Message from the President

Greetings!

Do More in 24! That is how we began the year; sure enough, the slogan is coming true. We’ve grown in membership in 2024 with 14 new members and in 2023 we had an astonishing growth with over 40 new members bringing our membership today to 121. You all have written more books and published more books—with a higher level of skill. Our Board of Directors has grown, most recently with the addition of Dr. Clarissa Willis, who has contributed to our leadership. Now, mid-year, we are rolling out our first quarterly newsletter, thanks to our long time Director at Large Jeanne Szarwinski who has tackled the role of Editor and packed this first issue with features related to our MWG and the craft of writing in general. We hope you enjoy this communiqué and find it to be of value. Thanks to those of you who participated in our Annual Writers Contest! Another year of beautifully written submissions—Contest winners to be announced in early fall. Lastly, please follow the plans as we roll them out for our MWG Annual Conference in September in St. Louis. We are planning exciting speakers and an introduction to a variety of workshops. Remember, six more months to “Do More in 24!”

Wishing you the best, Warren

Warren Martin

Quills and Pens

Missouri Writers Guild

JUNE 2024

Interview with J.C. Fields by Jeanne Szarwinski

How did you create the name, J.C. Fields?

I started writing professionally a decade ago. During the first six years, I worked a full-time day job. To keep questions from being asked about time spent writing, I published under a pen-name. I’ve been called JC by friends and relatives since childhood and my last name always gets butchered when people attempt to spell it. The name Crawford comes up a lot. My middle name starts with C, so, to keep things simple, my nom de guerre became J.C. Fields. Besides, it looks cool on a book cover.

Does your wife, Connie, get involved with your writing?

No. She’s very supportive, but not inclined to read my work. We’ve been married forty-six years and I don’t remember her ever reading a novel. She enjoys reading non-fiction, particularly decorating books.

Is Michael Wolfe one of your favorite characters? How did you create him?

I dabbled in writing during high school and college. Without an outlet for my efforts, I put it aside to concentrate on my family. In 2005 the itch finally needed to be scratched. The first character I created was Sean Kruger. I have more than a dozen discarded manuscripts with this character in various occupations. Making him an FBI profiler has inspired nine published novels. I wrote a short story in 2013 using Kruger as the main protagonist investigating a series of murders in New York City. This story introduced Wolfe as an ex-Marine sniper seeking atonement for the misdeeds of a corrupt Army general. Most short stories I write are generally abandoned and not thought about again. Not this one. The character of Michael Wolfe would not leave me alone. So, in 2019, I featured him in his own novel. A Lone Wolf. It became a #1 best-selling

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Do you feel something when you read the words dollars or donuts? Do your senses light up? Excitement for dollars, appetite for donuts. As writers, we have the power to evoke these same emotions with the words we craft. Words’ tone, context, and delivery can all contribute to how we perceive and respond to language. It’s fascinating to consider how words can impact our moods, thoughts, and behaviors, making us feel happy or sad, motivated or discouraged, energized or weary.

Let us delve into the realm of science and unearth eight secrets that will leave us spellbound. Although we are writers and not scientists, we shall endeavor to scrutinize the intricacies of these secrets.

How will we do this? We will explore these secrets with the guidance of a seasoned veteran in the field of business journalism and writing, Bill Birchard. His unique perspective and insights are sure to leave us spellbound.

His writings sparked my curiosity, leading me to reach out to him personally. To my delight, Bill was very receptive to sharing pieces of his writing and a few of his intriguing techniques with us. His insights are sure to engage and inspire you.

**Here is a peek at his bio:**

**Bill Birchard** is a veteran journalist in business, management, the environment, and social responsibility. He is also a consultant/coach to professionals who want to write nonfiction books. Bill has written books and articles for 30 years for his and others’ bylines. HarperCollins published Bill’s *Writing for Impact: 8 Secrets from Science That Will Fire Up Your Readers’ Brains* in 2023. It’s a guide to engaging writing.

For brevity’s sake, I’ve chosen two of his practical techniques to share. These are not just theoretical concepts, but actionable strategies that you can apply to your writing immediately.

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**From the Article:**

**“Writing for Impact” by Bill Birchard WORKBOOK**

“What separates writing that works, from writing that works wonders? What grabs readers so they hunger to start reading and keep reading? What not only interests them but engages them? Engages them so that the piece of work rises to the top of their reading list?…

“The story from science is especially instructive for a reason that art is not. The scientists have amassed evidence for one principle above all: Engaging writing stems from triggering a universal operation in your readers’ brains, the delivery of ‘rewards’. ‘Rewards’ in the neuroscientific sense. Rewards in the form of neurotransmitters that spike desire, induce pleasure, and drive learning. If you want to write with impact or thirst to break out with more influence, science demonstrates your guiding principle: Reward your readers! Two reward-producing neurotransmitters, dopamine and natural opioids, produce an irresistible cocktail to motivate readers. They do so not just for words but for all things people want or need to survive and thrive—food, drink, sex, social connection, and more. Science reveals the factors that best allow you to do so.

“…Thousands of experiments point to eight strategies that appeal to eight universal hard-wired desires. To begin, you must keep your writing — Simple /Specific /Surprising /Stirring — and then — Seductive/ Smart Social/ Story-Driven.”

I will share two of Bill’s techniques with this edition. He refers to them as “Tactics.”

**SIMPLE TACTIC 1: THIN THE ADS**

The first tactic for keeping it simple is to put fatty, adverb- and adjective-laden sentences on a diet. Experiments prove that removing these weaker parts of speech speeds comprehension. “Thin the ads,” in other words. Count on nouns powered by verbs as your virtuosos. Keep adjectives and adverbs as understudies. An author once said, “The adjective was never built that would get the wrong verb out of a tight spot.”

**SIMPLE TACTIC 2: CUT CAVEATS**

As a second tactic, beware of lacing your message with hedging. Verbal vines strangle tall trees of truth. In first drafts, by all means, express yourself with ifs, ands, and buts. But go back and strip out any vegetation that chokes off your main message. In *The Road*, Jack London witnessed a wife beating. He said: “The chief distinguishing trait between man and the other animals is that man is the only animal that maltreats the females of his kind. It is something of which no wolf nor cowardly coyote is ever guilty.”

Great directives, Bill. Thank you.
MWG wraps up its Annual Writers Contest. The Deadline was May 31, 2024. Submissions were stellar. Winners will be announced in early Fall 2024.

MWG Annual Conference—Tentatively scheduled for September 28, 2024, to be held at a venue in St. Louis! Details to follow.

Historically, UNESCO created “International Literacy Day” in 1967. This year, the day will be celebrated on 9/8/2024. HOW CAN YOU HELP? Donate books to local classrooms, gift a book, or initiate a local lending library.

A clap of hands for MWG Board Member Gregory Stout: His book Long Time Gone is scheduled for release by Level Best Books in October.

Congratulations to Barbara Leonhard and Nolcha Fox on having their poetry, “Hiking with Haikus,” published in Masticadores by editor Abhilash Fraizer.

A big applause for author Billie Holladay Skelley and illustrator James Skelley! Their outstanding work, Bass Reeves: Legendary Lawman of the Wild West, has been selected as a finalist in the Nonfiction-Children’s and Young Adult Category of the 34th annual Midwest Book Awards by the prestigious Midwest Independent Publishers Association (MiPA).

Kudos to Marty Martin (Warren Martin) for his new audiobook Farmerville Episode 7: Amber Alert. Listen on Spotify!

Congratulations to George Sirois, a former MWG Board Member, who joined the ranks of his new publisher, Roan & Weatherford Publishing Associates, as its new Media Relations Director!

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audiobook in March of 2020. So, is he my favorite character? No. But he sure is fun to write.

I understand you have a degree in psychology. Has this knowledge helped you develop your written characters psychologically?

It hasn’t hurt. One of the emphases of my degree was motivation. While I never sought a job within the field of psychology, the degree helped me understand motivational influences. After years of simply observing people, in conjunction with my educational background, creating fictional characters has never posed a barrier to my writing.

What characters in your books are most like you or like people you may know?

I’ve always been a voracious reader. The characters who spring from my pages are conglomerates of people I know and those I’ve found in novels. However, I will confess most of my bad-guys are modeled after one man I met many years ago. He was an extremely unpleasant fellow.

In your correspondence, your complimentary close is always, Peace, which is inspirational and says a lot. Could you narrow that down? Peace in one’s heart?”

Thank you for asking. When my wife became pregnant with our first son, we felt we needed to get back to a more spiritual environment. Not that we were non-religious, but we both had drifted away from attending church services. Since she grew up Catholic, I converted and we embraced her childhood faith. One of the rituals within the Catholic service is the shaking of hands and wishing your fellow parishioners’ peace. I found this a comforting gesture and have continued to use it where I can. We all need peace, in our hearts, in our private moments and in our dealings with others.
Since its establishment in 1915, the Missouri Writers’ Guild has been a haven for writers, offering a wealth of benefits. With chapters across the state, our guild provides a platform for writers to connect, learn from respected authors, and dive into the intricacies of writing. Whether a beginner or a seasoned writer, the Missouri Writers’ Guild is here to help you sharpen your skills and unleash your full potential.

Although we are a statewide organization for professional writers, did you know we accept members who live anywhere in the world?

We have had, and will continue to have, many famous and successful writers. One of our Honorary Lifetime Members (posthumously) is Samuel Langhorne Clemens. You may know him by another name: Mark Twain.

Mark Twain, a highly esteemed member of the Missouri Writers Guild, was not merely a writer but also a forerunner in shaping American literature. His works, often suppressed for their audacity, were pivotal in creating and popularizing a uniquely American literary tradition deeply rooted in American themes and language. As a member of the Missouri Writers’ Guild, you are part of this rich and diverse literary legacy, a legacy that continues to inspire and shape the world of literature to this day.

Next year, 2025, will be a milestone year for the Missouri Writers Guild! As we approach our 110th anniversary, we want to emphasize the importance of your voice, our valued members. Your ideas are not just welcome; they are crucial in shaping a tribute that truly reflects our mission, purpose, and the diverse interests of our members. The milestone is just around the corner, and we eagerly await your ideas to make this memorable.

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**MEMORABLE MOMENTS**

**Rural Missouri recipes**

*Blueberry Cream Pie*

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons flour, divided
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2-1/2 cups fresh blueberries
- 1 9-inch pie crust, unbaked
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons pecans, chopped

**Instructions:**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine sour cream, sugar, salt, 2 tablespoons flour, vanilla and egg. Beat 5 minutes or until smooth. Fold in blueberries.

Pour filling into pastry shell. Bake for 25 minutes.

Combine remaining ingredients, stirring well. Sprinkle over top of pie. Bake 10 additional minutes. Chill until ready to serve.

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**Answer to Trivia Question:** Vintage 14K Gold Tip Mont Blanc Fountain Pen 4810 Meisterstuck W. Germany Rare

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**Jokes for Writers**

Where would a writer never want to live?
A writer’s block.

Knock, knock.
Who’s there?
Orange.
Orange who?
Orange you supposed to be finishing your current draft instead of reading jokes for writers?