

Stet

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JULY MEETING

Travel Writing: The Gig That Pays You for Going Somewhere You Want to Go Anyway

BY STEWART TRUELSEN

What's your idea of travel writing? Mine is writing an article on my laptop at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on Waikiki Beach while a waiter brings me a cocktail from the Mai Tai Bar. It's one time I wouldn't mind having writer's block and needing to stretch my deadline.

Is freelance travel writing the stuff dreams are made of or is it just a dream?

You can decide for yourself after attending the IWOC monthly program on July 12. Two outstanding writers will talk about the evolving market for travel writing; how to get started in it; and what you can expect



in pay and travel perks.

Katie Hammel lives in Chicago and is an editor and

travel writer for BootsNAll Travel Network, www.bootsnall.com, a resource for independent travelers who aren't looking for packaged tours. She was a blogger at Gadling, an AOL website, and she has freelanced for a number of other travel websites. Last month she attended the Travel Blogger

Exchange Conference in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Jeff Steele is one of the most versatile and enterprising freelance writers in the Chicago area. He also is co-



chairman of the IWOC membership committee. His travel articles

appear in a national trade publication and in newspapers. Travel to Mexico is one of his favorite subjects.

Hammel, a former events planner for a prestigious law school, turned a passion for travel into a writing career. She is part of a new generation of travel writers who have a following online and through social media.

"There are a lot of people making a living as all-purpose travel writers, but if you can position yourself as an expert in a certain destination or type of travel that really helps in terms of making a brand for yourself," says Hammel, who counts travel to Iceland and value travel for the budget-minded among her specialties.

Steele, who considers himself a freelance generalist, says, "Travel writing is hard-

er, more difficult writing for me, but more gratifying." He recalls laboring over a piece he wrote on Mazatlan. In the end, the article gained more favorable attention than what he normally gets from writing about real estate or the automotive world.

There may be fewer opportunities to write about travel for print media—in part because newspaper travel sections have shrunk or disappeared—but the loss of print space is being offset by travel-related websites. Get the full story on trends in travel writing by attending the IWOC meeting.

Visitors are cordially invited. The program takes place on Tuesday, July 12 at National-Louis University, Room 4020, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Networking (and sharing travel experiences) begins at 5 p.m. The main program is at 6 p.m. Admission is free to IWOC members, \$15 to nonmembers (\$10 with pre-registration online). After the meeting, attendees are invited to go to a nearby restaurant for a buy-your-own dinner and to further discuss professional writing topics and continue networking. For more information, call 800-804-IWOC (800-804-4962) or visit www.iwoc.org.

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Joel Kimman

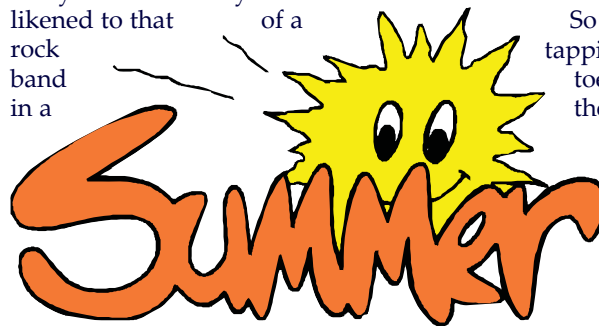
Contributors: Richard L. Eastline, Vladimir Herard, Roger Rueff, Stewart Truelsen

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

The Main Event



It looks like Summer might finally be here, judging from the heat, anyway. I know it officially began a couple of weeks ago, but seriously, its arrival this year could easily be likened to that of a rock band in a



major concert venue. The opening act, Spring, entertained the Chicagoland crowd well enough while the latecomers filed in and took their seats and the rest of us hit the restrooms and perused the stands in the lobby where we could buy tee shirts and CDs of the main attraction. Much of Spring's act seemed a bit on the cold side, especially the pieces billed as "breezy"—and the consensus opinion seemed to be that Spring's performance was nothing more than a cover-version mishmash of Winter hits. So most of us have been waiting for Spring to clear its equipment from the stage so that Summer could make its grand entrance. But it's taken its sweet time doing so.

Don't get me wrong; I have nothing against Spring. It's just that I'm not fond of its latest makeover, featuring Cold and Rain. When it comes to atmospheric condi-

tions, pleasant monotony is not that hard to... well... weather. Just ask a Southern Californian. But the repeated riffs of Midwest Chilly and Wet have gotten to be too much.

So I've been tapping my toes, like the rest of

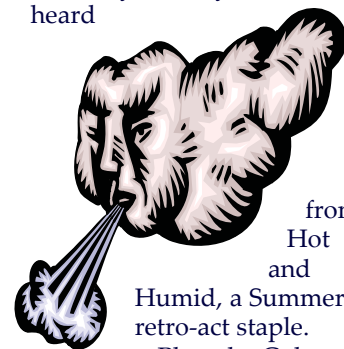
Chicagoland, and waiting for Summer's grand entrance. The ticket said 12:16 p.m. CST on June 21, but all we heard for weeks after that was a sound check while the roadie gods adjusted the stage lights. Meanwhile, the rumors flew. "Is it here?" "Maybe something happened." "Nothing happened. It's just trying to build suspense."

Then last Sunday evening, driving home to Uptown from the Old Orchard Mall, Summer blasted onto the stage with a light show of rock-star proportions—an electrical storm on a scale so grand that if I saw it on a movie screen, I would say to myself, "This special effects crew had too much money and too much time on their hands." If the aliens ever do land and kick ass, destroying cities and whatnot, they'll have to pump it up a notch to beat the show that night—flash after flash after flash of god-that-was-close lightning, some sending up

sparks. And chassis-shaking thunder.

And then came Rain followed by Hail and Howling Wind. Now that's an entrance! When it was over, you could almost hear Summer shouting with happy exhaustion into a microphone, "Hel-lo, Chi-ca-go!"—only to be answered by a collective cheer from those of us pleased to be acknowledged by fame on the level of a certified season. I was tempted to lift up my cell phone and wave it in the air... but I refrained.

Then yesterday, we heard



from Hot and Humid, a Summer retro-act staple.

Plus, the Cubs are sucking pretty bad—sixteen games under .500 and yet to string together three wins in a row. Eleven games back in the NL Central, where just six more wins than losses gets you a share of first place (and your choice



of plush doll or pseudo-sexy poster.) So, yeah. Summer is

definitely here.

Let's hope, when the time comes, it bows out gracefully to Fall. ♪

Healthcare Writing: Cashing in on a Robust Field

BY VLADIMIRE HERARD

Despite a three-year-old recession, Chicago's medical publishers could use more freelance writers. Interested?

If so, and you want to write for healthcare editor and journalist Matthew Weinstock, you need a



healthcare background, strong reporting skills, and an understanding of business practices.

"Our readers are CEOs," Weinstock said. "Fifteen minutes on the phone with them is big. We need to know what we are talking about." This means, Weinstock adds, you must "do your homework and know the meaning of terms such as 'value-based pay' and 'bundled packages.'"

Fellow healthcare journalist Judy Jakush agrees: "You



have to know what terms to use. It's 'dentist and physicians' and not 'dentists

and doctors.' We used M.D. We got a lot of questions about why we did not use D.O."

In other words, do the gruntwork, pay your dues early enough, and become conversant in the field.

Fair enough. Nationally, the medical profession offers ample opportunity for freelancers to cut their teeth

on, wherever they live and work.

HEALTHCARE GROUPS HIRE

Billed as one of the country's largest in 2008, the healthcare industry has since hired and kept 14 million more medical specialists and support staff in its 600,000-plus healthcare settings than it has in previous years, and it is expected to add 3.2 million more jobs to the economy between 2008 and 2018, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. In fact, the Bureau reports the healthcare industry has added another 600,000 jobs to the economy since the start of the recession in late 2007, and 10 of the country's fastest-growing jobs are in healthcare.

Chicago and its outlying suburbs are a gold mine for healthcare freelance writers to tap into. At least 21 medical professional associations, advocacy organizations, and lobbying groups are homeported in the Windy City. (See sidebar on page 5.)

The national and local robustness of the healthcare industry creates conditions ripe for the launch of new medical trade publications, the expansion of old ones, and endless freelancing opportunities. But how does a newbie or even a veteran, break into healthcare writing?

Weinstock, senior editor of *Hospitals and Health Networks (H & HN) Daily* business magazine, one of three publications of the Health Forum of the American Hospital Association (AHA), and Jakush, editor of *ADA News*, the official publication of the American Dental Association, say freelance writers must treat the health-

care beat as they would any other specialty.

That is, freelancers must cultivate a niche in the field by reading, researching, gathering sources and reporting, and by contributing to relevant professional publications.

FIND YOUR NICHE

"Find out what your niche is," Jakush said. "Go for what you know." But she cautions against looking to newspapers, which are dying slow and painful deaths. Indeed, newspaper publishers place seventh on the Bureau's national list of the top 10 industries facing the greatest job losses between 2008 and 2018. So don't look for trade pub start-ups in those niches anytime soon. In contrast, both editors tout the health information subset of the healthcare industry as the way to go for a shot at freelancing.

Weinstock says that his own employer has a client base for health information and freelancers can grow in the field. "Build yourself a niche," he said. "It may mean a blog ... Build it that way." (He recalls a simpler time before the web and computers when building a niche meant saving a physical portfolio of newspaper clips or magazine writing samples.)

Jakush suggests the same: "If you have a blog, make it health information," she said. "It is huge and will get huger."

Weinstock advises healthcare writers to stay current by reading trade pubs such as *Modern Healthcare*, *Kaiser Health News*, *Health Data Management*, and the varied

electronic and hard-copy journals, newsletters, alerts and blogs of JCAHO. Visit their websites, but it would not hurt to get industry updates on Twitter either, he adds.

And while tight budgets and staffing affect the work of the Health Forum of the AHA and *ADA News* as they would any other trade publication outlet, both are still places with opportunity.

FREELANCE OPPORTUNITIES

As an editor, Weinstock says that his own employer, the Health Forum, a for-profit subsidiary of the AHA, offers chances for freelancers to write for *Trustee* magazine, which focuses on healthcare-setting governance; *H & HN Daily*, the more consumer-friendly of the two publications on management; and *Health Facilities Management*, a business magazine for architects and designers. Of the three, *Trustee* provides the most freelancing opportunities, he says.

"Eighty percent of our work is freelanced," Weinstock said. "We are for-profit, and we downsized our staff quite a bit, so we are using more freelancing than in the past."

So, bone up on the latest medical business policy and lingo and be prepared to write competently on best practices for hospital CEOs and CIOs, staffing, policy, information technology, physician relations, perceptions of doctors in the communities they serve, medical services management, and profiling vendors such as Siemens.

Continued on page 4.

Within LinkedIn, More Aids for the Writer

This is yet another review in an irregular series devoted to books and Internet sites that are popularly classified as reference source material.

BY RICHARD L. EASTLINE

So, you have membership in LinkedIn, the self-proclaimed social network for professionals. And what are you using it for—strictly fishing for job offers? Or keeping track of friends' accomplishments? Or perhaps engaging in community dialogs on work-related subjects? If that last option is meaningful to you, then you may have already become aware of how much value there is in joining a group within LinkedIn.

As for groups directed to writers, they range from the frivolous to the fruitful. An example of the former is "Helium," (aptly named for something lighter than air). It's a haven for writers who are game-lovers and blessed with far too much free time. The principal activity seems to involve group participation in exercises such as

developing a story with ongoing one-word contributions or to create the longest list of compound words beginning with "yard-work-man" (although, on occasion, there may be an opportunity for discussion of sorts on topics such as "Which to you most enjoy—writing or proofreading." Really.

For something with predictably more value, there is the "Certified Professional Writers Association," a somewhat closed group that extends an invitation to all who write but accepts only those who furnish evidence of active engagement. Naturally, its membership is smaller than the wide-open groups but everyone involved profits from the limitation. Subject material—established either by its founder-director Leon Sterling or by members—

can range from recurring topics such as shaking up non-paying clients, to the use of clichés in different kinds of writing, and the expected requests for identifying websites for self-promotion.

There is even a job center tied in with the Public Relations Society of America that goes beyond PR work (business development, marketing, speech writing, etc.) and is a model in its formatted construction. Listings are by company with the title of the open position serving as a link. Clicking on it takes you to the Job Center where you are presented with a screen filled with a generous amount of details—job description, background on the employing organization, responsibilities, requirements, compensation, starting date, and the contact (name, title, and

e-mail address). The only drawback noted is that all of the recently-listed available positions tend to be for full-time employment. But, if nothing else, such listings do have value in giving you the names of companies and contacts who just might need freelance assistance from time-to-time.

One more plus for joining the group—you get to put the CPWA identification tag on your résumé and promotional materials. Think of it as having the value of a CPA tag, only it's one more letter better. ♣

(Editor's note: This article doesn't mention IWOC's own LinkedIn group because we presume you're already a member. If you're not, sign up now. Only IWOC members are eligible.)

June Recap, Continued from Page 3.

But don't count on seeing your work in print until September. Weinstock says his pubs are booked with writing assignments due for the July and August editions. The *H & HN* consists of three main sections: columns by editors, an Outbox section containing Q & A interview articles and contributions from physicians, and an Inbox section composed of 350- to 400-word case-study or small-trend stories, paying \$350 per article.

For larger stories about healthcare management and best practices – typically

running from 1,500 to 2,200 words – freelance writers are paid \$1 per word. Writers are paid on acceptance, and stories are used after they're read, edited, and prepared for print. The Health Forum, Weinstock says, buys all rights to freelanced pieces – a growing trend among many professional trade publishers nationally. Freelancers can pitch story ideas to him as well as receive assignments. For grist, Weinstock – who says he assigns 75 percent of articles – directs writers to visit



the

Forum's
website,
[http://
www.hhn-](http://www.hhn-mag.com)

[mag.com](http://www.hhn-mag.com), and view the editorial calendar or to thumb through physical copies of their magazines.

As for sources for articles for the healthcare pubs, be sure to put in the requisite effort to interview as many

pertinent experts in the field as possible as well as investigate, research, and report. While he says he does not prescribe the number of sources appropriate for stories, Weinstock fully expects his writers to use five to six sources, for, say, a 1,250-word article.

There is not much outside writing need in *ADA News* yet, but Jakush says meaningful freelance opportunities are slowly evolving. "I am open to pitching but it is a matter of if we have a

Continued on page 5.

June Recap, Continued from Page 4.

need," she said. "I'm always developing ideas for features. [We are] more and more into the web. It takes a while for all of this to happen."

Jakush says she looks for "evergreen" topics for freelance articles that tackle dental health policy by the federal agencies and Congress, the activity of the ADA, the member dentists and their hobbies, and dental school students.

Aside from feature articles and category stories, the staff also produces brochures that dentists use to inform themselves about the latest policy in their field and practice. On occasion, staff may write stories about companies whose medical products are awaiting clearance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Staff work is monitored carefully to reflect the association's position and medical practice. *ADA News* has a dental editor, and all work (both in-house and freelance) must be reviewed for accuracy and policy, Jakush says. For their work, freelance writers are paid \$20 to \$30 per hour.

The publications of the AHA's Health Forum do not undergo such scrutiny, Weinstock says.

"Unlike [*ADANews*], ours do not go through AHA," he said. "They don't see what is written. They don't govern content. We do communicate with AHA to get nuances on policy in D.C. and [to determine] what the sensitivities are. We cover issues with big city hospitals like Rush and rural hospitals. There will be payment differences [for more-sensitive stories]. We cover those gingerly." 🐼

MEDICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CHICAGOLAND

Want to do some cold-calling to find healthcare writing jobs but don't know where to start? The city is home to: the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Healthcare Inc.; the American Academy of Medical Administrators; the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons; the American Academy of Pediatrics; the American College of Healthcare Executives; the American College of Surgeons; the American Dental Association (ADA); the American Dental Hygienist's Association; the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA); the American Hospital Association (AHA); the American Medical Association (AMA); the American Osteopathic Association; the Chicago Health Executives Forum; the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs; the Healthcare Financial Management Association; the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS); the Illinois State Medical Society; the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO); the Medical Library Association; the Mental Health Association of Greater Chicago; and the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council.

— Vladimire Herard

Calendar

July 12

IWOC Monthly Meeting. It's all about travel writing. Speakers are Katie Hammel and IWOC's own Jeff Steele. The meeting will be held at National-Louis University, Room 4020, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program at 6 p.m. Networking at 5 p.m. IWOC members free. Nonmembers, \$15 at the door, \$10 with online preregistration. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers welcome. For more information, call 800/804-4962 or visit www.iwoc.org.

August 9

It's IWOCFest! Save the date. Once again we'll party on Pegasus' delightful rooftop. Watch for details.

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.

July 26 (4th Tuesday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Join near-west suburbanites for a noon lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Check before you come. This lunch is monthly only if there are enough people who can attend. Note: The lunch is now on the 4th Tuesday, not the 4th Thursday as it had been in the past.

July 7 (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.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in Coming Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG