

M PEN IN HAND

THE ART, BUSINESS, AND CRAFT OF WRITING

Summer 2013
v26 n3

Hope For Professional Media Writers?

Washington, DC, Journalists Say Yes, but with Major Changes

Writers of all disciplines and genres face a publishing landscape that looks nothing like it did a generation, a decade, or even a year ago. Can aspiring, emerging, and established writers realistically expect to make a living writing today? Starting in this issue, *Pen in Hand* will ask industry experts to share their opinions and advice on the subject. Charles County chapter vice-president **Michelle Brosco Christian** kicks off our series with a report on the outlook for writers working in print and broadcast media.

Sixty percent of the editorial staff at *The Birmingham News* laid off; hundreds of newspapers shut down; local newscasts on network affiliates failing to retain viewers.

If you follow the media business at all, these are not surprising statements. However, if you work (or want to work) in this ever-changing industry as a writer, it's enough to make you fill out an application at the nearest fast-food restaurant.

However, all is not lost.

At a recent three-day workshop on the state of the media industry for college journalism professors, I heard a more positive report from major industry leaders in the Washington, DC, media market. Here's what some had to say:

- "It's not true that the young are not interested in the news; they reject the traditional news delivery systems. People are getting more news today than they used to. More than 75 percent of people under 50 are on mobile devices. More people are going back to long-

form stories from trusted sources and brands." – *Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute, journalist, author, researcher, and founder and director of Project for Excellence in Journalism at the Pew Research Center*

- "More and more students will go out on their own as freelancers." – *Andrew Alexander, journalist, media consultant, professor, and former ombudsman at The Washington Post*
- "We could use better journalists out there in this area [economics]. [Students should] get fluent with data. [Future journalists] must write fast and clean, provide context, and be able to read data." – *Mike Tackett, Washington Bureau Chief, Bloomberg News*
- "The core of journalism is still the same—you have to care, be empathetic, be tech savvy

continued on next page

Meetings and Events

All meetings are listed on the Meetings page on the MWA website, at marylandwriters.org.

MWA Board

Public meetings of the MWA Board are held quarterly. Details are posted in advance on the website.

Chapters

The **Annapolis Chapter** meets the third Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. in Room 205 of Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Constitution & Greenfield Streets, Annapolis. annapolismwa.wordpress.com

The **Baltimore Chapter** meets on the fourth Monday of every month (except December) at 7:00 p.m. at Ukazoo Books in Dulaney Plaza, on Dulaney Valley Road, Towson. mwabaltimore.org

The **Carroll County Chapter** meets on the second Saturday of every other month at the Westminster Library, 50 E. Main Street, Westminster. carrollcountymwa.org

The **Charles County Chapter** meets on the third Wednesday of every month (except August and December) at the College of Southern Maryland's La Plata campus, 8730 Mitchell Road, La Plata. mwacharles.wordpress.com

The **Howard County Chapter** meets on the third Thursday of every month (except November and December) at 7:00pm at Sunrise Senior Living, 6500 Freetown Road, Columbia. mwahocowriters.com

The **Montgomery County Chapter** meets on alternating first Saturdays and second Wednesdays of every month in Room 136 of the Montgomery College Physical Education Building, 51 Mannakee Street, Rockville. mwamontgomery.com

The **St. Mary's County Chapter** meets on the first Thursday of every month in Meeting Room A of the Lexington Park Library, 21677 FDR Blvd., Lexington Park. stmaryscountymwa.wordpress.com

Professional Media Writers, cont'd.

and use Twitter! You must be able to use all of the technology. Everything's easier, but you still have to know how to use it. Future journalists

should be educated in business, foreign languages, economics, etc." – *Mary Jordan, Washington Post Pulitzer Prize Winner*

- "Students must learn how to communicate clearly with people and to listen well.

They must learn how to communicate orally—in TV, it's a team sport—and you must rely on others." – *Ken Strickland, NBC News Washington Bureau Chief*

- "Future journalists must still have all the basics, know enough about other areas to know what's wrong or right, and specialize in one or a few areas. Everyone can't be excellent at everything." – *Josh Hatch, Senior Editor, Data and*

Interactives, The Chronicle of Higher Education

"[As a young reporter] I had to really hustle. You need to show

you know how things move online. I constantly Tweeted while reporting at the White House and that's how others got to know me. Think about personal branding, stay on top of the new tools. Never just sit there and do nothing! Write,

start a blog—do something." – *Sabrina Siddiqui, Congressional Reporter, Huffington Post*

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Michelle Brosco Christian, Vice President of the Charles County chapter, is a journalism and communication assistant professor at the College of Southern Maryland. She has worked as a public relations practitioner, community newspaper reporter, local magazine editor, and freelance writer over the last 20 years in Southern Maryland.



Mike Tackett, Washington Bureau Chief at Bloomberg News in Washington, DC, encouraged journalists to increase their knowledge of business and economics.

photo: Michelle Brosco Christian

The MWA Has Moved! (Virtually, that is . . .)

Our new street mailing address is:

Maryland Writers' Association
3 Church Circle #165
Annapolis, MD 21401

Please update your records and tell your friends in the Maryland writing community!

PEN IN HAND

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Maryland Writers' Association

3 Church Circle #165
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marylandwriters.org

Editor: Paul Lagasse

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MWA Officers, 2012-14

Elected Positions

President: Paul Lagasse

Vice President: Carolee Noury

Secretary: Eileen McIntyre

Treasurer: Vacant

Program Chair: Louise Harris

Membership Chair: Bryan England

Communications Chair: Steve Berberich

Conference Chair: Vacant

Publications Chair: David Joyner

Development Chair: John Denticio

Member at Large: Ally E. Peltier

Appointed Positions

Editor, *Pen in Hand*: Paul Lagasse

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Contest Coordinator: Louise Harris

Teen Writers' Clubs Coordinator: Diane Booth

MWA Books: Ally E. Peltier, Gary Lester

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Baltimore: Ken Gauvey

Carroll County: Jack Downs

Charles County: Edna Troiano

Howard County: Glen Spangler

Montgomery County: Alix Moore

St. Mary's County: Nancy Smay

Submissions

Pen in Hand accepts submissions from

MWA members. Feature stories and fiction:

300-400 words. Poetry: up to 100 words.

Authors retain all rights except first

publication. Query for guidelines and

editorial calendar: Paul Lagasse,

peninhand@marylandwriters.org.

Cringe-Free Networking for Writers

by Carolee Noury

Did your heart flutter a little when you saw the word "networking" in the headline above?

If so, don't worry. Many writers have the same reaction. You've probably been told many times that networking is an important thing for writers to do, but if you don't know how to do it, then networking can be intimidating.

Like other ventures into the unknowns of life, the best way to approach networking is with a plan. Read on to find the answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about making connections, and find out how to turn those answers into your personal plan for successful networking.

Question 1: Why do I need to do this?

Networking is how you make new friends, gain insider knowledge, find out about opportunities, benefit from the hard-earned lessons of others, find beta readers for your works in progress, and meet fans who will eventually buy your book and promote it to everyone they know—especially if their names are listed in the acknowledgements.

Networking is a valuable tool for careers of all kinds, but solo writers usually do not have the opportunity for water-cooler chats. Therefore, writers have to go out and find—or make—their own opportunities for networking.

Question 2: How do I get started?

Even the most timid people can network. One of the best places to start is your inner circle. Talk about what you're doing and find out who else they know. Expand your network by connecting with your alumni association, and get in touch with former classmates. After all, they too are people with whom you already have something in common. Remember that people who want to speak with you genuinely want to help you.

Use social media to follow authors you like, and read and promote their work. Write fan letters that cite examples from their work to demonstrate your knowledge of their writing. Be authentic.

You'll have the best luck connecting with an author who is mid-level or published by a small press. Those six-figure-earning folks have people who read their fan mail for them—and even then, they still can't answer every letter.

Question 3: What should I do when I meet people for the first time?

Come prepared with four good questions that you can ask anyone. Listen, and listen well, to the answers—you'll want this information for later when you cement the connection. Bring plenty of business cards too.

Begin by introducing yourself to someone. When the person introduces him- or herself in turn, listen to the person's name and then use it in your conversation (after all, don't you feel more connected to people who remember *your* name?). Ask questions about the person's writing—their publications, experiences, and likes and dislikes.

When the floor is yours, talk about things you are passionate about. The things that light you up will make you more engaging and

memorable. Exchange business cards and, later, jot a note on the back of the one you received so that you'll have things to talk about when you follow up—which you will do soon—by e-mail.

Question 4: How do I make new contacts?

There are plenty of places outside of Facebook and Twitter where you can engage with other writers—some of which are much more valuable. Attend the monthly meetings of your local MWA chapter. Register for one or more of the many writers' conferences throughout the state, including (to name just a few) the Baltimore Writers' Conference, Bay to Ocean, the CityLit Festival, the and MWA's own Maryland Writers' Conference.

Participate in local workshops. Join a critique group. Hang out at bookstores. Go to book launches. Volunteer for organizations like libraries, writing associations, writing centers, and events such as the Gaithersburg Book Festival. Branch out by joining national associations and going to big events and conferences. Use writing websites to make writing connections (see "Free Online Networking Resources for Writers").

Now that you know the whys, wheres, and hows of networking, there's only one when—*now*.

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Carolee Noury is the Vice President of the Maryland Writers' Association and a career counselor in Rockville. She recently led an author biography workshop for the Howard County chapter of the MWA. Find Carolee online at cncareers.blogspot.com.

Free Online Networking Resources for Writers

by Carolee Noury

Goodreads

goodreads.com

On Goodreads, you can review books you're reading, suggest them to friends, engage with other authors, and—best of all—start making connections with your future fans. Bonus: GoodReads friends have the ability to suggest books to one another, which means that, for the most part, your fans will be active promoters of your books.

WritersCafé.org

writerscafe.org

WritersCafé.org is an online writing community where writers can post their work, get reviews, befriend other writers, and much more.

Writers Network

writers-network.com

On the Writers Network, you can "meet" other writers who also enjoy reviewing and giving feedback. Again, these are people who have the potential to become your first fans.

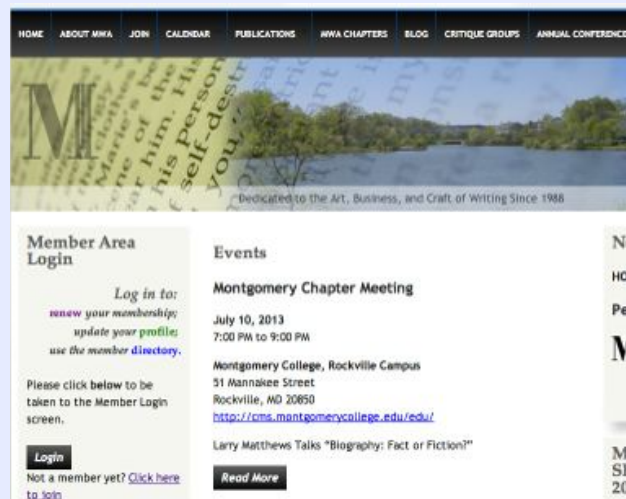
MWA's New Website is Packed with Useful Features for Members and Non-Members Alike

reprinted with updates from Keyboard in Hand, June 30, 2013

After nearly six months of work by the MWA's web team, the organization's new website soft-launched in late June. A complete top-to-bottom revamp, the new MWA website offers a lot of exciting features that will benefit members and chapters alike. The web team says that even more features will be rolled out gradually in the coming months.

On the site, which can still be found at marylandwriters.org, you'll find many new and familiar tools and resources, including:

- An online store
- A calendar of upcoming meetings and events
- Faster and easier secure online payments for memberships and store purchases
- Links to our chapters throughout the state
- Information about critique groups
- The latest news on the 2014 Maryland Writers' Conference



In addition, the site features a brand new **Member Area** where members can:

- Renew their memberships
- Edit and update their member profiles
- Find and connect with other MWA members by name, genre/discipline, services offered, and business name
- Respond to surveys that will help MWA fine tune its program offerings
- Post and respond to exclusive members-only classified ads for products and services
- Find exclusive members-only downloads including newsletter back issues, pamphlets, brochures, and information about MWA
- Identify prospects for memberships or sponsorships
- View their order histories from the online store

"We're especially pleased with the Member Area," says MWA President Paul Lagasse. "Members can use the networking tools to find other writers who share their interests." Members will have the option to display websites, mailing addresses, writing interests, skills, and other information in their member profiles.

After the launch, current and recently lapsed members received an e-mail with instructions for logging into the site's Member Area. If you didn't receive the e-mail and you believe you are a paid-up member, please contact MWA's Membership Chair Bryan England at membership@marylandwriters.org.

The site, developed and hosted by the association management services firm Star Chapter (starchapter.com), also "bakes in" many powerful administrative tools that will enable MWA officers to more effectively manage the organization from top to bottom. The state board and chapters will be able to use the site's control panel to track membership applications and renewals in realtime, sign people up as members or add them to the mailing list from the field, manage state and chapter event registrations, conduct membership surveys and mass mailings, identify and contact fundraising prospects, and much more.

"We get all of this for less than we were paying for fewer services before," says Carolee Noury, MWA vice president and acting treasurer. "In other words, we're getting much more for much less, which allows us to be better stewards of the MWA's financial and volunteer resources."

The new site will be managed by a team of two MWA members with a lot of web experience between them. Howard County Chapter president Glen Spangler will serve as the site's Content Manager; Jeff Wiegand, Senior Developer at USATODAY.com, will be the site's Technical Manager.

If you haven't already checked out the new site, please kick the tires and let us know what you think. And if you spot any glitches or quirks, let us know that too!

Charles County Chapter

by Michelle Brosco Christian,
Chapter Secretary

In only a few months since becoming an official MWA chapter, Charles County has attracted more than 40 interested participants. The chapter's inaugural officers are **Edna Troiano**, president; **Michelle Brosco Christian**, vice president; **Carrie Lovejoy**, secretary; **Kim Wyant**, treasurer; **Neal Dwyer**, program director; and **Cara Fogarty**, social media director.

The chapter, which meets on the third Wednesday of each month (except in August and December) at the College of Southern Maryland's La Plata campus, plans to offer a variety of speakers and hands-on writing workshops as part of its upcoming schedule. The chapter will be closely associated with the college's literary series "Connections," which hosts professional poets and fiction writers throughout the year.

To learn more about the new Charles County chapter, please visit our web site, created by member **Cara Fogarty**, at mwacharles.wordpress.com and its Facebook page at facebook.com/MWACHarlesCounty.

BUSINESS

Howard County Chapter

by Amy Kaplan, Chapter Secretary

Congratulations to our officers for 2013-2014: **Glen Spangler**, president and webmaster; **Amy Kaplan**, Secretary; and **Janet Ruck**, treasurer.

In April, **Michele Wojciechowski**, standup comedian and author of *Next Time I Move, They'll Carry Me Out in a Box* and the humor blog *Wojo's World* (wojosworld.com), discussed the ups and downs of writing humor.

LM Preston, author of *The Pack*, spoke at our May meeting. She discussed the new market for short stories in the YA, middle grade, and new adult markets.

At our June meeting, **Carolee Noury**, MWA vice president and Montgomery chapter secretary, led a talk on crafting your professional writer's biography. In July, our featured speaker was **Vonnie Winslow Crist**, who shared her secrets for getting published.

We continue to collect new and gently used books for the Howard County Domestic Violence Center at our monthly meetings. Donators get an extra door prize ticket. All genres and age groups are needed. Due to the nature of the center, books should not contain violence against women or children.



Montgomery Chapter

by Carolee Noury, Chapter Secretary

The Montgomery chapter celebrated its first anniversary in June with elections for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. The incoming officers are **Alix Moore**, president; **Carolee Noury**, vice president; **Larry Matthews**, program chair; **Joe Demasco**, treasurer; **Marlon Rice**, festival chair; and **Jim King**, publicity chair. The chapter is still in need of a secretary; in the meantime, the secretary duties will be shared by other officers.

Thank you to all of the non-returning founding officers who served in our inaugural year: **Assegid Habtewold**, **Judy Kelly**, and **Claudia M. Rousseau**.

In April, journalist and children's author, **Karen Leggett Abouraya** spoke about how she teamed up with a successful children's book illustrator to write an inspiring true story about the Middle East, *Hands Around the Library*. To learn more about the book, visit handsaroundthelibrary.com.

Chapter members promoted the MWA at the **Kensington Day of the Book** in April and the **Gaithersburg Book Festival** in May. At the Kensington event, chapter president **Alix Moore** made a connection with board members of the Montgomery Art Association. Alix was also asked to moderate panels at the Gaithersburg Book Festival.

In May, MWA member **Jack Downs** led a workshop titled "Writing Dollars and Sense: Filing Taxes for Your Writing Business." He explained how to determine whether your writing is a business according to the IRS. Find Jack online at jackbdowns.com.

In June, we were pleased to host the **MWA Annual Meeting**, featuring MWA president **Paul Lagasse** and members from around the state. At the annual meeting, young-adult author **Wendy Higgins** talked about her unusual journey to publication and the many—and sometimes painful—lessons she learned along the way. Visit Wendy at wendyhigginswrites.com.

MWA Members Receive a

\$25 Discount

at the

Creatures, Crimes & Creativity (C3) Conference

September 13-15, 2013
at the Hunt Valley Inn
Hunt Valley, Maryland



Jeffrey Deaver

The C3 Con will gather readers and writers of mystery, suspense, thriller, horror, sci-fi, fantasy, and steampunk fiction.

We will have mystery author Jeffrey Deaver and horror writer Christopher Golden as keynote speakers, and both thriller writer John Gilstrap and romantic suspense author Trice Hickman

as special guests. We will also offer 10-minute author/agent meetings and some exciting special events.

Registered authors will be added to panels and their books will be available at the conference bookstore. They are also invited to post on the conference blog and to submit a story to our exclusive anthology, which will be given to each attendee.



Trice Hickman

Get details and register at
creaturescrimesandcreativity.com!



Christopher Golden



John Gilstrap

Free Yourself, Be Yourself, and Love Yourself

by Teresa E. Mack

Now, I look in the mirror and embrace who I see;
I love this person that I'm created to be.

A designer's original though imperfect and flawed,
Created for a purpose by an all-perfect God

His creative beauty on the inside and out;
Representing Him, and what self-love is all about.

To love myself, my flaws and all,
shows my love for Him, then it spreads abroad.

Fearfully and wonderfully; He made me, it's true,
With confidence, with strength and dignity too.

Now there was a time when I negated these facts,
not loving myself and wearing a mask.

A mask that reflected what I thought was the norm,
My actions in God's heart, I placed a deep thorn.

At Him I shouted and I screamed with disdain
"I hate this", I said, "Why did you make me this way?"

He said:
I've crafted you for a purpose, to promote love; your own.
When you see your own beauty, your heart will overflow

You'll share this with others that self-love must come first
and that My Love can remove all anger and hurt

Now look over your life at all I've allowed; Yes, it was all in my plan;
I knew that you could handle it, and you would not disband.

These things were not to hurt you, but to make you strong;
Daughter, this place of disappointment is not where you belong,

So Rise up my child, stand tall and assured
You're not what you've been through, you've conquered and endured.

This is your new beginning, your task begins now;
Don't worry or doubt, I am with you and will show you how

There are others who desire this freedom you've found,
So Live and Love with purpose and let My Grace abound.

###

Teresa E. Mack is a native of Baltimore. She is currently pursuing her Bachelors of Arts degree at the University of Baltimore and will graduate in the spring of 2014. She is also a technical trainer at Johns Hopkins University in northern Baltimore County. Her writing focuses mainly on self-development, love, and humor. Her first book is due out in the fall of 2013.

Dad Was Taken to Watch a Lynching

by Richard Baldwin Cook

He was seven, maybe a little older, or younger.
I was a boy when . . . wait a minute . . . Did you tell me about this?
Did I overhear?
An echo in the wind tunnel of my memory full of debris all blowing around.

Dad's father, like his grandfather, was a preacher, a man of the Gospel.
Could it have been Albany? Danville? Farmville? Charlottesville?
Pick-a-ville . . .
Towns where Granddad preached against liquor and sin in the First Baptist Church.

Those photos of grinning White girls and White boys posing with a Black corpse
Their fathers and uncles and neighbors had just created. We beyond all that.
Don' chu know?
Don't do that no more. Troublemakers.

Silhouettes of my ancestors, lets me think I know a thing or two about you Dad
For a thousand years, impressed Catholics in Gaul and Albion
Then Cranmer Anglicans Calvin Reformed Bunyon Baptists
Into boats by choice or chance or magistrate decree.

Cooks and their married came on into Mr. Penn's forest and the Commonwealths below
Got them a passel of children and a few worked hard sex-slave Colored.
Just a few.
Did not care for the whispered expectations about letting go their worked hard sex-slave Colored.
Pass them around and down. Perfectly legal. Would die to keep it that-a-way.
Thank you.

Dad was taken to watch a lynching. Family's invited.
Father, were you there? Were you there when they crucified?
Oh, sometimes, daddy, it makes me tremble, tremble
Tremble.

#

Richard Cook is putting together a chapbook of poems. He is the author of Splendid Lives and Otherwise: Sonnets of Remembrance (Nativa LLC, 2011), available at lulu.com.

Would you like to see your poem, short-short story, or essay in *Pen in Hand*?

Submissions are open to current MWA members and Maryland-based literary journals, publishers, reading series, and writers' associations.

Submissions should be plain text in the body of an e-mail. Please include a brief bio. Include "PIH" in the e-mail subject line and send to editor Paul Lagasse at peninhand@marylandwriters.org.

Questions and queries are encouraged.

The Living Room

by Michelle Markey Butler

August is the cruelest month, breeding
Bare-knuckled fights and hair-pulling
Boredom and humidity provoking
Domestic war over broken toys.

Long-awaited summer now is endless
All books read or dull, crayons snapped,
All games, even chess, pointless.

The bickering, the shouting
I'd like to go drink coffee and talk for an hour
Or ten minutes
To someone with adult teeth.

Do I dare to eat a peach?
There's only one left.
Someone will wait. Or two.

In the room the children come and go
Pleading for Popsicles and Jell-O.

When WILL my husband get home?

I hear the children screaming each to each
I do not think that they will let me be.

HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME

Tom Eliot, get your poetic ass home
And take these children out for an ice cream cone.
I MUST HAVE five minutes alone.

And take your damn cats with you.

#

Michelle Markey Butler holds a doctorate in English Literature specializing in medieval drama. She is the author of several academic articles as well as short stories. Her debut novel, Homegoing, will be released by Pink Narcissus Press in 2014. Unwilling to waste good material, particularly when she's worked so hard for it, she blogs about the unintentional hilarity of parenting at heirraising.wordpress.com. She's pleased to report that despite their best efforts, none of the children have escaped. Recently.

Naming Characters: the Pivot

by Tom Glenn

A person's name brings a picture to mind. And when reading good fiction, readers create an image of a character that springs into consciousness when that character's name appears in text. So choose the name carefully.

Given names:

- Avoid common names like *John*, *Bill*, or *Bobor* for males and *Mary*, *Ann*, or *Anke* for females—especially for minor characters that the reader may have trouble remembering.
- Use names that suggest the character's personality. *Billy Joe* intimates a southern good-old-boy; *Clarissa* suggests elegance.
- Beware comical names in a serious piece. *Bucky* is a temperamental cat in the comic strip *Get Fuzzy*. *Irma* still resonates from the comedy series, *My Friend Irma*.
- Look out for echoes that bring to mind famous people or characters—unless that's the effect you want to achieve. *Ernest* brings to mind *The Importance of Being Earnest* and suggests naïveté; *Norman* might make the reader think of Norman Bates from *Psycho*.
- Remember that diminutives, such as *Joey*, *Bobby*, and *Tommy*, suggest immaturity.
- Do use apt names to imply the personality of a character, e.g., *Zachariah*, *Thisbe*, *Solomon*, *Salome*, *Venus*, and *Fagan*.

Make the most of surnames. Use *Smith* and *Jones* only for characters you don't want to draw attention to. Use hyphenated names to insinuate aristocracy, wealth, or snootiness. Be leery of well known names like *Heathcliff*, *Windsor*, or *Updike* even if you want to suggest a similarity to the bearers of those names.

Look at the work of Richard Brinsley Sheridan for an over-the-top collection of names that tell us immediately who these people are—*Charles Surface*, *Lady Sneerwell*, *Mrs. Candour*, *Sir Benjamin Backbite*. Imitate Sheridan in naming characters, but step back a bit from his parody. Names like *Jackstraw*, *Clawfor*, and *Fullery* might work for comic characters; *Flood*, *Storm*, and *Fleury* for more serious ones.

Use nicknames to hint at personal traits—*Sissy* for *Clarissa*, *Chucky* for *Charles*, *Tilly* for *Mathilda*, *Tim-Tim* for *Timothy*, *Chip* for anything.

Let the reader know all the names the character is known by—given name, surname, nickname—but only use in text the name you want the reader to remember.

Names, in short, offer the writer a shorthand for characterization. It's a gift. Use it.

#

Tom Glenn has published sixteen stories and one novel. He's now pitching four novels, one short story, and one non-fiction article on his escape under fire during the fall of Saigon.



STOP! HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

The 2012-2013 membership year ended on June 30, 2013. If you haven't renewed yet, log in to the Membership Area on the website

Don't have a member login? Contact Membership Chair Bryan England at membership@marylandwriters.org