away, and I never saw him between June and September.

If we went to the movies in the neighborhood, we would walk to 59th and Kedzie to The Colony Theater, or to 63rd and Kedzie to the Marquette Theater. Even though they were clearly outside our boundaries, they were still considered "neighborhood." We would make those walks as often as we could to sit inside the "air-conditioned comfort." In those days before the Blockbuster Summer Movie Events, we went to see anything that had guns or swords in it. Each screen adventure would fuel our summer play for weeks.

I don't remember how we managed to fill the long, hot minutes of those summer days without cable or video games or movie stores or organized sports or online third-person shooter games. But fill them we did, to the absolute limit. We were so busy that the end of summer always caught us by surprise. That final day of vacation was perpetually melancholic. It was always sunny and hot, as if we needed to be reminded what we would soon be missing. We got up early and played hard until suppertime. We knew, that night, there would be no going out after supper. Parents always wanted you inside so you wouldn't be worn out for the first day of school. (And what was that all about? We were never tired. But they had this mindset, "dinner is over, so is summer vacation!")

We had my pencil box, notebook, notebook paper, and new pens by then. The school supplied everything else. My two pairs of school pants were draped over the back of the chair in my bedroom. School pants were also church pants, and those were the only sanctioned activities for the wearing of those pants. You didn't play in them, run in them or goof in them. They were for sitting and learning and walking back and forth to school. They were uncomfortable, stiff, and a little scratchy.



A Challenge: Move your Business Forward

COLD CALLING IS THE ENGINE THAT WILL DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS' GROWTH. YOUR ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR ARE THE FUEL.

My "Cold Call Basics" and "Freelance Boot Camp" seminars are popular with IWOC members and other freelancers. These programs make attendees believe they too can expand their client bases by using the business-building techniques discussed in them.

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm wears off quickly when time comes to actually use the 64-pound telephone to tell strangers how you can solve their communications needs.

We are big believers in our products but too often lack the attitude and behavior that is necessary to leverage that internal enthusiasm into an external presentation that wins business.

And I think this is where we get hung up: We mistakenly equate cold calling — using the phone to speak to potential clients we do not know — with the telemarketing we receive in our homes for consumer products.

We are professional business people having a unique product that really does solve a unique need businesses need solved. We use the phone to speak to these people in their business environments.

Business people expect other business people to reach out to them about new ideas, new solutions, and other better ways of

doing things.

Rather than think you're being a pest when calling potential clients, recognize that, in truth, you are offering them solutions. Ask questions about their communications strategies, objectives, and tactics. Listen for "pains" that you can address and solve.

Successful use of the phone to build your client base needn't freak you out. Those of us in IWOC who do cold call, even once in a while, have the money in the bank to prove that it does work.

Cold calling is the engine that will drive your business' growth. Your attitude about cold calling — "Yes, I can do that," — and your behavior related to it — "Yes, I will spend an hour a day three days a week doing it" — are the fuel.

Here's my challenge to you: Decide you can and will use the phone to contact potential new business and then stick to a plan for calling or following up with these potential clients on a regular basis. Keep track of your activities and your results.

If, after three months, you can prove to me by your report that cold calling does not work for you, dinner for two is on me at an area restaurant of your choice. If it works, tell me thanks. ♦

Jim Leman, a former IWOC president and board member, has been a member of IWOC since 1993. He writes for the automotive and management consulting industries. www.lemanbizwriter.com or lemanBIZwriter@comcast.net.

IWOC NEWS & NOTES

We have two bits of IWOC business to note. First, you'll be delighted to hear that the board has voted to remove the \$35 charge for listing in the online directory from henceforth. You can still opt out of the online directory, but when renewal comes up, you'll save \$35 if you want to be listed, as most people do.

Second, here is the list of officers and board members upon whom we'll vote at the September meeting:

President, Harry Karabel
Vice President, Roger Rueff
Secretary, Ellen Krupp
Treasurer, Barbara Dillard
Parliamentarian, Jim Leman
Board members: Ed Bouchard, Joen Kinnan (as webmaster), Marla Kruglik, Diana Schneidman, Paula Shevick.

Be sure to be there to cast your vote.

Midwest Literary Festival

Authors and would-be authors take note: Writer's Digest is sponsoring the Midwest Literary Festival to be held at the North Island Center in Downtown Aurora, Illinois, on September 15-17. The festival will feature dozens of best-selling novelists and children's authors. Admission to the festival is free, but there is an all-day workshop on Friday, September 15 that costs \$125. The workshop appears to be jam-packed with information about writing, finding an agent, selling, and promoting books and screenplays.

Luminaries such as Joyce Carol Oates and Helen Thomas will be there. (There is a charge for the Thomas presentation.) For complete information, visit www.midwestliteraryfestival.com. We also have some info at iwoc.org/iwoc-events.htm. ♦

IN MEMORIUM

We are greatly saddened to report the deaths of former longtime member Phyllis Miller and beloved friends Lou Sorkin, husband of member Jane Ranshaw, and Jim Parsegian, dear friend and former husband of past treasurer Nancy Parsegian. For a long time, Phyllis held the attendance record for IWOC meetings, never missing a program for years. She was also a dedicated editor of *Stet*. Lou counted many IWOCers as friends, and everyone who knew Lou loved him for his warmth and kindness. IWOCers will remember Jim for his hearty good humor that enlivened IWOC parties. They will all be missed. We extend our heartfelt condolences to their families.

Memorial contributions for Phyllis may be sent to the Council for the Jewish Elderly in Chicago; for Lou to Heifer International; and for Jim to St. James Armenian Church in Evanston.

Promote IWOC & Yourself at NSACI Expo September 26

BY JEFFREY STEELE

IWOC members are invited to attend the Northwest Suburban Alliance for Commerce and Industry (NSACI) Business Expo on Tuesday, Sept. 26 from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Stonegate Conference and Banquet Centre, 2401 W. Higgins Rd., Hoffman Estates.

IWOC recently joined NSACI, and for the first time will have a table at the annual expo, which is now in its 16th year. IWOC members will be staffing the table to promote IWOC and its services to scores of businesses exhibiting at and attending the fair. The expo represents an outstanding opportunity for IWOC members to meet representatives of northwest suburban businesses that may be able to use their writing services.

Because IWOC has paid for a table at the expo, there is no cost to IWOC members to attend. Those who wish to join in a pre-expo business luncheon featuring a keynote speech by Chicago Cubs Senior Vice-President of Marketing and Broadcasting John McDonough should call NSACI's Harvey Blender for reservations. Cost is \$35.

Please join us on September 26th to promote both IWOC and our own writing or business communication services. ♦

President's Column *continued from page 2.*

Still, I was happy to be back inside them, happy to walk the four blocks up 52nd to Sawyer Avenue and then cut through the playground to stand at the door and wait for the bell. I knew I'd be seeing my friends and all those girls who each year got a little more interesting to look at. I would get to experience a new year and a new teacher with the whole neighborhood. And I couldn't wait.

I feel the same way about IWOC. Summer was great (although not great for business, and I understand I'm not alone). But the meetings were not as well attended (except for IWOCFest, a perfect evening all the way around), some familiar faces disappeared for a while, and part of the summer felt like sitting on Joey's lawn beating him at Mumbly Peg for the 143rd time.

But with the change in the air comes new optimism. I am optimistic about the work we will do this year to help IWOC grow, about our advertising efforts already in place and the plans in progress to further those efforts, and about our membership. New members are getting involved because they believe that's the best way to get the most out of their IWOC investment. And of course, they're right.

I've even heard from clients who haven't called in a while. I've also heard my new, improved sales pitch: more confident and aggressive, but still funny and relaxed. Maybe I rested this summer. Maybe I got smarter. Maybe my neighborhood got smaller so I'd be better prepared when it got bigger again. Maybe this will be the year that's better than all the years before. ♦

Calendar

September 12

IWOC monthly meeting. Election of officers and program "Collaboration between Writing and Visual Content." Speaker is Pat Noonan-Hastings. Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Ample parking and the El nearby. Buy-your-own dinner follows at a nearby restaurant. Networking at 5 PM, program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates free, nonmembers \$15.

October 10

IWOC monthly meeting. IWOC's annual roundtable. A member participation meeting.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org.

September 28 (4th Thursday)

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.

October 5 (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.

IWOC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

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MARSHA PORTNOY**

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