

# The Write Stuff

Long Island Writers' Guild, Inc. Newsletter

NUMBER FIFTEEN

WINTER ISSUE 2005

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Visit us at [WWW.LIWritersGuild.org](http://WWW.LIWritersGuild.org)

## Word From The Editor

Sorry to disappoint you folks about an Autumn issue, but we do have a Winter issue! A number of things got in the way, I don't need to bore you with the details, most of them personal.

I must say that many of you have listened to my pleas and responded with material for this issue of The Write Stuff. Thank you.

The Write Stuff can always use more material, especially from our new members. We use poems, short essays and stories (200 to 300 words max) news about member accomplishments, short Bios (not necessarily factual) up-dates, ideas for guest speakers, trips, parties, etc. If we have a cartoonist in our group, please....

OK, so much for the locker-room pep talk.

By the time this issue goes to press, we would have enjoyed our Awards Party, loaded ourselves with Chinese auction goodies and made New Year's resolutions to shed ourselves of writers block, and submit all that creative muse to the dozens of competitions out there that our talented members should be able to win awards.

**Have a Happy Creative New Year!**

Send us your thoughts at our e-mail address: [info@LIWritersGuild.org](mailto:info@LIWritersGuild.org)

*"What is written without effort is read without pleasure"* Dr. Johnson

## THE WRITE STUFF

### Writing versus Watching; Television versus Inner Vision

Why watch TV when you can write?

Writing tweaks acuity  
Trains the brain  
Impassions a conscience  
Explores unknown paths  
Introduces the road less traveled, not taken

Television, however  
Executively produces emotion  
Pre-disposes what highway to re-tread  
Robs imagination's tides  
Dams inspiration, drowns the muse

Writing relieves strife  
Comforts grief  
Dissipates waves of anger  
Restores placidity  
Creates a lake of reassurance

Television manufactures tension  
Assembles false personalities  
Casts burdens on minds with  
Fictional stress, calculated drama

Writing constructs a healing hut  
Cascades passionate baylets  
Gives intuition a fluid voice  
Infuses, soaks soul onto paper

Television numbs senses  
Hypnotizes creativity  
Dilutes intellect  
Siphons energy

Teri Schwartz

## THE POET'S PAGE

### The Salvation Army Santa Claus

The Salvation Army Santa Claus  
a stalwart, out-of-work tenor,  
joyous and true in thick black-soled  
boots,  
fuzzy red suit, white beard,  
operatic outside of Macy's doors  
shuffling in place to keep warm  
as shoppers dart to and fro.

He keeps smiling in merry silence  
in the neon shadow-filled air, his  
robin blue eyes implore  
those rushing by buying more  
oblivious to the lightness of giving  
to the charity brass bell ringing  
relentless shrill notes of a prayer.

The Salvation Army Santa Claus  
Sticks to his got-a-job purpose  
blesses just by his presence  
the hard-hearted and the blind,  
the tight-lipped and the toothless  
the wing-tipped and shoeless  
all who pass him going nowhere  
they've been a thousand times before.

The Salvation Army Santa Claus  
makes the holidays seem simple  
with endless good cheer keeps waving  
in the biting, icicle wind;  
a big red suit on the pavement  
a fat festive tree taken root,  
and if you were me you'd have to agree  
He seems so familiar but strange;

*"Ho Ho Merry Christmas"* he sings  
like Pavarotti incognito  
above the shrill relentless bell ringing  
for spare dollars and some change.

A. Policano

Submissions are being accepted for the SPRING/SUMMER Issue. They should have a seasonal theme (30 lines or less please) but this Editor will use any good poem, essay, bio or cartoon.

## THE WRITE STUFF

### WRITING POETRY

Writing poetry  
was as natural as breathing  
I'd write  
about grandchildren growing up  
driving home  
doctors visits  
electrical storms  
whatever happened during the day  
found its way into my poems  
I'd write words that would sing  
Like music light and lilting

When life became difficult  
choices hard  
I'd take a sheet of paper  
and pour out my heart  
sadly they became my best poems

When things came easy  
most people  
don't know how gifted they are  
I am no different  
I took it for granted  
announced that anyone can sit and write  
truth is  
anyone can  
but no one should take it for granted  
for sometimes the music disappears  
and the gift seems to be gone

Joan Marg

### AN ODE TO GRAMMAR

I'd like to subtly split an infinitive and use a contraction I love  
A preposition at the end is something I dream of  
My verbs agree when they leap from the page  
Now I'm left with this editing plague  
Hastily, eloquently, and passionately I overuse adverbs  
Without grammar, it would all sound absurd

**P.S. And never begin a sentence with a conjunction is the  
word**

Robert Lanzone

### TOASTED ICE

Wakening to December's  
Deep freeze-Recognize  
Deceptively bright sun

Lured into icy  
Drifts and bonechilling blasts  
Return with morning paper in unmittened  
hand

Pour steaming cup of cocoa  
Butter up the toaster  
Thumb through pages-circle ads

Bundle up-Mitten my hands  
Shovel pathway to  
Escape

Reenter warmth  
Remove wet boots  
Rub frozen hands

Fumble with the phone  
Book reservations  
For Miami thaw

Beverly E. Kotch

### SANTA'S EARLY ARRIVAL

Tuesday, December 13, 2005  
penning Christmas cards in emerald ink  
a knock on the door stops me  
we exchange smiles and Happy Holidays!  
Deliveryman hands me a floral bouquet  
arranged in white wicker  
encased in crystal cellophane  
a simple card:

Love, Santa

J R Turek

## THE WRITE STUFF

### WINTER WEEKEND

Snow starts Saturday evening  
Storms through the night  
Sunday dawns crystal;  
Winter-white comforter  
Covers sleeping hyacinths  
Tulips and gladioli;  
Concrete driveways and path  
Shout for shoveling.  
Bundled in layers, I dig  
Through mounds of frosty flakes  
But never find the child delight  
Of snowball fights and frozen forts  
And snow angels on the lawn.  
Frozen toes and frostbitten nose  
Has me huddled under a purple  
Couch comforter.  
I defrost overnight  
Wake to begin the first of many  
Winter weeks.

J R Turek

The Write Stuff Editor: Joe Pantatello

Submit all comments and bad press to:  
[www. Slush Pile USA.gov](http://www.SlushPileUSA.gov)

### BEDTIME

It will soon be  
The twilight time of year  
When we'll see  
Leaves be blankets held dear

Mother nature knows  
Our needs  
Sees when weariness shows  
Stratifies seeds

Tucks all in to rest  
Snug and warm  
Propagates only the best  
Sets buds  
Clones well hidden corns

All winter slumbers  
Living off lazy girth  
Awaiting spring's  
Rebirth

But the heartiest of breeds  
Throw caution to the winds  
Scatter their seed  
And grow like weeds that sinned

Beverly Kotch

### SANTA HAIKU

My Christmas Santa  
I do believe in you Sir  
For Christmas means love

Presents are nice, yes  
But gifts of heart and mind are  
Blessings from above

Marge McDowell

## THE WRITE STUFF

### BIOGRAPHY—ROB LANZONE

Mr. Lanzone, on a drunken bender, allowed Al Gore to take all the credit for Mr. Lanzone's invention called "The Internet".

It started out as a small project and V1.0 of the Internet was able to fit in Mr. Lanzone's shirt pocket. By the time V3.0 of the Internet was pressed, millions of people were using it and Mr. Lanzone had to keep it in the trunk of his car. Mr. Lanzone realized he was on to something big and spent the royalties of V5.0 of the Internet on a whiskey mill in Tennessee.

Very drunk and not thinking to straight, Mr. Lanzone sold the rights to V7.0 to Al Gore, then senator from Tennessee. Distressed about his future, Mr. Lanzone was faced with no choice but to hang around with some unseemly middle-eastern hackers bent on bringing down the world's economy using the Internet of all things.

Mr. Lanzone chose to document this escapade in a novel called "Cyberjihad" Find out more on the web (a bastard child of the Internet with little promise) at [www.Robertlanzone.com](http://www.Robertlanzone.com), but be careful, the NSA is monitoring every keystroke.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This editor dismissed Rob's first submission first hand. I mean talk about boring, it was like root canal. It sounded like the book jacket of his wonderful novel. This new piece, well...that's more like it. This is what this editor is looking for. The real truth!!!!

(Only kidding Rob)

The **Write Stuff** can use short antidotes of one's life, it doesn't have to be serious, keep it light, in fact it doesn't even have to be true!! (300 words, max)

**THE ABSOLUTE MEDIOCRITY of LIFE after the AGE of FORTY**

Flash Fiction by Joan Vullo Obergh

I can see some of you arching your eyebrows at the title. Go ahead, scoff—it's not hyperbole for me. At forty, my former 20/20 vision reverted to presbyopic hindsight, accompanied by an ever widening bald patch, love handles, and a dental bridge costing almost as much as my lawyer's fees. That eager voice coaxing me awake every morning now groans, "Oh God, not another hump-back Wednesday!"

Are some of you thinking? "Well, no big deal. My entire life has been mediocre." I feel sorry for you. The passionless life is no more worth living than the unexamined.

It wasn't the break-up that began my downhill slide into the irreversible malaise called forty-something . Okay, maybe it was. At the moment, it's all about the cycle of humdrum, hohum days followed by tedious nights channel surfing, hoping for the phone call or the E-mail bearing the life-altering message that might bring it all back the way it was. Believe this! It's all of that, plus stuporous dreams from which I drag myself, day after day, brined in perspiration. It all seams *same-old*: outgrown , Friday night poker games, restaurants where waiters parrot my name. Even stopping at Seven Eleven for the *winning* lottery ticket. Odds are better I'll be struck by lightning or choke on a peanut. Ten million jackpot? Bite me!

My wife filed the final divorce papers yesterday. Irreconcilable differences? Whatever happened opposites attract?

"But life begins at forty," I hear some under-aged fool whining. Buy that one and I'll scream the entire Grimm's book of fairy tales at you.

Still think absolute is too strong a word? Judge for yourself. Your turn is coming.

**Editor's note:** See it's easy. How about some submissions from you folks for the Spring/Summer Issue. Keep it down to 250 or so words, and I promise I do not edit or spell-check. No porn please

## THE WRITE STUFF

### LIWG HAPPENINGS

Why did we come to Jones Beach with the LIWG July 28?

Well, because there was much to share; the view, food, written and spoken words, and warmth that comes from being with folks you care about.

The water and waves upon the shore were as always, able to mesmerize and tranquilize. The sky obliterated most of the afternoon by scudding pewter clouds, but the cobalt blue peeked through at intervals, allowing us a short study in contrasts.

I found that whether it rains or shines, we do have fun together. Peter always shines and always looks for and finds the good in each of us, and his presence is one of our presents.

We returned to Jones Beach again on Sept. 8, and spent an enjoyable evening among the stars, the surf, and congenial folks who came to munch, read and listen. Under the able direction of Judy, Dennis and Lorraine, things moved smoothly along all evening and most everyone on the list got to read. With the aid of flashlights and lanterns, halos were created around the reader's faces, and the soft illumination cast lambent glows over all. Once again a delightful evening.

Once again, the Fire Island Lighthouse workshop was an unequivocal success. Climbers and crawlers alike enjoyed the journey, the view and the visits up-close and personal from the fuzzy, velvety deer. Everyone read and munched and shared congenial conversation and camaraderie. Kudos to Lorraine for another job well done.

Joan's sooktacular Halloween Party was once again frightfully delightfully fun. We had visits from a Victorious Viking, a Wacky Waiter, Animated Angel, Perky Pirate, Daffy Deviled Egg, Meandering Muse, Purple Passion Pal and a Vitalizing Vixen. Food and beverages were ghoulishly good and the tales that were woven out of many colorful threads enchanted all. The evening was a happy, harmonious, hoot and a howl.

Marge McDowell – Events Reporter

#### **BRAG BOARD:**

Long-standing LIWG member, **Florence Gatto** enters a different genre-COOKBOOK. Her essays and recipes are featured in "CUCINA CLASSICA II, The Legacy Continues". The cookbook is part of the centennial celebration of The Order son of Italy in America. The cookbook includes traditional Italian recipes and humorous personal vignettes about food preparations and holiday customs. They are available at \$22 and proceeds go for cultural, educational, philanthropic programs.(F.Gatto)

Congratulations **Doris Bush** on her successful booksigning of "**Anton's Place**" at our favorite book store, **Book Revue**, in Huntington.

How about our poets!

In the Princess Productions Poetry Contest, My Town Category: 1<sup>st</sup>-Paula Camacho, 2<sup>nd</sup>-Anne Butler, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judy Turek, 4<sup>th</sup>-Cheryl Longo, 5<sup>th</sup>-Diane Barker, Honorable Mention-Maria Monobianco.

Princess Legend Category: 1<sup>st</sup>-Judy Turek, 2<sup>nd</sup>-Beverly Kotch, 3<sup>rd</sup>-Joanie Obergh, 4<sup>th</sup>-Patti Tana (Pulitzer nominee), 5<sup>th</sup>-Maria Manobianco, 6<sup>th</sup>-Lorraine Conlin and Jeanie Delgado for Humor (They thought her poem was so cute, they created a category for it).

And how about our own **Judy Turek** who was awarded two Honorable Mentions in the Writer's Digest 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Writing Contest for unrhymed poetry; one for "Distant Uncle" and the other for "Granite Guards Against Ambivalence" Congratulations! And not to be outdone Joe Pantatello scored a second and third place in The Great Blue Beacon Short-Short Story competition, for his story, "Ricochet" and "The Parcel"

It only proves what I've been saying, the LIWG is loaded with talented writers, and we should be submitting to any and all writing contests available.

## THE WRITE STUFF

### DOWNHILL

by

J.A. BEHAN

He drove his blue 19-year-old Volvo station wagon into Cannon Mountain's nearly empty parking lot. It was 7:30 am and minus ten degrees, A blue-sky day, he shivered against the icy wind. Opening the tailgate with some difficulty, he grappled with his skis, poles, boots and gloves. Gathering everything, he trudged up the stairs to the lodge, clutching the worn handrail. Forty-eight years ago, he bounded up these stairs with little effort. Forty-eight years ago, he wasn't alone.

Polly wasn't the woman selling lift tickets. Some teenage girl with an earring in her nose was.

"One ticket," he said, slowly pulling out his wallet.

"Senior Citizen?" she asked.

He reluctantly nodded. "Take the damn discount," he thought. "Admit it; you're no young Olympian anymore. Nobody remembers you anyway."

With difficulty, he attached the ticket to his jacket. His wife Polly had always helped him with that. She was gone too.

Twelve kids followed him onto the first tram of the day. He hadn't been around this many people since Polly died six years ago. Jillian, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, stared at his long straight skis, which towered over his stubby sticker-covered snowboard.

"Wow, your boards are huge!" she said.

He looked over at the helmeted blue-eyed child who was young enough to be his granddaughter.

It was the first time in a while that someone initiated a conversation with him.

"Long skis used to mean you were pretty good," he replied, with a shy smile.

She nodded her approval.

Leaving the lift, he clicked his skis into the bindings and noticed her watching.

He began his decent effortlessly. Everything came back immediately; the flow, the turns, the freedom.

Jillian and her friends stared in amazement and then followed in his tracks.

John was home.

Joan Behan, 2005

Not so New Author:

I decided to enter one of my stories in Zoetrope's short story contest. They informed us that the judge would be author Robert Olen Butler. Who he?????

I had to find what kind of author he was, what did he write, what was his style. This might help me slant my story in his style or mode. You know, smooze the guy a little. I probed the Internet.

Guess what? He happens to have won the Pulitzer for his short story collection, "A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain". I went straight to the library, of course, they had that book and another book of short stories, "Tabloid Dreams."

"A Good Scent" deserved the Pulitzer, but you have to read "Tabloid Dreams"

Editor